

Teaching from a Critical Perspective / Enseñando de Una Perspectiva Crítica: Conceptualization, Reflection, and Application of Chicana/o Pedagogy

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It was Fall of 2009, in a “Chicana/o Communities” class, where the purpose was to study the origin, development, and current social location of the Chicano/a community. A student asked the Chicano instructor to explain the term *pedagogy*. Earlier in the day the young woman had read the term in another class but felt uncomfortable asking her other instructor what it meant. The professor looked at the term, then into the faces of 15 diverse students as they eagerly awaited his answer. He thought for a moment, as he reflected on his success of creating a space where students felt comfortable asking difficult questions, “what a wonderful teaching moment!” He then began to discuss pedagogy as transformative for professors and students. He spoke of teaching as creating a comfortable learning

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environment, sparking opportunities for change, stimulating critical thought, and enhancing a deeper understanding of our diverse world. He then explained that these are the same kinds of issues that Chicana/o leaders have struggled with tirelessly for the last 40 years in an effort to advocate for the Chicana/o community.

(From Dr. Eduardo Portillos' Class)

The above narrative is an actual classroom experience from one of our classrooms. It not only shows Chicana/o¹ pedagogy in practice, it also illustrates its application in predominately White classrooms. It is the interweaving of Chicana/o history and culture with present-day Chicana/o epistemology that now has transformative possibilities through *Chicana/o Pedagogy*. It is with this in mind that we initiate this paper on Chicana/o pedagogy – to describe what it is, and how it is developed and practiced.

The how and what in this paper will be presented using the concept *plática* (“conversation” in English) to detail the understanding, practice, and advancement of Chicana/o pedagogy. In this paper, we will use personal narrative in our *pláticas* to help explicate our classroom experiences. According to the Spanish Dictionary from the *Real Academia Española* (2010), *plática*, translated, is defined as: (a) a conversation, and (b) the discourse by which Christian doctrine used to be taught to advance acts of virtue and repudiate addictions and faults of loyal people. This root definition is both imperfect and problematic. It is imperfect because the concept has evolved from its mere *conversation* origins to a reflective and critical intellectual dialogue ingrained with U.S. Chicanas/os history and culture. The problem lies with its origins to a religion used to oppress indigenous groups and *mestizos* (“mixed”) during and after the Spanish conquest of Mexico (Acuña, 1988). In the same way that the term *Chicano* was turned from a pejorative term to one of empowerment (Escobar, 1993; Segura, 2001), we use *plática* to develop Chicana/o intellectualism and move beyond its oppressive origins (see Freire, 1970).

We define *plática* as intimate conversations (Ayala et al., 2006), popular conversations (Godinez, 2006), and intellectual dialogue (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2006; Moreno, 2003). The underlying message of these authors is that *plática* is useful and necessary to unbury and advance Chicana/o intellectual knowledge on theory and methods, cultural knowledge, civic participation, and the effects of the schooling process. In this practice of Chicana/o knowledge advancement, the use of a Chicana/o pedagogy is key because our pedagogy derives as much from our intellectual history as the method of *plática*. In the grand scheme of

1 *Chicano* denotes males and *Chicana* denotes females. *Chicana/o* is defined by Delgado Bernal (2001) as a term that identifies people: (a) with multiple layers of identities of resistance (particularly political and cultural), and (b) of Mexican origin, or Latinas/os who share the same political consciousness of resistance with people with Mexican origin.

academia, *plática* then is a key part of an innovative, culturally rich, and contemporary Chicana/o pedagogy.

In this *plática* on Chicana/o pedagogy, we will provide a brief introduction of ourselves and our students, converse on key literature pieces, give examples from our teaching experiences, and address problems with pedagogical implementation in predominately White college classrooms. Then, we conclude with a discussion of the *plática*.

Teaching Biographies and Description of Students

Nationwide, in the Fall of 2007, minorities² accounted for 16.3% of U.S. college and university faculty, and Hispanics³ accounted for 3.7% (or 51,660) (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a). Of the 168,508 assistant professors in the U.S., 3,265 (or 1.9%) were Hispanic male assistant professors (U.S. Department of Education, 2009b). Being two out of this 3,265, we offer insights into our experiences with teaching.

Edwardo: My initial teaching experience was in graduate school at Arizona State University (ASU) where I taught courses on race, gender, and crime. At this time, undergraduates constantly challenged every aspect of my pedagogy. I was young, inexperienced, a person of color, and did not have a Ph.D. I was not a legitimate possessor of knowledge, and my critical perspectives were viewed as biased. While ABD, I accepted a position in the California State University system, where my teaching evaluations improved in classes that were large and diverse. In California, I refined my pedagogy and began to enjoy the classroom experience. After two years, I completed my Ph.D. and accepted a job offer from a university in my home state of Colorado. The student population was less diverse than in California, but my teaching evaluations continued to improve. Through these pedagogical experiences, and living through the pedagogical knowledge on voice from the work of Giroux (1986), González (1995), Tatum (1994), and Weiler (1988), I have learned to listen to students and be inclusive of their voices, as I would expect that the voice of Latino faculty is included in predominately white institutions (PWIs). For me, learning to listen to students was recognizing the traditional classroom typically included the white male professor whose instruction could not be questioned and he ultimately made all decisions concerning classroom and content delivery. As a student, sitting in these

2 *Minority* faculty includes Blacks, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and American Indian/Alaska Natives.

3 *Hispanic* is the term used by the U.S. Census and the U.S. Department of Education, and therefore the term used here. The race categories do not include Hispanics of any race, as they are represented as the “Hispanic” ethnic group.

types of classes was very intimidating. As a result, when I became an instructor I made the conscious decision to listen to students and have their voices included in how I taught.

Juan Carlos: I also earned my doctorate at ASU where I had two years of experience as a teaching assistant. Upon graduation I entered the faculty at a university in the Midwest, and have recently taken another faculty position in my home state of California. It was through these early years at ASU, dialoguing with Chicanas/os from various disciplines about the benefits of learning from diverse faculty, that I began to conceptualize the idea that indeed Chicanas/os approached pedagogy from a unique and innovating perspective. The two writers that transformed my perspective and understanding about Chicana/o pedagogy were Smith (1999) and Sandoval (2000). Their work inspired me to rethink my ideas of the power of research and methods, and how pedagogy can be used to re-claim, re-tell, re-member, re-frame, re-store, re-name, and re-create the Chicana/o experience and struggle in the U.S.

Edwardo & Juan Carlos: As graduate students and assistant professors the majority of the students we have taught have been undergraduates, but slowly we have had more opportunities to teach graduate courses. The U.S. Department of Education (2009c) shows that of all undergraduate students in fall 2008, 63.2% were White and 12.9% Hispanic. To compare our classrooms to the national averages, we have analyzed our past class rosters to determine the race/ethnicity and gender breakdown.

Edwardo: In my first six years of college teaching, I taught over 900 students in 26 undergraduate and two graduate courses. Women have comprised 66%, Whites 66%, Latinas/os 23%, Blacks 5%, and Asian 2%. As a faculty member of color, I have realized that a “traditional” pedagogical delivery does not fit my personality, nor is it effective in teaching diverse students critical perspectives about our criminal and juvenile justice systems. Through my *Chicano pedagogy*, which is defined in the next section as being a pedagogy of and by Chicanas/os that is both critical and reflective, my hope is to inspire students to continue the struggle for justice in our criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Juan Carlos: I was hired as faculty one year after Edwardo, and in my first five years I taught 15 courses. Eleven of these courses were undergraduate and four were graduate. A total of 253 undergraduates and 43 graduates have completed my courses. In terms of race/ethnicity, 240 were White (81%) and 57 students of color (19%). But this changed when I took the faculty position in the California State University system, where about 50% of the graduate students I teach are Chicana/o. By gender, 212 (72%) have been women and 85 (28%) men, which is not surprising

given I teach in education. In Missouri, my courses were always viewed by students as “the diversity course” because my focus of knowledge and pedagogy comes from the Chicana/o community and other communities of color. In California, infusing Chicana/o pedagogy in what I teach (courses in research, administration, and leadership) is appreciated because it helps my Chicana/o students better relate to the material.

Edwardo: As we wrote this paper from my faculty office in Colorado, we asked ourselves, “Why is it important that we articulate a Chicana/o pedagogy?” While we were pondering this question, I had a telling experience when I entered the teaching center for faculty in need of a computer. I asked a graduate student for help whose job was to assist faculty.

He then asked, “Who are you? These computers are for faculty?”

I told him I was a professor.

He responded, “Well, you are not in your professorial garb today, are you?”

I responded, “I certainly am.”

He stated, “Well, you don’t look like a professor.”

I snidely responded, “Not in your eyes.”

These types of stereotypical attitudes are commonplace in academe for Chicanas/os due in part to the predominance of White privilege (Cabrera, 2010; McIntosh, 1989) where it became difficult for the graduate student to see me as a professor because I did not “look like a professor,” which in part was related to my skin color.

Juan Carlos: This experience plays itself out in universities all over the country, and in this sense they are not unique to Chicana/o faculty, but to faculty of color and women. Just this year I had an experience where a White female teacher in one of my graduate courses found the Chicana/o pedagogy that I practice problematic. In an email, she stated that:

I have really been trying to tune in to your lectures, but it is difficult when I don’t understand your examples. I spend more time trying to understand what your examples mean than how your examples illustrate the topic/concept.... Can you please come up with some examples that are not about Latina/o studies or high school drop-outs?

Edwardo: It is these types of experiences that help reinforce the idea we are university professors that consciously choose the profession in large part because we like to teach and conduct research, but the profession did not necessarily chose us. We practice Chicana/o pedagogy in the face of everyday racism in a discriminatory academy. However, we simply do

not teach to teach. Through our pedagogical practices and because of our experiences we strive to provide a critical analysis of societal policies and institutional practices that lead to understanding social justice at a variety of levels.

What is Chicana/o Pedagogy?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online (2010) defines *pedagogy* as “the art, science, or profession of teaching, especially education,” but this is also nothing more than a generic understanding of a very complex and nuanced interchange of ideas between humans. Anderson (2009) defined pedagogy as *professional concern*, meaning that it entails and include knowledge of the language of the profession, attained through intense academic preparation (p. 40). However, these basic definitions fail to capture the complexity of pedagogical praxis. That is, in its everyday practice throughout universities across the country pedagogical approaches are shaped by race, class, gender, and contradictory and competing world views, creating different types of pedagogical approaches. This section will focus on how critical, LatCrit, feminist, and borderland pedagogies contribute to conceptualizing a Chicana/o pedagogy.

Chicana/o pedagogy is critical and reflective pedagogy of and by Chicanas/os that draws from our historical, political, and cultural knowledge (Acuña, 1988; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Elenes, Gonzalez, Delgado Bernal, & Villenas, 2001; Hernández, 1997; Moreno, 2003). A component of *Chicana/o pedagogy* comes from Wink (2004) in her definition of critical pedagogy, which requires the implementation of processes such as naming, reflecting, and acting. In *Chicana/o pedagogy*, the *naming* includes the pointing-out of things that affect Chicanas/os in higher education, such as institutional racism, a hidden curriculum that marginalizes Chicana/o knowledge, and sex role socialization that affects both Chicanas and Chicanos. *Reflecting* requires talking and writing about what you know and do not know, such as how the the learning of Chicana/o history and culture by U.S. Chicanas/os is seen as a threat by mainstream society. And the *acting* involves the actual doing of the activism that is practiced in our communities, and integrating community service in all aspects of academic work.

In what ways are critical pedagogy and Chicana/o pedagogy similar? In both, *conflict* is a natural part of learning because it is at the crossroads of contradiction where knowledge building begins. This includes debating critical topics, such as racist immigration laws, affirmative action, language issues, and race and racism. Conflict also includes disagreements based on intellectual *plática* and a respect for opposing worldviews. Being open-minded, sharing differences, and trying to understand differences are essential to critical and Chicana/o pedagogy. In addition, in both, pedagogy is most dynamic when it is *student-driven*, meaning that classroom conditions are created where students become responsible for their own learning in a re-naming of *their* world. Lastly, both require a commitment

to life-long learning. This necessitates that professors and students similarly cultivate a desire, as described by Wink (2004), for learning, relearning (e.g., what was omitted from your education, such as Chicana/o culture and history), and unlearning (the most challenging, and requires a shift in philosophy, beliefs, and assumptions).

The way in which Chicana/o pedagogy is different than critical pedagogy is the former requires that Chicana/o issues, history, and culture enter the classroom through the curriculum and play a key role in developing nuanced understandings of the world in which we live. In all aspects of the university curriculum, the Latina/o voice should be present. Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) best explains the purpose of any pedagogy that is Chicana/o centered because LatCrit works to understand the inner-working of our racist society, challenge White and/or dominant ideology, advance social justice, give voice to people who have not traditionally had it, and integrate interdisciplinary knowledge into the knowledge-base of any singular discipline (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). What does Chicana/o pedagogy mean to us as academics and teachers?

Juan Carlos: As a college professor, to me Chicana/o pedagogy means that I am able to insert myself, my experiences and voice into any and all conversations about pedagogy. This was somewhat difficult in the Midwest because most Midwesterners still think in terms of the traditional Black-White paradigm, without much consciousness for other voices (Hernandez, 2004; Ramirez, 1996; Yosso, 2005). But, even in California, the fundamental belief is that if a university has a critical mass of Chicana/o students, then there is no need to talk about issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom because diversity has been achieved. Ultimately, from my experience in the Midwest, the hope is that Chicana/o pedagogy does for California and the southwest what Afro-centric curriculum and pedagogy is already doing for the advancement of African Americans in the South and Midwest of the country. Through the knowledge proliferation of Chicana/o Studies, Chicanas/os already have and practice Chicana/o pedagogy, but most of this is done unconsciously because the literature on our pedagogical advancement is very minimal.

Edwardo: I agree. This reminds of an article by Elenes et al. (2001) that I read. This piece was unique in articulating the reason and purpose of Chicana/o pedagogy. Elenes et al. wrote that they realized through their cumulative university experiences, that the Chicana/o voice is absent from conversations about critical pedagogy. So, as they began to talk about this collectively they recognized that one of the reasons for the exclusion of Chicanas/os from conversations and writing about pedagogy is because pedagogy is linked to knowledge, power, and politics. This realization provided the impetus to ensure the inclusion of the Chicana/o voice into this conversation so that academia benefits from our cultural

knowledge. Ultimately, a Chicana/o pedagogy needs to be articulated and advanced because it is essentially synonymous with gaining access to knowledge, power, and politics in academe (Córdova, 1998; Gutiérrez, 1993). Also, as stated by Anzaldúa (2007), as Chicanas/os we have political and ideological borders that constrain our vision of the world and her work as a Chicana feminist is to tell a counter narrative about various forms of marginalization that we are not taught in schools. In this same vein, Chicano pedagogy for us retelling the history and the experiences of a group of people who have been marginalized for centuries and these experiences are often buried and forgotten during the schooling process.

Juan Carlos: Yes, I also have read Elenes and Anzaldúa's work, and a few others from prominent Chicana academics (see The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). It was clear from my review of the literature that Chicanas are leaders on the development and advancement of Chicana/o pedagogy. Another point I remember about the Elenes et al. (2001) article was that they were mostly focused on a Chicana feminist approach to pedagogy. Hernández (1997) was another article in where a *feminist critical pedagogy* was articulated as a life-long project of producing diverse forms of knowledge, theory, and multiple subjectivities contesting domination and oppression; while also working through the tensions among social possibilities; while also interrogating social practices and forms of hierarchy. Hernández (1997) speaks of pedagogy as a political practice, within a political and economic context, intended to enhance personal and global knowledge. It was this article that caught my attention because it expanded Chicana/o pedagogy from a specific college classroom practice to a global political and cultural practice.

Edwardo: If you mention Hernández' feminist critical pedagogy, then you have to also articulate Delgado Bernal's *pedagogies of the home*. In her article, Delgado Bernal's (2001) concept of home is the Chicana/o home and *comunidad* ("community"), and she wrote that the pedagogies of the home have advanced pedagogy by putting Chicana/o cultural knowledge at the center of pedagogy. In this, Chicana/o cultural knowledge has not only contributed and advanced pedagogy, but it has interrupted the transmission of dominant ideologies that were perpetuated through pedagogy. And, not only do Chicana/o professors use pedagogies of the home to disrupt "knowledge as usual," but Chicana/o students use it to resist dominant knowledge and ideology that they are force fed through Eurocentric pedagogy.

Juan Carlos: Yes, Delgado Bernal's article spoke to my own experience. But so did the article by Elenes on *border and transformative pedagogies*. In her article, Elenes (1997) argued that border/transformative pedagogies draw from Chicana/o aesthetic experiences that deconstruct essential-

ist notions of culture, and involve cultural politics that incorporate the construction of knowledge capable of analyzing conflict and meaning. In essence, these pedagogies offer a cultural critique of the material conditions of oppressed communities along the U.S./Mexican border (many being Chicana/o in history and identity), and invoke politics to transform American society into becoming truly democratic. The *Border* part of the term refers to the multiple boundaries along race, class, gender, sexuality, and age differences that have been built by dominant hierarchical discourses, and efforts to resist these forms of domination. The *transformative* part is the process that enables students to demystify their own ideologies, whether they are liberal or conservative.

Edwardo: In summary, the scholarship on Chicana/o pedagogy is likely to grow as more Chicanas/os enter the academy. It is Elenes (2001) that unified all of these different and unique pedagogies into a Chicana/o pedagogy where she wrote that it is the constant search for a *common language* that we need to implement our Chicana/o pedagogy in the college classroom. This common language includes discussion, respect, and understanding of multiple and even contradictory discourses; and to understand how Chicana/o pedagogy fits into the larger pedagogical developments, particularly those that are being advanced by U.S. minority faculty.

Chicana/o Pedagogy in Practice

The literature on teaching evaluations consistently shows that in comparison to men, women often receive lower teaching evaluations (Anderson & Miller, 1997; Arbuckle & Williams, 2003; Basow, 1995). In this same vein, scholars of color receive lower teaching evaluations scores than Whites (Anderson & Smith, 2005; Hendrix, 1998; Smith & Anderson, 2005). As Chicano scholars we are cognizant of this research and fervently understand that structural inequality is the cause of these differences (DiPietro & Faye, 2005; Rubin, 1998). Moreover, we are also aware of the pedagogy literature and consciously employ pedagogical practices that we find successful based on our evaluations. What are some examples from our pedagogy? This section details how we put Chicana/o pedagogy into practice. Although many of the examples we provide are employed by all academics, our focus is on issues of social and economic justice. Furthermore, in our teaching we are sensitive to the ways in which knowledge and power are reflected in teaching, and we employ strategies that will frequently use examples from the Chicana/o community because too often these voices have not been included.

Juan Carlos: I have three examples of innovative teaching that take into consideration both types of students mentioned by Sanchez and Gunawardena (1998) – Western and non-Western thinkers. These examples are from my teaching in the Midwest, since I have only been teaching in

California for two years. The first is a final exam where undergraduates are given two weeks to think about critical issues in depth, and complete the exam individually or with a partner. Detailed instructions are given for students working as individuals or in collaboration. The second, also for undergraduates, gives them various opportunities throughout the semester to do role playing activities based on the books we are reading. Instructions are given for students to play roles based on different races/ethnicities, and work in teams, so they can safely place themselves in the shoes of other people that they know little about. From this, they need to focus on the issues that pertain to their roles, and argue accordingly. The third, for both graduate and undergraduate, requires reading a significant amount of material from Latina/o academics (or scholars of color). I specifically try to select texts written by scholars of color whenever these texts exist on the topics I am teaching; and when students ask about the texts we have conversations about the construction of knowledge, which lead to questions that send students into their own explorations about the point-of-views imposed on knowledge construction in education. This questioning of students based on selection of books by scholars of color is synonymous with Freire's (1970) *problem-posing* concept of education, which depends on questioning the "knowledge" that exists in the canonical texts, and raising questions about its legitimacy.

Edwardo: From the first day of class, I explain the context of the course and tell undergraduate students that I teach from a critical perspective. I tell them that if they want to hear how wonderful the criminal justice system is, this is not the course for them. I also tell them that they can disagree with the professor or their peers, but they must do so intellectually and respectfully. I strive to create an inclusive space where students feel comfortable to express themselves during class, especially when discussing controversial issues of race, class and gender inequalities in the criminal justice system. I frequently employ the use of narratives during lectures and require students do the same in their papers. During lectures, I will give current examples from the Chicano/a community of disparate treatment by criminal justice officials who use the war on crime to warehouse people of color, as one of many pieces of the prison industrial complex. This illustrates to students how these types of disparities impact people of color, even in their own communities. It also illustrates how criminal justice policies created by state and federal government officials can influence the daily lives of people of color. In addition, my goal is to help students learn that crime is socially constructed. Many of my students participated in some type of juvenile delinquency; however, most of them have never been caught by authorities. In addition, we analyze national and local data that highlight how youth of color are over-represented in the juvenile justice system and I provide examples of disparate

treatment throughout the system. Students are surprised by the data and many will attribute the disproportionate incarceration to white privilege and racism.

Juan Carlos: Focusing on one example in greater detail, the online collaborative exam is my latest “innovation.” I put exam questions online on Blackboard that have been developed by students. I give students two weeks to complete two essay questions. Most students prefer to work individually, but all are given the option to work with another person from class collaboratively. Students working in pairs have to write more, and they also have to qualitatively evaluate the working experience with their partners. Some students answer early, and others can read their responses. For those that answer late, they can cite the exams of others, and instructions are given for how this is done without plagiarizing. The goal is to teach students that we can learn from each other as a community, and knowledge attainment can be communal and individual, and collaborative rather than competitive.

Edwardo: I want student learning to be transformative in how they view Chicanas/os, people of color, and/or the criminal justice system. In two of my classes, I ask undergraduate students to decide whether or not they would like to do a group or individual research paper—recognizing that some students have had negative group experiences or others prefer to work independently. Group papers are significantly longer than individual ones, and I incorporate peer evaluations. In my *Chicana/o Communities* course, students must find a local Chicana/o community and describe how *Chicanismo* is evident in the barrio. In my *Youth Gangs* course, students can do observations from either a law enforcement or gang neighborhood perspective. Through writing their papers, students learn how issues discussed in the literature may be apparent in their local communities. At the same time, these papers also allow them to develop as sense of community with their fellow students. Sometimes these activities create tensions among students with different personalities, motivational levels, and educational skills, but this in itself is learning through diversity. The goal is for the knowledge learned from these projects to follow students in their everyday lives and into their professional careers.

Resisting Chicana/o Pedagogy

The what, how, and where we are trying to teach has a political, social, and cultural perspective that provokes student resistance. While resistance of ideas, ideology, and diverse perspective comes mostly from Whites, this is not always the case. Even Latinas/os and students of color, particularly those with more conservative backgrounds, may similarly resist when they perceive a challenge to their per-

spective and ideologies. From our experience, we confront challenges with three types of students: those that enter the classroom with very limited knowledge of diverse cultures or diversity, or little experience in working with diverse people; those that enter class with ideologies, preconceived notions, and stereotypes of the “other;” and those that have never had a Chicana/o professor, and quickly realize that Latina/o issues are going to be addressed in the classroom. What are some examples of these three challenges from our experience?

Juan Carlos: First, in my undergraduate classes, White students think they do not have a culture when issues of culture are raised. They see culture as something belonging to people of color. It is my job to make the distinctions between culture and race/ethnicity, and dialogue about what it is to have White culture. But, talking about White culture often leads to talking about White privilege, and this is often new to many students; and for those to whom it is not new, they do not want to talk about it because they have already addressed it in the “diversity course.”

Edwardo: For me the student resistance was institution-specific. Since leaving graduate school, resistance has been more individualized. For example, a Chicana student in Colorado called me racist because I flunked her three different times, despite my repeated effort to help her. Moreover, I do not see race/ethnicity as determining whether a student will be conservative or liberal. In my experience, students of all ethnicities and races tend to be right or left leaning. In Colorado, however, I have noticed that students are more open to engage issues of power and privilege because most instructors in my department address these issues, and this makes it easier for my critical perspective to resonate clearly with students.

Juan Carlos: Second, issues of race/ethnicity, class, and gender are always touchy and controversial topics for Whites students to talk about because they require that they acknowledge their privilege. Students of color, particularly undergraduates, do not want to talk about these issues because then they feel tokenized, especially those that are trying to integrate into White society. Usually if it is a Latina/o or Black student, they are the only ones in class, and talking about these issues puts the focus on them and makes some feel like tokens.

Edwardo: Students in Colorado and California, both White and non-White, seem willing to acknowledge that racism and White privilege are evident in society. The problem comes when I try to discuss these issues in relations to crime, where many students favor theories that assert individuals are responsible for their criminal behavior. Some students chose to ignore structural factors during these conversations. I feel these experiences in my classroom highlights the importance of having multiple discussions of power and privilege throughout ones undergraduate education.

Juan Carlos: Third, my research is mostly about Chicana/o issues, mostly because this is what I know, but I am realizing that in part it is because this is what I have been allowed to address through years of marginalization of society and the academy. So this is what I teach. I am well aware, through personal experiences and from stories of my Chicana/o colleagues, that most of what White scholars say about issues related to Chicano/Latino communities has already been said by Chicana/o and Latina/o scholars. White scholars, because of their expensive networks and privilege, usually receive more credit for research in our communities, while we are seen as biased when we study our communities, so naturally their books are sometimes better known. This is why I consciously try to select as many of my books from scholars of color. But I also had to go through my own transformation as a graduate student, and challenge my own ideas about knowledge construction and which voices get privileged in academia. It is the very questioning of the written text that helps students develop critical consciousness for cultural emancipation, as explained by Freire (1973).

Edwardo: I agree with you that we consciously teach what we know. My research agenda also focuses on Latinas/os. Specifically, I address issues of social and economic justice including police and community relations in Latina/o communities. My motivation for studying these issues is because I am a victim of disparate treatment from law enforcement and I share these experiences with students. In class, in addition to learning traditional criminology, they are going to learn how the study of crime has largely focused on the Black-White paradigm, and traditionally ignored the experiences of other ethnic groups. Therefore, I will frequently discuss how Latinos/as have been excluded. Students had not thought about how Latinas/os had been excluded before and they seem to welcome this knowledge. When the semester ends, my hope is that students have developed new understandings about how various racial/ethnic groups view the criminal justice system and what structural factors explain their involvement in crime. I also agree with you that I went through a transformation in graduate school. Anzaldúa (2007) discusses how the Chicano culture can lead to the oppression of women by men but that women are also complicit in this oppression because they help transmit the culture. As a Chicano scholar I needed to be aware of how my own male privilege has provided me opportunities while at the same time experiencing racial/ethnic oppression. To help highlight these issues I will discuss feminism and Chicana feminism in my classes to help students learn about the various forms of oppression evident in society and in the criminal justice system.

Discussing the Plática

As two Chicanos, trained by feminists, we are practicing a Chicana/o pedagogy rooted in traditionalism and progressivism. It is traditional in the sense that we utilize lectures and videos to deliver knowledge, and exams, quizzes, and papers to measure learning. And it is progressive because it is transformative, where we strive for our students to learn about larger structural inequalities in both our disciplines, and employ that knowledge in their personal and professional careers. Our world views, epistemology, history, culture, bicultural socialization, and traditions permeate our Chicana/o pedagogy. This may add validity to the notion of “biased” professors, but we rather some students view us this way than to continue to have non-traditional voices excluded from the classroom. At the same time, because of our bicultural socialization, we know what it is to be marginalized, and use this experience to make sure to be inclusive of all students – Whites and non-Whites alike. Being Chicana/o is almost synonymous with there being conflict and resistance from students, but we realize that the more the college classroom becomes diverse, the more all students will be understanding and accepting of diversity of people and ideas. As stated by Elenes (2001):

Much of the problem we have in contemporary classroom discussion is that students enter classrooms with their minds made up about what feminism is, or what perspectives are expected of them in ethnic studies. Most of us also work on preconceived notions of how certain people act (i.e., feminists), and how they will deal with those who are different from them. It is our job as teachers who are preparing a workforce to deal with a diverse environment to enable students to learn to be self-reflexive of their own ideologies, preconceived notions, and stereotypes. (p. 700).

Elenes’ perspective is important because as we continue to refine, reshape, and redefine our Chicana/o pedagogy through some sharing of promising practices and a little trial and error, we are cognizant that justice and equity are on our side. There is no need for these *pláticas* to take on a singular and formalized format, such as the one that we used in this paper. As Chicano academics, we need to reach out to other Chicanas/os and faculty of color and have these *pláticas* on Chicana/o pedagogy in larger forums at national conferences, and as well as in informal conversations with our colleagues that are serious about mastering and advancing a Chicana/o pedagogy. We practice a pedagogy that is inclusive of all voices, while at the same time asserting that the Chicana/o experience be a part of the dialogue, particularly on issues of race, racism, class, classism, justice, and equity.

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