


Chapter 7

Contemporary Views on Latinx Feminism: Applying Our Collective Histories to Create a More Brilliant Future

Brooke Rappaport

Tennessee State University, USA

Lucia Quezada

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7305-7070>

University of Georgia, USA

Kiara Manosalvas

Teachers College, Columbia University, USA

Grace-Ellen Mahoney

University of Maryland, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses contemporary perspectives related to Latinx feminism. This chapter builds upon a previous chapter about the history of Latinx feminism. Ways in which feminism and gender identity intersect with other identities are discussed. The authors discuss how Latinx feminism provides avenues to resist oppression. The chapter ends with a discussion of application of feminist concepts discussed and future directions. A combination of third-person research and personal narrative is utilized.

INTRODUCTION

Mujeres, a no dejar que el peligro del viaje y la inmensidad del territorio nos asuste —a mirar hacia adelante y a abrir paso en el monte (Women, let's not let the danger of the journey and the vastness of the territory scare us—let's look forward and open paths in these woods) (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983, p. v)

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-4901-1.ch007

The above quote was written by Gloria Anzaldúa in the forward to the second edition of her book co-edited with Cherrie Moraga entitled *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Both Anzaldúa and Moraga urged their audience to be bridges to connect their identities and experiences as important and worthy of care. This work and that of other Latinx feminist scholars, activists, writers, and artists inspired our collaborative writing of this chapter.

Making Meaning of Our Feminist and Mujerista Identities

One of the most powerful lessons feminism and mujerismo has taught me (Kiara) is that my assertiveness and boldness as a Latina woman are qualities to be celebrated rather than shamed. However, before evolving into the bold, assertive woman I am today, I was a scared, apologetic child terrified of her alcoholic father. My father was a poor immigrant from Ecuador who coveted the power, the privilege, and the respect that the White man so easily obtained. Unable to obtain the power of the White man, he chose instead to assert dominance over his family. He used his masculinity or “machismo” as a weapon to assert his authority and justify his abuse. I began to feel shame and resentment towards my culture – a culture I had associated with violence and dysfunction – and made no effort to cultivate my identity as a Latina woman.

It was not until I was forced to confront my own racial identity development and my internalized racism during my master’s training in mental health counseling that I realized how hard I was working to deny my experience inside the borderlands – the discomfort of not feeling Latina “enough” to build community with others who shared my identity, yet feeling awkwardly out of place with White people. Denying this experience felt easier than sitting with the ambiguity of existing inside the borderland, of constantly living in transition. Anzaldúa (1987) writes that “borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them” (p. 3). This is certainly true, yet for me, the most painful part was recognizing how I was an accomplice in creating these divisions. In order to heal, I had to learn how to express curiosity about the contradictions within myself as I tried to belong to two different cultures. I could be both assertive and gentle. I could feel ambivalent about having kids yet also be family oriented. These things were not mutually exclusive.

Fortunately, much has changed in how I think about my racial/ethnic identity. By taking the time to understand my own mestiza consciousness and expose myself to the brilliant ancestors who came before me, I have learned how to speak from my heart, to stand up for what I believe is right, and, even if my voice trembles, to stay committed in trusting myself. I have finally arrived at a place where I see my Latinx identity as a source of strength, not as a deficit. My culture is not perfect; no culture is. I will never stop feeling irritated when my mom tells me “ahora te puedes casar!” after I’ve cooked a good meal. But I have come to learn that my criticism of Latinx culture no longer comes from a place of shame or anger but from a place of love. Machismo and patriarchy may have dimmed the fire I had inside of me, but it was love, community, and the inspirational writings of Latina feminists who came before me that reminded me of how easily I can strike a match to my flame once more. I no longer feel like I have to decide between cultivating my Latina identity or my American upbringing. I can be someone who sees the value in the individual and the collective.

19 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/contemporary-views-on-latinx-feminism/314196

Related Content

Keeping Professional Boundaries

(2024). *Ethics for Mental Health Professionals* (pp. 113-131).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/keeping-professional-boundaries/338933

Mass Media's Negative Narratives: Secondary Psycho-Sociological Trauma on Students' Self-Identity and Academic Success

Michelle Jeanette Toma (2022). *Impact of School Shootings on Classroom Culture, Curriculum, and Learning* (pp. 190-217).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mass-medias-negative-narratives/289245

Adolescents and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Symptoms, Causes, Assessment, and Treatment

Kalpana Raman (2021). *New Developments in Diagnosing, Assessing, and Treating ADHD* (pp. 70-87).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/adolescents-and-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/259297

Spirituality and Well-Being in a Successful Life

Bhanu Prasad Behera (2020). *Psycho-Social Perspectives on Mental Health and Well-Being* (pp. 296-314).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/spirituality-and-well-being-in-a-successful-life/248719

Childhood Trauma: Impact and Management

Alisha Arora and Madhumita Bhattacharya (2024). *Handbook of Research on Child and Adolescent Psychology Practices and Interventions* (pp. 20-43).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/childhood-trauma/334058