

Review of *Bordered Writers: Latinx Identities and Literacy Practices at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*

Edited by Isabel Baca, Yndalecio Isaac Hinojosa, and Susan Wolff Murphy.

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University of Washington Seattle, on land of the Coast Salish peoples, land that touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot nations.¹

Although members of the various Latinx communities that make up this nation comprise the largest minoritized group by far, little has been written about undergraduate students from these communities by scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition. Like its 2007 predecessor, *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions* co-edited by Cristina Kirklighter, Diana Cárdenas, and Susan Wolff Murphy, *Bordered Writers: Latinx Identities and Literacy Practices at Hispanic-Serving Institutions* is a concerted effort by a group of impassioned scholars who wish to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges that Latinx students encounter as they embark on their college careers, especially in terms of the narrow, monolingual ideologies that continue to inform the teaching of writing in colleges across the country.

Immediately, a slight modification in titles from the first volume (Latino/a) to this one (Latinx) signals the sweeping changes that have taken place in the interim. Although the focus in both collections is on student identities and literacy practices, the sites and the language used to describe them has also shifted dramatically. For example, not only has the University of Texas at Pan American become the more comprehensive University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, but *multiculturalism* has been

replaced by *translingualism*. As a consequence, the bevy of scholars included in this volume are in a position to contribute new theoretical, pedagogical and practical insights that promise to move the field forward in ways that many of the scholars included in the earlier volume could not have imagined a mere twelve years ago.

Through their well-grounded citations, theoretical positions, method-ologies, data collection and analyses, the contributors to this volume demonstrate a familiarity with critical concerns facing the field, especially as those concerns impact the academic lives of Latinx students who face an array of challenges as they transition from their communities of belonging to the various community college and university settings they inhabit. On a broader level and to different degrees, a number of the essays in the collection explicitly engage the ever-expanding focus across the nation on the establishment of Hispanic-Serving Institutions and the role they play in providing Latinx students with the kinds of support they need to be successful. And whether they invoke more locally nuanced concepts like *familia* or more widely recognized ones like translingualism, contributors demonstrate a familiarity with and awareness of how such concepts can be utilized to address the needs of Latinx students. As a reader, I am impressed by the range of theoretical and methodological approaches that contributors call on and heartened by their careful excavation of the critical role that lived experience plays both in their individual development as scholars in the field and their efforts to intervene in the lives of their students. In this respect, their use of *testimonio* accents and signals a more sophisticated intervention in the field that rightly acknowledges the vital role that language, culture, and identity play across the projects that contributors address.

The introduction, ten essays, and five *testimonios* that comprise this volume include scholarly research and personal stories designed to enlighten a broad audience of fellow scholars and educators about how they can make use of the theoretical and methodological principles available in the field to gather data and stories that provide readers with a better understanding of the Latinx students they are likely to encounter in their classrooms. The introduction serves to effectively bind the various *testimonios* and essays by providing a coherent narrative that locates the work in the scholarship that others have contributed to the field. The essays in each of the four parts—Developmental English and Bridge Programs, First-Year Writing, Professional and Technical Writing, and Writing Centers and Mentored Writing—are different enough from one another in terms of the theories and methods they invoke and the data they analyze, but what is common across the four parts is a palpable commitment by every writer to make members of a broader audience aware of the challenges Latinx students have encountered over the last several decades, as well as the kinds of interventions

Review of *Bordered Writers*

educators need to consider to make a difference in these students lives. The five *testimonios* serve to personalize the more scholarly treatises (although a number of the ten chapters also make effective use of *testimonio*) by humanizing the telling and, in line with current theoretical interests in the field, embodying that telling in the lived experience of scholars who to a great degree faced and met the same kinds of challenges in their own personal lives.

Because it is both timely and overdue, *Bordered Writers* responds to the needs of a wide audience in the field of rhetoric/composition and beyond. The book is relevant to graduate faculty and writing program administrators whose primary responsibility is to prepare graduate students to teach writing to culturally diverse students. No doubt faculty who teach graduate seminars and practicum courses on language, culture, identity, and pedagogy will find refreshing takes on topics and lessons relevant to the scholars they are cultivating. Faculty in schools of education and administrators charged with addressing diversity by building or rebuilding existing programs will find the subject matter relevant as well. Finally, the book will appeal to students in advanced, undergraduate courses designed to examine the teaching of writing or the broader education of Latinx students as their numbers in university settings continue to increase. As the co-editors make clear in their introduction, “[b]ordered writers, in and outside Hispanic-Serving Institutions, have a voice that must be heard and should not be ignored” (2019, p. 10).

Endnotes

1. Land acknowledgement – Native life & Tribal Relations. (2020). Retrieved February 21, 2020, from <https://www.washington.edu/diversity/tribal-relations/>

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About the Author

Juan C. Guerra, Professor of English and Chair of American Ethnic Studies at the University of Washington, is co-editor of *Writing in Multicultural Settings* (1997) and author of *Close to Home: Oral and Literate Practices in a Transnational Mexican Community* (1998). His most recent book, *Language, Culture, Identity and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities* (2016), develops a set of rhetorical and discursive tools that

Juan C. Guerra

disenfranchised students can use to navigate and negotiate the pedagogical spaces they inhabit in writing classrooms and beyond in the course of becoming *citizens in the making* in a global society.

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