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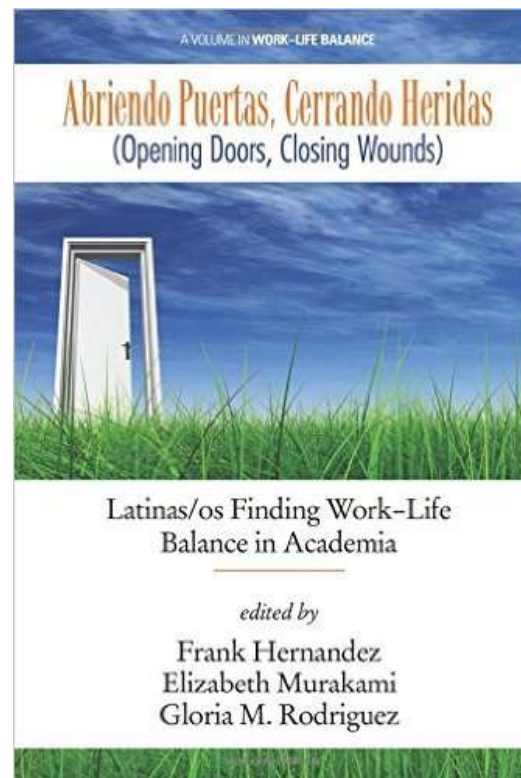
Hernandez, F., Murakami, E. & Rodriguez, G. M. (Eds.). (2015). *Abriendo puertas, cerrando heridas (Opening doors, closing wounds): Latinas/os finding work-life balance in academia*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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Latinx, persons of Latin American descent, are a group that is still tremendously underrepresented in higher education despite significant gains in the U.S. population overall. As a young demographic, Latinx are predicted to become an increasingly prominent population of students at all levels of schooling. With input from more than 40 contributors, *Abriendo Puertas, Cerrando Heridas (Opening Doors, Closing Wounds)* is a collection of essays from individuals, most of whom are faculty in schools of education across the United States that insightfully draws needed attention to the contributions, values, and struggles of Latinx in academia. These 24 chapters are grouped into three thematic categories: personal identity and ideologies; higher education structures; and building pedagogy and academic and social capital for Latina/o students. Collectively, they create a rich, tapestry-like text narrated by voices whose personal backgrounds, professional



specializations within the field of education, and unique personal-professional journeys are woven from commonality of experiences, ideals, and epistemologies.

The autobiographical writing style of *testimonios* effectively testifies about, objects to, and resists the oft suffocating nature of the ivory tower. *Testimonios* are politicized tales of personal experience that contain wisdom as well as sustain the mind and spirit. They are a form of resistance. The editors explain, these “counter-narratives . . . provide confessions and *consejos* (advice) . . . to provide educational institutions and individuals with organic healing, critical consciousness, and agency as a way to center and legitimize knowledge” (p. xxii). As Susana Hernández and Leslie D. Gonzales explain, the tales nurture and remind others they are not alone. *Testimonios* (testimonies) are often intimate and moving accounts, and the stories in this volume are no exception. Career-sustaining knowledge(s) and wisdoms surface from the authors’ reflections on their experiences.

Implicit and explicit critiques of cultural norms centered in racist, classist, capitalist, heteropatriarchal systems of higher education represent an overarching theme of the book. The text reflects a value system that emphasizes the significance of personal background and family history; maintaining family and community as well as *colegas* (colleagues), friends, and mentors in professional spaces; a need to resist social injustice that crystalizes with a sense of purpose or responsibility; cultivating a holistic sense of self; and the importance of non-dominant ways of knowing and knowledge.

As authors reflect on balancing work and life, caring for or having proximity to family surfaces as an important obligation and a critical source of strength for some academics while others reflect on the difficulty of being geographically distant from family members and wider community. The significance of family and its tremendous influence on formative years shines through in many *testimonios* – especially in the first section

of the book titled “Personal Identity and Ideologies.” The book makes it clear that Latinx families shape the life journeys of these academics in many ways, contributing key values such as working hard, being humble, and giving back. A powerful chapter about Hilario Lomeli’s journey from East Texas to graduate school in rural Pennsylvania mixes real and imagined conversations with people he has never met and loved ones who are far away. In a particularly moving vignette he addresses his mother: “I see the strength and resilience in our collective pain and struggle. You see momma, to go forward, I look back” (p. 222). Going hand-in-hand with the importance of family is an emphasis on maintaining and participating in community, which helps to sustain one’s sense of humanity. Contributors report doing this community-creation and community-maintenance work by mentoring students, working with on-campus colleagues, nurturing professional relationships from long distances, sharing one’s culture to create a sense of community, and working to give back to la raza. All are conceptualized as veritable responsibilities that are often rewarded through renewing and fortifying the spirit.

The twin themes of working for justice and social responsibility to pave the way for future generations also permeate the text. In the introduction to the second part of the book, “Work-Life Balance within Higher Education Structures,” editor Gloria M. Rodriguez summarizes that “adversity experienced by the authors inspired the commitments they carry about how to create more access, expand existing opportunities for academic careers, and generally foster a more inclusive, welcoming, and humane professional environment” (p. 100). Ideas about alignment, advocacy, resistance, responsibility, and purpose highlight the good born of bad, but also remind readers that the struggle to open doors for future generations continues unabated.

Care for self in a holistic sense emerges from this book and ties closely with

the idea of balance conveyed by the subtitle. The idea of appreciating many facets of our identities and working to improve or protect ourselves as whole beings arises from authors who reference family histories of diabetes, for example, as well as personal health problems like headaches, racial battle fatigue, and high stress levels. Wellness also encompasses oneness of spirit, body, and mind. Israel Aguilar eloquently sums up an important conceptual link with his assertions that embracing his sexuality and making himself physically healthier enabled him to be a more effective and insightful scholar. When the socio-political identity is under attack by systems of domination, the act of self-care can itself be a potent and important form of resistance. This framing enables us to see a holistic approach as a resistance to institutions that work to rob marginalized persons of their spirit, history, and culturally specific ways of knowing.

An example of critique of dominant ways of knowing comes from the chapter with Raymond V. Padilla's wise reflections on what he learned growing up as a migrant worker. He notes that validating knowledge depends upon language. Padilla explains that speaking Spanish helped him to understand two ways of knowing that are encapsulated by the verbs *saber* and *conocer*. He argues that *saber* reflects an English language way of knowing that is related to measuring and quantifying knowledge that he calls antidemocratic and particularly slanted against Latinx ways of knowing. Padilla explains *conocer* type knowing as "a more personal, interactive, and relational kind of knowing, a situated knowing that depends on personal experience...a knowing that is achieved in a relationship that is reciprocal between the knowing parties" (p. 52). Padilla highlights practical usefulness of dual epistemologies in Spanish language as a framework that enables pedagogic aims like teaching the whole student. Also, his argument asserts the deep-rooted worth in forms of knowledge that have been marginalized for lack of positivist character. With Padilla's

instructive thoughts on the relational aspects of knowledge as a foundational concept, any reading of *testimonios* takes on new depth and facilitates the cultural and institutional possibilities of change. Such an epistemological message is the best part of the text.

The weaknesses of the book are few, but include structure of thematic sections and absence of exploration of pan-ethnic and racial identities. The editors composed separate introductions to each of the three parts of the book, but these section divisions failed to resonate or prove memorable as conceptual distinguishers. Due to the overwhelming sense of (inter)connectivity produced by *testimonio* writing style, chapters from all sections were more connected along the themes delineated above than differentiated by section headings pronounced by the editors.

Perhaps the nature of a text centered on *testimonios* is that it will, for the most part, be introspective and reflective more than future-oriented or forward-looking. Yet, it would also have been useful to see further consideration of Pan-Latino identity in terms of how this concept may be useful for supporting, nurturing, and organizing Latinx in the academy in years to come. An idea which surfaces at least twice in the text, Pan-Latinx community is mentioned in both cases as a potential vehicle for solidarity and tool that enables building community while honoring differences. Conceptually, Pan-Latinxness may contain possibilities for transforming cultural and institutional aspects of higher education.

Another notable gap is the limited discussion of racial identity, which seems to have been traded for nuanced discussion of cultural aspects of Latinx ethnic identity. In most cases, biracial or Afro-Latinx identified contributors explicitly addressed race though many authors alluded to cultural identity as a proxy for ethno-racial otherness in predominantly White institutions and departments. A discussion of how non-Anglo identity plays out in higher education is neither

synonymous with, nor separate from, how non-Whiteness plays out in majoritarian institutions like academia. How racial otherness and whiteness operate in Latinx communities is not beyond the purview of strong *testimonios*, so I would have appreciated more explicit discussion of race in conjunction with ethnicity.

Though written primarily for a community of college-educated Latinx for whom the terrain of higher education may be an “unfamiliar promising space” (86), non-Latinx readers can certainly benefit from a close reading of the entire text. As a White, non-Hispanic woman who gained Spanish fluency during my early 20s, this text did not convey extraordinary parallels to my own educational journey. However, the effectiveness of *testimonios* at conveying experiences of Latinx in the academic realm is precisely the fact that they make intelligible what one may not have lived herself. Emerging first-generation scholars of various racial and ethnic backgrounds are groups likely to reap a sense of strength from tales about the values working-class families can embed in a person who goes on to succeed in academia. Moreover, the volume in its totality can serve as a useful tool for majoritarian members of


academic communities to better understand the experiences of their Latinx students and colleagues. Hence, this book can be valuable for any current and future academics, upper-level administrators, and student affairs professionals to better understand the experiences of Latinx coming through the educational pipeline.

Abriendo Puertas, Cerrando Heridas highlights important and potentially career-sustaining themes while dreaming about a better tomorrow. Because of the personal nature of testimonio writing style, this volume has the potential to provide Latinx readers with a version of precisely the type of community many contributors have found lacking during their own journeys through academe. The work carves out a space of “cultural confidence...discourse spaces...where identity and cultural wealth permeate and connections beyond academia are made” (p. 246). The proud and nuanced portrayal of Latinidad that emerges from this text reminds that even when not in close physical proximity, one can still have *comunidad* (community), from a group of thoughtful educational leaders and researchers who are able to supply a sense of collectivity and fellowship.

About the Reviewer

Elizabeth A. Daniele is currently a PhD Student in Sociology at Syracuse University and is pursuing a certificate in the Program in Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Her research interests include immigration and higher education. She is co-editor of *Student Involvement and Academic Outcomes: Implications for Diverse Student Populations* (Peter Lang, 2015). Liz also serves as Senior Associate Editor of *Annals of the Next Generation*, a refereed journal published by the Center for African American Research and Policy. She holds a master’s degree in higher education administration from the University of Rochester, and is an alumna of Smith College. Although not a native speaker, Liz loves to hear and speak Spanish.



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