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An introduction: Chicana/Latina feminista pláticas in educational research

Historically, pláticas have existed in Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x communities for generations. Yet, it is not until the late 1970s that we begin to see Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x scholars from various disciplines employ pláticas, not as a methodology, but as a way to get to know their participants before conducting research. Since that time, pláticas have been used and discussed within academia, primarily in three distinct ways: (1) as a “gateway” to the data but not considered as data itself, (2) as a culturally familiar practice expressed and utilized by Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x scholars and communities, and (3) by scholars who ground their use of pláticas in Chicana/Latina feminista frameworks and other frameworks used by Women of Color that view “kitchen table talk” as central to understanding their theorizations in the flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983). This special issue situates itself in this last strand and focuses on what a Chicana/Latina feminista (CLF) plática methodology entails.

In 2016, Fierros and Delgado Bernal’s (2016), *Vamos a Pláticar*, article helped change the conversation on the use of pláticas in research by shifting them from simple entryways or “small talk,” to a valid methodological approach. Since that publication, there has also been a clear increase in the number of dissertations/thesis and published articles that engage pláticas in the research process. When we first drafted the call for proposals in March 2021, we did a quick search on Proquest and found 234 manuscripts that used Chicana/Latina feminista pláticas; presently in February 2023, there are 604 manuscripts, nearly a three-fold increase. This shows the growing interest and commitment to the development of a pláticas methodology. As scholars who have utilized and contributed to this development, the growth in the use of pláticas nudged us to explore the many ways in which this methodology was being extended and theorized by scholars. For example, we noted how Gaxiola Serrano (2019) had conceptualized walking pláticas in her dissertation and how Rivera (2019) had paired pláticas with critical race frameworks to center the experiences of queer Chicana/Latina higher education leaders in her dissertation. They, and others, offer original directions for pláticas in the field of education. Our desire to further examine pláticas grounded in Chicana/Latina feminista frameworks stems from wanting to highlight how scholars utilize this methodology and articulate its connection to Women of Color and their theorizations of oppression and resistance tied to colonialism, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy.

After some discussion between the four of us and numerous inquiries from graduate student scholars interested in utilizing a pláticas methodology, we decided that a special issue would allow us to curate a space for scholars to continue theorizing and providing examples of the use of a pláticas methodology. In the Spring of 2021, our call was made public and more manuscripts than we could accept were submitted (over 70), all of them engaging pláticas in innovative ways. The final collection of articles we include in this special issue fills a critical gap in published research that addresses the structure, nuances, and messiness of Chicana/Latina feminist pláticas methodology. Together, the contributions to this special issue begin to answer at least three guiding questions: (1) what are the methodological ways that pláticas can be used in educational research and praxis? (2) what are the processes of “doing” pláticas? and

(3) how is solidarity work embedded into a pláticas methodology? Simultaneously, the contributions are methodological in nature. Methodology for people with marginalized identities is not just a way of doing research but also reflects our personal lived realities, our ways of being and moving about the world (Saavedra & Pérez, 2014; Smith, 2012). As such, our understanding of methodology is expansive—we understand that it intersects with praxis, with teaching, with consciousness building, as well as with our ontological beings tied to space and place.

The goal of this special issue is to underscore Chicana/Latina feminista approaches to a plática methodology in educational research. This is important considering the prevalence within academia to dismiss theoretical and methodological approaches that decenter whiteness and eurocentrism, particularly around notions of objectivity and neutrality in research. Thus, we have curated a space for scholars to theorize and provide examples of a Chicana/Latina feminista plática methodology for others to build from, as well as to continue challenging eurocentric epistemologies within research.

The first manuscript in the special issue written by Socorro Morales, Alma Itzé Flores, Tanya J. Gaxiola Serrano, and Dolores Delgado Bernal, describes some of the trajectory of Chicana/Latina feminista pláticas, arguing that pláticas informed by Chicana/Latina feminist sensibilities are a methodological disruption to traditional, eurocentric methodologies and conceptions of methodology. They argue that Chicana/Latina feminista pláticas engage the researchers' and collaborators' wholistic selves—body/mind/spirit (Lara, 2005)—in ways that directly speak back to white supremacist methodological approaches that intentionally demand researchers to be personally severed from their research. They offer implications for folks who choose to engage in feminista pláticas within research, particularly as it relates to positionality and other considerations.

The next three manuscripts deliberately engage with and interrogate notions of space and place where both intersect with Chicana/Latina feminist pláticas. Tanya J. Gaxiola Serrano's article builds on her previous (2019) introduction of walking pláticas. Her conceptualization of walking pláticas centers the Brown bodies of her college student research collaborators to better contextualize their lives within specific spaces including homes, schools, communities, institutions, and nation-states. In doing so, she outlines the two methods that inspired walking pláticas and offers four key elements of this methodology. Mayra Puente and Verónica N. Vélez propose a multimethod methodology for educational researchers who critically engage geographic lenses and tools, like geographic information systems (GIS), to interrogate issues of race, space, and educational (in)opportunity. Using a case study of the college (in)opportunities available to rural Latinx youth from California's San Joaquin Valley Puente and Vélez merge pláticas and GIS to illustrate the Chicana/Latina feminista GIS methodology of *platicando y mapeando*. This approach challenges relations of power embedded in the research process and honors students as co-cartographers of their educational and spatial realities. Ceci Lopez and Dolores Calderón intersect Indigenous cosmopolitics with pláticas as a means of exploring how pláticas can serve as a method of refusal for educational practice. In framing pláticas through a lens of Indigenous cosmopolitics, pláticas can work towards a praxis of refusal that resists sovereign state power and refuses recognition by the university. In this way, Lopez and Calderón highlight how their engagement with pláticas enact a method of refusal connected to home, place, and community.

The three subsequent articles, while methodological, more closely address the use of pláticas as a pedagogical tool. For example, introducing the importance of pláticas as pedagogy, Cindy Mata, a longtime K-12 educator, showcases a K-12 history project using family photographs aimed at keeping the memory alive through the use of pláticas among families and students. Noting the erasure around Salvadorian histories in California's K-12 curriculum, Mata walks us through the deliberate process of developing lesson plans aimed at disrupting curricular and communal silences in the Salvi community and moving towards healing. With *ternura* and *cariño*, students follow the traditions of *re(membering)* while centering their families, histories, and cherishable moments in their lives via pláticas, fotos, y recuerdos. Invoking a praxis of love

within the classroom, Sharim Hannegan-Martinez utilizes pláticas to explore conceptions of love developed in collaboration with high school youth of color. Recognizing the multiple forms of trauma that youth of color are exposed to on a daily basis, Hannegan-Martinez argues that pedagogies of love can serve as a way to heal from trauma, and thus merits further study, particularly within the realm of k-12. Hannegan-Martinez articulates three iterations of pláticas developed within her study: communal, peer, and individual. Highlighting how pláticas can work towards healing and love, Hannegan-Martinez argues that pláticas can serve both as a methodological and pedagogical praxis of love. Using critical learning sciences with a Chicana/Latina feminist sensibility, Sandra Zuñiga-Ruiz and Kris D. Gutiérrez examine how pláticas through their collective and social construction serve towards the co-construction of mathematical conocimiento. Through an empirically-informed vignette, Zuñiga-Ruiz and Gutiérrez show how feminista pláticas help organize participation in ways that make cultural knowledge a resource for future action towards equitable and justice-oriented math teaching and learning. Their article encourages us to reflect on the potential of feminista pláticas to reframe the recruitment, apprenticeship, and retention of Latinx mathematics maestras.

Two articles in this special issue make a significant departure from all the others by drawing from *jotería* scholarship to queer a pláticas methodology and unsettle heteronormativity and cis patriarchy. Describing the podcasting process as two queer Latinx, Angélica Becerra and Jack Cáraves, use pláticas to host a digital space, *Anzaldúing It*, to heal outside academia while centering queerness and consciousness-raising. Inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa, Becerra and Cáraves have authentic pláticas on the joys and difficulties of navigating the metaphysical and physical borders found along academia, race, gender, sexuality, etc. Drawing from Chicana/Latina feminisms, critical race theory, and *jotería* identity, the authors propose five contours to create digital *jotería* counterstories when navigating racialized, sexist, and cisheteronormative spaces. In contrast, Ángel Gonzalez, Roberto Orozco, and Sergio Gonzalez build on the original contours of feminista pláticas to theorize queer pláticas and conceptualize five new contours. They do this by drawing upon their respective empirical research projects with queer and trans-Latinx/a/o college student collaborators and on foundational ideas such as queer chisme and Anzaldúa's mundo zurdo and path of conocimiento. Collectively, these two articles make visible the lives and experiences of queer and trans peoples, while also addressing a substantial gap in the plática literature.

The idea of solidarity and coalition building are linked to *confianza*, *respeto*, reciprocity, and vulnerability which are foundational components of a plática methodology. And though all the articles incorporate these foundational components, Magali Campos and Yadira Valencia write as "sister-scholars" who utilize this bond to share their plática research processes. Their article is a series of Chicana/Latina feminist cartas to each other that allow the reader to learn about (1) the challenges they faced through the use of pláticas, (2) the lessons they learned in the process, and (3) the bridging of pláticas with other CLF methodologies. In an act of vulnerability and solidarity, they offer some clarity, excitement, and hesitations about the process of utilizing pláticas in one's research. Further examining how a plática methodology can inform a praxis of solidarity, Lynn Hampton and Sylvia Mendoza Aviña center their relationship and connection as contingent faculty working at a predominantly white institution. Specifically, their manuscript explores how pláticas viewed through the lens of decolonial feminista practices of *real talk* (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2018) aided their crafting of a praxis of solidarity amongst Black and Brown contingent faculty.

Collectively, all the articles leave the door open for scholars to decide if some version of a pláticas methodology aligns with their research in more culturally relevant ways and if the methodology might provide insights that other research methodologies do not. The scholarship in this special issue is cutting-edge, making significant contributions to the literature on decolonizing methodologies in education while simultaneously inviting others to expand and build upon the work.

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