ONE

Introduction

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Building with Our Hands depicts diverse aspects of the Chicana/Mexicana experience.[1] The essays reveal the collective importance of our work as women of color in the United States and express our shared experience in a society that has attempted to render us invisible. Historically, Chicana voices have not been chronicled, yet Chicanas have spoken out—around kitchen tables, in community and political organizations, at union meetings. Our voices have gone largely unnoticed and undocumented; in spite of the academic claims of value-free inquiry, they have not been deemed worthy of study. When they have been studied, stereotypes and distortions have prevailed.

This anthology evolved from our need to document and analyze the Chicana/Mexicana experience. Our scholarship reflects the intricate tapestry of our lives. To contextualize this tapestry, we have included in this introduction, and in our final chapter, interviews with contributors to the anthology and other key Chicana scholars.[2] We hope that our collective voices will make known the impulses that inspire Chicana scholars, as well as the power relationships—in both the academy and our communities at large—that influence our scholarly production. By providing such a forum, we offer our audience a glimpse into our milieu and our analysis of the Chicana experience. We believe this approach challenges and corrects the Eurocentric male bias of "detached," "value-free" inquiry, an underlying premise of traditional disciplines.

Rooted in the political climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s, our scholarship, like other currents of dissent, is a Chicana critique of cultural, political, and economic conditions in the United States. It is influenced by the tradition of advocacy scholarship, which challenges the claims of objectivity and links research to community concerns and social change. It is driven by a passion to place the Chicana, as speaking subject, at the center of intellectual discourse.

Although we were all trained in traditional disciplines, our intellectual enter-

prise compels us to stretch our disciplinary boundaries, discover new methodologies, and formulate new directions in theory building, in order to comprehend our complex position in a society stratified along lines of class, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Chicana academics work "many sides of the street," a situation imposed by the need to maintain our presence in our own disciplines, our historical roots in Chicano studies, our political interest in women's studies and feminist theory, and our own "protected" space.

CHICANA SCHOLARSHIP: HISTORICAL AND INTELLECTUAL ROOTS

The Chicano movement and the "second wave" of the women's movement, which emerged during the 1960s, called into question social and ideological patterns that justified systems of racial and gender inequality. Both movements used political action and ideological critiques as weapons in the struggle against oppression. These movements gave birth to Chicano studies and women's studies programs, which developed new conceptual frameworks to analyze Chicanos and women. In theory, the particular circumstances of Chicanas should have found expression in Chicano and feminist discourses, but they did not. The Chicano movement and Chicano studies paradigms have typically analyzed race/ethnic and class domination, neglecting a gender critique. Women's studies and feminist theory have challenged the system of male domination and female subordination, ignoring race/ethnic and class contradictions. Chicana activism and discourse of the late 1960s and early 1970s characteristically reverberate with frustration at the politics and theoretical formulations of these movements, because they denied, subsumed, or neglected the "triple-oppression" status of Chicanas. Although Chicanas sought numerous ways to express their concerns, their discourse was confined primarily to alternative publications within the Chicano movement.[3] When asked to discuss their perceptions of the relationship of Chicana scholarship to Chicano studies and women's studies, our contributors gave voice to the tensions and contradictions characteristic of earlier Chicana positions.

Angie Chabram Dernersesian: Mainstream feminists, many of whom do not know this newly formulated Chicana who has yet to make her way into mainline academia, are now being obliged to think about their own privilege in terms of access to cultural production. Mainstream feminists are being invited by Chicana scholars to reflect on their own convergence with male hegemonic practices that omit minority scholars (in this case women of color) or silence them as speaking subjects in theoretical discourses of race, class, and gender oppression. In their critiques of Chicano scholarship, Chicana scholars have successfully deconstructed Chicano movement discourses that privilege the Chicano male subject and draw on male cultural symbols (Ché, Pancho Villa, brave Aztec figures on sexy calendars) as illustrations of group resistance to domination. By pointing out that Chicano cultural production is replete with male figures—El Pachuco, El

Vato Loco, the political Chicano, the existential Chicano, the indigenous Chicano, the metaphysical Chicano, and their authoritarian fathers, all of whom constitute the essence of Chicanismo for their producers—Chicanas have also brought to light the uncomfortable convergence between alternative nationalist and mainstream hegemonic discourses of culture, which foreground patriarchy. Ultimately, the contribution of Chicana scholarship is that it has begun to populate Chicana/o cultural production with positive, viable images of Chicanas. Chicanas are not only questioning and restructuring feminist and nationalist discourses but also infusing largely unexplored class themes with new forms of identity that have until now been absent from Chicano/a cultural production.

Antonia Castañeda: It's a question of who has power in the society and then how that power is used. At this point, Anglo women and Chicano men out of Chicano studies have more power than Chicanas do, and that's why I keep coming back to political issues. That's what it boils down to: Where does the power lie? Who has it? How is it being used? I don't have in my experience much of a basis for trusting the institutions of society and the people who run those institutions. At this point in women's studies, it's Anglo women; and in Chicano studies, it's Chicano men. I'm not sure that they have the best interest of Chicanas in mind, because I don't think that they have thought about it; or if they have, their attitude has been unfortunately more "How do we control and direct?" than "How do we empower?" It's not that I'm expecting Anglo women or Chicano men to empower me. I'm just expecting them not to be obstacles, and unfortunately I have found that in many respects they either are obstacles or I'm in the position of having to teach them, and that can be very problematic.

Vicki Ruiz: In Chicano scholarship, Chicanas are invisible; and in women's studies, Chicanas are exotic—the "other" of the "other." Chafing against the matrices of invisibility and mystery, Chicana scholars have created their own terrain, both personally and professionally. I believe that Chicana academics share a deeply embedded commitment to their communities, to the women whose voices take center stage in our research. They are our friends, not our informants. We feel a sense of responsibility that exceeds the ethical standards of our disciplines; we care for those who entrust us with their secrets. Whether we meet someone in person or through scraps of physical evidence—for example, diary or testament—we feel that bond of trust.

Norma Alarcón: I think that in the 1980s there have been signs that women's studies programs want to incorporate the literature of women of color; they even want to hire women of color, although they continually run into problems, because sometimes they may find that the work of women of color is too combative, in which case they may say that they are looking for someone more collegial. Thus, the plan to hire women of color is fraught with problems, many of them regarding the politics of feminism itself. Such politics often pivot on theoretical questions and problems. Women's studies programs have been producing successive theories of "correct" women's studies since the 1970s, and as they successively

theorize themselves, they do not want to have that construction displaced by the positions of women of color. Ultimately, it is not going to be a curricular problem, because most women's studies programs have demonstrated, especially in the late 1980s, that they are willing to include your article, your book, your novel, your poem, whatever, in their syllabus. What they do not want disrupted are the theoretical underpinnings of that syllabus. So they appropriate the work without retheorizing the syllabus, and I think that is going to be the major battle. You can see that there are parallels here with the Chicano studies project, whereby the theory underpinning the syllabus elaborated by male scholars around male topics is going to be displaced. Basically, we are speaking about an epistemological overhaul. As long as neither group is willing to rethink all of this, we are in a position where we have to keep on doing what we are doing; and, like the women of color at the National Women's Studies Association, we may have to opt for our own organizations.[4]

CONTEMPORARY DIMENSIONS: THE EMERGENCE OF CHICANA STUDIES

Marginalized within traditional disciplines, Chicano studies, and women's studies, Chicana scholars, like other women of color, created alternative avenues, "safe spaces" to develop intellectually and continue the trajectory of political dissent. The creation of such spaces was forged by institutional constraints and fueled by the emergence of a small but critical mass of Chicanas within the academy who persisted in posing "Chicana" questions.

Because of their historic "home" in Chicano studies, Chicana academics have tended to focus political energy within Chicano studies programs and the National Association for Chicano Studies (NACS). At the University of California, Berkeley, for example, several women graduate students and one assistant professor from Chicano studies organized Mujeres en Marcha in opposition to male domination within Chicano studies and NACS. At the NACS conference in Tempe, Arizona, in 1982, they presented a panel on sexual politics.[5] The following year, at the NACS conference in Ypsilanti, Michigan, about a dozen women met and formed the Chicana Caucus, demanding that the next conference focus on gender and proposing "Voces de la Mujer" as the conference theme.[6] In this way, discussion of gender politics was institutionalized at NACS through the Chicana Caucus and the yearly plenary.

The decade of the 1980s demarcates the emergence of Chicana studies. At the organizational level, a separate "safe space" was institutionalized through Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) in 1983. In 1985, MALCS initiated its annual Chicana/Latina Summer Research Institutes. The Chicana faculty and graduate students who founded MALCS as a support and advocacy

group and a forum for sharing research interests declared: "We are the daughters of Chicano working-class families involved in higher education. . . . We are particularly concerned with the conditions women face at work, in and out of the home. We continue our mothers' struggle for social and economic justice."[7] Drawing from a tradition of political struggle, MALCS is dedicated to the documentation, analysis, and interpretation of the Chicana/Latina experience in the United States.

Although a critical mass of Chicana scholars were engaged in gender analysis in the 1980s, it is premature to attempt to categorize their scholarly production. We propose that the vitality in Chicana scholarship springs from its insistence on developing new categories of analysis that reshape and expand established intellectual boundaries. For the first time in the short history of Chicano/a scholarship (about two decades), a visible, viable group of Chicana academics confront the complex intersection of class, race/ethnicity, and gender/sexuality in their scholarship.

In the following paragraphs, Chicana scholars discuss the significant contributions of Chicana studies over the past ten years.

Elisa Facio: I think that Chicana scholarship, its development and establishment, is a struggle for representation and voice in the realm of knowledge. So obviously I would want to see this knowledge contribute to change, not only in communities but in the larger society. But, like most scholarship, ours is not developed in a vacuum. Its most important contribution has been the integration of a gender analysis of the Chicana experience. The methods of investigation of Chicana lives, both past and present, are being seriously questioned, challenged, and tested. And they continue to be part of a larger academic process in building theory and seeking new methodological approaches. Chicana scholarship has not only contributed to the building of knowledge about the Chicana experience but has also helped Chicanas develop as scholars.

Deena González: I think Chicana studies is expanding the categories that it uses, that it relies on. I don't feel any longer that I'm "just" a historian. I'm not so locked into the methodologies and the ways of history. I've found, for example, that literary criticism has helped my work enormously, that it has made me think in different ways. I think Chicana studies is moving to develop its own practices, pedagogies, methods, and treatments in a more public way. I wouldn't divide Chicana scholarship into disciplines, because I don't think we have an equal distribution across disciplines. But I certainly think we have carved out a subfield within major fields, whether those are Chicano studies, history, or literature. We have a presence, a beginning interest and visibility, and that's different. The final thing that I think is important in all this, probably the most important, is our focus on and continuing interest in sexual politics. Many of us never let that die out. In my own work, I never let go of the fact that on some primary level, sex and sexuality, sexual politics, are dimensions that are missing in past analyses of

women's lives. I'd say that in the last ten years these are some of the key things that Chicana studies has contributed.

Emma Pérez: As a historian, I'm really seduced by theory, and I know that theories follow practice—what people do in their daily lives. Chicana women are exposing the lack of harmony in gender relationships by focusing on conflict in the family and in women's political and economic positions.

Rosa Linda Fregoso: Chicana scholars are applying available theories to new objects of study; the consequences include revision and modification of previous theoretical frameworks. Chicana scholars insist on the centrality of theorizing about all forms of domination. This is one of the ways that previous theoretical assumptions of many of these academic disciplines are undergoing transformation.

Denise Segura: I think that Chicana scholarship offers critical perspectives on the way society is structured hierarchically. Chicana scholarship confronts a myriad of critical issues: poverty, education, employment, institutional racism, sexism, and classism. I'd say there are several types of Chicana scholarship. One type tries to connect research on Chicanas to mainstream frameworks in the respective fields; another type tries to develop an understanding of the status and oppression of Chicanas, using feminist frameworks as points of departure; another type, connected to postmodernist frameworks, tries to get away from all mainstream thought. It begins with Chicanas as a point of departure and builds from there an understanding of their uniqueness as well as their commonalities with other oppressed peoples in this society.

In sum, Chicana scholarship challenges analytical frameworks that dichotomize the multiple sources of Chicana oppression; at the same time, it posits alternative frameworks grounded in the Chicana experience. Although the field does not yet offer fully developed, coherent new frameworks, it is beginning to reconstruct the often fragmented or incomplete analysis in traditional disciplines, Chicano studies, and feminist theory. Chicana studies places at center the Chicana subject. Thus, its analytical underpinnings are grounded in the multiple sources of Chicana subjectivity. As the contributors to this anthology illustrate, Chicana scholarship draws from diverse theoretical traditions and methodological interventions, at the same time forging into new intellectual terrains.

The contributions to this anthology span several decades and stretch the analytical frameworks usually employed by mainstream scholars. For example, analysis of colonialism (both Spanish and Anglo conquest of what is commonly referred to as the Southwest) has been dominated by economic and racial/ethnic frameworks. Chicana scholars expand our intellectual horizons by incorporating sex/gender domination and resistance within a colonial dialectic. Similarly, immigration—generally viewed through male immigrant lenses—takes on new contours when analyzed through Chicana feminist frameworks. Analyses of cultural practices and cultural reproduction are contested and reshaped when Chicana experiences—the forces that Chicanas contend with in their daily lives—are made a part of these analyses.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

I. Acts of Domination / Acts of Resistance

Themes of political subordination, sexual exploitation, and ideological domination in sex/gender politics provide the conceptual framework in Part One of this book. Against this backdrop, the contributions in this section analyze diverse manifestations of power relations and opposition to domination.

The first essay, Antonia Castañeda's "Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California," focuses on the manner in which sex/gender informed the politics and policies shaped by social relations of domination/subordination during the eighteenth century. Highlighting the sexual assault on Amerindian women, Castañeda points out that the brutality they experienced was not unique to the Spanish Conquest; indeed, sexual violence is generally considered legitimate in the context of war and conquest. Although the political and religious authorities recognized that assaults on Amerindian women severely obstructed the Spanish crown's objective of missionization, they were unsuccessful in curtailing such attacks. By linking domination based on race with domination based on sex/gender, Castañeda illuminates the relationship between sexual violence, racial ideology, and conquest.

Angie Chabram Dernersesian's "And, Yes . . . The Earth Did Part: On the Splitting of Chicana/o Subjectivity" explores the development of Chicana subjectivity through an analysis of cultural production. Moving away from a subjectivity grounded in the Chicano movement's nationalist discourse, Chicanas' cultural production deconstructs the hegemonic singular Chicano (male), challenging his claim to privilege and power. Furthermore, Chicanas contest the Chicano movement's limited codification of the female subject within the confines of "La Familia." Through various cultural media, they offer instead Chicana representations engaged in a struggle against class, race/ethnicity, and gender/sexuality oppression.

Emma Pérez's essay, "Speaking from the Margin: Uninvited Discourse on Sexuality and Power," analyzes Octavio Paz's use of the discourse of the Oedipal-conquest triangle to decode social-sexual-racial hierarchies and Chicana oppression within a historical context. Using Luis Valdez's rendition of the Delgadina *corrido,* Pérez also illuminates the cycle of destructive dependence through an investigation of the Electra complex. Female subordination can be combated, Pérez concludes, through a dialectical process that challenges oppressive social constructs of race/ethnicity and gender/sexuality.

II. Cultural Representations / Cultural Presentations

Fragmented cultural representations of Mexican-origin women are challenged on the basis of the realities of their daily lives. The four chapters in this section

document issues of accommodation and rebellion within different historical periods and suggest alternative interpretations of these women's behavior.

In "La Tules of Image and Reality: Euro-American Attitudes and Legend Formation on a Spanish-Mexican Frontier," Deena González discusses doña Gertrudis Barceló, an ingenious New Mexican businesswoman who profitably adapted to Euro-American colonizers. Chafing against prescribed Euro-American views of "proper" female roles, La Tules established a niche in a transitional society. Rather than merely describing a legendary figure, González sets Barceló within the larger framework of colonization and adaptation of New Mexicans. To Euro-American colonizers, La Tules embodied prevailing stereotypes of Mexicans as smoking, gambling, and dancing degenerates. To the people of Santa Fé, she represented a woman who successfully accommodated to colonization, but on her terms.

Angelina Veyna discusses the lives of ordinary women of Spanish-Mexican origin during the colonial period. In her article, "It Is My Last Wish That . . .": A Look at Colonial Nueva Mexicanas through Their Testaments," using primary sources from the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, Veyna focuses on the wills and estate documents of twelve women from northern New Mexico. By reviewing the material goods that women owned and the way they distributed their possessions, she interprets their daily activities and interests and provides a glimpse into family interactions. These documents also allow her an initial interpretation of the dynamic role women played within New Mexican society during this period.

In " 'Star Struck': Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican American Woman, 1920–1950," Vicki Ruiz discusses agents of acculturation that influenced Mexican American women's coming of age in this generation. Focusing on such issues as education, intergenerational conflict, the lure of Hollywood stardom, advertising, and consumerism, Ruiz illuminates conflicting currents in the acculturation of Chicanas in California. On the one hand, Hollywood films, consumerism championed through advertising, and acculturation promoted by the educational system framed illusions of conformity to the American dream. Yet the daily reality of racial prejudice, restricted employment, and parental control thwarted upward mobility. Faced with these contradictions, young Mexican American women navigated a precarious path between acculturation and cultural retention.

In "The Mother Motif in *La Bamba* and *Boulevard Nights,*" Rosa Linda Fregoso deconstructs male cultural narratives by analyzing Hollywood representations of "La Madre" (mother). Both films, one directed and produced by a Chicano, the other by a non-Chicano, center on the mother motif vis-à-vis the "good" son and the "bad" son. Thus, the mother is not a subject but an embodiment of dominant cultural patterns that at the same time idealize and condemn mothers. Fregoso analyzes Oedipal themes of seduction and retribution central to both films. Using feminist lenses, she reveals the patriarchal text embedded in the cultural imaging of Chicanas through both films.

III. Contested Domains: Economy and Family

In this section, women's paid and unpaid labor is examined through a consideration of gender strategies in migration, health practices, and the division of household labor. By juxtaposing the costs and benefits incurred by the participation of Mexicanas and Chicanas in the labor force, the authors critically assess the effects of that participation.

In "Gender, Class, and Households: Migration Patterns in Aguascalientes, Mexico," María de los Angeles Crummett shows that only in the context of a class analysis does the household become a useful tool in examining the uneven impact of migration on gender. Using a case study of migrants from Aguascalientes, Mexico, she forcefully argues that differing patterns of migration by class and gender are critically linked to the household's economic standing in the agrarian structure and to internal demographic features. Among commercial, subsistence, and landless households, the bulk of the migrants are located in the subsistence class. Additionally, women from this class have higher migration rates, greater involvement in household agricultural tasks traditionally assumed by men, and greater unpaid labor in the home. Thus, Crummett elucidates how class status affects migration and women's involvement in wage labor, agricultural production, and social reproduction of household members.

In "Hard Choices and Changing Roles among Mexican Migrant *Campesinas,*" Adela de la Torre examines maternal behavioral changes in infant-feeding practices, migration, and rural employment in California, together with changes in the household division of labor of these migrants. Her essay suggests that the consequences to Mexican women of migration to the California fields may not be completely positive. From her survey of agricultural migrant workers in selected California labor camps and rural clinics, she concludes that traditional infant-feeding practices, such as breast feeding, are limited by these women's seasonal employment. In addition, the increased paid employment in agriculture is not offset by greater male participation in the division of household chores.

Beatríz M. Pesquera assesses the complex dynamics in the division of household labor by focusing on the relationship between Chicana workers' ideological position, gender strategies, and the division of household labor. " 'In the Beginning He Wouldn't Even Lift a Spoon': The Division of Household Labor" delineates differences across occupational categories. Pesquera's data suggest that income differentials among couples and women's employment demands shed light on ideological and behavioral differences among the informants in her sample. Furthermore, she elucidates the manner in which the division of household labor by gender is altered or reproduced.

IV. Social Reproduction: Institutional and "Uninstitutional" Lives

Employing a case study analysis, the last two essays illustrate the tension between formal and informal institutions and social reproduction. These essays are framed

within a social reproduction conceptual model. This model analyzes the process whereby institutional practices reinforce existing structures of inequality inherent in the capitalist system. For example, the educational system—through curriculum, tracking of students, and allocation of resources—codifies existing class and race/ethnic relations.

Denise Segura's "Slipping through the Cracks: Dilemmas in Chicana Education" describes the educational experiences of a select sample of Chicana women. She concludes that Chicanas often are unsuccessful in the educational system because of insensitivity, indifferent instruction, and the lack of strong support in the schools. Her findings refute beliefs that Mexican-origin families are not motivated to pursue educational opportunities. Segura emphasizes that Chicanas "slip through the cracks" primarily because of forces in the educational institution rather than as a result of parental educational neglect.

This section fittingly concludes with Elisa Facio's "Gender and the Life Course: A Case Study of Chicana Elderly," which portrays social interaction in a senior center. As in other phases of the human life cycle, the search for self-esteem is an important feature of the aging process. Traditional Chicano family structures, in which the elderly play an important role, are not readily available to many of the center's participants. Through an analysis of social life in the center, Facio illustrates how notions of self-worth linked to women's domestic sphere are reproduced. She also notes, however, that the Chicanas in her study retained a measure of control over their lives, which enhanced their self-esteem.

NOTES

1. The ethnic label *Chicana* refers to women of Mexican descent residing in the United States. *Mexicana* specifically refers to Mexican immigrant women. See "A Note on Ethnic Labels," p. xiii above.

2. In addition to the contributors to this anthology, we interviewed Norma Alarcón, Assistant Professor, Chicano Studies Program, University of California, Berkeley, because she provided valuable editorial comments on the manuscript and has made important contributions to publishing Chicana/Latina scholarship through Third Woman Press. Adaljisa Sosa Riddell (whose interview appears in our concluding chapter) has been a leading force in the development of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) and directed the Chicano Studies Program at Davis, which for three years sponsored the Chicana/Latina Summer Institute. Because of their contributions to the development of Chicano studies, we wanted to include their voices.

3. For a detailed analysis of Chicana feminist writings of this period, see Alma Garcia, "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970–1980," *Gender and Society* 3 (June 1989): 217–238; and D. Segura and B. Pesquera, "Beyond Indifference and Antipathy: The Chicana Movement and Chicana Feminist Discourse," *Aztlan* 2 (Fall 1988–90): 69–92.

4. At the 1990 meeting of the National Women's Studies Association, the Women of

Color Caucus voted to split from the organization and develop an organization with a focus on women of color in the United States and internationally.

5. The conference panel and discussion was prepared by Teresa Córdova and published under Mujeres en Marcha, *Chicanas in the 80's: Unsettled Issues* (Berkeley: Chicano Studies Library Publications Unit, University of California, 1983).

6. For proceedings from the conference, see Teresa Córdova et al., eds., *Chicana Voices: Intersections of Class, Race, and Gender* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas, 1986).

7. Adaljisa Sosa Riddell, ed., *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social, Noticiera de M.A.L.C.S.* (Davis: University of California Chicano Studies Program, 1983), p. 3.