

## Nuestros Testimonios: A Plática on the Intersection of Latina Identity and Critical Heritage Language Teaching and Research

This panel brings together five Latina Spanish heritage language (SHL) educators and scholars to center our identities as fundamental to our roles as researchers and teachers in the field of Spanish as a heritage language. Drawing from Chicana feminist epistemologies (Delgado-Bernal, 1998), specifically *testimonio* (Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, Flores Carmona, 2012), and *plática* (Fierros and Bernal, 2016), we assert that our Latina identities, histories, and positionalities are central to Spanish as a heritage language's past and present. In this panel we engage in plática as a practice to share the testimonios of our lived language experiences, the importance of place, and our journeys to critical consciousnesses in academia. We highlight plática as a safe space of co-created knowledge, a tool for survival for Latinas in academe, and as a space where we have healed together. This panel centers our Latina voices in a context of collective *corazón y cultura*. Anzaldúa states that to survive in the Borderlands, "you must live sin fronteras, be a crossroads," (p. 217). Our panel's plática interrogates this crossroads and the complex convergence of identities present in our lived language experiences as Latina SHL scholars and educators.

Our first panelist shares her journey from the Arizona-Sonora borderlands and the ways in which critical language awareness transformed her language experience as a heritage learner turned instructor, as well as her current research regarding SHL instructors and administrator identities. Our second panelist highlights the transformative role of ethnic studies and Chicana feminist methodologies in her path from Chicago heritage language learner to Spanish heritage language professor. Our third panelist reflects on her Midwest and Southwest language experiences as a Latina heritage language student, instructor, and researcher. Our fourth panelist addresses her identity as a Latina from Brazil and the importance of not only understanding similarities across Latinxs in Latin America and the U.S., but also (and most importantly) in acknowledging their differences and how crucial this understanding is for being an ally in the teaching of SHL from a critical perspective. Our last panelist reflects on her identity as Nuevomexicana Chicana SHL learner, SHL program director, and professor in a Spanish department at a Hispanic Serving Institution in order to stake a claim to Latina/o/x language experiences in Spanish departments and underscore the importance of Latina/o/x heritage learners in the role of SHL program director.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. (1987). *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 68(4), 555-582.

Delgado Bernal, D, Burciaga, R., and Flores Carmona, J. (2012). "Chicana/Latina Testimonios: Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political." *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), p. 363-372.

Fierros, C. O., & Bernal, D. D. (2016). Vamos a Platicar: The Contours of Pláticas as Chicana/Latina Feminist Methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 15(2), 98–121.