

## BOOK REVIEW

MARY BUCHOLTZ, DOLORES INÉS CASILLAS, AND JIN SOOK LEE (eds.). *Feeling It: Language, Race, and Affect in Latinx Youth Learning*. New York: Routledge. 2018. vii + 277 pp. Pb (9781138296800) \$39.95.

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This review begins where the book ends – with remarks on the significance of *Feeling It: Language, Race and Affect in Latinx Youth Learning* in the present political moment. As the editors, Mary Bucholtz, Dolores Inés Casillas, and Jin Sook Lee, explain in the first line of the concluding chapter: ‘Since we began the collaboration that was the starting point for this book back in 2013, much has changed in our university, the state of California, the nation and the world’ (p. 255). As a Latina professor living and teaching in the United States of America (U.S.A.), where the studies collected in this volume were conducted, my experience of *Feeling It* has similarly been in flux. As the ‘Trump regime makes explicit and unmistakable the longstanding white conservative effects of racial hatred, fear, and domination’ (p. 255), the chapters in this book become only more compelling. What remains constant in this moment – as we experience the dehumanizing impacts of the ongoing crisis arising out of white supremacy in the U.S.A. – is that teachers play a unique role in engaging children and youth in making sense of their society and their role within it. As James Baldwin put it in his 1963 essay ‘A talk to teachers’: ‘So any citizen of this country who figures himself (sic) as responsible – and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people – must be prepared to “go for broke” ‘ (p. 678). *Feeling It* provides a three-dimensional view of the School Kids Investigating Language in Life and Society (SKILLS) program housed at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where participants truly give their all to the joint enterprise of critical pedagogy and social change.

But how can teachers ‘go for broke’ when they are too scared to speak out? Young people across the U.S.A. are experiencing ever more extreme forms of violence and discrimination – civilian and police killings of black youth, the detention of immigrant children and families in cages along the border, presidential orders instituting a travel ban on majority-Muslim countries and repealing temporary protective status leading to indefinite family separations, mass shootings in schools and communities. Meanwhile, teachers have become more

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fearful of broaching these important events in their classroom for fear of retribution in a highly polarized and punitive political context (Costello 2016). When educators and researchers stay silent in the face of these realities, they become complicit in the everyday ways in which white supremacy and patriarchy are being upheld and defended through schooling practices across this nation (O'Connor and Mangual Figueroa 2017). Against this charged backdrop, *Feeling It* offers close accounts of teaching and learning grounded in face-to-face interaction and rooted in three principles of 'sociolinguistic justice, linguistic and cultural sustenance, and accompaniment' (p. 9) that call on all SKILLS members to challenge the status quo.

*Feeling It* can be read in at least two ways. First, it can serve as a model of curricular and pedagogical approaches for fostering critical thinking about language in secondary and higher education contexts. Second, it offers us empirical, qualitative evidence of the ways in which raciolinguistic ideologies circulate in educational settings. Raciolinguistic ideologies are socially-constructed, institutionally-sanctioned beliefs about language and race, rooted in histories of colonization and slavery during which white European ways of being and speaking were valorized and minoritized people and practices were marked as deviant (Flores and Rosa 2015). As this book shows, these ideologies pervade our everyday lives and educational practices as they are contested, renegotiated, and reified by students and teachers during classroom interactions. As the title suggests, this isn't a book premised on positivist notions of a social science achieved through claims of researcher objectivity or neutrality. To the contrary, each of the chapters was researched and written by 'contributors...at the beginning of their scholarly careers' and was written through a collective writing process in which the authors were:

reflecting constructively and critically on their relationship between their own and other's embodied subjectivities. Inscribed in these chapters is the dual affect of pain and hope that accompanies the uncertain processes of creation, discover, and struggle – processes that are inherent to meaningful research and meaningful teaching and learning alike (p. 257).

The foregrounding of affect during difficult conversations about race, language, and power is a through line among the chapters in this volume. Collectively and individually, the chapters offer important lessons about the enduring challenges of talking about race and power in this country and underscore the exigency of pursuing these discussions despite the painful histories and unfolding traumas that are stirred up when we do.

The book is organized into three thematic sections that provide rich insights into the program. Part 1 focuses on the graduate students and professors who design and facilitate the SKILLS meetings with the high school student-researchers. This section sets the tone for the self-reflection and critical perspectives that we encounter throughout the book. Chapter 1 theorizes key terms that are empirically examined in situ within the SKILLS program in subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 presents data from a graduate seminar taught by the volume editors: this chapter portrays the challenges involved in creating interracial dialogue when graduate

students struggled to express and acknowledge one another's emotions during discussions about the relationship between histories of colonization and the possibilities for contemporary pedagogy. Chapter 3 describes the language ideologies of the teaching fellows in the SKILLS program, several of whom we meet later in the book as scholarly contributors to the volume, and whose beliefs about home, family, power, and political agency shape their personal and scholarly decisions about how to use and study language. Chapter 4 chronicles some of the challenges faced when implementing the SKILLS program in educational settings where young students' expectations were at odds with the teaching fellows' goals for participation. The chapters toggle between different degrees of specificity: ranging from identifying interlocutors by name only, to charting out participants' language and racial identities, to describing how the participants' raciolinguistic identities shaped their interactions in the program. These different perspectives implicitly evoke enduring issues in the field of educational anthropology regarding the ethics of representation in our work. How much ethnographic evidence is needed to draw rich, situated conclusions about discourse and its impact? How is the researchers' positionality relevant to their data collection, analysis, and writing? I find that the frankness about the immediate context in *Feeling It* adds texture and insight, lending credibility to the scholarship rather than undermining its scientificity.

Part 2 tracks the language ideologies of SKILLS participants as they were made visible to the contributing authors throughout their time in the program. The first two chapters in this section examine the ideologies of white monolingual SKILLS members: Chapter 5 presents interviews with white teachers of predominantly Latinx students, illustrating the ways in which so-called objective terms like *appropriateness* and *formality* are actually laden with deficit perceptions of non-standard varieties of English linked to race and class. Chapter 6 examines the ways in which white high school students in a mixed-race classroom employ laughter as a means for avoiding critical self-reflection on language and power. Chapter 7 centers the voices of non-white Latino SKILLS members, focusing on how Latino students assert agency in moments of raciolinguistic profiling in order to redirect interactions in public spaces away from stereotypic views of Spanish and Spanish speakers. Chapter 8 explores how parents and other elders may maintain ideologies that privilege notions of separate, grammatically-bounded codes and discard the dynamic translanguaging processes of younger community members. Here we see the tensions that can arise when Latinx students begin to interrogate the language ideologies into which they were socialized. Educators, teacher educators, and classroom researchers will appreciate the close look at curriculum that this section presents; it will hopefully prompt us to imagine how we might take up this work in our own teaching contexts.

Part 3 centers Latinx youth words and writing and braids their histories, their affective experiences, and their interactions in powerful ways. By starting from the perspective of pedagogy – the texts used, the questions posed, the teachers' own testimonies – and then turning to a close look at the youth's production of their own writing and speech, we are able to gain valuable insights into students' lives inside and outside of school. Part 3 chronicles the ways in which students take up the

academic concepts presented in SKILLS – those of translanguaging, language policy, language brokering, translation, and communities of practice – in their own voices and on their own terms. These four chapters help us to integrate theory and practice and move beyond the decades-old home/school divide in educational research by making visible how Latinx students reconcile the various competing domains of value in their everyday lives. In so doing, these chapters contribute to enduring conversations taking place in educational research, including: how to adopt a funds of knowledge approach that enlists educators in developing deep relationships with families and children that can inform classroom teaching and learning (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005), when and how we can make methodological and conceptual changes resulting in humanizing research practices and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris and Alim 2014; Paris and Winn 2014), and how our work can further anthropological linguistics (Zentella 1997) and sociolinguistic justice (present volume). Chapters 9 through 12 demonstrate how Latinx youth transcend nation-state boundaries, racial classification, and language codes to make new meaning and open up new interactional and intellectual possibilities for us all. The authors present visual and textual evidence of students' voices, the exigency with which they speak and feel, and the hopes they outline for their and our future, leaves the reader with fresh outrage and fresh inspiration: outrage at how these young people are often treated, coupled with inspiration stemming from their steadfast openness before the world. While there is an explicit discussion of power here, the institutions that uphold and reproduce that power are less visible to the reader. I could imagine a sequel to this volume in which scholars and young people work collaboratively to analyze those immigration policies, schooling practices, and interactional dynamics that reproduce inequality. The present volume and others that issue from it have the potential to move us closer toward building social movements for change led by young people with our support.

The editors of *Feeling It* close the book with a rereading of the volume through the lens of affect and, in so doing, they exemplify the volume's broader argument that the personal, political, and professional dimensions of a person's experiences are interwoven during everyday interactions. This is especially true for the SKILLS program participants for whom language and culture are, by design, both the topic of discussion and the means for producing shared meaning across racial and linguistic difference. And, taking a page out of the earlier chapters, they each present an autobiographical account of their relationship to this work – referencing their own linguistic and racial identities and bearing their own emotional responses to this longitudinal engagement in SKILLS. Reading these thoughtful closing accounts, I was reminded of anthropologist Ruth Behar's note on autobiography and affect in ethnography: 'The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake' (1996: 14). The authors in this volume do take us to new places of possibility as SKILLS program participants make visible the messiness that can ensue during cross-cultural and inter-racial dialogue. Moreover, they provide us with the tools to enact those new and needed conversations through the protocols and appendices contained within

the pages of this book as well as in the online archive of the SKILLS website. Readers in various roles – primary and secondary school teachers, undergraduate and graduate students, and professors within the related disciplines of education, anthropology, and ethnic studies – living across the globe and experiencing new forms of sociality borne out of globalization and transnationalism will benefit from these poignant, multi-perspectival examples of going for broke.

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