

Stilling the Frenzy of the Visible and the Political
Slow Encounters with Chicana/o Photo Books of the 1970s

In this talk, I examine three children's photo books from the 1970s that center on Chicano and Chicana subjects: Joe Molnar's *Graciela: A Mexican-American Girl Tells Her Story* (1972), Ruben Sandoval and David Strick's *Games, Games, Games/Juegos, Juegos, Juegos* (1977), and Elia Robledo Durán, Débora Ana Rodríguez, and Jonás Robledo's *Joaquín, niño de Aztlán* (1972). I contend that the form and content of these texts enable slower textual encounters, which is to say they enable slower reading, thinking, and feeling experiences. The slowdown that these texts achieve is critical amidst what I am calling the frenzy of the visible and the political, both in the 1970s and in our present day.

I begin by situating these texts in relation to the Chicano Movement. Reflective of the identity politics that distinguished the Movement, *Graciela*, *Games*, and *Joaquín* confound the historical objectification and abjection of people of Mexican descent by recuperating the dignity and subjectivity of Chicanos and Chicanas. As I point out, the content of the photographs, the simplicity of the captions that accompany the photographs, and the overall layout of the texts combine to cultivate intimacy between audiences and the featured subjects. By extension, these texts cultivate (for non-Chicana/o audiences) compassion toward Chicanos and Chicanas more generally.

In particular, I foreground the simplicity of these texts as a powerful means by which a critical deceleration occurs. Amidst the social and political tensions of the time—all of which was made visible on the pages of newspapers and magazines of the time—these texts nurture more intimate, more compassionate social relations. Textual features, namely an aesthetics of slowness, broker humanizing re-perceptions of Chicanas/os and so re-mediate the relations that prevailing representations and discourses had hitherto propagated.

I conclude by teasing out what these texts and the aesthetics of slowness that they embody have to offer us in our current moment.