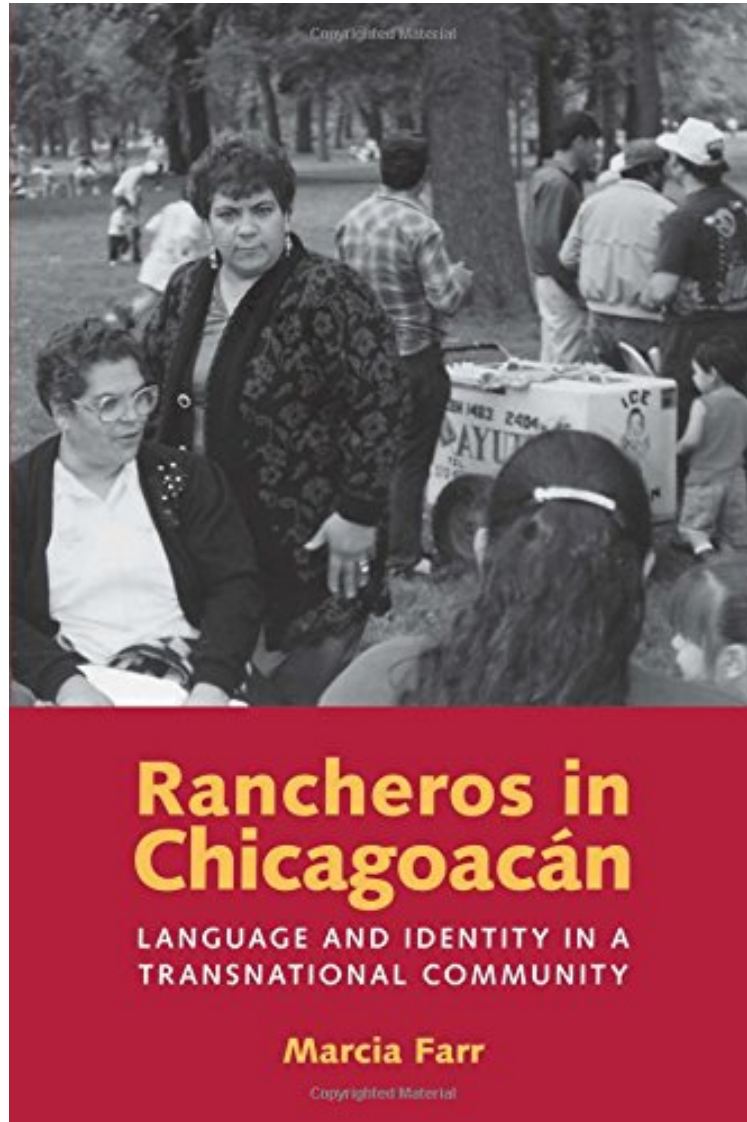


(Library ebook) Rancheros in Chicagoacn: Language and Identity in a Transnational Community

Rancheros in Chicagoacn: Language and Identity in a Transnational Community

Marcia Farr

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Marcia Farr : Rancheros in Chicagoacn: Language and Identity in a Transnational Community before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Rancheros in Chicagoacn: Language and Identity in a Transnational Community:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. the verbal franqueza style of Ranchero Mexican cultureBy Otto Santa AnaThis scholarly work is an exceptional contribution to the fields of language and identity. Farr presents a very

well researched ethnographic study on a major subgroup of Mexican transnationals, the Rancheros. These people are crucial in the creation of Mexican *norteo* culture, which allows for the first time to an English-reading audience an important pair of contrasts, to the Mexican elite of the metropolis and to the Indian campesino of southern Mexico. With fifteen years of cross-generational, cross-gender, and cross-border interaction, extensive and insightful reading of the key scholarships across disciplines, and exacting attention to the speech of her informants, Farr describes on-going on the fly cultural framing that Ranchero speech patterns, discourse patterns, and meta-discourse patterns create and reinforce. I knew from previous reading that Farr's work was insightful, but the depth of her thinking on Mexican discourse overwhelmed me. I could not read this book in a cursory manner; her descriptive insight into the language that I research (and in which I was raised; home culture) had me reaching for a note pad at every page. Before I finished the fifth chapter, I had filled twenty sheets in my cramped handwriting. Farr's main argument is that the distinctive Ranchero culture is articulated by way of a distinctive discourse style, *estilo franqueza*. This culture is based on a liberal individualistic ideology that distinguishes it from *sureo* and *metropolitano* groups of Mexicans, as well as distinguishing it from Mexican indigenous and *mestizo* ways of life. Mexicans are often viewed homogeneously as sustaining a communal and anti-capitalist ideology, in contrast to (an also homogeneous) Anglo-American individualism and capitalist ideology. Farr describes Rancheros holding both a familial yet individualistic ideology. This is of course nothing new to Mexicanists, but Farr's contribution is to link the Ranchero discourse "verbal style," *franqueza*, to this ideology. And it is written for an English-reading audience. Moreover, Farr makes clear that *franqueza* is articulated by way of a "grammar of self-assertion" that is non-deferential; that it both allows for egalitarian stances among equals, and it establishes and affirms a patriarchal social order across the Ranchero community. Farr does this by describing the linguistic and discourse components of the grammar of self-assertion, and with fine examples, which are analyzed with clarity and aplomb! *Franqueza*, the "primary framework" in which Rancheros speak their society into existence, has two special frames, *relajo* and *respeto*. As Farr notes, these three discourses have been discussed (in different terms) by Latin Americanists for a time (e.g. Lauria 1964), but the strength of Farr's work is her emphasis on how the distinctive parts of Ranchero culture are expressed with the three: *franqueza* (individualism, progress, contrast with *humildad* or *ornateness*, work without subservience, constructing Other Mexicans, and gender); *respeto* (individualism with *familialism*, social orderings, reciprocity); and *relajo* (stepping out of the everyday, to showcase talent and personal transformation, to comment on the everyday, and to enact gender). This in itself would be quite a book, but the transnational character of Chicago Rancheros should make this manuscript invaluable to U.S.-oriented scholars. Farr provides Mexicanists and Chicano studies scholars of many disciplinary stripes with a great deal to think about. Much of what she points to regarding Ranchero culture can be extended with utility to *norteo* and Chicano or Mexican-American culture. This book should be read far beyond linguistic anthropology--across the social science spectrum (particularly by rhetoricians, political scientists, folklorists, gender scholars, public education scholars) as well as by scholars of various forms of cultural studies and history. Farr avoids jargon and strives for clarity that too often escapes anthropologists enamored by social theory. This is an authoritative work, the capstone of fifteen years of ethnography and of scholarship that draws from much previously unintegrated thinking. This book will be worked over, aggressively critiqued, and cited intensely for the next fifteen years!

Rancheros hold a distinct place in the culture and social hierarchy of Mexico, falling between the indigenous (Indian) rural Mexicans and the more educated city-dwelling Mexicans. In addition to making up an estimated twenty percent of the population of Mexico, rancheros may comprise the majority of Mexican immigrants to the United States. Although often *mestizo* (mixed race), rancheros generally identify as non-indigenous, and many identify primarily with the Spanish side of their heritage. They are active seekers of opportunity, and hence very mobile. Rancheros emphasize progress and a self-assertive individualism that contrasts starkly with the common portrayal of rural Mexicans as communal and publicly deferential to social superiors. Marcia Farr studied, over the course of fifteen years, a transnational community of Mexican ranchero families living both in Chicago and in their village-of-origin in Michoacán, Mexico. For this ethnolinguistic portrait, she focuses on three culturally salient styles of speaking that characterize rancheros: *franqueza* (candid, frank speech); *respeto* (respectful speech); and *relajo* (humorous, disruptive language that allows artful verbal critique of the social order maintained through *respeto*). She studies the construction of local identity through a community's daily talk, and provides the first book-length examination of language and identity in transnational Mexicans. In addition, Farr includes information on the history of rancheros in Mexico, available for the first time in English, as well as an analysis of the racial discourse of rancheros within the context of the history of race and ethnicity in Mexico and the United States. This work provides groundbreaking insight into the lives of rancheros, particularly as seen from their own perspectives.

About the Author Marcia Farr is Professor of Language, Literacy, and Culture in the College of Education at Ohio State University and Professor Emerita of English and Linguistics at the University of Illinois at Chicago.