Narratives from Latina Professors in Higher Education

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This article shares the lives of three Latina faculty members teaching in state colleges of education. Interviews revealed that the personal and professional experiences they encountered on a daily basis reflected tokenism in the academy, varying levels of support, and perceived burdens and expectations. All three women saw knowledge as contextual and often relied on feelings and intuition to describe and assess their lives in the academy. Recommendations for change within the academy are offered.

Entering Academe

The presence of Latina women in higher education is a relatively recent phenomenon that rose out of the political turbulence from the 1960s civil rights movement and the 1970s feminist movement. This 20-year span called for the reexamination of current university practices with regard to educational equity for diverse populations. Within the context of the civil rights movement and the feminist movement evolved the current conceptions of cultural pluralism and the more widespread study of class inequity, sexism, and racism in the United States (Appleton 1983). The concept of cultural pluralism took many definitions and became rooted in various theoretical forms (e.g., amalgamation, insular pluralism, ethnogenesis).

Basic, however, to these political movements and pluralistic theories was the belief that there were definite inequities between the dominant culture—typically defined as white, middle class, heterosexual, and male—and the nondominant culture. One outcome of these political movements was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act laid the legal basis for affirmative action in higher education (Cuadraz 1992). The Civil Rights Act prohibits racial discrimination from any institution receiving federal assistance, and affirmative action policies encourage educational institutions to take positive steps in recruiting qualified individuals of minority status in employment and as students (Ogbu 1978).

For the first time Latina women had more fluid access to graduate programs in institutions of higher education, and the number of Latina females with conferred doctorates increased from 139 in 1976 to 366 in 1990 (National Center for Education Statistics 1991). Though this statistic

seemed encouraging, Latina women in 1993–94 earned only 2.6 percent of doctorates conferred, with only Native American women lower, at .4 percent (*Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* 1996). Many of these doctorates are utilized in employment outside of higher education. Moreover, the number of Latina women in academic ranks continues to remain low. A 1995–96 survey of 33,986 full-time faculty members notes the small percentages of Latina women employed in colleges and universities. In terms of rank, only 9 percent of Latina faculty members held full professorships, and only 16 percent held associate positions—the lowest percentages of all female ethnic minority faculty in these two ranks. A disproportionate 75 percent of Latina faculty held the rank of assistant, instructor, or lecturer. Even more discouraging, the survey reveals that Latina faculty members were the lowest percent of all tenured faculty members represented in higher education when compared for gender and ethnicity (American Indian, Asian, black, Latino/Latina, and white) (Schneider 1997).

Place and Presence

Given that there are so few Latina women with doctorates, it is not surprising that those who do obtain doctorates and return to higher education as faculty members face feelings of alienation, poor support systems, and cultural conflict (see, e.g., Aisenberg and Harrington 1988; Nieves-Squires 1991; Padilla and Chavez 1995). These feelings appear to have developed in early educational experiences and been reinforced in institutions of higher education (Ogbu 1978). In many cases, the institutional culture reaffirmed the women's personal and professional dilemmas regarding their place in the academy in the following ways: (a) Latina women who had succeeded in academia were often made to feel tokenized by individuals in their respective departments, (b) Latina women starting as assistant professors in academia had to learn how to excel in an institutional culture that was often alien to them, and (c) Latina women in academia had to find avenues in which to claim their own "voice."

Faragher and Howe (1988) elucidate the paradox in which women in academia were often placed. They argue that "even though the vast majority of Americans believe that women should have equal opportunity with men, the cultural norms still maintain a sexual division of labor at home and in the work place which perpetuates sexist gender distinctions and differences" (1988:184). And, as Margaret Mead observed, "In some societies, anthropologists tell us, men fish and women weave and fishing is considered more important than weaving. In other societies, men weave and women fish, and weaving is considered more important than fishing" (quoted in Millett 1970:7).

Race and gender inequalities continue to permeate institutions of higher education, for the culture and ideology of academe do not allow for differences. Academe is a model based on commonalities—not a

community built around the concept of diversity. As Tierney notes, "Such communities . . . have inevitably silenced those of us on the borders" (1993:25). The academy tends to mirror society at large, where a monolithic system of majority values and beliefs tend to devalue racial, cultural, and linguistic differences. The absence of a large, diverse professoriate reflects the existing racism in academia, where "the dominant cultural group has the power, resources, and authority to define itself in positive, normative ways and to define the out-group in negative, dysfunctional ways—thus rationalizing the continuation of vesting power in itself and away from other groups" (Ramirez 1988:138).

Aguirre poignantly asks, "When, then, do minority faculty have a meaningful presence in academe?" (1995:18). Researchers note that decisions and conditions surrounding minority faculty can be different from those experienced by majority faculty members, and these factors impact work loads, research, tenure, and promotion. Specifically,

1. Minority faculty tend to be "more burdened with service activities we advise other junior faculty colleagues to defer" (National Education Association 1991:159).
2. Minority faculty are often "saddled with the dirty chores of the department and time-consuming committee appointments that may leave little time for research and scholarship" (Blackwell 1989:13).
3. Minority faculty are assigned responsibilities because of their presumed knowledge of cultural differences, "being called upon to be the expert on matters of diversity . . . being called upon . . . to educate individuals in the majority group about diversity . . . serving as the liaison between the organization and the ethnic community . . . being called upon to translate official documents" (Padilla 1994:26; see also Tierney and Bensimon 1996:115 for the burdens of "cultural taxation").
4. Minority faculty scholarship is often seen as tangential and peripheral, less rigorous and academic, and not published in the "right" journals (Bronstein 1993; Garza 1993).

In regard to research, Latina faculty members encounter double discrimination. Their scholarship, which may focus on minority-related topics, noted as "Brown-on-Brown" research (Reyes and Halcon 1988: 306), is often considered nonacademic, narrow in scope, and nonobjective. Stemming from their life experiences as minority *and* female, Latina professors' research is devalued. These scholars are caught in a "cultural perplexity, a perplexity of gender" (Aleman 1995:74). As these Latina faculty members know, jumping through all the hoops and playing all the games do not ensure tenure. Moreover, with tenure there still remains the issue of survival; as one Latina educator explained,

I have received tenure (and I was anxious through it all), but I still have the state of full professor ahead of me. I may have more to say then. What I have learned is that while I have gained personal and professional power, its

significance is weakened if I remain the only Latina at this ivory tower. I need colleagues, and the nation needs more diversity. [Torres-Guzman 1995:64–65]

With the paucity of Latina faculty members on university campuses, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of educators to commit themselves to the equitable education of all individuals—including women, ethnic/racial minorities, and the poor. This effort needs to start early in higher education with undergraduate and graduate students as they face academic or social difficulties. Most ethnic minority college students are the first in their families to attend universities, and therefore they are traditionally not knowledgeable or familiar with the work of the academy and the rules of its culture (Harris-Schenz 1990). Latina women have been found to be at the lowest levels of occupational, educational, and financial indexes, with these factors inhibiting entrance into, participation in, and completion of higher education (Vasquez 1997). Even more troubling are Latina students' feelings of alienation and unconnectedness with the university because of lack of experiences and contacts. As the only minority student in a class or in a residence hall, a Latina student feels not only cultural shock but discomfort and isolation.

Adequate opportunities and support for Latina students can create environments wherein participation in higher education will improve. These students will graduate and may consider higher education in their career decisions. It then becomes the responsibility of public schools and postsecondary educational institutions to concentrate on those factors that hinder or promote a woman's opportunity to enter, complete, and work successfully in higher education.

Lives of Three Latina Faculty

A review of literature revealed that there is a dearth of qualitative research regarding the historical or current experiences of Latina women in higher education. The purpose of this study was to (a) explore the life experiences and influences that helped three Latina women seek teaching professions in the academy, specifically in colleges of education; (b) learn about the personal/professional experiences three Latina women encountered in relation to their daily lives in the academy; (c) learn how three Latina women interpreted the meaning of their academic lives as related to the understanding of self; and (d) relate what was learned from these three Latina women to the larger body of literature on this topic.

Qualitative research requires that the researcher examine and attempt to understand human behavior in its social context (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This type of research captures participants in their own terms—their emotions, the ways in which they view their worlds, their thoughts on their experiences, and their perceptions and values. Though human behavior is complex and qualitative research can generate

multiple interpretations and realities, the words of participants provide the meaning to life that is often missing in quantitative data. As Geertz poignantly explains,

> If . . . interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens—from what in this time or that place specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world—is to divorce it from its application and render it vacant. A good interpretation of anything—a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society—takes us to the heart of that of which it is the interpretation. [1973:18]

Phenomenology, as a branch of qualitative research, does not assume knowledge of events and interactions in the lives of people. It does, however, seek to understand the meaning of these events and interactions and allow realities and interpretations to be influenced by the researchers' interactions with the participants (Bogdan and Biklen 1982).

Seidman's (1991) "in-depth phenomenological interviewing" procedures were utilized to understand the lives of three Latina faculty members teaching in colleges of education. In-depth interviewing is a vehicle with which to access abstract and complex social and educational issues and place them in a very realistic and concrete framework (Seidman 1991). For this research, this model of interviewing involved three 90-minute interviews with each participant. The first interviews focused on the historical backgrounds of the participants as they related to their teaching in institutions of higher education. The second interviews focused on the present-day experiences of the participants with regard to their experiences in higher education. The third interviews asked the participants to reflect on the *meaning* of their experiences in higher education.

The participants were three Latina women currently teaching at public institutions of higher education. *Latina* is used throughout this article only to inform the reader that the women interviewed are culturally rooted in Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. We realize that each woman described brings a rich and diverse voice to this article and that to use the term *Latina* fails to speak to individual backgrounds in terms of socioeconomic status, ancestry, historical discrimination, and language differences. Given the limitation of confidentiality, we have attempted to describe the participants accurately and honestly.

One faculty member, Dr. Alicia Cantu, had earned tenure in her department and had been at her present institution for approximately two years. She had approximately six years of university experience at two other institutions. Dr. Cantu self-identified as Mexican American when asked about her racial/ethnic background. She grew up in a southwestern rural community comprising Mexican Americans, Euro-Americans, and African Americans. Many of the Mexican American citizens in her community obtained seasonal farmwork and largely relied on this farmwork for survival. Dr. Cantu described her family as being of a low

socioeconomic background. Her family has lived in the Southwest for several generations. She indicated that while Euro-Americans were the majority population of her childhood, they have now become the minority population of her adulthood. Mexican Americans are now the prevalent population.

Dr. Gabriella Gonzales, who self-identified as Puerto Rican, had nearly two years of university teaching experience at the time of the interview. Dr. Gonzales grew up in the eastern region of the United States after relocating from Puerto Rico at a young age. Upon her arrival from Puerto Rico, she lived with relatives who were already residing in the United States. She attended primarily private parochial schools and described her background as working class.

Dr. Stella Falcon, who self-identified as Chicana, had been at her institution for less than one year. She grew up in the southwest region of the United States, where she attended racially mixed public schools in a moderately large city. Dr. Falcon described her economic background as lower working class to working poor. Her family had resided in the Southwest for several generations.

Both Gabriella and Stella had tenure-track positions and held the rank of assistant professor. Prior to teaching in institutions of higher education, Gabriella and Stella had teaching experiences in the public schools. Alicia had several years of teaching experiences in private schools. All participants were professors in colleges of education.

Participant selection was made by direct person-to-person contact by the primary author, Catherine Medina. Medina had previous professional interactions with two of the women and both professional and personal interactions with the third. It was the intent of this study to interview only Latina women who had tenure-track positions in colleges of education. Prior to interview agreements, participants were told the purpose of the study, the means by which confidentiality would be maintained, and the length of interview time needed to complete this study. Each participant also signed a written consent form that outlines the interviewer/participant agreement. A tape recorder was utilized during each of the interviews. All interviews (Interview One, Interview Two, and Interview Three) took place approximately one week apart over a 20-month period.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, names, university locations, and other identifying comments have been changed or deleted from the original text. In cases in which clarity of the content is questionable, grammar and sentence structure have been corrected.

Voices to Be Heard

Early Educational Years: Differential Treatment

Cuadraz (1992) found through open-ended interviews with ten Chicana women pursuing doctorates that all had early educational experiences

in which they viewed themselves as feeling like outsiders or removed from the mainstream because of their gender, ethnicity, social class status, or a combination of the three. These feelings of marginality in early educational experiences are not uncommon among minority group populations (Garza 1984), for whom differential or stereotypical treatment demonstrated toward them by teachers was prevalent. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that student academic performance follows in the direction of teacher expectations (Cummins 1989), with gender and ethnicity being traits that influence low teacher-student expectations. In the study conducted by Cuadraz, the majority of the Chicana women stated that they felt conflicted about their early educational experiences. On the one hand, teachers considered them as being special in their minority group because of their scholarship. On the other hand, they experienced other types of overt and covert occurrences of racism.

Latina women often face this type of double oppression—being female and being Latina. The *Digest of Education Statistics* (National Center for Educational Statistics 1992) reports that 31.1 percent of all Latinas between the ages of 16 and 24 drop out of school. This rate is higher than any for the female cohorts in U.S. high schools, with the overall Latina dropout rate highest at 28 percent, followed by that of blacks (14 percent) and whites (8 percent) (President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Latina Americans 1996).

Ogbu (1978) discusses a framework with which to understand minority school failure and feelings of alienation faced by many students of ethnic minority status. Indicated in the theoretical framework articulated by Ogbu is the belief that caste-like minorities (involuntary minorities)—those incorporated into U.S. society by enslavement, conquest, and colonization—have a history of subordinate status and oppression in the United States. Even though ethnic minority students of caste-like status receive messages that school success leads to a better socioeconomic quality of life, they also understand that the realities of their communities have typically not borne this out. In a later discussion, Gibson and Ogbu (1991) further delineate in their cultural-ecological theory of school performance that voluntary minorities (those who choose to immigrate to the United States) often see their experience and status in the United States as very different from that of involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities do not have the historical discrimination or the long history of racism in the United States that would lead them to distrust white institutions. In fact, they often see these white institutions (e.g., public schools) as places of opportunity and are committed to excelling in them. Involuntary minorities, on the other hand, are often ambivalent about schooling because of their own personal experiences or the experiences of others in their communities.

Consequently, when Latina women do excel in school there may be conflicted feelings or internalized guilt for having passed when so many Latina peers have either dropped out or failed out of school. This

phenomenon undoubtedly produces stress in young Latina girls who must watch their peers be systematically dropped out of educational institutions as they attempt to stay afloat in an often painful educational environment. The pain of the environment only snowballs as various scenarios play out for Latina students. These students are more likely to have taken remedial mathematics, not the level of math required for "good entry level jobs in high technology industries" (President's Advisory Committee 1996:36). Similarly, they have more often than not been tracked into general courses with little career counseling or precollege advisement.

Below are excerpts from the three interviews that reflect early feelings of inadequacy and shame felt by all three women in the school systems they attended. Issues of classism, sexism, and ethnic prejudice are addressed. It is important to note that these three women bring memories of the past 50 years, with each participant representing, in terms of age, different decades.

Gabriella, who is the oldest of the participants, articulated how teachers in the early years instilled in her feelings of inadequacy:

> When I started school, my mother was told by the teachers that I needed to go to the public school because I was a slow learner. My mother told the teachers not to worry about me being a slow learner and that they should do what they were paid to do and she would take care of the rest. As far as formal education goes, I was always told by educators that I would never go beyond high school and to never aspire to a higher degree. . . . I remember writing a poem in elementary class, and my teacher refused to read it. She told me I couldn't write. I still remember it [starts to recite the poem and then sings it]. Wow, I thought I couldn't write. . . . The fact that I couldn't do anything stuck with me. . . . These messages I carried with me through my dissertation.

Alicia relayed the pain of her early education years, of surviving the primary grades by being quiet and not drawing attention to herself. One incident involved a teacher's spanking for poor work, with Alicia noting, "I remember feeling so humiliated and so upset. . . . It still hurts when I think about it." She noted how the majority population of her primary school years became the minority population of her high school years:

> When I started school I couldn't speak English. . . . I remember it being my first day of school and not being able to understand anything my teacher said. In fact, I don't remember anything during my first year of school because I couldn't understand. But my cousin was in the second grade, and had been in school one year already, and knew enough English. . . . She could help me out and was able to translate. . . . Even though I felt totally, totally inadequate in that environment, I survived it. The second year we moved into town. I went to a different school. When I went to school in the second grade I probably had the worst teacher that you could ever have if you come from my background experience. First of all she was very racist. She was Anglo. She singled out females. . . . She singled out the Mexican American kids. . . . I always managed

to stay pretty quiet and in the background so that I never got myself into trouble. . . . My parents were just as powerless as I was. They didn't have money. They didn't have power in the community. . . . In 1970, I graduated from high school. I was the second female—Mexican American—to graduate from high school—the second one. . . . In first grade, Latinas were the majority. By the 12th grade, Hispanics were in a very small minority. There were four other Hispanics in my senior class. Only two of us graduated that year, and one was a male and then I was the female.

For Stella, a sense of shame and an early awareness of social, economic, and racial inequities were realized. The experience of not making the girls' choir at age ten left her with little confidence and self-esteem. When a math teacher called her stupid, she noted being "so embarrassed that I ran into the coat closet and hid." Stella was openly rebellious and demonstrated active resistance toward the educational treatment she received because of her ethnicity and economic status:

My public school schooling was very insignificant until I went to high school. I never felt I had a special gift or something to offer. It wasn't that my public school teachers were so terrible; they just didn't see me as someone they wanted to spend time with. I was a low average student with average abilities. I was also embarrassed at school. I was the child whose parents never went to school. I was the young adolescent who wore the same clothes several times a week. I was the adolescent that if teachers didn't pay attention to, no one would be concerned or know about it. . . . My sense of self was influenced in the classrooms of that school where I knew my social class, my economic class, my color, who my parents were mattered to these teachers. . . . My father was an alcoholic and my mother had only several years of schooling. I internalized their shame and my own. I remember wanting teacher attention. I just didn't know how to get it. By the time I went to middle school, I had learned how to act out, to be truant, to experiment with drugs.

Access to Higher Education: The Influence of the Mother or a Significant Female

Latinas who stay in school often experience later failure that prohibits their access to higher education. Government reports reveal that Latina students score approximately 66–85 points below their white non-Latina peers on the verbal and mathematical portions of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (National Center for Educational Statistics 1992). These test scores usually form the basis for entry into higher education. Then, too, data indicate that Latina students never reach their full potential because of inappropriate placements and inaccurate uses of assessment. A report on public schooling reveals the following: (1) Latina students are less likely than white or black students to be enrolled in college preparatory programs; (2) Latina students are less likely than students from other racial or ethnic groups to be enrolled in college preparatory math, even if they score in the top quartile of a standardized math test; (3) Latina students are less likely than white or black students to be enrolled in

gifted and talented programs; (4) Latina students are more likely to be placed in remedial-general education tracks; and (5) Latina students are more often incorrectly assessed as mentally retarded or learning disabled (President's Advisory Commission 1996:48–49).

Given that our public school institutions are stratified institutions representing our larger society, Latina students who because of their gender and ethnicity do not fall into the "high-status" groupings in schools often receive messages that further educational attainment is not possible. Research has noted consistently that same-sex, same-race role models play a pivotal role in Latina students' decisions to stay in school and to succeed academically. With few such role models available in education, Latina females have found support from family members. Studies indicate that there is a strong correlation between a young woman's academic achievement and her mother's support and encouragement of educational goals (see, e.g., Gándara 1982; Vasquez 1978). Fligstein and Fernandez (1985) find that foreign-born mothers demonstrate even higher levels of motivation for Latina youth with correlative educational attainment. Research points out that the socialization process by Latina mothers, which includes reinforcement of the value of education, has—even in the face of social, economic, and cultural barriers—significant impact.

Gabriella, Alicia, and Stella all received negative messages regarding education, yet the strong influence of a mother or "mother-image" *(co-madre)* played an integral part in the women formulating beliefs in their own abilities. The mothers and mother-images for Latina women have traditionally been dynamic and determined women who have prevailed over their own societal obstacles (Castillo 1994) and encouraged their daughters to cross educational and social borders. As Anzaldúa so eloquently states, "To this day I'm not sure where I found the strength to leave the source, the mother, disengage from my family, *mi tierra, mi gente* [my land, my people]" (1987:18). In fact, the ability of these women to leave their communities and navigate unfamiliar terrain took the determination of both the mothers and the daughters. The following words of Gabriella, Alicia, and Stella note the influence of mothers and mother-images:

> The person who influenced my entry into higher education has been my mother. She started to teach me. . . . My mother would tell me that I could be a fast learner. . . . As I got older, she repeated[ly told me] "to reach beyond what you expect to reach for." . . . There was always a sharing of what you know. These were the conversations that we had. . . . She would ask me things like, "Do you ever wonder where the moon goes when we can't see it anymore?" . . . These were the things she wondered about. She developed a curiosity in me. [Gabriella]
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> I had to fight my father. My father was against it [going to college] all the way. . . . I went to live with my aunt temporarily. I got my mother, God bless her, to talk to my aunt. My mother was always the vehicle for me getting some of my

needs met. . . . She wanted me to do what I wanted or saw as being important. She called my aunt and said, "Alicia needs to come stay with you. She's going to school." [Alicia]

It was a high school teacher who helped me believe that I could go to the local university. It was the first time that higher education was articulated to me as a real possibility. I couldn't believe that she really believed that I would go. I didn't want to disappoint her. . . . I knew my skills were not competitive, but it was during my senior year [in high school] that I also began to believe in her vision for me. I knew that if I could get accepted to the university that I would make it. I would be successful. I was scared—terrified. I mean terrified. [Stella]

Tokenism in the Academy

With so few Latina women earning doctorates, they often feel tokenized or the need to prove themselves to other faculty in their departments. The concept of tokenism resulted from the Latina faculty being valued primarily because of their ethnic/racial background, which often left Latina women questioning their own abilities. With the inception of affirmative action and the fluctuation of economic conditions in the United States over the last 30 years, some individuals in higher education have seen minority hiring as preferential quota filling. This sentiment of preferential hiring of qualified ethnic minorities often pitted individuals against each other. The idea of tokenism left other academic colleagues resentful and questioning the Latina faculty members' abilities.

The notion of tokenism may have also been internalized by minority women early on, when primary and secondary teachers sent mixed messages about the young women's academic progress. For example, the Latina woman who received mixed messages from teachers and others in educational institutions may have come to question whether her academic achievement was based on ability or, in part, on ethnicity. Vera (1982) offers suggestions for educational institutions overcoming the *"only Hispanic" phenomenon* so often prevalent in higher education (e.g., mentorship programs for Latinas in higher education, additional funding for networking for Latinas in higher education). Below Gabriella speaks to the concept of tokenism and her challenge to repeatedly convince members of the academy of her abilities:

In academia, my chairperson, Dr. Davis, really influenced me. When I entered the doctoral program in education, I immediately felt I was back in elementary school. My committee wanted to track this minority woman into an Ed.D. program. There were three ethnic minority people on my committee. They were wondering why I wanted a Ph.D. Did I realize how strenuous the program was and how taxing it would be on me? . . . I'll be darned if I was going to permit them to dictate where I was going to go. . . . People were so surprised that I was the first Latina in my department to get a Ph.D. . . . During my interview here, I felt very accepted. . . . It was when I applied for this job at the university that I felt I didn't have to prove myself. I was proven. I was

valued for me and what I brought to the workplace. . . . I had [referring to past situations] run across other Latinos who'd say, "Can she do it?" I was invited to come here and work at this university even though I hadn't finished my doctoral work. . . . Mainly it was because they needed the wares I had to sell. They needed a bilingual/bicultural person. I don't have any difficulties being a token Latina. It gets me in. It gets me in, and then I can show them what a token Latina can do. I don't have any difficulties with that. I've always been a token and a good one.

The Load They Bear—Burdens and Expectations

Not only do Latina faculty feel the burden of tokenism, they often feel marginalized, with colleagues using such terms as *not one of us, outsider,* and *the other*. Arturo Madrid describes this marginalization as follows:

If one is the *other*, one will inevitably be perceived unidimensionally; will be seen stereotypically; will be defined and delimited by mental sets that may not bear much relation to existing realities. There is a darker side to otherness as well. *The other* disturbs, disquiets, discomforts. It provokes distrust and suspicion. The *other* makes people feel anxious, nervous, apprehensive, even fearful. The *other* frightens, scares.
    . . . For some of us, being *the* other is only annoying; for others it is debilitating; for still others it is damning. [1988:56]

Stella, a first-year assistant professor at a majority institution, found herself questioning her own abilities and spoke directly to feelings of being "the other." In fact, it appears that her overwhelming feelings of loneliness and alienation had affected her on a very deep professional and personal level. Stella found herself working long hours without the support so often needed by junior faculty:

It has been especially difficult for me—being here. . . . I find myself very much alone. I am the only Mexican American female faculty member in my college. . . . I am always doubting myself and my actions in the workplace. I do not know who to trust or where to go for help or information. Some days the loneliness and anxiety are overwhelming. . . . The institutional racism is everywhere. I am most often referred to as a minority first—not a scholar, not a strong teacher, not a researcher. . . . Sometimes the yearning to share, collaborate, and speak of my own strengths and uncertainties in the workplace are profound. It is ironic that we ask our children to speak of feelings and, yet, this is the last thing we encourage in the academy.

Latina faculty members are more often overburdened with professional responsibilities than non-ethnic faculty. These include heavy teaching and advising loads, expected participation in minority-related committees, demands by their communities, and multiple requests from university students of the same ethnic background (Garza 1993; Nieves-Squires 1991). These additional expectations affect their research and scholarship participation and productivity, thereby influencing decisions regarding their promotion and tenure (Garza 1993). Stella shared

her views of academe as noncollaborative and alienating. Moreover, the burdens she carried reinforced the inequities within the system:

> As I mentioned before, I am very lonely here and am beginning to believe that there is no sense of community here. . . . I only wish that this college would have connected me with other female faculty mentors who would help me learn what I need to learn to be successful. It is all guesswork. So, instead, I find myself being overworked and volunteering or being volunteered for every committee that comes along. I want to be a team player. I never know when enough is enough. . . . I know I will make a significant contribution to my field and the institution, but I also know that my personal and social needs will not be met here—at least, not now. . . . I wonder if I am asking for too much. But how do you not ask for this when the academy demands so much from you?

Gabriella also found the university environment indifferent and lacking in support. She shared her pain of feeling isolated and alone, striving for the professional and personal companionship of others:

> The reason I was hired was to be productive—to be an assistant professor who does research. I felt uncomfortable at first because I didn't know how to fit into the professorate role. I really didn't know what was going on in the department. . . . There is only a support system here to an extent—for work. . . . I've been at other universities where new faculty have been included in the social life of the city by other faculty members. . . . There is no social support here. They know they have a single woman. What have they done to help me get into the community? It's up to me. I've seen [social support] happen at other universities. . . . I think the department needs to be culturally sensitive to my needs. I feel so isolated here. The other area of support that I don't find is research. To this day I don't know what our grants are. I have asked constantly. How can I get involved in them? I have asked to the point where I think they don't want me to know.

On the other hand, Alicia, a tenured professor, viewed her department as interactive, supportive, and collaborative. Perhaps the differences in the three women's perceptions stem from (a) different career developmental stages, (b) anxiety often experienced by new work and living situations, (c) differences in personality and temperament, or (d) a sense of comfort in self-identity and capabilities. Or perhaps Alicia had learned to negotiate the system and had become adept at choosing her institution based on her personal/professional needs. This was Alicia's third institution of higher education employment; she spoke of it as follows:

> There are things that I bring to my job and my position that's very different than what everyone else brings. I don't leave my identity outside the door when I walk into the offices. It's all part of what I do and who I am even though who I am is sometimes incongruent with certain expectations of the job. . . . One of the reasons I chose to come here was because of my ability to function within this department, within this college, within this university. It

was more in keeping with who I am. . . . I believe in people working together as opposed to people working apart. The way this department functions fits into my idea of people working together. There is still a certain amount of divisiveness, a certain amount of politics, a certain amount of competitiveness—but not to the degree that it feels uncomfortable or that it interferes with who I am. I think because of who I am I bring a certain amount of sensitivity.

Claiming Ourselves and Our Voice

In our society the preferred method of thinking in the academy follows a male model of rational and objective thought, and female thinking processes are often negatively stereotyped as intuitive, emotional, and personalized. Jean Baker Miller's 1976 classic work challenges the long-standing stereotypes of women and the convention of male behavior as the norm. Women's minds as well as their contributions to society have been devalued throughout history. Miller recounts her research as describing women's strengths and accounting for the reasons that women go unrecognized.

At a later date, Carol Gilligan (1982) echoes feminist theorists in the call for reexamining current models of knowledge, the female voice, and traditional career-life models. As Gilligan points out,

> The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought. [1982:2]

And following in the footsteps of Miller and Gilligan, Josselson focuses on the female sense of identity:

> The most important development task facing women today is the formation of identity, for it is in the realm of identity that a woman bases her sense of self, as well as her vision on the structure of her life. Identity incorporates a woman's choices for herself, her priorities, and the guiding principles by which she makes decisions. [1987:3]

And perhaps more applicable to the identity of Latina women is *Xicanisma*, the term used to refer to Chicana feminism and the history and *conscientización* (consciousness) of brown women (Castillo 1994). Castillo states, "It is our tasks as Xicanistas to not only reclaim our indigenismo [native roots]—but also reinsert the forsaken feminine into our consciousness" (1994:12). For many Latina women, the cost of membership in the academy has been great. Latina women have sometimes had to make the difficult choice of forsaking their past, their cultural identity, their language, and their indigenous roots for access and mobility in the academy. At other times, they have had to fight for their own voices and identities to be recognized and affirmed within the academy.

In the excerpts below, we clearly hear the feminine voice that values knowledge as contextual. All three women saw themselves as able to create knowledge and understanding both subjectively and objectively (intuitive, emotional, rational, integrated, and cyclical). They not only searched for aspects of their identities within the academy but also explored the possibilities of their existences within the academy. For Latinas who have entered the academy, the price of success is often high and uncompromising, but perhaps in the end it is worth it:

> I am continuously defining what being a Latina woman means to me. I don't believe I have a complete answer of what it means. What it means shifts and changes. I get stimulation from other people, primarily intellectual stimulation and stimulation of ideas, social stimulation. I also get to live out a lifelong dream: not that of being a university professor but [that of] making a difference. Hopefully, I get to touch people's lives—primarily the people that I train. My experience, and who I am, and what I bring will have an effect on the dynamics on how this department functions—my contribution to this department, the people I come into contact with, maybe a contribution to the university—I don't know how far the contribution goes. I know I have an impact on my field. [Alicia]

> [Being a university professor] means being paid to be creative. . . . I have a chance to explore things that I've wanted to . . . figure things out, explore things, and to test ideas. . . . I want to be known for having done things and for being able to share what I know is true. . . . I want to share with those who want to learn. . . . Women see things in a more nurturing way. . . . I would like to think that if I were Irish, or Polish, or black that I would still be here. . . . I would have the same perspective of academia and being a professor. . . . I am comfortable with that perspective—with who I am. I need to believe that. . . . My mission is to work with children to facilitate their growth and their academic health. I want to teach teachers how to be teachers. . . . I want my students to see students from different perspectives. [Gabriella]

> Being a female in academia means that I will have to push harder and look more critically at myself and my work. I am judged by very male and very white standards. I don't delude myself with the belief that we are all treated in an equitable manner. . . . I love the fact that I am able to be more cognitively flexible in my classes. I am not afraid of my words when I am with my students. I know that I bring a new way of looking at the familiar—differently. I want to excel in my field. I have the opportunity to contribute a great deal to my profession and my own area of study. . . . My passion and enthusiasm are in my work. I won't stop here. [Stella]

Voices to Be Heard for the Future

From the in-depth phenomenological interviews with three Latina women teaching in the academy, similar themes emerge in terms of factors that shaped the women's experiences in education and their goals to become professors. Early childhood experiences revealed that all three women received negative messages from primary teachers and

experienced differential treatment in the classroom. In spite of these negative messages, they made the decision to become educators in a university setting. All three saw their academic path as being that of teacher trainers. Perhaps the guiding force for these women's academic achievements was their reliance on and support from their mothers or another significant female figure. All three women received positive messages from strong females which influenced their vision for the future.

Furthermore, the voices of the Latina women interviewed reveal that personal/professional experiences encountered on a daily basis reflect tokenism in the academy, varying levels of support, and perceived burdens and expectations. For example, Gabriella spoke to issues of being valued because of her ethnicity. This belief brought on feelings of inadequacy or having to prove her academic worth in the workplace. It is possible that Gabriella integrated messages of tokenism early in her educational life. Mentoring and support were also difficult for Gabriella and Stella, who were new assistant professors with less than two years of university experience. They both described their departments as alienating and felt a need for additional support. Alicia, a tenured professor, saw her department as being collaborative and supportive. Perhaps these differences in perception stem from the anxiety often experienced by people starting a new career path. It would be interesting to determine if other beginning female professors experience feelings similar to those of Gabriella and Stella.

Finally, the understanding of self was for the three Latina faculty members important in defining meaning in their academic lives. Gabriella, Alicia, and Stella often relied on feelings, intuition, and a desire for kinship to describe their lives at their universities. This feminine/feminist voice has not been heard and has often been devalued as being too emotional and not appropriate for the university. However, the voices of these Latina women express poignantly the value of contextual knowledge and understanding within the academy.

As institutions of higher education seek minorities for faculty positions, findings from these three Latina female voices need to be heard. Academe needs to be reminded of the problems of access to and employment in higher education, differential treatment, tokenism, and burdens and expectations for Latina faculty members. Concentrated and sincere efforts to recruit, employ, and promote Latina women in academe are needed. The numbers reflected in this article are small, and there must be caution not to generalize about Latina women or infer that the women interviewed reflect the voices of Latinas, Chicanas, or Mexican American women. There is great variability and the realities may be different. However, in an institution in which women faculty members are the minority and the number of Latina faculty members is dramatically small, their voices cannot be ignored. They speak volumes for the work that institutions of higher education have yet to do.

More specifically, these narratives can enrich understanding of the culture and daily lives of minority female faculty members. Readers can hear the pain, can see the struggles, and can note the barriers. For example, these voices can help an administrator understand that support and mentoring are critical to minority females in their teaching and scholarship. These voices can help majority faculty members understand the importance of collaboration with minority colleagues in curricular and scholarly endeavors. These voices can help senior faculty members realize that guidance and support, including protection and sponsorship, are needed by minority colleagues. Lastly, these voices can help all educators understand the importance of collegiality and respect for individuality in the academic environment.

Moreover, these voices echo the sentiment that further research needs to be conducted on Latina women in higher education. Along with further study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Increase the number of Latina women being interviewed so as to add to the confirmability and transferability of the research, and also assess how beginning professors determine whether they are receiving the support needed to succeed in academe.
2. From this study, it appears that early educational messages influenced these three women professionally and personally. It would be interesting to determine what messages young girls receive with regard to higher education as a career option. Are these negative messages of the past being replaced with more positive messages?
3. The concept of tokenism needs to be explored further. As institutions of higher education reexamine their commitment to affirmative action, it becomes important to determine current practices relative to the hiring of qualified minority scholars.
4. It would be interesting to determine if the role of "mothers" or "significant females" plays a large part in helping to form young girls' attitudes about cultural identity and career options.

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