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Controversial Issues in the Recruitment and Retention of Latino/a Faculty

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Abstract: This article deals with controversial issues in recruitment of Latino/a faculty in higher education in the United States. The authors present a hypothetical faculty hiring case scenario that they follow throughout the manuscript. Through this case scenario, they examine aspects of Latino/a identity, Latino/a demographics in higher education, and the interaction of Latino/a faculty dimensions that interact with faculty search committee expectations. They highlight implications for hiring and retention.

Resumen: Este artículo maneja asuntos controversiales en reclutamiento de profesores hispanos/latina/o en educación superior en los Estados Unidos de América. Los autores presentan un escenario hipotético para emplear a un profesor, el cual conducen a través del manuscrito. A través de este escenario ellos examinan en individuos latinos aspectos de identidad y demografía en educación superior, así como dimensiones en la interacción de profesores latinos y las relaciones que éstas tienen con las expectativas de comités de selección. Implicaciones para el empleo y la retención se señalan.

Keywords: *Latino/a higher education faculty; Latino/a recruitment; Latino/a retention; Latino/a identity; Latino/a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered faculty*

The problems that Latino/a¹ people encounter at every level of the U.S. educational system are grave. As Ana Margarita Guzmán, Chair of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, wrote to President Clinton in 1996, "Serious work needs to be done regarding the development, monitoring, and coordination of federal efforts to promote high-quality education for

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Hispanic Americans, if Hispanic individuals are to move away from the ‘fault line’ of insidious failure. . . . The educational progress of Hispanic Americans still remains unacceptably poor, compared to almost every other group.”

In particular, there have been concerns over the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Latino/a higher education faculty. There is a rich literature examining Latino/a faculty in higher education with regard to hiring, the tenure process, and retention (e.g., Guanipa, Santa-Cruz, & Chao, 2003; Ibarra, 2003; R. V. Padilla, 2003; Plata, 1996; Suinn & Witt, 1982), the demography of the Latino/a professoriate (Harvey, 2002; Verdugo, 2003), barriers to Latino/a faculty success in higher education (Comas-Díaz, 1997; Delgado-Romero, Flores, Gloria, Arredondo, & Castellanos, 2003; Niemann, 1999; Olivas, 1996; R. V. Padilla, 2003; Reyes & Halcón, 1996; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002), and the unique concerns of faculty at Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) (e.g., de los Santos & de los Santos, 2003; Mulnix, Bowden, & López, 2002). Rather than restating what has already been written, we aim in this article to contribute to the dialogue regarding Latino/a hiring and retention by stepping back from the literature and delving into some controversial areas that are often not thoroughly discussed. We begin this process by posing a hypothetical faculty hiring situation that we will follow throughout the article.

Imagine you are on a faculty search committee at a large public university. Recently, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Latinos both in the community and in the student population. Therefore, the dean of your college wants to hire a Latino/a faculty member to “diversify” your department. Now imagine that the following three candidates rise to the top of the search committee list:

Juan is a racially mixed (indigenous/European) Mexican American whose area of research deals with Chicano/a² issues. He is bilingual and he is the third generation of his family to live in the United States. Juan takes great pride in working with Latino/a students and is very involved in the local Latino/a community.

David is racially mixed (African/European) of Venezuelan ancestry, and he carefully avoids any ethnic or “brown-on-brown” research. He is monolingual (speaks only English) and considers himself first and foremost an American. He is not interested in the Latino/a community and has no desire to mentor Latino/a students.

Celia is White and of English ancestry. Although she was born in the United States and her parents were not Latinos/as, her stepmother is Puerto Rican and Celia grew up in Puerto Rico, where she learned Spanish and married a Puerto Rican. She considers herself ethnically Latina. Her research interests are in Latino/a issues.

Suppose further that the qualifications of all three candidates are roughly equal and their performance on campus interviews and job talks is, again, equal. Which candidate do you think has an advantage in the hiring process? Given the charge by the dean to diversify, which candidate do you imagine best fits that description? Which candidate do you imagine has the best chance for success (tenure)? Which candidate qualifies for affirmative action or targeted hiring funds? What should be

the basis for making the hiring decision, and should the Latino/a community be a part of that decision?

Given the variety of dimensions of being Latino/a that the three candidates represent, it seems prudent to begin with an examination of what the term *Latino/a* has meant historically.

When You Say You Want Latino/a Faculty, What Exactly Do You Mean?

Hispanic and *Latino/a* are controversial panethnic terms used to categorize millions of people of varied racial, ethnic, national, and cultural heritages. Terminology used to describe Latino/a or Hispanic people has a long and controversial history in the United States. Several authors (e.g., Martinez, 2000; McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004; Rodriguez, 2000) have traced the various ways people known as Latinos/as have been identified, classified, and included or excluded from the U.S. political system. Mexican was first used as a racial category by the U.S. government in 1930 (Martinez, 2000; Rodriguez, 2000), and criteria such as language and surname were used as categories for Latinos/as until the 1970s when Hispanic became an official category. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB; 1997) classifies a Hispanic individual as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term *Spanish origin* can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino.” According to the standards for maintaining data on race and ethnicity for all federal purposes, there are five categories for data on race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. There are two categories for data on ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. Consequently, Hispanic individuals are a unique group in that they have both an official ethnicity and race. The OMB notes that the categories used in classification are sociopolitical constructs and are not scientific or anthropological in nature.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2004) defines *Hispanic* similarly to the OMB but with some important differences. Persons are considered of Hispanic origin if they classify themselves as having origin in specific Hispanic categories: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin. The Census Bureau differs from the OMB in that it goes on to define the Other category as those with origins from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic. One might question what exactly is meant by the term *origin*—the Census Bureau defines *origin* as “the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, ¶ 2).

It should also be noted that the Census Bureau clearly states that those of Hispanic origin can be of any race. In fact, according to the Census Bureau’s (2004)

official definition of race, those who consider themselves as belonging to a Hispanic group that does not fall under any of the aforementioned five racial categories are encouraged to mark "some other race." There is mounting evidence that some Latinos/as may be rejecting these racial classifications (see McConnell & Delgado-Romero, 2004) and view themselves as part of a distinct racial group (Latinos, *Raza*) or prefer to use descriptors that situate their racial identity along a continuum as opposed to the categorical systems used in the United States.

In our case example, the dean has purposely left ambiguous what he means in his call to diversify the faculty and we do not know what definition of *diversity* or *Latino/a* is being used. His definition may differ from the definitions used by the search committee, affirmative action officers, and perhaps the candidates themselves. We find ourselves asking, What is a Latino/a person anyhow?

Latino/a Faculty: What We Know

The United States continues to see a rising population of Latino/a people with an increase of 5 million people over the past 3 years, the largest of any racial or ethnic group. In 2005, according to the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), more than 41 million people reported themselves as being of Hispanic origin. Of those identifying as being of Hispanic origin, 26.7 million were Mexican, 3.8 million were Puerto Rican, 1.5 million were Cuban, and 9.8 million listed themselves as Other Hispanic or Latino. This is out of 288.4 million people total in the United States.

But despite the fact that Latinos/as make up the largest ethnic minority group in the country (about 14% of the U.S. population), fewer obtain a bachelor's degree or higher (11.4%) and become faculty in university settings (2.9%) than do Whites and other minority individuals (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Latinos/as who do become faculty are disproportionately concentrated in the humanities, foreign language departments, HSIs, and 2-year colleges. Most often, Latinos/as find themselves in relatively low-status, non-tenure-track positions with little hope of advancement or entry into the power structure of academia (Allen et al., 2002; Delgado-Romero et al., 2003). It is clear that disparities exist in the tenure rate for Latino/a faculty in that the tenure rate for Latinos (64%) is lower than the overall tenure rate (73%) as well as the tenure rate for Whites (75%). Gender issues also exist; Latino men are more likely to be tenured (68%) than are Latina women (59%) (Harvey, 2002). Latino/a professors are nearly evenly distributed throughout the ranks (e.g., assistant, associate, and full professors) such that there is little opportunity to increase the proportion of Latino full professors in the near future (Chapa, in press). What is not clear is why these disparities exist.

This disparity between Latina/o individuals and other ethnic groups in education and faculty position attainment, however, does not reflect a lack of interest in academia. Of the top five occupational choices of Latina/o college seniors, Professor ranked number

one with 37% of responses, 13% more than the second most popular choice (Cole & Barber, 2003). If so many Latina/o college seniors are interested in becoming university professors, why are these aspirations not reflected in entry to the academic pipeline? Despite the aspirations of Latina/o college seniors, very few are able to navigate the pipeline from an undergraduate degree to graduate school to the professoriate.

Of those Latinos/as who are able to become professors, Verdugo (2003) listed the following barriers to success that are often encountered: discrimination, low number of Latino/a faculty (leading to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and tokenization), and the lack of status and power of Latino/a faculty in higher education, which precludes them from being positive role models for Latino/a students.

It is interesting that the most recent statistical analyses released by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2002), show no significant differences between Latina/o faculty and White faculty on dimensions such as average salary (adjusted for rank, experience, and other variables), number of publications, or official workload. On the surface these statistics seem to support the argument that Latina/o faculty receive equal treatment to their White colleagues in academe. However, given that academia is hierarchically organized, adjusting for rank can lead to a misleading picture as the largest group of Latinos/as occupy the lowest ranks (adjunct, affiliate, and assistant professors) and the largest group of Whites occupies the highest ranks (full professors) (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003). Thus, statistics can be used to overlook this systemic issue. In addition, statistics do not account for the discrimination and racism Latinas/os and other minority individuals may experience as perpetual outsiders to the sociopolitical and cultural climate of the academy.

Statistics also fail to account for institutional policies and practices that continue to perpetuate the established order. Policies and politics dictate whether minority faculty ever attain the coveted full professorships that will allow them salaries, prestige, and advancement opportunities equal to those of their White counterparts. Policy, in conjunction with departmental attitudes, also influences whether tenure committees will value the unique contributions of minority faculty that choose to pursue brown-on-brown research and provide ethnically oriented service contributions to campus and community minority groups. Tenure and promotion committees may also be unaware that minority faculty who teach courses with an ethnic or racial focus may routinely be evaluated much more harshly by students, which often leads to lowered teaching evaluations (Helms et al., 2003).

Dimensions of Latino/a Faculty

The hypothetical faculty search that we used to start the article shows that the vague definitions of Latino/a permit a wide variety of people to count as Latino/a. For example, given the rather vague definition of Hispanic used by the OMB, people like Celia may qualify as Hispanic or Latino/a. That is, Celia was born in the United

States, has no Hispanic-blood (biological) relatives, yet can self-identify ethnically as Hispanic, given the lack of a definition of what it means to be Latino/a. As an alternative to the OMB, some organizations define *Latino/a* more narrowly. For example, the Ford Foundation (www.fordfound.org) restricts its funding to people who are “Mexican Americans/Chicano/Chicana” and “Puerto Ricans.” In this scenario, David and Celia are not eligible as Latinos/as unless Celia is considered a Puerto Rican by virtue of having Puerto Rican relatives by marriage (which is unlikely). However, given concerns about a legal challenge, colleges and universities are unlikely to use more restrictive definitions of the term *Latino/a*, at least overtly, and will most likely adhere to governmental categories.

Given the ambiguous nature of the self-defined racial and ethnic category of Latino/a, in this article we propose an alternate model of understanding the multiple dimensions of Latino/a identification.³ We propose the following salient dimensions:

- A. Latino/a by national origin—born in or descended from family born in a Central American, South American, or Caribbean country
- B. Latino/a by descent—biological descendant of inhabitants of the above countries, might involve the concept of Spanish or indigenous biological heritage
- C. Latino/a by personal cultural commitment—regardless of biology or ancestry, the person considers himself or herself ethnically or culturally Latino/a
- D. Latino/a by professional cultural commitment—the focus of scholarship, research, or teaching or service is on Latino/a issues
- E. Latino/a by language—advanced ability to speak and write Spanish
- F. Latino/a by surname—regardless of national, biological, or cultural origins there is a Hispanic/Spanish surname (for example, through marriage)
- G. Latino/a by law or rule—someone who meets a legal or professional definition of *Latino/a*, regardless of self-identification

We note that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive and may overlap. A given person may qualify under several dimensions and still refuse to identify as Latino/a. These dimensions are demographic (A, B, E, F) or based on self-identification (C, D) or government identification (G) and do not necessarily correlate with the ways that other people identify an individual. For example, David is racially mixed and might be identified as Latino or African American by others who focus on skin color as an indicator of ethnicity.

Anyone who has ever served on a search committee realizes that there is the overt process and the covert process to a search. A search committee often has expectations (manifested overtly and covertly) of job candidates for a given faculty position such as the following:

1. Representation only: The position requires someone who can “check a box” and count as Latino/a for the purpose of accreditation reports or to fulfill a mandate for diversity without contributing substantively to racial or ethnic concerns.

2. Latino/a neutral: The ethnicity and research interests of the candidate are not a criterion pro or con.
3. Latino/a centered: The position requires research, teaching, or service related to Latino/a issues. The ethnicity and research interests of the candidates are important criteria.
4. Latino/a biased: The department is actively biased against Latino/a faculty or certain types of Latino/a faculty (e.g., Mexican American).

It should be noted that the expectations and motivating factors for Latino/a hiring can significantly vary among faculty and administrators.

The interaction of the dimensions of the candidate with the institutional demands of (and motivation for) the position can create interesting situations. For example, returning to our hypothetical search, what dimensions of Latino/a experience are the dean or search committee looking for? Do they want representation only (dimensions A or F but most importantly G)? Is it a Latino/a-centered (dimension C or D) position? Looking at our candidates, Juan fulfills dimensions A, B, C, D, E, F, and G; David fulfills dimensions A, B, F, and most likely G; and Celia fulfills dimensions C, D, E, and F. A department seeking representation only would most likely (assuming all other things are equal) select David and avoid the others. A Latino/a-centered position would fit either Juan or Celia. A Latino/a-neutral position would most likely favor David. A Latino/a-biased position would fit Celia (if phenotype is the salient dimension) or David (if cultural commitment is the salient dimension).

There are many other factors at play including the number of Latino/a faculty or administrators of color who are already members of the faculty, the Latino/a community in which the university is located, the number of Latino/a students and their desire for Latino/a faculty, pressure from accrediting bodies to diversify the faculty, and faculty and administration attitudes toward hiring Latino/a faculty.

Things Unknown but Should Be Known About Latino/a Faculty

Although some things in general are known about the issues facing Latino/a faculty in the United States, there is much that is simply unknown. In this section we focus on issues related to the use of generic and panethnic labels for Latinos/as, the essence of Latino/a identity, relationships between Latinos/as and African Americans, the invisibility of Latino/a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered faculty, and the marginalization of the culturally compatible narrative approach to research.

In the majority of available research and statistics regarding Latino/a faculty, there is widespread use of generic or panethnic terms such as *Hispanic* or *Latino/a*. The use of these generic terms results in data that do not discriminate between Latino/a sub-populations; often confound U.S. Latinos/as with Latinos/as from foreign countries;

inflate numbers by the inclusion of all Hispanic-surnamed individuals (for example, non-Hispanic individuals married to Hispanic individuals); and are based on institutional reports that often include retired, resigned, and part-time instructors who are not actively involved in faculty life (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003; Olivas, 1996). In addition, such data also often fail to distinguish between faculty at 2-year and 4-year institutions or between faculty at predominantly White institutions and HSIs and may include data from the Puerto Rican university system (e.g., the American Council on Education; Harvey, 2002). Although there are some exceptions (e.g., Chapa, in press; Olivas, 1996; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002), statistics are not presented in a way that permits a thorough discussion of exactly who composes the Latino/a professoriate.

Mexican American individuals compose the largest group of Latinos/as in the United States and have a long history in the country. Yet the statistics on Latino/a faculty often do not permit an analysis of the representation of Chicano/a faculty because data are not presented by national origin or ethnicity. Garza (1993) mentioned that the representation of Chicano/a professors in higher education remains the "absolute lowest" (p. 33) of all minority groups when their proportion of the U.S. population is considered. Chapa (in press) found that Chicanos/as are only 25.4% of the Latino/a faculty despite composing 58.5% of the U.S. Latino/a population. Chapa also pointed out that 49.2% of Latino/a professors are immigrants (a percentage excluding Puerto Ricans because they are U.S. citizens). This large percentage of immigrant faculty raises concerns for the status of U.S. Latinos/as and has implications for the state of the educational pipeline in the United States. The reasons for Chicano/a underrepresentation and the large number of immigrants in the U.S. professoriate must be examined in depth. For example, it is quite problematic in terms of social justice if Chicanos/as are systemically excluded from the professoriate based on discrimination that places Chicanos/as at the bottom of the Latino/a prestige hierarchy (Shorris, 1992). Similarly, it is problematic if the success of non-Chicano/a faculty is based in part on discrimination against Chicanos/as. For example, in our faculty hiring case scenario, what if Juan is not hired because of anti-Mexican bias? What if David or Celia is hired as a result of anti-Mexican bias? We do not mean to imply that Chicanos/as are not Latinos/as or that other Latinos/as are less than Mexican Americans. However, given historical discrimination against Chicanos/as and the fact that they compose the largest Latino/a group in the United States, this issue must be addressed in a manner that permits researchers to disaggregate data in a way that is reflective of social concerns within the Latino/a community.

Similarly, the use of panethnic terms obscures historical factors that have resulted in groups of people with very little Spanish, indigenous, or African ancestry who are considered Latino/a: for example, immigrants from European and Asian countries who have spent some time in Latin American countries and are then classified as Latino/a (based on country of origin before entry into the United States). In defining a Latino/a, is the country of origin of ancestors more important than cultural (professional or personal)

commitment? In our case example, if we changed the information that Celia was of Chinese heritage and had been born in Cuba, would she be considered Latino/a based on her country of birth?

One of our main concerns in this article is that the vague and overly inclusive definitions of Latino/a will result in an eventual watering down of the Latino/a category until it is meaningless. We believe that Latino/a people need to identify the defining features of being Latino/a. In other words, they need to determine the essence of being a Latino/a; otherwise, varied and politically motivated definitions of *Latino/a* from outside the Latino/a community will be used to determine inclusion in the Latino/a group.

Our goal is not a better system of categorization. We are aware that groups have constructed efficient categorical systems for people of color that were immoral and ethically inappropriate (e.g., Nazi eugenic classifications, see Lifton, 1986; the rule of hypodescent, see Root, 1996; Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2003). Therefore, category is less important than consensus. However, that consensus needs to be critically informed because as critical race theory (known as LatCrit) scholars have pointed out (e.g., Valdes, 2000) Latino/a identity in the United States has been greatly influenced by racial and ethnic politics tied to notions of White superiority. Defining the essence of being Latino/a is no small task; for example, legal scholars have stated that the issue of Latino/a identity presents a “practically impossible challenge” (Simon, 1994, p. 522) for the courts.

Returning to our original example, let’s assume Celia is hired but that the search committee or dean assumes she is Latino/a (using criteria A, B, or G). Remember that Celia self-identifies as ethnically Latino/a but was not born in a Latino country nor is biologically related to any Latino/a people (criteria C, D, and E). What recourse does a program have if it discovers that a faculty member’s understanding of what Latino/a means differs from others’ (the program, administrators) understanding of what it means to be Latino/a? That is, if the department becomes aware that they define Latino/a differently than Celia does, can they fire her? Given her level of professional cultural commitment, would such a firing be ethically appropriate or legal? Given that a Latino/a is not universally recognized by skin color and that there is not a way to prove Latino/a status (compared to Native American tribal affiliations) other than self-identification, how does a program or community verify Latino/a status and what criterion is used? What is the result of using that criterion and who is most affected? Conversely, what about Celia? Does she have a right to identify herself according to her personal and cultural commitment? If Celia is hired as the result of ethnic minority-targeted funds or an affirmative action program, does that change your opinion?⁴ If Celia is Latina by choice, what role does choice play in being Latino/a (remember that David chooses not to identify as Latino)? It quickly becomes clear why many people would want to avoid the messy and complicated political, legal, and ethical dilemmas involving complicated social and personal-identity dynamics inherent in deciding who is or is not Latino/a.

A controversial area in higher education is the relationship between African American and Latino/a faculty (Delgado, 2004). Scholars have debated Black exceptionalism

versus Latino exceptionalism (Espinoza & Harris, 2000) but this topic remains largely unexamined in higher education, although it will likely become a growing issue as the number of Latinos/as continues to grow. Latinos/as have supplanted African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States and, therefore, the challenge seems to be whether Latino/a and African American faculty and administrators will be able to form coalitions or if relations between the two groups will be competitive or antagonistic. In light of the historical oppression of African Americans in the United States, will Latino/a success (or failure) be in spite of racism and prejudice or because of it (that is, as a result of anti-Black bias)? This controversial area needs to be addressed because there is potential for African Americans and Latinos/as to lose ground overall while competing for selected minority positions.

One aspect of Latino/a faculty experience that is virtually absent from the research literature is the experience of Latino/a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (L-LGBT) faculty. A decision that some Latino/a faculty have to make either in the job search or within their academic setting is whether to disclose their sexual orientation (Ellis, 1996; Pope, 1996). Often ethnicity becomes the sole focus of the L-LGBT faculty member's identity expression. The fact that he or she may identify as a double (Latino/a and LGBT) or triple (Latina, LGBT, and female) minority is often overlooked. Making the decision to come out (implying that an individual has disclosed his or her sexual orientation) during the job search or once hired has immediate and long-term implications (e.g., Rosabal, 1996; Friskopp & Silverstein, 1995).

The L-LGBT faculty member may have to contend with heterosexism and homophobia in the job search and work setting (Gelberg & Chojnacki, 1996) as well as in the Latino/a community and perhaps in his or her own family. Consequently, L-LGBT faculty might justifiably be cautious regarding when and with whom they share personal information. It is important to keep in mind that it may be difficult for the L-LGBT faculty candidate to assess the climate toward LGBT individuals prior to applying or interviewing. Unfortunately, for some L-LGBT faculty members the decision to disclose their double minority status is not always clear and may jeopardize their sense of well-being (Barret & Logan, 2002). Heterosexism and homophobia may be present on a personal or institutional level. For the faculty member, these aversive concepts may cause emotional and physical harm, feelings of isolation and alienation, fears of rejection or judgment, or loss of opportunity for tenure and promotion. The detrimental effect of these losses on self-identity may be high, and the effect on one's self-esteem may in turn affect job performance and satisfaction (Powers, 1996).

Imagine if one or several of the candidates in our case example were LGBT. How do you imagine that would affect the search process? How does it affect the view of that person's cultural commitment? In other words, is it assumed that a Latino/a faculty candidate is heterosexual? How might community members and students react if they hold homophobic attitudes toward LGBT people? The literature, and some would argue the Latino/a culture itself, is mostly silent on the challenges facing L-LGBT

individuals, and clearly more needs to be known about the experiences of L-LGBT faculty. Although departments should have appropriate policies regarding the reporting and management of sexual harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes (Badgett, 1996), we worry that the silence on this issue masks prejudice and homophobia that does not rise to reportable levels yet threatens to sap the spirit of L-LGBT faculty.

Numbers and statistics may present one aspect of the story of Latino/a faculty but what of the lived experiences of Latino/a faculty? As we seek to define experience based on discrete and, allegedly, measurable constructs such as race and average (adjusted) salary, the real life experiences of individuals can be masked. For example, what does it feel like to walk into the office each day and know that you will not see another face like yours or hear Spanish all day? How does it feel to be deeply passionate and committed to conducting Latino/a-focused research that is devalued by your peers and senior faculty? How does being perceived as the “affirmative action hire” affect your work and your feelings of competence as a qualified professional? How does it feel to be bilingual in a department of monolingual individuals and yet have your bilingual ability ignored, devalued, or exploited? These aspects of discrimination (Verdugo, 2003) are typically often not examined systemically and presented only anecdotally.

Several Latino/a scholars have attempted to highlight the issues of Latino/a faculty through the use of personal narratives (e.g., Delgado, 1989; Delgado-Romero et al., 2003; Niemann, 1999; Olivas, 1996; L. M. Padilla, 2001; R. V. Padilla & Chávez, 1995; Reyes & Halcón, 1996; Rivas, Delgado-Romero, & Ozambela, 2004; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). These narratives can give voice to unaddressed barriers in academia and provide validation, identification, catharsis, and relief to readers about the structural, sociopolitical, and interpersonal dynamics in higher education. However, the risk to sharing narratives is twofold: Narratives are often not considered legitimate academic work and the sharing of a narrative may leave an individual feeling vulnerable and exposed. For example, even if narratives are presented anonymously, the low numbers of Latino/a faculty may lead to identification of the writers. Nonetheless, narratives provide a necessary counterweight to the impersonal nature of statistics that can sometimes be manipulated to misrepresent the lived experiences of Latinos/as (e.g., Olivas, 1996). Given that *personalismo* (a preference for close personal relationships) is a core cultural value for Latino/a professionals (Comas-Díaz, 1997), it seems imperative that the lived experiences of Latino/a faculty be shared.

Retention

In a conversation with an administrator at his university, the lead author asked why there were no retention efforts aimed at pretenure faculty of color. The administrator responded that he did not want to stigmatize the faculty of color by “singling them out for special treatment” and suggested that all pretenure faculty members could use

support, not just one group. This example represents an attitude toward retention that seems to permeate higher education. Basically, the idea seems to be that any effort to focus on the unique problems of faculty of color might undermine the tenure process, which is presumed to be impartial and based on merit. However, (a) many Latino/a faculty experience the tenure process as anything but impartial and related to ideals of merit that are inflexible and culturally insensitive and (b) it seems that many programs, departments, and schools may elect not to offer any retention efforts under the guise of fairness or else they may offer a standard retention effort that does not address the unique experiences of Latino/a faculty. Do Latino/a faculty deserve specialized retention efforts? Yes, to the extent that they face specialized barriers to their success. In addition, Latino/a faculty may hesitate to ask for help or to question the tenure system because of the fear that they will be accused of being too sensitive, defensive, or are trying to get special treatment (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003).

For example, Latina/o faculty may face specific obstacles related to their orientation toward collectivism within a politically minded system centered on individualism and opportunism (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003). The absence of others within the department sharing values such as *personalismo*, *simpatia*, *familismo*, and *allocentrism* may not only put Latina/o individuals at a disadvantage in such an environment but may also leave them feeling used and isolated (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003). Latina/o individuals also face obstacles relating to the vast diversity within their broadly defined ethnic group. Differences in attributes such as skin color, country of origin, level of acculturation, and accent may result in differential treatment from students and colleagues. L-LGBT individuals may face double or triple stigmatization and in some cases may not find that they feel comfortable in the local LGBT community. Consequently, retention efforts must be culturally sensitive rather than “one type fits all.”

We argue that the need for retention efforts directly relates to our model of the interaction between the dimensions of Latino/a experience and the demands and requirements of an individual faculty position. For example, if the position calls for representation only or is Latino/a neutral and the candidate is only interested in checking a box regarding Latino/a identity, retention efforts will likely be very similar to the retention efforts used with other non-Latino/a faculty. If the position is Latino/a centered and the candidate is personally or professionally Latino/a focused, then the candidate may either (a) find the position energizing and need little additional retention efforts or (b) find the position exhausting and need retention efforts focused on culturally sensitive burnout prevention. Additionally, a mismatch between job expectations and candidate characteristics may also necessitate retention efforts or perhaps even reconsideration of the appropriateness of the position or candidate.

Despite a general perception of the need to have diversity among faculty, many departments do not clearly establish why they are hiring a Latino/a faculty member in the first place. Traditionally, the motivations for hiring minority individuals such as Latinos/as have included (a) redressing past discrimination, (b) adding to the racial and ethnic diversity of faculty, (c) adding to the diversity of experience and

expertise of faculty, and (d) reflecting a changing student or community demographic. Of these motivations, currently only c seems to have withstood legal challenge (so far) as a stated motivation for diversifying faculty. Consequently, the overt and covert motivations for hiring minority individuals should be honestly discussed by administration and faculty within the department to ensure that expectations are fair and realistic. For example, it seems unreasonable to expect that a minority hire will act as sole advocate and implementer of all projects relating to diversity (especially if these projects are not valued in tenure and promotion decisions), nor is it realistic to think that the mere presence of a Latino/a faculty member or any other minority faculty will negate the need for further action and accountability on the part of all faculty to embrace diversity within the department. It is also critical that the expectations of the department match the expectations (and ability) of the Latino/a faculty member because incompatible expectations will yield undesirable outcomes for both the minority faculty member and the department. For example, Juan might be asked to limit his ethnic minority–related service and research, David might be asked to provide ethnic minority–related service and research, and Celia may experience an identity crisis if other faculty do not accept her identification as Latino/a.

Universities often fail to recognize that the job of implementing diversity within an institution does not stop once minority faculty members are hired. Rather, the entire methodology and philosophy of the schools must change to serve populations of students and faculty that have not previously had access to academia. Minority hiring is only one small element of the much larger scheme of diversification within schools.

The biggest challenge of implementing diversity is that no one seems to know what it actually means to incorporate it into the existing social power structure. Brayboy (2003) argued that the process of diversification is not merely a set of unrelated programs or policies—such as offering diversity courses, providing students with a diverse set of mentors, or hiring more faculty of color—but rather a total restructuring of the underlying values that inform and motivate everyday activities dictating the true climate of the institution. As the landscape of the academy changes, so must its values to reflect the ideals of all involved in the system, not just those who have traditionally held the power (White males). Furthermore, it seems dishonest to ask faculty of color to challenge and change a system in which they have been traditionally marginalized.

Universities need not lessen standards—only broaden them to include the wider range of service and research interests representative of the contributions of all faculty. Specific elements of effective diversification efforts repeatedly mentioned in the existing literature include providing trained mentors for minority faculty, allowing for more flexibility in activities and research contributing to evaluation of tenure, supporting research on the positive impacts of minority faculty, minimizing the importance of shared research interests with senior faculty, resisting the urge to overload minority faculty with all of the work of diversity, and creating a general atmosphere of acceptance and appreciation of minority faculty contributions within the department (Alger,

2000; Brayboy, 2003; Chapa, in press; Delgado-Romero et al., 2003; Fenelon, 2003; Guanipa et al., 2003; Moody, 2004; Plata, 1996; Verdugo, 1995).

Conclusion

This article introduces and discusses some cutting-edge and controversial issues that are often not addressed or considered when dealing with Latina/o faculty but that occur with some degree of frequency. We provided insight into an alternative model of understanding the multiple dimensions of Latina/o identification. We have highlighted a number of barriers faced by Latina/o professionals who have entered or considered academia as a career choice. It is imperative that comprehensive and culturally sensitive procedures and policies are implemented in the recruitment and retention of Latina/o faculty.

With the provision of insight and suggestions into the recruitment and retention of Latina/o faculty, the reader has been introduced to several controversial issues that may inadvertently occur or be prejudicially applied. We have explored the widespread use of generic or panethnic terms such as *Hispanic* and *Latino/a*, which tend to affect the actual statistics of those cultural groups and their representative members. We presented several suggestions to overcome the challenges in recruiting and retaining Latina/o faculty. We provided insight into the multiple identities that some Latina/o faculty may have and the impact these multiple identities may have if they are not acknowledged or allowed to be expressed. For example, the discussion on the double identity of an LGBT Latina/o faculty member outlined the importance of sensitivity in the recruitment and retention process to ensure that LGBT Latina/o faculty choices of self-identify are not being ignored or oppressed.

We have outlined several important challenges facing minority individuals and indicated that institutions of higher learning must perform a better job of addressing the unique dynamics facing the Latina/o faculty of today. Without clear understandings by all involved as to what dimensions of Latino/a faculty are salient and desirable within a given institutional context, efforts to hire and retain Latino/a faculty are unlikely to succeed. This understanding is necessary so that faculty and administrators are able to discuss their values and how these values are reflected in hiring, promotion, and retention so that Latino/a faculty understand what aspects of their experience are (a) sought after and (b) rewarded through tenure and promotion and so that the U.S. higher education system remains relevant and responsive to the rapidly growing Latino/a population. The alternative is that the status quo remains unchanged and Latino/a faculty members are eventually classified as an ethnic variation (similar to Irish or English) of the majority population and loses a distinctive identity (although they still may be subject to discrimination). Such an understanding would make clear the relative desirability and fit of Juan, David, and Celia. The accommodations and specialized retention efforts that hiring each of these qualified candidates entails should be examined and known to all involved.

To ignore that racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, and discrimination exist in the recruitment and retention of Latino/a faculty is to diminish the richness and diversity of contributions made by Latinos/as in the fields of teaching, research, service, and development of the current generation of students who will engage and interact in a pluralistic, multicultural society. It is imperative that this next generation of leaders be exposed to a variety of individuals, experiences, and challenges to ensure they will be prepared for the globalization of industry, education, politics, and health in the multicultural world. Institutions of higher learning must not miss opportunities to expose their students to a diverse learning environment with faculty who are representative of the society and cultures in which they live.

Notes

1. *Hispanic* and *Latino/a* are often used interchangeably although the two terms have different origins and connotations. In this article, we use the term *Latino/a* unless we specifically refer to government publications that use the term *Hispanic*. The word *Hispanic* refers to historical influence of Spain in the Americas. The word *Latino* traces its roots back to ancient Rome and some say it is more inclusive and politically progressive. Valdes (2000) pointed out that the language used in the 2000 Census that uses the terms *Spanish-Hispanic-Latino* reflects the hierarchical status of the three terms in the United States. Other specific terms such as *Chicano/a* will be used when appropriate.

2. *Chicano/a* is a term used for Mexican Americans that can have political connotations.

3. We also assume that we are referring to U.S. Latinos/as not Latin American citizens (which is a separate and controversial issue—see Chapa, in press, and Verdugo, 2003).

4. If the aim of such programs is to rectify past discrimination, can Celia claim discrimination as part of her ethnic affiliation? The politics of discrimination are complicated and hard to substantiate for a diverse ethnic group such as Latinos (see Simon, 1994), which is why affirmative action programs now speak of diversity of experience and focus on the experience the candidate brings to the professoriate.

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