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Chicanas in Academe: An Endangered Species

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The more I talk to Chicanas, and other women of color in the academy, the more I come to the conclusion that academic success and upward mobility in the academy requires an allegiance, a tacit oath which, if written, would go something like this:

> I pledge allegiance
> to a white academy,
> and to the scholarship which it reveres,
> one paradigm, under white males,
> monolithic, homophobic, and Eurocentric—for *all*.

This pledge embodies the conflict and contradictions Chicanas must endure in the academy. It demands that we disassociate ourselves from our cultural identities, punishes and demeans us for having research interests with links to our own lives and our community, attempts to make us forget that we can make a difference, and demands a heavy price for full admission, one that many Chicanas are refusing to pay (Reyes 1992).

Introduction

This chapter focuses on three case studies. They are part of a larger study on Chicana academics which took place at Major University (pseudonym) between 1992 and 1994. Major University is the flagship university in a state where Chicanos (Americans of Mexican decent) make up nearly a quarter of the population. The university was founded over 125 years ago. It currently boasts a student enroll-

ment of 25,000 and approximately 1,100 tenure-track faculty. Although it is located only thirty-five miles from the largest Chicano enclave in the state, at the time of the study, there were fewer than 1,000 Chicano *and* Latino students and a total of 24 Chicano faculty (male and female). Of these 24, only *one* Chicana was *tenured*, at the associate professor rank. There were no Chicana professors.

The irony was that despite this small number of Chicano professors, Major University still had eleven women faculty members—among the largest critical mass of Chicanas in any major *research* university in the Southwest. These Chicanas represented earned Ph.D.s from elite institutions such as Berkeley, UCLA, Yale, UT-Austin, Stanford. In this chapter I attempt to illustrate how, despite the impressive credentials and accomplishments of these Chicanas, their resistance to being molded into traditional Eurocentric scholars and their deeply engrained commitment to the social transformation of the Chicano community mitigate against their success in academe and contribute to their "endangered" status.

Cultural and Political Forces Affecting Chicanas in Academe

Though highly educated and independent, the majority of Chicana academics still struggle to balance their own cultural identity and the political struggle of their community with the Eurocentric, patriarchical, and hierarchical requirements for success set by a majority white, male academy. The importance of *familia*, the traditional extended family, remains at the heart of Chicano values (Baca-Zinn 1980). This centrality of *familia* affects them in two ways. First, Chicanas—regardless of their educational level or their own personal preferences—continue to feel the pressure from the larger community outside academe to accept the traditional role of mother and wife still predominant in Chicano culture. Young Chicanas pursuing graduate studies, for example, are often confronted with, "Yes, but do you have any prospects for marriage?" Married Chicana academics with children face additional pressures of maintaining the role of wife and mother as well as that of scholar. The lifestyle of an academic which requires much solitary work—long hours of research and writing—is often incompatible with maintaining a traditional family life. It is not coincidental that many of the most successful Chicana academics are either single, divorced, or lesbian. Second, for the Chicana the value of *familia* translates into a concern for the common good of that community. Imbedded in Chicana consciousness is a responsibility to "give back" to the community who throughout the history of Chicanos has collectively nourished its mem-

bers and fought against their oppression. This responsibility is critical and at times weighs heavily on Chicanas in the academy.

The demands of the academy as well as their own desire to give back to the Chicano community exert a unique "push-pull effect" between their professional career and their cultural identity. On the one hand, the academy applies strong pressure to conform to Eurocentric definitions of scholarship. It attempts to remold Chicanas into what they do *not* want to be: brown copies of white scholars. On the other hand, Chicanas are more interested in utilizing their academic knowledge for the social transformation of their community. As one of my Chicana colleagues put it, "We get our Ph.D. for different reasons. . . . [We] are here [in the academy] for a different purpose." Yet the warnings from the academy are clear: avoid "brown on brown" research (Reyes and Halcón 1988), steer clear of issues affecting your own ethnic community. Walking a tightrope between these two forces creates a major challenge as Chicanas must do this within a hegemonic system buttressed by both racist and sexist structures.

Chicana academics, for example, are expected to achieve success in spite of their "triple oppression" (de la Torre & Pesquera 1993): discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, which they share with Chicanos; gender discrimination, which they share with white women; and discrimination as *women of color*, members of *two oppressed groups*. Like other women of color, they are victims both of racism and of sexism. When it comes to special opportunities or key positions, Chicanas frequently feel passed over: first, for white males; second, for white females; and third, for ethnic males (Reyes 1992).

Alienation and invisibility in the academy are common experiences for Chicanas. This alienation from their white colleagues is exacerbated by the fact that Chicanas also feel excluded both from the dominant Chicano discourse that has typically focused on ethnic and class domination without addressing gender differences, and from white feminist theory that ignores white privilege and the marginal location of women of color within the academy. This exclusion by white women is primarily, but not always, from heterosexual women. Neither of these groups with whom they share common experiences has championed their cause in any significant manner.

Chicanas with a strong cultural identity feel tremendous conflict in having to choose between their commitment to community and academic success. Sacrifices in their personal and professional lives required for success in the academy (i.e., achieve tenure) are often too high. Thus, a number of them are leaving academia before facing the pressures of the tenure process, or shedding their cultural identity to succeed in the acad-

emy. For those who remain in higher education, a good number remain frozen at the lower ranks. Many others transfer out of Ph.D.-granting institutions, further reducing their potential to influence the nature of the academy and reducing the number of Chicanas in academe.

Endangered Status

The majority of Chicanas in faculty positions in major research universities are first-generation academics and can be divided into three significant waves of Chicanas completing Ph.D.s. The first wave completed their degrees in the late sixties and midseventies and have been teaching an average of twenty years; a majority of the tenured full professors are from this wave. The second wave graduated in the midseventies to mideighties. And the third wave (which comprises most of the women in my study) completed their doctorates in the mideighties to the early nineties.

My assertion is that Chicanas in academe are an "endangered species." By the best of estimates, Chicana *full* professors at major research universities across the country *in all disciplines* except law and medicine total about fifty. I arrived at this estimate by contacting individual members of the small network of prominent Chicanas in research institutions around the country and cross-referencing that information with estimates from Centers for Chicano Research at Stanford, Arizona State University, San Antonio, Houston, the Tomás Rivera Center, and the Postsecondary Education Commissions in California and in Texas.

As a Chicana with eleven years in academe, what I have learned about other Chicanas in research universities is that they generally fall into three categories: I know them, I know *of* them, or I know someone who knows them. Because the network is so small, this is also what other Chicana and Chicano colleagues have told me about this network of women. Thus, in the absence of accurate data sources—most of which group all Latinos together (Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South Americans, etc.), I surveyed key Chicanas, well known in their fields, to generate lists from their own personal knowledge of other Chicana academics across the country. The fortunate thing was that the network is small enough to make a good estimate possible; the unfortunate reality is that the numbers are minuscule.

Definition of Terms

My claim that Chicanas in academe are an endangered species is based on my definition of the word *academe* as Ph.D.-granting institu-

tions focused primarily on research. My rationale is that these universities are considered the bastions of intelligentsia, where degrees are conferred to those destined to occupy positions of leadership in America.

It is at research institutions like these where the majority of published scholarship is generated—books, articles, and reports that influence the direction of policies affecting the wide spectrum of life in America—where future leaders are prepared, where the "baton of leadership" is passed on to the next generation of doctoral students who will take their place. Faculty at research institutions serve on most editorial boards, national professional boards, and commissions and hold office in professional organizations that determine the direction of their fields and comprise the pool of nationally known "experts" in every field imaginable.

My premise, as I have discussed elsewhere, is that the *center of power* lies within the ranks of the tenured full professor. Tenured full professors control the most powerful committees in academe: governance, curriculum, budget, promotion, review, and tenure. I believe that without voice at this level, Chicanas will have little access to knowledge-generating positions that will influence learning for *all* college graduates (Reyes and Halcón 1988; Reyes and Halcón 1991).

Limiting the definition of academe in this manner in no way implies my endorsement of this academic pecking order nor minimizes the many important contributions made by Chicanas in nonresearch universities; it merely acknowledges the dominant construction of the term *academe*.

I use the term *minority* in its standard sociological sense, rather than in a numerical sense; it refers to people relatively powerless in the hierarchy of power and authority.

The word *Chicana* refers to a U.S.-born woman of Mexican descent. It is a term that more specifically identifies and clarifies her minority status vis-à-vis the dominant group and positions her in a unique historical, social, and political context. It is different from the generic term *Latina* which may refer to other women from Spanish-language backgrounds or Spanish-speaking countries. Additionally, the terms *Chicano* and *Chicana* (in contrast to Mexican American) connotes self-affirmation as well as a strong political, cultural, ethnic, and/or linguistic identity. Although Chicana feminists have constructed new ideological and political formations that make more rigid distinctions between the terms *Chicano* and *Chicana* to highlight "privileged male forms of identity" (Chabram Dernersesian 1993, 39), my use of these terms refers respectively to men and women in the Chicano (a more inclusive term for males and females) community.

Theoretical Framework

My work is largely informed by the work of Paulo Freire (1970). Education for emancipation and the concept of 'conscientizaçao', (critical consciousness) resonates well with the experiences of oppressed groups. For Chicanas with strong cultural identity who value commitment to the social transformation of their community, there is a strong connection between the essence of Freire's critical theory and their own sense of struggle for emancipation both from racial and from sexual domination. The writings of women of color, particularly Chicana scholars and poets (Anzaldua 1983; Castillo 1994; Chabram Dernersesian 1993; Cervantes 1992; Cisneros 1991; de la Torre and Pesquera 1993; Facio 1993; Nieto-Gómez 1975, Pérez 1993; Ruíz 1993; Sánchez 1990; Segura 1993) and African American and other women scholars (Collins 1991; hooks 1994; hooks and West 1991; Lorde 1983; Morrison 1990; Ng 1991; 1993; Rains 1995; Williams 1991) influence my perspective as well as my analysis. Bolstered by the perspectives of these women scholars of color, I make the assumption that Chicanas, like other women of color, understand the sources of their triple oppression and yet are able to develop a strong self-identity while appearing to conform to the pressures of the academy. They continue to resist and to find solace and friendship with others who sustain them in their struggle. However, this resistance does not necessarily mean that they remain in academe.

My Role as a Chicana Researcher

My own position is that of "womanist" (see Henry, this volume) rather than strictly feminist—a woman concerned with empowerment of the *entire* oppressed community of color—*males and females*. As a womanist—who is Chicana—my interests are in advancing the concerns of my community, improving the literacy and graduation rates among our youth, and improving its economic and political status. I believe that Chicanas cannot be "liberated" when our people—both males and females—continue to be subjugated by the dominant, racist power structures.

The kinds of experiences I observed closely, as well as those revealed to me by the women in this study, are experiences that I, as a Chicana, and other women faculty of color, encounter on a regular basis. They relate to issues that touch me deeply, some specifically or similarly, others merely by virtue of membership or association with this group. They force me to grapple with the contradictions of my

multiple locations—my continued identification with my poor, working-class upbringing *within a Chicano family* and that of my current middle-class status with membership in both a privileged and elite academy where I play the role of a researcher and academic, yet as a brown woman—marginal in the overall system of authority and privilege. I recognize that I cannot help but speak from an insider's perspective for that is who and where I am. In Alan Peshkin's words, however, "I have looked for myself where, knowingly or not, I think we all are—and unavoidably belong: in the subjective underbrush of our own research experience" (Peshkin 1990, 20). What I mean is that I reject the notion that I as the knower/writer or researcher can be "objective," or that *any* writer can occupy a position which transcends all viewpoints (Ng 1991).

In the following section, I will provide a brief biography of each of these women, highlighting their educational experiences as minorities in schools, then discuss common themes that emerged from my interviews with them. Finally, I analyze these themes in light of these women's struggles in balancing their identity as Chicanas with the demands of the academy which contribute to their endangered status. The names I use here are pseudonyms. I have also purposely camaflouged specific details in broad, generic terms to protect the identity of these women who are part of a very small network of Chicana academics.

Case Studies

Data collection included a survey questionnaire (part of the larger study) which asked about the working climate, job satisfaction, support for research, and other aspects of academic life. In addition, three in-depth interviews were conducted with each woman to explore their life histories; the details of their experiences as academics in their respective fields; and their reflections on the intellectual, cultural, and emotional connections between their work and their lives.

These interviews averaged over two hours each and approximately eight hours per participant. Data also included field notes from participant observation in their public presentations, observations of their interactions with students in class, on campus, and/or in social settings related to University activities; a review of their vitas; and readings of their scholarly publications and stories in campus newspapers.

In the year prior to this aspect of the study, I was a participant observer in, and a member of a group known as the Chicana Faculty

Network (CFN) made up of the eleven Chicana faculty at the University of Colorado where I also taught. During that year, we met informally once a month for purposes of getting acquainted, networking, and supporting each other in our professional endeavors on and off the campus. Our gatherings were usually around breakfast or dinner at local restaurants or at each others' homes. Throughout this first year of monthly gatherings with these women, I kept some notes and conducted some unstructured, informal interviews. Data from these field notes and my interactions with these women serve as a larger social and political backdrop for my analyses and discussion of these three case studies.

Elvira

Elvira is a graduate of one of the top-ranked campuses in the western section of the country where she earned her Ph.D. in the area of social science. She is a petite woman in her mid thirties with dark, olive skin—readily identifiable as a Chicana.

Elvira was born in a migrant labor camp. Her parents and extended family made a living by working in the fields picking cherries, apples, and other crops. Unlike the other children who worked alongside their parents, Elvira felt "spoiled and privileged" because she had the luxury of being allowed to play and run freely in the fields. "I was spoiled," she recalled. "I didn't work when I was 3 to 4 years old. I was treated like a little queen—the Little Princess of the Labor Camp. Yes, that's what I was: a princecita" (Interview, November 2, 1993). She attributed her "privilege" to the fact that she was the first grandchild in a large extended family.

Both her mother and her grandfather pushed her to get a good education so she could get out of the migrant stream. In fact, her parents befriended a woman, "Mamá Lupe" (no family relation), who took little Elvira into her home until she was about 10, so she could attend school without the seasonal interruptions required of migrant workers to follow the crops. Elvira loved school and made good grades throughout elementary and junior high school. In the fifth grade she and her Chicano friends discovered the "secret to school success," an inevitable reality discovered by all minority students. Elvira recalls, "The teachers didn't want us to act Mexican. The more white we acted, the better they treated us." Elvira's mother understood this reality and reinforced it by telling her daughter, "Don't speak Spanish in school, and always be clean—you know what they think of us!"

In spite of Elvira's good command of English and her excellent grades, she and her Chicano friends never received well-deserved recognition; instead, they were assigned to sit in the back of the class

and were reprimanded for speaking Spanish. She recalls, "We weren't rewarded like the white kids although we were just as good, got good grades, [but] they were given the certificates; they were class monitors. We were *never* class monitors!"

Elvira's high school years were rocky as they were for many adolescents in the seventies. "I noticed," she said, "that [the girls] in my community were all getting pregnant." There were other problems. "Why is everyone running away? I'd ask. Why is everyone doing drugs? I saw juvenile delinquency everywhere, and I started thinking about social change," she said. Many of her friends were dropping out of high school. Recognizing the tragedy of those statistics, she emphasizes, "I happened to be one of the fortunate ones." Notwithstanding all the problems around her, Elvira graduated from high school with honors and went on to a major university where she got involved in the Chicano movement, joined the farm workers' picket lines, and became a strong community activist.

Angela

Angela has a Ph.D. from a top-ranked university in the eastern United States where she majored in a math-related, nontraditional field for women, especially minority women. She is a tall, slender, attractive woman with long, dark hair. Although her good looks are the envy of many women, she believes they have been a source of frequent sexist comments and unwelcome sexual advances. She often is asked if she is Italian, a question she resents because she recognizes it for what it is, a rejection of her Mexicanness. Angela was raised in a small ranch town in the Southwest where she grew up with her extended family: her parents, siblings, grandparents, and a great aunt. Her mother returned to work, leaving Angela, at five, a great deal of time with her Spanish-speaking grandparents and aunt who filled her life with rich cultural stories and Mexican traditions. "I attribute my school success partly to my position in the family, and that I was a curious child," she said. Her grandfather encouraged this curiosity and spend a great deal of time with Angela. She recalled, "He sat me down with *Hit* and *Super Hit*, two baseball magazines in Spanish, so that's how I learned to read in Spanish." Although there were no kindergarten classes in public schools, she was sent to the home of an Anglo woman who taught a group of about twelve children a readiness curriculum. "I was the only Mexican in the group," she recalls.

She attended a Mexican/Chicano elementary school of about five hundred students and junior and high schools of about one hundred each.

> The school was 80 percent Mexican and 20 percent Anglo, but they tracked—even in first grade they tracked you in A or B track. B class was always Mexican and A class was Anglo, occasionally some Mexicans—depending on whose parents went and fought for their kids. [But] ordinarily, your last name assigned you to your track. My mother went and fought. She said, my kids are all going to be in A track 'cause they've got veterans' benefits to go on to college . . . cause my dad had died. He was a major [in the army], so that was one of the things we knew we all had so we all went A track from the beginning. We all knew we had to do very well in school because it was our responsibility to go on to college. . . . That we were going to be the generation to go to college . . . it was what our father wanted. . . . My grandfather used to tell me when I was six, "You're going to be the lawyer in the family."

Throughout her school years she was always in trouble. She recalls, "I was very bright and got very good grades, but I was too curious and I was always reprimanded for being too talkative, asking too many questions, raising my hand, wanting to engage the teacher in stuff beyond what was supposed to be taught, and that caused me to get Fs in deportment."

Like most Chicanos, Angela had her taste of racism in grade school. In fifth grade, she recalled:

> This white boy from another ranch pulled my hair and called me a "dirty Mexican," he said, "Yeah, we all know about you dirty Mexicans." I just lost it; I got on top of my desk, turned around waving my arms, and yelled, "I'm not dirty. I take a bath every day. I take a shower just as often as you do, Jimmy. And I wouldn't want to be white and pale like you!" The teacher was scandalized. She punished me [because] the appropriate behavior would have been for me to ignore it; so *I* had to stay after school. Nothing happened to Jimmy.

Math always played a prominent role in Angela's life. Even as young as six, it was Angela's responsibility to help translate for her aunt, help her in the exchange of any money over ten dollars (*in dollars and pesos*) and figure the bus route across the border to Mexico and back. "My grandfather," she said, "treated me like a male with respect to the role of Mexican family." In high school, he counseled all her other female cousins to take typing and bookkeeping, but he told

Angela "not to bother" with these, arguing that she should take trigonometry and calculus.

In high school, Angela excelled in math and sports. She finished high school in three years and earned a basketball scholarship to an elite university in the Southwest. From there Angela transferred to a university in the East and went on to earn her Ph.D. in a field requiring advanced knowledge of mathematics, and not coincidentally into a predominantly male-dominated field.

Cynthia

Cynthia earned her doctorate in social science in a major university in the Southwest. She comes from mixed heritage parents; her mother is white, and her father is Chicano. This explains, in part, her blondish brown hair, light skin, and why most people do not easily identify her as Chicana. Throughout her life this has shielded her from overt racism, but it has also prevented her from getting close to other Chicanos who have not readily accepted her or who have resented her for being able to pass for white.

Cynthia was raised in a border town in the Southwest where her father was a public school administrator in the same district where she attended school. She loved school and made excellent grades, but her father also fueled her competitive spirit: "When I took a report card with 6 A+s and one A, he'd say, 'How come this one's not an A+?' . . . He used to tell us that education was very important. 'Get that degree 'cause no one can take that away from you,' he'd say."

Unlike most Chicanos, Cynthia grew up in a middle-class environment, but the schools she attended were predominantly Mexican American. In fact, many of her elementary and junior high teachers were Mexican American. Of her teachers, she said, "I had great teachers, really *good* teachers. . . . I remember being challenged by my teachers." Her father was also a role model for her. He had a master's degree, and her mother was in graduate school while Cynthia was still in elementary school.

When she was in junior high school, her parents divorced, forcing Cynthia to take on the major responsibilities of running a household. She recalled, "I was coping with the pressure of doing all the cooking, cleaning, ironing and menu planning for my dad and [two] brothers, . . . so I was not happy from junior high to high school." These responsibilities made her social life in high school difficult.

After high school she went on to college and graduate school in a major institution in the Southwest. She found laboratory research exciting, and she published 3 articles in premier journals in her field

before earning her Ph.D. Then she accepted a postdoctorate at a prestigious university in England where she worked as an intern under a renowned scholar in her field.

Common Experiences in Academe

These women, as well as the majority in the larger study, shared many painful experiences in academe, many of them stemming from overt racism and sexism. In this chapter, I focus only on three themes: alienation from their colleagues and sometimes even students, lack of an on-going support system to sustain them through difficult times, and lack of deference, power and authority in their positions as faculty. Although it was not planned, the interviews of the three women in these case studies occurred within the backdrop of their third-year review.

Alienation. A common theme among these women was that of alienation and isolation in their work environment. This was due, in part, to the fact that each was the only Chicana in her department. None had any real friends in their primary unit. With some exceptions, Cynthia found some professional acceptance from at least one or two colleagues who would take the time (during work hours) to read her manuscripts or sit and listen to her ideas. However, she recognized that they were not always aware of her ethnicity, "They know I'm *Lopez*, but they don't see me as Chicana. . . . My skin and hair color prevents me from being viewed as Chicana." Outside the campus, she rarely socialized with them.

Angela and Elvira found it more difficult to feel connected, to have colleagues within their own departments who understood, appreciated, or even respected them or their work. In fact, they felt a high level of resentment from members of their departments who frequently assumed that they were affirmative action hirees and thus not likely to be fully qualified for the positions they occupied. Angela reported, "People remind me overtly and covertly, 'you're a double protected class hire. We have a special budget for you'" (Interview, February 12, 1994).

This feeling was fairly consistent among the majority of Chicanas on campus. One woman said of her own hiring, "I've had people say to me, 'You got the job only 'cause you're Mexican.' . . . Forget that I have a Ph.D., never mind that I'm qualified for the job—there's a suspicion, a stigma attached before I even walk in the door!" (Interview, November 28, 1993).

As mentioned above, at the time of the study, Elvira, Angela, and Cynthia were all going through their third-year review. Their general

feeling of isolation from colleagues and lack of professional support was exacerbated during this period. The three described their reviews as needless and especially stressful. They were provided little information, or *vague* explanations about the process, the preparation of their dossiers, or their research statements. Angela likened her midcareer review to "psychological hazing." She viewed it as nothing more than a display of power by white males. "My colleagues' behavior and responses were 'let's keep her scared [and] jumping.'" The three reported an attitude of "See if you can figure it out for yourselves," or "See if you can guess what we want" (Interview, February 12, 1994).

In the case of Elvira and Angela, their department chairs had informed them they had plenty of time to prepare their files and then sprung on them a deadline nearly a month earlier. Neither one was mentored through the process. Little or no clerical assistance was provided for preparation of their materials. Instead, they felt taunted as they passed through what seemed a gauntlet. Cynthia, who had six publications in premier journals in her field—a major accomplishment for three years in academe—was told by her committee chair, "You're on the edge" (Interview, April 12, 1994).

Angela and Elvira were told: "You don't have enough publications,"

"You're publishing in the *wrong* journals," "You have too much service to community." Of her four referred journal articles and published book, Elvira, whose research was on Chicanos, was told: "Well, this work is *okay* for *now*, but your next book better be from an academic press or you won't get tenure," and "Listen, *for your own good*, you need to stop writing about minority issues" (Interview, November 4, 1994).

Even after the three women had received a majority vote for renewal of their contracts, they were constantly reminded of their "tenuous track positions" (Reyes and Halcón 1991) and demeaned or ridiculed. Instead of congratulations, their white colleagues said things like: "Just because you got a unanimous vote, *don't think you've made it*" and "Being a minority woman didn't hurt you" (Interview, February 12, 1994). Even a Chicano colleague offered Elvira little comfort. He told her: "You're just a midcareer review case, you're not that important; they're just fattening you up for the kill" (Interview 11-6-94).

The verbal harassment they experienced during the review process took a physical toll on all three women. Even with an impressive publication record, Cynthia suffered stomach problems. Elvira, who experienced the most overt kind of racism from her supervisors

and white colleagues, lost ten pounds and suffered blackouts caused by intense anxiety. Angela also lost ten pounds and developed a severe muscle spasm in her neck that made it impossible for her to turn her neck for a nearly a month. Both women were already quite thin at the beginning of this review process.

Their third-year review was further complicated by the fact that other Chicanos on campus went public in demanding to be transferred out of their department. In a united voice, they accused their department chair of overt racism and publicly cited examples of what they alleged was a hostile working climate. To make matters worse for all three women, this incident coincided with a student hunger strike aimed at pressuring the university for an ethnic studies department and major, as well as for tangible commitment to the principles of cultural diversity in the curriculum. Although the student group included a cross-section of all students on campus—whites, African Americans, Asians, Native Americans and Chicanos—it was perceived as a "Chicano rebellion." These incidents in tandem created a climate of suspicion of all Chicanos, both male and female, across the campus.

Lack of support system. In addition to their professional isolation, the three women also felt keenly their lack of a sustained personal support system. Friendships with other Chicanas on campus, and the social outings with them, albeit limited, were of tremendous support, but inadequate for the intense pressures and barrage of racist and sexist comments they experienced almost daily. Elvira was even admonished for seeking other minorities and told it would be a liability for her: "Stay away from the ethnic studies center if you want to get a good review" (Interview, November 4, 1993). Angry and eyes filled with tears, she uttered: "How dare they tell me to stay away! That's my *only* safety net. What else do I have? Who's there to support me? . . . . I realize everything is so petty, [like review] and tenure. If they don't give it to me, it's their loss. I would be devastated, but I'm not gonna live and die for this stuff" (Interview, November 4, 1993). Yet she sobbed as she described her hurt and her feelings of exasperation that her white colleagues would deny her need for support from other people of color in whom she could confide.

Lack of deference, power, and authority. Elvira's and Angela's relationships and interactions with white students were generally strained. They felt a lack of access to deference, power, and authority as ethnic female professors. This was true for most of the Chicanas on campus, except for Cynthia, whose looks *and* work resembled closely the Eurocentric model.

Elvira and Angela felt their authority constantly challenged. Elvira described an example of this:

> I teach of class of over 200 undergraduates, mostly white males; a core course. The students are confrontational, questioning; they want [to know] my credentials. They want me to justify everything—justify why I chose the questions I chose for an exam, for example! They can't stand that I'm down there on the platform, the classroom auditorium—as the professor. They *resent* that a brown woman is telling them their business. . . . When I talk about racism and sexism they say, "That's a bunch of crap; that really doesn't happen!" (Interview, November 6, 1993)

Students in her classes complained that there were too many class readings by too many people of color, by too many Marxists, too many women. "They tell me I am offensive because of the types of issues I talk about. They look at me like, "how dare I have the audacity, the audacity of some brown woman to prance her brown ass in front of the class as if she were in charge!" Elvira added, "First and foremost [students] react to my color; we don't look like their other professors. We're short, we're dark . . . [and] we also dress nicer than they do!" (Interview, November 6, 1993)

Moving into positions previously reserved for white males was more likely to result in a higher incidence of hostile, cruel, and demeaning comments in their teaching evaluations. The tenor of the comments was generally personal and sexist. For example, in response to the question "How would you improve this course?" a student wrote about Angela's class: "Assassinate the bitch!" (Field notes, March 1992).

For these Chicanas, student evaluations left a bitter, long-lasting sting. Often, student evaluations included comments such as, "In spite of the fact that she's Hispanic, she can still get the material across [to the class]." Elvira and Angela reported that the normal chain of command was often violated when it came to their dealings with students. For example, it was not unusual for students to go straight to male department chairs rather than directly to them with their complaints. They felt that this action underscored the students' lack of respect for them as minorities and especially as women, particularly in those instances when the male department chair did nothing to support or to validate their authority. Angela regarded this power struggle between herself and white students as the ultimate symbol of resistance to her position of authority as faculty. In some instances, their

students did not even offer the kind of professional acknowledgment and courtesy greetings offered to other faculty.

In describing her tenuous relationship with white students and how they responded to her as an African American law professor, Patricia Williams (1991) provides a good example of how women of color and these Chicanas walk a thin line with students. She writes,

> I am expected to woo students even as I try to fend them off; I am supposed to control them even as I am supposed to manipulate them into loving me. Still I am aware of the *paradox of my power* over these students. I am aware of my role, my place in an institution that is larger than myself, *whose power I wield even as I am powerless, whose shield of respectability shelters me even as I am disrespected.* (Williams 1991, 95–96, emphasis mine)

Another theme among Chicanas was that, in an ironic fashion, and in spite of the fact that service did not count for tenure or promotion, the university expected them to provide service to minority students and minority communities. Cynthia reported that during her job interview an administrator asked her, "Are you gonna be a good role model?" She responded, "If you're looking for a role model, don't hire me because I don't fit in either group!" (Interview, April 12, 1994).

None of the women objected to working with students or community, but they resented the fact that their respective colleagues *expected them to bear the responsibility for all minorities* whether they were Chicanos or foreign students and that their superiors often reprimanded them for doing so. They both felt resentful that their white colleagues would not work with minority students. When Elvira specifically informed her colleagues that she could not take on any white students because she had *all* the minorities in the department and this was five to seven more students than the average number of advisees per faculty member in her department, she was accused of "reverse racism."

Discussion

The dominant theme in the study of Chicanas was the conflict between their cultural identity and the demands of academic scholarship as measured by Eurocentric standards, a variation on the notion of having to act white to succeed. In ivory tower terms, this translates into tremendous pressure to assimilate and emulate Eurocentric models of scholarship in order to be successful. It implies that expertise in

minority-related topics is inherently nonintellectual. The myth of a pure, objective scholarship generated by the so-called cognitive elite and defined by white Eurocentric America plays a major role in legitimizing inequality in higher education. This view forces a large number of minorities who are unsuccessful in attaining tenure to accept the unequal features of the larger society.

It ignores the fact that identification, classification, or category is specifically located and historically placed. Academic knowledge is tied to who we are, how we think (Ng 1991). Expertise in our field is filtered through who we really are outside our academic shell, outside the ivory tower. Our identity, our academic knowledge is situated in the social relations in which we engage. The myth of pure scholarship ignores the fact that an individual may be a woman of color, the only Chicana in a department, the only minority, the only Spanish speaker, the only woman in a predominantly male field, or the only ethnographer in a quantitative field—and it attempts to define scholarship and evaluation methods as either good or bad.

Being Chicana has everything to do with how we construct our identity as scholars and as women. But the academy tries to separate our cultural, sexual, and linguistic identity from our professional identity. It would have us believe that mixing the two dilutes the rigor of scholarship. This creates a continual conflict for us. Scholarship without purpose, meaning, and relevance goes counter to our very nature, against who we are as Chicanas, against why we are in higher education in the first place. One of the participants in the study expressed it well, "I have a *lifetime* of research because *my community is my research.* There's so much to do. It's not just a job; it's my life!" This is true for many Chicanas. We view our education as a means of our own liberation and that of our community.

The findings from this study and other writings that attest to these experiences of Chicanas in academe imply that if universities are to retain these women, they must affirm genuine diversity, even the kind that challenges the dominant paradigm. They must legitimate and respect ethnic identity and its expression in their work. They must recognize the negative effects of racism, sexism, and white privilege on women of color and create safe places for public discussion of these issues in the academy.

The extinction of Chicana academics must be fought at two fronts: among Chicanas and in the academy. As Chicana academics we can slow the tide of our own extinction in the academy by recognizing that in order to change the system we must learn to live within it, acknowledging the contradictions of our identity. This means that so

long as we work in those environments, we must understand that our presence will continue to challenge the status quo and as a result, our treatment might not be equitable, but we must resist, remain firm in our resolve. What we can hope is that if we endure *without* sacrificing our integrity and identity, we will be in a position to effect change through our actions and our writing. This is what other Chicana scholars before us have done.

It is difficult to recognize the progress that has taken place in academia when we find ourselves facing the same issues as previous generations of scholars. When I studied for my bachelor's degree in the late sixties, for example, I did not read a single book written by a Chicano or Chicana scholar, writer, or poet. Today, my students and the students of other Chicana faculty are exposed to, and even required to read, a new version of reality—scholarship generated by Chicanos and Chicanas. This is progress, yet not the kind that provides comfort in the face of overt racist and sexist acts which Chicanas still face. I am by no means suggesting that if we put up with abuse we will succeed. On the contrary, we must hold our ground at every turn.

Universities which hold real power have a major responsibility to slow down the tide of Chicanas leaving academe by taking such concrete steps as hiring more than one Chicana per department, providing incentives for department to do this or disincentives for those that do not, hiring at the middle and upper levels of the professoriate *with tenure*, developing effective mentorship designed by Chicanas, providing diversity training for majority faculty, establishing oversight committees with real power and authority to monitor the treatment of Chicanas, providing antiracism and antisexism training, embarking on exploration of new models of scholarship, and other such things.

However, the reality of it all is that universities are inherently "non-inclusive" (Bryson 1995). They are likely to remain so for the next several generations. Most have a long history of systemic bias and take pride in being *ex*clusive. Universities will also have to appoint more women of color to personnel and tenure committees so that minority women will have a better chance of being evaluated within the context of their scholarship and their positions within their departments. Without this, it will be more difficult for universities to retain these women, few will move up the ranks, and many will remain endangered.

Postscript and Acknowledgment

Of the eleven women, and barely a year after the completion of this study, only six Chicanas remain on the faculty at Major University.

Two are on a leave of absence and are not likely to return to the same university. Two others have left academe all together. (One, anticipating an imminent denial of tenure, left for the private sector; the other refused to continue with so many constraints on her work.) Another woman moved to a university where both she and her academic husband could secure jobs.

Conducting the interviews was a gut-wrenching experience for me. These Chicanas were not "subjects to be studied"—they were my friends, my colleagues, *mis hermanas* (my sisters). Because they put their trust in me and shared so many intimate details of their experiences, I felt honored, close to them. They were willing to share their pain so that other Chicanas might learn from their experiences, so that their situations might be improved. I felt humbled by their trust, in awe of their incredible inner strength, their talents, their intelligence. Getting to know them better was a gift to me. I gained the deepest respect for each of them. In all but one case, each of the women cried, and I cried *with* them; yet I forged ahead with the interviews in hopes that the information would alleviate the struggles of *other* Chicanas. There were nights when I went to bed with a heavy heart, unable to sleep because of the sheer nakedness of their pain. In many cases, I was aware of bits and pieces of the incidents they related to me because of my membership in that tiny network of Chicanas on campus, but I felt the full weight of their struggle when each woman put all the pieces together for me.

A page from the personal journal which I kept during this period provides an example of what I felt throughout this study.

> October 4, 1993.
>
> My own heart ached with pain at listening to her. My very throat tightened as she continued telling how she felt and how she feels she's conformed to *everything* else in the academy, but that she won't let them strip her of the only thing that she has left: her identity as a Chicana.
>
> I also began to cry silently as I listened to her talk, describing her pain; as I watched her cry, literally sob in pain. I wanted to stop the interview, to go over and hug her and let her know I knew that pain, too. But in my academic response, I let the recorder continue taking in all her pain so that I could capture the power of her feelings . . . and I felt so guilty doing it.
>
> I struggled with my dilemma to respond to her personal pain, or let the recorder capture it for sake of later informing the larger

academic community—via an article—about the reality of the Chicana struggle. During those moments when she cried—and they seemed forever—I hated myself for not throwing the recorder against the wall and responding to her as a human being rather than a subject of my study. For what seemed to be an eternity, I listened to her. Eventually, I couldn't take it any longer; it was too painful. I stopped the tape, and got up and put my arm around her shoulder. She turned and sobbed in my arms.

I was so proud of her strength; so impressed at her courage to stand alone against a system that doesn't understand her or people like her. I was so impressed at how smart and strong she is [she looks so frail] and how I didn't realize the extent of her resilience. She is standing up to her supervisors, she is recognizing how she is getting differential treatment. And, yet she's still standing, almost daring them: "Hit me again. 'Cause now I've got your number." Now she's taken the higher ground and I think she will rattle their conscience—if they have one. She's put them on notice that she won't stand for it any longer—even if she gets fired. My chest ached with pain—literally; and for the rest of the night I felt such a heavy weight. Will the system spare no one?

Prologue

The greatest hope for Chicanas and other minorities, I believe, lies in the development of new institutions designed to be truly universal. Such a one has emerged in the current creation of the University of California-Monterey Bay. Its vision statement reads as follows:

California State University-Monterey Bay is a state university being designed to meet the developing needs of California's diverse student population into the next century. Its evolving mission embodies a commitment to education of the highest quality; to an environment of gender equity and cultural diversity; to the integration of such cross-disciplinary models as those which have emerged from ethnic, women's colonial, and disability studies; to the achievement of an academically effective merger of liberal learning with preparation for the professions; to the integration of learning, working, and residential living within a multicultural and interdisciplinary organization structure; to the use of technology for the enhancement of student learning;

> and to sustained support for an intellectual climate that values and promotes public service. (CSUMB Mission Statement 1994)

In January 1995, I left my academic position at Major University to become one of CSUMB's thirteen founding faculty, made up of seven women and six men. Of the total, seven are ethnic minorities and six are of EuroAmerican ancestry. Each of us was granted tenure at full professorship rank. Participating in the development of this university is a dream come true for a Chicana such as myself who has lived on the margins of the academy where my research on Chicanas had little value; here it is promoted. As one of my female colleagues has so aptly expressed it, it is literally a "visceral high" to be in the center of this new experiment in higher education where *pluralism, equity, and service* to community are a given. This is, no doubt, a major reason why we received over five thousand applications from all over the world for twenty-two faculty positions! The stellar qualifications and ethnic diversity of those applicants will forever serve as empirical evidence that there are, indeed, qualified minority academics all over the world who seek inclusive environments and affirmation of their identity and their scholarship.

Our task is an exciting though formidable one, especially in light of the current political climate of California and the general conservatism in the country. All eyes are on us. It will be a major challenge to stay true to our vision. Only time will tell if we succeed.

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