

**Testimonios
of Latina Junior Faculty:
Bridging Academia, Family,
and Community Lives in the Academy**

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Introduction

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The academy can be a harsh and unforgiving environment with policies and expectations inherently biased against women, particularly women of color. This reality is no more apparent than in the gender and race differences in tenured and tenure track professor positions (Halpern, 2008; Medina & Luna, 2000; Van Anders, 2004; Vasquez-Guignard, 2010). Differences are seen with 60% of males versus 40% of females attaining tenure (Perna, 2004). These numbers are even more disconcerting for faculty of color in the academy. While Latinos constitute 16.3 percent of the U.S. population, Latinos only constitute 4 percent of faculty in higher education (Ponjuan, 2010). Only one percent of all professors in U.S. institutions of higher education are Latinas (Guignard-Vasquez, 2010).

In terms of underrepresentation by gender, systemic and familial barriers have been reported to play central

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roles where scholarly productivity and service expectations often conflict with child rearing, bearing, and familial obligations. Still, other variables, including guilt, stress, and pressure to successfully juggle everything, must be recognized when examining 21st century gender inequities. This perpetual juggling act and the desire to do everything and be everything for everyone, partially attributed to social and cultural norms, often results in internal conflict over this sense of “push and pull” between the demands of academia and motherhood. While most working professionals and parents experience job and family-related stress, for female faculty, the aforementioned variables are amplified by traditional cultural and societal values and norms as marriage and motherhood appear to decrease the likelihood of pursuing or advancing in the academy (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Mayer & Tikka, 2008).

Despite advances in women’s rights and some change in female societal norms, the nature of the academy and its expectations and demands prevent change from occurring rapidly. Women, in general, and faculty of color, in particular, navigate and contest multiple hierarchies of oppression in the academy. Relying on Latina/Chicana feminist and critical race theories of identity, and testimonio as methodology of knowledge production (Latina Feminist Group, 2001), we examine the complexity of our professional and personal identities as academics and members of families and communities to theorize our common experiences as Latina/Chicana junior faculty. The brief testimonios that follow seek to illuminate the personal and professional experiences of Latina junior faculty in academia and the ways in which we navigate, negotiate, and contest gender norms and expectations inside academia. We contend that Chicana/Latina junior faculty continue to navigate cultural “borderlands” in academia, as we struggle to carve a rightful place as scholars in our disciplines, while maintaining *compromiso* (or commitment) to our families, communities, and students in higher education as mothers, daughters, and activists.

Literature Review

Long-standing gender differences in academia demonstrate a long history of gender inequities. However, with rapid political, societal, and cultural change, a current and fresh perspective on the academy from the eyes of Latina junior female faculty is timely. Thus, the present study seeks to examine gender differences in the 21st century academy from the perspective of Latina junior female faculty at a large aspirant Tier I research Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). In order to draw comparisons across historical and modern day female faculty experiences and to determine if perceived barriers have changed or remained the same, a brief review of literature is provided. In addition, we offer three brief testimonios to illuminate our experiences as three young Latina academics, with emphasis on the ways in which we were able to navigate barriers, create spaces of resistance, defy expectations, and become master “jugglers.”

Women in the 21st Century Academy

The perception that the academy is unfavorable for women is shown in the overrepresentation of women in teaching-oriented universities and in non-tenure track positions (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). Female academics choose to work at community colleges to avoid the stress and pressures of more prestigious institutions and tend to be disproportionately employed in lower rank positions at institutions that have higher teaching loads, less research support, and lower salaries (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). Women faculty have reportedly pursued these positions because of greater perceived barriers in aspirant and research intensive institutions, to reduce stress, and in order to have time for family obligations and child rearing (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

Women and motherhood. The stress and pressure to “publish or perish” often collides with childbearing and rearing which likely contributes to the fact that more women in academia are single and childless than men (Halpern, 2008). While having children can have adverse effects on productivity for women faculty, men appear unscathed. In fact, having at least one child appears to benefit men in academia as men with children are more likely to attain tenure than those without (Halpern, 2008).

Having children in the academy not only puts you at risk for attaining tenure, it also influences perceptions. When men have children they continue to be seen as equally competent as their non-parent male colleagues, and acquire the additional benefit of being seen as “warm” because they are a parent (Cuddy et al., 2004). Female academics with children on the other hand, while perceived to be “warm”, are perceived as less competent than their non-parent colleagues (Cuddy et al., 2004). This competence bias is seen in recent research that found women who had their first baby within the first 5 years of receiving their doctorate were 20 to 24% less likely to receive tenure than colleagues without children (Halpern, 2008).

Women and stress. Gender differences in the stress of balancing work and parenting have also been reported (Akin-little et al., 2004). In one study, women described this source of stress as stemming from the need to be everything to everyone and to be able to successfully balance work and family (Schlehofer, 2012). One female academic reported childcare to further magnify this pressure as it restricts work availability and forces one to choose between attending after hours work and service events or spending time with children. This illusion of choice or dilemma rather, and having to choose one over the other, can result in feelings of guilt no matter which option is chosen (Schlehofer, 2012). The other way in which these results can be viewed is from the perspective of choice as an illusion. The women faculty interviewed often stated that they “chose” to work at a particular type of institution in order to adequately balance work and family life. However, the author questions whether this is really a choice of free will or if these women are forced to choose a lesser institution due to societal and cultural expectations (i.e.,

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motherhood). In sum, social and cultural norms contribute greatly to the pressure and stress women feel to do it all (Schlehofer, 2012).

The stress female faculty report appears to in part stem from views of child-rearing as a threat to career, as evidenced by the finding that most women in academia do not take full maternity leave and limit the number of children they have. Some women academics elect to not have children at all. Discouraged by the long-standing gender gap in tenure rates, many women feel that having children will hurt their chances of attaining tenure. The tendency for women to delay or to not have children relates to the concept of “bias avoidance” which suggests that men and women will either downplay or avoid situations that may have a negative effect on their career. Women are more likely to exhibit this behavior due to the disproportionate demands of work and family when compared to men.

Women and retention. Likely related to stress and pressure, women who go into the academy are also more likely to leave than men. Gender was found to relate with the intention to leave an institution as well as the intention to leave academia entirely (Dryfhout & Estes, 2010). Of further concern, faculty of both genders in a part-time rather than full-time position reported more intention to leave, which also explains the gender difference in intention to leave since women are more likely to hold part-time positions (Dryfhout & Estes, 2010).

Last, some experiential differences, based on institutional type, have been noted. Women at research universities were generally satisfied with their experiences. While they did not feel that their universities were overly supportive of family demands, they were satisfied with the tenure track because expectations were very clear. Those at striving comprehensive colleges by contrast, felt a lot more pressure due to constantly increasing demands, requiring them to work evenings and weekends. For these women, there was more conflict between work and family. In addition to these forms of gender inequality in academia, Latina faculty have had to contend with a constellation of institutional and historical practices that have shaped their experiences within the academy. These include, but are not limited to, racial discrimination, ethnocentrism, and institutional marginalization.

Latinas in the Academy

The number of Latina faculty has steadily increased over the past 35 years (Medina & Luna, 2000). In 1976, 139 Latinas earned doctorate degrees. This figure jumped to 366 in 1990. In 1994, Latinas earned only 2.6 of doctorates. In 1995, Latinas constituted 1% of professors in the academy (Vasquez-Guignard, 2010). Medina and Luna (2000) note that of those in the academy in the mid-nineties, Latinas were the least represented as tenured faculty members in higher education. Today, Latinas continue to be underrepresented as faculty, which means that Latina college students are unlikely to encounter professors of their ethnicity and gender. Given that there are few Latinas with doctorate degrees, Medina and Luna (2000) state “it is not surprising that those who do obtain doctorates and return to higher

education as faculty members face feelings of alienation, poor support systems, and cultural conflict” (p. 48). In addition to facing professional isolation, Latina faculty experience less mentoring, slower rates of promotion, and increased likelihood of leaving an institution than their male counterparts (Vasquez-Guignard, 2010).

In their phenomenological research on the lives of three Latina faculty members, Medina and Luna (2000) offer that their experiences as Latina professors are linked to early educational experiences and reinforced as they navigate the new demands and expectations of academia. The professors in their study expressed that they felt inadequate in their schooling. As dissertators, they continued to operate from internalized race and gender oppression—that they were not good writers or that they were incompetent because of their race, gender, and language. In her personal testimonio as a Latina professor, Reyes (2005) offered that “misunderstanding—whether because of an accent, a style of speaking, or a point of view that is perceived to be outside of the norm” (p. 274) leads to feelings of inadequacy and incompetency.

Medina and Luna (2000) argue that gender and race inequality pervade in higher education and that academia silences those who are on the margins. In her study of four Latina professors at four U.S. universities, Garcia (2005) studied the various meanings of silence that come as a result of their gender and racial oppression. She found that Latina faculty’s silence was associated with “shame, guilt, [and] oppressive exclusionary forces” (p. 261) and that this was used as a strategy to muffle the trauma they experienced. She argues that silence is a voluntary and involuntary mechanism to deal with oppression.

Furthermore, Garcia (2005) and Vasquez-Guignard (2010) found that the Latinas in their study received little to no guidance along their education journeys, from their days as undergraduates to graduate studies. Latina professors report not knowing “how universities work” (Garcia, 2005; Vasquez-Guignard, 2010). While they felt that their white counterparts were being mentored, they did not feel they were receiving the same mentorship, which affected their professional socialization, leading to isolation, lack of confidence, and feelings of inadequacy. Garcia (2005) argues that social, cultural, and economic issues affected these professors’ exposure, access to knowledge, and preparation. As a result of this, they did not believe in themselves and some sought therapy. In their quest to rectify this, they consciously mentored students intensively to produce cohorts of students of color. While emotionally satisfying, this mentoring intensive work took them away from their professional responsibilities (Vasquez-Guignard, 2010).

Like Vasquez-Guignard (2010), Medina and Luna (2000) also found that women faculty of color felt overextended with professional responsibilities more so than non-ethnic female faculty (Garcia, 2005). They had heavy teaching, committee, and advising work that left them with little time for research. This negatively affected their tenure and promotion. Vasquez-Guignard’s (2010) research also found that Latina faculty dedicated more time on service activities rather than those activities that would increase their likelihood of becoming promoted.

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Medina and Luna (2000) and Garcia (2005) argue that Latinas face ethnocentrism as they challenge dominant epistemologies in the academy. The dominant cultural group defines normative ways of producing knowledge and casts “judgments on scholarship, making faculty of color more susceptible to biased review” (Garcia 2005). Latina faculty encounter obstacles when research focus is on “race, ethnicity, post colonialism, or challenges mainstream theoretical approaches” (Garcia, p. 264). Medina and Luna (2000) argue that Latina scholarship is seen as less rigorous and inferior. It is pigeonholed in Latino Studies and not taken seriously by faculty and students who are part of the dominant culture. As a result, Latina faculty face double discrimination as their work is devalued and considered “nonacademic, narrow in scope, [and] nonobjective” (p. 49).

In their research with twelve self-identified Chicana/o professors of education, Urrieta and Mendez Benavidez (2007) found that these professors articulated a community commitment, which was impacted by their own values rather than the values of their institutions. They expressed a sense of responsibility to create opportunities for students and also to do research that makes a difference in Chicana/o and Latina/o communities. These faculty were committed to spreading awareness even if it came at the cost of promotion and tenure. Their classrooms became spaces to be activists, to change the world through their students, as they addressed pressing issues affecting the Latina/o community. Urrieta and Mendez Benavidez (2007) found that these faculty wanted to produce activist scholarship that was undervalued in the “white-stream” academic world. They did not want to produce knowledge for knowledge’s sake, but to “reverse the wrongs and erasure that result from a long history of White dominance and white-stream intellectual indoctrination” (p. 231). Similarly, Vasquez-Guignard’s (2010) phenomenological study with four Latina professors in Southern California found that they were actively involved in minority issues that contributed to their community, but detracted them from their academic demands and expectations. Most of the research on Latina academics tells of feelings of incompetence and self-doubt, a result of history, isolation, treatment, perception, and social and cultural norms. Another theme however, is one of mentoring to contest and counter the wrongs many female academics reported. This mentoring however, ironically, can present an additional barrier.

Testimonio as Methodology of Personal and Social Transformation

We offer our *testimonios*, stories of our lived experiences as Latina junior faculty (Latina Feminist Group, 2000). Our *testimonios* serve as counter stories that speak against master narratives in higher education. As a methodology, *testimonios* or counterstories, have been used as a non-traditional research method to illuminate the overt and subtle forms of oppression in education—sexism, racism, classism, and ethnocentrism as experienced by students of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000; Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgman, 2010).

As a methodology, *testimonio* opens up spaces for voicing, reflecting, and

theorizing our own lived experiences—experiences which are often marginalized, silenced, or denied (Latina Feminist Group, 2000). As women of color in the academy, we offer our testimonios to name the institutional inequities, challenges, and cultural practices that impede Latina junior faculty from successfully navigating academia and becoming tenured.

We examine our experiences within a critical race and gender lens. One of the assumptions of critical race and gender studies is that schools are structured to maintain the existing relations of power and social inequalities based on race, gender, and class. Critical Race Theory (CRT) as presented by Solorzano and Yosso (2002) is defined as a:

...theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process. However, it also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color. Furthermore, it views these experiences as sources of strength and (e) uses the interdisciplinary knowledge base of ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, humanities, and the law to better understand the experiences of students of color. (p. 24)

In this case, we include the intersections of race, class, and gender in our lived experience as Latina/Chicana junior faculty in an HSI, aspiring Tier-1 institution. Through our testimonios, we name the sources of our individual concerns and collective struggles, while reflecting on our survivalist strategies. Our *testimonios* reflect our struggles as we learn the culture of academia, navigate its demands of intellectual production, negotiate multiple social identities, and claim a space in higher education—an institution that has historically privileged and taken the knowledge and experiences of White male professors as a standard of professional development and success. While we work in an HSI with a growing diverse student and faculty population within our college, we remain a minority in academia as only 1% of professors are Latinas (Vasquez-Guignard, 2010). By including our own *testimonios*, we acknowledge that race, class, and gender are legitimate areas of study in our disciplines.

In writing our *testimonios*, we not only speak against master narratives that exclude our experiences, but also create spaces of resistance, inclusion, and critical transformation in our practice as scholars doing “work that matters” within and outside of academia (Anzaldúa, 2010). Couched within a critical race, gender, and class analysis, our testimonios allow us, as junior Latina faculty in the field of education, to ask questions that are central to creating personal and institutional change. For example, what are the institutional ideologies and practices in higher education that maintain racial, ethnic, and gender subordination? What can Latina/Chicana scholars, who simultaneously occupy positions of privilege and oppression

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as academics of color, do to “help end racial, gender, and ethnic subordination” in higher education (Zamudio et. al, p. 114).

As Latina/Chicana junior faculty, we draw from our racialized, gendered, and classed experiences as sources of strength for surviving and thriving in a culture that has privileged White male faculty as holders and producers of knowledge. Our testimonios challenge master narratives like meritocracy as we identify the institutional practices that we must overcome to claim a place in academia. Our *testimonios* also highlight the centrality of experiential knowledge—our strategies of resistance that we have learned along the educational pipeline that continue to support our professional and personal goals.

Felicia’s Testimonio:

Bridging Personal and Professional Identities of Mother and Latina Scholar

The academy is a daunting place, replete with experts, specialists, renowned researchers, clinicians, and businesspersons. Diverse backgrounds and training experiences breed individual thought but common threads include intellectualism, work ethic, intensity, competition, and the perpetual pursuit of knowledge. Individuals with a decade or more of schooling and training coupled with work ethic and discipline that can only be cultivated by such combine to create a culture of high expectations, standards, productivity, and dedication. While these characteristics are ideal, many duel with parallel expectations for the women who are primarily responsible for managing the household and childcare.

For me, therein lies the conundrum, how do I do everything for everyone and do it well? As a Latina, as a mother, as an academic, and as one who has lived to defy expectations and prove others wrong, I have found it increasingly difficult to successfully juggle it all. As someone who has built her identity on exceeding expectations, many would agree that there are no two better ways than the academy and motherhood to challenge that identity. Again, I do not imply that others fail to experience the same challenges, however, the academy with its pressures to produce and teach future generations, creates a culture and climate of “work, work, work, and more work” that is very unique to academia. For women, the reality of social and cultural norms combined with these pressures, is often too much, resulting in fewer female academics, fewer female academics with children, fewer to attain tenure, and more females in non-tenure track positions in community colleges (Halpers, 2008; Perna, 2004; Van Anders, 2004).

For me, a female in a College of Education, the stress to be available for students and the University, the pressure to publish in my area of expertise, and still fulfill family responsibilities and retain primary responsibility for childcare are my greatest sources of stress. The “push and pull,” the struggle to achieve “master juggler” status by successfully juggling family, marriage, and work, and to make a name for myself make up my inner conflicts and anxieties, my *papelitos guardados* (Latina Feminist Group, 2000). In part due to these aspirations, I am guilty of employing “bias avoidance” when I have denied childcare responsibili-

ties to be the reason for not being available after hours and not volunteering for weekend events, seminars, and conferences. I am also one who elected not to take maternity leave (twice) to avoid appearing undedicated or uncommitted and perhaps to be able to say, “I did it all.”

With the previous two examples, I demonstrate the “push and pull” that many females experience and show an instance when the academy prevailed and an instance when family responsibilities took precedence. With one example, I demonstrate the intersection between social and cultural norms and gender in the academy. This “choose one or the other” challenge is the source of stress and guilt that female academics invariably report. I have been confronted with those barriers reviewed, I have personally experienced the biases that come with having children before tenure, and as an additional barrier, I am Latina who has introduced a different set of barriers, perceptions, biases, and challenges.

While low expectations, biases, and stereotypes, are shared experiences in the academy, the contrast with high societal and cultural expectations and stereotypes is less examined (Ek, Quijada Cerecer, Alanis, & Rodriguez, 2010; Gutierrez & Muhs, 2012). That is, in the academy, I personally feel as if I am always being evaluated, always under the microscope, always surveyed for competence and the right to be here. Low expectations mark many a Latina academic and scholarly experience. By contrast, in my social world, I personally feel that society, family, and my culture have the highest of expectations for motherhood, marriage, and taking care of family and while women have fought to tear down societal and cultural stereotypes, as a form of resistance or perhaps to maintain my identity, I have embraced them. This contrast, nonetheless, is a great source of personal stress and anxiety.

My mother modeled for me what her mother and grandmother modeled for, and more. She modeled the importance of obtaining an education and becoming independent but also in an almost superhuman fashion, she modeled how to successfully juggle a career as a registered nurse, wife, and mother of three. For her, passing down traditions, caring for a family, cooking and cleaning every day, was just as important as her career. With every plug for education, she simultaneously emphasized the importance of caring for a family, cooking, and maintaining a marriage. Thus, while these cultural norms are taxing, I learned to embrace them. Which takes me back to where I began—juggle it all and prove competence or better yet, prove others wrong. Those are my most salient challenges in the academy. In the following paragraphs, I will share how I navigated institutional, societal, and cultural barriers and overcame personal struggles.

Time and scheduling. I made a nontraditional non-eight to five job a traditional eight to five job by strictly adhering to a tight schedule. Instead of falling for the illusion of flexibility, I created very structured work hours for myself. I arrived to the office at eight am and stayed until five pm Monday through Friday. In addition, each hour was accounted for by rigidly scheduling writing time, data entry, data collection, service responsibility, class preparation, office hours, and grading. I always inserted miscellaneous time for mentoring or department crises. For me,

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rigid self-imposed scheduling and deadlines were essential to successfully juggling a marriage and children. By forcing structure and rigidity, I was able to accomplish a lot and not feel as if I needed to take work home allowing time to fulfill household and childcare responsibilities. This forced structure helped to reduce the stress, pressure, and guilt that many female academics experience (Perna, 2004). The overt message here is, find what works for you and adhere to it. The underlying message here is, through testimonio you find idiosyncrasy and variability that serves to validate individual difference.

Collaborate and seek mentorship. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate, partnering with scholars with similar research interests, divergent interests, common ethnic backgrounds, and/or similar outside interests is critical to surviving in the academy. Collaboration not only increases productivity but it also provides much needed social support.

In my experience collaborative research groups impose social accountability and help to build and sustain momentum. When one is juggling many responsibilities and expectations, social accountability and support is essential. Aside from collaborating on research products to share data collection, entry, and the writing load, collaborative groups breed real friendships, collegiality, and a sense of “belongingness.” There is nothing like sharing the experiences, struggles, and challenges of the academy with others who can identify with you. The idea of collaboration hinges on the notion of shared responsibility and creating space. Although, the research reviewed shows “space” in the academy is limited and mentoring opportunities are few and far between, collaboration can create space by networking and partnering. Through networking, partnering, and collaborating you are likely to find a great mentor. Through networking, partnering, and collaborating you are likely to find strength and courage, the strength and courage to continue when faced with adversity, rejection, failure, and disappointment. Here you will find the *comunidad* you need when the essence of who you are is challenged. Here is where you may find who you thought you were is not who you are at all.

Mentoring is also critical to surviving in the academy especially for those who have been historically marginalized. This is a survivalist move, considering good mentoring is hard to come by. I strategically found mentorship outside the university in my major advisor, inside the university in my department, and within the college. Similar to my regimented schedule, I also scheduled re-occurring meeting times with mentors to discuss research projects and deadlines. Even more important than the content knowledge transmitted through the mentoring relationship, is the social relationship, wisdom, and sense of “giving back” that is being modeled.

Utilize resources. While resources vary by institution, it is important to utilize research and writing centers, grant support, course releases, and course buyouts to support scholarly endeavors. Here again, freedom and perceived flexibility can be deceiving. For me, finding out about all available resources was essential to my successfully navigating the tenure process, teaching, grant writing, service

expectations, and research supports. It is of utmost importance that we advocate for ourselves and exhaust each resource made available to offset those competing service and familial demands and expectations that women in the academy can easily fall victim to.

I offer my *testimonio* as a way to transmit knowledge, to expose my inner conflicts and anxieties in hopes of validating someone else's, and to demonstrate that storytelling is safe and an acceptable methodology. Above all else, I offer my *testimonio* to learn from one another.

Lilliana's Testimonio:

Transforming the Self, Changing the World as a Chicana Activist Scholar

I became an Assistant Professor in Mexican American Studies at UTSA in 2009. It was a year of personal and professional transitions as I negotiated the intense demands and expectations as a newly appointed faculty member. As a native of San Antonio and a product of public schooling, I felt fortunate to work at a public institution where I could work with students who reflected the linguistic and cultural demographics of San Antonio and South Texas. I would be able to do "work that matters" in my hometown, close to my family, and in my community.

My first encounters with the university I work for took place when I was in middle school. I participated in a social studies competition as a 7th grader and completed a pre-engineering program for high achieving students of color in 8th grade. In many ways, I had come full circle to the very place that had opened its doors to me. Now, I would be able to do the same for other first generation students who were like me, navigating a new institutional culture and creating educational possibilities that had not been available to their parents or ancestors given the racialized dual wage economy of the region.

After completing my master's degree in San Antonio, I left to pursue my doctoral studies in the Midwest, much at the insistence of my thesis advisor. "You'll need to leave San Antonio if you want to come back to your community." And I left for four years, enduring my own struggles as a Chicana scholar in a predominantly white campus. I never thought that the struggles I endured as a student—the legacy of miseducation in San Antonio working-class, segregated barrio schools and the psychological and emotional impact of educational inequality—would continue to haunt me as a professor, leaving me with the task of healing, discarding old narratives of the self, and carving my identity as a Chicana activist scholar in the face of new expectations and demands.

Unlike the experiences of most Latina faculty who work in predominantly "White-stream" departments or universities, I work within a program that is Chicana/o Studies, where interdisciplinarity, critical pedagogy, and community-based teaching, research, and service are valued. Ethnic studies, feminist thought, and issues of social justice like immigration are at the center of discourse and scholarship. I do not feel invisible or feel like I work within a field that privileges white, middle-class ways of knowing. On the contrary, my program is dedicated to produc-

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ing scholarly work that is relevant to the historical and contemporary experiences of Mexican Americans in the U.S. Furthermore, I receive overwhelming support for the work that I do by my MAS colleagues. To this day, I work closely with two Chicana faculty mentors who are allies and mentors in my professional development. Still, the past year and a half has been a time of intense healing, learning, and transformation as I have learned to navigate the culture of academia and its incessant demands, particularly as the university moves towards Tier-1 status.

In my journey as a junior faculty, I've had to confront and chase out my own "shadow beasts" (Anzaldúa, 2010), the internalized oppressive narratives that people of color, women, and those who are the most marginalized in society carry about in their everyday lives. The most difficult to confront are those we refuse to voice because they are the most painful, the ones we keep to ourselves like "*papelitos guardados*" or hidden stories tucked away from sight (Latina Feminist Group, p. 1, 2001). While I do not recall a specific moment in which someone treated me as if I was an incompetent or unintelligent scholar, I struggled against these master narratives throughout my entire academic career, from my days as a barrio scholarship girl in high school (when I became aware of the blatant racism and inequality in my educational preparation) to my days as a doctoral student. No matter what I did—whether I worked long hours (getting home late and working weekends), over-prepared for lectures, edited and re-edited manuscripts—I struggled with self-doubt. As a new hire in my department, I thought that as soon as I'd finish my dissertation, these dominant narratives would disappear, as if earning a doctorate degree would magically erase these narratives. Often, as Chicana/Latina academics, we fear that if we were to offer an authentic testimony of what our spirit, body, minds experience in the academy, we will be exposed, judged, and rejected by our peers and made into outcasts by the larger institution. For me, confronting my "shadow beasts" was but the first step in reclaiming my humanity and restoring the commitment I made to myself, my students, my academic community, and the larger communities that continue to struggle against educational injustice (Anzaldúa, 2010).

I cannot say that my "shadow beast" has completely disappeared. However, I have learned to keep it at bay by not allowing it to paralyze or sabotage the work that I do as an activist scholar. This new identity, one in which my professional and personal identities are not rigidly bifurcated, has allowed me to navigate professional demands and expectations from a place of grace, possibility, and liberation rather than from a place of subordination, doubt, and fear. It has also provided me with the fortitude to strategize creatively and *entrenzar* (weave) the three areas of scholarship that are central to professional promotion—research, teaching, and service—from a Chicana/o Studies approach (Gonzalez, 2001). As a Chicana/o activist scholar, I am committed to my community, my program (e.g. course development and recruitment of more students), students (e.g., mentoring and advising), and research that is meaningful to my discipline, my department, and the larger communities that we serve as Chicanas/Latinas. These are strategies of resistance and survival that I continue to carve on an everyday basis, with much mentoring and support from

my academic mentors, allies, and family, as I learn what is privileged and valued in academia without compromising my own values as an activist scholar.

Through his process of healing and coming to self, I have come to a greater awareness of my personal and professional identities as I work towards the future of my program (MAS) and the collective struggle to keep Chicana/o Studies in higher education. It is important to note, given the anti-Raza Studies political climate in the United States (i.g. Arizona's ethnic studies ban, HB 2281, and the new proposed Texas SB 1128, which would not allow ethnic studies history courses to count as degree requirements in higher education), that the struggle for inclusivity is not only a struggle forged within the university, but outside the university, as Chicana/Latina junior faculty claim a rightful place in academia

Erica's Testimonio:

Fulfilling Responsibilities as a Latina, Donating Time as an Academic

Academia inherently is a stressful profession. Alongside responsibilities to acquire funding for my research, conduct rigorous research studies, and publish manuscripts, we are responsible to provide high quality education to our students and be involved in service in the community. However, beyond these outlined responsibilities comes a set of unwritten responsibilities as a Latina faculty.

My personal values as a Latina can sometimes conflict with the values of academia and deter fulfilling these responsibilities. These values include, but are not limited to, familiasm or *familismo*. My family is the center of my life and is the drive for many of my decisions in life. My family includes my immediate family of my mother and sisters and my extended family. My grandmother was the matriarch for our family for so many years and served as a role model for me. Living in proximity to her and being able to see her and help in any way was a driving decision to stay in Texas for all of my coursework through my doctoral program. I remember one of my professors in my master's program asking me if I was scared to leave Texas. He laughed as he teased me about being afraid to leave the nest. However, a duty to my family rather than any sort of fear was what drove me to stay close to my family both physical and emotionally. This duty is a blessing and privilege. My family's interconnectedness and ability to help each other is also the reason I believe I have been so successful in my life.

My connectedness with my students is another aspect of my work. I feel very connected to my students. Many Hispanic students see similarities between their backgrounds, struggles and my own. They come to my office to discuss issues of balancing school work while working full time, being able to be successful at school while being true to their family, and managing fears that they won't succeed. Although I love this role and believe I fulfill a critical role by being a resource person for them, academia does not value this specific type of mentoring very much. Depending on the institution, you might not earn any credit for mentoring unless it relates to a research project or specific coursework. So, helping these students is not given much credit.

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I have been creative at finding ways to have mentorship count towards credit. I am an advisor for a student group for honor students. I am able to use this time to provide additional mentoring on maintaining success throughout their undergraduate and graduate programs. I have also been able to connect the undergraduate students in this group with graduate students who serve as mentors. This has helped my students get mentored from students who face similar struggles. This mentorship can then be seen as part of the service in the student organization. Also, I discuss how to overcome challenges to get into graduate school in my introductory course for the profession. Although this time is limited, I am able to provide a little bit of extra help to my students during my teaching time.

I value collectivism in work. I enjoy collaborating on research projects. Fortunately, Community and Public Health research is often done collaboratively. Collectively, we are able to produce higher quality work while benefitting from diverse skill sets of team members. For the most part, this type of work is awarded. However, the tenure and promotion process emphasizes individualism and the ability to show independent work. As I work towards tenure, I fear that this value will also be a disservice to my success.

The collectivism and connectedness to a sense of community is difficult to find in an academic setting. I have been very fortunate to find a support group of fellow Latinas. These Latina scholars have helped me trouble shoot ways to overcome some of the issues in academia that I and other Latina faculty face. These sisters have also been instrumental in helping me identify potential opportunities to become more successful in my path towards gaining tenure. They provide both emotional and informational support that has been critical to my success. Finding or forming similar groups can help Latinas in navigating the academic culture.

Discussion

We render our *testimonios* to reveal the individual and collective struggles we experience as Latina/Chicana junior faculty. We navigate multiple identities as scholars in our disciplines, mothers, daughters, and community activists, while simultaneously defying gendered and racist biases and stereotypes, challenging legacies of institutional inequality, and meeting, if not exceeding, the expectations in our disciplines for tenure. We draw from the strength of strong mujeres (women)-our mothers, grandmothers, and academic godmothers/mentors, as we navigate the tensions of these multiple spaces which are often at odds with each other. Our *testimonios* also speak to our commitment to transform the culture of academia for our students and the larger communities we serve who are often a reflection of our race, class, and gender identities. In addition to the academic contributions we make to our fields, we contend that our cultural knowledge is an asset, rather than a deficit to academia (Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

Our *testimonios* extend on previous research on the experiences of female faculty

in general, and Latina faculty in particular. While these Latina junior faculty took it upon themselves to carve spaces in the academy, to meet expectations, to navigate barriers, more systemic change is necessary if we are to begin to close the gender gaps in academia. In order to make real changes we need to see a shift in societal support and call for universities to adopt policies that are more sensitive to the Latino cultural values. For example, we recommend policies that enable family/work balance such as flexible tenure clocks and part-time tenure-tracks. Additionally, teaching schedules that work with childcare needs and allow professors to teach subjects they are passionate about can go a long way towards job satisfaction and effective family/work balancing (Comer & Stites-Does, 2006).

More family-friendly policies can help change the culture of higher educational institutions. Drago (2006) and Halpern (2008) suggest that in order to live a dually successful life, a shift is needed in the assumption that the responsibility of the well-being of the family falls almost solely on the mother. They also suggest that new faculty should negotiate for options that will allow them the flexibility to perform both roles successfully. Furthermore, early career faculty should use the family-friendly policies already available to them rather than avoiding them because of bias as this serves to perpetuate the bias (Drago, 2006; Halpern, 2008).

Fellow academics (Comer & Stites-Does, 2006; Schlehofer, 2012) recommend that institutions implement family friendly policies such as on-site childcare, stopping the tenure clock upon having a baby, and/or not obligating faculty to attend events outside of the regular workday. However, the academic culture and gender roles must change to allow these policies to work as intended. The term “work/life balance” needs to be redefined into more of an integration of personal and professional responsibilities in order for these various responsibilities and roles to be accepted and welcomed in the academic culture (Schlehofer, 2012). Women who are able to devote quality time to both work and family and who enjoy both of these roles report successful work/family balancing. If the roles are successfully balanced, productivity goes up in both roles (Comer & Stites-Does, 2006).

Those who feel marginalized in academia (whether by gender, race, parenting status, etc.) should connect with other colleagues who share one or more of the same identities. These groups provide support systems that can be critical in advancing minority faculty. Because Latinas value collectivism, these groups can also help facilitate cooperative work rather than competitive alliances (DeLuca & Escoto, 2012). Universities and professional organizations need to advocate more for their female faculty members in the areas of recruitment, professional development, and support. Latinas currently make up a small proportion of faculty. However, as these Latinas work collaboratively they are able to advocate for their needs and advancement. As their representation in the academy grows, we hope policies and culturally-sensitive systemic changes will follow.

Conclusion

Our *testimonios*, analyzed within Chicana/Latina feminist and critical race lenses, contributes to existing literature by documenting the different experiences of Latina junior faculty across institutional settings, a perspective that has not been well researched. The research reviewed shows gender gaps in the academy continue to exist and are likely to remain because of expectations and policies that are odds with societal and cultural female norms. Simply changing policies to become more family-friendly will not be enough to curb bias avoidance. A cultural and social shift toward acceptance of family commitments is also necessary. But also learned through the shared narratives is that history, culture, society, and traditions have cultivated in us this internalized oppressive narrative. Some of our inner most fears and beliefs reflect the legacies of historical and institutional inequality. Still, our *testimonios* speak to the sources of strength—family and community inside and outside of academia—which are often perceived as deficits, rather than assets to our professional success. The shared experiences demonstrate that many of these issues continue to prevail and, despite training and degree differences, Latina junior faculty share a lot of the same perceptions and sentiments that continue to dominate in academy.

Given the current social, political, and cultural climate, Chicana/Latina academics must “carve their own space” by devising ways to successfully navigate a number of institutional barriers. Consistent with the stories of Latina faculty who came before us, our stories underscore the need to advocate for ourselves and others, create space where space is limited, creatively and cleverly resist where there is resistance, and assume a survivalist mentality (Ek, Quijada Cerecer, Alanis, & Rodriguez, 2010; Gutierrez & Muhs, 2012). This survivalist mentality involves risk taking and “leaning in” as opposed to “stepping back.” Taken together, the recommended strategies work to reduce the stress and guilt that often underpin that oppressive narrative and refocus cognitive energy and effort to enhance capacity in all aspects of life. In closing, the *testimonios* shared demonstrate that while the same barriers remain, Latina faculty members can and have devised strategies of resistance and survival in an institution that continues to be exclusionary and inequitable.

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