HISPANIC WOMEN
MAKING THEIR PRESENCE ON CAMPUS
LESS TENUOUS

by Sarah Nieves-Squires

"To speak categorically about all women is to deny the existence of real racial and ethnic difference. To speak of white women and minority women, on the other hand, is to affirm the natural bond that exists as women, while acknowledging the differences that also exist as a result of race and ethnicity."

Up to now, minimal attention has been paid to Hispanics in America's colleges and universities, and thus little has been written about the experiences of Hispanic women. Some may view Hispanic women as a group with few specific concerns. In some instances, programs aimed at recruiting Hispanic faculty members, staff members, or students focus primarily on Hispanic men; similarly, programs aimed at helping women may overlook minority women in general or Hispanic women specifically. This report examines some of the experiences that Hispanic women have as students, faculty members, and administrators. Recommendations for institutional use appear at the end.

The report draws upon information from the files of AAC's Project on the Status of Women (PSEW), published materials, informal interviews with Hispanic women, and anecdotal material collected through an informal questionnaire sent by the author to a small, random group of Hispanic students, staff, and faculty members around the country. This report is intended to educate others about the experiences of Hispanic-American women in academe and lead all to new strategies that will ensure the full participation of Hispanic American women in the intellectual, social, and economic growth of the country.

Hispanics in Higher Education: Numbers

I use the terms "non-Hispanic" and "non-minority" as well as "white" because many Hispanics are white and minority, and because the term "non-Hispanic" includes other minorities as well as white. I use the term "Anglo" to refer to members of the dominant culture of the United States.

Students

Census data indicate that in 1987, 8.6 percent of all Hispanics over age twenty-five were college graduates as compared to 20.6 percent of the same age cohort among the non-Hispanic population in the United States. Between 1976 and 1986, the total Hispanic enrollment in higher education increased from 384,000 to 624,000, including 292,000 men and 332,000 women. Hispanic men represented 2.3 percent of students, and Hispanic women represented 2.7 percent. Women also outnumber men at both the masters and doctoral levels, with men earning 2.1 percent of masters degrees, compared to women who earned 2.7 percent. Hispanic men earned 2 percent of the doctoral degrees, while women earned 2.2 percent.

Although the number of Hispanic students is increasing, the increase has not kept pace with the increase in population. The number of Hispanic Americans between ages 18 and 24 (traditional college-age) grew by 62 percent between 1976 and 1982.
Cultural Differences

For many Hispanic women, the major cause of stress is cultural conflict. In addition to facing difficulties that women or any minority member might experience, they also must deal with different cultural expectations. Meléndez and Petrovich point out that "many attitudes and values of the university culture are at odds with the character of Hispanic interpersonal relationships, forms of communication, and sex-role expectations."[8]

Meléndez and Petrovich also note, for example, that Hispanic culture encourages tolerance of different opinions. Challenging someone's statements, trying to change another person's opinion, or debating issues can be viewed as a sign of disrespect. Not only does such a tradition of academe make some Hispanics uncomfortable, but the reluctance of Hispanics to participate in such behavior may be misinterpreted by faculty members as a lack of interest or ability; the classroom silence of a Hispanic may be due to politeness rather than a lack of independent thinking.[9]

Cooperation and group cohesiveness are very important values in Hispanic culture. The competitiveness of academe, with its strong emphasis on individual achievement, can be a source of conflict for Hispanics. "While Hispanics need to learn to survive and thrive in a competitive environment, they may well need a period of transition before they can tackle individual and competitive projects. Professors can help by permitting students to do some group projects. Non-Hispanic students could also benefit from opportunities to develop cooperation skills."[10]

The way in which professors relate to students in conversation about their work reflects these cultural differences. "Anglo professors... are often task oriented and get right to the point in conferences with students. Hispanic students are used to professors asking about their families, vacations, hobbies, and so forth, before discussing business. The immediate discussion of the business at hand is considered indifferent and cold."[11] Thus professors may be viewed as rejecting students even when they are not. More importantly, a professor who shows personal interest in a student and provides encouragement can enhance markedly the student's motivation and performance. This is true for all students, not just Hispanic women.

Similarly, expectations of friendship and peer relationships may be different for Hispanics. Hispanics often spend a good deal of time building relationships. Friendships are deep and require loyalty. "The informal casualness of acquaintances in the dominant culture, along with the different expectations of friendships, may complicate the task of making friends and exacerbate feelings of isolation."[12]

Other differences also may lead to misunderstandings between Hispanics and others. The closer personal space that is comfortable for some Hispanics may make Anglos uncomfortable or be perceived as inviting intimacy. A warm smile may be mistaken for a flirtatious one. Overt hand and arm
What Does “Hispanic” Mean?

The U.S. government describes Hispanics as persons of Cuban, Mexican or Mexican American, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish ancestry or descent.¹

There is, in fact, considerable variation in terms of self-defined ethnic identity among the various groups, so that some refer to themselves as Mexican Americans, others as Chicanos, others as Hispanics, and still others as Americans. Many people in the United States are not aware of the diversity of these groups, although the Hispanic population in the United States clearly is far from homogeneous. Hispanic Americans are of several different races, religions, and ethnic origins. Here is a brief description of the different groups.

- **Cubans.** Those who arrived in this country as refugees sponsored by the U.S. State Department in the 1960s form the core of Cuban Americans. This is an older population, light complexioned and generally well-educated. The second wave of Cuban migration occurred in the mid-1980s, primarily as a result of the Mariel boatload; these emigres generally have not fared as well as their predecessors. They have darker complexions, lower levels of educational achievement and lower socioeconomic status, and they have had less government help in assimilating into U.S. society than did the earlier refugees. Cubans comprise 7.1 percent of the Hispanic population.² As of 1987, 61.6 percent had completed high school, and 17.1 percent had completed four or more years of college.

- **Puerto Ricans.** Puerto Ricans are not immigrants; they are U.S. citizens.³ A mostly young, urbanized population, Puerto Ricans form the core of Hispanic Caribbean Basin migration, which includes Dominicans and Cubans. Puerto Ricans comprise 15.1 percent of the Hispanic population.⁴ As of 1987, approximately 54 percent had completed high school, but only 8 percent of Puerto Ricans had finished four or more years of college.

- **Mexican Americans.** Also known as Chicanos, Mexican Americans were a presence in the Southwest even before the Mayflower. They became a “minority” when the U.S. annexed some of their land. Their numbers are swelled by Mexican nationals who cross the border hoping to better their economic conditions. This segment of the population grew by 93 percent between 1970 and 1980.⁵ The largest group of Hispanics—60.6 percent—is Chicano.⁶ Their level of education is the lowest among Hispanics, in part because of the high proportion of agricultural workers in the group. In 1987, only 44.8 percent had finished high school, and just 5.8 percent of Chicanos had finished four or more years of college.⁷

- **Central and South Americans.** Many Hispanics who emigrated earlier from Central and South America were from a higher socioeconomic class than other Hispanics and came to the United States to further their education or establish business contacts. These persons and their children may identify themselves as “Latinos.” A number enjoy a comfortable standard of living, and other Hispanics may identify them with the dominant culture of the United States. The more recent arrivals, however, often emigrate to escape various forms of repression and hope to establish themselves in the U.S. to help families still living in their native countries. They generally do not enjoy the higher standard of living of the earlier arrivals.⁸ Central and South Americans make up 10.2 percent of the Hispanic population.⁹ In 1987, 39.3 percent had completed high school; 12.2 percent had completed four or more years of college.¹⁰

- **Other Hispanics.** Eight percent of the total Hispanic group as defined by U.S. Census Bureau data are persons who identify themselves as being Hispanic or Latino but do not belong to the above groups. They may be of Iberian origin but are not considered Hispanics.

Despite the differences among the various groups, Hispanics nevertheless share common bonds of language, culture, religion, and history. They also have shared the experience of being oppressed.¹¹

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1. Filipinos are not considered Hispanic although most have Spanish surnames as a result of five hundred years of Spanish rule in the Philippines.
4. The Foraker Act in 1917 imposed U.S. citizenship on all Puerto Ricans born in Puerto Rico or in the U.S.
8. Ibid.
10. While the identification of “Latino” versus “Hispanic” varies according to geographic location, generally Latino refers to Spanish-speakers who do not share “hyphenated citizenship” such as “Mexican-Americans” or “Cuban-Americans.”
gestures, coupled with a Spanish accent, may be perceived as a lack of verbal ability. Moreover, "Hispanics of the same sex stand very close together, while members of the opposite sex stand further apart than Anglos do. Hispanic friends of the same sex touch each other quite frequently, whereas those of the opposite sex do not touch each other at all." Thus closeness, hugging, and kissing among Hispanic women may be misinterpreted as homosexual behavior.

In Hispanic cultures, looking someone directly in the eye is often considered a challenge or a sign of disrespect. In contrast, in the dominant culture—and particularly in the classroom—eye contact means attentiveness. Thus the stage is set for misperception and misunderstanding. The Hispanic female student may feel embarrassed when her male professor looks directly at her. The professor, noting that the student did not maintain eye contact, may conclude that she is not paying attention, is not interested in the materials, or is too passive to interact with the professor.

Ignorance of Hispanic customs and beliefs can prompt non-Hispanics to misunderstand the motivation and behavior of Hispanics. Social contacts are problematic when compounded by stereotypes. Many non-Hispanics' knowledge of Hispanic culture derives from stereotypes perpetuated in the media. Their knowledge of Puerto Ricans comes from West Side Story, La Bamba and El Norte complete the picture for Central and Mexican Americans. Some people do not differentiate among the various Hispanic groups but have one stereotype for all. Thus, the stereotypes of Hispanic women are compounded by stereotyped attitudes and views of women in general. One of the major assumptions about Hispanic women is that they focus only on home and family. "The image of dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers...is a negative one in this society because the sense of duty is linked to subservience and dependency. Hispanic women are seen as content with being sex objects and decorative figures who are required to obtain less education than their male counterparts because they are less capable of using it...These negative images...lead to the stereotyping of Hispanic-American women as powerless, pathological, prayerful, and dutiful family members." A woman dean at a private university comments: "I suspect that being a woman became more important in this [institution] than being Puerto Rican. It has always been difficult for me to tell what it is that is really disturbing people who I don't feel should otherwise be disturbed—my gender? my being Puerto Rican? or my political views? At any rate, I say I suspect being a woman was more important because when our printer came...to deliver an order, he yelled to the white male assistant dean, 'Hey, I hear you got a woman!' meaning a woman boss."23

On the Campus

They differ in color and physiognomy, degree of adaptation to the dominant culture and ties to their native culture, proficiency in English, social class background, and financial need.24

Just as there are differences among the various Hispanic groups, there is much variation within any group of Hispanic students attending college. The following quotation, although written about Mexican-Americans, applies to other Hispanic students as well: "As a group, they do not fit the stereotype often attached to this ethnic minority, nor do most fit the stereotype of the conventional student. This is a group of Americans who are trying to move upward educationally and economically in comparison to their parents. Some come from homes where there is little formal education and where Spanish is the only language spoken. Many are over 21 years of age and are attending community college or state university campuses. Others come from more middle-class, English-speaking homes and tend to be conventional college-age students with high occupational aspirations and few serious academic problems. The more middle-class student is more likely to be attending the more prestigious campuses in the sample.25

Some Hispanic women in college are likely to have heavy domestic responsibilities, a spouse, and children. Some find that their families oppose their idea of attending college and may be discouraged from venturing into the world of academia in the first place.26

Some Hispanic women may not know any others pursuing nontraditional lives. Although parental support for attending college is usually strong, in one study of Mexican-American students men were more likely than women to report that their parents were very supportive of their college plans.27 Hispanic parents are generally very protective of their children and may not value independence or separation as much as parents in the dominant culture. Daughters particularly may not be encouraged to move out of the family home or to make decisions against their parents' wishes. Those women who do go to college may be more likely to attend school near home, whereas Hispanic men are more likely to study further away. For women who do go away to college, it may be the first time they have ever been away from home. The pressures of coping with being away from home and learning to live independently in a place that appears to be uncaring and culturally different can make the first year in college a difficult experience for many Hispanics.28

Additionally, the sense of being the first in her family or community to go to college can in itself place a heavy responsibility on the student and cause additional stress: "Everyone from my community is watching me. If I do well, people will encourage their children to do well in school and go to college."29
A faculty member describes her Chicana students: "Many of the Chicanas I work with experience a good deal of insecurity and self-doubt about their abilities even though they have demonstrated considerable talent."\(^{10}\)

Other sources of stress for some Hispanic women in college include: financial problems (including not being able to contribute to family income), lack of academic preparation, being in a competitive place, difficulty speaking in class, and a subsequent loss of self-confidence because of any of the preceding.\(^{11}\) Often there are so few Hispanic women on most campuses that they are seen as representatives of an alien culture that no one understands rather than as contributors to a multicultural educational setting. One student observes, "You grow up around 4400 Mexican-Americans, and you don’t know you’re different…until people point it out."\(^{12}\)

For many Hispanic women—whether they are students, faculty members, or administrators—the conflict among the values of their culture, the values of the academic community, and the values of the majority culture are real ones. Often Hispanic women are torn by conflicting demands, especially when the roles and behaviors acceptable in their background contradict those expected in an academic environment.

If a Hispanic woman is "too Hispanic," she may have difficulty succeeding in academe. If her Hispanic peers consider her "too Anglo," she may lose their support. They may contemptuously refer to her as a "coconut"—brown on the outside but white on the inside. She also risks giving up a vital part of herself: her heritage and all that it implies. Many Hispanics feel caught between two cultures and feel they must respond to both traditional values and modern demands. Moreover, their different values and experiences mean that Hispanics, like other minority groups and women in general, often are viewed as marginal: "not one of us," "outsiders," or "the other." Arturo Madrid, former director of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, poignantly describes what this is like: "If one is the other, one will inevitably be perceived unidimensionally; will be seen stereotypically; will be defined and delimited by mental sets that may not bear much relation to existing realities. There is a darker side to otherness as well. The other disturbs, disquiets, discomforts. It provokes distrust and suspicion. The other makes people feel anxious, nervous, apprehensive, even fearful. The other frightens, scares… For some of us, being the other is only annoying; for others it is debilitating; for still others it is damning."\(^{13}\)

Like other women, Hispanic women may be treated differently because of their gender. Indeed, like other minority women, they frequently face "double discrimination": being both female and racially or ethnically different. Several researchers have noted how women students and faculty members are more likely than men to be interrupted, less likely to be called upon in classrooms and at staff meetings, and receive less eye contact from both men and women. Men in general, whether students or faculty members, receive more attention and feedback than women. Comments made by men are more likely to be listened to, responded to, and credited to their author than comments made by women.\(^{14}\)

Often white men and women are uncomfortable dealing with minority women and act on the basis of misperceptions and wrong assumptions. For example, intellectual competence and leadership ability, along with other qualities valued in academic life, are associated not only with males, but specifically with white males. These attributes are often denied, denigrated, or viewed as an exception in minority women. Minority women are more likely than other women to be excluded from informal and social activities within their departments and institutions—sometimes by white women as well as by white and minority men. The isolation of Hispanic women is compounded by the relatively small number of Hispanic persons of either sex—students, faculty members, or administrators—who can serve as role models, mentors, colleagues, and peers.

Because of their small numbers, Hispanic women faculty members are even more overburdened than white faculty women—especially with advising Hispanic and other minority students and numerous committee assignments—thus limiting their time for research and publishing. Sometimes there is a tacit assumption that all Hispanic students should be advised by the sole or few Hispanic faculty members, even though the numbers may outstrip those assigned to other faculty members. In addition to those students formally assigned, a number of others may gravitate to Hispanic faculty members to seek informal guidance. A Stanford University report found, "Many minority staff members feel they have two jobs—the job in the job description plus the work taken up in response to one's ethnic community. Ethnic community work is usually not seen as service to other staff, faculty, and students, and thus to the whole university community, but rather as a personal matter putting the staff member with two jobs under additional stress from both sides."\(^{15}\)

In addition, Hispanic women in academe, like other minority women, often are judged in terms of their imputed sexuality. Simple friendliness or even a smile may be misinterpreted as a sexual overture and may lead to sexual harassment or a keeping of distance by some male faculty and administrators. Like all women, Hispanic women may be sexually harassed. Minority women in general are more likely to be singled out by male students as a target of harassment. Stereotypes are prevalent in jokes that students and colleagues tell about Hispanics. Sometimes the jokes are told directly to Hispanics without any sensitivity to how the "joke" is perceived. Although humor often can be used to lighten a subject, it also can be used to define the outsiders and to express anger and hostility toward them in a socially acceptable form. On several campuses, where fraternities and sororities have had parties with a Mexican theme, guests are encouraged to use fake accents, not to celebrate Mexican culture but to denigrate it.
The Black Hispanic Woman

While a sizable proportion of the Hispanic population is Caucasian, there are some whose roots originate in the Caribbean Basin and who share an African heritage mixed with the Arawak Indians and the Spaniards.1 About 5 percent of Hispanics are Black.2

It is almost impossible to trace a direct cause-and-effect relationship between lightness/darkness of skin and access to educational, economic, and social mobility among African Americans as well as Hispanics in the country. By and large, however, those found at the high end of the economic and/or educational scale tend to be of lighter shades than those at the bottom. Since the former also may be more likely to attend college than their darker-skinned cohorts, many people in academe assume that most Hispanics are Caucasian or “Caucasian-looking.” In contrast, Hispanics who live in the inner city may be misidentified as African-American. These assumptions belies the variations in skin color among Puerto Ricans and Cuban-Americans, where the mixture of races has led to a whole spectrum of complexities. Thus, some people may be surprised to meet a blue-eyed blonde Puerto Rican; they may assume that her Caucasian appearance will lead her to adhere to dominant cultural values and reject Puerto Rican culture.

Another incorrect assumption is that those who look Black must know and feel what it is like to be African-American. (This is particularly difficult for Black Hispanics who grew up outside the United States.) Those who grow up in the inner city in the U.S. quickly learn that they are not perceived as Hispanics if their complexion is dark; they are treated in the same manner as African Americans, for better or worse. Many Hispanics adopt this imposed ethnicity if they see it as the only way to survive. Others may voluntarily embrace it as another aspect of their heritage. Some Black Hispanics may be unwilling to accept an imposed ethnicity, however, and have difficulty dealing with the experience. In any case, the dynamic creates additional tensions for Hispanics who are dark-skinned.

Since the Hispanic presence in academe is minimal, the Black Hispanic woman is often identified as African-American rather than as Hispanic by non-minority academics as well as by African Americans. When their expectations concerning her beliefs and behaviors are not met, the resulting discomfort for non-Hispanics, African Americans, and the Hispanic woman herself can lead to additional tension, rejection, and isolation.

In some instances, Black colleagues may expect the Black Hispanic to identify with the Black agenda; others may not accept her because she does not share the same background. Some Caucasian Hispanics also may reject Black Hispanics, perhaps from fear of being identified with a perceived lower-status group. The Black Hispanic may be bereft of a sense of belonging to either group. The situation may differ between historically Black and predominantly white institutions. The testing of being “Black enough” seems to be more of an issue at historically Black institutions but is not absent from predominantly white campuses.

Thus, the Black Hispanic woman in academe must struggle with cultures—Black America and mainstream America—both of which may be equally foreign to her.

1. The Arawak Indians lived in the Caribbean Islands when the Spaniards arrived.

Sexual and ethnic stereotypes still may prevail when harassment is not overt. Hispanic women, like others, may be praised and evaluated for their appearance and personal qualities rather than for their abilities.

Other stereotyped interpretations of Hispanic women’s behaviors can influence their relationships with peers, faculty members, and supervisors. Because many Hispanics speak English with an accent, some people automatically assume that they do not fully understand what is being said, that they are passive, and that they are not intellectually capable. (Interestingly, a French or German accent does not evoke the same assumptions of intellectual deficit.) One respondent to our questionnaire wrote, “A few people make inappropriate jokes about my accent. Others have remarked how wonderful [it is] to be bilingual and about the value of having command of two languages.” Stereotypes also may lead advisors and faculty members to counsel Hispanic women to lower their education and career sights and to steer Hispanics into service and allied health professions.

Because of these stereotypes as well as cultural and gender barriers, Hispanic women may miss out on informal interactions with colleagues. For many faculty members and administrators, informal contact is crucial for professional advancement, for it is through informal conversation and professional relationships that one often learns about departmental and institutional politics, professional opportunities, and other matters of importance. Hispanic women also miss out on the informal mentoring and validation of their work that is critical to professional advancement.
Tokenism, too, poses a problem. The "token" may be reminded by members of the dominant culture that she is exceptionally talented and deserving and unlike the rest of her ethnic group. When a Hispanic woman receives praise for her accomplishments, it may be expressed in terms of her being different from other Hispanics—the implication being that Hispanics in general are not expected to achieve and that she is different (and better) than her peers. She is subtly encouraged to see herself as separate from the wider minority population.

Hispanic women may find themselves and their work devalued not only because they are female but because they are Hispanic. Some faculty members, administrators, and students assume that Hispanic women professionals are tokens, hired only because they are Hispanic and not because they possess the necessary credentials, experience, and qualifications. A student speaks: "We carry a stigma.... When I first came here as a freshman, a white undergraduate said to me, "You're here, and my friend, who is better qualified, is not.""

The unspoken devaluation that Hispanic women and men often face can be seen in what Reyes and Holcón call "the one-minority-per-pot syndrome." They write of the "unspoken fear that the presence of more than one minority faculty member in a mainstream traditional department might reduce the department's academic reputation." Sometimes administrators are comfortable hiring Hispanic women in bilingual education, Chicano studies, ethnic studies, foreign language (Spanish) courses, affirmative action or equal opportunity programs and student services—areas with relatively low status in the academic hierarchy. When Hispanics apply for jobs in academic departments, "...it is not uncommon for minorities to be required to submit copies of their dissertations, evaluations of their teaching, bibliographies from their published papers and copies of funded proposals.... It is usually minorities who are singled out to provide additional documentation and the requests are usually made after they have become top candidates.... For minority academics this particular practice has the simultaneous effect of publicly demeaning their professional reputations while chipping away at their self-esteem."*

The paradox of "underattention" versus "overattention" experienced by women in general is often exacerbated in the case of Hispanic women. On the one hand, a Hispana's comments in classrooms or at staff and faculty meetings may be ignored; on the other, she constantly may be called upon to present the "minority view," or the "Hispanic woman's view" rather than her own views. If a Hispanic woman focuses her research on issues concerning women and/or Hispanics, it may be seen as not scholarly enough and consequently devalued in the promotion and tenure process. As is the case for many non-white scholars, themes that are of interest to non-mainstream groups often are shunned by mainstream researchers. Ironically, when mainstream researchers undertake the same questions, their research carries more weight than that of minority researchers. The rejection or devaluation of research on minorities undertaken by members of minority groups is usually cloaked under the mantle of "lack of objectivity" and "distancing" from the data.

"[We are] tired of reading about ourselves in the social science literature written by non-minorities, we want to speak for ourselves, to define, label, describe, and interpret our own conditions.... Quite often our research interests are dismissed as minor or self-serving. The general perception is that minority-related topics do not constitute academic scholarship.... and that they are inappropriate and narrow in scope. The assumption is that minority researchers cannot be objective in their analyses of those problems which are so close to their life experiences. [There] is a double standard that lends full credibility to whites [who are] conducting research on white populations but discredits minority academics' research on minority issues."40

At the Third Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in 1987, Birgit Brock-Utne noted in her keynote address that it is time to ask "What is wrong with physics (or politics, or...) that women don't do it?" rather than "What is wrong with women that they don't do physics, politics, etc.?" As institutions of higher education consider the tenuous presence of Hispanics, they might well question the conditions that keep their numbers low rather than simply assume there are not enough out there who want to come in and succeed.

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Recommendations

The recommendations below cover a wide range of activities and policies. Not all will be appropriate for every institution, and some may need modification in order to fit particular situations. Many of the recommendations are also appropriate for Hispanic men as well as other minority groups.

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General

- Recognize the diversity of Hispanic experience. Not all Hispanic women look alike, nor do they speak alike. They come from varied backgrounds and experiences; do not try to pigeonhole them into the straight jacket of the all-encompassing "Hispanic woman."
- Do not assume that Hispanic women are solely interested in Hispanic issues. In some instances they may not be interested at all. Resist assigning the role of "Campus Hispana."
- Make a special effort to engage Hispanic women in everyday activities and informal conversation.
- Make an effort to call Hispanic women by their correct names. It is very frustrating to be called "Marta" again and again when your name is Marta or Josefa. Recognize and respect that Hispanic women may arrange their names differently than Anglos.
Recognize that for some Hispanic women, feminist ideology as espoused by Anglo women may not be appealing. This does not mean that Hispanic women are not aware of or do not understand the role of women within their cultural milieu; they are trying to deal with it within a framework that makes sense from their own set of cultural experiences.

Do not assume that Hispanics talking in Spanish among themselves are deliberately excluding you or talking about you. Feel free to ask them to translate for you or to speak in English so you can join the conversation. By the same token, remember to include them in your English conversations.

Allow room for humor in discussions since humor is often used in Hispanic culture as a way of dealing with differences and avoiding confrontations. Humor allows one to state one's case without crushing the ego of one's opponent. Thus laughter on the part of Hispanics does not necessarily signal the undervaluing of a theme nor does a smile always represent acquiescence.

Give positive feedback to faculty members, administrative colleagues, and others for any efforts they make to create an equitable climate for Hispanic women.

Avoid comments that perpetuate stereotypes about Hispanic women. For example, do not say, "I cannot tell you how bright she is because of her accent."

Assume the best when colleagues work together. Too often, interchanges between male and female colleagues are assumed to be sexual liaisons; collaborations among women also may be viewed as sexual or as "plotting"; and collaboration or even simple interaction among Hispanic women may be seen as "separatist."

Acknowledge comments or suggestions made by Hispanic women. Hispanic women often report that their contributions are ignored by colleagues. Give Hispanic women credit for working on committees or helping students.

Seek the advice of Hispanic women in areas other than minority issues and affirmative action: for example, in the areas of their academic expertise.

Make a special effort to help newly hired Hispanic women faculty and administrators feel welcome. For example, offer personal support, share information such as explaining formal and informal networks, or volunteer to be a mentor.

Administrators

Ensure that all programs, services, and other efforts aimed at improving the climate for women recognize the special concerns of Hispanic women.

Incorporate appropriate language into the charter or mandate that programs and services include a focus on minority women, including Hispanics.

Educate the campus community to be aware of the existence of double discrimination: the effects of both racism and sexism on the experiences of Hispanic women students, faculty members, administrators, and staff.

Try not to evaluate the overall climate for Hispanic women on your campus solely on the basis of your own behavior and intentions. While you may be sensitive to issues concerning Hispanics, others may not be. Ensure that those offices responsible for allocating institutional research money have persons qualified to evaluate proposals about Hispanic issues.

Ensure that Hispanic women are aware of in-house management training programs and are encouraged to participate in them.

Develop special "grow-your-own-administrator" programs to groom Hispanic women in lower administrative positions for higher positions.

Offer opportunities for staff members to attend seminars and workshops on cultural diversity and its impact on the quality of campus life.

Be aware of devaluation of women and minorities and the tracking of Hispanic women into positions dealing with affirmative action, bilingual programs, and minority affairs. These positions should be developed as steppingstones for further advancement.

Where appropriate, set up a committee to examine the status of Hispanic women or incorporate the examination of the status of Hispanic women into existing committees or commissions studying the status of minorities and the status of women. Develop specific recommendations for policies and programs that might be adopted.

Publicize data, reports, and other information concerning Hispanic women.

Designate a specific office(s) and staff members such as ombudspersons to be responsible for evaluating and reporting on the general climate for women and minorities and ensure that Hispanic women are among the groups served.

Establish policies and set timetables to increase the number of Hispanic women faculty members and administrators on campus to achieve parity with the proportion of Hispanics in the student body. Identify administrators who will be responsible for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating these policies.

Ensure that Hispanic women faculty members and administrators are given the opportunity to participate on recruitment teams or public relations teams for the institution. Hispanic women should be visible and serve in a wide variety of jobs on campus. These extra responsibilities should be acknowledged and rewarded, when appropriate, by promotion and tenure committees.

Help the academic community and others explore its attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors toward Hispanic women and toward issues of ethnicity and gender.

Include Hispanic and other minority women in the de-
development and implementation of awareness programs.

- Incorporate materials about Hispanic women in lecture series and public seminars; hold seminars and conferences on the topic of Hispanic women.
- Include Hispanic women faculty members, administrators, and students, when appropriate, in the planning of educational policies for the university.
- Establish a distinguished visiting scholar series focusing specifically on Hispanic and other minority women. Include Hispanic women in planning the series.
- Recognize Hispanic women's achievements by awarding honorary degrees or visiting professorships. Endow a chair or lecture series to recognize Hispanic women's achievements.
- Give personal and institutional support to scholarship about Hispanic women. Publicly recognize and promote Hispanic women's studies and invite Hispanic women to campus as visiting professors, consultants, guest lecturers, and curriculum specialists.
- Establish a multicultural center where faculty members and students can learn about each others' cultures and dispel misconceptions and fears about their differing backgrounds.
- Develop a campuswide policy specifically aimed at racial and ethnic harassment. The policy should broadly define racial and ethnic harassment, provide for both informal procedures and counseling, and outline formal grievance procedures. The policy should list sanctions that may be imposed on offending employees or students. Include racial/sexual harassment of Hispanic and other minority women, and make it clear that racist/ethnic humor and comments will not be tolerated.
- Ensure that campus sexual harassment policies contain specific language that covers Hispanic and other minority women.
- Establish a policy so that official publications will reflect the presence and contributions of minority women in both visual and textual materials.

Institutional data collection

- Gather data—statistical and other—to evaluate the campus climate for Hispanic women.
- Examine existing programs and services aimed at minorities and women to insure that Hispanic women are actually being reached and helped. Require that data about these programs and services be collected according to race and sex (for example, Hispanic men, Hispanic women).
- Collect institutional data concerning administrators, faculty and staff members, students, and applicants according to sex and race/ethnicity so that the status of Hispanic women can be compared to other groups of men and women. The tendency to aggregate minorities into racial/ethnic groups while ignoring sex differences within these groups can obscure information that could have implications for enrollment, retention, degree attainment, and hiring and promotion.
- Collect data according to groups, e.g., Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans.
- Collect data according to race and sex on part-time and temporary faculty members, visiting lecturers, postdoctoral students, and part-time students.
- Collect, on a regular basis, statistical data covering such areas as salary, benefits, promotions, perquisites, awards, grants, course loads, advising loads, committee assignments, financial aid, student jobs, majors, changes of majors, and extracurricular participation.

Curriculum

- Encourage faculty members to include Hispanic authors in their assigned readings. Students who can read these works in Spanish will benefit from a boost of self-esteem, and those students who must read the works in translation will enlarge their cultural understanding.
- Encourage all department chairs to revise their curricula and to include works by or about Hispanic women in a variety of contexts.
- Encourage faculty members—through release time, for example—to attend workshops that focus on the integration of materials about women and minorities, especially Hispanic women, into their mainstream courses.
- When concerns about women and/or minority students are included in the curriculum, include information on the differences between minority and majority women, as well as differences between women of different minority groups.
- Encourage departments to sponsor workshops, colloquia, and conferences on research issues relevant to Hispanic women's lives. Cosponsor these events with ethnic studies and women's studies departments or programs on campus or with other institutions or related interests groups in the area.
- Encourage the continued growth of existing Hispanic women's studies courses or develop such courses. There is a growing body of scholarship on Hispanic women that is not always included in minority studies programs or in women's studies programs; this scholarship needs to be incorporated into the curriculum.
- Encourage campus libraries to collect, display, and publicize materials concerning Hispanics and Hispanic issues and to include a focus on Hispanic women when they do so.
- Offer ethnic studies courses to help students understand cultural diversity in the United States.
- Use the expertise of Hispanic faculty members to plan campus and community programs that support an understanding of Hispanic culture. Ensure that such programs include a focus on Hispanic women.
Faculty

- Examine recruiting practices to ensure that special efforts to recruit minorities and women include Hispanic women.
- Contact minority colleagues to ask for personal nominations for prospective faculty. Contact Hispanic women's professional organizations (such as the American Educational Research Association's Special Interest Group on Hispanic Concerns), the American Council on Education's Programs on Minority Concerns, and organizations that have an interest in Hispanic women's advancement (see the selected list of resources at the end of this paper).
- Utilize the same strategies for recruiting Hispanic women faculty members and administrators that you would for any other "hard-to-hire" candidates. Offer salary incentives and other perquisites to attract Hispanic women.
- Incorporate in the interviewing process a mechanism that ensures that all candidates are treated fairly and professionally at all steps of the process. Familiarize search committees with procedures that may inadvertently devalue Hispanic women candidates, such as asking women and minorities more direct questions and white men more open-ended questions, which allow one to display one’s talents more readily. Develop guidelines to ensure that all candidates are treated equally in the interview process.
- Establish working relationships with colleges and universities that graduate high numbers of Hispanic women students. These institutions can provide a pool of potential graduate students, faculty members, and administrators.
- Develop strategies to "grow your own faculty."
- Make scholarships, fellowships, and research opportunities readily available to Hispanic women faculty members. Publicize programs such as the National Science Foundation Visiting Professorships for Women, Fulbright Study Abroad Programs, and the National Research Council Doctoral and Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, and encourage Hispanic women to apply.
- Form task forces or committees to examine departmental or college policies (such as office assignments and appointments to committees) to make sure that Hispanic women, who are often junior faculty members, are treated fairly.
- Establish recognition awards for junior faculty members so that formal recognition is not solely reserved for senior faculty members, who are most often white and male.
- Encourage senior faculty members to be mentors. Working with sympathetic and supportive senior faculty members can help new faculty members understand the formal and informal structures of the university and the department.
- Establish information manuals for all new faculty members so that women and minorities, who are often excluded from informal information sharing, can know what is expected of them as they prepare for tenure.
- Recognize that demands for service to the university, to students, and to the community are often greater for minority women than for most faculty members. Develop criteria to value and reward such service contributions so that they are considered in merit and promotion deliberations.
- Keep data concerning tenure rates for departments and schools according to race and sex (for example, Hispanic women, white women) so that disparities, if present, can be identified.
- When Hispanic women are hired, department chairs and members of search committees need to ensure that others know that the search was rigorous and that the person hired has the best qualifications to do the job; they need to be explicit in their support of the Hispanic woman they hired.
- Ensure that Hispanic women on committees are not assigned stereotypical roles, such as providing food or doing the support work for the meeting.
- Develop peer mentoring systems for new faculty members that help incorporate Hispanic women into the academic departments where they are based. The mentor does not necessarily have to be Hispanic but should be someone who is willing to spend time "teaching her the ropes" and helping the newcomer maximize her professional potential.
- Recognize that the nature of research topics that interest many Hispanic faculty members may stem from their broad experiences with a particular population. Thus they may be more inclined to perceive issues and utilize paradigms that may not occur to Anglo professionals. To dismiss this as "untested" or unorthodox is to lose a source of innovative thinking and data interpretation.
- Identify experts in different fields both inside and outside the institution who can read research written in another language—in this case, Spanish. Sometimes work undertaken by Hispanic women cannot be evaluated readily because no one in the department can read Spanish. Therefore no one in the department may be aware of the themes Hispanics may be dealing with or with the whole body of underlying assumptions, and no one is able to make an informed judgment as to the validity of specific work dealing with these issues.
- Monitor the formal and informal advising loads of Hispanic faculty members to ensure that they are not overworked.
- Do not refer all Hispanic students with difficulties to Hispanic women faculty members. It is important to increase Hispanic women's contacts with other members of the academic community as well as with Hispanic students.
- Sponsor university-wide seminars by Hispanic faculty members on topics in their particular field, not just Hispanic issues.
- Incorporate into faculty development and orientation programs issues concerning Hispanics in general and Hispanic women in particular.
☐ Appoint Hispanic women to search committees and other committees rather than only to committees dealing with minority and women's issues.

☐ Increase the visibility of Hispanic female faculty members and administrators on campus, not only by hiring them but also by using their expertise and publicizing their activities. They can be role models for Hispanic women students as well as other students who may not be accustomed to seeing Hispanic women in leadership positions.

Students

☐ Develop a comprehensive, institution-wide recruitment and retention plan that will provide long-range planning, goal setting, and project implementation to help Hispanic and other minority women stay in school from high school to college. This is especially important in preparing Hispanic and other minority women for careers in mathematics, science, engineering, and computer science, where preparation must begin early. Ensure that resources are allocated.

☐ Identify administrators who will be responsible for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating specific recruitment programs concerning Hispanics.

☐ Ensure that existing recruitment and retention programs deal specifically with Hispanic women.

☐ Ensure that outreach programs, such as summer orientation, are attentive to the needs of Hispanic women.

☐ Ensure that recruitment materials, pictures, and texts reflect the diversity that the institution is trying to foster.

☐ Encourage recruitment officers to be honest about the campus, the curriculum, and the experiences of minority students.

☐ Make special efforts to include Hispanic women in career programs and other university-wide programming.

☐ Encourage faculty members and chairs to include Hispanics in their informal talks and gatherings with majority students.

☐ Recognize that the apparent passivity of some Hispanic female students may stem from fear of being ridiculed because of their accent, fear of failure, or because of cultural differences. Engage them in class discussion by calling on them, asking them questions, and responding to their comments. Concentrate on their contribution rather than on their linguistic delivery.

☐ Be aware that many female Hispanic students are struggling with economic and social barriers that detract from their ability to devote all their attention to their studies; thus they may take longer than other students to complete their degrees.

☐ Assess tutoring programs and other resources to see if they are effective for Hispanic women and to find out what else may be needed.

☐ Do not assume that all Hispanic women come to the classroom with the same educational background as each other or that because they are Hispanic they do not have comparable levels of attainment to those of other students.

☐ Work with local high schools with large populations of Hispanic students to encourage them to attend college.

☐ Develop programs that encourage high school-age and younger female Hispanics to expand their horizons and consider college.

☐ Develop ethnically oriented support services, such as a Hispanic student center. Create a special place or center where Hispanic students can meet for social and educational experiences. While some may consider these centers as "separatist," they provide an oasis where Hispanic students can feel comfortable on campus.

☐ Develop special orientation programs and other extracurricular activities for Hispanic women as well as courses in ethnic studies to counter a sense of isolation and to provide support and information.

☐ Develop peer support groups, such as peer study and peer advisement groups, both in undergraduate and graduate school.

☐ Develop programs for Hispanics that sharpen their academic skills without damaging their self-esteem.

☐ Where possible, develop bilingual programs so students can learn English while accumulating credits in academic courses taught in Spanish.

☐ Help create a climate in which multiracial/multicultural women's coalitions can be established.

☐ Gather and evaluate criteria, rules, regulations, and data concerning financial aid and develop specific strategies to provide financial assistance to minority students in general, ensuring that attention is paid to Hispanic women.

☐ Make more financial aid available to students who can only attend school on a part-time basis. More Hispanic students would be able to attend if aid for part-time students were available.

☐ Allocate part of existing scholarships (or create new ones) specifically for Hispanic and/or minority women.

☐ Award grants, rather than loans, to Hispanic women wherever possible. Incurring large debts for their undergraduate education may deter Hispanic women even more than majority students from considering graduate school.

☐ Recruit Hispanic women to participate in on-campus work-study employment.

☐ Develop career-oriented programs adaptable to the needs of working Hispanic women students.

☐ Train advisors to evaluate and respond to the academic needs of Hispanic women students—especially reentry students—many of whom cannot afford to take more courses than are absolutely essential.
Encourage Hispanic women students—especially reentry students—to improve a variety of practical skills such as math proficiency and computer literacy.

Invite Hispanic women professionals to visit the campus and have exchanges with both Anglo and Hispanic students.

Make sure that the needs of Hispanic women graduate students are integrated into overall graduate program practices. For example, Hispanic women should be made aware of and encouraged to apply for research opportunities, financial aid packages, teaching and research assistantships, and to seek out mentoring opportunities.

Make special efforts to form partnerships with government and businesses to develop financial support programs for minority students in general and for Hispanic women in particular.

Foster mentoring opportunities for Hispanic women students. Offer incentives such as release time or extra research money for those willing to be mentors. Develop extensive community ties in order to develop another source of mentors, especially when mentors on campus are not available.

Team Hispanic women graduate students in their first term with active faculty researchers. This early mentorship will help orient students to the graduate program and prepare them for the research they will do.

Make it easier for Hispanic women who have heavy domestic burdens by providing special financial and other assistance such as campus child-care programs so that they can attend school. Develop peer support groups for these women as well.

Develop student services that address the needs of Hispanic women on campus. For example, train resident assistants to deal with issues that affect Hispanic and other minority women.

Encourage Hispanic women students to participate in extracurricular activities such as student associations, student clubs, and internship programs. Ask local community organizations and individual Hispanic women to act as sponsors, mentors, and role models.

Encourage Hispanic alumni to visit the campus and address incoming students. Encourage these alumni to recruit other students to help with mentoring when appropriate. All role models need not be academicians.

Create a fellowship program focusing on Hispanic women's studies.

Professional associations and organizations

Incorporate issues concerning the climate for Hispanic women into all activities and programs (such as speeches and sessions at annual and other meetings, in publications, campus consultations, award programs, and so on).

Sponsor administrative internships and other programs to encourage and promote women in leadership roles.

Identify and collaborate with other associations to sponsor conferences, workshops, and research to improve the professional climate for women.

Conduct multi-institutional surveys on issues of the climate for Hispanic women and other women of color.

Stimulate research on issues relating to the professional climate for Hispanic women by calling for papers in this area and providing a forum for dissemination of these papers (either in writing or through oral presentations).

Stimulate research on issues relating to the numbers of Hispanic women and other persons of color in the institution by doing a self-study and setting short- and long-range objectives.

Develop a directory of Hispanic women on campus or in a particular discipline.

Encourage professional women's associations, both local and national, to profile and publicize Hispanic women faculty members and administrators who are members of professional women's organizations.

NOTES


2. An eleven-item, open-ended questionnaire was sent to approximately seventy-five Hispanic women students, faculty members, and administrators in the spring of 1988. There was a response rate of 49.3 percent to the questionnaire (n = 37).


16. Ibid., 61.
17. Ibid., 62.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 61.
20. Ibid., 64.
21. Ibid., 63.
27. María Chacón, et al., Chicanas in California Postsecondary Education, 51.
29. Julie Martinez, student at Stanford University, quoted in Edward Fiske, “Economic Realities Spur College.”
30. Faculty respondent to author survey. See note 2.
31. María Chacón, et al., Chicanas in California Postsecondary Education, 87.
34. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see the following publications published by the Association of American Colleges’ Project on the Status and Education of Women: Roberta M. Hall and Bernice R. Sandler, The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women, 1982; Roberta M. Hall and Bernice R. Sandler, Out of the Classroom: A Chilly Campus Climate for Women, 1984; Bernice R. Sandler, The Campus Climate Revisited: Chilly for Women Faculty, Administrators, and Graduate Students, 1986; and Jean O. Hughes and Bernice R. Sandler, Peer Harassment: Hassles for Women on Campus, 1989.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., 306.
40. Ibid., 306–7.
42. Some of these recommendations are based on strategies suggested by Yolanda T. Moses in Black Women in Academe: Issues and Strategies (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges, Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1989).
43. In most Hispanic cultures, both the surname of the mother and father are used. A person’s last name is one’s mother’s surname, and thus not the family’s last name. Married women do not lose their maiden names; they append their married names to their family names; thus the use of hyphenated names.
44. Bernice R. Sandler, The Campus Climate Revisited, 19.
Selected References


"Hispanic Women and Mental Health." Special issue, Psychology of Women Quarterly 2 (December 1987).


Selected Resources
ASPIRA Association, Inc.
1112 16th St., NW, Suite 340
Washington, DC 20036
202/335-3600

Chicano Database on CD-ROM
Chicano Studies Library
3404 Dwinelle Hall
University of California-Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720
415/642-3859

National Council of La Raza
810 First St., NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002
202/289-1380

National Hispanic Institute
P.O. Box 220
Maxwell, TX 78656
512/357-6137

National Institute for Women of Color
1801 20th St., NW, Suite 702
Washington, D.C. 20036
202/296-2661

National Network of Hispanic Women
611 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90017
213/225-9895

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