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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the Chicana in academe using a framework that considers the academic environment and the dialectic influences that contribute to the dynamics of group interactions, social positioning, and philosophical considerations of dimensions which may promote or deter the important interactions for professional growth and intellectual fulfillment of the Chicana professor in the academy. It discusses the Chicana within the social environment in academe showing how the limited number of Chicanas in academe does not promote healthy development of within group affiliation nor a sense of comfort and security in individual endeavors. The paper argues that the marginalization status of one who is a representative of a socially marginalized group continues throughout the individual's professional experience. It further argues that real change cannot occur without the dismantling of belief systems and structures that are not conducive for growth. (Contains 7 references.) (GLR)

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The Pervasiveness of the "Psychology of Marginalization": Barriers to Institutional and Personal Development in a Multicultural Education Environment

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Sara S. Garcia

*The effect of theory, which a well constructed theory exerts by making real divisions visible, is all the more powerful when this theory is better grounded in reality.*

In Other Words Pierre Bourdieu, 1990

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The focus of this paper is the Chicana in academe. This presentation will use a framework that considers the academic environment and the dialectic influences that contribute to the dynamics of group interactions, social positioning and philosophical considerations of dimensions which may promote or deter the important interactions for professional growth and intellectual fulfillment of the Chicana professor in the academy. Since my field of educational psychology has afforded me the opportunity to pay attention to and observe a process phenomenon of interactions in educational institutions from different perspectives, this vision is based on personal observation as a Chicana academic and my training in schools of education. Pierre Bourdieu educator and sociologist posits a framework which could be applied to particular aspects of the Chicanas in academe. My purpose in this work in progress and future studies, is to use elements of this construct to focus on principles of ethnic visions and divisions.

The Chicana and Social Space in Academe

When considering group dynamics it appears that very specialized types of interactions exist in institutions of higher education, thus this privileged sector (but dominated fraction of the dominant class according to Bourdieu's definition of the intellectual) of the society provides an opportunity to closely examine the "habitus" of

\* This is the first version of a paper of research in progress. This paper sets a theoretical framework that will be used to gather data on the behavior of Chicana academics.

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Chicanas. Chicana professors in institutions of higher education are still limited in number and representation in various fields. The habitus is constructed by a system of acquired dispositions that function as a practiced set of categories of perception and assessment; classificatory principles as well as the organization of principles of action. Bourdieu insists on the generative capacities of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions. Chicana academics are creative, possess inventive capacity, and are acting agents affected by "rites of passage". Patterns of perceptions, thought and action are constitutive of what Pierre Bourdieu (1990) refers to as social genesis or constructivism. They also include social structures which in particular groups and fields are products of social conditioning and thus of history (like Chicanas in academe). Because there is a paucity of social science research conducted by using Chicana academics as subjects it is difficult to ascertain if they represent particular social (economic) groups. Since the graduate school experience is so stratified in the U.S. however, one can surmise that most Chicanas that succeed through graduate school have learned to persevere obstacles and use resources not available to other Chicanas.

Representation by legitimate meaning has been and continues to be a problem for the legitimate interpretation of the Chicana academic's culture. According to Bourdieu (1990), the irreconcilable perspectives: objectivism and subjectivism (which can take on diverse colourings, phenomenological, semiological, etc.), can "treat social phenomena as things", in accordance with the old Durkheimian maxim, and thus leave out everything that they owe to the fact that they are objects of cognition or of miscognition, in social existence. Bourdieu posits that the task of social science consists of producing "account of the accounts" produced by social subjects. In addition, "the objects of thought constructed by the social scientist to grasp this social reality must be based on the objects of thought constructed by the commonsense thinking of people who live their daily lives in their social world". Thus, the constructions of the social sciences are, second degree constructions, that is, constructions of the constructions made by the actors on the social stage (Bourdieu, 1990). There is genuine concerted effort by Chicana academics to represent their own reality (See, Anzaldua, 1990). Research however, on the behavior of Chicanas in general is scarce. Social scientists whether they are female or male, have constructed groups in order to objectify the positions they occupy but the very act of constructing these groups conceals different like-positions thus preventing in-depth analysis of power and positions or what Bourdieu refers to as "field of power".

Although Chicana academics are represented (in limited numbers) throughout the nation, the agents, groups or institutions have many properties in common; they are close to each other in common space based on criteria used to evaluate its members. So even

though the behavior of Chicanas in academe can be studied, the true or real space in which they live and exist is not conducive, without scientific inquiry, for proper interpretations. According to Bourdieu (1990) it is true that one can observe almost everywhere a tendency to segregation in space; people close to each other in the social space tend to be close together, by choice or necessity, they are tangible, but conceal the structures that are realized in them.

One behavior related to the process of growth for Chicanas in academe and which perpetuates the isolation for an already reduced group, is the manifestation of social space practices that institutions promote with a tangible but symbolic reward system. This segregation of social space and the concealed structures, promotes misinterpretations of the interactions as they are available to observation. By using strategies of condescension, agents occupying a higher position in one of the hierarchies of objective space symbolically deny the social distance, which does not thereby cease to exist, thus insuring they gain the profits of recognition accorded to a purely symbolic negation of distance (Bourdieu, 1990). It is a fact that Chicanas are very poorly represented at the levels of academe that provide a basis for power relations. It is this symbolic reward system however that often seems to manifest an extreme amount of competition, gossip and jealousies or what some Chicanas term "envidia" that strongly undermines a collective alliance for further growth and mentoring of other Chicanas coming up-the-ranks. Indeed, from a personal and professional standpoint the prevalence of this kind of action behavior both social space (i.e., conferences, organization meetings etc.) and the strategies of condescension, marginalizes Chicana academics within their own social space. It is with this in mind that what has been identified in the feminist literature as the "queen bee" syndrome can be equated with what I call the "zorras syndrome" for the Chicana. "Zorras" or "Foxes" in institutions of higher learning are legitimized by the recognition of their status in positions of power. This power may be exercised in different forms in the decision making process: recommendations, the availability of support for research and teaching assistants, feedback on work in progress, expertise in specialized field, etc. The "Zorra" syndrome unfortunately manifests itself among some Chicana faculty in positions of power. In its various forms it constitutes symbolic capital by the mere fact that the person has a title and represents an institution of higher learning. According to Bourdieu (1990) symbolic capital is a credit. It is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. The academy expects certain behaviors. One is evaluated at all levels directly and often indirectly. Indeed the institution is organized to foster particular behaviors which are perceived and recognized as legitimate and thus create a symbolic form of capital.

The dynamics which appear to emerge in the Chicana academic group are different than what occurs in groups of mainstream women. Therefore the actions seem to manifest differently when Chicanas block other Chicanas from succeeding in the academic institutions. From observation, typically some women of color in power positions maneuver in the system and at times vacillate their political positions with poise and sophistication typifying the very notion of being a "token" when appropriate. These women consciously or unconsciously appear as part of a mainstream system and at the same time contribute to the concealment of structural dynamics that blur the existing divisions in the Chicana group. It is in these situations that the "Zorras" can thrive. The fear expressed by Chicana assistant professors interviewed for this paper was that the conditioning which occurs from being part of the system and the training stemming from succeeding in graduate school, will promote, unconsciously behaviors that typify the "zorra" syndrome. As succinctly stated by Nieves-Squires (1992), "the token minority is encouraged to see herself as different from most other member of her group, as exceptionally talented and deserving, and to separate herself from the wider minority condition. At the same time, she is perceived by "ordinary" members of her group as separate also--perhaps even as stronger than themselves".

A prevalent behavior stemming from conditioning which may be conscious or unconscious, from the standpoint of institutional influences on the psychodynamic action behavior of the Chicana in academe, is the subliminal or what my colleague Joyce King terms 'dysconscious' manifestation of thought. "Dysconsciousness is a cognitive phenomenon manifested by factors that influence mental distortions". Representation of Chicanas in the academy has only occurred during the last twenty years. Clouded by antagonism, competition and a need for survival the first members of the academy did not become part of the institution with an initial set of beliefs already developed but circumstances (.i.e., historical and political) gave them a symbolic capital and power that with the process of becoming part of the institution, may manifest behaviors that can be categorized as dysconscious stemming from institutional conditioning. Ironically, this new gained power at times could be used to disempower subordinate level Chicanas.

Dysconsciousness is manifested strongly in social space. Dysconsciousness is an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given (King, 1991). If Bourdieu's notion of social space which is constructed by agents who occupy similar or close positions is taken into consideration, placing Chicana academics in similar systems would imply that they are submitted to similar conditioning, and have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus produce similar practices. Although, one can attest to the fact that indeed a conditioning process of sorts is occurring by the mere

fact that one becomes part of the institution for to resist certain practices means you will not receive the reward of rank and tenure. It is difficult however, to ascertain without conducting in-depth interviews how this conditioning marginalizes Chicanas within their own group. It is certain that the academic status of Chicana lecturers or non-tenure track Chicanas in academe promotes marginalization by all the conditioning systems that operate both socially and symbolically. In addition, anecdotal data from three informal interviews with assistant professor Chicanas, has shown that within the group Chicanas are very divisive, especially when it concerns competition for rewards such as grants, fellowships and promotions. What does seem to occur also is the social organization of particular groups that "scratch each others back" or what might be termed as "comadres". It could be surmised that these groups do provide some within group support but it appears that overall they sabotage the opportunities of members in the group at large that are not accepted in a particular social space thereby reducing the reward allocation, mentoring and role modeling to a few, select but privileged individuals.<sup>1</sup>

According to Bourdieu (1990) the dispositions acquired in the position occupied imply an adjustment to this position. It is this sense of one's place which, in interactions, leads people who are 'ordinary people', to keep to their 'ordinary' place and the others to 'keep their distance' or 'respect their rank', and 'not get familiar'. These strategies, it should be noted, may be perfectly unconscious and may take the form of what is called timidity or arrogance. No doubt agents (Chicana academics in this case) do have an active apprehension of the world. No doubt they do construct their vision of the world. But it is clear that this construction is carried out under structural constraints.

Thus, for Chicana academics the constructing of social reality is not carried out in a social vacuum but subjected to structural constraints. The cognitive structures are socially

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<sup>1</sup> An emotion stemming from these interactions that can be identified within group is the notion of betrayal. Betrayal is felt on the part of Chicana women who perceive that a Chicana in a position of power, by the fact they are Chicana (or Latina in some cases), will automatically become their ally, mentor and serve as a role model. They discover however, that at times this person may make it more difficult and present more hurdles than a representative of the mainstream group and thus they feel a painful, insidious sense of betrayal. On the otherhand, some Chicana professors have expressed that they feel used by their own group since at times Chicana graduate students whom they have not worked with directly will ask for a scholarship nomination or a letter of support and expect instantaneous response without allowing rapport or consistent mentoring to occur beforehand. This can also be seen as a betrayal of sorts since the person requesting support has little understanding of the stress producing and demanding constraints of time that the Chicana professor may be experiencing. Thus, this emotion of betrayal can be identified as occurring in both directions.

structured because they have social origins and the construction of social reality is not only an individual enterprise, but is also a collective enterprise. The limited number of Chicanas in the academy does not promote healthy development of within group affiliation nor a sense of comfort and security in individual endeavors since the marginalized status as a representative of a socially marginalized group continues throughout the professional experience. In a very real sense Chicanas are still "token" members in this privileged institution. <sup>2</sup>

### The Chicana and Postmodern Education

The reality of Chicanas in academe involves a multidimensional assessment of issues such as genderization (the relation of Chicanas to Chicanos in academe), the issues of representation to offset tokenism which results in placing Chicanas in oppositional situations, shunned by their White colleagues who perceive them as affirmative action representatives and less qualified to hold academic positions, and how the system promotes within group behaviors that prevent close alliances and mentoring of group members. The focus of "the margin becoming the center" affords Chicanas in academe an opportunity to develop a voice that promotes within group characteristics of struggles, oppositional values and traditional rules in systems to be examined closely in order to recognize their existence and influence the development of personal growth (Aronowitz and Giroux 1991).

Chicana academics have started to voice their realities by using a perspective that has problematized the cultural sphere from what is recently considered as postmodern strategies in education. This can help to raise new questions about the terrain of culture as a field of both domination and contestation. Postmodern education and minority discourse has redefined the relationship between power and culture, representation and domination, language and subjectivity. In addition, it has provided a theoretical foundation for engaging the Other (in this case the Chicana academic) not only as a deterritorialized object of domination, but also as a source of struggle, collective resistance, and historical affirmation.

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<sup>2</sup> For a view concerning Chicana academics in relation to Latina and Latina American women and networking, mentoring and general lack of understanding of one another's experiences, see Leal and Menjivar (1992). This paper only deals with the group dynamics of Chicana academic networks and cannot include the relationships that are produced with other Latinas until our own divisions have been closely examined. Chicanas being considered for this work in progress are Mexican American academic women who were born or raised in this country and who suffered the inequities of the public education system in the U.S.

The validation of the existence of the Chicana professor requires what Norma Alarcon (1990) has termed "disidentification" in order to reconstruct their existence, not only at the individual level but at the group level as well. Alarcon states that "Indeed, the multiple-voiced subjectivity is lived in resistance to competing notions for one's allegiance or self-identification". What might result is chaos, but then real change cannot occur without dismantling of belief systems and structures that are not conducive for growth.

The political work of group making is all the more likely to be successful when the social collective it endeavors to constitute as group is less scattered in theoretical space (Bourdieu, 1990). This paper presupposes that what is presented here is a theoretical premise that will help to create a theoretical space for the purpose of furthering the dismantling of barriers for better understanding of the dynamics which occur within our own group. Certainly the diversity that exists in the Chicana academic group with respect to ethnic identity must be considered when looking at perceptions of thought manifested in the interactions that are part of the academy. The symbolic power that is attained when a space is appropriated in an institution of higher learning promotes a multicultural representation by women of color. When the Chicana group is examined closely one discovers multiple perspectives and a diversity of backgrounds. It is clear that Chicanas are multicultural within their own community.

It can be surmised that Chicanas in the academy are breaking ground. The notions of "border pedagogy" addresses the important question of how representations and practices that name, marginalize, and define difference as the devalued Other are actively learned, interiorized, challenged, or transformed. In order for change to take place there needs to be an understanding of how these differences can be used to change the prevailing relations of power that sustain them. It is also imperative that such a pedagogy acknowledge and critically interrogate how the colorizing of differences by dominant groups is expressed and sustained through representations in which Others are seen as a deficit, in which the humanity of the Others is either cynically posited as problematic or ruthlessly denied (Aranowitz and Giroux, 1991). Furthermore, a better understanding of how the experience of marginality at the level of everyday life lends itself to forms of oppositional and transformative consciousness for all Chicanas in academe is imperative in order to offset the "zorra" syndrome, dysconscious manifestations of thought behavior, and abuse of power.

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