LATINA FACULTY/STAFF TESTIMONIOS ON SCHOLARSHIP PRODUCTION

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This article explores four Latina faculty and staff perspectives on scholarship production using Chicana Feminist Epistemologies and testimionio as a theoretical tool. Inspired by an inaugural Faculty/Staff of Color Writing Retreat at the University of Wyoming, we draw from our collective experiences as Latina faculty/staff to analyze our specific institutional setting in regard to the rewards, challenges, motivations, and hesitations involved in writing for publication. Reflecting on our backgrounds, we examine how we each arrived at this context, our experiences thus far in academia, and our visions for our futures. We situate our approaches toward scholarship production within existing literature and argue that the act of writing for publication is not a straightforward process. We stress that explicitly identifying complex factors involved in this social, cultural, and academic endeavor is critical in encouraging other rising Latina scholars—and faculty from marginalized communities in general—to persist in scholarly production amidst an often-hostile environment.

Key Words: *Chicana Feminist Epistemologies, Faculty/Staff of color, Latinas, scholarship production, testimonio, Wyoming.*

With the recent publication of *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012), we can see more clearly the continuing obstacles that Latina women, as well as other women of color, face within the university. The daring attempts at combating racial hierarchies and traditional attitudes of scholarly production are highlighted in this important work. This anthology shows that many women were warned against writing and publishing essays based on their personal experiences because it would not be marked as intellectual scholarship. However, it has become increasingly important for these voices to be heard. Our personal experiences guide our scholarly work and it is through testimonio

that we are able to gain inspiration to produce knowledge that can affect change within the institution. Delgado Bernal (1998) reminds us of the failure of liberal educational scholarship to provide a useful paradigm to examine the intersection of gender, ethnic, and class oppression. One of the failures she stresses is that liberal feminist scholarship begins with a mistaken notion of universal commonality among all women.[1] In other words, the ways in which we, as Latina scholars, approach and experience scholarly production cannot be the same as white women scholars.

This study is about self-identified Latina faculty and staff who are trying to make meaning of our brown bodies within academia as active producers of scholarship by navigating the generation of new awareness about knowledge production from our standpoint. Additionally, we identify the complex factors involved in this social, cultural, and academic endeavor, which is critical in encouraging other rising Latina scholars. We produce scholarship not solely as academicians, but also as Latinas, grandmothers, mothers, daughters, significant others, Católicas, Nuevomexicanas, queer community members, multiracial Latinas, activists, teachers, siblings, native speakers of Spanish—we are one with our intersectional subjectivities and therefore reject the kinds of "western dichotomies of mind versus body, subject versus object, objective truth versus subjective emotion, and male versus female" (Delgado Bernal 1998, 558). As Delgado Bernal (1988) asserts, "a Chicana epistemology maintains connections to indigenous roots by embracing dualities that are necessary and complementary qualities, and by challenging dichotomies that offer opposition without reconciliation" (4). Indeed, our role as scholars must take our multiple dualities into account and go further by incorporating our lived positional experiences into the process of writing and the ultimate publication of that writing.

This is why journals, such as *Chicana/Latina Studies: The Journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*, encourage and publish various forms of knowledge and affirm our intersectional, lived experiences, which are critical in challenging what counts as knowledge and who is included in that production. How we, as Latina scholars, frame scholarship production, the processes by which we accomplish this, and the intentionality we bring to writing is the subject of this article. Through the exploration of Chicana Feminist Epistemology and testimonio, we analyze our experiences with scholarly publication at the University of Wyoming. Our initial encounter was framed by an Inaugural Faculty/Staff of Color Writing Retreat, which created a safe space to talk about the challenges of scholarly writing as Latinas at a predominantly white institution. Our lived experiences share a number of commonalities that allowed us to engage in collaborative writing and reflection. The present article is the product of this endeavor. It is our hope that this work will inspire future generations of Latina scholars as they navigate the publishing requirements of the academy.

Scholarship production is about knowledge production, the allocation of professional power, and academic identity formation. In its most neutral sense, writing for publication is the primary vehicle for generating original knowledge. However, we know that knowledge itself is not neutral. What is often considered "official knowledge" (Apple 2014, xvi) excludes knowledges of marginalized communities such as African American, Native, and Latina/o. If these knowledges are included, they are framed as oppositional, subjective, and/or reactionary to that of the whitestream (Urrieta 2010), which refers to the dominance of white supremacist norms in everyday practices. Facio (2010) explains that we often must cite those who are considered legitimate producers of knowledge within a white, heterosexual conceptual framework. As Russel y Rodríguez (2007) illustrates through her "intertwined" and "untidy" concept

of "undiscipline" we, too, "seek an unveiling of silencing practices in academe . . . with a politics of solidarity" (94). Our experiences of marginalization and the imposition of whitestream standards for legitimating knowledge reveal an element of power that must be considered with every written piece. The assessment of our professional performance by those in power may be affected by the social identities that place us among underrepresented groups within the academy (Castañeda 2008). This additional burden to our scholarship sometimes is paid through nuanced ways of managing our tone, analysis, and content, so it is publishable and often palatable to an audience that has been inculcated in whitestream educational contexts. López (2006) reminds us that we are engaged in a delicate balance between speaking frankly and adhering to professional courtesies, personal diplomacy, and critical strategy.

Who We Are

In this article, we use Chicana/Latina interchangeably. We are four self-identified Latinas from diverse backgrounds who found each other at the University of Wyoming as some of the few female faculty/administrators of color on campus. Like Castañeda (2008), we are "among the relatively small percentage of U.S. adults who have college degrees and the even smaller percentage with doctorates" (25). Here, we present portraits of who we are.

Aurora Chang—curriculum and instruction—is a career educator, with twenty years in K–16 settings. Once an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala, she was raised in Richmond, California, and earned her PhD in cultural studies in education at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a multiracial Chicana completing her second year as a tenure-track professor focusing on the intersection of education, identity, and agency within traditionally marginalized communities with a focus on Multiracial students, Latina/o students, and faculty of color. Vanessa Fonseca—Latina/o

studies and English—is a New Mexican Chicana finishing her second year as a tenure-track professor focusing on colonial and postcolonial Chicano literature, regional literature, and connecting Latino/a communities through digital humanities. Fonseca received her MA in Hispanic Southwest studies from the University of New Mexico and her PhD in Spanish cultural studies from Arizona State University. Lilia Soto—American studies and Latina/o studies—is a California Chicana finishing her third year as a tenure-track assistant professor focusing on girlhood studies, comparative race and ethnic studies, and transnational migration between México and the United States. Soto was born in the US but moved back to Mexico when she was one-year-old. As a US-born Latina and an immigrant, Soto returned to the US at the age of ten with her mother and five sisters. She migrated to reunite with her father after having lived in a transnational family for ten years. Soto received her MA and PhD in comparative ethnic studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Dolores Saucedo Cardona—student affairs—earned her PhD in Education Administration, curriculum and instruction and has been in student services for more than thirty years. Cardona is the associate dean of students and her responsibilities include improving student access, retention, and graduation; promoting student learning, development, and engagement; and improving campus climate and environment for diversity.

The Power of Testimonio

The authors have known each other for approximately two years and have formed a bond of shared struggles, framed inside the joys and hopes of our work. In an attempt to engage in reflexión (Espino, et al. 2012), a process "that allows us to analyze and interpret our individual testimonios as part of a collective experience that reflects our past, present, and future, thus moving us toward a collective consciousness" (Espino, et al. 2012, 445), we draw from Saavedra and Salazar Pérez's (2012) understandings of the value of testimonios:

> Collectively, theoretically inspired testimonios facilitate a deeper examination of identity, one that disrupts the oversimplified notion of life as neat and marginal. Instead, testimonios encourage the understanding of identities as lying somewhere on the fronteras of cultural privilege and cultural oppression in complex ways, thereby facilitating the recognition of interconnectedness (Anzaldúa, 1987; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). Furthermore, identities of "success" for women of color can come at a high price that leads to some rewards, while causing more devastating isolation. (Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2012, 437)

Saavedra and Salazar Pérez's reference to "devastating isolation" resonated deeply within us, given the solitary nature of our work as scholars/writers, coupled with living in the least populous, alarmingly homogeneous, and widely expansive state in the country. Speaking of our lived realities and experiences for the specific purpose of providing support for future Latina scholars has brought us closer together and provided a professional space of intellectual exchange, sisterly support, and scholarly production. In this way, we join *testimonialistas* (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona 2012) in disrupting the insidious solitude and disconnect of academic livelihood and attempt to commune in an act of resistance against such individualistic isolation, drawing from the "I" to contribute and support the "We" (Saavedra and Salazar Pérez 2012, 430).

The power of testimonio provides a space for Latina scholars to speak freely about their experiences in the often-hostile environment of academia, which affects our capacity to produce scholarship and define a research agenda. C. Alejandra Elenes positions narratives within the context of disseminating cultural knowledge by stating that Mexicans and Latinas use their cultural repertoire as a way to express the ways in which they see the world (Elenes

2011, viii). Testimonio allows faculty to confront shared experiences in academia as a way to not only teach others, but also to learn from the issues our fellow Latinas have faced in their academic careers.

Cantú (2011) notes that testimonios inspire and encourage while urging and demanding change for the oppressive conditions imposed upon Latinas. Deena González (2012) reinforces the need for testimonio as an agent for social change in Latina communities, highlighting that we bring a unique and daring perspective to our fields. We present our testimonios in this spirit of agentic change and hope that they will provide a space for other Latina scholars and scholars of color to affirm their knowledge and scholarly production. Testimonio is a powerful tool for scholarly publication. By reading about the struggles and triumphs of fellow colleagues or those individuals whom we aspire to emulate, we ultimately form a strong bond based on shared experiences that guide us in producing scholarship that reflects our voices. Testimonio provides us with a guía on how to be successful in academia by outlining the problems we face as Latina faculty. Also, it provides, as the literature in this section has shown, useful strategies for survival in a harsh environment that looks at our scholarly production as inferior (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Flores Niemann, González, and Harris 2012). Scholarly production is a necessary and significant part of the tenure process in academia. This can be a daunting process, particularly for women of color as we work to overcome the many obstacles that can inhibit the writing process and perceptions of scholarly production by those that determine our future as scholars.

Tensions within Latina Scholarship and Knowledge Production

In this section, we focus on the literature about Latinas' experiences regarding scholarly production and the challenges we face in reaching this end. We present the following themes: the significance of Latina support

systems in knowledge production, the tensions that exist between activism and scholarship, the process of being othered in a hostile academic space, the internalized feeling of inferiority, and the extra burden of contributing inordinate amounts of time to service and advising. While some literature (as we cited in the previous section) discusses the problematics of writing for people of color and women of color, others have addressed the specific issues that Latina faculty face to ensure their voices are heard among a sea of scholars, thereby validating the Latina experience and the scholarly production we contribute to academia. This production does not take place in specific academic units but, rather, across disciplines and, at times, includes interdisciplinary perspectives.

This modeling of a writing group that is supportive, as the editors of *Presumed Incompetent* state, is highlighted first in 1981 in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1984). Michelle A. Holling, May C. Fu, and Roe Rubar (2012) stress the impact Moraga and Anzaldúa have had on support systems for women of color in opposition to white women. The importance of writing support networks for women of color simply cannot be overstated. It is through these academic links that Latina women find inspiration to publish with a social justice agenda in mind so as to effect profound change in higher education.

The hostile environment we enter as Latina academics certainly is not a new phenomenon. Since the onset of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s, we have tried to define our space as women and as productive members of the university community amidst issues of "ethnocentric, curriculum, double standards, assumptions of our inferiority, harassment, unfair evaluations, lower pay and bypassed promotions" (Córdova 1998, 20). Scholarly production, thus, must take place in this type of atmosphere, which often presents barriers to academic

success for many Latina faculty members. In this colonized environment, there is a fine line between scholarly production that adequately reflects a social justice agenda and scholarship that adheres to dominant ideologies. We struggle with "the tensions that exist between activism and scholarship, and the border created between these two worlds, as it connects with [our] personal history and experiences as Chicana[s]" (Téllez 2005, 46). Francisca de la Riva-Holly (2012) writes about the importance of being productive in academia: "Productivity speaks for itself in higher education, and nothing can be left to chance in an institution where we are expected to fail" (295). However, as demonstrated by Rosaura Sánchez (2006) in her analysis of Ethnic Studies programs and scholarly research, the academic production of dominant paradigms in scholarly writing is often seen as evidence of our intellectual and research competencies (386). However, if Ethnic Studies academics present a perspective that is contrary to dominant ideologies, we are perceived as biased and purely ideological (Sánchez 2006). This echoes Dolores Delgado Bernal and Octavio Villalpando's (2002) observation that academics produce scholarship that not only labels people of color as deficient, but also that brands their scholarship as biased and nonrigorous. By resisting dominant ideologies and "creating bridges between the production of knowledge in the academic world and communities struggling for social justice" (Téllez 2005, 49), we take professional risks for the sake of affirming our othered voices. As Téllez (2005) notes, "by deconstructing this notion that theory and activism are two separate entities, I can see that my work as a Chicana, as an academic and as an activist must operate at all these levels" (54). In recognizing the importance of creating spaces in scholarly production that validate knowledge produced by Latinas in the spirit of social justice, we inherently accept a long and arduous academic career path where we consistently work against the grain of dominant beliefs systems and work unceasingly to legitimize our positions as scholars.

Kimberly R. Moffitt, Heather E. Harris, and Diane A. Forbes Berthoud (2012) posit that our class privilege as scholars often is overshadowed by perceptions of racial inferiority that pervade in traditional white universities, or TWIs. This, in turn, leads Latinas and women of color to feel institutionally marginalized as others (Moffit, Harris, and Forbes Berthoud 2012). The process of othering has a traumatic effect on scholarly production, which makes us highly susceptible to the racial hierarchies that permeate academic culture (Harris and González 2012). Faculty of color contend that the evident stratification of academia, created by racial hierarchies and organizational structures that favor so-called hard sciences over social sciences and the humanities, often alienate and marginalize knowledge produced by faculty of color across disciplines and institutions (Delgado Bernal and Villalpando 2002).

Other scholars, such as Yolanda Flores Niemann (2012) use personal narratives to speak about the constant stigmatization associated with her work, demonstrating that racial hierarchies have a profound effect not only on the way that our work is viewed, but also how we begin to recognize our own work based on these perceptions. Flores Niemann reflects: "The way my work was evaluated is consistent with literature that indicates that stigmatization results in negative expectations" (349). Consequently, the way our work is perceived results in an internalized feeling of inferiority as it relates to scholarly production. It is clear we struggle to move our scholarship from these peripheral and marginalized spaces. However, it is within these spaces that solidarity and common agendas are formed and strengthened to contest marginalization in ways that matter.

Literature tells us that being the only Latina at a university often equates to contributing more time to service and advising than other colleagues, which creates a tremendous obstacle to scholarly publication. Flores Niemann (2012)

attributes this to the concept of tokenism, or being the only faculty of color in a department. This can ultimately compromise the path to tenure, as scholarly production usually is a prominent component of tenure decisions within academic units—and more so in research-focused institutions. How, then, is it possible to overcome these obstacles, produce scholarship that reflects a social justice agenda, and make a significant impact in academic circles? This article is one attempt to do so.

Research Setting

According to the US Census Quick Facts website, the state of Wyoming is home to 576,412 residents of which 84.6 percent report "white alone (not Hispanic or Latino)" and 9.5 percent report "Hispanic or Latino." The University of Wyoming (UW), founded in 1886, is the state's only public four-year institution of higher education. It is a research university with high levels of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level research.

UW is a predominantly white institution. Student enrollment is 13,929, based on the UW Enrollment Summary from fall 2012. Female students comprise 7,601 students or 54.5 percent of the student body. Students of color comprise 1,304 students or 9.4 percent of the student body. Female students of color number 692 students or 5 percent of the student body. Latina/o students number 642 or 5 percent of the entire student body and lag behind the state's representation of 9.5 percent of the state population. Latina students numbered 360 students or 2.6 percent of the entire student body. Clearly, the numbers of Latina/o undergraduate and graduate students in the research and scholarship pipeline are very small, while Latina student scholars in the pipeline are literally invisible.

Within the faculty ranks, UW's Common Data Set (2012–13) reports 837 full and part-time faculty, with 79 who are members of the US Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission-defined racial and ethnic groups (9.4 percent). Of the instructional faculty, 323 are women or 38.5 percent. In fall 2012, according to UW Human Resources data, there were 131 Latina/o staff and faculty. When disaggregated, Latina/o faculty numbered only seventeen individuals (seven men and ten women). The Latina/o face for faculty and scholarly role models is nearly invisible with only 2 percent faculty representation. Latina faculty members comprise 1.19 percent of the faculty. There is not one full professor who is Latina on campus. In the fall of 2012, there were four Latina associate professors and two assistant professors in the teaching, research, and scholarship pipeline. Given the low numbers of Latina faculty, staff, and students, UW clearly needs to support these scholars in every possible way. UW's environmental context provides tremendous challenges for the support of research and publication by Latina faculty. On the heels of this disparaging context, several efforts have been made at the grassroots level to provide structural scaffolding aimed at increasing the success of faculty of color.

Faculty of Color Retreat

This study was inspired by one of those efforts. The inaugural Faculty/Staff of Color Writing Retreat at the University of Wyoming was the product of an awarded grant initiated by one of the authors, in collaboration with other UW faculty. The grant, "Retaining University of Wyoming Faculty/Staff of Color through an interdisciplinary, scholarly writing mentorship program," requested funding for an interdisciplinary, scholarly writing program open to self-identified UW faculty of color at different stages in the tenure and promotion process. The ultimate goal was to create a professional mentoring and collegial network at the university that would lead to increased scholarly production and foster meaningful mentoring relationships for UW faculty and staff of color.

The proposal involved funding a series of professional development events, including two writing retreats and incorporating the leadership of two non-UW renowned senior scholars of color to foster and produce collaborative scholarly production. Outcomes included at least two-manuscript submissions[2] from each participant—either solely or multiple authored—toward scholarly publication and assistance in grant-writing techniques to further equip participants with tools to support their productivity. Hand-in-hand with the importance of establishing mentoring relationships, the proposed workshop also served to connect academic research and publication and its processes through social connections with other scholars in writing groups.

The structure consisted of two writing retreats led by two different senior faculty scholars of color. The first retreat consisted of a full-day writing workshop for the UW faculty of color participants, focusing on successful strategies for scholarly publication, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary, collaborative integration. The second retreat consisted of 2 days of a senior-level, nationally recognized scholar working with the UW faculty of color participants in an intensive writing for publication workshop. These retreats were imperative to the university in retaining its current faculty and staff of color; establishing an affirming and supportive community space; providing relevant training on publication for tenure; and supporting the few faculty and staff role models who in turn teach and support the student body at UW and who infuse diversity and inclusion into the academic culture.

This space brought faculty and staff of color together and, more specifically, allowed the only tenure-track Latina assistant professors at UW to interact together in the same room with other faculty and staff of color. There was a palatable sentiment of hope among us, knowing that we were a potential team of authors, driven by socially just research and teaching agendas. During breaks

and at the conclusion of the retreat, we eagerly huddled together and committed to writing as colleagues, looking out for one another and producing scholarship with an ethic of care. Initially, we intended to use some of the writing prompts we were required to develop, e-mail communications among the retreat participants regarding its content, and the final evaluations. In other words, we aimed to focus on the retreat itself as the primary data source. However, after completing our first draft, it became clear that what we were trying to convey would only be possible by contextualizing our own experiences as we interacted in the academic world. Focusing on one event—the retreat—was simply insufficient. We all agreed we had to share our testimonios. That was the manner in which we decided to engage collaborative knowledge.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Testimonio

We utilized Chicana Feminist Epistemology and testimonio to guide our data analysis, precisely because our article deals with the production of knowledge through scholarship. Delgado Bernal explains that epistemology involves the nature, status, and production of knowledge. Specifically, "a Latina epistemology must be concerned with the knowledge about Latinas—about who generates an understanding of their experiences, and how this knowledge is legitimized or not legitimized" (Téllez 2005, 50). Kathryn Blackmer Reyes and Julia E. Curry Rodríguez (2012) discuss the roots of testimonio and provide guidance for the various ways in which it is used as a methodological tool. They tell us that "this type of writing entails a first person oral or written account, drawing on experiential, self-conscious, narrative practice to articulate an urgent voicing of something to which one bears witness" (526). Additionally, the objective of testimonio is intentional and political. This means that it includes the knowledge that reflection and speaking lead, eventually, to liberation. For education scholars, this method is a pedagogical aid to help students develop an analytical frame that demystifies structural marginalizations. Perhaps this

is the most important characteristic of testimonio in educational research or in the classroom, for it holds the Freirian promise of conscientization to hope, faith, and autonomy (Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez 2012, 527). Indeed, through our collaborative work, we aim to expand our conscientization. Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2012) state, "testimonio, then, can be understood as a bridge that merges the brown bodies in our communities with academia as we employ testimonio methodology and pedagogy in educational practices" (364).

None of us imagined we would become producers of knowledge because we simply had "significantly different opportunity structures than men (including Chicano males) and white women" (Delgado Bernal 1998, 558). Therefore our journey to this privileged location of scholarship production becomes a crucial aspect of framing our lives as academicians and particularly our roles as writers. Every step of the way has involved an act of agency, whether intentional or not. Now, in the act of producing scholarship we conscientiously "become agents of knowledge who participate in intellectual discourse that links experience, research, community, and social change" (Delgado Bernal 1998, 558–559).

A unique characteristic of a Chicana feminist epistemology is that it also validates and addresses intersectional experiences (Delgado Bernal 1998). Our data analysis centers on the triumphs and struggles of our everyday lives that embody the contradictions that allow us to survive amidst bastions of white domination, class exploitation, racism, sexism, and elitism. We privilege the four sources of cultural intuition that Delgado Bernal (1998) presents: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and the analytic research process. We see our work as a continuation of our ancestral fight grounded in the rich historical legacy of Latinas' resistance and as an act of social justice (Delgado Bernal 1998). In this spirit, each of us wrote our

own narratives, illustrating our struggles within our shared context. In the following section, we summarize our commonalities and differences in the context of our road to the academy.

Testimonios

We all agreed on three things: (1) Wyoming was an unexpected stop in our life journeys, (2) we felt isolated culturally and professionally at several points, and (3) managing research and teaching/administration presented unique challenges. However, our backgrounds, paths to the academy, and motivations for coming to Wyoming differed. None of us ever planned to live in Wyoming. The opportunity to work in a well-funded research university, however, was attractive, and all of us knew we would have the opportunity to fill a niche specific to our talents and desire to serve underrepresented students. This opportunity came with painful problems of cultural and professional isolation. Some of us came with partners and families; others arrived and remained alone. Regardless of the support systems we brought with us or maintained through our global network, we all experienced cultural isolation in the overwhelmingly white state of Wyoming. Access to culturally specific events, foods, and people was at best limited. In this context, each of us faced challenges in our different positions as faculty and staff. As we narrate our experiences below, we place quotations on statements that we have heard from colleagues on campus.

Aurora found herself in a situation where faculty accomplishments were being framed as noncollegial; i.e. "shaming other faculty." Being shamed led her to question her own diligence in producing scholarship, for fear of being punished. As a Latina faculty member, she always was advised to work two, three, four times as hard as others. This further led her to question whether her success presented a liability and how she could frame her accomplishments in a way that both benefited her professional trajectory and the overall face and reputation

of the entire department and college. Eventually, and after several talks with assigned "mentors" that she should "tone it down" when it came to scholarly production and programs for Latina students that were receiving positive media attention, she decided to look elsewhere. She was offered a faculty position at another institution in a large, urban city and quickly accepted it.

Vanessa came from a Spanish program that placed a high value on producing scholarship in Spanish. Upon accepting a joint position in Latina/o Studies (75 percent) and English (25 percent) at UW, she had to renegotiate her scholarly production to fit her academic homes and the publishing world's preference for scholarship in English. She often finds it difficult to navigate this transition but ultimately recognizes the many advantages of being a bilingual scholar. Because of her joint appointment, Vanessa's nontraditional tenure and promotion committee is comprised of interdisciplinary faculty housed in English, American Indian Studies, Latina/o Studies, History, American Studies, Spanish, and Gender and Women's Studies. Though only two members of her committee speak and understand Spanish, others have stated they will "bow to their learned colleagues" and trust their evaluations of her Spanish scholarship. While this is reassuring at the department committee level, presently there are no tenure and promotion committee members at the college level that speak or understand Spanish. This means that her Spanish scholarship will not be evaluated at the same level as her scholarship in English. Vanessa is hopeful that her interdisciplinary tenure and promotion committee will help her to navigate the nuances of this process, as they all share similar academic struggles.

Lilia found herself spending the majority of her time prepping for class. She often over prepares but enters class always feeling under prepared. Classes she taught more than once always felt like new preps as she strived to recreate a tangible narrative of the course. In her tenure and promotion review, despite

the endless hours focused on teaching, anonymous colleagues stated that she needed to take her teaching "more seriously" (as if she already did not), that she needed to approach teaching from a "less subjective" manner, and that she needed to pay attention to students' needs, particularly those who feel the classroom was hostile. While she was aware these were typical experiences for faculty of color, hearing such comments from colleagues did not make it easier on her teaching, particularly when she felt that a narrative about her teaching was being constructed based on students' perceptions of faculty of color. The majority of her time was focused on improving pedagogical approaches and, therefore, her research and writing suffered. Separating teaching and research has meant that during the academic year, she focuses on teaching, while the summers and breaks have become the only opportunities to write.

Dolores still feels unaccepted as a "Wyomingite," even with more than thirty years of experience in student services at UW. She considers herself a "survivor" in the frontera that Wyoming represents, having watched faculty of color come and go, as many did not secure tenure in the early years. Coming from rural Nebraska, Wyoming's neighboring state, the culture shock of moving to a highly independent, culturally isolated, "good ole boys network," and a predominantly white institution, as a Latina PhD, initially was traumatic and isolating. As the only Chicana on campus with a PhD in the student services arena, she had minimal time to even seriously consider engaging in research or publication. Service and administration were the foci of her experience on a campus that desperately lacked diversity. She found herself supporting and advising faculty who were having issues with their colleagues, managing strained relationships with others' racial microagressions, and dealing with other administrators in their home departments. However, these relationships never entered the realm of publishing together until now. She had enough on her plate merely coping with the stresses of surviving at the university.

Discussion and Conclusion

For us, four warriors on this western frontier, we have blazed paths, often feeling the fiery heat of their lighting. Because Brown epistemologies and pedagogies are marginalized in academia, we have encountered a teaching climate that often places us at an immediate disadvantage. We have witnessed the ways in which our successes have worked against a climate of mediocrity and insecurity. We have balanced competing responsibilities, sometimes in multiple departments. We have crossed geographical, academic, and linguistic borders. We have broken out of silos to form interdisciplinary, faculty-staff collaborations. And, in the end, we have formed exquisite relationships that go beyond any typical professional relationship. By sharing our testimonios with one another and releasing them, we render them no longer as guarded, safe, and secret, but as powerful tools in affirming one another's struggles and in re-igniting our hope for our futures as Latina scholars in academia.

While we recognize the barriers that often impede scholarly production by Latinas, we aim to leave a legacy inspired by those before us and continue to pave the way for future Latina scholars. We are reminded of the power we possess in that Latinas may be a rare commodity in academia (Villanueva 1999), but we affirm our dedication and commitment to disseminating the research that connects so closely to our communities and our own lives. In offering our testimonios, we link our scholarly product to the process as an inseparable bond (Latina Feminist Group 2001, 8).

The type and amount of scholarship we produce and the ways in which various audiences receive this scholarship inform our academic identities. Politics are not separate from our academic identities. For those of us who have reached the ivory tower, we have likely internalized the capitalistic mantra of individualism, even in our best efforts to fight against it. The "pull yourself up

by your bootstraps" approach or earning tenure through publications (in the academic world) pressure can prove isolating. Faculty of color and, specifically, Latina faculty and staff, would benefit from breaking the walls of isolation and collaborate with one another. As we have experienced, the benefits of producing scholarship as a community of colleagues not only propel us toward tenure but also bind us as colleagues and as female faculty of color in an often-hostile environment.

Pairing Chicana Feminist Epistemology with the existing research on scholarship production and testimonio, we have outlined the continued need for support systems among women of color at the university level. We recognize a long trajectory of Chicana/Latina scholars who have embraced testimionio as a powerful tool for social change and a manner in which we can value our personal struggles and accomplishments as an important aspect of scholarly production. Our initial meeting at the University of Wyoming Faculty/Staff of Color Writing Retreat was not by accident. It was here that we created the impetus to engage in scholarly research in a collaborative manner and be a support system to one another as we navigate the terrain of an often-hostile academic environment. This relationship extended beyond the walls of academia to form long-lasting friendships and support systems that will endure as we transition to new universities, deal with linguistic insecurities, confront uncomfortable accusations, and create a sense of place and cultural self amidst unwelcoming environments.

The implications of this work can reach institutional levels in the process of working on interdisciplinary scholarship. Institutions of higher education can create spaces for scholars of color to work on scholarship production, similar to models created at the University of Wyoming Faculty/Staff of Color Writing Retreat. Given that it provided the impetus for four scholars of color

to collaborate and share their knowledge across disciplines, the model has merit for other institutions to consider. Indeed, teaching and research centers on college campuses also can integrate similar activities into their faculty development programs. Such undertakings would provide a mechanism to address faculty of color retention issues that plague college campuses. The advocacy of this writing group along with other faculty of color assisted the formation of an interdisciplinary model for retaining graduate students, which includes mentoring and writing support at UW. It will be piloted in the 2015–16 academic year. Another implication is that future retreats might focus on microaggressions to assist faculty to deal with them as they occur, so that testimonios do not reflect them in the future. The stimulation of bringing in nationally recognized Latino/a writers for such workshops would require funding on an annual basis and institutions could benefit from building this into annual budgets. Beyond scholarly writing, support for grantsmanship also is needed for faculty to build collaborative research support. Institutions also can train and place a diversity advisor in each college to advise at tenure and promotion meetings when reviews of faculty of color occur to help alleviate bias as well as provide support to faculty in the tenure process.

For Latina/o faculty and staff, writing groups provide a source of support and way to work collaboratively while building relationships and increasing scholarly production. Latina/o faculty investment in workshops and networking and collaboration with other Latina/os will provide the opportunity to build these writing teams and contribute to knowledge production. Collaborative writing experiences will further assist Latina/os in the tenure process and spur future collaborative or individual progress on scholarly pieces of writing. Latina faculty and staff have powerful testimonios that require sharing in higher education so other Latinas who follow can be aware of both positive and negative aspects of their own roles in higher

education. The major implication for Latinas is the reduction of "otherness" in that the scholars can bond and feel encouraged and supported.

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Notes

[1] The following works are helpful for understanding feminism from a multicultural perspective: Mohanty 2003, Davis 1983, Carby 1996, Sandoval 1990.

[2] The goal is to *submit* manuscripts to journals by the end of the funding period, not for them to be published by then.

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