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Leading in the Borderlands:
Negotiating Ethnic Patriarchy for the Benefit of Students

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Abstract

This article draws from a seven year auto-ethnographic study of a *Mestiza* (female Spanish/Native American) leader negotiating ethnic patriarchies for the benefit of college students. Developed through a critical cultural feminist epistemology, teaching stories derived from study findings are used to illuminate leadership dilemmas in navigating situations across gender and culture in higher education. Values, norms, beliefs, priorities, and behaviors of various ethnic patriarchal leadership and organizational environs are explored using anthropological techniques to understand how a female leader of color moves effectively, though not without challenge, to negotiate for the benefit of students. Recommendations are provided for leaders, allies, and those working to develop beyond cultural and patriarchal boundaries in higher education.

Leading in the Borderlands: Negotiating Ethnic Patriarchy for the Benefit of Students

Because I, a *mestiza*, continually walk out of one culture and into another, because I am in all cultures at the same time ... *alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro, me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio*... a soul between two worlds, three, four. My head buzzes with the contradictory; I am disoriented by all the voices that talk to me simultaneously.

– Gloria Anzaldua --

My first reaction is intense anger, rage...and I am usually so very slow to anger. This response is prompted by headlines announcing the first female president of Harvard, an article on first female Native, Asian, and Hispanic American presidents of four-year colleges (Turner, 2007), and my own recent departure after four productive yet physically and psychically exhausting years as a woman of color leading a campus. I felt compelled by this anger to analyze seven years of autoethnographic leadership field notes on negotiating ethnic patriarchies in academe. Though my second reaction is elation at these milestones by women and especially women of color, I cannot help but wonder how in current times there are still so many of these firsts. My anger originates in this question, this reality of academe. Regardless of whether emotions are considered appropriate in research or leadership, they are there naturally from which to draw strength, to remind us of the high stakes still in education, and as a cautionary indicator to take a step back and systematically analyze.

As a woman of color and a leader, scholar, and teacher in colleges for over 25 years, I shouldn't be surprised at this paucity of women of color in high level leadership. Rarely were there cultural role models, supervisors, or high level leaders to connect with each time I took on a new level of responsibility. My role models have been colleagues at other institutions as well as female elders around me and in my extended family. I have mourned as one after another of

my friends who are women of color have left professorships and collegiate leadership exhausted from the experience of working in cultural and gender environs not their own. Individually and institutionally we navigate ethnic patriarchies every moment of our professional lives (Rich, 1993).

Ethnic patriarchy is a term I use to refer to ways that patriarchy and culture intersect. As a woman of color I experience cultural and gender differentiated treatment and treatment that is a fusion of the two. Gender roles and expectations are defined differently within various cultural groups (Lorde, 1984). The way I am perceived and treated by a group of Hispanic males is often very different than by Native American males or by males from a mix of Caucasian European origins. Institutionally, policies, structures, and practice are also framed differently across cultures (Fried, 1995). In this article, I offer illustrations of my leadership as a woman of color within institutional norms outside my own. My experience includes negotiating predominantly Caucasian male presidential/provost cabinets, regents, and dean's councils, all male tribal councils, and Hispanic male town/county boards.

I began this article with the extreme emotion of rage to send a message that we must engage our whole selves as leaders, teachers, and researchers if we are to negotiate these borderlands and successfully serve a global society. I believe the common denial of heart, body, and spirit in academe challenges our evolution as collegiate organizations operating in a global context. The falling ratings of U.S. higher education within worldwide contexts (US Department of Education, 2006) are important indicators that the evolution of collegiate culture and practice is critical. This article adds to the literature about women in higher education by offering an autoethnographic examination of some norms that impact cultural and gender outsiders like me and ways that these can be negotiated in service to students. It is also an exploration of what

practices might look like from a more diverse epistemological orientation. I have organized the article into three sections including: a discussion about identity and leadership, a summary of the research process, findings illustrated through “teaching stories” about leading as a woman of color in academe, and recommendations. I dedicate this article to all those women of color who remain in academe and those who wish to enter, for we need to trust in our own ways of being as cultural translators, as role models, and as leaders, teachers, and scholars.

Borderlands: Intersections of Identity and Leadership

I became a reluctant role model to other women of color at the age of 22 when I began my first professional leadership position as a residence hall manager at New Mexico State University. A young student who described herself as Spanish and Native American asked me about my professional experiences and if I thought she could be a leader. I spent the next hour listening and sharing stories. I felt humbled when she shared that she hadn’t thought she could be a leader until she saw my very Spanish female name listed at the front office. This experience made real for me the responsibility of intersecting roles of identity and leadership. For you see, I am *Mestiza*, a Spanish and Native woman from the high desert mountains of northern New Mexico. This cultural blending has roots in New Mexico from the mid-1500s when 16 families traveled from Spain and intermarried with Native peoples (Beck, 1962; Chávez, 1989). Travelers who visit my home town of Taos often feel they have entered another country and indeed, many rhythms remain from long ago. It is often said that we stayed put and the border moved...and moved...and moved again....and we never knew.

Those of us, whose identities and ways of being are not common in higher education, walk in borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) between our own ways of being in the world and those of academe. A supervisor once told me he “didn’t envy me the reality that I would always have to

walk with feet in two worlds” (Schwartz, 1988). Differences can be so foundational and unconscious even now I am often unable to recognize them until barriers rise up between me and what I am working to accomplish. Because so many of our students, faculty, and staff reside in these borderlands we need to continually recraft academe from a more diverse epistemology of norms, values, assumptions, and beliefs (Ibarra, 2001). Unfortunately, as Kaylynn Two-Trees states, “privilege of any kind can act as a learning disability” (Personal Communication, 1996). Privilege enables individuals to move through situations with little challenge to their beliefs about the world or to norms they propagate (Hurtado, 1996). When one has the privilege of being normative by identity; it is not as necessary to study others to survive in everyday life (Strange, 2000). I believe this leads to less motivation for ethnic patriarchies to transform or to make the way easier for those outside these norms. This makes studies from within the highest echelons of higher education essential.

The Study

This study is drawn from seven years of autoethnographic field notes and interpretive reflections of my experiences as Dean of Students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and as Executive Campus Director of the University of New Mexico – Taos. The University of Wisconsin-Madison is a very large, public research institution in the state’s capital. Students of color make up about 13 % of the overall enrollment (UW Data Digest, 2008). The University of New Mexico-Taos is a small branch campus of a large research university and is located in the mountainous northern region of the state. Students of color, mostly Hispanic and Native American, make up over 49% of enrollment (UNM-Taos Factbook, 2008).

Research Philosophy and Positionality

This study was conducted and written from a critical cultural feminist epistemology, a term I use to describe a collection of principles serving as a foundation for my leadership, teaching, and research. From critical race feminism, I embrace several ethics and philosophies of research. I choose to study identity borderlands in leadership so that we may understand our similarities and differences more deeply in the service of transformation and effectiveness in academe. Critical race feminism as a philosophy embraces the notion that data from heart, mind, body, and spirit are essential to research (Wing, 2003). From critical theory I apply critical deconstructive approaches in the tradition of Derrida (Kearney, 1984, 1985). Anthropological deconstruction and critique is helpful to understanding values, assumptions, and beliefs in leadership and institutional practice especially where identity privilege is a key factor (Fried, 1995; Ibarra, 2001). Consistent with Latina (Garcia, 1995), and Indigenous (Grande, 2004) feminist philosophies I believe in taking a hopeful stance that it is possible for society to become more socially just (Elenes, González, Delgado Bernal, & Villenas, 2001). I critique for both what is problematic and what is helpful about the cultured and gendered norms of higher education.

Ellis in her ongoing autoethnographic research urges us to examine our own positionality in relation to our scholarship (2004). In studying myself, I face the challenge of being both insider to my research (Merriam et al, 2001) and the focus of my research. My research is not meant to benefit me, but rather to subject myself to study as one of few possible subjects for inquiry on women of color in high level collegiate leadership. Self disclosure has long been overwhelmingly detrimental to female leaders, particularly to women of color in higher education (Valverde, 2003). Yet I am uniquely situated for this study and believe I bear this responsibility to others. By placing myself in the eye of public scrutiny with autoethnographic

research I stand up with other women of color and all those who face similar challenges and those who are or wish to be our allies (Mohanty, 2003).

Methods

Because there are so few women of color in the high level leadership positions of presidency, provost, or dean I chose an autoethnography for this study. “Autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture; it is an autobiographical genre...that displays multiple layers of consciousness” (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). It is “personal text as critical intervention in social, political, and cultural life” (Holman Jones, 2005 p. 763), the study of one’s own experiences, feelings, and interpretations of a specific phenomenon. The personal, specific voice derived from autoethnographic methods can have a powerful impact and influence others to action in the transformation of social institutions. This occurs when readers are invited into a “lived, felt experience,” lessening the possibility of continuing to, “stand outside...at safe remove.” Autoethnography “creates charged moments of clarity, connection, and change” (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 764) by bringing culture and self together through the personal narrative of one individual.

I chose three primary methods of data collection to develop a deepened understanding of high level leadership contexts and experiences as a woman of color within them. Using multiple methods made it more likely that I would remain open to unexpected findings and develop depth in understanding (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For this study, I was interested in my own dilemmas as a *Mestiza* leader working across ethnic and gender cultures in academe. Specifically, I focused on strategies and insights that proved effective in negotiating for students inside and outside collegiate institutions. In keeping with autoethnographic technique (Ellis, 2004) I conducted participant observation of myself and others in a variety of contexts, keeping

extensive field notes as often as possible during or just after meetings and other administrative activities as well as daily journals of my reflections, feelings, and interpretations. In addition, I initiated many conversations with leaders about culture and gender. Two research questions served as my guide: 1) how does a woman of color negotiate groups of leaders dominated by males of similar and different cultures than her own? And 2) what strategies show effectiveness in negotiating across culture and gender with leaders in high level positions of academe and in external boards impacting the institution?

Data Analysis

To develop thick description (Geertz, 1973) and gain a deep understanding of cultured and gendered aspects of leadership I first utilized thematic analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1994), categorizing specific dynamics and components common across my experiences. Second, I developed systematic coding (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) to analyze and reduce data according to identified themes and to search for outlying and more subtle themes.

The Power of Teaching Stories

I use teaching stories to make sense of and illustrate the findings of this study. Teaching stories are both the creation of metaphorical stories to teach larger lessons and the telling of real events to illustrate a concept or idea. They are a tradition in my family and a primary way that learning takes place in the far reaches of mountainous New Mexico. These traditions stem from a belief that it takes the heart, mind, body, and spirit to fully understand any phenomenon (Anzaldúa, 1987). The use of traditional storytelling is a strong ethic of Indigenous and critical race feminism (Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. A. Vellenas, 1999). By choosing stories selectively from my autoethnographic field notes and journal reflections, I am able to illustrate key findings to the reader in ways that have effectively influenced human choices throughout history (Grande,

2004). I relate experiences from my own leadership as a cultured, gendered outsider to engage readers cognitively and emotionally. It is my hope that within these stories, leaders and others in higher education will find inspiration, ideas, and greater understanding toward continued transformation of academe.

Findings: Learning from Professional Teaching Stories

Themes emerged strongly from the data which was only somewhat of a surprise to me after facing so many cultural and gender challenges as a leader of many years. I was surprised at how deeply these norms went and was reminded of Lukes' (1974) three levels of power in which the most insidious barrier to social justice is to be able to define underlying norms, values, and definitions within any context. I found that in most cases leaders I worked with, who often had very positive intentions, seemed completely unaware that their norms and priorities had a basis in their own identities.

September 11 – Heart, Mind, Body & Spirit

On September 11, I was serving as Dean of Students at the University of Wisconsin. After a long day of emergency operations leadership, I was asked to speak at an evening vigil and had 45 minutes to prepare. As I reflected on what had been happening on our campus, the beauty and the ugliness of responses, the personal mixed with the official, the grief, anger and confusion, I knew it would be critical to connect personally, to inspire goodness in others, and to offer empathy and reassurance. An excerpt from my brief speech follows:

It is at tragic and frightening times such as we are faced with today, when we are called upon most clearly to rise to our highest character. At times like this, we are faced with many emotions – anger, fear, helplessness, sadness. ... Please know that we as administrators, service providers, teachers, and scholars are with you in heart and in

spirit. We too are hurting and confused and questioning and we will be turning our energy to assisting you and our community to cope during this difficult time...We will be with you along the way.

I knew when I crafted this speech that it was up to me as a leader to go beyond an official measured response to something I find rare in the public selves of collegiate leaders. In the weeks and months following; I learned that excerpts, especially my words, "*We too are hurting and confused and questioning...and we will be with you along the way.*" had been broadcast around the world via internet. I received hundreds of e-mails thanking me for speaking so clearly about emotions, spirituality, and connection as a collegiate leader. Most individuals I heard from told me that by sharing feelings of fear, anger, and confusion I connected with them in ways that they had not experienced among leaders in academe. In this instance and in many of my other interactions of professional life, I find that leaders and professors are often expected to separate emotions, body, and spirit. I find this to be one of the very controversial dilemmas of being a woman of color in academe. We are often pressured to choose between the integrated selves encouraged in our cultures and the separated expectations of leadership in academe.

It took me many years of observing high level leaders in academe to realize how strong the pattern is of showing only an official face to the public. I understand some of the reasons for these choices, based on gender roles and the danger inherent in opening yourself to personal attacks. High level leaders receive so much scrutiny and challenge that it is not surprising so many choose to show only a public face. Yet, there are many times when our campuses need the personal, when showing how we feel and what we believe helps calm and reassure our college communities. I have seen many collegiate leaders respond to student racial protests with removed, measured, legalistic words that triggered even stronger responses when some statement

of feeling, of empathy, of personal connection and commitment is what would be helpful. It takes a kind of moral courage as a leader (Kidder, 2005), to share ourselves in more personal ways in times of crisis, in the classroom, the boardroom, and in our work around the campus. Though we have come a long way because of scholars and leaders who push the edges of practice, the foundations of higher education are still based very substantively in only parts of our selves as human beings.

Becoming Patrona: Latino Politics in Community Context

I had always heard that coming home is never easy and had seen my father struggle with his return to Taos after 21 years of military service. There is a strong history in Northern New Mexico of distrusting outsiders and those who leave behind the humble professions of their home communities. Centuries of broken treaties and commitments have made it common to trust a handshake more than a signature and someone in the community more than someone from outside (Beck, 1962). When I was hired to return home after 20 years to lead UNM-Taos I knew that I had challenges ahead. The first two campus leaders were male and there were few women in any type of leadership positions in town or county education or government. My father warned me about the Latino politics of the community and my Mother cautioned me about “*envidia*,” a common practice of pulling others down from high places in many oppressed communities (Anzaldua, 1987). I quickly found that people around me displayed one of two reactions, either thrilled that I was there as a woman of color, or deeply distrusting my legitimacy as a leader who is a woman of color. A critical difference from my past collegiate experiences was that I was now in a community and college that are made up of over half peoples from Mestizo, Hispano, or Native American heritage. Another difference is that gender role separations are even stronger than anywhere else I have served. All male tribal councils are the norm in the governments of the

Indian Nations in northern New Mexico, the two local public entities I worked with most, the Town Council and the college advisory board each had one Hispanic female leader. I remember feeling excited to come home culturally and yet concerned at being such a public female leader within local gender role expectations. An early excerpt from my journal of this time reads.

I know from my own upbringing in this community and the critical foundations of relational connections normative in Latino and Native communities that it will be essential for me to make clear my connections to others with stories of my extended family and my education in the Taos public schools. This will ease the development of trusting partnerships with community leaders for college initiatives and student success.

A second entry a month later,

Today I spoke at my first Town Council meeting after requesting time on the agenda to introduce myself. I started with a story of my own education and the wise local familial and school teachers who were essential to my own growth as a professional and human being. To signal the importance of many kinds of livelihood and knowledge in this rural community I spoke of being able to birth a sheep, make enchiladas, conduct and publish research, and lead important initiatives. I must honor both what has been and the possibilities of the future. As is my habit, I wore long bright skirts and adorned myself in silver and turquoise, long ago moving away from the common business suits of academic leaders. I could see that these symbols of community and identity were connecting as people throughout the council and audience nodded and murmured support. Several council members made a point to connect themselves to my family. I noticed, however, that unlike responses to male leaders introducing themselves, some of the responses to me seemed to be a “pat on the head”. Comments implied female roles that I might play

on the campus such as developing childcare, enhancing teaching, and nurturing students. Even after I spoke of my work as a Dean in a large university, one council member offered to be of assistance in areas he assumed I had no experience such as finance, construction of the campus, and legal issues. He continued in subsequent meetings to offer to assist me in these areas even when I discussed my experiences in each and learned that he had little experience in any!

Over time, I learned that many on campus and in the community had begun to refer to me as *patrona*, a female version of a male term for leader-employer in many Hispanic communities. I found this intriguing knowing that female frontrunners often possess characteristics more common to men (Lorde, 1984) and yet I have always been told that I have few of these characteristics. Unlike many stereotypes of Hispanic and Native women, my early experiences were of women who are simultaneously fierce, assertive, and compassionate. By leading through these characteristics which are often considered opposing I have been able to negotiate for a variety of student needs. This has never come without the challenges of being patronized.

Healing the Unforgivable: Troubling Choices by Good People

In September 2000, while I served as dean of students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University made headlines in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Yachin, 2000; Clegg, 2000) when someone noticed photographic discrepancies on the cover of a marketing publication. It was revealed that a photo of an African American student had been inserted into a photo of a crowd of Caucasian American students and reporters descended on the University. As dean, I contacted the African American student to offer assistance, fielded some of the media, and offered support to groups of upset students of color. Reflections follow from that time.

Today, I met with an African American student whose photo was inserted into another photo for a marketing publication. He has been hounded by reporters and is struggling to cope with unasked for and unwanted national attention, the use without permission of his image, and trying to keep up with academics in the midst of turmoil. It is heart wrenching to know that all I can offer is empathy and a bit of support on campus. I am so very impressed with his graceful dignity and compassion in dealing with all of this.

An excerpt a few days later,

Yesterday, I heard calls for firing of the leader who decided to portray diversity by altering a photograph in a University publication. My reaction has been far different. I want this White male leader to stay and make reparation to the campus! It is too easy to walk away and in my cultural traditions it is important for all to regain dignity and make amends by being held responsible for repairing the damage of our actions.

An excerpt a few weeks later,

Today, I had lunch with the leader who made decisions about the photograph. It has been a difficult three weeks and I can see that he is down. I asked him if he would find it helpful to know what I have been hearing from students of color and others on campus. He seemed distraught as he spoke of meeting with students and feeling like they hated him. He spoke of how he was trying so hard to build the student diversity of the campus and was dedicated to advocating for students of color on campus to improve retention. I asked him a few questions about what behaviors from students made him feel that he was hated then reflected for a moment on how I might assist him in finding healing and in continuing with this priority. I told him that I didn't believe these student behaviors showed hatred. They were clearly frustrated, angry, and hurt about being used and not

served well and their main concern in my experience is to work with us as leaders to improve the campus for those who come after them. I spoke of how misinterpretations are often made across cultures when there are differences in how much we show emotions and asked if part of what he was feeling might also be from an upbringing of low public displays of emotion. He looked startled and said that yes; he had been raised to show mostly positive emotions and had been taken aback at the strong emotions showed by these students. He asked me how he might go about working through this and I suggested he meet with some of these students, share how he was feeling, ask for their assistance in significant ways, and work to apply as many of their ideas as possible.

By putting aside my own frustrations and empathizing with this leader to assist him in shifting his focus toward understanding, connecting with students as partners, and finding solutions I was able in a small way to assist a well meaning person overcome a profound misjudgment. This opened possibility for healing, to hearing others' concerns, regaining dignity within a campus community, and developing proactive solutions. It was important in this situation for me to draw from the concepts of Spanish and Indigenous cultures to frame every relationship as a lifelong one, healing beyond mistakes and making reparation to those we harm. It was also important to work at understanding some of the cultural and gender perspectives of this leader and to assist him to reinterpret some of his assumptions about students. In this way, I was able to negotiate aspects of ethnic patriarchy that can prevent healing, reparation, connection and solutions within the diversity of our campus communities.

Role Dancing: Collaborating with Male Tribal Councils

Perhaps one of my greatest challenges as a leader in my home town was to gain entrance and develop collaborative leadership with tribal governors and councils of northern New

Mexico. There are 22 distinct tribes in New Mexico and UNM-Taos serves Taos Pueblo and Picuris Pueblo. Both of these tribes are highly patriarchal in public aspects of government and only men sit in governorships and councils. Women hold important roles in other aspects of tribal life but are rarely permitted in this public aspect of government. To complicate matters, most of the Native American students we served at that time were women and even before my arrival many of these women were beginning to make demands to become leaders and have a role in the more public aspects of their tribal governments. Excerpts from this time read,

Today I met with the Governor of Taos Pueblo after a series of meetings and discussions with the Tribal Secretary, the Tribal Administrator and several friends who are members of Taos Pueblo. Though I have much Native ancestry, I was not tribally raised and it is with great care that I need to proceed. After consultation with tribal members, I determined that calling upon relationships I have with individuals near the Governor would be critical to gaining entry. I walked into a room filled with male council members. I introduced myself with my family and clan names and spoke of my wish to serve members of Taos Pueblo. We had much discussion about collaborations that would benefit the tribe. I was treated with great formality and respect as a leader in education.

I was told by several leaders including a Taos Pueblo Governor that few leaders ever approached the Tribe except to ask for something and my very formal and respectful demeanor, attention to protocol, and offer of assistance and collaboration made the difference in garnering partnerships between Taos Pueblo and UNM-Taos. In the almost four years I served as campus leader, we built needed academic programs, negotiated policy changes with UNM concerning credit for Tribal languages, developed courses in Native Studies, held retreats to boost student success, and collaborated on sustainability initiatives. By taking the time to learn appropriate

protocol, build long-term relationships, and combine with the activist stance of entering all male domains as a woman, I was able to serve as a catalyst for collaborative endeavors between the campus and tribes. As I look back now on that first meeting I am humbled that I gained entry into this male world and yet troubled that this is such a rare occurrence for women in the tribe.

Students in Need: Balancing Old and New Ways

I have long been uncomfortable working in a realm of regulation between individual privacy and familial support. In both of the cultures I come from, an ethic of involvement is expected. I sometimes describe this in myself as my intrusive nature as a teacher, leader and friend. My learned tendency is to inquire about private things, call or visit those I'm worried about, and connect with family and friends of those in trouble. Laws governing student rights to privacy make some of this impossible and yet I believe that students benefit from the supportiveness of those they trust. Many students I have worked with suffer all by themselves, keeping their hurts, disappointments, fears, and needs tightly hidden inside. Over the years I have developed practices that create a balance between privacy and supportiveness, individuality and collectivity. I have also developed ways to ask about identity while assisting students. I describe one situation while I served as dean of students at UW-Madison in the following excerpt,

Yesterday I met with a male student who seemed very distressed in the quiet way I've come to see as common among Wisconsin males. I closed the door and asked him how I could be of assistance. He gave me a relieved look and told me that he had just lost a close friend to suicide, was failing his courses, and was having his own thoughts about committing suicide. After listening for awhile I asked him a question that I have developed over time, "Are there aspects of your identity, such as being male or circumstances such as where you grew up that are impacting this situation for you?" He

looked at me with astonishment and then told me of how he was the first in his extended dairy farm family not only to attend college but to finish high school. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he shared that his family had pooled their money to send him to college and he couldn't face telling them he was failing. I asked him who among his family, community, and/or friends he felt safe with, who did he trust. Once again, he looked relieved and talked of an uncle he was close to.

I spent the rest of the time with this student assisting him practice calling his uncle first to talk through his situation and gain support in then speaking to his parents. I asked him if he would like to call his uncle from my office so I could be with him for moral support. He did so and we went over some campus resources he might use. I ended by walking him personally to the student counseling center for a preliminary session. After many years of working to balance the cultural norms of my upbringing with the parameters of academe, I believe that we need to work within the constraints of systems even as we push them to evolve. By assisting students to identify support people in their own lives and consider identity and background aspects of situations; we can facilitate more effective solutions and offer deeper assistance.

Building Relationships and Forming Allies

One way that I have often applied the practice of gathering over food common in my cultures is to invite campus leaders to coffee, tea, or lunch not to tell them about my priorities but rather to ask about theirs. I find that individuals are often startled when asked what is important to them. I long ago lost track of the added benefits of this technique yet one story serves to illustrate. I was told that a particular academic dean at UW-Madison was difficult to know and I noticed that he was often contentious in dean's council meetings. It took me awhile to arrange a

meeting with him but he finally agreed to a walk for coffee on campus. Excerpts from my field notes illustrate.

Today I met with an academic dean to build our relationship. I took the opportunity to ask him how he had come to be a dean. He looked at me strangely and sighed, launching into a fascinating account of his dislike for administrators and yet his passion for student learning and the development of knowledge. On our return toward his building, I asked how I might be of service to him and he told me that he would have to think about this. I left it at that but then began to notice that he would seek me out at dean's meetings to chat. A few months later my notes read,

I spoke up passionately today in dean's council for the needs and contributions of students of color and drew a blank look from almost everyone. I paused for a moment and suddenly, this dean stood up and spoke. He urged everyone that student learning and the development of new knowledge would be benefited if we paid attention to the diverse ways of our students. He then spoke of his esteem for me and that with me in the council and my extensive background in working with diverse students; we might have a chance even in Wisconsin of making progress. He turned to me saying "Dr. [my name kept out during blind review process] we would be honored if you would continue.

Though I could have been upset that it took a White older male to get the attention of this council about the needs of students of color, instead I felt so very grateful to have found a way to connect and ally with someone who already had the influence to persuade an important group on campus. When I thanked him later he responded that conversations we'd had taught him that he had a responsibility to use his White male privilege to make a difference among his peers.

Discussion & Recommendations: Negotiating Ethnic Patriarchy

In this section, I discuss some key recommendations for those working across culture and gender to benefit students. Developing cultural competence as leaders is essential if we are to continue transforming education within a highly diverse country and global society (Lindsey, Robins & Terrell, 1999; Pope, Reynolds & Mueller, 2004). Remaining ourselves, learning cultural and gender rhythms of others, seeking advice from cultural translators, and learning to speak the language and priorities of those you wish to persuade are primary strategies I find critical as a woman of color leading in higher education.

Remaining Ourselves

Recently, I had yet another experience of individuals becoming irritated with my cultured professional norms while simultaneously receiving strong positive remarks from others who feel that my cultured ways have had a profound impact on them. I reached out for help to a long time friend and partner activist and asked her how I might make sense of these opposing messages. She explained that **I am the same person in both situations** and the same qualities that some see as wise, compassionate, and helpful to education are seen by others as problematic, irritating, disruptive and even dangerous to the status quo of academe. She explained that those who actively transform organizations and who by our very identity have a transformative impact are often seen negatively by those who are happy and comfortable with the current culture of education (Chagnon, 2006). I have to admit that I was stunned by this observation. As someone who is very introspective and constantly trying to improve myself, it had never occurred to me that it might be the same qualities attracting both responses. I kept thinking that if I could just improve or get rid of my “bad qualities,” things would be fine.

This was a freeing revelation to me as a Mestiza whose essence in many ways is opposite to much of academic culture (Ibarra, 2001). So how do we as women and especially women of

color negotiate this tension of opposites? How do our allies work with us to transform academe so that many ways of being are welcomed, encouraged and garnered as assets to our work?

Audre Lourde provides perhaps one of the best guides in her now famous urging not to dismantle the master's house with the master's tools (1984). With these words, she was urging African Americans not to respond to racial violence with racial violence. As a leader, teacher, and scholar, I strive to avoid the competition, individuality above collectivity, power over others, and the separation of parts of myself as a leader that are all too common in collegiate culture (Ibarra, 2001). In this way, I am able to act as a transformative educational leader.

Learn Cultural and Gender Rhythms Appropriate to Others

Individuals who work effectively in other nations such as international educators, military personnel, and global corporate employees know the power of constantly staying vigilant in their study of the language, etiquette, mannerisms, and rhythms of others (Torbiörn, 1994). This is true within the United States as well and in the Midwest for example, I found that male professionals always started with the "business" at hand and were not likely to bring up anything personal during a meeting with me. Though I have developed ways to bring in the personal later in relationship, I learned over time that many males from Caucasian American ethnic groups connect through common interests and goals in their work and that by honoring and engaging this kind of connection I can advocate and partner with them in service to students. With Hispanos especially in New Mexico, my upbringing held me in good stead as I knew to start by asking after families, referring back to something we had talked about in a previous meeting to reinforce connections, and letting the business of our meeting begin when the conversation naturally moved in that direction. With Native peoples I met in Wisconsin, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado I found it important to make time for formal introductions, blessings, and

periods of silence. It is appropriate and expected in many Native communities for individuals to form connections by sharing clan, tribal, and familial relationships. Though I am not from a specific tribe I make sure to introduce myself with the four maternal and paternal names in my family, mention our family's long history of ties to the land through shepherding and to protecting our way of life as warriors in the military. In formal interactions, making personal connections develops ties and eases the way for our work together.

Identify and Seek Advice from "Cultural Translators"

While having lunch with a group of Chinese American business men in Madison, one individual caught my eye and silently motioned to how he was holding his tea cup to be served. When the waiter served me, I too bowed my head and held the cup with one hand while placing finger tips of my other hand beneath. When I looked up, I noticed nods of approval from around the table and the leader began to invite me directly into conversation and ask how he could be of assistance to the University. After the luncheon, the man who had motioned to me shared that this one small act signaled that I was a leader who paid attention to the importance of small things, was willing to go beyond my own comfortable rhythms to work with others, and who would be a person of honor even in difficult times. I was amazed that my small act had communicated these important messages. I began to seek this individual's advice in continuing to work with this group over time in support of the University. It is important to develop relationships with individuals who can assist us in traversing into professional and identity cultures so we are able to collaborate more fully in our service to students. I have been very blessed to find, cultivate and learn from many cultural translators in my professional life.

Learn to Speak the Language and Priorities of Those You Wish to Persuade

I am often struck by frustrations I see as individuals in higher education try to persuade those from other professional or cultural groups using their own jargon and priorities. Voices rise, words are repeated, and the group is often blamed for not understanding or caring. I learned long ago that to persuade effectively I must learn the language and frame things in the priorities of others. I often use differentiated language to persuade faculty, administrators, student affairs professionals, donors, and regents. For example, the language of learning, knowledge, and governance are important to faculty and if I am to benefit students, I must be innovative in making connections based in this language and framed to support these priorities. Similarly, various ethnic and gender groups often share similar language and priorities. Since I do not have a background in every subculture, I find it useful to learn from group insiders and to observe groups prior to trying to persuade them of something. I have spent countless highly productive hours attending meetings of groups I would need to persuade later such as faculty senates, city councils, and regents. In addition, I gain insight toward assisting in their mission.

Additional Strategies

Other strategies I find helpful as I continue to negotiate academe include greeting negative colleagues with positive energy, empathy, and compassion; using my strengths to minimize and compensate for areas I'm limited; building up my warrior self by funneling the energy of anger and frustration toward positive purpose; dressing as myself yet formal enough for the occasion, cultivating positive inner voice (and telling the negative inner voices to be quiet!); replacing competition with collaboration toward shared goals; balancing myself with rest and renewal; and engaging others in the future by enlisting their talents toward common purpose. With each year I gain new insights and strategies to also consider identities such as

class, sexuality, religion, age, and ability. We each embody multiple identity cultures that need to be part of a diverse epistemology of higher education.

Conclusion

Since I began writing this article, we have been through a historic time when a White woman became speaker of the house and both a White woman and an interracial Black man are serious contenders for the U.S. presidency. Though I wonder how long before we see a woman of color as contender, I find hope in this progress, in the activism I see on college campuses, and in my own mixed *Mestiza* blood...*La Sangre* running through my veins and through the diverse blood of this country. Ethnic patriarchy is something we must acknowledge and deconstruct in higher education as we serve a global society. There is much to be done within ourselves, in working with others, and in recrafting our collegiate institutions toward a more diverse set of cultural and gender based epistemologies.

Crafting our own ways of leading authentically within the borderlands of identity is an ongoing endeavor. While remaining true to ourselves, we must continually learn to negotiate the cultures of others if we are to serve students in the halls of academe. A quote by Susan Wooley shared by a long time friend and colleague as we worked across our cultural differences provides powerful

testimony. “We have lifetimes of undigested, unassimilated experience to be unpacked, catalogued, and crafted into theory, providing the foundation from which to later speak with men. The only way to stop being outlaws is to become lawmakers...at last trusting our own experience.” I often imagine the marvelous possibilities of research, leadership, and teaching if we would use our full, complex, and integrated selves in each moment, each endeavor. Perhaps our most radical and important daily act is to be fully ourselves so that we provide examples of possibility for a more diverse epistemological foundation in higher education.

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