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Hiring Policy in United States Spanish Departments: Considerations of Social Class, National Origin, and Ethnicity

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Abstract

The present study focuses on two inter-related factors specific to United States college and university Spanish Departments: the unique demographic profile of the entry-level faculty in terms of gender, ethnicity, national origin, and social class; the relation between these factors and hiring practices, especially regarding field of specialization, pay scale, and tenure-track opportunities. We believe these issues are important in that they underscore the value of considering questions of social class as well as ethnicity and gender when analyzing academic job segmentation.

The present study focused on the initial job searches of recent recipients of the Ph.D. in Spanish from US institutions. It was conducted by mailing structured questionnaires to 150 of those listed in the 1997 "Dissertations 1996" (Eutis, 1997) section of *Hispania*, the journal of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. This is an annual listing of completed dissertations in Spanish. In addition to

follow-up telephone calls to degree-granting institutions, the 1997 *Modern Language Association Member Directory* and the "Job Tracks: Who Got Hired Where, 1997-1998" listings in *Lingua Franca* were consulted, and surveys mailed where appropriate.

Results

A total of 99 people (out of 170, 58%) returned completed questionnaires. (Note 1) A comparison of our sample with the total universe of doctorates granted in Spanish (National Opinion Research Center, 1997) in 1996 (n=196; this is the year most of our sample received their degrees) across key descriptive variables displays relative correspondence, with almost all categories varying by three percent or less (Table 1). The Modern Language Association's PhD survey for the years 1993-1994 (Huber, 1996), the most recent data available, further supports the representation of the sample in terms of the proportion who received tenured or non-tenured positions (Table 1-A). Based on the close correspondence between the two populations, any concerns regarding selectivity or sampling bias are unfounded.

Table 1
Comparison of Survey Population and 1996 Universe

	Survey		**1996 (Note 7)**	
	n	%	n	%
Total	99	100	196	100
Male	42	42	82	42
Female	58	58	114	58
US Citizen	59	59	116	59
Perm. Visa	19	19	42	21
Temp Visa	15	15	34	17
Hispanic	48	48	98	50
Mex/Am	6	6	10	5
Puerto Rican	4	4	15	8
Other Hisp.	38	38	73	37
Male	21	21	38	19
Female	27	27	60	31
US citizen	14	14	28	14
Perm visa	19	19	31	16
Temp visa	14	14	24	12
Non-Hispanic	51	51	98	50
Male	21	21	44	22
Female	30	30	54	28
US citizen	45	45	73	37

Perm visa	1	1	11	6
Temp visa	4	4	10	5

Table 1-A
Comparison of Post-Secondary Education Placement Among Survey Population and MLA Placement Survey

	Survey		MLA (Note 8)	
	n	%	n	%
Total	99	100	222	100
Post-Secondary	78	78	182	82
Hispanic	36	46	87	48
Non-Hispanic	42	54	95	52
Tenure	50	64	124	66
Male Tenure	22	28	50	27
Female Tenure	28	36	73	39
Non-Tenure	26	26	41	22
Male Non-tenure	8	10	21	11
Female Non-Tenure	20	25	41	22

Several factors that do not appear in the Tables, but that might influence a job search, should be mentioned. First, only six of the Hispanics were native-born (eight were naturalized) and, if we correct for Puerto Ricans, who are native speakers and non-immigrants, only two of the Hispanics are potentially second- generation US citizens, hence non-native speakers. (Note 2) Also, the survey cohort ranged in age from 28-60 years of age. The mean age of the respondents was 36 (37 years for Hispanics, 36 years for non-Hispanics). Additionally, because our sample were on their initial job search, years of academic experience was more or less a constant in the present analysis. Almost 90 percent (88%) had one year or less with a doctorate. There appeared to be no pattern among the remaining 12 percent.

Lastly, publication of refereed journal articles is one significant indicator of merit or productivity which could lead to a more successful academic outcome. Approximately 65 percent of the sample had no peer-reviewed journal publications; 85 percent had one or less. Only 15 percent had 2 or more articles published, a number which could have a significant bearing on acquiring a tenure-track position. No pattern emerged between Hispanicity or gender and number of publications. Thus this variable is treated as a constant in the present analysis.

A oneway ANOVA was computed for Hispanic versus non-Hispanic differences and gender subgroups (see Table 2). Based on the ANOVA results, entry-level Hispanics are paid more on average than non-Hispanics ($t=2.69$, $df=67$, $p<.01$). Differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics based on gender were also significant ($F=2.89$, $df=3$, $p<.05$). The Hispanicity/gender effect was stronger than either the Hispanicity or

gender influence taken separately. Mean differences in pay between Hispanic and non-Hispanic males were most pronounced, $36,818 vs $31,250 respectively (median differences = $37,000 vs $32,000).

Table 2
Tenure Status and Salaries (in $1000s) by Ethnicity and Gender

	Hispanic				Non-Hispanic				
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Total
	n	% or Mean	n	% or Mean	n	% or Mean	n	% or Mean	n	% or Mean
Tenure*	11	84.6%	15	65.2%	11	64.7%	13	52.0%	50	64.1%
Aver. Pay**	11	$36.8	23	$34.9	14	$31.2	21	$32.5	69	$33.7
Lang.***a	0	—	6	24.0%	8	47.1	9	39.1%	23	29.5%
Lit.***	10	76.9%	10	40.0%	4	23.5%	6	26.1%	30	38.5%

* Sig. <.07
** Sig. <.05
*** Sig. .01
a. The abbreviations "Lang." and "Lit." refer to the area of teaching specialization.

For those who were offered full-time academic jobs (n=78), a comparison was made between those offered positions where the primary focus was teaching literature versus those whose primary responsibility was teaching language. Differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics showed a weak statistical significance. When the sample was broken down by gender subgroups, differences were most apparent and statistical significance improved considerably (sig.=.01). The most apparent significant difference was between Hispanic males and non- Hispanic males in that 77 percent of Hispanic males were offered literature positions versus 23 percent of their non-Hispanic counterparts. The comparisons for females were significant but less striking, 40 percent of the Hispanic females were offered literature positions versus 26 percent for non-Hispanic females.

As reported in Table 2, there is a weak statistical (sig. <.07), yet substantively important relationship between ethnicity, gender, and whether or not one receives a tenure-track appointment. This weak effect is due primarily to the reduced *n*; there were only 37 respondents in this part of the analysis. While both non-Hispanic males (65 percent) and Hispanic females (65 percent) recorded figures near the overall group average (64 percent), 85 percent of Hispanic males reported tenure-track positions, while only 52 percent of non-Hispanic females received tenure-track appointments. These findings are in line with what Rosenblum and Rosenblum (1990) found to be characteristic of segmented labor markets in academia, namely that those outside the tenure stream or internal labor market are more likely to be women and less likely to be cosmopolitan (p. 158). (Note 3) They also have a greater than 80 percent probability of staying in the non-tenure-track or external academic labor market (Rosenblum and Rosenblum, 1996, p. 441).

Discussion

As noted above, a statistically significant proportion of jobs in the field of literature go to Hispanics, while non- Hispanics are hired primarily to teach language. Said division of labor is particularly observable in the case of males. This pattern becomes meaningful when we consider the relative prestige associated with literature and the concomitant lack of status that comes with an appointment in language. In a recent issue of *Profession*, Russell A. Berman (1997, p. 63) explains:

> While there may be exceptions, language instruction is not as well rewarded with prestige or remuneration as is literary scholarship.... A line of class division, corresponding precisely to the distribution of rewards by the university, runs through all our departments.

Not only are language teaching positions less distinguished, but there are fewer of them, as many of these positions are filled by teaching assistants and part-timers. According to Huber (1996, p. 98), 15 percent of the jobs advertised in the October 1993 "Foreign Language" listings in the Modern Language Association Job List "referred to language teaching expertise only," while "32 percent of the descriptions mentioned expertise in literature only."

One of the rewards of the literature track is the opportunity to teach upper-division literature classes as a graduate student, while simultaneously avoiding the "educational service work" (MLA Final Report 1997) of teaching lower-division introductory language classes. Teaching literature classes, which are generally 3-credit classes, instead of lower-division language classes, which are normally 4-credit classes with high enrollment caps populated with non-majors seeking only to fulfil an exit requirement, translates to a lighter work load, higher pay per hour of instruction, more free time to pursue one's own studies, and a competitive advantage in teaching experience with respect to the job search. (Note 4)

The survey found that non-Hispanics, especially males, were disproportionately relegated to lower-division language classes (mean number of lower division classes taught, Hispanic males vs. non-Hispanic males, was 10.3 and 15.9 respectively; $p<.05$) while serving as teaching assistants. Thus, not surprisingly, the segmentation seen in faculty hiring practices has antecedents in graduate school employment protocols.

Finally, at the faculty level, language teaching positions pay less, a concrete manifestation of the distribution of rewards Berman refers to above. The average entry-level language teaching salary reported was $32,857, while the average entry- level literature position paid $36,607. The average salary, not the entry-level salary, of an assistant professor in a US Department of Foreign Languages is $35,095 (Wright, 1998, p. 115).

As mentioned above, only 6 percent of the survey cohort are domestic-born Hispanics and, if we correct for Puerto Ricans, who are native speakers and non-immigrants, only 2 percent of the cohort are potentially second-generation US Hispanics. As Guadalupe Valdés, a senior member of Stanford's Spanish Department, points out, for reasons of language and social class, "these [2nd generation] speakers of immigrant languages are often considered undesirable in our departments." (1998, p. 154).

This situation is relevant in terms of affirmative action hiring practices, which were designed to remediate prior discrimination. Said remediation does not appear to be present in US Spanish Department hiring practices, and indeed there seems to be a bias against non-native speakers of Spanish, be they of Hispanic origin or not. Hiring

practices appear to reflect a *standard language ideology*, which the sociolinguist Rosina Lippi-Green (1997, p. 64) defines as:

> a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class.

The "spoken language of the upper middle class" is in this case the spoken Spanish of upper middle class, foreign-born Hispanics. If we assume a correlation between educational levels and social class, then it can be argued that the Hispanic cohort (and the non-Hispanic as well) come from privileged social origins. Forty-six percent of all Hispanics had at least one parent with a 4-year degree or better, and 63 percent of the foreign-born Hispanics arrived in the US with at least a bachelor's degree.

These educational levels become significant when we compare them with the educational levels of the overall US Hispanic population. Only 10 percent of all Hispanics in the US have 4 or more years of college, while the aggregate figure for the US is 27.1 percent (*Digest of Education Statistics 1997*, 1998, p. 17). Moreover, in the US, Hispanics constitute an estimated 10.7 percent of the population but hold only 2.1 percent of Doctor's degrees and 3.1 percent of Master's degrees (*Digest of Education Statistics 1997*, 1998, p. 17).

The elevated educational level, and concomitant social status, of the Hispanic respondents becomes even more evident when we compare these with educational levels in their countries of origin. For example, only 11 percent of the entire population of Spain has a bachelor's degree (Organization for Economic Cooperation 1994), and in Latin America the distinction is even sharper. In Nicaragua, in 1995, "the illiteracy rate represented approximately one-half the population over the age of ten" (Arnove, 1997, p. 92). A mere 8 percent of the entire professoriate in Mexican higher education has a Ph.D. (Altbach, 1996, p. 322). By way of comparison, in the US, 62 percent of all faculty hold a Ph.D. degree (Altbach, 1996, p. 345).

In short, the foreign-born Hispanics represent the educational elite even in the US, but especially in their countries of origin. In marked contrast to the demographics of the US faculty at large, entry-level faculty in US Spanish Departments are predominately Hispanic, upper middle class, and foreign-born. (Note 5)

The reasons for the segmentation observed in Spanish Department hiring practices are doubtless many and complex. Affirmative action policies are clearly a factor, and Literature or Culture is traditionally the domain of the privileged classes. Additionally, as Gerhard Lenski pointed out, once in place, status groups tend "to make in-group membership a resource in the competition for power and privilege" (p. 400), and Bourdieu's (1988) research on class replication in higher education in France supports this view. Similarly, Foucault has pointed to "societies of discourse" and "doctrinal groups" as those responsible for disciplining the order of discourse: "none shall enter the order of discourse if he does not satisfy certain requirements or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so" (p. 120). Lang's (1986) language model of discrimination, in consonance with Lippi-Green (1997) and Valdés (1998), argues those who do not acquire privileged language patterns may be crowded into job markets with high densities of similarly marginalized workers. This is a special case of the more general "crowding theory," which argues that marginalized workers are crowded into a limited set of opportunities, thus flooding the labor market in that specific area and so driving

down wages for all who compete in that area (Sorensen 1990). This does seem to be consistent with our results, as language jobs pay less across the ethnic and gender continuum, although within the language division Hispanics continue to be paid more on average than non- Hispanics ($34,000 vs $31,000). Furthermore, two factors that the human capital theory of earnings suggest distort the crowding effect--time spent out of the labor force and time taken to train for jobs--are not relevant variables in this survey and, according to Paula England (1982), are fallacious in any event.

Conclusions

Whatever the causes, some of the relations reported in the survey are clearly incongruent with egalitarian principles, especially those which underlie such important programs as affirmative action and the movement toward equal opportunities for women. From a policy standpoint, we would offer the following suggestions as a way to alleviate the reported inequities. First, is the question of salaries. The fact that both Hispanic and non-Hispanic women fare worse than their male counterparts, both in terms of salary and in terms of tenure- track appointments, needs to be rectified.

Some ameliorization of the pay differential between language and literature positions also appears appropriate. Because language teaching serves the vast majority of students, and not incidentally generates the bulk of tuition dollars, it is in the long-term best interest of those in literature to avoid the inequities which are currently splitting Spanish Departments. As Dorothy James (1997) points out,

> In largely confining language teaching to the lowest levels of the curriculum and in assigning it to a category of teachers different from those who teach literature or other content, we have undermined the rationale for having a paid, full-time professoriat in foreign languages....Can we really be surprised if it dawns on administrators under severe budgetary constraints that they can save a lot of money by doing away with the small upper-level foreign literature programs altogether and sustain the lower-level language courses without the benefit (and expense) of properly paid senior faculty members? (p. 49)

Likewise, literature positions should be made available to more non-Hispanics, given that the "crowding" or competition between non-Hispanics for the limited number of language positions drives down pay scale, and here we can point to the use of graduate students and part-timers as related aggravating factors. This would also add diversity of ideas and perspectives to the discipline.

Another issue is the co-mingling of departmental diversity data within colleges. Under-representation would be better determined on a departmental basis. Allowing administrators to report only aggregate college figures may well bias Spanish Department hiring patterns, and so produce the oft-cited "small worlds" or "barrioization" of and in Spanish Departments (Clark, 1987; Garza, 1988). Said reporting may also influence student recruitment and retention, and later give rise to pipeline deficiencies (Bernhardt, 1995; James, 1989). Appropriate steps need be taken to train, recruit, and retain both Hispanic and non-Hispanic candidates from under-represented ethclasses. (Note 6)

Finally, exchange programs, at both the student and faculty level, should be expanded. Present policy encourages "brain drain" from developing nations at a time

when they most need their best and brightest (Altbach, 1996, p. 302), and simultaneously disregards the crisis in the US job market (Curren, 1994; Modern Language Association Committee on Professional Employment, 1997).

We conclude by observing that the assumption that equates Hispanic hires with increased social diversity and mobility can be illusory in some situations. It may be advisable to reassess the ultimate fairness of hiring policies that, while empowering under-represented ethnic groups, do so within a context of socio- economic or class bias. Therefore, in order to fully appraise academic employment practices in the US, we feel it is necessary to consider not only ethnicity and gender, but also national origin and, importantly, how all these intersect with social class.

Notes

1. The questionnaire is based upon the survey instrument used by the National Research Council in assessing earned doctorates in the US in 1995. It was modified to ascertain Spanish Department-specific information.
2. Only two Hispanics indicated they were non-native speakers. All other Hispanics declared themselves native speakers.
3. In Gouldner's (1957) sense of the term, a cosmopolitan is one with high professional skills (native speakership), low loyalty to his or her employing institution, and high allegiance to a reference group of similar (socio-ethnically as well as intellectually) academics located outside the individual's institution.
4. The teaching-load disparity persists into the arena of entry level jobs. 54% of Hispanic males and 45% of Hispanic females report teaching-loads of 5 classes per year or less, while only 16% of non-Hispanic males and 26% of non-Hispanic females teach 5 or fewer classes per year (sig. <.07). Overall, 31% of the survey cohort teach 5 or fewer classes per year.
5. Overall, the US faculty in higher education is 2.5% Hispanic, 87% white not-Hispanic, 13% foreign-born, and 68% male (Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster, 1998: 28).
6. Milton M. Gordon defines "ethclass" as the "social space created by the intersection of the ethnic group with the social class" (51).
7. All data regarding the 1996 population is from the National Opinion Research Center (1997).
8. Job placement figures are taken from the MLA's survey of PhD placement (Huber 1996), the most recent year for which figures are available. Data are only collected every two years, and the 1996 data are no yet available. The survey does not break out tenure by ethnicity, nor does it address pay or the language/literature distinction.

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