

HISPANICS IN LIBRARIANSHIP

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At the beginning of the Fall 1986 semester, the Academic Librarianship class at the University of Arizona was given an assignment by their professor, Dr. Donald Dickinson, which entailed looking up the most recent ARL (Association of Research Libraries) statistics and academic library annual reports, and reporting to class any trends or problems that could be detected from these sources. One problem that was mentioned more than once in class was the inability of academic libraries to meet affirmative action goals and timetables in hiring minority librarians. The purpose of this paper is to explore and discuss some of the reasons why today there exists a shortage of minority librarians, in particular, Hispanic librarians, and to discuss some of the implications that this fact has for the future of both librarianship and for the Hispanic population in this country.

In order to clarify the terminology I will be using, some definitions are in order. Minorities, in this discussion, includes Blacks, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, Asian Americans, and others who are not white and do not fall into any of the aforementioned categories. Hispanics, sometimes referred to as people of Spanish origin, include Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans, and immigrants from other parts of Latin America. The focus of this paper, as was previously mentioned, will be on Hispanics, but sometimes, especially when citing statistical data, the term minorities will be used. Whenever possible, I will attempt to clearly identify which group I am discussing, since the terms do not mean the same thing.

The structure of this paper will be as follows: First, I will examine the most current demographic data available on the U.S. Hispanic population, in order to provide the reader with some

background information and to point out various trends and problems. From there I will look at Hispanic access to higher education, past and present recruitment efforts of Hispanics into library schools, affirmative action in libraries and its effects on Hispanics, Hispanic librarians in the library profession, and finally, current trends and future prospects for Hispanics in librarianship.

Demographic data on Hispanics has been available only since 1970. (Prior to 1970, the Census Dept. categorized people as either white or non-white). Most of the statistics on Hispanics cited in the library literature date from this period, so in addition to the reasons already mentioned, this data is given in order to provide the reader with an update on the characteristics of this population. Today there are an estimated 17 million Hispanics in the United States, 6.4 percent of the entire population. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1986:32). Between 1950 and 1980, a 270 percent increase took place in the growth of this group, compared with a 50 percent increase in the total U.S. population for the same length of time. (Burgoyne 1985:65). Statistics for the fertility rate of Hispanic women indicate that on the average each woman has 2.9 children per lifetime, the same rate for white women during the baby boom, compared with 1.8 per lifetime for the entire U.S. population. (Education Week 5-14-86:16). In addition, the average age for Hispanics is currently 23 years, while for white Americans it is 31 years. (Education Week 5-14-86:16). These two facts, higher than average birth rates and a large proportion (40percent) of Hispanics in their child-bearing years, along with

increasing numbers of Hispanic immigrants, indicate that the Hispanic population is continuing to grow at an unprecedented rate. Some writers (Grover 1983:163) have suggested that if this trend continues, by 1988 the Hispanic population will surpass the Black population to become the largest minority in the U.S. Other estimates (Burgoyne 1985:65) have been more conservative. Burgoyne claims that this change will take place by the year 2020, when, if the current population boom continues, there will be 47 million Hispanics in the U.S., constituting 15 percent of the entire population.

Although the U.S. Hispanic population is increasing, all is not well for the second largest minority in the country. Last year, for example, 5.2 million Hispanics lived in poverty, (about one third), as its median income, which the U.S. Dept of Commerce(1986) says is \$18,833 per year, almost \$8,000 less than the national average, fell \$478. (Az. Daily Wildcat 9-3-86:10). In addition, unemployment for Hispanics in 1985 was 11.3 percent, while for the entire U.S. population it was only 7.6 percent. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1986:32). Of those Hispanics employed in the work force, almost half are blue collar workers. (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:7).

In terms of education, while white enrollment in public schools fell by 19 percent between 1968 and 1984, Hispanic enrollment increased by 80 percent. (Tucson Citizen 9-10-86:6A). However, as many as 40 percent of these students drop out of school before completing their sophomore year of high school. (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:7). According to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce

(1986:32), only 27.3 percent of Hispanics over the age of 25 have even graduated from high school, compared with 39.1 percent of the total U.S. population. Those who do stay in school and graduate are generally less qualified than non-minority graduates. For example, Hispanic SAT test-takers, in 1983-84, were almost 14 percent less likely than white test-takers to have been enrolled in college preparatory programs during high school. (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:7). The reasons behind these disparities vary, but one thing is ~~for~~ certain, things are not getting any better. In fact, with the Reagan administration's assaults on bilingual education, scholarship programs for the disadvantaged, and affirmative action, (Lamb 1985), the situation for Hispanics in higher education is getting worse.

Turning to higher education, between 1975 and 1980, the college enrollment rate of Hispanics fell from 20 percent to 16 percent. (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:9). This decline seems to be continuing through the eighties. Hispanics currently constitute roughly 4 percent of all those enrolled in institutions of higher education in this country, and most are enrolled in two year colleges as opposed to four year colleges. (Grant and Snyder 1984:100). Only 8.5 percent of the Hispanic population has completed four or more years of college, compared with 19.4 percent of the entire U.S. population. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1986:32). These low figures can be traced to various factors. One source argues that while minority students' aspirations are as great or even greater than Anglo students' aspirations, minority students have generally been less likely to have received the essential coun-

seling and teacher guidance needed to realize their ambitions. (Solize 1981:4). Others have argued that increasingly complex financial aid procedures and stricter eligibility requirements have reduced Hispanic access to financial aid, (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:4), a very crucial point to consider, since many Hispanics in higher education are dependent on such aid. Furthermore critics of the Reagan administration argue that despite Supreme Court decisions and federal statutes that have laid the basic legal foundation for equal educational opportunity for minorities, the present administration has been characterized by underenforcement-a lack of commitment and an unwillingness to exercise leadership in civil rights implementation. (Lamb 1985:83).

In terms of graduate education, the situation for Hispanics is even graver still. Hispanic enrollment in graduate and professional programs is but a drop in the bucket, with only 2.2 percent and 2.3 percent representation in these programs. (U.S. House of Representatives 1985:3). Since there are so few enrolled in graduate school, it is no wonder that there is a shortage of Hispanic librarians.

Turning to education for librarianship, those in the profession have been aware of the lack of minorities in the field since the 1960's, when federal funding to libraries and library schools became contingent upon minority representation and service to cultural minorities. (Grover 1983:163). In 1966, the American Library Association formed an ad hoc committee on Opportunities for Negro students in the library profession in order to attract more minorities into library school.(Totten 1975:18). Since then, with the aid of funding from Title II-B of the Higher Education

Act, several library schools developed in-depth minority recruitment programs, some of which have focused solely on recruitment and training of Hispanics.

Two of the most successful programs took place in the 1970's. The first, known as the Graduate Institute for Mexican Americans (GIMA), at California State University at Fullerton, graduated 50 Hispanic librarians between 1972 and 1975, and the second, the Graduate Library Institute for Spanish-speaking Americans, (GLISA), graduated 54 librarians between 1976 and 1980. (Guerena 1984:126). Both programs relied heavily on HEA Title II-B funding and local institutional support.(Guerena 1984:126). These programs were unique in many respects. According to Guerena, (1984:126), both involved a successful formula, including adequate financial aid, flexible admissions policies, specialized curricula, and a cultural ambience conducive to attracting bilingual-bicultural graduate students. The combined efforts of both programs more than doubled the ranks of practicing Hispanic librarians.(Guerena 1984:128).

But alas, the 1970's are long gone and so is most of the federal funding for such programs. Library schools have not since been able to attract Hispanics in the numbers that they would like. In fact, since 1979 the number of minority library school graduates has decreased 40 percent. (Wilson Library Bulletin 3-86:144). The following table shows the number of Hispanic graduates from 1979 to 1984. (Reforma Newsletter 1986).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1979	66	1.72
1980	53	1.41
1981	62	1.63
1982	37	.09
1983	38	1.00
1984	51	1.38

There has been much speculation as to why Hispanics are not interested or attracted to librarianship. One source (Grover 1983:165), argues that a significant hindrance in attracting Spanish speaking Americans into the library profession has been the amount of competition with other professions for minority graduate students, while another (Harvey and Dickinson 1985:7), argues that graduate school recruiters and library employers may not be doing an adequate job of marketing librarianship to minorities. Librarianship, a woman's profession, this source says, may not project an image or offer pay, job security and opportunity attractive enough to compete with traditionally male occupations for college educated minorities. Yet others have argued that Hispanics and other minorities have not been attracted to librarianship in recent years because of a lack of financial aid. (NCLIS 1983:16). At least six persons testifying at the Cultural Minorities Task Force Hearing in 1983 articulated the paramount role that federal financial assistance has played in improving minority participation in librarianship. (NCLIS 1983:16). Still others argue that financial aid is not the most important factor to consider and that those attracted to librarianship usually come from higher social class groups. (Grover 1983:165). A study by Morrison (1969), on the social backgrounds of academic librarians found that 75 percent of all those surveyed came from either professional or white collar families. Another study (Grover 1983:165), found that public librarians tended to come from families in which the educational achievement of the parents was much higher than the population average.

No matter what the reason, there exists a shortage of Hispanic students in library schools, and efforts are still being



made to attract them into the profession. An article in the ALA Yearbook (1985:214), on recruitment for the profession states that greater emphasis was placed in 1984 on the recruitment of minorities. Some libraries developed community awareness programs geared toward the recruitment of minority professionals and paraprofessionals. Others enlisted the aid of individual minority colleagues and minority associations for recommendation of potential candidates.

In 1984 there was still some scholarship money available through HEA Title II-B but with 41 universities competing for these funds, and only 76 fellowships in graduate library education available, money from the federal government is very scarce. (ALA 1985:171). Efforts at increasing funding for graduate and professional education at the federal level have met with very little success. A bill introduced in 1984 by Chairman Paul Simon of the Subcommittee on Post-secondary education that would have increased such funding never passed the 97th Congress. (House of Representatives 1985:1).

It appears that once again the Reagan administration and Congress do not really care about minority access to higher education. Noting this at the ALA Midwinter Conference, Lorene Brown (Wilson Library Bulletin 3-86:18) suggested that in order to improve minority access to librarianship, four things needed to be done: 1) the private sector needs to be tapped for funds; 2) all of HEA Title II-B funds should be channeled in this direction; 3) a national recruitment program should be launched; and 4) ALA should acknowledge the decline of minorities in the profession as a crisis to be dealt with. Another source argues that if more Hispanic heritage persons

are to be attracted to the profession, the recruitment should be done in high schools and colleges, preferably by assisting students to find part-time jobs at the sub-professional level to familiarize them with library work.(Trejo and Lodwick 1978:264).

Today there are an estimated 500 Hispanic librarians in the United States, 39 percent of which work in academic libraries, and 41 percent of which work in public libraries. That amounts to one Hispanic librarian for every 34,000 Hispanics, a staggering ratio.(Trejo 1986:iv).

Some critics argue that the reason that there are so very few Hispanic librarians is that historically all minorities in this country have been discriminated against across the board, in housing, employment and education.(Carter 1970:2). It has even been suggested that the library profession has been discriminatory in its practices.(Guerena 1984 127). Critics of the library profession argue that racism and discrimination is institutional, and that special efforts by the government need to be taken to alleviate the inequities not only in the library profession, but in society in general. According to Schwartz (1984:58), since 1964 this country has developed a refined a body of consitutional, statutory, and regulatory approaches designed to exorcise the existence and effects of discrimination and racism so entrenched in our society. Until 1981, all of our presidents, to a greater of lesser extent have contributed to this effort, even when, like Nixon, they were less than enthusiastic.(Schwartz 1984:58).

Advocates of affirmative action, the concept that discrimination can be eliminated when positive steps are taken to identify and change policies, practices and any other institutional barriers that cause or perpetuate job inequality (Harvey and

Dickinson 1985:5), contend that not enough is currently being done at the federal level to help alleviate this dire situation. In fact, one critic of the Reagan administration (Yarbrough 1985:vii) says that the Reagan administration has opposed affirmative action, contended that purposeful discrimination is largely a problem of the past, and argued that current social and economic disparities are a consequence less of continued discrimination than other factors.

Although the present administration is opposed to affirmative action, it is still the law of the land. According to Harvey and Dickinson (1985:6), the affirmative activist seeks to staff each library with men and women, whites, minorities and handicapped persons in numbers not less than their corresponding representation in local society, and to have these groups represented in the same ratios in library leadership. A recent article in Library Journal (1-85:14) reported that libraries are keeping affirmative action among their priorities despite the conservative mood of the nation. However, this same article indicated that recruitment of minority professionals is still a major problem. Affirmative action is not enough. In order for there to exist an adequate pool of available Hispanic and other minority librarians more need to be recruited into the profession.

While I began my research for this paper with the intention of exploring why there are not enough Hispanic academic librarians in the U.S., I quickly discovered that the problem of Hispanic representation in librarianship extends beyond just academic libraries. Hispanics are underrepresented in all forms of librarianship. The implications that this fact has for the future of His-

panics in this country are enormous. As was stated earlier, the growth rate of this population is incredibly high. As time passes, more and more Hispanics will be needing the services that libraries provide. According to Trejo and Lodwick (1977:259), library schools do not adequately prepare their graduates to serve Hispanic heritage people, whose needs and preferences are frequently quite different from those of the larger society. Clearly, more Hispanic librarians are desperately needed. The only way to improve the social conditions of Hispanics is to understand their needs, both educational and cultural, and to provide positive role models that believe strongly in education and learning. Hispanic librarians are needed to help other Hispanics realize their dreams. If more are not recruited into the profession, this group will continue to suffer from high drop out rates, low incomes, and high illiteracy rates.

In conclusion, much needs to be done in order to attract more Hispanic librarians into librarianship. The suggestions offered earlier by Brown and Trejo are ones that should be pursued. In addition, programs such as GIMA and GLISA need to be re-implemented. The federal government, although it is currently ~~in~~interested in VW Hispanics and other minorities, also needs to be pressured for more funds for such programs. Finally, library schools, Hispanic and other professional library organizations need to beef up their efforts at making librarianship look like and be a worthwhile profession, in addition to increasing their efforts at recruitment of minorities into the profession.

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