HUMANIZING ANTHROPOS, RESISTING HUMANITAS: CONCEPTUALIZING THE ACADEMIC LABOR OF LATINX FACULTY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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There is a well-established literature base detailing the labor experiences of Latinx faculty in theological institutions (Alicea-Lugo, 1998; Turner, Hernández, Peña, Gonzalez, 2008; Hernandez, Pena, Turner, & Salazar, 2017; Maldonado, 2009). This literature base has drawn attention to how Latinx faculty, while finding enjoyment in teaching and mentoring students, are stretched beyond the boundaries of their professional charge to perform other responsibilities, such as serving on diversity committees, connecting students with opportunities, and serving the Latinx community (Hernández, Peña, Turner, & Salazar, 2017). Moreover, as many scholars have outlined (Alicea-Lugo, 1998; Isasi-Díaz, 2004), Latinxs have challenged dominant discourses in theological disciplines for a long time. These theological challenges are often rooted in the lived experiences of Latinxs and directly subvert claims to theological objectivity.

While scholars have spilt considerable ink in describing the experiences and perspectives of Latinx faculty in theological institutions, there has been little effort to conceptualize these challenges (to theological institutions and to theological disciplines) theoretically. Conceptualizing Latinx challenges to theological institutions and disciplines is important if we are to (1) make sense of the challenges facing Latinxs who choose theological education as a career, (2) understand the ways in which Latinx theological faculty are surviving and thriving in the midst of predominantly White institutions (PWIs), and (3) gain a picture of how the disparate labor of faculty (teaching, research, and service) compound especially for Latinxs, creating a taxing work environment. Moreover, conceptualizing Latinx theological labor will help us garner a larger picture of how institutions can support Latinxs and other faculty of color.

If we are to fully conceptualize the academic labor of Latinx faculty in theological institutions, we must employ a framework that recognizes the inherent coloniality of U.S. higher education. As such, I draw on Nishinti Osamu's (2006) conceptualization of *Anthropos* and *Humanitas* as a way to understand how White European humans (*Humanitas*) created a colonial world order by which their bodies and perspectives become superior, while the bodies and perspectives of all others (*Anthropos*) are discarded and/or transformed to accommodate the *Humanitas*. This framing of the paper will help us make sense of the ways in which Latinx theological faculty have fought to legitimize their own labor to their institutions and disciplines while creating a space for their own survival and thriving.

To begin, I will first outline Osamu's (2006) concepts with special attention to how their work applies to the history of higher education and studies on faculty of color. Next, I will explore the literature on the experiences of Latinx faculty in theological education. I will then highlight a few key contributions that Latinxs have made to theological discourse, specifically the ways in which they critique not only Eurocentric theologies, but also the assumptions of

previous Latinx theological work. In my account of this literature, I draw attention to how Latinx theological faculty have pushed back against the often-dehumanizing assumptions of higher education, thereby humanizing their *Anthropos* selves while resisting the tug toward *Humanitas*. I will close by celebrating the labor of Latinx theological faculty while acknowledging the challenges that lie ahead for Latinxs seeking a career in theological education.

A Humanitas-Anthropos Framework

The Renaissance era, which recovered classical Greek and Roman thought, provided a path toward rationality and a Man-centered worldview, contra dominant Christian thought at the time. The knowledge produced by White European men, called *humanitas*, is named as such "because this study was the pursuit of human knowledge by humans; no longer relying on God or religion (Christianity)" (p. 264). The White, European, male human being, free to create his own knowledge rejected dominant Christian thought and ventured toward exploring himself and the world around him while his life and worldview remaining unexplored by others. The *humanitas* saw himself in contrast to the *anthropos*, the "other." Modernity, which originated with the "discovery" of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, cemented the centrality and superiority of the White Man. Maldonado-Torres (2011) makes evident what Osamu implies. For Maldonado-Torres (2011), the God of the Renaissance was one created in the image of Man—patriarchal, heterosexual, and White. All who refused to conform to the standards of White Christianity were considered inferior.

Within this context of colonial thought came the founding of colleges and universities on Indigenous lands using the unpaid and abused labor of enslaved African people—all under the banner of spreading Christianity. Wilder (2014) writes that the earliest higher education institutions in the United States "were instruments of Christian expressionism, weapons for the conquest of indigenous peoples, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery" (p. 17). The original mission of Harvard College was for "For Christ and His Church," for instance. These institutions served as places to strategize about how to convert indigenous peoples to the Christian faith (Wilder, 2014). The English, Spanish, and Portuguese used Christian rhetoric and practices to justify the subjugation of indigenous people and Africans.

Built on these colonial foundations, higher education in the United States began for the purpose of training clergy for ministry and inculcating within students distinctly English values (Geiger, 2011; Gonzalez, 2015; Rudolph, 1990). Institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary were established as centers to promote Christian and English values. The curricula of these institutions mirrored the curricula of the middle ages, offering courses in philosophy, classical languages and literature, and a "smattering of general worldly knowledge" (Geiger, 2011, p. 39). The first two years were generally devoted to study classical languages and mastering Latin, while the last two years focused on philosophy, theology, and other subjects (Geiger, 2011). Thus, higher education in the U.S., since its inception, has centered knowledges and disciplines of benefit to White men, the *humanitas*. The knowledge and experiences of non-White groups (*anthropos*) was pushed to the margins. It is only in the past century have we seen an increased effort to include the knowledges of marginalized groups in higher education.

This framework is important to employ when making sense of the experiences of faculty of color in higher education. Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood's (2008) global review of the faculty literature indicated that while there has been some progress in developing more equitable conditions for racially minoritized faculty, much more work needed to be done at the institutional level (e.g., hiring practices, leadership development, increasing pay for extra labor, etc.). Racially minoritized faculty often need to be "twice as good" as White faculty in order to gain tenure, garner respect of students and colleagues, and obtain promotions (Matthew, 2016; Turner, Walker-Dalhousie, & McMillon, 2005). Racially minoritized faculty often experience unfair expectations related to institutional service (Antonio, Astin, & Cress, 2000; Baez, 2000; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). Tierney and Bensimon (1996) would later refer to this as the problem of "cultural taxation" as they suggested that minoritized faculty bear the burden of advocating on behalf of their racial or ethnic group or community (p. 11). Moreover, faculty of color were driven to publish and challenge the dominant intellectual norms of their respective disciplines (Turner et al., 2008). In this body of literature, we see that faculty of color are subject to labor conditions that White faculty are not. Perez (2010), in the context of U.S. Ethnic Studies, writes that "the road to ethnic studies scholarship is lined with the roadside graves of drop-outs, even at the professorial level, with suicides and early deaths, with psychological and physical ailments related to frustration, stress, and bouts of defeatism," a road that is infinitely more taxing on women of color faculty specifically (p. 130). Faculty of color (the anthropos) thus often carry a burden which White faculty (the humanitas) do not. It is within this theoretical yet all-too-real context that I situate my interpretation and chronicling of Latinx faculty who teach in theological institutions.

Latinx Faculty in Theological Institutions

As mentioned previously, a robust and growing literature highlights the inequitable labor conditions of faculty of color in higher education (Delgado-Romero, Flores, Gloria, Arredondo, & Castellanos, 2003; Gutierrez, Castaneda, & Katsinas, 2002; Jones & Castellano, 2003). Within the body of literature on Latinx faculty, there exists a sub-field of literature devoted to understanding the experiences of Latinx faculty working in theological institutions. As we will see, this literature highlights that while Latinx theological faculty are exploited for the unique labor they provide, they often create modes for survival and thriving.

Initially, the diversity of Latinx faculty in theological education spurred several large-scale reports detailing their experiences in North American theological education. The first of these major reports on Latinx faculty in theological education is a 1988 report entitled *The Theological Education of Hispanics*. The survey study highlighted the severe lack of Latinx representation in theological education among students, faculty, and staff. The report also states that there was a growing group of Latinxs qualified to serve as faculty, and it was in the best interest of every Christian denomination to recruit and hire them in order to attract more Latinxs to the Christian faith. Additionally, the report highlighted how Latinxs have experienced theological education as a struggle to preserve Latinx identity, negotiate Latinx-centered theological dimensions, and resist the racism and patriarchalism present in theological education.

The next social scientific study is recounted in *Reconstructing the Sacred Tower* (2003). The report described how Latinx faculty are pushed beyond the boundaries of their professional

charge to support Latinx students, represent the Latinx and/or "person of color" perspective on diversity committees, and focus on issues pertinent to racially minoritized communities. Hernández et al. (2002) also discovered that Latinx faculty are able to help Latinx students in ways that non-Latinx faculty cannot. As they write, Latinx faculty "have a significant impact on Latino/a students' ability to affirm their cultural identity, believe in their own potential, and negotiate with other faculty and administration" (Hernández et al., 2002, p. 73).

In the third social scientific study, *Spanning the Divide: Latinos/as in Theological Education*, Hernández, Pena, Turner, and Salazar (2017) examined Latinx faculty in theological education using several data sets from 2001 to 2005. Specifically, the authors explored data sets from the University of Notre Dame's Institute on Latina/o Religion, the *Latina/o Seminary Survey*, and the *Latina/o Theological Faculty Study*. The authors highlight that while Latinx faculty derive joy and meaning from teaching and advising students, they are often stretched by serving on various committees, traveling to conferences, and maintaining involvement in the Latinx community. One participant responded:

I tell you my all-time favorite is the teaching—being with the students and exposing them to new ideas and sitting with them [at a field trip location] and watching their faces and hearing their conversations and reading their journals, you know, when they reflect upon it. I think that's the most exciting. (Hernandez et al., 2017, loc. 3271)

However, in pondering the ways in which their labor is stretched by their institution, another respondent suggested that she and her fellow Latina colleague were often asked to perform work outside of their teaching and research responsibilities:

So even if we are not the advisors, we are advisors of all the Latino students. Even if we are not counselors, we are counselors of all Latino students. We are housing advisors; we are go-betweens, because most of the administration at [our school] is white Anglo, and they have a hard time understanding the specificities and idiosyncrasies and differences of the Latino population, of Latino ministers. So we have, very often, to be the ones functioning as buffers, as advocates before the housing office, financial aid offices, before this and that, because the people in those positions, even if they are very good at it, they often don't have the skills and patience, the experience to even understand what it is about. (Hernandez et al., 2017, loc. 3321)

Furthermore, the study compares the experiences of Latinx faculty with White faculty, confirming the notion that faculty of color engage in extra labor that their White counterparts do not.

While survey studies have offered a general snapshot of the experiences of Latinx faculty in theological institutions, several Latinx scholars have reflected on their own experiences serving in predominantly White theological institutions. Fernando Segovia (1994), a biblical scholar, argued that Latinx theological discourse is often pushed to the margins in seminaries as one of many "contextual approaches" such as Black or feminist theology. According to Segovia (1994) Latinx theology can have its place in theological institutions, but only if it does not seek to change or interrupt dominant theological discourse (i.e. does not challenge the knowledge of

humanitas). He states that "la vida es una lucha" in the academy for Latinx faculty because they must consistently seek to validate their ideas for others and guard against attacks from dominant discourses that exclude Latinx voices. Segovia encourages other Latinx theological scholars to continue la lucha.

Maldonado (2009) advances the thought of Segovia (1994), by strongly asserting that "to simply say that the theological seminary is a welcoming institution without recognizing and making room for cultural realities is misleading and quite deceiving" (Maldonado, 2009, p. 30). For Maldonado (2009), being a student or staff member of color in a theological institution is challenging, but nothing compared to being a faculty member of color:

You will have to learn the system just to survive. You will have to overcome the system in order to succeed and to thrive. You will have to live out your commitment to Latino issues despite the system! Finding your place at the table may well mean claiming and defining your space in the institution as a Latino/a and as a scholar.... You serve a variety of constituencies and strongly identify with a community beyond the walls of the seminary. As Latinos we struggle to balance the expectations of the institution, the academy, the Latino community/church, and our own sense of identity and purpose. All four lay claim to big chunks of who we are. How we manage this balance and keep our sense of integrity will shape our lives and careers. (p. 31)

Maldonado (2009) elucidates several of the key themes present in the work of Davis and Hernández (2003) and Hernández et al. (2017). Latinx faculty are stretched in several directions by their communities and workplaces. For Maldonado, multiple solutions exist, such as hiring more Latinx faculty, contextualizing theological ideas, and partnering with Latinx-specific Bible institutes (educational organizations run by churches). However, Maldonado's solutions primarily exist outside of the formal context of theological institutions, which privilege the *humanitas*.

Realizing that empirical research into the experiences of Latinx faculty in theological institutions was lacking, Turner et al. (2008b) sought to uncover how Latinx faculty interact with the predominantly White environment of theological seminaries. Their overarching question was simply, "What are the experiences of Latina/o faculty in theological schools?" (Turner et al., 2008b, p. 322). To shape and guide their research, the authors used Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and discovered five themes. First, Latinx faculty were often the target of "marginalization, tokenization, and exclusion" based on their racial/ethnic, gender, language, and class-based identities (Turner et al., 2008, p. 326). Second, Latinx faculty often resisted Eurocentric ideologies that sought to devalue their cultural or theological perspectives. Third, Latinx faculty often engaged in social justice work, citing a strong sense of vocational commitment to make a difference in Latinx communities. Finally, Latinx faculty embraced their epistemological and social locations, legitimizing their knowledges and experiences to challenge dominant ideologies. For Turner et al., (2008), these findings were unsurprising since they confirmed much of the literature on Latinx faculty. Turner et al. (2008) suggested that Latinx faculty were driven by a sense of purpose, which enabled them to succeed in their contexts despite a lack of institutional support.

As Hernandez et al. (2017) note, Latinx theological faculty will often seek support from external organizations devoted to supporting Latinx theological faculty in their vocation and career. Davis and Hernández (2006), Hernández et al. (2002), Hernández et al. (2017), and Turner et al. (2008) praised the work of the *Asociación para La Educación Teológica Hispana* (AETH) and the *Hispanic Theological Initiative* (HTI), both organizations that seek to develop Latinx religious leaders through seminars, financial support, and mentoring programs. While these organizations have done impressive work, their very existence serves as a critique on the failure of theological education to address the unique needs of Latinxs.

To summarize, Latinx theological faculty have been pushing for legitimacy within the Eurocentric, colonial confines of theological institutions. While their labor is exploited and undervalued, their deep commitment to helping the Latinx community remains evident. These studies also align with the experiences of faculty of color in other predominantly White institutions (Delgado Bernal & Villalpondo, 2002; Zambrana, Harvey Wingfield, Lapeyrouse, Dávila, Hoagland, & Valdez, 2017), demonstrating that theological institutions, as predominantly White institutions, privilege the *humanitas* and unfairly treat the *anthropos*. The kinds of labor that Latinx faculty have had to take up (mentoring, serving on diversity committees, representing the "other" perspective) is due primarily to how non-White individuals have been pushed to the edges of educational institutions and have had to devise strategies for survival. The primary survival strategy for Latinx faculty in theological institutions is to continually prove one's legitimacy through harnessing distinct cultural tools, such as mentoring and community service, to provide an offering acceptable to the *humanitas*. Perez (2010) labels this "activism in the face of entrenched, sometimes subtle, hegemonic Eurocentrism" (p. 130).

Latinx Challenges to Dominant Theological Discourses

Although much of the research on Latinx faculty in theological institutions highlights their marginalization and isolation, other research has also shown how they push back against such marginalization through their scholarship. Several Latinx theological scholars have actively challenged the dominant theological discourses present in theological education. Herrera (1979) argued that since Latinxs have had centuries of theological reflection, they offer dominant theological discourses a richer, fuller account of Christian theology. According to her, Latinxs challenge theological educators to recognize both the Indigenous and Catholic history of North America, become sensitive to oppression and speak on behalf of the oppressed, and return to the Christian values of which Jesus spoke in the Gospel of Matthew.

Building on Herrera, Riebe-Estrella (1992) suggested that in theological education, students are taught to take an "objective" theological approach (true in all places at all times) and apply it to their distinct contexts. However, such an approach privileges the theology of the *humanitas* and de-legitimizes the work of Latinx theologians (Riebe-Estrella, 1992, p. 272). Riebe-Estrella called for a *culturally responsible* model of theological education that takes "seriously the historical and cultural location of the candidate and facilitate his or her theologizing out of that context" (p. 273). Herrera and Riebe-Estrella challenged dominant discourses that perpetuate ahistoricity, continually decontextualize theological concepts, and marginalize the theological methods of the *anthropos*.

A key aspect of Latinx theology is the notion of doing theology en conjunto, or "in conjunction." An example of this approach to theological discourse is Robert Pazmiño's (1994) book, Latin American Journey: Insights for Christian Education in North America, which introduces theological educators to liberation theology. At its core, liberation theology (which originated in South America) asserts that the goal of Christian theology should be liberation for oppressed peoples and the transformation of society. In contrast, dominant North American Christian theology has tended to emphasize personal, spiritual transformation—certainly an important aspect of Christian faith. For Pazmiño, North American theologians had not adequately explored the possibilities of liberation theology, and that a richer expression of Christian faith would be to emphasize both individual and social transformation. Pazmiño's purpose is similar to Herrera's (1979), in that he sought to challenge dominant theological discourses and to shatter dualisms that "have separated clergy and laity. . ..ecumenical and evangelical, public and private, the church and the world, the sacred and the secular" (p. 103). Pazmiño, thus, attempted to start a dialogue between Latinx and non-Latinx theological perspectives to foster "an openness to learn from others and a unity that transcends differences" (p. 104).

Building on the work of Herrera (1979), Riebe-Estrella (1992), and Pazmiño (1994), Benjamin Alicea-Lugo (1998), in his article, "Salsa y adobo: Latino/Latina contributions to theological education," made clear what the previous scholars had implied; he argued that Latinx scholars in theological education were considered illegitimate voices within their disciplines and institutions. Alicea-Lugo (1998) argued that these Latinx voices come from the margins and actively question the dominant discourses of theology, criticizing its hesitation to engage with scholars of color, its lack of attention to praxis, and failure to provide a holistic account of Christian theology. Alicea-Lugo's (1998) piece was among the first to begin substantively analyzing Latinx challenges to theological discourse, and remains a staple in Latinx theology.

While Alicea-Lugo (1998) broadly examined Latinx contributions and challenges to theological discourse, Isasi-Díaz (2004) and Martell-Otero, Maldonado-Perez, & Conde-Frazier (2013) have offered theological proposals from a Latina perspective that actively challenge dominant theological norms in both Eurocentric and Latinx theologies. Isasi-Díaz (2004) argued that feminist theology privileged White, upper-middle class women, while Womanist theology emerged from the experiences of Black women. This realization led her to construct Mujerista theology, rooted in the experiences of Latinas. Mujerista theology is a specific theological orientation that describes the structures in society that actively oppress others as inherently sinful. A theology of personal and social liberation is thus needed to create social conditions that give life to everyone. Mujerista theology runs counter to dominant theological norms, which privilege an individualistic approach to liberation (Isasi-Diaz, 2004). Building on Isasi-Díaz's (2004) work, and rooted in Latina, feminist, and evangelical theologies, Martell-Otero et al.'s (2013) work, Latina Evangelicas, explores several key themes such as the complexity of Latina Christian identity, the emergence of theological reflection from daily existence. Additionally, the authors echo Pazmiño's (1994) commitment to including a broader, liberation perspective to North American evangelical theology. The authors explore numerous aspects of evangelical theology deriving from theological reflection through the lens of the Latina experience.

Broadly, Latinx theologians have been actively challenging dominant theological discourses that have privileged the voices of upper middle-class White male theologians. This literature highlights how theological institutions have consistently pushed Latinx theological reflection to the margins as "ethnic theologies" (Segovia, 1994). Latinx faculty in theological institutions challenge dominant ideologies, center the experiential knowledge of Latinxs, and counter objective and ahistorical narratives (Solórzano, 1998). While I have only touched on a small fraction of literature in the field of Latinx theology, my point remains clear. Latinx theologians, in an agentic move, have questioned the theologizing of *humanitas*, creating space for their own unique way of thinking theologically.

Humanizing Anthropos, Resisting Humanitas

Laura Perez (2010), writing within the context of ethnic studies, writes that

U.S. ethnic studies...is therefore not merely an argument for inclusion into a canon whose disciplinary principles are derived from, and remain within, an elitist, Eurocentric, sexist, and homophobic colonial politics of domination. As part of a decolonial project, these studies contribute as well to the transformation of our understanding of what gets to count as knowledge and the appreciation of its value to humanity outside the prejudices of the Eurocentrism of cultural Darwinism that assumes that the products of Germany, France, England, Renaissance Italy, and Euro-America, particularly those of its gender-privileged ruling classes, are most worthy of study.

In sum, as we examine the experiences of Latinx faculty who teach in theological institutions, we observe a similar phenomenon to that which Perez (2010) describes. Latinx faculty are seeking justice in both their institutions and their disciplines. From their institutions, Latinx faculty have demanded more positive working conditions even while performing labor for which they are not rewarded. In addition, they have sought the legitimacy of their own theological ideas about God, the church, and the world. This two-pronged approach is only natural, as the deep-seeded coloniality of theological institutions has become normalized, and those who challenge coloniality are viewed as "radicals" or "heretics" (Maldonado-Torres, 2011; Wynter, 1984). But in reality, Latinx theologians are simply arguing that their labor is just as important as those whose knowledges and labor are prized in a colonial society.

However, as we can see from this brief exploration, Latinx theological labor has struggled not only to preserve its own labor, but also resist the expectations therein. A key point Osamu (2006) makes is that knowledge produced by the *anthropos* is legitimate only if it aligns with the aims of the *humanitas*. However, the dominant shape of Christian theology, with its conflation of God with "White Male Heterosexual and Homophobic" tendencies as Maldonado-Torres (2011, p. 203) suggests, has been summarily rejected by the bulk of Latinx theologians. In other words, Latinx theologians have refused to accommodate the status quo of theological scholarship, instead opting for theological reflection rooted in the lived experiences of Latinxs.

Where do we go from here? While Latinx faculty do indeed experience labor exploitation, they are nonetheless finding means of survival and even thriving in such institutions. As the Latinx population in the U.S. continues to grow, so does the presence of

Latinx faculty, staff, and students in theological institutions. If theological institutions are to survive, they must make more efforts to support the academic labor of Latinxs, including rewarding student mentoring, community service, and efforts to decenter dominant theological norms. Ultimately, we must do away with the ideologies of *humanitas* and *anthropos*, and their corollary practices and strivings, and instead, find our meaning and framework in the *imago dei*, which will lead us all toward liberation, peace, and justice.

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