

Latinxs and Democracy Cluster Hire Proposal

Submitted by the Latinx Research Center in Partnership with the Departments of Demography; Ethnic Studies; Environmental Science, Policy, and Management; Public Health; Spanish and Portuguese; and Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

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In response to Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost Paul Alivisatos's call for "future faculty cluster hires in areas relating to scholarship connected to marginalized, minority and underrepresented groups" (December 3, 2018), the Latinx Research Center joins the departments and programs of Demography, the Chicana/o [Latina/o] Studies Program-Ethnic Studies, ESPM, Public Health, Spanish and Portuguese, and Sociology to propose an interdisciplinary cluster hire on Latinx Studies and Democracy. Through the Latinx Research Center, this cluster will foster interdisciplinary research that more holistically interrogates how Latinx demographic diversity, civic participation, migration and labor, and identity have a reciprocal impact on US democratic structures and processes.

1. The Intellectual Proposal of Latinx and Democracy

The Latinx population drives demographic growth in the United States. They are the country's second largest "racial"/ethnic group, and their economic, cultural and social imprint is evidenced in both historic gateway cities, such as Los Angeles and New York, as well as in newer geographic areas like the U.S. rustbelt and the South. Latinxs tend to be younger and have larger families than other racial groups, and although they are often stereotyped as "foreigners," Latinx in what is today the United States predate 1776, and Mexican-American communities in the Southwest predate statehood. Yet, perhaps what is most distinctive about Latinxs is their great diversity. Although categories like "Hispanic" and "Latinx/o" convey the sense that this is one homogenous community, Latinxs come from many nations, have different skin tones, religious identities, and speak different languages. This diversity amidst commonality makes the Latinx community an exciting site from which to research significant questions about the past, present, and future of the United States and the larger question of diversity.

The proposed cluster will focus on the impact of U.S. Latinxs on democracy as a project-in-progress. Specifically, we envision an interdisciplinary Latinxs and Democracy cluster that brings together research in the sciences and humanities to address three main themes central to the understanding of U.S. democracy: 1) the relationship between structural inequality and assimilation, 2) the tensions that undergird multiculturalism, and 3) civic participation. We elaborate on these themes below.

First, in terms of structural inequities and assimilation, the study of Latinx communities provides an important lens from which to understand how social mobility is forged in the United States. Given that Latinx migration flows have brought with them different forms of human capital, and that Latinxs have settled in different regions throughout the country, the study of this community would yield insight into why and how some groups succeed and others get left behind. Demographic and Sociological studies might thus examine Latinx mobility patterns across U.S. regions to provide insight on how context of reception and local political economies shape assimilation. Public Health and Environmental research might also research how exposure to environmental toxins, like pesticides and smog, affect Latinx labor and community health outcomes. Indeed, U.S. democracy has historically depended on the ability of immigrants to serve as both reservoirs of exploitable labor *and* examples that assimilation is possible. The U.S. Latinx community is reflective of both of these processes, and the study of the population's heterogeneity reveals how factors like nation, skin color, race, documentation status, and class influence immigrant social mobility and, by extension, shape inequality in the United States.

Second, an intellectual focus on Latinxs provides an opportunity to understand the tensions inherent in multiculturalism. Latinxs embody the national motto— *e pluribus unum* — and, as such, provide an opportunity for scholars to examine how culture and narratives matter for developing a sense of community and cultivating a broader sense of group belonging within the polity. Here we see the opportunity to bring humanists in conversation with social scientists. Humanists, for example, could examine how Latinx public art, performance, religion, and literature have long been central to Latinx visions of community and more democratic futures. They could also research how Latinxs' understanding of Indigenous and African cultural norms are passed on across generations through rituals and community tradition. Social scientists, on the other hand, might examine the effects of arts and religious participation on Latinx social mobility and adaptation outcomes. Moreover, both sets of research could examine just how select parts of Latinx culture have shifted from being a “minority” form of cultural discourse in the 1980's and 90's to a more mainstream form of U.S. expression today. Indeed, Latinxs are currently celebrated for reshaping film, theater, and literature even when their products often challenge the way that we think about Latin America and the role of the U.S. in the world. A cluster hire that includes research on Latinx cultural expression, will provide an important window into how group identities are constructed, and how they are changing, and by extension, how multicultural democracy is sustained.

Finally, a focus on Latinx studies can yield important insight into civic participation in the United States. Latinxs immigrants arrive in the U.S. with different political norms and knowledge, different ideas about community, and different expectations about representational democracy. Survey research shows that first generation Latinxs express greater hope and trust in government than do second-generation Latinxs, a population that also tends to express high levels of legal and political cynicism. Given these trends, and the fact that Latinxs are quickly

becoming a significant part of the American electorate, we see an opportunity for researchers to position Latinxs as a case for answering important questions about “race” and politics. For instance, social scientists could examine Latinx immigrant mobilization to understand how marginalized groups become politicized, while humanities scholars could look at how racialization and discrimination affect political outlooks within and across Latino communities. Moreover, public health researchers could examine the effect that anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric have on Latinx immigrant health outcomes, and environmental scholars could research the development of environmental justice campaigns in Latinx areas. Indeed, Latinx farmworker protests against pesticide use have led to major changes in agricultural policies in states across the nation. In all, this cluster hire in Latinxs and Democracy will illuminate how access to, participation in, and contributions to our understanding of democracy and democratic processes are impacted by the diverse Latinx communities of the United States.

2. The Scope of the Cluster

While other cluster proposals may focus on specific themes such as poverty, immigration, or incarceration and may include research relevant to Latinx populations in their descriptions, our proposal, Latinxs and Democracy, **centralizes the study of the Latinx community** as an especially relevant intersection that generates a more expansive set of research questions that cut across the Latinx experience **through a common thread: the lens of Latinxs’ relationship to democracy**. There are potential synergies between all of the participating departments providing the extremely promising opportunity to understand Latinxs, Democracy, Health, the Environment, and cultural and artistic practices *in a holistic fashion*. There is research synergy on campus already here to form larger research communities. In the past two years, for example, individual members of Health and Environment, along with Latinx community stakeholders, have held symposiums and forums focusing on Latinxs and, the Latinx Research Center and the Townsend Center co-sponsored a working group on performance and visual arts and politics in the Latinx/Americas, and the LRC initiated a program of art exhibitions by Latinx artists that this year, focused on the democratically-motivated work of artist Melanie Cervantes, of the Oakland-based collective, Dignidad Rebelde.

The necessity of hiring more Latinx Studies faculty is further underscored by unreplenished losses in the historic site of Latinx Studies on campus, the Chicana [Latinx] Studies Program, in the Department of Ethnic Studies. In the last three years, four Latinx Studies scholars have been lost, two full professors (U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History-Sociology; Central American Anthropology); one senior associate professor (19th-20th century California and Mexican American History); and one assistant professor specializing in Latinx migration and voting patterns (Political Science) who taught in ES and CSP. Today, **only three** professors remain in the CSP, in a department whose two top majors, comparative Ethnic Studies and Chicana/o Latina/o Studies are composed in the majority by Latinx students. By comparison, **UCLA has 17** core tenure-track faculty in its new Chicano/Latinx Studies department.

Similar to the Native American Studies cluster hire, the Latinxs and Democracy cluster would recruit those working in a range of quantitative, archival, qualitative, and interpretive methods. The social science hires could include use of “big data” to understand how Latinxs use and engage social media to gain political knowledge, and how organizations can use technology in tailored interventions to improve Latinx health outcomes. Others might use more large-scale survey data to project demographic trends across Latinx subgroups and regions and shed light on Latinx social mobility and civic participation patterns. Still others might be social scientists placed within Public Health or ESPM departments to unpack the Hispanic Health Paradox. In fact, the School of Public Health’s reputation as a leader in social epidemiology, for example, lends itself well to the proposal of how public health and democracy are interdependent. Humanities scholars could also focus on sub-topics such as Latinx religion and philosophy and their relationship to democracy, given more democratic notions of being, community, and non-human-centric ideas of interdependent relationship to the rest of the natural world that Indigenous and Afro-diasporic traditional worldviews center. To expand Latinx research into the future means readiness to understand more deeply and expansively what constitutes citizenship, belonging, inclusion, American culture, and democracy itself, through the promising lens of cultural and other forms of diversity.

3. The Latinx Research Center and Participating Departments

A consortium of departments, Demography, ESPM, the Chicana/o [Latina/o] Studies Program-Department of Ethnic Studies, Public Health Sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese, led and organized by the Latinx Research Center, identified Democracy as a pressing area of scholarship and the teaching/training of students that encompasses interdisciplinary combinations of Latinx studies, including:

- population growth, change, and inequality (Demography, Sociology, Public Health, ESPM)
- racialization and the environment (ESPM, Ethnic Studies);
- Latinx religion and philosophy, with specialization in the non-Western Indigenous and/or African-diasporic (Ethnic Studies, Spanish & Portuguese);
- Latinx culture and mass/social media studies (Sociology, Ethnic Studies, Spanish and Portuguese);
- migration, citizenship, and public health (Public Health, ESPM, Ethnic Studies, Spanish and Portuguese).

The Latinx Research Center would support the cluster with physical space and resources at its location, Shorb House, working group affiliations, public presentations, workshops, clerical support, publications and digital media support, in addition to administration of grants funds. We expect that cluster members will have a 0% appointment in the LRC. The LRC would serve to bring together faculty with graduate and undergraduate students and thus provide the kind of

intellectual climate that enhances their recruitment and retention, supporting the timely promotion of Latinx Studies faculty and the completion of distinctive theses for students.

4. Outline of How Searches for the Cluster Will be Conducted and Coordinated

We are proposing that each department take lead on each of the proposed FTE in different and/or overlapping areas of research. Where overlapping scholarship allows for joint searches and appointments, those departments will work together. Each department varies in terms of existing Latinx Studies faculty, in terms of rank of tenure-track faculty, and even in terms of how clear particular disciplinary or sub-disciplinary foci should be (e.g., emphasis on feminist and/or queer approach, or emphases on anthropological approaches, or on methodological expertise of a particular type).

5 & 6. How the Latinx and Democracy Cluster Hire Will Promote Campus Goals and Strategic Initiatives of Diversification of the Faculty, Inclusion, and Support

The Latinx and Democracy cluster hires would contribute to the Chancellor's Strategic Initiatives on diversity and democracy, to UC Berkeley's ten-year Hispanic Serving Institute goal, and to creating the climate that would successfully attract, retain, and graduate Latinxs and other urm students. Indeed, much research has documented the positive relationship between Latinx faculty presence and Latinx graduate recruitment and undergraduate retention. Key to transforming the intellectual climate itself in culturally more democratic ways, bringing Latinx Studies expertise to traditional disciplines will support the diversification of the fields themselves and not simply function as an additive approach to the existing canons that leaves unquestioned problematic and erroneous underlying assumptions.

Moreover, while UC Berkeley faculty includes internationally recognized scholars in Latinx Studies, many are approaching retirement. With a pipeline crisis of too few Latinx faculty (5.6%), graduate students (7.7%) and undergraduates (14.7%), the hiring of more Latinx faculty and/or Latinx Studies faculty is crucial, as research has shown that equitable and visible presence of Latinx faculty and healthy Latinx Studies programs contribute to a more respectful, equitable climate for undergraduates. Latinx faculty have also been shown to maximize research and community service opportunities that in turn inspire undergraduate Latinx students to apply, to be supported and retained, to graduate, and to continue into all of the professions, including the professorate (UCOP Chicax Latinx Leadership Summit November 2018, San Diego; Hispanic Serving Institute Symposium, Latinx Research Center, UC Berkeley, January 2019).

7. How the Latinx and Democracy Cluster Hire Will Enhance Education at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

Undergraduate: **The overwhelming majority of Latinx students on campus are clustered in the Social Sciences and Humanities**, and this cluster effort would help meet their educational demands by offering a broader array of classes whose focus would have an interdisciplinary and

synergistic bent. Very current research has shown that Latinx undergraduates go to campuses where there are more Latinx and other students of color, Latinx faculty, and other Latinx forms of student support (UCOP Leadership Summit 2018). More Latinx Studies faculty would mean more classes that cover Latinx issues – such as Latinxs and Public Health, Latinxs and the Environment, Latinx Migration, and Latinx Philosophy. These courses could provide students with opportunities to conduct research, engage in community service projects, and learn more about the US Latinx experience.

Graduate: There is a pipeline crisis in the United States, in California, and at UC Berkeley in particular, among the other UC campuses. At UC Berkeley, the ratio of 14.7:7.7:5.6 of undergraduate to graduate to faculty is untenable. *We must hire more faculty, but we must also produce more faculty.* In our experience, many graduate students in numerous fields interrupt graduate programs or initiate new studies as they find that their chosen traditional majors do not sufficiently center issues of racialization. Latinx Studies graduate prospects--whatever their personal ethnic ancestry--seek out top scholars. UC Berkeley assembles these, but in too few numbers. By hiring Latinx Studies Faculty we can support Latinx Studies graduate students and others across campus that seek to learn more about the Latinx experience to prepare themselves for an increasingly diverse state and nation where Latinxs will constitute a large portion of the population of the United States.

8. What the Relevant Pool of Scholars is Likely to Be and Efforts Taken to Ensure a Broad and Diverse Applicant Pool

We expect a broad and exciting top choice of faculty from assistant to full professors. The interdisciplinarity of this proposal allows for a wide range of prospective candidates. We see the ‘problem space’ of Democracy as one that will attract a wide range of highly active issues across various disciplines including migration, the environment, and health. We believe that such an initiative can successfully accomplish the ambitions of the cluster hire to appeal to candidates representing a cross section of fields as well as to recruit the most innovative. Because we are in the third full generation of Latinx and Ethnic Studies, we expect to see innovation at the theoretical and methodological levels as well. Initial research into the pool of candidates shows us that Latinx-oriented research is heavily developed in Sociology and Chicana/o Studies Programs-Ethnic Studies departments, and may be overlooked across the disciplines more widely. The unifying problem space of Democracy engages a wider set of questions.

Correspondence

Below we attach sample correspondence about the proposed cluster hire. The email messages highlight departments’ and programs’ enthusiasm and, in some cases, their areas of need.

Department of Demography:

Demography is very excited about this important proposal. The growth of the Latinx population, as well as a number of important scholarly puzzles about this significant group, makes research and teaching related to Latinx demography very exciting and timely. And great work at a couple of the classic demography training centers (especially Texas and UNC) mean that there is a rich a deep pool of candidates. Finally, we are determined to grow in the future through joint appointments, ideally 50%, in order to build close intellectual ties with other departments. So this is a wonderful opportunity for us in many ways.

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks

Chair and Professor of Demography

Professor of Sociology

University of California Berkeley

<http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/jennifer-johnson-hanks>

School of Public Health:

The School of Public Health (SPH) is widely recognized as the birthplace of **social epidemiology**, which emphasizes how social determinants including poverty, socioeconomic position, racism and other forms of discrimination, and other social inequalities “get under the skin” via both social and biological pathways to affect mental and physical health and illness, as well as mortality. **Addressing health inequities among Latinx populations requires a focus on reducing inequities across sectors** such as health care, education, employment, city planning, housing, environment, and the legal system, and a “**health-in-all-policies**” approach focused on understanding and ameliorating the negative health impacts of inequitable access to healthy neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.

Public Health does not have any faculty with research focused on Latinx health policy, which is an important need on campus given that the health sector accounts for more than 20% of the gross domestic product and Latinxs are the largest U.S. racial/ethnic minority group. Federal and state policies have the potential to improve access to health care in Latinx communities and reduce health disparities. Health inequities are evident in disproportionate incidence of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases faced by members of Latinx populations, which result in part from economic, political, and social contexts. In contrast to many widespread assumptions, individual-level health behaviors (such as smoking and sedentary lifestyles) do not account for the different health outcomes by race and ethnicity, but aggregate-level structures of inequality partially do. A humanities and social sciences foundation in the broad range of Latinx Studies proposed will help produce relevantly informed medical practitioners and researchers for a growing population markedly underserved by culturally uninformed health practitioners (Hayes-Bautista presentation, November 2018, UCOP Chicane Latinx Leadership Summit, San Diego).

SPH is a longstanding leader in the areas of **health policy**, including working with policymakers and local and national organizations to provide the evidence base for policies designed to improve population health and reduce health inequalities, and **Community-Based Participatory Research** (or CBPR), in which community members directly affected by health and social problems such as violence, HIV, and obesity are trained to become co-researchers with academics, creating research teams of Berkeley scholars and community members to understand the problem and co-design policy solutions and interventions. SPH's FTE request as part of the Latinx and Democracy cluster will leverage SPH's established partnerships with state, national, and global community organizations and private industry.

The Latinx and Democracy FTE focused on population health will contribute to the greatest population health challenges in our California communities—as well as nationally and globally—through community-engaged science in partnership with Latinx-focused community organizations. With greater investment in this area, Berkeley is poised to become a national leader in **health policy and social epidemiology research among Latinx populations**.

Examples of junior scholars of Latinx Health Policy or Social Epidemiology who would be strong applicants:

- 1) [Adrian Mosqueira](#)- Harvard PhD candidate
- 2) [Brent Langilier](#)- Drexel Assistant Professor
- 3) [Michael Flores](#)- Harvard post-doc
- 4) [Vanessa Torres](#)- UW PhD candidate
- 5) [Christian Lopez](#)- Brandeis PhD candidate

Chicana/o [Latina/o] Studies Program-Department of Ethnic Studies:

Philosophy and Religion are two very important related areas of Latinx research. They represent areas of tremendous growth. In the area of religion, Latinx have transformed the U.S. landscape, not only in the different branches of Christianity, but also in new and growing areas such as Afro-diasporic and other religiosities or spiritual practices, such as the Indigenous. In Latin America, Liberation Theology on the one hand, and Evangelical conversion have also transformed the political landscape throughout the hemisphere. Both of these phenomena impacted U.S. Latinx democracies as much as religiosities (and Black, Feminist, and Native expressions of U.S. social-justice oriented Christianities). Today, in Latinx Religious Studies, a growingly interdisciplinary field is increasingly focusing on queer spiritualities, Muslim and other non-Western spiritualities, and benefitting from cultural studies, literary, visual art, and other non-theological/Seminarian or sociological approaches to religion and its relationship to democratic formation.

The Chicana/o [Latina/o] Studies Program has engaged in national and international philosophy and cultural-studies based decolonial studies networks (Maria Lugones, Dussel, Quijano, Mignolo and the Latina Feminist Roundtable organized by Mariana Ortega) but UCB failed to retain a top young Latinx philosopher (Maldonado-Torres) and a Mellon Post-doctoral queer

philosopher. Latinx philosophical studies today are characterized by transnational and pan-Latinx, comparative thought, with an important leadership from queer Latinx scholars, and is increasingly impacting young scholars across fields. Democracy is at the heart of these endeavors and a full cohort of senior, mid-level, and junior scholars are now available. The Humanities and Social Sciences have been transformed by the impact of democracy-focused post-structuralist European thought. Moving beyond “canon-busting,” i.e., the adding of people of color, or in this case, Latinx individuals, to being able to think about the epistemic questions of who decides what gets to count as knowledge, how the formation of our disciplines are imbricated in colonial legacies, and how we might now be able to collectively develop truly culturally universal thought we can all benefit from, are the stakes in decolonial philosophies and religious studies. Genuine knowledge of non-Western philosophies and/or religious studies of culturally diverse Latinx populations promise to support our national democratic search for respectful coexistence of different peoples in a deep, sustaining way. My suggestion would be that we hire at the tenured level, associate or full. Although we have only one untenured faculty member at present in Ethnic Studies, the kinds of program and departmental responsibilities we have would benefit from a tenure colleague.

The Department of Ethnic Studies voted unanimously and in the strongest possible terms (“five finger fist”) to endorse this proposal, as presented here.

Laura E. Pérez

Professor of the Chicana/o [Latina/o] Studies Program and Ethnic Studies
Chair of the Latinx Research Center

Department of Spanish and Portuguese:

The top hiring-priority for the Department of Spanish and Portuguese in the last two FTE request-cycles has been a position in the transnational and diasporic literatures and cultures of Latin America, with a focus on migration and displacement as key research questions. Within this framework, the department has prioritized Central America and Mexico as highly desired geographical areas that would augment current faculty research, engage the 50% of majors whose family-histories are linked to these regions, and address important new directions in the field of Latin American literary and cultural studies. In the last two decades Critical Migration Studies and Critical Refugee Studies have emerged globally as central fields of inquiry, and Latin American migration has played an important role in the field.

Latinx Literature and Art have become key sites for the articulation, critical exploration, and performance of transnational, diasporic identities, thus complicating the question of what it means to be Latinx. These developments intersect with important shifts in the social sciences, which have moved from classic conceptions of migration based on the nation-state (emigration, immigration, and adaptation) toward more fluid conceptions of mobility, identity, and belonging (cultural and political). The field is by definition multi-disciplinary insofar as history, politics, economics, social theory, philosophy and the arts each illuminate the questions of migration and transnational mobility differentially. With an emphasis on movement across national

boundaries, the field also poses important questions regarding the relationship between democracy and citizenship. As such it contributes directly to the campus-wide Strategic Initiative on Democracy, Values, Governance and Freedom of Expression. The position would be at the Assistant level in order to capture the newest developments in the field.

Michael Iarocci
Professor, Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Department of Sociology:

Berkeley Sociology is excited about the possibility of a cluster hire on the topic of Latinxs and Democracy and would leverage this opportunity to identify a scholar at the assistant professor rank engaged in innovative methodological and theoretical approaches to understanding a variety of related social phenomenon. This might include how Latinxs' relationship to democracy is shaped by the extent and nature of embeddedness in major organizations and institutions, including educational and criminal justice systems; is informed by their relationships with other ethnoracial minority groups; is altered by the emergence of artificial intelligence and the changing nature of work; and is potentially diminished by the problems posed, or wrought, by climate change, which has devastated communities throughout Latin America and forced internal and international migrations to nations ill-equipped to cope with the growing populations of extremely vulnerable migrants. Rarely has a moment been so ripe with possibility for game-changing sociological study. As with the other units listed above, Sociology would like to take advantage of this moment with a hire in Latinx and Democracy. Doing so would solidify our dominance in the fields of race and ethnicity and immigration, and it would be an appropriate response to anticipated retirements; two of four Latinx colleagues are expected to retire in the next two to five years. It would also help to address a growing need for greater Latinx representation among the faculty among the 28% of our Sociology majors who identify as Latinx.

Sandra Susan Smith
Professor and Chair of Sociology

Submitted by: Laura E. Pérez, Chair of the Latinx Research Center, with LRC Faculty Advisory Board Support, 4/05/2019.