Learning from las maestras: Experienced teacher activists who remain in the classroom

Theresa Montaño
Joyce H. Burstein
California State University, Northridge

An ethnographic research study was conducted with seven Chicana activist teachers in a large metropolitan area in California to investigate the strategies they employed to remain teaching in urban classrooms. Results showed they sought out colleagues with a common ideological framework and who shared their borderlands identity. In addition, they created networks among other Chicanos/Latinos, and enacted their identity and activism within their classrooms to precipitate social change for their students and families. These experienced activist teachers gave advice to new teacher activists to help them stay in the classroom where their work is about changing the face of education for Latino children.

She remained faceless and voiceless, but a light shone through her veil of silence. And though she was unable to spread her limbs and though for her now the sun has sunk under the earth and there is no moon. She continues to tend the flame. The spirit of the fire spurs her to fight for her own skin, a piece of the ground to stand on, a home ground from which to view the world. (Anzaldua, 2005, p. 25)

We have completed two research studies on Chicana teacher activists and their experiences are reflected in the quote above. Chicana teacher activists in this, and a previous study fought hard to keep their spirit alive, but became increasingly frustrated with the stifling of their Chicana identities and the silencing of their social justice voices. These teachers struggled to retain their social justice outlook while teaching an educational climate that dictated “narrow practices, parochial monolingual visions, and conservative, reactionary educational policies in education” (Moll, 2003). Previous research with new Chicana teachers demonstrated their disempowerment under the present conditions in education. The research also revealed that establishing relationships along the lines of race was prevalent among Chicana teachers and that their relationships with one another or through the support network were empowering, it was not enough to keep them in the profession.

We were inspired to continue our research on Chicana teacher activists after a suggestion was made that we investigate the professional lives of experienced Chicana teacher activists, Chicanas with a social justice philosophy who were critical of current teaching practices, but who remained in the classroom. Few studies look at the socialization processes of Chicana teacher activists in relation to their culture and identity or on the question of retention where Chicana teachers are concerned. Much of the research on teacher retention focuses on teacher mentoring, but does not study how teachers find supportive relationships in race-alike groups or networks. Our previous research begs the question, what can we learn from the experiences of experienced Chicana teacher activists that could contribute both the socialization process that new Chicana teachers undergo, but to the development of teacher induction and professional development models in school districts with a large number of Latino/a students. Moreover, what can we learn from these teachers that would insure that our schools not only employ teachers who are committed both to quality teaching and child advocacy, but retain them. In this light, we share our work on experienced teacher activists, we identify
the common characteristics of these teachers, share strategies that promote collegiality and offer their words of advise to those just entering the profession. **Theoretical Framework**

Teacher retention is a critical issue in today’s urban schools. In California, about ten thousand teachers are trained in credential programs each year but not all enter the classroom. Of those who decide to teach, thirty percent end up leaving the profession within two years (Wasley, 1999). It is especially critical to keep Latina/o teachers in the profession since the majority (71%) of children in Los Angeles are Latino/a. With the high attrition rate of Latino/a teachers, teacher educators and school personnel must find ways to keep teachers who understand diverse cultural backgrounds in teaching.

One of the most important aspects of new teacher retention is successful socialization into the profession. Teacher networks create a learning environment where similar ideas, teaching strategies, and voice can be explored. Experienced and novice teachers who had traditional beliefs about how classrooms operated had changed their views when they came into contact with others with similar viewpoints (Burstein, 2001). New teachers sought out those who were similar in cultural background, perceived teaching style, and had similar outside interests (Burstein, 2001). Other studies showed how teacher networks provided emotional support, feelings of inclusion, and strategies for teaching that helped new teachers (Burstein, 2001; Lieberman & Grolnick, 1999).

While teacher socialization is one aspect to our theoretical framework, it is also situated within the framework of critical communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1993; Wenger, 1998). For the purpose of this study, the communities of practice observed are the support networks of the women. We examined the formal and informal locations of collaboration, the activist circles and support networks where these women shared their repertoire of teaching practices and engaged in political activity. We studied the organized activities where these women engaged in critical dialogue and political activism and how analyzed how that participation influenced or supported their remaining in the classroom. **Chicana Teacher Identity and Critical Consciousness.**

Current marketplace practices have recently paid special attention to the Latino/Chicana consumer, as such they have reaped great monetary benefits from the Chicana bicultural existence by de-emphasizing the oppressive nature of the process and focusing on the positive nature of those bicultural moments. It is important for Latinas/Chicanas to display their duality proudly, demonstrate their abilities to slip into two separate and distinct worlds, to master two languages, enjoy popular culture from two worlds and display their uniquely bicultural selves. And, while it is critical for Latinas to acknowledge the positive moments of cultural resilience experienced by a bicultural or borderlands existence; it is critical to analyze the political nature of their existence. (Monntaño & Burstein, 2006)

The teachers in this study identified as Chicanas. They recognized that being Chicana, accepting and owning the label Chicana is a call to political action. Chicana is a critically assumed identity (Alarcon, 1998) that when adopted is a social and political consciousness and a personal responsibility to critically analyze the societal context of Chicanas, to name the political and social injustice placed upon a marginalized community and to engage in social action. For these teachers, it also requires a commitment to instill in students a love of Chicana/o culture and the teaching the forgotten and neglected history of their people. The Chicana teacher activists in this study have retained their Chicana--ness, in spite of hegemonic conditions in schools.
that seek to erase their identity, socio-political conditions that disregard and belittle their cultural knowledge and a school system that devalues their activist leanings. The Chicana identity of these women is rooted in a Chicana epistemology, defined by (Delgado-Bernal, 1999) as an epistemology concerned with the knowledge about Chicanas generated by Chicanas who understand the daily experiences of women connected to the indigenous roots of their people. It is an oppositional epistemology where Chicanas use the knowledge to cause change in society (Delgado-Bernal, 1999). Chicana epistemology facilitates the development of a critical consciousness and is firmly embedded in the social construct of race, language, gender and historical oppression, where these women of Mexican heritage reclaim a racial and cultural identity of Chicano/a resistance. It is a borderlands existence, and not simply the story of two cultures juxtaposed in a U.S. society. Being Chicana is the critical consciousness that struggles to redefine and name the multiplicities of cultures that is Chicanaisma. 

Chicana teacher activist

In accepting the label Chicana, these women became activists and agents for social and political change and have selected the educational arena as their site of activism. As Chicana activists, these Chicanas construct their activist identity through their participation in the struggle for educational equity and their genuine love of their students. According to Pardo (1999), Chicana activism constructs the social identities of activist mujeres; conversely their gendered identities are built-up by their activism. Moreover, women activists “have implicit theories of power, and they test and reformulate their theories in relation to their mobilizing experiences” (p.8). In this case, Chicana teacher activists test their social justice pedagogy by establishing an academic curriculum that emerges from their participation in activist communities, their personal familiarity with the Chicana/o cultural experiences, and their knowledge of Chicana/o history and tradition. As defined by Elenes (2000), Chicana feminist pedagogies, such as those possessed by these women “are partially shaped by collective experiences and community memory” (p.120). Chicana teacher activists consciously integrate information attained from their activist communities and personal experiences to design an academically rigorous curriculum based upon the real life experiences of their students and themselves. These experiences include activities that invite their students to question and to take action against the sociopolitical realities affecting marginalized communities, not only their own but the marginalized communities of others. It is in this vein that we argue that Chicana teacher activists naturally implement the praxis inherent in Freirean tradition. Further, Chicana teacher activists expose their students to the inherent inequality, economic and social injustice, and challenge hegemonic practices through their teaching, despite the current oppressive and debilitating political atmosphere.

The political agenda of Chicana teacher activists is to enact strategies that develop the collective consciousness of their students. These strategies are often arrived at from their participation in activist circles, teacher activists use the information to politicize the curriculum. (Montaño, López-Torres, DeLissovoy, Pacheco & Stillman, 2002). In her study of Chicanas active in the East Los Angeles Blowouts, Delgado-Bernal (2001) referred to this characteristic as cultural intuition, a natural factor that emerges and is utilized by Chicanas when producing cultural knowledge—an inevitable quality that emerges as women participate in activist communities. The women in our previous study listened to other Chicanas who not only had social justice consciousness, but also applied their social justice consciousness in the classroom. These Chicanas sought out other Chicana teachers who could help them deal with the mandates without compromising their teaching ideals. Given the constraints in teaching, the women
Learning from las maestras

in the previous study all indicated that in order to remain true to their social justice philosophy, to honor their identity and voice, and to maintain their sense of purpose they needed to act secretly. Subversive teaching has become the order of the day (Montaño & Burstein, 2006). Thus, Chicana teacher activists do rely heavily on the process of conscientization, a Freirean practice not only to build their activist knowledge, but used to transform their public schools.

Critical support networks

In our previous study, we argued that Chicana/os are normally brought up in a collectivist culture, where family and relationships are of primary importance. (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Trueba, 2000; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001). We maintain that providing a space where teachers can come together to share similar experiences and teaching philosophies is crucial for keeping teachers in the classroom. This space becomes the familial or collective space that supports the ideological and cultural development of Chicana teacher activists. The findings from our previous study on Chicana teacher activists (Montaño & Burstein, 2006) revealed that political ideology and cultural identity are the prerequisites for the formation of supportive networks for Chicana teachers. Furthermore, we learned that political ideals and cultural connections were the strongest bonds [lazos] and in fact, kept the Chicana teacher activists united. None of the women in the previous study had supportive colleagues who were mentor teachers, members of their curriculum department or grade level teams. The philosophical and educational underpinnings that these Chicana teachers appear to isolate them from others in their school culture, but compelled them to form teacher learning communities with one another. Therefore, we believe that Chicana activists actively seek others who share their definition and purpose of teaching. In addition, their strong connection to culture and identity motivate them to seek others who were Chicana or Latina. All of the relationships from the previous study were informal and personality did not seem to matter.

Methodology

In 2005, we extended our research on Chicana teacher activists through an ethnographic case study. Our intent was to discover what conditions kept Chicana teacher activists in the classroom, while simultaneously facilitating their involvement in the community. Through this research, we hope to make possible a process where experienced Chicana teacher activists can share the strategies they use to remain in the classroom with others like them. For the purpose of this study, experienced teachers are teachers who have taught in an urban classroom for 5-12 years.

Participants

The teacher activists in this study are composed of seven Chicana elementary school teacher activists in a large, urban district in Los Angeles. Each of the participants was chosen through stratified selection from several active community groups such as the teacher’s union. Each participant was asked to fill out a sociogram (graphic organizer that shows social connections between people) of her supportive colleagues. Once the sociogram was explained, we used an interview protocol to explore the nature of the relationships. We focused on these Chicana teachers because they shared a borderlands culture and ideology, were activists, and demonstrated social justice orientation in their teaching. Each of these women worked in urban schools where the student population was predominantly Latino/ a and had a lower socioeconomic background.

We interviewed the educators for about 45-60 minutes using a semi-structured interview protocol. The protocol included topics on how the teachers networked and made connections, teaching philosophy and teacher belief system of critical pedagogy, and what type of advice they would give new teachers to stay in the classroom and keep active. All interviews were audio taped, transcribed word for word and reviewed for major themes and trends.

Findings

Interestingly enough, the research on this set of Chicana teacher activists generated similar
findings to our previous research and yet, surprising results in others. There were five major themes that emerge from this research, they are:

1) A common ideological framework on education or teacher belief system remains the strongest bond for Chicana teacher activists seeking relationships or mentors,

2) All experienced teachers had developed a strong support system with other Chicanas, but now the social circle included Chicanos and other progressive teachers,

3) A sense of community or an informal support network is a sustaining factor and this is often outside of the immediate school community. The informal support networks that sustain these activists included two separate circles of support; one that supports teaching and the other that supports activism,

4) Chicana teacher identity and activism in enacted within their classrooms and through advocacy for student and family rights,

5) Experienced Chicana teacher activists wished desperately to connect with new teacher activists and offered sage advice to new teachers, hoping to encourage them to remain committed to classroom teaching and activism.

Teacher Belief System: The Strongest Connection

When asked to prioritize teacher belief system, teaching practices, grade level or subject matter as determinants for membership in their informal support network, the women interviewed said that teacher belief system was most important factor. These experienced Chicana educators purposefully sought out others who shared their belief system and views about social justice. Through social events, teacher’s meetings, and informal networking, all seven women identified these colleagues by listening intently in district-sponsored meetings, university courses, or professional development sessions to “those who spoke up” and shared similar views on teaching and learning. Each of these teachers explained that their initial views on teaching and social justice beliefs have not changed since their first years of teaching. Eva stated, “Fundamentally, my belief system has stayed the same. I still believe that every child learns and that each and every one learns differently.” Another teacher’s philosophy remained basically the same but had been modified to reflect a more grounded and realistic notion of change. Laura commented, “I think you come in trying to change the world to some degree but you can only do a little at a time.” Unlike our first group of teacher activists who held a more global or macro political agenda, the critical difference in these teacher activists are the immediate focus on the community as their site of political activity.

Since all the women expressed that their views have stayed basically the same over the years, they tended to seek out those colleagues who shared their belief system. Many of the teachers looked for colleagues who are bilingual teachers at the school site. Others find colleagues who continue to enact their identity and culture through the curriculum. Nina shared, With this group, I talk only about pedagogy. We can share new reading strategies or what we are doing in our bilingual classroom. I think I still have that space at my school with the bilingual teachers because we work together to change the curriculum and tweak it. I use balanced literacy practices and bring in culture. I sometimes forget this is not the norm.

Teachers like Nina find they must connect with those who share their same outlook so they do not feel isolated. She goes on to say, I consider teaching in a bilingual...
classroom in California subversive. I forget what I am doing is not the norm because it is part of my world. I think that most teachers are like me and teach the curriculum with a multicultural view. But I am not the norm. I am Latina who is a chapter chair, and who speaks out for kids. I accept who I am and I find others who are like me to support me. That is the only way to accept that it is okay.

It is critical to note that like our first group of teacher activists, this set of teacher activists also developed networks naturally or without assistance or support from district officials. While these teachers may participate in networks created for them by district or university personnel, their strongest relationships and their support for teaching emerge from outside the circles legitimized in school. These networks are not only developed so that these activists can sustain their mental health or inform their political beliefs, but these networks directly influence their teaching practices.

Chicana/o Identity: A Powerful Bond

While teacher belief system was the strongest bond between these experienced teacher activists with other colleagues, all of the participants kindled relationships with other women who shared their Chicana or Latina background. Each teacher spoke eloquently about what it meant to be “Chicana” and how it connected to their teaching and to their selection of colleagues. Laura stated,

I am a Chicana. A person who is not accepted in one country or the other, yet has strong values and accepts her parents’ culture and knows it. I have pride in that culture and also sees that I don’t fit into this culture. I am always striving for the core values of becoming a better person and professional.

The seven teacher activists also associated with Latinos or Chicanos on the school site, a major difference from previous findings, where the new Chicana teachers’ primary support group was only Chicanas and Latinas. These experienced teacher activists found vice principals, coordinators, male teachers and paraprofessionals who shared their Chicano identity. These Chicano colleagues were found through connecting in after school programs such as Aztec dancing, ballet folklórico, and working with parents.

In addition to classroom support, Chicano colleagues were sought out to provide a safe space to ask questions and vent out frustrations. Three of the seven teachers had male colleagues who shared their same background. Many of activists found it was easier to speak to those colleagues who shared the same context in going through life experiences and who understood how to relate to the children and the community surrounding the school.

Former professors were also included on the sociograms. This is a new subset of support that was not evident in our previous study. Three of the Chicanas mentioned professors from their undergraduate program, these women complimented their professors for providing them with new strategies, ways of thinking, and alternative options to deal with the issues they were facing in schools. Eva teaches children with special needs and consistently turns to her activist professors for advice. “I had some really good professors who were activists. They gave me the language to use to be an advocate for my students.”

Two Circles: Teaching and Activism

When completing their sociograms, the Chicana teacher activists in this study had two separate circles of support. One of the circles identified close colleagues, family members and friends as providers of the personal and emotional support. The second circle contained the names of friends in the activist circles who gave them the information they need to keep abreast of social and political issues. In both cases, the experienced teacher activists looked for colleagues to add to their support network. These teachers did not wait to be approached, but that they took the initiative to connect with others who shared similar views and
teaching philosophies. Each of the teachers reported a need to connect with colleagues in order to vent, get new perspectives, and share teaching pedagogies.

The teachers needed colleagues to share day-to-day teaching stories, Eva differentiates between her two circles, One circle is my personal friends. Sam gives me a different perspective on things. The “Red Star” group is my activist group. With this group I have to be more politically correct. They keep me in touch with the issues.

Nina, a ten-year veteran teacher, explained that her activist group helped her understand the larger context of schooling. She disclosed how her political perspective is replenished and her belief system nourished by her continued relationship with activist circles. I enjoy my culture and it gives me meaning. It colors my world and brings me beauty, light, and joy. So I can’t get inspiration from my school site or district. There is no support for multicultural or bilingual education there. It does not bring in the big picture or the world context...like Paulo Freire was all about. This group reenergizes me and supports my beliefs. I can talk about my struggles at my school with [this group] because they share my same viewpoint.

These teacher activists were reinvigorated and launched into political action when confronted with repressive legislation. In many instances, the teachers’ activism were directly linked to district mandates such as the implementation of Proposition 227, Open Court or high stakes testing. These activists took collective action when they perceived that policies had a direct impact on their students. Four of the seven participants became teachers’ union activists after the passage of Proposition 227. These teachers established a relationship with parents and community members and called attention to the rights and options available to parents after Proposition 227 virtually eliminated bilingual education. These teachers relied upon allies who would fight for the rights of children and families.

Activism and Advocacy: The Classroom

The teacher activists considered the classroom as the best site for enacting their activist beliefs. The classroom, according to these women, was where they could teach their students about social issues they learned about in their activist communities. The teachers felt that the classroom would make their political work less abstract, more realistic. Eva sentiments are reflected in the statement below and were echoed by all the Chicanas in this study, “If you weren’t in the classroom, you wouldn’t see that you were an activist and who you are working for” (Eva, 2005).

Another aspect of how these teachers’ activism was firmly grounded in their classrooms was reflected in the curriculum they provided their students. Many of the teachers mentioned creating new units of study, lesson plans that tapped into the cultural and linguistic knowledge of the students. In addition, each one possessed a strong desire to teach multicultural units and to include lessons that highlighted diversity and created a sense of community. Nadia shared, I try to do units that I created myself on our culture because there was really nothing out there. I try to do units on the Maya, Inca, and Aztecs and I feel that my Spanish has helped me with the parents because they feel closer to you.

Culturally relevant curriculum was important to all the teachers. Two of the teachers maintained cultural identity was better facilitated through the establishment of extracurricular activities. Nadia brought Aztec dancers to her classroom and the students learned the ancient dances One teacher accomplished this by creating a cultural club, where culture, language and Chicana/o history would be the subject of student inquiry. A parallel activity was created by
Laura, who started an after school club for girls to provide a support system for them. Laura explained, I started the Butterfly Club because I see myself in them but they don’t have the support system. They need to know something is out there and there is something to look forward to. The clubs were spaces for raising cultural consciousness and discussing critical social issues, applying Freirean principles to the after school activity.

Activism, for these Chicana teachers, was also evident in the relationships they had with parents. Many of them also participated in activities centered on helping students and parents. Many of the teachers shared stories of how they helped parents fill out forms, translated at parent meetings or designed lessons that required their students to share the results with their parents. In order to connect to the broader community, these teachers used their Spanish to help parents negotiate the school community and to help advocate for their rights. Eva became a special education activist, because she believed immigrant parents did not have sufficient knowledge about special education to advocate on behalf of their children.

Overall, these activist teachers took information originating in community struggles into the classroom directly affecting the students they teach. Their activist techniques helped students access the curriculum and provided these students culturally relevant lessons. All of the teachers reported that they did this work “behind closed doors” and considered themselves “subversive” change agents, teaching for social justice while negotiating district and legislative mandates.

Advice for New Teachers From Experienced Activists

We asked the experienced Chicana teacher activists to offer advice to the new Chicana teachers activists from our previous study. All of the Chicana activists advised the new teachers to ask questions, to speak up in meetings, and to openly challenge hegemonic practices. They advocated “teacher back talk”. Reina substantiated this view when she stated, “Speak up and act on it. Do not be silenced or disempowered just because you do not want to rock the boat.” Laura added, “I have been fortunate to have people take me under their wing but mostly by asking questions. Just get out there and ask.” By asking questions, teacher activists do not only identify who needs help, but discover teachers with complimentary teaching philosophies. One teacher noted, “If you don’t speak up, we won’t know who you are and that you believe in the same things we do.” Teacher “back talk” was not only a way to change school culture, but it was often the only way they learned who the new activists were. Many of the teachers believed that if the new teacher activists would make themselves known, experienced teachers could approach them enabling them to establish relationships with them, thereby creating a space for activists teachers to relate to one another. Therefore, we maintain the establishment of critical teacher activist support networks where experienced Chicana teacher activists can offer advice to new activists could improve the chances of retaining new teachers.

These activist teachers counseled new teachers to create a sense of community within the classroom, with other teachers, and among parents in the school. All seven experienced teacher activists mentioned that they created a safe community in the classroom by sharing stories and their culture and that new teachers should replicate this activity in their classroom, by bringing in guest speakers and cultural artifacts to engage the children in a discovery of culture and language.

The experienced teachers also reflected on the significance and responsibility that experienced teacher activists had to connect with new colleagues. Several of these teachers identified as their first priority “helping new teachers”. Specifically, they believed it their obligation to inform and mentor new Chicana teachers. Laura said, “You become a leader and you have to look back an
You need to inform them of the possibilities to help them move forward.

In addition to creating community, the experienced teachers advised the new teachers to join outside organizations. Each of the teachers interviewed belonged to an organization outside of the school, like the teacher’s union, California Association for Bilingual Education or the group of National Board Certified Teachers. They joined these organizations to collectively challenge unjust educational policies. It is critical to understand that the teacher activists did not join the teachers’ union in order to advocate on behalf of teachers, they joined in order to advocate for students. The teacher activists stressed the importance of working with teachers of varied political viewpoints. They stressed that working in multi-racial, diverse organization was a method for presenting the issues that directly impact Chicano/a and Latino/a students to a diverse group of people. In this case, language minority students and communities were the impetus for coalition building.

The experienced teacher activists also joined groups that enriched their cultural knowledge, something that cannot be learned from district mandated professional development. For example, Nina shared,

In my Aztec dancing group, I see how excited they are with our children and our culture. In my school district, I lose all sense because what I promote doesn’t matter to them. If I see these things at other conferences, they validate the work I am doing in East L.A.

While Chicana teacher activists in this study actively joined organizations outside of the immediate school community, all the teachers recommended that new Chicana teacher activists find teaching positions in schools where there were other teachers who shared their beliefs. In order to be active in the classroom and community, the experienced activist argued that if a core group of like-minded individuals were present in their schools, they would feel less isolated and have others for collective work on common causes.

The final piece of advice to new teacher activists had, was “don’t give up.” Each experienced teacher stated that new teachers must find the “right situation”, one that would allow them to “flourish”. They also advised the teachers not to be disappointed if the consequences of their activism resulted in “small steps” towards social change. They argued that what might appear to be insignificant victories were, in reality, significant steps towards educational justice.

It is difficult to enact change. Don’t give up because change really starts in the classroom influencing the students. I see it in my kids and the way I teach. I question and they start to question.

Finally, Chicana teacher activists need “space” where they can connect with others who will nourish their social justice perspective. Unless they were allowed the spaces for developing plans for advocacy and activism, the educational system could lose these most valuable allies in the quest for educational equity and excellence.

Final thoughts

Our study of experienced activist teachers confirmed our belief that providing spaces for these teachers to develop a borderlands pedagogy and their Chicana activist identities were important factors in retaining them as classroom teachers. This Chicana identity, borderland pedagogy and informal support networks are what sustained their spirit and allowed this group of teachers to create a strong bond with their students, a bond necessary to improve student achievement. Borderlands or Chicana/o culturally relevant pedagogy honors the dynamic, constantly changing nature of Chicana identity, the sociopolitical consciousness, and cultural knowledge of Chicana teachers and their students. The borderlands pedagogy or oppositional biculturalism (Darder, 1991) is the foundation upon which these teachers build their teaching repertoire. An oppositional foundation that is not psychological, but political;
that is theoretically grounded in the historical and social formation of power in this nation. A pedagogy that acknowledges the process by which marginalized communities negotiate the complexities of dominant culture. Chicana/o oppositional pedagogy is the vehicle used by these politically conscious Chicanas to create a safe space in which their students negotiate their Chicana/o identity. This factor is seldom the theme of school based professional development, teacher preparation or teacher induction programs, but is it a factor that facilitates the resiliency in these Chicana teacher activists.

It is our hope that this study will result in the identification of concrete strategies and the creation of networks that will blend the experience of Chicana teacher activists with the passion and commitment to social justice embodied in the lives of new Chicana teacher activists. We hope that these strategies might be replicated and shared in courses in Chicano/a Studies, Women Studies and Education. It is our intent to sensitize teacher education and induction programs to the concerns and needs of Chicana social justice educators and encourage educational programs to consider culture, race and ideology.

In addition, the results of this research will be used to expand the research base on teacher socialization by examining how teachers of color create networks. We maintained that one of the responsibilities of educators is to contribute to the recruiting, retention and professionalism of teachers and to provide strategies to help negotiate the difficult environments in our schools today. The need for teachers who understand the language of Latino/a students, who embrace the richness of their culture and history, can communicate effectively with parents and community members, and relate to Latino/as as distinct race of people who are marginalized in this society is essential for the educational well being of all our children.

References


Theresa Montañó is an assistant professor in the Chicano/a Studies Department at California State University, Northridge. Her areas of interest and research are in critical pedagogy, issues in Chicano/a education, and teacher education.

Joyce H. Burstein is an assistant professor in the Department of Elementary Education at California State University, Northridge. Her areas of interest and research are in teacher induction, history/social science, the arts, and multicultural education.