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AUTHOR   Walker, Nancy T.
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ABSTRACT
        This study examined the impact of three forms of literacy
training (teacher education, professional development in literacy, and
mentoring) on four Latina teachers in two urban elementary schools in Los
Angeles, California. Data came from a larger study that examined how Latinas'
own school experiences related to their instructional practices. This study
used data from the transcripts of four interviews in which participants
shared memories of literacy instruction in teacher education, literacy
professional development, and mentor programs. Data analysis indicated that
these women were caught in a maze of tensions related to overlapping issues.
The dominant structure of the school limited their decision making power
regarding curriculum in the classroom and their exposure to literacy
training. As a result, they struggled to make sense of the ambiguous
environment they worked in along with the experiences they brought to the
job. There were both external and internal struggles that intertwined with
gender expectations, cultural norms, and the historical context of teaching.
Four themes that emerged from the data were: fragmented teacher education
memories; abandonment by the school structure; finding help; and
insignificant professional development. (Contains 42 references.) (SM)

Running Head: Latina Teachers' Pathways to Literacy Instruction

Latina Teachers' Pathways in Literacy Instruction

Nancy T. Walker

University of Southern California

Phone: (626) 403-1793

Email: nwalker@usc.edu

Projections for new teachers that will be needed over the next decade are estimated from 1.7 million to 2.7 million. These numbers are expected to replace teachers retiring and meeting needs of increasing enrollment (Hussar, 1999). In California, nearly 80% of teachers are white while only 40% of the state's students are white. Latinos make up 11% of California's teachers, but 40% of the state's student population (Yates, 1999). In Los Angeles County 80% of students in schools are from minority populations. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, 90% of students are also from minority populations while white teachers constitute 62% of the teaching force (Metcalfe, Smith-Maddox, Wilcher and Morrell, 2000).

There have been dramatic changes in literacy instruction over the past fifteen years in California. A timeline compiled by Cappello (2000) illustrated these significant changes. Becoming a Nation of Readers (1985) called for a balanced approach to literacy instruction with a priority on comprehension. The California Language Arts Framework (1987) described the integration of reading and writing spotlighting children's literature yet failed to address skills, emergent learners and English language learners (ELL).

In 1992, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests were given to 100 schools in California and introduced state-by-state breakout scores. Children in grades 4, 8, and 12 scored 52% below the basic level in reading which demonstrates comprehension and making connections between text and personal experience. Reading becomes a priority with the election of the new state superintendent in 1994, Delaine Eastin. On the most recent NAEP data, California scores are lower than

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1992. A task force was created in 1995 and published literacy recommendations in its document Every Child a Reader which asserted, "Every child will leave third grade no longer learning to read, but reading to learn." Literacy instruction in 1996 focused on K-3 and reading is compartmentalized. Staff development is impacted in 1997 with passing of Assembly Bill 1086 which limited staff development by approved providers and focused on back to the basics. The NAEP scores in 1999 saw California raising scores from 197 to 202. Eastin finds the results unacceptable and the state now sees the arrival of scripted reading program such as Open Court (Bereiter, Brown, Campione, Carruthers, Case, Hirshberg, Adams, McKeough, Pressley, Roit, Scardamalia, and Treadway 2000).

The emphasis on diversifying teachers in education implies that minority teachers will be more effective in working with students of similar background. Gay (1993b) states "it cannot be assumed that teachers of color are culturally affiliated with their students" (as cited in Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996, p. 525) or are able to translate their knowledge "into culturally relevant pedagogy and success for pupils" (Montecinos, 1994 as cited in Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996, p. 525). All teachers arrive at school with their own "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1994) that can positively impact student instruction. Yet, many of these teachers do not know how to translate this knowledge into their classroom curriculum. Furthermore, they may have systematically ignored their cultural experiences in order to succeed in school.

Professional development can provide opportunities for teachers to make these connections with students. Current professional development "exercises institutional authority" as a focus for teacher growth (Little, 1993, p. 142). Little calls for alternative models in professional development that attend to the "complex contexts of teaching" (p.

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129). Specifically, experiences of teachers need to be explicit while placing classroom practice in the larger context of schools and education of children. One way is to provide strategic professional development by focusing on translating teachers' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1994) into classroom pedagogy. Although professional development is an arena that can strengthen the use of relevant cultural knowledge in the classroom, teachers do not always access this rich source of information. Attending to "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1994) between teachers and students is important for teachers of all cultures.

My aim is to examine support in literacy instruction for Latina teachers who are part of a larger study of literacy and culture. Specifically, this paper addresses one research question: (1) What is the impact of literacy training from teacher education, professional development in literacy and mentoring for four Latina teachers in two urban elementary schools in Los Angeles?

Key Literature

Teacher Education Contributions

Feiman Nemser (1983) describes the mismatch between formal teacher education and actual teacher learning. Teacher education does not tap into the personal experiences of teachers that are shaped by culture. As Lortie (1975) suggests, "Many of teachers' ideas of how to teach particular topics can be traced back to their memories of how their own teachers approached these topics. Teachers also rely on their disciplinary knowledge to shape their knowledge and beliefs about teaching subject matter."

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Feiman Nemser points out that preservice programs are not powerful interventions and that the majority of learning to teach occurs during a teacher's first year on the job. Unfortunately, it's during this first year that beginning teachers "flounder on their own" (p. 167). For many teachers, this floundering results in instruction that resembles how they were taught which may not be best practice.

Along similar lines, Zeichner, Tabachnick and Densmore (1987) discuss two facets in the teacher preparation program: (1) methods and foundation courses; and (2) field experiences. Their review found that methods and content knowledge had little impact on preservice teachers actions during training (Hodges, 1982). Furthermore, there is debate in the role of the field experiences. Zeichner (1980) characterizes the knowledge base of the field experience as "weak and ambiguous." Research needs to be conducted in teachers' field experiences.

Grossman (1990) also studied teacher preparation with six first-year English teachers three of whom graduated from the same teacher preparation program and three who entered teacher without any formal training. Grossman's findings from the teachers who had teacher education preparation call for stronger subject-specific teacher education courses that are linked to field experiences. Three of the six teachers in this study realized that the pedagogical methods used in their college courses did not translate into their own teaching.

Professional Development

Professional Development is a necessity for teachers in the constantly changing field of education and it is important to study because this literature provides a model for

teacher learning that improves classroom practice. Corcoran (1995) calls for stronger collaboration between schools and universities. Little (1993) also examines alternative routes of professional development. Little argues "the dominant training model of teachers' professional development, a model focusing on expanding classroom practice is not adequate to the present reform initiatives" (p. 129). Little recognizes that reform agendas challenge teachers, especially reforms in subject matter teaching which can be exhaustive. For example, in California, there are revolving curriculum frameworks that keep teachers in a constant state of change and innovation. Little presents one policy dilemma in which local districts prefer the training models over alternative models. Training models represented workshops, courses or in-service days but have little impact on teacher change. The alternatives to the training model are teacher collaboratives, subject matter associations, reform collaborations, and special institutes or centers.

Mentors

The purpose of mentoring is to "assist novice teachers and to foster their success during their first years of teaching" (Gold, 1996). There have been several studies that illustrate a value of mentoring (Kram, 1983; Bova & Phillips, 1984; Miller, Thomson, & Roush, 1989). Feiman-Nemser and Parker focus on mentor programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Graduate Intern Program in the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. The researchers focus on mentoring in the junior and senior high schools in Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, the responsibility of mentor teachers is to assist new teachers, including those in the Teacher Trainee (District Intern) program. Mentors share how they "relieved new teachers' sense of isolation" (p. 8). They explain how

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difficult it was to find materials for their new teachers. The trainees lament over the inaccessibility of their mentors. Availability for trainees varied depending on the mentor and the school context. Gold (1996) asserts that "some support providers have negative perceptions of mentoring because of the difficulties they have making and finding time to work with their proteges" (p. 577). These mentors struggled to overcome the demands of the classroom with the responsibility of guiding new teachers in the field.

Continuing research with these two programs, Feiman-Nemser and Parker's (1992) study found that mentor teachers in Los Angeles were assigned to work with beginning teachers in the teacher trainee program without support of mentor colleagues. The University of New Mexico works collaboratively with Albuquerque Public Schools to provide eight support teachers to work with graduate interns as well as other first-year teachers in the district. The two programs differ in availability, program components, and social context. According to Gold (1996), Los Angeles mentor teachers teach full time limiting their availability to their trainees. These mentors participate in 30-hour trainings by presenters from the district's professional development staff. According to Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) "the training shapes mentors' expectations about their roles and teaches them strategies and techniques to use" (p. 7). The Graduate Intern Program mentors are released from classroom instruction and mentor on a full-time basis. In Los Angeles, the mentors have little contact with the intern program and they have no support from colleagues. The data in this paper shows that some new teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District did not receive mentor assistance.

In Albuquerque, mentors learn about their work while doing it. Their training utilizes research based literature about effective teaching. Because these support teachers work full time with new teachers they have time to confer with colleagues.

Teacher Beliefs

In recent years, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to how beginning teachers learned to teach. Teacher beliefs influence a teacher's decision making process (Richardson, 1996, p. 102), and exploring teachers' childhood experiences can provide insight into this decision making process. The seminal work of Nespor (1987) and Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991), are given much attention as these represent the greatest impact to my work.

Important work in this area is attributed to Nespor (1987), who attempts to provide a theoretically grounded model of 'belief systems'. She noted the little attention paid to the structures of teacher's beliefs about their roles, students, subjects, and schools. Her model is based upon research on teacher thinking called the Teacher Beliefs Study (1985). In this study, eight middle school teachers were videotaped in their classrooms on classroom action. Four interviews focused on teachers' beliefs about teaching, student behavior and their school context. An additional four interviews focused on teacher explanation of teaching practices. Nespor found that beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering against contradictions caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience. Beliefs change during adulthood was rare; the most common cause of a change was a conversion from one authority to another or gestalt shift. Therefore, we must pay attention to goals teachers pursue and their interpretations of classroom

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processes. Nespor cautioned that there is little knowledge about the origin of beliefs, or how they are weakened or supported.

In a related vein, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) share findings from their study designed to determine the relationship between teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading comprehension and their classroom practices. Thirty-eight teachers were interviewed using a beliefs interview. This interview guide consisted of questions inquiring into teachers' public beliefs about reading and how children learn to read. Teachers were observed twice while they taught reading comprehension. The team found that practices could be predicted from belief interviews. This demonstrated that the beliefs of teachers related to their classroom practices in the teaching of reading comprehension. The teachers in this study used basal readers that focused on skills of reading and were unaware of more "interactive approaches" such as background knowledge and teaching vocabulary within content for reading instruction. The team states that the multiple choice measure of beliefs was ineffective in determining beliefs because it limited teacher response.

Conceptual Framework

I assume that culture impacts gender and is multifaceted depending on personal and professional environments. I analyze the data with an awareness of "multiracial feminism." This is an attempt to "go beyond recognition of diversity and difference among women to examine structures of domination, specifically the importance of race in understanding the social construction of gender" (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1997, p. 23). These teachers share the complexities of their workplace and how they resist these

structures, and they question their roles as women, Latina, and teachers in different ways. Employing this framework allows women's differences to be socially and historically situated.

At the onset of the industrial era, "women entered teaching to escape the passivity and dependency that motherhood conferred on its daughters" (Grumet, 1988, p. 48) but this notion of motherhood has followed women into the work force. For many women, roles at home conflict and cause tension with roles at school (Aguilar, MacGillivray, & Walker, 2000). These women have dual jobs and many succumb to dual exploitation (Apple, 1986, p. 51). The exploitation of women in teaching can be explained in terms of pay, recruitment, class assignments, support, and materials. It is assumed that women can take care of the home and care for themselves at school. Yet, the data in this paper reveals the struggles these women encountered in schools. Besides lack of support, the women are "deskilled as curriculum is standardized and their working conditions and autonomy worsen" (p. 24). Currently, there are large numbers of women teachers in U.S. classrooms. The high numbers of women in these poor conditions calls for inquiry, analysis, and reform.

Data Collection

Two elementary schools located in downtown Los Angeles are the primary sites for this research. These schools participated in previous CIERA research and have a strong collegial relationship with the university. Madison Elementary School (pseudonym) is located near the University of Southern California. There are 1,918 students, 103 teachers, 58 support staff, two assistant principals and one principal. This

is the second year for both the principal and assistant principals at this school. The school was built in 1907. Manhatten Elementary School (pseudonym) is situated in a nearby suburb of Los Angeles. It was built in 1895 and is 105 years old. The school consists of 1,050 students, 49 teachers, 33 support staff, and one assistant principal and principal. The principal has been there for 12 years. The assistant principal has worked for six years at this site.

The larger project examines how Latinas' own school experiences relate to their instructional practices in their classrooms. The data for this study were taken from the larger data set, and include transcripts of four interviews. This paper focuses on four of the thirteen Latinas who participated in the study. All four teachers attended the USC teacher education program. They are all bilingual, biliterate, and have two to five years teaching experience. All of these women consider themselves Latina. This complexity is a mere sliver of the richness of the Latina community in the U.S. today.

I use the term "Latino" to describe these teachers' ethnicity. "Latina" includes persons whose origins are in Latin America. Participants in this study had origins in Mexico and El Salvador. Some of them describe themselves as Chicana, a term with political origins in the *movimiento*, or Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s.

The participants were invited to join this qualitative study during an initial explanatory meeting. Eva, Carmen, Carla and Alicia (pseudonyms) have two to five years teaching experience and are first generation bilingual Latinas. I chose them because of their diverse experiences during their first years of teaching.

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USC Teacher Education Program

All four teachers attended the same teacher education program. This program attends to a constructivist literacy approach and aims to prepare students for democratic citizenship by promoting individual and group responsibility and respect. Attention is given to four models of instruction: direct instruction, advance organizer, concept attainment, and group investigation. Extensive and intensive coaching has been built into the program. Field supervisors provide coaching for student teachers on a weekly basis. In addition to feedback from their master teachers, students receive feedback from their teaching partner. All elementary student teachers are assigned partners and learn to give and receive professional feedback.

Latino/a and Language-Minority Teacher Project

This project began as a privately funded grant and is an integral part of the USC Teacher Education Program. The project's goal is to increase the number of Latinos/as in the teaching profession, by creating a career track for practicing Latino/a para-educators. Support and assistance-financial, social, and academic-are provided promising para-educators, thereby enabling them to successfully complete a teacher education program and have successful careers as teachers. Students in this project attend conferences with their master teachers, attend workshops held at USC and have a location on campus to utilize for meetings, socializing and educational assistance.

<u>Open Court</u>

California recently adopted the <u>SRA/Open Court Reading</u> (Bereiter, Brown,

Campione, Carruthers, Case, Hirshberg, Adams, McKeough, Pressley, Roit, Scardamalia

& Treadway, 2000) program for students in K-3 and mandated in Los Angeles Unified

School District. This program focuses on "explicit phonics and comprehension skills

instruction balanced with reading of decodable texts and quality literature" (p. 2). The

goal of this program is to "ensure that by the end of the first half of first grade, all

students have the tools to begin reading authentic literature at grade level" (p. 2).

Method

The fourth round of the larger study is the primary source for this paper. In the

first round of interviews and focus groups the research team examined the Latinas' early

childhood reading experiences. In the second round, participants shared their decisions to

go to college, the reaction of family and peers, sources of encouragement and barriers,

the application process and finally academic and social habits. The third round focused

on the participants describing their current literacy instruction practices. The fourth

round of the larger study is the primary source for this paper. Participants were asked to

share memories of literacy instruction in teacher education, literacy professional

development, and their experience with the mentor program. Individual interviews lasted

from one to two hours and all sessions were audiotaped and transcribed.

I employed a constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to create

categories of support, training, and teacher education. Further analysis of the data

allowed me to refine these categories to: (a) abandonment by the institution, (b) minimal professional development, (c) impact of teacher education, and (d) assistance.

Findings: 4 Stories

Eva

Eva is twenty-seven years old. She was born in the United States and educated in Los Angeles at USC. Eva married while she was in college and experienced the struggle of balancing a marriage and school expectations. She hopes to pursue a doctorate in education. For Eva, her memories of teacher education focused on organization and second language learning:

> The structure and meticulous planning they forced us to do in student teaching
>
> made me an organized person. Without it we would not have been able to make it
>
> through the first year. That is one of the things that hinders first year teachers.
>
> They teach you methodologies in college but the practicality of actually being
>
> there and having these multiple different situations that's when they don't teach.
>
> But when you go into the classroom, it's a very realistic situation.

Teacher education provided Eva with the organizational skills she needed to survive the first year, yet she realized how demanding the first year of teaching can be even though she came from a teacher education program. Eva needed the support of a mentor teacher to guide her through the maze that confronted her. Unfortunately, Eva was unable to obtain mentor support:

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Mentors are priorities for those new teachers that haven't had any student

teaching, that don't have their credentials. That's who the mentors go to and

since we came with credentials we were experts. There was some really good

teachers that guided us but I really wished we had some mentor support.

The institution abandoned Eva during that critical first year as a teacher. Subsequently,

Eva was forced to look for help elsewhere and she found other ways to gain information.

"There was one TA, a senior TA who happened to be in my classroom and she taught me

so much about how to help those non-readers. She taught us phonics." Eva reflected on

how lucky she was. "I learned a lot from my TA and a teacher who was also teaching

second grade, who is now a mentor teacher. She was pretty supportive; she's really

enthusiastic about trying these new things. She really taught us the ropes." For Eva,

support came from classified staff and not certificated personnel who taught in the

classroom.

Besides help from the TA, Eve received assistance through her professional

development experiences:

Any activities [staff development] that I've been involved in outside the

classroom have always been instruction in reading and so I've gone to so many

workshops and so many trainings that deal with standards of reading, practices of

teaching reading, theories, and reading programs. We went to one training on

whole language that was like a week long. I mean we were completely immersed

and then we went to a follow-up training and then you were a trainer.

Eva's professional development experiences are standard for education. Brief exposure to

the material, few follow-up sessions, and then you become an expert.

Eva is in her fifth year of teaching and has become a leader on her campus. She recently accepted a position to become a literacy coach for the literature series <u>Open Court</u>. She talked about her goals for her career:

I do want to be in an administrative position like at a college level, maybe the district level you know. I want to teach teachers." She explains her incentives for taking the literacy coach position. "Yeah, I can teach Open Court in my own classroom and teach 20 kids how to read and write, but if I can teach 49 teachers to do that then how many more students do we have reading and writing? The reason I wanted to stay on at Jefferson (pseudonym) was the different duties I have taken on these past five years. I really hope that they can see me as just a source, a resource and somebody who might understand the program (Open Court) a little better and who might help them in achieving whole class success, mainly language arts. I don't think it's the program that is going to make the difference; its going to be the way its implemented and the way it's overseen. So my job is not to police it, but just to provide them with support to do it because they are going to have to do it.

Unfortunately, one week later, Eva resigned from the job due to misinformation by the district on salary and hours. Eva was disappointed because she looked forward to experiencing a new challenge that allowed her to work with teachers. Eva and her husband had just bought a house not realizing that her salary would be reduced with this position.

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Carla

Carla is twenty-four years old and attended USC. She teaches Kindergarten and is working on a Masters in Early Childhood Development. Carla married in college and her husband is a high school English teacher.

Carla also attended USC's Teacher Education Program. She remembered running records, reading comprehension models and learning about vocabulary. She recollected "bits and parts of it but doesn't remember how to put it all together." Although Carla came from a teacher education program she felt that she needed assistance at her school. Unfortunately, formal mentor assistance was minimal for Carla, "even though I had a mentor teacher my first year I don't think my mentor teacher did anything." As Carla explained her mentor teacher played a small role in her adjustment as a first year teacher. "I saw her, I mean, she came in like the second month of school. I knew the teacher from before but I never really asked her for much." She spoke fondly about her room partner. "She was the one who really helped me. It was Renee who really helped me. Luckily, Carla was able to experience a positive working relationship with her teaching partner which can be difficult. In this case, Carla's teaching partner provided the support that was absent from the institution.

Teaching can be an isolated profession and Carla felt the loneliness that many teachers experience. "I mean we did talk with the other kindergarten teachers but we didn't plan together. It was just they were doing their own thing; we were doing our own but we still kind of tried to talk to each other about what we were doing, but not really." Fortunately, Carla had participated in a teacher education program that paired up the

student teachers in classrooms and at her school site she was able to teach with a partner as well. Carla was trained to teach collaboratively by her teacher education program.

Carla had experiences with professional development that were positive. She shared:

> Oh, I guess I did go to that, it's like on Saturdays, uh you know how you have to take some training for 20 to 1 and that was all on literacy and it was two or three Saturdays that we had to go. They talked about interactive writing and book making. I didn't think it was a waste of my time. I kind of liked interactive writing. But we did have this woman from our cluster come in and do a phonics staff development.

Professional development is a necessity for encouraging growth in teachers, yet many districts provide this training on weekends when teachers need time away from their jobs. Attendance can be poor because of the familial and educational demands placed on teachers.

Carla remembered one professional development training that was held during school and positively impacted her teaching style. The California Early Literacy Learning (CELL) training was offered to schools in LAUSD and provided training on the elements of reading instruction. Although Carla recognized reading aloud and running records from her teacher education program, it's the CELL training that has impacted her instruction. She attributed this to its being recent while the USC program occurred three years ago.

Carla remembered the July training that focused on assessment. Teachers were upset with the multiple assessments that needed to be implemented throughout the year.

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They didn't want to do the extra work. Carla rationalized the teachers reaction as, "I don't think a lot of teachers do it (assessments). I don't think they take the time to really figure out where their kids are at. Like at the beginning of the year they do it and then that's it and then they keep them in the same reading group." As a result, the staff at Carla's school was divided in their attitude towards CELL training. Isolation set in for Carla and her teaching partner. "I mean a lot of the time Renee and I felt like we were the only ones who are really excited about CELL and everybody else is upset." As I stated earlier, teaching is a lonely profession especially when teachers counter the school culture.

Not all teachers wanted to participate in the CELL training. Carla remembered her principal sending a memo around asking teachers if they were interested in participating. The teachers who said no were paid a visit by the principal. "People were mad. She would go in and want them to say yes when they already said no and they realized that even though they voted, CELL was one of the programs selected and she [the principal] really wanted it. She was pushing for it and a lot of people felt pressured to say okay to CELL." Teachers felt the mandates that so often occur in this profession with no opportunity to voice their opinion.

Resistance occurred at the school site and at the workshops. Teachers were vocal about their concerns and when they weren't vocal they just sat there and didn't participate. Contrary to the belief that teachers can be passive, Carla's colleagues at her school site and trainings disrupted this notion and expressed their opinions. The school culture can be intimidating as Carla found out when she shared her successes of CELL training. Carla and two of her colleagues would drive to the CELL trainings together,

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walk in together, and were excited and ready to learn. She encountered resentment at her school when she told her colleagues about the strategies working in her class and "they just laughed." Despite this negative atmosphere, Carla continues to teach using her CELL training.

Carla's school is getting ready to transition into the Open Court Literacy program. She has some concerns because she heard the program was designed for gifted children and that her CELL training would be inappropriate. Her principal's position is that "you know they're going to just call them different names. It's going to be the same thing, just different names. Don't think we wasted our time getting trained." At the same time, Carla realized that the autonomy she once enjoyed will no longer exist once Open Court goes into effect. She explained:

> I heard they have the Open Court police that come into your classroom and make sure you're doing it. I think that's dumb because I feel that we all have our own personalities and our own style and to push us into all doing the same thing at the same time and say the same thing in exact words, I don't know how its going to work.

By adopting a highly structured program like Open Court, schools send the message that teachers are not capable and are unable to provide instruction.

Although Carla doesn't like the upcoming changes, she is willing to try it out. She is realistic about the changes, "I know I'm probably not going to be able to do a lot of the CELL strategies in the morning, but I know I can do it in the afternoon, like with social studies or science, well, if I'm not teaching Kindergarten in the afternoon." Carla

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realizes that she will have to maneuver the system and do what needs to be done for herself and her students.

Alicia

Alicia is twenty-seven years and has been teaching for 3 years. She was born in El Salvador and moved to the U.S. when she was nine. She attended USC and completed her Masters in Reading. Alicia hopes to become a Bilingual Reading and Writing Specialist. She is married with two children. Alicia is in her third year of teaching. She did not have a mentor teacher during her first year at her school site. Alicia asked her principal that year for a mentor and the principal's response was "Well, you are too good, you don't need one." Alicia was frustrated because she had a lot of questions about how to begin the year and the school staff didn't think she needed anyone. These assumptions prohibited Alicia from access to a mentor program designed to help new teachers.

Despite the lack of a mentor, Alicia was able to participate in the CELL training. She remembers a three-day weekend with intensive training and heavy reading at night. Observing classrooms that implemented CELL instruction was one feature that marked this training. After the intensive, Alicia met once a month with her core for follow-up training. These trainings involved leaving the classroom for the day and meeting at different sites to work on running records and interactive writing.

Alicia pondered over the effectiveness of the training:

> Was it helpful? It's hard to say. I don't think that I remember, I mean, if I don't
> remember enough they're not going to be helpful. I think there were more
> questions that came to mind that we didn't discuss. And the program and trainers

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seemed to be very adamant. They weren't welcoming or open for discussion.
That is what I resented most. I had a lot of questions about my own theories
versus their theories.

Alicia resented the rigidity of the professional training and found little use for it in her
classroom. These trainings did not recognize Alicia's about teaching. She remembered
another staff development training where four of her colleagues and herself attended a
Saturday workshop that focused on guided reading and interactive writing. She recalled
the little booklet that showed how the district wanted her to teach reading. Alicia
explained that it was "so disconnected and it wasn't the way I structure my reading and
writing program. I don't think that I changed any of my reading and writing programs
because of these staff development programs." Phonics training was another staff
development that opposed her literacy philosophy. Alicia stated that it was "heavy
phonics and I didn't agree because the children don't have any meaning of the text so then
why focus more densely on the sound of breaking every single word up?" The
professional training opportunities that were presented to Alicia did not match her teacher
education training or her teaching philosophies.

Grounded in the philosophies of her teacher education program, Alicia was able
to translate these techniques and methods into her classroom instruction. She believes,
"the learner should have choice. As a teacher she will help them connect to their prior
knowledge." She asserts that if a teacher knows what students bring into the classroom,
how well they can do, and allow them to take risks, then the students will do better once
they believe in themselves.

Alicia discussed her knowledge from teacher education:

> I would say breaking down important concepts and strategies into small
>
> mini lessons that I can build on everyday or extend the whole week. It
>
> didn't appeal to me to cover a whole lesson in one day and have it done.
>
> Part of why I think students are successful is because they continue to
>
> build on that same knowledge and when we do something new they can
>
> relate it because it is all connected.

Alicia resisted the structural demands of the institution by closing her doors, maintaining her autonomy, and meeting the needs of her students.

> Alicia is concerned about the adoption of the Open Court program:
>
> From what I have heard, it's a program that prescribes, constricts,
>
> constraints. I mean you follow word for word what's on the book
>
> and the students are on the same page. I mean, everyone's doing the
>
> same thing, very monotonous. That's my question. Why do we need
>
> qualified teachers if all we're going to do is follow a program. A lot
>
> of teachers are happy, especially the upper grade teachers are looking
>
> forward to it because they feel their students will be stronger in English.

Alicia realized the program will be patrolled by someone at her school. The literacy coach oversees the implementation of Open Court. Everyday the coach will walk through the classroom and then debrief with the teachers if something's not being done correctly. Alicia is exempt from teaching the program because she has a waiver class where primary instruction is conducted in Spanish. But if she had to implement the program she would do her own program at a different time of the day.

> Alicia feels that new teachers will like the program because:

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They need to survive, they need to swim and this is going to be what's going to

help them. There are so many new teachers at the school that this will be the best

thing in order for them to get something, otherwise they might not be getting

anything. That's a way to help them get started.

Despite her opposition to the program, Alicia acknowledged that other new teachers may

face her same predicament, lack of mentoring. In her opinion, Open Court will substitute

for the lack of mentor assistance.

Carmen

Carmen is twenty-two years old and was born in Los Angeles. She attended USC.

She teaches fifth grade and her goal is to pursue a career in teaching at the university

level. This is Carmen's second year at her school site. She was assigned a mentor but

only saw her a couple times during her first year. Carmen explained how she sought

help:

What helped was that I student taught here before I was hired. I kind of

knew where things were and who to ask for things. And if I had major questions

I would ask teachers in my grade level, but not too much because they

kind of tend, you know, because I was in the upper grades, I don't

know, they tend to keep more to themselves.

Carmen didn't have help with literacy instruction at her school site. She attributes her

literacy program to her teacher education experience at USC. She remembered the

reading comprehension model that contained structural analysis, literacy analysis and

phonetic analysis. She recollected being exposed to different literature genres, higher

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level questioning, literature circles and teaching about different cultures through reading.

Carmen shared her problems with teaching:

> It's hard to search for materials especially because we bought these
>
> supposedly fabulous books and they really weren't good for the kids
>
> they were too hard or not enough repetition. So I ended up trying to
>
> find the old series and I made photocopies because some of the kids
>
> were non-readers. I just had to start from scratch.

Lack of materials was a major concern for Carmen as she implemented her instructional program. She asked her principal for materials but was unable to obtain them due to a lack of money. Struggling to overcome the hurdles of a first year teacher, Carmen encountered a lack of materials yet managed to provide instruction for her students.

Carmen participated in CELL training. She remembered interactive writing and guided reading, components that were not taught at USC and they were valuable to her because she found that they worked and were helpful. Carmen explained why CELL training was effective and helpful, "I like the two components in the training. I liked interactive writing and guided reading because we get to practice writing and we get to internalize it as a whole group." Carmen's experiences with CELL were mixed. Reviewing old material was a waste of time and she was tired of listening to techniques that she uses and considers this a weakness of the training.

Carmen was concerned about training for Open Court. She shared, "I hear it's really good but I'm really unsure of the whole thing. I know other teachers don't like it because it's very structured. So, I don't know. I guess it's something I'm going to have to

deal with and see if I like or not." Carmen has heard that <u>Open Court</u> will compliment

her current method of instruction along with her CELL training.

Discussion

This study explores the influences of teacher education training in literacy,

literacy professional development and mentoring for Latina teachers. These women were

caught in a maze of tensions related to overlapping issues. Furthermore, the dominant

structure of school limited their decision making power regarding curriculum both in the

classroom and their exposure to literacy training. As a result they struggled to make

sense of the ambiguous environment they worked in along with the experiences they

brought to the job. There were both external and internal struggles that intertwined with

gender expectations, cultural norms and the historical context of teaching. In this section,

I will discuss four themes that emerged from the data: (a) fragmented teacher education

memories, (b) abandonment by the school structure, (c) finding help and (d) insignificant

professional development.

Fragmented Teacher Education Memories

Similar to findings by Zeichner, Tabachnick and Densmore (1987), these Latina teachers' recollections about teacher education were fragmented at best. Alicia was the only teacher who asserted that her classroom instruction mirrored her training. Three of the four teachers had memories of teacher education methods yet resorted to techniques provided by other teachers or professional development to survive in the classroom. While these teachers had intentions to utilize their educational experiences, the school structure limited the integration of their education into their classrooms. Alicia was the only teacher who shut her classroom door, utilized knowledge from teacher education, and was in control of the curricular decisions in her classroom. The other three teachers became immersed into the school culture that projected a curriculum that was more skills-based differing from their training. This culture attended to an English-only curriculum that focused on phonics as its focus of instruction.

Abandonment by the School Structure

California in the 1960's experienced high numbers of white teachers along with a large white student population and was considered to have a strong educational program during this time. Currently there is an increase in a student population that is diverse in race, class and language ability. Furthermore, legislation that mandated a 20:1 classroom reduction along with the passing of Proposition 227 resulted in a large teacher shortage. The shortage of teachers in California has encouraged people to bypass traditional teacher education programs that are lengthy and expensive, for district intern programs that allow people to teach while enrolled in credential courses.

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In the Los Angeles Unified School District, funding for the mentor program is tight therefore credentialed first year teachers are assumed to be expert if they come from the same cultural background as their students and participated in a teacher education program. The data in this paper asserts that these teachers did not have formal mentor assistance even though they wanted to participate in the program. The educational structure abandoned them. Similar to my findings, the UCLA Center X program (Metcalfe, Smith-Maddox, Wilcher & Morrell, 2000) found that because their students had gone through a formal teacher education program they were considered "experts in the classroom." Although these women work in traditional caregiver roles, it cannot be assumed that because they are of similar culture to their students, they are women, and they are graduates of a teacher education program that they do not need assistance.

As this paper depicts, women who came into teaching and were considered novice teachers resented the lack of help they received from their institutions. The women interviewed in this paper recalled their lack of mentor assistance, and rather demanding these services, turned for help elsewhere.

Finding Help

It has been estimated that 25% of beginning teachers do not teach more than two years and that nearly 60% leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Harris, 1992). According to Gold (1996), there are six factors that relate to teachers' decisions to remain or leave teaching: (1) meeting teachers' unmet psychological needs (Gold & Roth, 1993); (2) amount of education (Bloland & Selby, 1980); (3) initial commitment to teaching (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982); (4) adequacy of teacher

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preparation programs and student teaching (Zeichner, 1980); (5) professional and social integration into teaching (Chapman & Hutcheson, 1982); and (6) the role of the administrator (Berry, Noblit, & Hare, 1985). These factors are evident in the teachers experiences. Eva shared her concerns about the lack of practicality in her teacher education program. Carla recollected how her principal coerced colleagues to attend professional development training. All four teachers shared the lack of mentors due to their teacher preparation.

According to Lane, Rogers, Metcalfe, Contreras and Gelbwachs (2000), 50% of teachers will leave teaching within six years. In urban schools, the attrition rate is 50% within five years and in some urban schools, 50% of the teachers will leave within three to four years. These statistics are alarming when data reveals the lack of support schools are providing new teachers especially when three years are needed for teachers to reach their full potential. New teachers need the support for opportunities to become educators.

Despite the abandonment experienced by these Latina teachers, they managed to find answers to their questions. These roads varied as the exemplars reveal. For two of these teachers, women at their school sites aided in disrupting the institutional expectations of teaching in isolation and helped them on the road to success as a teacher. One woman in particular, a senior teaching assistant provided Eva with phonics instruction. This teaching assistant's positive results with children caused teachers to demand that she have her own classroom to provide instruction in reading. Colleagues also provided support as these teachers made their way through unfamiliar territory. Maneuvering their way through the mazes of teaching demanded much more from these women than their earlier teacher education experiences provided them.

Insignificant Professional Development

One source of training for teachers in the classroom is professional development.
Since professional development is one of the few ways to improve practice, effects of this training should be positive. Yet researchers agree that professional development has weak effects on practice because they lack focus and follow-up (Corcoran, 1995). These teachers had opportunities to participate in professional development but how significant were these workshops for teacher practice? These trainings failed to recognize teacher beliefs and educational theories. Carla was the only teacher that praised her CELL training and believed that it positively impacted her instruction. Alicia, on the other hand, refers to professional development as being "disconnected" and the trainers were "resistant to discussion."

Whether being coerced by the administration to attend professional development or feeling the pressure to obtain salary credits, these teachers listened to a curriculum that was mandated by policymakers, not teachers who articulated needs for their students. As Corcoran (1995) explains, professional development should utilize the expertise of teachers as a source for professional development. Instead, teachers are forced to attend workshops during school hours, missing valuable instructional time with students, to listen to repetitive curriculum that is disconnected with their educational philosophies. A curriculum teachers' wanted access to was deliberately unavailable which supports that "silence that shrouds women's work in educational institutions is articulated by a curriculum that withholds knowledge" (Lewis, 1993, p. 44). District officials, policy makers, researchers, and the public have a general distrust of teachers. The assumption that teachers do not know best practice is evident in the decisions made by leaders in

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education. It is this everyday disconnect from teachers experiences and philosophies that is the most serious flaw in the teaching experience. The structure of school fuels this disconnect by providing a school curriculum that promotes the dominant culture while sending a message that teachers are not professionals and cannot make their own instructional decisions.

The transition to Open Court is another example of a mandated curriculum that will be forced on these teachers regardless of their teacher education training or philosophies. School systems searching for teacher-proof curriculum support the mistrust of teachers' to make decisions about how and what students should be taught (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 51). This teacher-proof curriculum promotes the deskilling and devaluing of teachers.

This mistrust should be re-focused on the structure of schools. Currently, some of the teachers are being told that Open Court duplicates the CELL training, just different labels. What will happen to these teachers when they realize that these two programs are theoretically and pedagogically different? Will they shut their doors and continue teaching their current program? Apparently the teachers have thought about this as they refer to the "Open Court Police" that will visit classrooms and monitor instruction. Will this continue to silence teachers? Policing of teachers is an exploitation of teachers.

Implications

The main purpose of this study is to interpret the literacy training of teachers from their teacher education and professional development provided by the district. Educational research needs critical, qualitative investigations of Latinas' and their early

literacy training. This study demonstrates that Latina teachers are receiving minimal literacy support from teacher education, mentors, and professional development.

Why are the stories of these Latina teachers important? We need more teachers who are prepared to instruct second language learners. This population is an obvious choice, but we must understand the struggles they encounter as they learn to teach.

This study provides insight about the impact school structure and curriculum mandates have in California and their interference with teacher education and personal beliefs. It is evident that the structure of the school impacts the integration of teacher education knowledge. These Latina teachers entered schools where they were encouraged to follow a curriculum regardless of what they were taught in teacher education. The dominant structures that exist in schools prohibit teachers' from making their own curricular decisions and they are left feeling inadequate as professionals.

Professional development is necessary to provide teachers with current research and instructional training. As indicated by the teachers' stories, professional development has minimal impact on teaching. The current models of professional development provide short intensive trainings with little regard for personal knowledge or student population. Recent mandates in California have impacted professional development with the implementation of new programs. In this district, Open Court includes a one-week intensive training during the school year and each school is provided with a literacy coach to monitor teachers' instruction. With the curriculum mandates occurring in California, teachers have less freedom to access students' prior knowledge and culture, create lessons that apply to students' environment and adjust pacing according to students' needs. Scripted programs have changed the landscape of professional development.

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Emphasis is placed on following the lesson step-by-step in a timely manner rather than integrating theory or large concepts into the classroom. One way to improve upon the current model of professional development is to create a professional development school with ties to the university.

This study reveals that teachers need more support early in their careers. One possibility is to create a professional development school between the schools and a local university. There are several advantages for teachers and the teacher education department. Universities can provide mentoring support to supplement the district without financial burden. Preservice teachers can begin their student teaching at this site with the time to build cohesive relationships with the school and community. A professional development school can provide a forum for discussions are recent state mandates and ways to improve these structures. The university also benefits by having a site for continuing research and teaching facilities. This collaborative can strengthen the ties between university and school providing additional support for teachers and opportunities to voice opinions about themselves as professionals.

Conclusion

One could conclude, then, that genuine changes will come about when schools, districts and teacher education think differently about what is happening to new teachers in the field, and are provided with the literacy support to ease the transition. The provision of methods in teacher education that fail to acknowledge school curriculum may widen the gap between theory and practice and increase frustration for teacher educators', new teachers' and school administrators. Schools need to address their

weakened support systems including mentoring and professional development. Teachers

are not getting the support necessary to ensure a lasting and fulfilling career in the

classroom. Lack of support may lead to increased frustration that could result in teacher

attrition. As Darling-Hammond (1997) states, "It is not that U.S. teachers and students

cannot succeed when they are well supported, it is that the system fails to support so

many of them" (p. 27).

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