

SECTION III:

**Redefining the Academy
for the Public Good**

CHAPTER 13

**Chicana/o Professors
and the Public Good:**

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT, ACTIVIST SCHOLARSHIP,
AND THE PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract: This chapter explores ten Chicana/o professors of education's sense-making about their role in the academy in terms of community commitments, activist scholarship, and the practices of consciousness in their struggle for their version of the public good. An inductive and domain analysis was used to analyze the observation, document, and narrative data used in this study. Chicana/o consciousness in practice involved not only active awareness of their agency in moment-to-moment interactions, but also the responsibility to seize those moments to act for change. These Chicana/o professors consciously exercised their agency not only in reaction to white supremacy (i.e., White hegemony) in the academy, but also in proactive, enduring ways through day-to-day practices to subvert and challenge the whitestream (i.e., traditional, Euro-centric) norms and practices of higher education. The practices of Chicana/o consciousness, I argue, can contribute to further developing a common understanding of higher education for the public good.

I would like to believe that institutions of higher education were meant to be public spaces for the betterment of society and that their product, higher

education, is meant to produce engaged citizens committed to active participation for the public good. But, do all communities define the “public good” in the same way? Is someone’s good another person’s bad? Is someone’s good fortune another’s misfortune?

I would argue that higher education for the public good as a broad concept should be the pursuit of knowledge(s) that prepare all individuals for active participation in society; thus, it should not just function as a concept, but also manifest in practice (pedagogy). Higher education for the public good should be the active pursuit to produce people with a consciousness inclined toward social justice, including through activism for equality, equity, and true democratic engagement.

Higher education for the public good should promote not simply individual gain and competition for mass accumulation, but also people becoming involved in community building and mutual support. The products of higher education for the public good should model and teach with and about a different way to be a citizen. This includes moving beyond a procedural, individualistic, and spectator form of citizenship into a collaborative effort with a high sense of social responsibility to serve the public interest for all people.

This chapter explores how ten Chicana/o professors of Education make sense of their role in the academy in terms of community commitment, activist scholarship, and the practices (pedagogy) of consciousness in their struggle for their version of the public good. Important in this study is the social-cultural, as well as the historical, individual, and collective, context from which this understanding of self as Chicana/o emerges in relation to the hegemony of white supremacy in the U.S. Urrieta and Reidel (2006) define “white supremacy” as the official and unofficial practices, principles, morals, norms, values, history, and overall culture that privileges Whites in U.S. society.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are community commitments embedded into the ideology and practice of Chicana/o academics in education?
2. How does the intellectualism of Chicana/o scholars contribute to, and/or disrupt the social and political hegemony of the Euro-American academy?
3. How does personal experience and collective memory, through the Chicana/o identity framework, inform the practices that either sustain or challenge traditional educational institutional practices in higher education?

The agency in practice of these Chicana/o professors of education will be defined as Chicana/o consciousness. Chicana/o consciousness in practice involves not only

active awareness of their agency in moment-to-moment interactions in the struggle for social justice, but also their felt responsibility to seize those moments to act in the world. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the close relationship between Chicana/o identity and consciousness, and how the Chicana/o professors in this study describe their work as activist pedagogy for the public good.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND BACKGROUND

Social Theory and Agency

Social and cultural reproduction theories proposed relatively closed reproductive processes (Morrow & Torres, 1995). From this perspective, individual agency was relatively absent within the structures of social and cultural systems. Culture itself was essentialized as static collective bodies of knowledge and norms, passed down from generation to generation (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996).

Resistance theories later challenged the idea that subjects did not have the agency to respond to the structures and institutions (Morrow & Torres, 1995) of whitestream¹ society. In Chicana/o scholarship, Solórzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) examine Chicana/o agency in education as a form of “transformational resistance” using a Critical Race and Latino Critical Race (Latcrit) theoretical framework and have defined it as:

behavior illustrating both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice...the student holds some level of awareness and critique of her or his oppressive conditions and structures of domination and must be at least somewhat motivated by a sense of social justice. With a deeper level of understanding and a social justice orientation, transformational resistance offers the greatest possibility for social change (p. 319).

Transformational resistance, however, is articulated within the constraints of resistance theoretical frameworks that often disable and delimit the potential of agency (Holland & Lave, 2001), and frame action as reactive rather than proactive.

Bourdieu (1977) challenges stagnant views of culture and the dichotomy of structure and resistance by redirecting attention to the constant improvisation of cultural forms. According to Bourdieu, although there are certain behavioral expectations in society that constrain, no action in the interaction process between dominants and subordinates is complete until the entire “moment” of interaction has transpired. Bourdieu states: “But even the most strictly ritualized exchanges,

in which all the moments of the action, and their unfolding, are rigorously foreseen, have room for strategies” (p. 15).

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) also highlight the importance of improvisations of cultural forms as a manifestation of agency. When improvisation is seen as agency, there is the potential for a local or full-scale new social movement as “improvisation can become the basis for a reformed subjectivity” (p. 18) and has the potential for collective action. Chicana/o consciousness in practice has this potential.

To think about Chicana/o professors’ strategic roles in the academy as a practice of their identity, or as informed, orchestrated action (Holland, 2003), it is necessary to revisit the concept of agency. Inden (1990, p. 23) defines human agency as:

the realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view.

Holland et al. (1998) aptly add that personal agency exists within a seeming contradiction between humans as social producers and humans as social products. Chicana/o consciousness in practice is this “realized” awareness of knowing of their ability *and* responsibility to act critically in the world, knowing well that there are structural and inherent contradictions to limit their social practice.

Agency, as understood in this chapter, also incorporates the concept of cultural production. Cultural production focuses on how human agency is maneuvered under the structures of the system (Levinson et al., 1996). According to Levinson et al. (1996), cultural production “indexes” a dialectic between structure and agency, “[f]or while the educated person is culturally *produced* in definite sites, the educated person also culturally *produces* cultural forms” (p. 14, original emphasis). Chicana/o professors’ practices in the academy in this study are under this self-awareness or conscious understanding of agency, culturally *produced* in formal educational institutions and working within them to *produce* new and trans/formative cultural forms.

The following section addresses historical, social, and philosophical aspects of the Chicana/o identity and the quest to challenge U.S. White supremacy. This quest for change involves a re/definition of activism when working within whitestream institutions for higher education with the aim of creating trans/formational, democratic, more socially just spaces.

Chicana/o Identity and the Practice of Consciousness

Chicana/o identity officially emerged in the 1960s. This new understanding of the self as “Chicana/o” claimed legitimacy as a “U.S. citizen” group with equal rights. Yet, Chicana/o was also product of the oppressive structures of historical colonial institutions such as whitestream schooling (Urrieta, 2004b) due to the military invasion and subsequent continuous occupation of Northern Mexico (today known as the U.S. Southwest) (Acuña, 2000; Gallegos, 2000). This new identity actively denounced a long history of educational practices embedded in the federal educational system that denied equal access and treatment to children of Mexican descent.

The ideology behind the Chicana/o *movimientos* of the 1960s was not monolithic, yet a general ideology often referred to as Chicanismo emerged. According to Acuña (2000), generally anger and reaction to an unjust system, whether macro or micro, was being acted out. There was a call for Chicanismo that took on different meanings for different people. Chicanismo generally meant to have “pride of identity, and self-determination” (pp. 357–358). Self-determination included a strong sense of “community commitment” (Delgado Bernal, 2001) that was later attributed to having a Chicana/o, or *mestiza/o* consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987; Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Activism usually revolved around community-based organizations, efforts that sought to “better” the conditions of the *barrio* (neighborhood). Gutiérrez (2001) concurs by alluding to community in terms of *raza* and of the brotherhood of Chicanos as *carнаles*. “Chicanismo meant identifying with *la raza* (the people), and collectively promoting the interests of *carнаles* (brothers) with whom they shared a common language, culture, and religion” (Gutiérrez, 2001, p. 214). García (1998) similarly writes about Chicanismo as a philosophy surrounded by historical symbols and active attempts to fight against racism through activism. Chicanismo is thus the broad ideology behind the identity politics of the self-proclaimed Chicana/o. Participants in these politics (practices) were often perceived as activists, or members of a new social movement called the Chicana/o Movement.

Having a Chicana/o consciousness often meant engaging in activism of various sorts, with the aim of creating a “better world”—another interpretation of the public good. In the 1960s, Chicana/o activism took on more physical acts of protest (García, 1998) and was associated with other protest movements of the ’60s (Maciel & Ortiz, 1996). Thus a new and unique perspective, drawn from a Mexican-American past, yet different than any other previously espoused, emerged with the advent of Chicanismo.

Institutionalization and Chicana/o Professors

Certain sectors of the Chicana/o *movimientos* were infiltrated by the end of the 1970s and the notion that the movement had become “institutionalized” emerged (García, 1996). With the implementation of Chicana/o Studies Programs and of MEChA’s (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán*)² on different university campuses, feelings of distance emerged from the original grass-roots organizing of earlier times. A different form of participation or “professional activism” (Padilla, 2003) emerged.

Institutional “penetration” is evident in institutions for higher education. García (1996) asserts that “[o]ne development from the period of the Chicano Movement is the ‘penetration’ of Chicanos in decision-making institutions” (p. 95). Acuña (2000) documents, for example, that, in 1967, only three percent of the teachers in California had Spanish surnames. In 2000, the percentage of Hispanic teachers was 13.5% (California Department of Education, 2000). The number of Hispanic university faculty members is not as promising, yet is also growing. Although these numbers do not reflect the proportion of the Latina/o population, there is a growing number of Chicanas/os penetrating into institutions that were formerly closed. García (1996) states, “One can suggest that the political times may be different and that institutionalization of the movement calls for different strategies and approaches” (p. 103).

Not all Chicanos/as see institutionalization as good, but rather as costly compromises. Some activists of the ’60s lament the changes and distancing from the tactics and activism of that time (García, 1996; Muñoz, 1989). Scholars like Acuña (2000) have called the ’80s and ’90s the “Hispanic” generations, full of negotiations and compromises. The notion of the institutional “sell-out” is often conjured up as the ultimate compromise in these negotiations for institutional recognition and power (Urrieta, in press). However, such accusations are not deterministic or dichotomous as many have made them seem. The experiences of Chicana/o, Latina/o educators in higher education highlight some of the contradictions.

Chicana/o, Latina/o faculty document the personal struggles with covert and overt forms of racism and marginality experienced when dealing with or overcoming dominant gate-keeping institutional practices (Padilla & Chávez, 1995). Studies have found that academic success for Chicanas/os is an alienating process at institutions of higher education that are rarely welcoming environments for students or faculty (González, 2001; Urrieta, 2003). Alemán (1995) states:

As Latina/o professors, we are newcomers to a world defined and controlled by discourses that do not address our realities, that do not affirm our intellectual contributions, that do not seriously examine our worlds. Can I be both professor and Latina without compromise?” (p. 75).

Such *testimonios* speak broadly to the experiences of Chicanas/os in higher education. With reference to identity, there is an orchestration of selves that emerges as a person acquires a more enduring identity—Chicana/o—and learns to negotiate roles, languages, and scripts according to the social/cultural spaces entered (Urrieta, 2003). The institutionalization of Chicana/o professional activism in the Post-Civil Rights era is the context for this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study further develops my previous research conducted in California from 2001–2003 (Urrieta, 2003). My previous study builds on Gándara's (1995) seminal work on low-income Chicana/o educational success, as well as Delgado Bernal's (1999) work on Chicana/o activism. It is a study of the experiences of twenty-four Chicana/o educators, including undergraduates planning careers in education, as well as current teachers, graduate students in education, and professors of education. I explore how identity and agency manifest in activism for these particular Chicana/o educators. In further analysis of this work, I also explored how Chicanos/as achieve educational success through strategic practices of identity and ideological negotiation and orchestration by "playing the game," and yet maintain activist commitments for change (Urrieta, 2005).

In this study I focus specifically on Chicana/o professors of education. Ten Chicana/o faculty members (five woman and five men) at different universities in the Southwest were interviewed. The faculty members interviewed had tenure-track appointments in public universities; five had experience working in Tier 1 Research Universities, and five were affiliated with Teaching Institutions. This sample included two full professors, two associate professors, and six assistant professors, with each of these rankings being gender equal.

With this research, I wanted to further understand how Chicana/o professors of education make sense of their role in the academy as it relates to community commitments, their scholarship, and in particular, their individual and collective agency, or practices (pedagogy), in their struggle for their version of the public good. The participants in this study were treated as consultants or as "experts" (Hinson, 2000). Autobiographical narratives were privileged as the epistemological foundation (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Observations were also conducted and documents collected for limited forms of discourse analysis (Freeman, 1996).

To participate, consultants had to strongly self-identify as Chicana/o and be employed as tenure track faculty in schools and/or colleges of education in accredited universities in the U.S. Professors were contacted using a purposeful sampling method (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996) using personal contacts, professional organizations, and professional contacts. An in-depth, semi-structured (Davies,

2001) interview was conducted with each professor as well as five hours of observations at their host institution. Two documents were requested from each professor: an example of personal writing such as a journal entry, poetry, etc., and a formal writing sample such as curriculum vitae, syllabus, or professional statement.

The data were analyzed using an inductive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interview transcripts were actively used to triangulate observation and document data and to substantiate and/or refute claims (Davies, 2001). After themes were identified and data sorted into domains (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), representative examples from the interviews were cited to support each of the emergent themes. Pseudonyms are used for all people and institutions. In the following sections I discuss briefly the overall findings and later focus particularly on the themes of:

1. community commitment,
2. activist scholarship, and
3. the practice (or agency) of consciousness.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Generally the Chicana/o professors expressed feeling isolated and alienated at their institutions. The degree of isolation for some was greater than for others due to the setting and number of supportive colleagues directly available with whom to network. The isolation of Chicana/o professors, however, was not a deterrent in their active attempts to present to all of their students a more critical and multi-perspective curriculum, as evidenced through course syllabi as well as by their use of instructional pedagogies to raise students' critical consciousness. Equitable student evaluation, support for learning, and mentorship were important to Chicana/o professors. Mentorship was especially important when working with graduate students where pseudo-familial metaphors were used to refer to these relationships.

All professors expressed a strong and equal commitment to both their teaching and research in areas that support and present alternative epistemologies and perspectives. This commitment involved raising awareness about social justice education, equity issues, resources allocation, and critical analysis of policy and language issues, immigration, race/ethnicity, and affirmative action. Several professors were doing this by incorporating these issues to their course syllabi; others, however, were teaching small seminars for which they were not getting paid and not receiving university credit for teaching. Professors doing research expressed a "political twist" to their research agendas as well as a controversial element to their "debunking of myths" in whitestream research previously used to stereotype minority communities.

All of the professors, in particular, saw themselves as a resource to Chicana/o students on their respective campuses (undergraduate and graduate) as well as to Chicana/o students nationally that often sought their assistance. Their commitments to “opening doors” and to mentor students in the graduate school socialization process were taken very seriously. Opening doors often involved maintaining Chicana/o networks across different university contexts, locally and nationally, that enabled for the flow of students through what some called “pipelines.” This was done with the goal of increasing Chicana/o student representation at all levels of the educational system.

Chicana/o networks were not limited to other scholars in four-year universities, but included professors at the community colleges as well as graduate students, teachers, and community members at all levels and in different fields or disciplines. Such connections also included networks in government organizations; legal organizations, such as MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) and LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens); NCLR (National Council of La Raza); and other policy forums created to address community issues, especially relating to Latina/o educational attainment and access to higher education. Such networks often provided social, emotional, academic, legal, political, and other forms of support.

Part of professors’ activist commitments also involved the creation of trans/formative spaces for Chicana/o, Latina/o students and their allies (of other races/ethnic groups). Trans/formative spaces included research opportunities, classroom discussions, office space for meaningful interaction, centers to gather, after school programs, migrant education summer programs, and minority new student orientation programs. Research and teaching were thus seen as very important in both creating these spaces and securing funding sources that would enable these professors to have these spaces and fund students through their graduate and undergraduate programs, while also doing community related research. Professors who worked in teacher education programs and with terminal Master’s students focused on:

1. teaching students how to use critical pedagogy to make the K–12 classroom a site of trans/formation, and
2. preparing students to attend elite universities to do doctoral-level work.

Conveying the public “voice” was also of great importance to activist Chicana/o professors; they did so not only through presentations at academic conferences, but also by talking to a variety of different groups, including community organizations—even when they did not receive “official” university credit for their service. Many

were actively involved in writing for local newspapers, radio, and television in order to present a more critical perspective on issues affecting the community. All felt that their connections to K–12 education, K–12 teachers, and community educators were important and, in many cases, helped to keep them grounded, honest, and humble in their professional and personal lives. With the hope of influencing the direction of the academic and policy conversation, many also engaged audiences as keynote speakers and “experts,” even when the label made them feel uneasy.

A few undertook positions locally and nationally that gave them the agency to make informed policy decisions regarding educational issues affecting the Latina/o community. One professor served as a high official in the national government, for example, while others worked in policy circles and/or gave expert testimony in court. Through their research, several sought to raise awareness about issues such as standardized testing, the validity of the SAT, minority student access to higher education, and the efficiency of K–12 instructional programs. In some cases, professors’ involvement in faculty search committees was also perceived as being instrumental in hiring more Chicana/o, Latina/o faculty in their departments. Their positions as faculty members gave them the agency to recruit and, in many cases, admit—or commit to working with—Chicana/o, Latina/o students and other students committed to their vision for a better world.

“We can make a difference...we can!”

The above quote illustrates the enthusiasm for change expressed by most of the professors interviewed, and although some talked about their discomfort in predominantly White working environments, all were committed to work for a better world. In the following section I will discuss the themes of:

1. community commitment,
2. activist scholarship, and
3. the practice (or agency) of consciousness.

These themes were particularly salient for all of the professors interviewed. Representative quotes are used to illustrate the concepts.

Comunidad

Whether it was with Latina/o communities outside of the university or with student communities within it, community commitment was central to the work of Chicana/o professors in education. Adriana said:

I am incredibly grateful and I feel this very strong sense of responsibility that I need to turn that into opportunities for other people. And because I have a particular connection to the Chicano community, it allows me to do that there.

Not only was this an important component of professors' research, teaching, and service agendas, but most, like Adriana, also expressed a sense of responsibility to work on Chicana/o, Latina/o issues in education, even when these issues were devalued by the institution. Andi stated:

The reason lots of us get into this business [education] is because we have this felt need, we have a community in crisis, we see it and we wanna get in there and do something. It's not something that you wait to get tenure for and then you do it.... It is fundamental to why we got into the academy. It is...fundamental to our work. It's not...we don't have the luxury [to wait for tenure to begin to work on Chicana/o, Latina/o issues].... I can't do it after tenure. We don't have that luxury.

Like Andi and Adriana, other professors interviewed expressed their commitment to raise awareness about the issues affecting the larger Latina/o community, even if they had to pay an institutional price—tenure and/or promotion—for this commitment. Andi's statements are representative of other professors' motivations for entering the field of education in the first place. Part of that motivation is not just to work for the physical benefit of the Latina/o community, but also to raise the consciousness of *all* of the students they teach. Miguel, for example, stated:

My goal as an educator is to make people think critically about the reality that they live in. Because I am convinced that if they do that, they will want a different world than the one we are in.... I see that, that practice in a classroom as activism. It is the space in which I am politically working toward... a better world, it is a more humane world and that's where I do it.

As Miguel states, commitment to community for these Chicana/o professors was not exclusively about the Chicana/o community per se (although there were strong commitments expressed), but also a commitment to the greater good—one could say the public good—of all people. It was understood that when inequality and discrimination exist in a society, it affects not just the oppressed, but everyone in that society in negative ways.

Although the field of education is one that especially draws the interests of Chicana/o, Latina/o students, the Chicana/o faculty in this study were not unconditionally committed to “brown” students simply because they identified as Chicana/o or Latina/o. Felipe expressed this well:

I'm not interested in just having brown faces with White middle-class dreams. I'm not interested in working with students who just wanna get a nice cushy job and make a whole lot of money. I'm interested in working with students who come from communities where they had to overcome a lot of barriers to even get to college. Poor working families who've been able to overcome that and to help them to go to college so that they can then go back and help those kinds of Mexican communities, Chicano communities, and not necessarily just prepare middle class “Highspanics.”

Community commitment, for Felipe, therefore related to addressing the pressing issues affecting and afflicting the broader Chicana/o, Latina/o community outside and within the university. However, it was not just about an undisputed ethnic/cultural alliance, but also an ideological commitment to and for social justice—the pursuit of a better world, a more humane world that includes everyone living in it.

Activist Scholarship

The literature on intellectualism highlights that interpretations of intellectualism and the role and responsibilities of intellectuals in society vary (Gramsci, 1971; Said, 1994; West, 1999). The Chicana/o professors in this study did not see their scholarship simply as an expected practice of their career, but as form of activism or activist scholarship. Felipe stated this well:

I would consider an activist agenda [in research] doing the kind of work that's gonna shake things up. They're not doing the safe kind of research, they're doing research and producing the kind of knowledge that's gonna be very controversial, that's gonna have some resistance. Uhm, that's gonna have strong critique against it. But I think that's one way of determining of whether your work is making a difference or not. If it causes some resistance then you know you must be having something that's threatening change, 'cause people don't like change. So it's a good measure.

Activist scholarship is not unsound or un-rigorous research, but rather scholarship about issues undervalued or misunderstood in the whitestream academy and by whitestream researchers. Because activist scholarship challenges previously

misunderstood or misguided research, it is often perceived by the whitestream, like Felipe says, as “controversial” and also “causes come resistance.”

Activist scholarship is often associated with the tradition of social criticism. Social criticism poses difficult, but necessary questions that encourage intellectual debate fundamental to furthering the cause of democracy. Although the voices of intellectual dissent are necessary to the goals of deliberation, dialogue, and democracy, the activist scholarship of the Chicanas/os interviewed was not social criticism. Chicana/o activist scholarship is the active and valuable knowledge production, through empirical research, that validates the epistemologies of those outside the whitestream in U.S. society. Adriana stated:

Our role is to codify and give credibility to certain kinds of knowledge and then to codify and give credibility to people who have that knowledge. And of course it's a huge tension because there are people within the academy who believe that there's one kind of knowledge. And that kind of knowledge of course is privileged in this setting. And I think our job, people like me, people like you Luis is I think to always call it into question.

Giving credibility to “certain kinds of knowledge” and the people that possess that knowledge is fundamental to the scholarship of Chicana/o professors. The production of knowledge for these Chicana/o professors is not knowledge for knowledge's sake, but an active agenda to reverse the wrongs and erasure of people of color that result from white supremacy and whitestream indoctrination.

The Practice of Consciousness

The practice of Chicana/o consciousness involves not only active awareness of one's agency to challenge white supremacy in moment-to-moment interactions in the struggle for social justice, but also the responsibility to seize those moments to act in the world (Urrieta, 2003). All of the Chicana/o professors interviewed were aware of their agency and sought “moments” where they could exert this agency in proactive and practical (rather than reactive and reductive) ways. Andrés stated:

I want more people with experiences like mine and like other Latinos, in positions where they can either acquire or utilize the assets of the academy to make a difference. And that's broadly defined, intellectually, politically, and on a day-to-day practical basis.

Andrés' reference to the “assets of the academy” illustrates that for these Chicana/o professors, academic culture and the artifacts of this culture (such as writing,

teaching, public speaking, etc.) were not only tools for domination, but could also be tools for liberation—to make a difference—in proactive ways. Agency, as understood in Andrés' statements, is also not about mass revolution (that is not what proaction means here), but about change “on a day-to-day practical basis.”

The practice of consciousness, especially the practical aspects of change, was especially important in the field of education for these Chicana/o professors. Education was seen as a place for emancipation, although for others, education is the very site of whitestream indoctrination. Felipe stated:

It's a place of liberation when you think about activism. Education is the most fertile ground to liberate yourself. Liberate yourself, your mind and liberate yourself economically, socially, spiritually, every way, through education. I think you can totally liberate yourself in many ways by the power of writing, by the power of thinking.

Because the field of education was already seen as a potential place to bring about change, the Chicana/o professors in this study used their positions to practice their consciousness in several ways. The practices of consciousness included forming individual and collective networks of support for their efforts, mentoring students, teaching, and using their public voice to raise awareness about issues they considered important.

Mentoring students was probably considered one of the most important practices of consciousness for the Chicana/o professors in this study. This was especially true when it involved mentoring graduate students. Laura, for example, stated:

I think we have that responsibility to be mentors, mentors to other Latinos. I think one of the things, I think once you earn your doctorate, once you've done a qualitative study or statistical study, it doesn't make a difference, that you always have to help the next person that is doing a doctoral study.

Although mentoring students is part of academic culture in graduate school, the ways that Chicana/o professors spoke about their responsibility to mentor and specifically about their mentoring relationships was significant. The practice of consciousness through mentoring relationships evoked familial and kinship ties that were captured well by Andrés:

Once you're in a position where you can help others, then you ought to do it. You have to do it. That's just the responsibility you have. And mainly because there may not be that support for those individuals elsewhere. It's the old you know *padrino*, *madrina* syndrome. When you baptize someone, you have a responsibility.

The devil is not supposed to take that person. Should anything happen to the parents, you're supposed to do it. When you marry someone, you're the *padrino* in some sense, you have responsibility. You know to help them, nurture them, support them, not just, it's not just an honorific relationship it's a responsible relationship.

Andrés specifically uses the metaphor of Catholic sacramental sponsorship to make his point about mentoring. In this cultural context, the mentoring relationship has a more familial and also sacred commitment to have a "responsible relationship" and part of that relationship is to nurture and support, and most importantly protect, the *ahijada/o* (mentee/student) from harm (the devil).

The Practice of Chicana/o Consciousness and the Public Good

Chicana/o consciousness in practice, in this study, similar to Villenas' (1996) colonizer/colonized ethnographer dilemma, is about Chicanas/os working, as professors, in educational institutions that would have them contribute to the educational colonizing enterprise, but with the personal counter-intent and motivation to trans/form these institutions into more accessible and democratic spaces. Villenas (1996) attempts to locate herself within the problematic dichotomy of the colonizer (whitestream ethnographer) and the colonized (Chicana), and ultimately resolves the dilemma by seeing her own agency as a *Chicana ethnographer*. She concludes:

My answer to the ethnographer-as-colonizer dilemma is that I will not stop at being the public translator and facilitator for my communities, but that I am my own voice, an activist seeking liberation from my own historical oppression in relation to my communities (p. 730).

The Chicana/o consciousness in practice of these professors, like Villenas, is about finding and expressing an alternative voice. Exercising agency consciously for Chicana/o professors is not only in reaction to white supremacy in the academy, but also in proactive, enduring ways through their day-to-day practices to subvert and challenge the whitestream norms and practices of higher education. Chicana/o consciousness is thus formed on the basis of cultural, collective, and community memory (Delgado Bernal, 2001), but is negotiated and manifests in seized moments of opportunity for change in institutions for higher education. When these opportunities arise, improvisation, whether planned or unplanned, is key.

Overall, the practice of consciousness by these Chicana/o professors was seen as strategic and opportunistic in a positive sense. By being strategic and opportunistic,

they were aware of their agency and their positions of power to bring about change. The Chicana/o professors in this study were careful about seizing the moments when they could make, or improvise, changes into the system. All of the Chicanas/os in this study felt fortunate and satisfied with their contributions to their vision of a greater good. All felt they were contributing to the cause of social justice in one way or another. Adriana, with a radiant smile and enthusiastic tone of voice, said:

I just get enormous, just enormous gratification out of doing what I do. I mean I just, I can't tell you how happy I am that things have worked out the way they have because one of those major sources of grat....There's two sources of that gratification. And one is...this network of Chicano scholars that it is such a really wonderful part of my life. And the other is being able to work with students...I mean I get to chose who I'm going to work with and I chose to work with people who think similarly to me and who will make a difference, you know?

Adriana expresses the gratification she enjoys in doing the work she does as a professor with the purpose of making a difference. The sources of this gratification include the network of Chicana/o scholars she works with and the mentoring relationship she has with students who think like her and are committed to making a difference—the public good. Elogio, a professor and administrator, similarly responded with enthusiasm:

I've been fortunate. I've been in positions where I can make policies, where I can make decisions, everything from this position, to other positions, to department chair, to even faculty member where I could make decisions about students.... I've been fortunate to be in those positions where you can do that. You can make gains, 'cause you can.

Elogio, like Adriana, and the other professors in this study, was proud and confident about his accomplishments and contributions to a greater good—one could argue, the public good. Elogio's consciousness in practice was especially important due to his position and awareness of his agency and ability to make positive, more democratic changes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WHITESTREAM PUBLIC GOOD

The practices of Chicana/o consciousness, for those committed to dismantling white supremacy and the whitestream norms of higher education institutions, can contribute

to further developing a common understanding of higher education for the public good. That common understanding should be geared toward creating engaged citizens committed to the goals of social justice that include equality, equity, and democratic engagement. As a point of departure toward that goal, however, it is important to understand with clarity that we live in a white supremacist and patriarchal society from which our notions of whitemainstream as *the* mainstream emerge.

In terms of the practices of Chicana/o consciousness, in this chapter, I focused on community commitments, activist scholarship, and practices such as teaching, the public voice, networking, and especially mentoring; however, there are many other practices that need to be further studied in constructive ways. From community commitments, it is important to understand that there has to be an active institutional commitment to diversity, like that of the Chicana/o professors in this study, that goes beyond mission statements and actually involves the active pursuit and commitment to communities of color and other underrepresented groups in higher education. This study also highlights that scholarship is political and that the activist scholarship of the professors studied is no different in rigor or in political inclination than is any other scholarship. The difference is that whitemainstream scholarship is blinded by its normalized status. For the Chicana/o professors in this study, knowledge for knowledge's sake is not as innocent, or as objective, as whitemainstream scholars claim it to be. Finally, the practices of consciousness are important—voice, networking with those committed to social justice, teaching as a tool for consciousness raising, and mentoring, especially students of color, involves a responsible and respectful—not just an honorific—relationship.

The practice of Chicana/o consciousness has important insights to offer our broader conceptions of higher education for the public good in terms of the social responsibility *all* faculty members have in their positions of power. Faculty members committed to the public good should model a different way of being a citizen with actions, not just with concepts, and should especially focus their energies to serve the public interest. U.S. society is changing rapidly, demographically and otherwise. Dismantling white supremacy and whitemainstream practices as the mainstream in higher education is timely and in the public interest—it's for the public good.

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Endnotes

1. Sandy Grande (2000) refers to “whitestream” as the cultural capital of whites in almost every facet of U.S. society. Grande uses the term whitestream as opposed to mainstream in an effort to decenter whiteness as dominant. Whitestream, according to Denis (1997), is a term which plays on the feminist notion of “malestream.” Denis defines Whitestream as the idea that while (Canadian) society is not completely White in socio-demographic terms, it remains principally and fundamentally structured on the basis of the Anglo-European white experience. Whitestream in this article refers to the official and unofficial texts used in U.S. society that are founded on the practices, principles, morals, values, and history of white supremacy and that has been normalized as natural, or “mainstream.” Whitestream indoctrination is not exclusively the domain of Whites in U.S. society, but of any person actively promoting white supremacy as “standard.”
2. MEChA in English translates to *The Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan*. MEChA was officially created as the official student organization of the Movement by faculty, staff, students, administrators, and community members gathered by the Chicano Council on Higher Education at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1969 (Urrieta, 2004a).

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