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“IT’S MAKING ME A BETTER TEACHER”: TRANSFORMING LATINX TEACHER CANDIDATES’ CLINICAL FIELD EXPERIENCES IN A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

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Abstract

This manuscript explores the outcomes of a university-district partnership that provides Latinx teacher candidates with a year-long clinical experience as the culmination of their teacher preparation. Qualitative data collected as part of a mixed methods study were analyzed to determine how Latinx teacher candidates and cooperating teachers understand learning to teach, and perceptions of the partnership. Results show an emphasis on mastering routines, learning to teach through observation, and reciprocal growth derived from their mentoring relationship. Salient is the tendency to homogenize Latinx students and a reductionist vision of diversity. The authors explore the positionality of culture and language in Latinx teacher preparation and implications for quality teacher preparation, including a structured clinically rich approach to learning to teach.

Keywords: university-district partnership, Latinx teacher preparation, clinical experience

In 2014-15, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported that Latinx students accounted for the largest percentage of total enrollment in Texas public schools (52.0%) while Latinx teachers account for only 25.56% of the teaching force (TEA, 2016). Unfortunately, many teachers from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds leave every year for a variety of reasons including feeling inadequately prepared to teach Latinx students (Clark & Flores, 2001; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Davis, et al., 2016). Lavadenz and Hollins (2015) argue that preparing teachers for underserved populations “requires re-conceptualizing the process for learning teaching and locating clinical/field experiences in schools and communities serving these students” (p. 12). Amidst this reality, it is imperative to develop innovative models of Latinx teacher preparation that attracts them to the profession, provides meaningful support, and better prepares them to have a significant impact on Latinx students’ learning and achievement (Davis, et al., 2016). In addition, “given the role that teachers play in cultivating the pool of students who can gain access to college, the experiences of Latinos/as within teacher education are particularly significant and merit further exploration” (Irizzary, 2011, p. 2806). Traditionally, educator

preparation programs consist of courses addressing content and pedagogy, embedded or stand-alone field experiences, and student teaching. Jacobs (2014) extended this discussion by arguing for the need to construct field experiences that are deliberate and designed to be collaborative and inquiry based.

This study explores the outcomes of a university-school district partnership designed to improve Latinx teacher candidates’ clinical experiences. The program design and implementation draws from research that explores the gap between what preservice teachers learn in methods courses and what they learn in field placements (Zeichner, 2010), and research that argues for practice-based pedagogies (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Hollins, 2011; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). In addition, this study aspires to contribute to the preparation of Latinx teacher candidates, especially considering that:

Given the failure of teacher preparation programs to attract and retain more Latino/a students, and the implications that the shortage of qualified teachers has on Latino/a and other K–12 students, it is vital to learn from the challenges and successes of Latino/a

preservice teachers to improve the ways in which teachers of diverse backgrounds are attracted into the field and prepared for this work. (Irizarry, 2011, p. 2806)

The program consists of a year-long field-embedded professional education model to prepare Latinx teacher candidates to become effective practitioners. Prominent in the project is a strong collaboration between the district/school and university in which all partners participate in discussion, decision-making, and program improvement. Key elements of the program are co-teaching (Bacharach & Heck, 2012) and a reflective approach to bridge theory and practice through instruction and data driven practices (Berghoff, Blackwell, & Wisehart, 2011). This research explores the project's outcomes, challenges, and the implications to improve clinical field experience in teacher preparation programs targeting Latinx teacher candidates and students. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Latinx teacher candidates (TCs) and cooperating teachers (CTs) understand learning to teach?
2. What do TCs and CTs perceive as the impact of the year-long field embedded district-university partnership?

Theoretical Perspectives

Many teachers from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds leave the profession for a variety of reasons including feeling inadequately prepared to teach Latinx students (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Davis et al., 2016). Amidst this reality, it is imperative to develop models of Latinx teacher preparation that attract them to the profession, provide meaningful support, and better prepare candidates to have a significant impact in Latinx students' achievement (Davis, et al., 2016).

Research shows that Latinx teachers are more likely to support Latinx students' success by affirming languages and cultures (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Irizarry, 2011). Much of the research regarding the experiences of students of diverse backgrounds in institutions of higher education, and more specifically in teacher education, has focused on minority students or students of color without disaggregating the experiences of Latinx or others incorporated under those umbrella terms (Irizarry, 2011). Research exploring the reasons for Latinx teachers to choose the profession indicate that they hope to improve students' future and fight injustices they have

experienced (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio, 2014).

District-university partnerships have the potential to positively impact the recruitment and quality of preparation of Latinx teacher candidates (Oliva & Staudt, 2003). Teacher preparation programs should focus on Latinx teachers' identity development to ensure school success for language minority students, modeling the value of cultural knowledge (Clark & Flores, 2001). To that end, it is important to consider teacher education research that argues for the need to bridge the gap between practice and theory, and the disconnect between the reality of K-12 classrooms and university coursework (Ball & Forzani, 2009; McDonald, et al., 2014) while ensuring teacher candidates' understanding of the broader professional, cultural, and relational aspects of teaching.

Research on Teacher Preparation

Over the past 20 years, teacher education research has tackled the need to bridge the gap between practice and theory, and the disconnect between the reality of the K-12 classroom and university-based coursework (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Grossman, et al., 2009; McDonald, et al., 2013). Research has documented teacher candidates' perception of classroom experience as where the real learning happens versus the university-based course that seems far removed from the day-to-day realities of teaching (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). Research has shown the importance of providing meaningful, practice-based learning opportunities to move teacher education closer to the work of teaching (Zeichner, 2012). Zeichner (2012) argues that what makes teacher education "practice based is its systematic focus on developing teacher candidates' abilities to successfully enact high-leverage practices" (p. 378) while ensuring teacher candidates understanding of the broader professional, cultural, and relational aspects of teaching.

A recent review of teacher preparation research (Anderson & Stillman, 2013) identified the need to strengthen the evidence base concerning teacher preparation, especially in regard to the nature of teacher candidates' learning in the field. There has also been a recent call for more research focusing on questions about how teacher candidates learn the tasks of teaching as they learn to reflect on beliefs and practice (Cochran-Smith, et al., 2016). Presently, there is consensus that more research is needed to determine the characteristics of teaching and learning that make the most difference in preparing effective teachers (Grossman, et al., 2009; Hollins, 2011). In this regards, Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) assert that

From a social constructivist approach, learning to teach has been defined as a collaborative endeavor

that occurs in a community of peers, which involves learning from and with others by exchanging ideas, articulating the reasoning behind instructional decisions, engaging in inquiry aimed at solving specific problems of practice, and reflecting on one's teaching to improve student learning (p. 111).

In this sense, teacher preparation programs need to provide teacher candidates opportunities to develop and examine their practice amidst their sociocultural and political reality, through purposefully planned opportunities to engage in making meaning of prior and new knowledge and experiences through “intentionally guided practice while student teaching” (Anderson & Stillman, 2013, p. 5).

Field Experience and Learning to Teach

Schools are where the practice of learning to teach is situated; thus, the choice of setting and the field experiences that each setting affords to teacher candidates deserve special attention. In a thorough review of the literature, Grossman, Ronfeldt, and Cohen (2012) call for attention to the setting of field experiences as it frames teacher candidates' experiences. They explain “[t]he activities of prospective and novice teachers are framed by the settings in which they work, including the individuals who work there, the tools and curricular resources available to them, as well as the students who populate the classroom” (p. 111). For instance, they point out that unstructured or naturally occurring field experiences in urban school settings could contribute to perpetuating negative stereotypes and be detrimental to the development of cultural competency. They also conclude that carefully structured field experiences have positive effects, especially when including cooperating teacher training and course support.

Research has explored the gap between what preservice teachers learn in their methods courses and what they learn in their field placements (Zeichner, 2010). Now there is evidence that planned and purposeful integration of field experiences into coursework that are part of carefully thought programs have the potential to benefit candidates (Grossman, et al., 2012), and contribute to overcome what Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1985) identified as the “two-worlds pitfall,” signaling the gap or disconnect between university and classrooms and the assumption that “making connections between these two worlds is straightforward and can be left to the novice” (p. 16). As previously stated, there has recently been an important development in research that argues for practice-based pedagogies (McDonald et al., 2013) with a focus on implementing strategies that represent different stages or levels of approximations to practice (Hollins, 2011).

One essential component of learning to teach in the context of field experiences is the essential role of university supervisors and cooperating or mentor teachers in bridging coursework and fieldwork (Grossman, Ronfeldt, & Cohen, 2012). This requires that both, university supervisors and cooperating teachers are carefully selected, receive meaningful and sustained training and support, and work in collaboration with university faculty within a structured program. For instance, Grossman et al. (2012) note that

supervisors may need more clarification and guidance from the university about the nature of their role and desired outcomes associated with supervision and would benefit from support for collaborating with cooperating teachers to target and scaffold the development of specific features of teacher candidates' practices. (p. 324)

Research shows that cooperating teachers have the most significant impact on teacher candidates (Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014); therefore, it is important that teacher education programs consider cooperating teachers' involvement in teacher preparation not as peripheral but as a key component of program outcomes. The caveat is how to approach this with the inherent challenges of selecting and recruiting effective cooperating teachers.

Latinx Teacher Preparation

Latinx educators represent less than 9% of all teachers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). Moreover, the number of students of color, specifically Latinx students enrolled in teacher education programs, remains critically low nationwide (Irizarry, 2011; Ocasio, 2014). Developing a better understanding of how to attract, support, and prepare teacher candidates of diverse backgrounds can have a significant impact on the academic experiences and outcomes of Latinx youth and other students traditionally underserved by K–12 schools. Research shows that Latinx teachers are more likely to recognize and affirm Latinx students' languages and cultures, which are important for fostering school success (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; García-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Much of the literature regarding the experiences of students of diverse backgrounds in institutions of higher education, and more specifically in teacher education, has focused on minority students or students of color without disaggregating the experiences of Latinx students (Irizarry, 2011). As a result, when Latinx teacher candidates are addressed within teacher preparation, they are often positioned as subjects to be worked “on” rather than partners in the educational process (Grinberg, Goldfard, & Saavedra, 2005).

Irizarry (2011) documents that recruiting students

and preparing them to work as educators in their own communities is a well-researched strategy whose outcomes include the potential to transform teacher education culture and quality of education offered in public schools. In addition, as Irizarry highlights, research indicates that colleges of education in minority serving institutions have consistently worked on increasing students of color recruitment efforts. Still, teacher education programs are challenged by the need to prepare teachers to work with a growing body of students who are racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse (Irizarry, 2011).

Nonetheless, Latinx representation in the teaching force is an issue to address. There is a clear disproportion between the number of Latinx teachers available to teach (Ocasio, 2014) the 26% of students who identify as Hispanic or Latinx in public school classrooms in 2015 (National Center of Education Statistics, 2019). Research has also shown that the lack of Latinx teachers negatively impacts Latinx student achievement and graduation rates and that the inclusion of minority teachers is important in terms of role modeling (Frankenberg, 2009; Ocasio, 2014; Flores et al., 2007).

In regard to recruitment, “[c]ollaborative school–university partnerships (...) show great promise as K–16 early interventions for recruiting Latinx students to the teaching profession and college, both contexts in which they are under-represented” (Oliva & Staudt, 2003, p. 278). Recruitment efforts should not be in isolation but, when possible, followed by induction programs to fight attrition as they have shown a positive impact on teacher retention. The induction of Latinx teachers into the profession should prepare them “to effectively communicate and support culturally responsive practice and to be resilient in the face of the limited numbers of professional practitioners from the same ethnic background” (Davis et al., 2016, p. 9).

For partnerships to be successful in terms of graduation rates and career initiation, teacher preparation programs should

focus on the development and enhancement of ethnic identity in teachers in order to ensure school success for language minority students. As well, teacher preparation programs should model the value of cultural knowledge and provide teachers with the skills necessary to enhance ethnic identity of their future students, in this way enhancing their students’ internal power (Clark & Flores, 2001, p. 83).

Research exploring the reasons for Latinx teachers to choose the teacher preparation pathway indicate that they are primarily “motivated by a desire to combat negative

experiences they had as students, hoping to create a better future for the students they teach” (Ocasio, 2014, p. 257). Research in the field of bilingual education teacher preparation has also shown how bilingual teachers choose teaching to counteract their own schooling experiences and as a way to afford Latinx bilingual students with opportunities to learn that value their culture and language (Flores, Sheets, & Clark, 2010; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Musanti, 2014). Studies found that Latinx teachers pursue to fight injustices they have experienced (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012), to fulfill an early calling to the profession (Oliva & Staudt, 2003), to learn how to provide Latinx students with the opportunities they were not afforded to learn their heritage language (Musanti, 2014, Rodríguez & Musanti, 2017), and to provide experiences that value their culture (Flores, et al., 2010, Rodríguez, 2014). This study contributes to the body of literature by exploring Latinx teacher candidates’ and cooperating teachers’ understandings of learning to teach in the context of a year-long field embedded teacher preparation university-district partnership.

Methods

This qualitative study takes place in South Texas, a region with a predominantly bicultural and bilingual Latinx community. The study investigated is a collaborative program between the regional university and a school district both with a predominant Latinx student population. The program consists of a year-long field-embedded experience model. During the final year of the teacher preparation program, the teacher candidates (TC) are placed in a district selected elementary school for the complete calendar year starting the first day teachers are on site for the school year. This research encompasses the first and second year of implementation of the program.

Context of the Study

The program came to be as a result of initial conversations with the district superintendent and the then dean of the college of education. Their discussion was rooted in reconceptualizing the student teaching experience to allow for a more substantive and purposeful clinical experience. The goal was to ensure TCs had opportunities to bridge theory to practice through inquiry, develop data literacy, and engage in critical reflection. A design team comprised of faculty from both the college and the district convened during the spring semester to develop the program for implementation the subsequent fall semester.

During the fall semester, TCs spent one full day in the school every week. During the spring semester, TCs

completed their student teaching. TCs and CTs participated in monthly planning meetings co-facilitated by a faculty liaison and a district liaison and met once a month with the field supervisor to address specific areas of student teaching. Throughout the year, TCs also participated in monthly seminars facilitated by the faculty liaison to reflect on different aspects of practice.

Participants

TCs were eligible to apply to the program if they had a 3.0 GPA and were on track to complete clinical teaching the following spring semester. Applicants submitted a short essay and were interviewed by faculty. Cooperating teachers were selected by the district and the school principal (See Table 1).

Table 1
Program Participants: Cooperating Teachers

CT (N=7)	Grade level	Ethnicity	Years of experience in the classroom	Program or Degree Leading to Certification	Years as CT in the Program
Mrs. Morales	2 nd grade English instruction with ESL support	Latinx	4	Bachelor	2 nd year
Mrs. Alvarado	2 nd Grade Dual Language	Latinx	6	Bachelor	2 nd year
Mrs. Guerrero	3 rd grade Dual Language	Latinx	11	Bachelor	1 st year
Mrs. Maldonado	3 rd grade Dual Language	Latinx	5	Bachelor	2 nd year
Ms. Navarro	4 th grade Bilingual	Latinx	20	Alternative Certification	2 nd year
Mrs. Delgado	Kinder Dual Language Two Way	Latinx	30	Bachelor	2 nd year
Mrs. Huerta	Kinder	Latinx	8	Bachelor	2 nd year
Mrs. Sandoval	5 th Grade Dual Language	Latinx	6	Bachelor	2 nd year
Mrs. Pale	Resource Room	White	20+	Post-Bac	1 st year
Mrs. Kyle	PPCD Room	Latinx	6	Bachelor	1 st year

NOTE: All names are pseudonyms.

Once admitted, the TCs' placements were decided by the faculty liaison working closely with the district liaison and school principal. During year 1, 10 TCs were accepted in the program, and eight completed all program requirements. During year 2, 14 TCs were accepted, and

10 completed all program requirements. All TCs were Latinx (See Table 2). We identified the participants with pseudonyms or with random initials to protect their identity.

Table 2
Number of Participating TCs by Specialization who Completed the Program

Specialization	Year 1*	Year 2**
Bilingual Education	4	6
English as Second Language	0	1
Early Childhood	2	3
Special Education	2	0
TOTALS	8	10

*All female TCs

**One male TC in the Early Childhood specialization.

Data Sources

This paper focuses on qualitative data collected as part of a mixed methods study. The analysis involves data from TCs' reflective journals and semi-structured interviews with TCs and CTs. TCs were interviewed twice during the year and CTs were interviewed once during the second semester. Interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions of their student teaching experience in terms of their learning, the project's outcomes, and challenges.

TCs kept a reflective journal throughout the year where they described the activities they had taken part of, salient notes from classroom observations, and their insights, questions, and doubts about teaching and learning. In addition, we analyzed a component of the Teacher Work Sample, a performance assessment completed during the second semester. Analysis focused on Standard 7, Evaluation and Reflection: *"The teacher analyzes the relationship between his or her instruction and student learning in order to improve teaching practice."*

Qualitative data were independently open coded by the research team members (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Analysis included repeated reading of interview transcripts and journals in order to gain a sense of participants' experiences and perceptions on teacher preparation programs. Open coding involved labeling data that the researchers identified as significant to the research questions, specifically data were coded identifying segments related to defining teaching, learning about teaching, understanding of learning, knowledge of students, and instances where participants revisit their practice, provide a rationale for decision-making, or identified experiences that impacted their change/learning. Open coding was followed by a focused reading of the data to

identify themes in response to the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Findings

In agreement with previous research, participants' understanding of learning to teach included a focus on what needs to be learned and how it is learned, or the process of learning to teach. The nuances identified in TCs' and CTs' perceptions evidenced the complexity of teaching and learning (Hollins, 2011) and a coexisting narrow and simplified view of what it entails: mastering routines and learning through observation. Practices addressing the linguistic and culturally diverse student population were not in the conversation; however, differentiated instruction was identified as an area for growth. In relation to the impact of the year-long partnership, CTs discussed the reciprocal growth derived from their mentoring role and highlighted positive impact on students. Four themes were identified in response to the research questions: envisioning teaching as mastering routines, learning through observation, homogenization of the Latinx community, and co-teaching as reciprocal growth.

Mastering Routines

Teacher candidates' understanding of learning to teach included both, a focus on what needs to be learned, and how it is learned or the process of learning to teach. The nuances identified in TCs' and CTs' perceptions spoke about the complexity of teaching and learning (Hollins, 2011) and a coexisting narrow and simplified view of what it entails. In relation to what TCs need to learn, the TC and CT interview data showed a persistent trend to initially locate the meaning of being and becoming a teacher on mastering the routines of teaching and managing student

behavior as well as developing character traits such as being patient and flexible.

Classroom management was identified by TC and CT as a main area for learning and improvement: “I think as long as you master that classroom management first, I think everything flows from there” (VV, Interview, Year 2). From the seven CTs, only two highlighted some aspect of content knowledge, such as the TCs’ abilities to teach vocabulary. The absence of acknowledgement of mastery of content or specific strategies related to bilingual education or ESL is significant considering the school houses a dual language program and most of the students are classified as bilingual.

By the end of the year, classroom management continued to be a concern; for instance, LG mentioned what she envisions as her biggest challenge during her first year of teaching:

I feel probably classroom management is going to be big. You never know what type of students, what type of behaviors they are going to have. And so I feel that’s one thing that’s just the classroom management being able to, you know, handle a whole class. (Second interview)

Cooperating teachers also shared perspectives on learning to teach that resembled TCs’ emphasis on routines and behavior management strategies as areas for learning. One CT indicated that “classroom management is another huge thing that I think a lot of new teachers will struggle with and I kind of exposed her to the way our classroom runs as far as procedures” (Ms. Navarro, 4th grade). Of the seven CTs, only two highlighted some aspect of content knowledge, such as the TCs’ abilities to teach vocabulary.

Moreover, the learning that had taken place in previous years during their schoolwork appeared diluted or questioned as the most relevant learning related to becoming a teacher had taken place as they entered the classroom and became part of the school life. For instance, LG, an early childhood major, pointed how she learned about routines and planning. “That is probably the two most important things I learned for teaching.” MC, a bilingual major, described the disconnect she saw between her coursework and the experience of being in the classroom, for her “theory and practice are very differentthere is so much I didn’t know... stuff that you don’t learn in school that I am learning now that I wouldn’t have learned if I wasn’t here” (MC). Cooperating teachers described teaching as complex and indicated learning to teach develops from experience. For example, MD, a cooperating teacher expressed that teaching is “not something you can tell somebody but if they are actually experiencing it, that’s amazing” (interview). Along those

lines, LP, another cooperating teacher explained, “I have been doing this for years, so I can take things for granted” (interview), stressing the complexity of effectively handling the multiple responsibilities of a teacher, and adding “I can tell her, but if she is not actually there, there is no way she could do anything” (LP, interview). Clearly, TCs and CTs prioritize the mastering of routines as central to effective teaching. Moreover, the persistent disconnect between what happens in the classroom and what they have learned during their coursework is still present despite the efforts to bring practice and theory together through on-site seminars and field-based course assignments.

Learning through Observation

TCs and CTs agreed that one of the main components of the experience was the opportunity for learning through observation. TCs used terms such as: watching, observation, experience, being exposed to. For instance, MR emphasized the importance of following the CT model and to “see” students at work: “I followed exactly how Ms. Delgado did it just to get myself started. I also had small groups where I *was able to see* which students need help in what and where I need to target. ...” (MR, Journal, Year 1). CTs also highlighted the criticality of observing practice. Ms. Maldonado explains how TCs learn: “Being able to mirror us and kind of be our shadows” (Year 2). Mirroring CTs and experiencing practice through observing mentors was the perceived way of learning to teach. Observing is a critical skill in teaching. It relates to the ability to notice and understand practice in context to be able “to do” the teaching Latinx students’ need and deserve (Barnhart & van Es, 2015).

All TCs at some point identified how their observations lead to important insights. For instance, most of them noticed how “every child is different. Every situation is different” (KC, first interview). They mentioned differentiating instruction and adapting to students’ needs as critical part of their learning. AG explained “I am able to differentiate; I know my students a lot better, so I am able to say okay, I know what they individually need” (second interview). The absence of acknowledgement of mastery of content or specific strategies related to the specialization area (i.e. bilingual education) as at the core of TC learning process was noticeable.

Even though cooperating teachers highlighted the importance of being observed by and observing teacher candidates, some appear to prioritize conversations about practice as a medium to develop practice. In general, even though most CTs highlighted the need to talk, it was, for the most part, from the perspective of telling TCs than from

generating a space for collegial conversation. A transmission model was evident in CTs' vision of the process of learning to teach that they defined as situated in the classroom and a result of observing and doing. This is also reflected in one of the TC's words, "Being able to *observe* different grade levels gives me an idea of what students should be learning at each grade level and how we make a difference when we are teaching ..." (DR, Journal, second semester). MR also emphasizes the importance to mirror the CT model and to "see" students at work. In talking about one of her first lessons, she describes,

I followed exactly how Mrs. Delgado did it just to get myself started. I also had small groups where I *was able to see* which students need help in what and where I need to target. ...I *was able to see* where they were at. (MR, Journal, second semester)

Direct experience and observation seem to be the privileged way of learning to teach. AG explained "I feel the experience most of all from ... just the classes that we have taken prior to this and *being able to see* it here with actual students and being able to see I guess" (First interview). Being in the classroom and being in charge of students is perceived as a primary way to become a teacher. "When my cooperating teacher leaves the room and the para[professional] is not there and it is just me with the student that is when I start to feel like. Okay this is my class. I am the teacher" (MR, second interview). These quotes indicate that TCs understand teaching as an act of experiencing ways of doing when teaching. Despite the focus on developing a co-teaching model, most of the candidates valued the opportunities to experience teaching alone, showing how viewing teaching as a solitary act is entrenched in teaching. Some of them refer to the importance of "seeing" in learning to teach and references to teaching as a reflective act were absent. Research has identified the importance of teacher noticing but defined as the capacity of teachers to observe, analyze and interpret the meaning of students' work and interactions (Barnhart & van Es, 2015; Jacobs, Lamb, & Philipp, 2010).

Teaching and the Homogenizing of the Latinx Community

All elementary teacher candidates take at least one lower level and one upper level course on linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. Bilingual and ESL specializations include at least five courses that explore issues of language and culture. The campus where candidates were placed is a dual language school. However, issues of language and cultural diversity were not identified as central to TCs' development. Data show that TCs understood the need "to get to know your students"

(MC, interview, Year 1). However, there seemed to be a tendency to universalize what teaching and learning is, even within a predominately Latinx community, as opposed to contextualize teaching considering language and cultural diversity. When asked about what TCs learned about students, responses usually included variations of "Every single student is different... You have your high, medium, lows and you have to be super patient" (MA, Year 2). This way to describe students reflects a predominant discourse in schools. Moreover, they seemed to homogenize Latinx students as opposed to recognizing the diversity in language and culture (Irizarry, 2011). Even when TCs were able to identify language differences, the tendency was to classify students in dichotomic categories: those who speak or do not speak English, those with family support or without it. The consideration of issues of language in relation to teaching were for the most part equated to differentiated instruction.

Co-Teaching and Reciprocal Growth

TCs and CTs described personal growth as a result of co-teaching interaction, especially as a result of a mirroring component of the TC-CT relationship where CTs modeled practices, TCs observed and then attempted to perform them (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). CTs also referred to their own growth. Mrs. Morales explained, "I've learned from them as well. ... [I am] more specific and intentional through my lesson planning and make sure that I share with them and it is not just for my own eyes" (Year 1). Cooperating teachers acknowledged the impact that engaging in a mentorship relationship has had in their own development. "It's made me a better teacher. I think this is my best year yet.... you are constantly [reflecting] you have someone who is shadowing you and you are setting that example for" (Ms. Alvarado, Year 1). As this quote shows, cooperating teachers indicated the awareness of having to model effective and quality teaching for teacher candidates was especially impactful.

CTs drew from their own experiences as novice teachers and what they considered more effective for their own professional growth. For instance, Ms. N., who had completed an alternative certification program identified her mentor as essential to overcome the challenges of her first year of teaching.

...the mentor plays a very important part I feel. It gives you that comfort you know. I may not know what to do and how to do it but I have this person here who is a veteran teacher and she can, she is willing to share all her ideas with me, and that really helped me to become a better teacher. (Ms. Navarro, interview).

CTs also shared what they learned from TCs and what they brought to their classrooms. “We’ve been trying to definitely look more into technology. I...need to grow professionally in that. I know she (TC) had some ideas as far as using technology” (Ms. Huerta). They Cooperating teachers also described the value of jointly attending professional development to learn about new programs being implemented at school. One CT described the importance to be open to peer observations. She explained “I am always willing to learn. To go see classrooms that I know, that I heard the teacher is amazing. I want to see what she is doing....I am always ...opened to ideas and suggestions from colleagues.” Similarly, to how “seeing” and “observing” were identified as vehicles to learn to teach for teacher candidates, cooperating teachers also identified observing colleagues as a source of professional development.

Discussion and Conclusion

To date, there has not been consensus on how to prepare quality teachers, but there is agreement on the need to identify what it entails (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Harris & Sass, 2011), especially in the field of Latinx teacher preparation. This study contributes to the body of literature exploring Latinx teacher candidates’ and cooperating teachers’ perceptions of a year-long clinical experience in a school (Lavandez & Hollins, 2015). This study shows that TCs and CTs still value “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) and experiencing teaching as the main venue for learning to teach (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; McDonald et al., 2014), maybe at the risk of perpetuating an emphasis on routines and behavior management and teacher personality attributes (e.g. patience) as the main focus for learning to teach and teaching. It is concerning that most TCs and CTs tend to present a vision of issues of language and culture as related exclusively to differentiated instruction and a depiction of teaching that reproduces pedagogical tenets such as “knowing your students” or “doing more differentiated instruction” (Rozelle & Wilson, 2012). These findings indicate that Latinx teacher preparation need to bring to the forefront issues of culture and language, situating and structuring field experiences as opportunities to explore, analyze, design, implement, and deconstruct teaching practices in terms of how they leverage diversity. In addition, we argue that it is not only the teaching

experience that will shape novice teachers but also a mentoring relationship with quality mentors that perceive themselves as reciprocal learners.

In terms of lessons learned that can contribute to improve our teacher preparation programs, this study sheds light on the importance to help our teacher candidates move beyond the idea that teaching is learned by observing and doing detached from theory to teaching as an interpretative act (Hollins, 2011). One potential venue is through teacher preparation frameworks that leverage the notion of teaching noticing. In this regard, following Jacobs et al. (2010), we identify three critical elements of teacher noticing: (a) identifying key elements of a classroom situation or learning event or product, (b) using knowledge about the context, students and content to reason about the classroom interactions, and (c) making connections between the specific classroom events and broader principles of teaching and learning (p. 171). In addition, the findings indicate that we need to move into revisiting the role of teacher educators - including university professors, cooperating teachers, clinical faculty and field supervisors - identifying key competencies to support their role and effectiveness in preparing future teachers (Goodwin, et al., 2014; Korthagen, 2010). Additionally, cooperating or mentor teachers, universities and districts could partner to provide professional development on how to implement a co-teaching model (Shaffer & Brown, 2015) to overcome the limitations of the traditional “apprenticeship of observation” model. Ultimately, faculty and field supervisors, teacher preparation can benefit from building capacity to implement a practice-based model (Ball & Forzani, 2009, Hollins, 2011). Hollins (2011) defines this model as addressing the “grammar of practice” and the relationship between characteristics of the learner, the learning process, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. In this holistic perspective, the processes of representation, decomposition, and approximation can be employed in the epistemic practices of focused inquiry, directed observation, and guided practice to help candidates understand the anatomy of pedagogical practice (p. 396).

Despite the certainties in the direction to move the transformation of teacher preparation, more research is needed to address the challenges of defining what teacher educators need to know and be able to do to support teacher candidates. The need for research is more acute in the field of Latinx teacher preparation.

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