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Within and beyond a grow-your-own-teacher program: Documenting the contextualized preparation and professional development experiences of critically conscious Latina teachers

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Abstract

This study provides an account of seven Latina teachers' select educational, professional, and personal experiences over the past 10 years as they completed a grow-your-own-teacher program, became licensed teachers, and established themselves in Latinx minority–majority public schools within their rural, mid-western community. More specifically, as a Latina researcher and participant observer, I sought to better understand the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) Latina teachers' process-oriented engagement and *conscientization* over time. Far from being 'ready-made' conscientized teachers, in this work I discuss the ways CLD Latina teachers' multiple and developing identities as bilingual learners, mothers, racialized minorities in schools, and educated professionals serve as both burdens and gifts in their engagement and processes of conscientization for teaching CLD students. Through the use of critical literatures, and life and professional story methodologies informed by Chicana feminist epistemologies, I sought to privilege Latina teachers' narratives as well as uncover the mechanisms and experiences that proved most impactful for their development and sustainment within white normative educational spaces. Findings illustrate an emergence of racialized, identitarian resources among Latinas and implicate a nuanced, culturally contextualized, pedagogical approach to pre-/in-service CLD teacher professional development that engages participants in reflective storytelling, critical inquiry, and restorative community building.

Keywords: Teachers of color, teacher preparation, teacher professional development, culturally and linguistically diverse students, Latinx education

As a researcher and practitioner, I have engaged in educational and scholarly work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) Latinx student populations in various formats and contexts over the past 15 years. Growing up in the mid-West, as a bicultural Latina and daughter of a migrant worker, I have approached my work in education and teacher preparation with a faceted lens. Whether in informal or formal learning environments, my interests and inspirations often stemmed from a desire to build understanding, connectedness, and *community*. Still today, I marvel at the ways in which many Latinx youth seem to collectively embody the strengths, struggles, dreams, and passions of their families – drawing on these ancestral attributes for sustenance in their daily lives. Yet, despite the cultural and linguistic assets that CLD students bring to educational contexts, I also have witnessed the various ways in which educational institutions, and more specifically educators, fail to effectively engage Latinx students' potentialities in the teaching and learning process.

These persistent shortcomings have historical, social, political, and economic roots. As described by Ladson-Billings (2014), many educators, while claiming/attempting to use culturally relevant pedagogy, lack the experience and *sociopolitical consciousness* necessary to engage CLD students authentically and critically in their learning. Scholars implicate larger systemic issues such as historic racism, de facto segregation, and the predominance of Whiteness and race evasiveness in educational institutions for perpetuating these deficiencies (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2017; Jupp, 2017; Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Sleeter, 2001). The predominance of Whiteness in teacher education programs continues to be evident among the approaches and mechanisms in place for the recruitment, selection, preparation, and induction of teachers (Irizarry, 2011). Despite local, state, and national efforts, the cultural and linguistic inclusiveness of policies and curricula is still tragically limited and the demographic makeup of the teaching force has been slow in moving toward parity with K-12 student populations.

Sadly, general teacher preparation programs recruit for diversity, but seldom are equipped to support CLD pre-service teachers in using their cultural and linguistic assets in purposeful and effective instruction. More often, through culturally stifling and outdated policies, they systematically discount these assets, marginalize CLD pre-service teachers' diverse perspectives, and *program out* the very cultural nuances that would serve as natural tools for connecting with CLD students (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002; Morales & Shroyer, 2016). Furthermore, due to the lack of mentorship beyond graduation, the absence of professional induction once in the classroom, and the often toxic climate of *white normative educational spaces* (Robles, 2009), the rate of attrition among CLD teachers is greater than among white, monolingual teachers (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). Given these complex realities, it is important to consider the preparation, development,

and *conscientization* of CLD pre-service and in-service teachers using a finer gauge of analysis. As such, I have sustained a commitment to studying these issues while simultaneously working to redress them.

To these ends, with a focus on localized actions for improvement, I have found *grow-your-own-teacher* and 2 + 2 (2 years at a community college and 2 years at a university) teacher preparation models to be rich with potential. Through cross-institutional collaborations with Hispanic serving districts and community colleges for over a decade, I have been engaged in research and implementation of several federal and state funded *grow-your-own-teacher* and 2 + 2 preparation programs that draw on the cultural and linguistic resources within a community by way of recruiting, retaining, and preparing bilingual/bicultural Latinx pre-service teachers to work in local schools.

In these efforts, I was mentored by fierce 'academic mothers', who invested greatly in my personal and professional development, modeling empowering critical care pedagogies with me and the Latinx students in our programs. In our collaborative research, my mentors, colleagues, and I have published on the successes, failures, and lessons learned from these targeted research and implementation projects as well as our analyses of the larger social, political, and institutional challenges often encountered while doing this work within predominately white institutions (PWIs) (Herrera, Morales, Holmes, & Herrera Terry, 2011; Holmes, Fanning, Morales, & Herrera, 2012). These studies have shaped my continued research and contribute to the existing scholarship in teacher education and diversification in meaningful ways. They align with critical literatures, particularly in the areas of Latinx, immigrant/migrant, and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education that call for context- and culture-specific support and preparation for Latinx pre-service and in-service teachers (Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2015; Magaldi, Conway, & Trub, 2016; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Context, participants, and purpose

Immersed in the body of scholarship noted above and inspired by Sandoval's (2000) *methodologies of the oppressed*, in this current work I engaged in a longitudinal study with seven CLD Latina teachers who were part of a research and implementation program I co-coordinated 10 years ago. The previous associated research study investigated the experiences of bilingual, non-traditional students enrolled in a partially distance-delivered, 2 + 2 teacher education program called *AccessUS*. Developed based on the highly successful BESITOS model, created at the same university (Holmes et al., 2012), *AccessUS* was a collaborative program between a land grant university, three Latinx-majority school districts, and two Hispanic serving community colleges in a midwestern state. This *grow-your-own-teacher*

program targeted individuals who were already associated with the partnering school districts, primarily as language support paraprofessionals, to become teachers. It was offered as part of a larger K-16 simultaneous renewal initiative funded by a Teacher Quality Enhancement grant from the Department of Education.

Some key findings from the previous study that informed this current work were (a) due to their unique and often difficult experiences as EL Latinas, participants could relate to their EL, Latinx students in authentic ways; (b) participants were culturally responsive as they utilized their cultural and linguistic knowledge to teach their EL students; and (c) through their wide range of personal, social, and *purposeful* educational experiences, participants developed a sense of agency to advocate for themselves and other Latinxs in their schools and communities (Morales & Shroyer, 2016). These initial findings were foundational to the current study as they served as a jumping off point. They informed my inquiry and provided fodder for deeper conversations with the subset of seven participants as current CLD in-service teachers, and with myself as a cultural insider, participant observer, and teacher educator.

Having been socialized as bilingual Latinas in the same semi-rural, minority-majority agrarian region for years, the seven women in this study shared many similarities – yet their background experiences varied. Four of the seven are first-generation native-born US citizens, and three of the seven were immigrants to the US as children. All seven began attending US public school in early elementary grades, and one experienced a transnational education – entering and exiting the US public school system three times during her K-12 years. Given the political climate of the time of their formal K-12 schooling (proliferation of English-only legislation in the 1980 and 1990s), and even though their families spoke Spanish in the home, none of the seven participants had the benefit of bilingual education as children. Three were placed in ESOL pullout programs and four were in English-only immersion programs. Despite their hardships in learning English, at the time that I met them (entering the teacher education program) all seven women were fully bilingual in Spanish and English.

This current study draws upon and extends beyond participants' educational experiences as students. As such, it provides an account of the Latinas' experiences over the past 10 years as they became licensed teachers and established themselves in Latinx minority-majority public schools within their rural, mid-western community. As a researcher and participant observer, I hoped to better understand pre-service and in-service, grow-your-own CLD teachers' process-oriented engagement and *conscientization* over time. The questions that guided my inquiry in this process were: (a) What aspects of CLD Latinas' teacher preparation and/or professional development proved most salient for the Latinas in working with their CLD

students? and (b) What tools and processes support and sustain the Latinas' enacted identities as impactful CLD teachers in white normative educational spaces? The following critical theoretical frameworks were used to explore participant narratives related to these questions as well as to examine the larger issues shaping current practices and dominant narratives in CLD teacher preparation and professional development.

Theoretical frameworks

I utilized Latino Critical Race Theory (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2006) and Chicana Feminist Epistemologies (Delgado Bernal, 1998) in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of my study. Similar to Solórzano and Villalpando (1998), who studied the resistant cultural capital of marginalized students within the larger social confinements of white normative public education, I used CRT (more specifically LatCrit) to problematize historic and contemporary structures within education and academia that perpetuate exclusion, silencing, and marginalization of Latinx and linguistic minorities (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Further, I employed LatCrit as a mechanism for interpretation and to frame my understandings of the social realities shaping the Latinas' lived experiences in this study.

I also pressed into the work of Delores Delgado Bernal focused on Chicana Feminist Epistemologies (CFE) (1998, 2001, 2002). In this powerful line of contextualized research, she applies the cultural ways of knowing among communities of color, specifically within Latinx communities, to build theory (further discussed in the introductory essay of this issue). By theorizing the complex subjectivities and multiplicities within Chicana identities and realities, CFE elucidates the differing experiences of Chicanas relative to those in dominant positions of power (Moya, 2002).

Delgado Bernal's scholarship on CFE within educational research is particularly powerful in how it centers and elevates Chicana experiential and intuitive ways of knowing that 'disrupt hegemonic categories of analysis', 'create decolonizing methodologies', and 'inform our practice as educators and activist scholars' (Calderón, Delgado Bernal, Pérez Huber, Malagón, & Vélez, 2012, p. 514). *Cultural intuition*, which Delgado Bernal describes as 'the unique viewpoints Chicana scholars bring to the research process' (1998, p. 2), honors the *cultural sensitivity* that Chicanas have to understanding the nuances of Latinx personal and collective experiences. She also articulates the value of Chicanas *theoretical sensitivity* in educational research and how it flows out of one's 'personal experience, the existing literature, one's professional experience, and the analytical research process itself' (in Valenzuela, 2013, p. 75). Therefore, I summoned my own cultural intuition and

knowledge of LatCrit theory and CFE as I captured, interpreted, and applied the Latinas' 'untold histories' (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 2) within the various contexts and spheres of education in order to better understand them.

Modes of inquiry

Given my prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with the participants, and my positionality as a cultural insider (Bhattacharya, 2017), my role in this present study was primarily that of researcher and participant observer (Krefting, 1991). Taking into consideration that this study was couched within a 10+ year relationship with these seven women, I utilized more contextualized and dialectic methods of data collection and analysis (Goodson & Sikes, 2001/2010; Van Manen, 1990).

Through my formal and informal roles over the years (as program coordinator, course instructor, researcher, and later as mentor and graduate advisor) I bared witness to the CLD Latinas' growth and development and I observed as they established themselves as professionals in Latinx minority-majority public schools within a rural mid-western community. At the present time, they hold a range of teaching and leadership positions within their home districts. While I have made an effort to follow the professional paths of all my CLD students, post graduation, this subset of seven participants demonstrated a desire to remain connected and engage more formally and consistently with me, the university they graduated from, and each other. As a result, I have maintained communications with them via phone, email, social media, and in person and I served as the graduate program advisor for three of the seven women.

In addition to ongoing virtual communication with and among the Latinas, the group has maintained their relationship, coming together as an informal Latina learning community regularly. The seven teachers and I have continued to meet, reminisce, eat, laugh, vent, and cry as they discuss their current realities as professionals and mothers, as well as their problems of practice as CLD teachers. Within these sessions I have introduced informal prompts to elicit reflection and spur conversations. During a visit in spring of 2016, I invited each of them to reexamine data (individual transcripts, surveys, etc.) which I collected from them in the original study they first participated in as undergraduates. They were asked to read the artifacts prior to us coming together for a reflective conversation.

Using their own narratives as mirrors, participants reflected upon who they were as CLD, first-generation, non-traditional college students, their prior experiences in the *grow-your-own-teacher* program, and their current realities as CLD teachers of CLD students in white normative public schools. Through these ongoing dialogs, participants have engaged with me and

each other in sustaining *community*, through storytelling, sharing of struggles and *consejos* (advice and words of wisdom), and establishing *confianza* (trust) among the group (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010).

As a result, through use of life and professional story methodologies (Goodson & Sikes, 2001/2010) in these contexts, I was able to document participants' various narratives and develop rich interpretations of their individual and collective stories (Kim, 2015). To these ends, over the course of the study, I documented and transcribed our interactions and communications – from our more structured reflective sessions and interviews to our informal conversations in the schools. Furthermore, I conducted and documented observations in classrooms. All of these data (transcripts, field observation notes, reflective journals, written communications, and artifacts) were collected and analyzed holistically. Utilizing qualitative coding and thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2013), I identified patterns and interpreted emergent themes using a critical theoretical lens. In addition to sharing the findings with the CLD Latina participants, I enlisted two colleagues who are knowledgeable as critical scholars, but outside the study, to serve as peer debriefers. Below are the selected findings that align with and inform my established research questions.

Findings and interpretations

This study yielded several relevant findings; however, those that proved most salient for the focus of this paper are enumerated below:

- (1) Drawing on identity backgrounds: Being able to acknowledge and deconstruct the complex realities presented by their cultural and linguistic diversity within the safety of the grant based program proved vital to their success.
- (2) Cultural wealth and experience as means for caring: The Latinas learned to use their various forms of cultural wealth as tools to enact critical care pedagogies for effective teaching.
- (3) Transformative resistance to whiteness: Each developed their own professional identities as CLD teachers which guided their approaches to transformative resistance within the often toxic environments of their schools.
- (4) Sustainment of/for CLD community: As pre-service and now in-service teachers, they drew strength and sustainment from the learning *community*. Engagement in reflective and critical dialogs spurred healing and steeled resolve.

For the purpose of brevity, I provide select, representative excerpts from the data to illustrate the four identified themes that emerged related to the CLD teachers' preparation and professional development and the tools and processes that supported and sustained them as impactful CLD teachers in white normative educational spaces (see Table 1).

For five of the seven participants, data indicated that they saw themselves reflected in the content they learned in the program. In some instances, it was painful but meaningful, as it surfaced suppressed guilt and shame they felt as children of Spanish speaking immigrants. For example, two participants stated that course topics spurred them to discuss certain childhood experiences with their parents, bringing clarity and healing in their relationships. For others, it was an empowering experience – one that gave them the theoretical knowledge to interpret their lived experiences. Further, their narratives revealed a deeper understanding of the larger social and institutional structures that marginalize ethnic minorities and hinder the educational success of CLD children.

In relation to the second theme, I found strong evidence across various sources of data that all seven of the Latinas' learned to leverage their various forms of community cultural wealth in their work with and for CLD students. The most common forms of capital discussed in the context of their role as educators were experiential, aspirational, familial, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005). Using content and contexts relevant to their students' realities, three of the teachers described their efforts to develop the critical consciousness in students needed to resist oppressive social scripts placed on Latinx youth in their community (e.g. *dropouts* and *teen moms*). All seven women shared various methods and mechanisms they use to relate to, inspire, direct, and empower their students. Whether it was through establishing a Ballet Folklórico dance group for young Latinas, sharing *consejos* with troubled students, or strategizing with them ways to get an inequitable policy changed in their school, the teachers all gained inspiration from one another's examples shared in *community*.

The third theme surfaced primarily in the data collected from my individual dialogs with participants. In these conversations (in person, via phone, or Facebook messaging) the teachers shared specific ways in which they dealt directly with the deficit perspectives held by some administrators and teachers toward Latinx students and parents in their school. Six of the seven Latinas' narratives demonstrated their *process of becoming* agentive, with each of them at varying stages of development. They often spoke with me and with each other about how frustrating it is to see ignorant and uninformed decisions being made in school/district policies that negatively impact CLD students. In some cases, the teacher's advocacy for CLD students and parents was overt and in direct response to a specific issue, while in other cases, it was subtler, subversive, and ongoing.

Table 1. Coded, representative excerpts from CLD participants' narratives.

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Examples from participant narratives</i>
(1) Drawing on identity backgrounds	'Because I was raised in a bilingual home, I learned to speak English and Spanish well. But a lot of times my dad was not there So my mom would raise us and we would speak a lot of Spanish, more than I realized. When I started learning about ESL children in [class], about the different needs ... and sometimes, you know, like the difference between survival, playground, [and] academic language, I understood why I was so frustrated all the time. It was really hard ... but I learned that if I wanted to achieve something academically, that was going to have to come from in here [placing her hand over her heart].' (Susana, interview)
(2) Cultural wealth and experience as means for caring	<p data-bbox="646 558 1357 894">'If I wouldn't have had this opportunity, to be in a program like this (grow-your-own program), I wouldn't be here. I could see myself being [involved in] what we try to get kids away from [gang life]. That is my push with them ..., and WHY I push them [students]. It's because I know what a lot of them deal with, it makes me a bit more understanding I know the realities that they face. Like Raul (one of her students) is defensive ... but I know the way to approach him. You [the teacher] have to kind of find a way around him. Teachers think, "oh, he's naughty". But if you think about it, his home life influences life here (in the classroom) ... if I battle him here, and he battles as home, what's the point? I just have to be sensitive. I have him stay after school sometimes ... and he turns stuff in.' (Aurelia, interview)</p> <p data-bbox="646 894 1357 1146">'I think all of that goes back to how we [CLD teachers] were growing up. We need to remember that our experiences tie back into what teacher we turn out to be. I think with my students, it helps when they realize you [as the teacher] didn't have a perfect life, like having a single mom. Sometimes when I have to bring my son here with me [to class] or when they hear me talk about my husband . . . When we learned about weather, I said, "I lived in a trailer for about 15 years and I always felt like I was going to blow away!" They were surprised and kind of like, "You lived in a trailer?" It's like it is shocking to them. You? . . . Ya me.' (Aurelia, interview)</p>
(3) Transformative resistance to whiteness	<p data-bbox="646 1167 1357 1272">'My challenges are the teachers, just their attitude and their biases, [and] their comments. I hate it when there they're like, "Oh the Hispanic parents don't do this." Or "don't do that ... [they] have no clue, and it's just so hard.'" (Verónica, focus group)</p> <p data-bbox="646 1272 1357 1503">'But anytime I have an opportunity to share about the positive things my students and their families have accomplished, I share and share. They can't say anything negative about my positive. When they bring up a negative comment, I always share the positive. I will write down things the students share with me so I won't forget. It's kind of like killing them with kindness. When they [teachers] start in on their negative talk, I start sharing about the good in my students or families.' (Verónica, digital media interview)</p>
(4) Sustainment of/for CLD community	<p data-bbox="646 1524 1357 1661">'We leaned on each other to get through the program and still do today. They [the cohort of Latinas] are still influencing me ... We were always pushing one another to not give up [in school], ... Now we are there when someone needs to vent or talk about stuff that is frustrating them.' (Carina, interview)</p> <p data-bbox="646 1661 1357 1860">'At this new school, it has been hard ... They [administrators] make decisions about my students [migrant & refugee newcomers] and keep them out of a lot of things ... I protect them [newcomers], from the things they say about them and to them. I feel bad. . . It is not right, so I have to fight for them After talking about this stuff I realize that I need reminded about WHY I matter in the schools. It is so helpful to have someone to talk to about the things I am seeing in the schools.' (Carina, phone interview)</p>

And lastly, all seven Latinas' narratives were representative of the fourth theme. Both in phone and email conversations with me and in *community* with the group, the women reiterated how vital having each other was and is to their success personally and professionally. Some stated assuredly that they would have never graduated or survived all the pain, exhaustion, and frustration that they have experienced as preservice and in-service teachers, if not for the support of the others. Furthermore, six of the seven expressed gratitude for every opportunity they have to come together. Their narratives indicate that they use the learning community as a mechanism to combat cultural, linguistic, and gendered isolation, as the community creates a safe space to vent and process their fears and frustrations related to the realities of their various intersecting identities (within their schools and families).

Discussion and considerations for practice

Evidence from this study echoes existing studies that document the frequent failings of educational institutions to understand the complexities involved in both effectively recruiting for and supporting the development of CLD teachers. Yet, taken together, findings document the potential of grow-your-own-teacher models as well as the critical, yet often overlooked, contextualized processes and informed pedagogies (that incorporate CFE) useful for effective CLD teacher preparation and professional development. Furthermore, they support the argument that CLD professionals are not 'readymade' – merely because of their backgrounds – but instead require differently focused pedagogical interactions and *conscientization*.

There is compelling evidence that CLD teachers are a vital resource in schools, as they can be highly effective in utilizing their cultural intuition and funds of knowledge in working with students from similar cultural backgrounds; however, we must acknowledge that it is not a de facto guarantee that teachers of color graduating from general teacher education programs are innately cultural competent nor is it safe to assume they naturally will see how their cultural assets fit within the white-normed pedagogical practices used or the methods taught in said programs. I argue that because CLD preservice/ in-service teacher biographies are *different* (relative to the historically white, monolingual teaching force), the ways in which programs recruit, prepare, and mentor them must be different.

As such, this study points toward a nuanced approach to teacher education that (a) challenges traditional structures and exclusionary policies that limit access for CLD and nontraditional college students (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015), (b) fosters the development of critical decolonizing perspectives among educators (Jupp, 2017; Pérez Huber, 2009), and (c) centers CLD teachers' cultural and linguistic biographies as assets (Yosso, 2006). Further, it

demonstrates the sustaining benefits of professional development informed by Chicana feminist perspectives that privileges CLD teachers voices, honors their struggles, and values their cultural ways of knowing within a field and a society that often marginalizes and silences them (Calderón et al., 2012; Delgado Bernal, 2002). Through purposeful infusion and extension of Chicana feminist epistemologies into the pedagogical approaches documented in the study, critical teacher educators can create environments and experiences that nurture and sustain CLD teachers.

While this report argues for the type of instruction and facilitation built upon the realities of the CLD pre- and in-service teachers, I acknowledge that this likely is not easy for PWIs. This requires department, program, and/or district leaders as well as faculty across content areas to commit themselves to learning about and from their CLD students and associated communities.

At the curriculum level, it requires instructors and facilitators who are willing to courageously and skillfully delve into issues of race, class, religion, gender, and oppression within the context of schools, families, and society. As seen in this context, impact is made when students/participants are engaged in generative and contemplative practices. By using case studies, personal narratives, life histories, poetry, visual/performance art, and critical readings, students are engaged at a visceral level. As the pre- and in-service teachers critically reflect upon their socialization as CLD individuals within the context of the coursework and/or program, they excavate often-difficult and sometimes painful memories of past and present experiences. Through guided discussions and reflections on experiences, they are able to acknowledge and process both the *cargas* (burdens they must carry as someone from a marginalized group) as well as the *regalos* (gifts and experiences as CLD individuals) their cultures provide.

By problematizing difference-blind perspectives and approaches to teaching and learning commonly experienced in education (Johnson & Williams, 2015) the facilitator *lifts the veil*. He/she provides CLD pre-service and in-service teachers the opportunity, context, and lens through which to question and reflect upon aspects of their own identity in relation to larger social systems (Herrera et al., 2011). Once participants develop a more nuanced perspective of their cultural and familial heritage, and the intersectionalities that exist in their own life histories, they are able to construct more clearly their personal and professional identities as CLD educators. With these new understandings of themselves and society, they begin to develop a critical consciousness (Kohli, 2008, McDonough, 2009).

As illustrated in these findings, critical consciousness is a vital step in CLD teachers' preparation and professional development, yet it alone does not result in agentive, culturally responsive teaching. CLD pre-service and in-service teachers must receive guidance and mentorship for what to *do* with the

knowledge and understanding they have gained and how to leverage their skills and cultural assets intelligently and strategically to impact change. By providing the space and time to work through these processes in various ways, *in community* with each other, they can co-develop an identity that includes advocacy. Similar to the critical inquiry groups discussed by Kohli et al. (2015), and Ritchie (2012), through the healing practices of community and collective sustainment, educators come to understand that their full *cultural selves* are vital to effective and agentive praxis. As in the case of the CLD teachers in this study, with this understanding comes a sense of responsibility to support and to advocate for the CLD students and families in their Latinx minority–majority schools.

Conclusion

In this paper, I chose to focus on selected findings that document Latina teachers' *processes of becoming* and the use of critical and CFE perspectives in the professional development of their enacted identities within white normative educational spaces. The narratives shared here, surfaced through the use of life and professional story methodologies, identify many of the persistent and systemic issues that limit our ability to produce and sustain teachers who provide affirming, impactful, and liberating educational experiences for CLD students in schools. However, they also give us hope, as they illustrate the potentialities of CLD teachers, while providing a realistic vision for both process-oriented CLD teacher preparation and relational/sustaining professional development that could lead to critical-race-conscious praxis in our field.

As our educational institutions strive to understand how to recruit, motivate, and prepare educators to enact liberatory pedagogies within the increasingly segregated, politically charged contexts of white normative educational spaces, study findings point toward an effective approach to the work. While I acknowledge this study is just one mid-western example, I believe it can be effective with populations beyond Latinxs. In fact, variations of such a model can be seen at the pre-service level in programs such as *Call Me MISTER* (Jones & Jenkins, 2012), which provides nuanced programming, mentorship, and servant leadership development for Black males in elementary education. Also, at the in-service level, teacher-organized and grass roots activism organizations such as the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE), the Institute for Teachers of Color Committed to Racial Justice (ITOC), The People's Education Movement (People's Ed) (Kohli et al., 2015), and the H.E.L.L.A. Educator of Color Inquiry Group (Pour-Khorshid, 2016) demonstrate the impact that can be made through collective empowerment and activism among practicing educators of color.

It is important to note that in all instances the sustainment of impactful programmatic change must flow from institutional commitment to move beyond *espousing* asset-based frameworks when working with CLD students toward a genuine dedication to transformation. Institutions are challenged to stretch beyond the comfort of status quo, to implement more robust and engaged pedagogical models that are grounded in critical theory and connected to practice, and to seek contemporary relevance from and for the communities they serve. As such, it is vital that educational institutions strengthen their collective capacities to understand and to serve, which can only come from increased involvement in and with communities of color not often represented in higher education. Ultimately, this brings us closer to our goal of authentic integration of culturally contextualized understandings into policy making, programming, curriculum development, and teaching in both university and public school contexts.



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Amanda R. Morales is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research and practice builds on her previous experiences as an assistant professor and the diversity coordinator for the College of Education at Kansas State University, and her leadership as a program manager in the Center for Intercultural Multilingual Advocacy. Prior to her work in higher education, Amanda was an Assistant Director of Visitor Programs at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History in Fort Worth, Texas for over 5 years where she did school, public, and community-based programming as well as teacher professional development. She is the author of numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and grant proposals that address issues of equity & access for culturally and linguistically diverse students across the K-16 education continuum. Amanda's current research explores the lived experiences of immigrant, migrant and first-generation college students in the mid-west, as well as teachers of color in Predominately White Institutions.

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