

Preparing Teachers for Latino Children and Youth: Policies and Practice

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This paper explores the role teacher education can play in improving the education of Latino children and youth in the US. By first suggesting that preservice teachers cannot reasonably be prepared for each and every student population, it promotes reforms in three areas of teacher education policy and practice, each oriented towards improving the education of Latinos: (a) preservice teachers' acquisition of cultural knowledge, (b) preservice teachers' knowledge of second language teaching, and (c) the value of targeted recruitment of Latino teachers.

The thought of preparing new teachers fills educators with an uncommon optimism. Hope springs especially in the minds of those who believe that fresh teachers fashioned from a reformed teacher education can help to erase the academic achievement gaps among ethnic groups in the US. We believe that better prepared teachers will work harder to liquefy the culture's rigid social hierarchy by injecting new methods, materials, and motivation into the nation's most underperforming students—students who are largely of color, many of whom are Latino.

Contrast this hope with the dreary school reality of many Latino students. They are told that success in school will ensure their participation in the wider economic and social life, but many find school to be a boring, even humiliating place. They are told that school is their only hope of "making it," but their immediate experience tells them otherwise. Their classroom needs repair, the books are old, and the teacher knows nothing of the lives of the students. After years of the same brutal routine, such promises for the future are hollow encouragement. For many students, the most adaptive response to such conditions is simply to drop out of school (Fine, 1991).

The gap between the hope we invest in teacher education and the continued academic underperformance of Latino children reveals that we may have overestimated teacher education's capacity for reform. And although teacher edu-

cation has been characterized as resistant to change (Tom, 1997; Freiberg & Waxman, 1990), it has made significant efforts to change its placements, curriculum, and strategies to be more responsive to the needs of low-income, students of color. The "reflective" movement, for instance, widened the scope of the curriculum in teacher education (Clift, Houston, & Pugach, 1990). By encouraging preservice teachers to consider the larger moral and social implications of their profession, it represented a significant change from the purely technical skill orientation common to teacher education. Indeed, a reform effort known as multicultural teacher education (e.g., Hollins, 1995) has been embraced in many teacher education programs. Further, the primary national accreditation agency for teacher education has enacted standards for preparing teachers for diverse students (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001).

Naturally, there are critics of teacher education who argue that teacher education has done little in the interest of low-income, students of color (Goodwin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Such criticisms may be valid, but it is very difficult to determine the effects of teacher education: student teachers are not typically well tracked by their home institutions and a host of confounding variables cloud the relationship between teacher education and student performance.

Irrespective of changes to teacher education, the academic achievement of Latinos troubles us. To wit, Latino ("Hispanic") students, who account for an ever greater proportion of the school age population, average scores well below their white counterparts (NCES, 1999). More distressing perhaps is that the gap between "Hispanic" and "White" scores has remained relatively constant during the last 30 years. Still more troubling is the "Hispanic" dropout rate, which is stuck at an unacceptable 30 percent (Hispanic Dropout Project, 1998). Of course, teacher education cannot be held solely responsible for the gap or the failure to narrow it. In fact, some of the nation's most comprehensive and controversial educational reforms have aimed to reduce the differences in academic achievement scores between White stu-

dents and those of color; most meeting with little success.

Teacher education alone cannot be relied upon to erase ethnic and class differences in academic achievement, but it should clearly be part of a renewed effort on many fronts to improve the school performance of Latino youth. The purpose of this paper is to propose several changes to policy and practice in teacher education, each oriented to improving the preparation of teachers for Latino children and youth.

The prospect and value of preparing teachers specifically for Latino children and youth

The very first point I would like to make is that teacher education cannot hope to prepare teachers who will be equally successful with all cultural and linguistic groups. This view is admittedly not widely held in the teacher education literature, where the focus is on preparing teachers for "diversity." But let me quickly circumscribe this statement by saying that many techniques and strategies we share with preservice teachers apply to students representing the full range of cultures and languages. For instance, curriculum development strategies using a dialogic approach have an even application; that is, the general technique for engaging in a critical pedagogy [cf. the approach advocated by Paulo Freire in the Appendix of *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1997)] is generalized for any population of students, regardless of their age, ethnicity, or native language. The only required common condition is some level of oppression by a dominant culture.¹

In spite of a common knowledge base in several key areas, I am suggesting that new teachers not only benefit from targeted preparation for a specific cultural and linguistic group, but that the wide variations among such groups prohibits teacher education from preparing new teachers for every kind of student. Consider the different needs of African-American and Latino students with regard to language instruction. Teachers of Latino children and youth must know how to teach English, an entirely new

¹ Even this condition has been debated (see Shor and Freire, 1987).

language, or, in some cases, develop literacy in their students' native language, one that will soon be supplanted by English (i.e., the work of a bilingual education teacher). By contrast, teachers of African-American students must understand how new *dialects* are acquired, a process that can result in a powerful metalinguistic awareness. Of course there are many points of similarity between teaching a new language and teaching a new dialect, but linguists recognize important variations (Wolfram, 1991). Given the myriad subtleties inherent in teaching language and dialects, can we reasonably ask preservice teachers to be highly knowledgeable of both processes?

"Minority" status is another point of obvious congruence between both ethnic groups. Both African-Americans and Latinos are well aware of their marginalized treatment in US culture, yet the two groups are quite different, especially when we consider their immigrant status. Many Latino students regularly visit relatives in Latin American countries, where links to their home culture are reinforced. African-American students have no comparable experience. Indeed, educational anthropologists have recognized the wide variability among "immigrants" and argue that factors such as generation may provide a superior typological system to describe differential school achievement (Gibson, 1997). Finally, many researchers (e.g., Rumberger & Larson, 1998) have studied Latino K-12 students as a distinct group, implying that similar schooling features may succeed for one group while failing another. These points of difference, among many others, suggest that teacher preparation could profit from a clear focus on specific populations.

Previous policy recommendations for teacher education

Calderón and Díaz (1993) suggest that teacher educators must "retool" their programs in two broad areas in order to meet the demands of Latino children and youth: recruitment and content. That is, teacher education must develop a well-articulated recruitment project with the local secondary schools and community colleges with the goal of adding more Latinos to the teaching force. Recruitment efforts will not be sufficient, they argue, and suggest that the

content of teacher education be reformed so that new teachers of Latino youth know how to (a) work collaboratively within a team of language education specialists, paraprofessionals, and teachers, (b) teach English as a second language, (c) create a classroom of dialogic inquiry, based on student knowledge, and (d) use student culture in developing curriculum.

Castro and Ingle (1993) suggest several changes to teacher education in order to better meet the needs of Latino students. First, they maintain that schools of education must place high value on teacher education. Here they refer to the fact that many schools, departments, and colleges of education cultivate their graduate programs at the expense of initial teacher preparation. Second, following Calderon and Diaz, they suggest that teacher educators pursue alternate pools of teacher candidates who are more experienced (in life), more male, more culturally diverse, and more understanding of Latino and other minority students' needs. Next, they suggest that teacher education should expose potential teachers to K-12 classrooms earlier in their college experiences, as well as preparing teachers to deal with the severe economic, social, and psychological problems that many Latinos students bring to school.

A lengthy literature search revealed that these papers are surprisingly alone in addressing teacher education issues specific to Latino students. And while both are to be praised for raising important issues, they are brief policy recommendations and fall short in providing specific or practical reforms in teacher education. For instance, Castro and Ingle suggest that teacher education should cultivate educators who are more understanding of the needs of Latino students. Of course, but how does teacher education accomplish this task? Both papers argue that teacher education must recruit a different kind of teacher, one who represents the Latino culture of the students, but they fail to consider the full implications of aiming for such a cultural unity.

In this paper, I wish to add specificity to and explore the implications of the policy recommendations these papers propose by examining three broad areas of teacher education programming: (a) the task of acquiring cultural, (b) the

task of learning to teach language, and (c) the recruitment “solution.” I have connected these explorations with my own policy recommendations-recommendations I believe will serve to prepare teachers for Latino children and youth.

The task of acquiring culture

Teaching at its simplest level is the mere presentation of dispassionate facts. The teacher “delivers” a pre-selected curricula, the students learn it, and the teachers tests for its retention. This description suggests that the culture of the teacher and students is of no consequence. But no teaching/learning arrangement is ever this simple. All teachers have a culture of their own and cannot help but share the artifacts, traditions, and values they possess. It does not really matter whether this cultural sharing is purposeful or not.

When the culture of the teacher differs from the culture of the students, the lack of a common set of assumptions about schooling-its purposes, methods, and materials-often spells trouble for teaching and learning. Teaching can be troublesome even when teacher and students share a common cultural background (e.g., teachers and students in nearly all settings vary with regard to age and experience), but wide variations in culture often result in missed learning opportunities. Teachers must be always on the lookout for metaphors that bridge student cultural knowledge to new, “school” knowledge. Teachers who know little of student culture fail to connect the knowledge students already have to the knowledge the school will teach.

Many policy-makers and researchers have argued that the most efficient way to ensure that teachers know student culture is to recruit teachers who represent the culture of the students (e.g., Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990). Indeed, it is tempting to consider cultural mismatches as a trivial problem in education, one easily solved by increasing the number of teachers who represent the culture of the students. Although I agree that recruiting teachers who represent student culture is a practical idea, instructional improvements may not automatically follow.

For the moment, however, I want to put aside the recruitment of Latino teachers as a solution

for improving Latino student achievement. I do this for three reasons. The first is that the ethnicity (e.g., Latino) is a wide and inaccurate cultural marker. Creating classrooms in which students and teachers share ethnicity group does not ensure that teachers understand students and vice versa. (I address this dilemma in the third section of the paper.) Second, a fundamental goal of a democratic society is the sifting and sorting of contacts among people who represent all dimensions of life (Dewey, 1916). Imagine the consequences if Latino children and youth were taught only by Latino teachers, African-American children and youth were taught only by African-American teachers, and so on. It is difficult to imagine such a condition when teachers of color are so rare, but a healthy democracy depends on a multiplicity of social interactions. Third, contemporary conditions suggest that for decades to come many thousands of European-American teachers will be teaching many millions of Latino youth. We may not find this ethnic imbalance favorable, but for now the trend cannot be significantly altered. Further, teacher education has a responsibility to prepare the teachers who enroll in their programs for the students they will face, irrespective of their ethnicity.

Teacher education has always prepared teachers who will work with culturally diverse students, but an interest in more effective preparation began only a few decades ago. In the early 1960's the anthropologist Ruth Landes embarked on what was one of the first direct efforts at cross-cultural development for teachers (Landes, 1965). As part of the preparation of a group of preservice and inservice teachers at the Claremont Colleges in East Los Angeles county, Landes brought the tools and methods of anthropology to bear on teachers' understanding of “minority” cultures. By recognizing that cultural differences are destined to impact the school success of culturally diverse students, her comprehensive work was perhaps ahead of its time.

Through the extensive use of interviews and observations, Landes wanted these new teachers to use the tools of the anthropologist so that they might learn more about the lives of the students they teach. After extended study, each

teacher was to design a project that would ameliorate the condition of a minority group student. One such project was described by a male teacher who wanted to assist the "Mexican" boys who were active in street gang life. After several unsuccessful interventions, he decided to modify his classroom talk by using Spanish words in his class, as way to "comfort" his students. While his goal was admirable—preventing Latino boys from gang activity remains an important goal for many schools—speaking a few Spanish words in class is unlikely to discourage gang participation.

A second teacher decided that the "Mexican" girls, whom she decided were not working to their potential, should be removed from their elective classes (e.g., science) and work instead in the school office as a "Note-toter," essentially providing a mail service for the teachers. This project is even further from the mark than the previous example, demonstrating at least the vast differences between 1960-era schools and those of today.

Other projects that Landes' teachers created were just as earnest but equally naïve. What the project lacked was any mention of classroom *curricular* practices altered as a result of their increased awareness of Latino life. This omission is not unexpected. Landes did not approach her work as a curriculum developer but as an anthropologist, and her results and interpretations are written from that perspective.

In order for teachers to create connections between home and school culture, the only reliable way to augment student learning in the classroom, they must help student culture find its way into the school curriculum (Au & Jordan, 1981). Teachers are not, nor should they consider themselves to be, anthropologists. Furthermore, understanding the culture of students is but a fractional step towards improving students' academic achievement. This is why teacher education reformers who would have new teachers think as anthropologists are bound to be disappointed.

Zeichner and Hoefft (1996) in their review of teacher socialization for cultural diversity suggest that one dimension along which teacher

education efforts for diversity vary is the degree to which programs focus on *interacting* with cultures in contrast to *studying* about them. This distinction accurately describes the state of the discipline but also points out one of the general failures of teacher education. Preservice teachers can interact with cultures (a clearly more genuine activity than simply reading about culture) but remain unsure about how their new cultural knowledge, even when gained via direct experience, relates to student activity and achievement in the classroom.

Teacher educators who want their students to be effective with an unfamiliar cultural group must begin by recognizing the difference between acquisition and learning. This distinction is, of course, one that language experts have plied for many years, suggesting that children do not "learn" language in any systematic way, but instead "acquire" it via exposure and existing mental structures (Chomsky, 1968).

Learning culture is the work of an anthropologist. Careful documentation and analysis using prescribed methods helps the anthropologist to understand culture. However, anthropologists do not routinely come to participate in a culture's important social structures (e.g., schools). (The balance between understanding and participating has become a central theme in the anthropological literature [Clifford, 1988].) Landes tried to make anthropologists out of teachers. Consequently, the teachers understood their students better but still had trouble connecting student lives to the ideas in school. Teachers who wish to link home culture and school knowledge cannot *study* student culture; they must *acquire* it through natural exposure.

A more recent example of teachers becoming anthropologists is found in the work of González and Moll (González & Moll, 2002; Gonzales, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001; Moll, 1992). Their work, described as the Funds of Knowledge project, invites teachers to conduct interviews in the households of Latino families. To learn directly from the families of their students represents another important step towards the acquisition of culture, and a vast improvement on Landes' project, but it remains a somewhat artificial method. In my own experience, conducting home visits is uncomfort-

ably asymmetrical: if I must invite myself over to someone's house, I would insist that I be given the chance to return the favor, an impossible gesture in most cases.

If previous efforts have failed to help preservice teachers acquire culture, what curricular reforms hold promise? In the mid-1990's, a group of colleagues and I were given the opportunity to reform a large urban university's teacher education program. In spite of the diverse ethnicities represented the community, our teacher education students were overrepresented by European-Americans. By contrast, the majority of the new teaching positions in the area were in the fast-growing Latino regions of the city.

We knew that providing our students a list of Latino cultural markers (e.g., Latinos value highly home and family relationships) would not help them to acquire culture. Of course, we placed them in largely Latino schools, but we further recognized that schools are poor places to acquire culture. Schools tend to flatten students' home culture, making it difficult to for an "outsider" to acquire much about any culture besides "school" culture.

So in addition to placing our students in majority Latino schools, we developed a social service requirement in which our students would volunteer for at least 20 hours in agencies that provide services to Latino children and youth. We tried to use agencies like after school programs or community centers where our students would be able to interact with "everyday" children and their families, although some of the students chose to work in settings such as a group home for abused women.

One particular volunteer opportunity seemed particularly useful. Our teacher education students were invited to teach "school" English to adult Spanish speakers so that they might be able better participate in school activities (e.g., parent-teacher conferences). As a result of their participation, our students not only learned first hand the challenges faced by those who do not speak English (and the intolerance of many who do), but they also came to regard their students as friends, sharing stories about family life. For

instance, one of our students learned of one family's plans for a *quinciñera*. She had been completely unaware of this traditional ceremony prior to her experience, but the history and practice of this rite of passage fascinated her. Wanting to learn more, she queried the Mexican-American parents in the English class, who welcomed her questions and were genuinely pleased to share their views. More importantly, they were thankful that she was teaching them English. Based on their mutual gratitude, their cultural knowledge was shared rather than forced.

Admittedly, learning about a *quinciñera* is not the pinnacle of Latino cultural understandings, but we were pleased that our students were acquiring culture in a way that made them feel less like outsiders to Latino life. And we knew that this strategy for learning of Latino culture was far more genuine than reading about it. In the main, we found that service learning was a natural and comfortable way for our students to acquire knowledge of Latino culture.

Such service learning experiences are finding their way into more and more teacher education programs (O'Grady, 2000; Wade, 1995; Wade, et al., 1999), but the experience is not enough to better prepare teachers for Latino students. Teacher educators must take what preservice teachers have learned in their service work and fruitfully engage it with the school curriculum. For instance, new teachers should be invited to question whether the school curriculum offers any connection to Latino life. If so, how can it be integrated? Indeed, preservice teachers must consider whether certain aspects of Latino culture should be left out of the school curricula. In other words, are there cultural artifacts and patterns too sacred to be grafted on to the school curriculum (Télez, 2001). For instance, in the case of the student who grew to understand the importance of the *quinciñera*, we invited her to consider whether or not she *should* build curricular themes around such an important cultural tradition. Did she understand *quinciñeras* well enough to treat such cultural knowledge with sensitivity? Would students be embarrassed or even humiliated by an "outsider" talking about such an important cultural event.

Such questions have no definitive answer, but their exploration with preservice teachers is crucial.

Preparing for Language Instruction

Of the 13 million 5-24 year-olds in the US who speak a language other than English at home, over 72 percent speak Spanish. Of those who reporting that they speak English with difficulty, the percentage of Spanish speakers grows to 78 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Of course, in some regions (e.g., Southern California and South Texas), the percentage of native Spanish speakers is dramatically higher than 70 percent. School officials are fond of citing the great number of language spoken by the students in their district, but the vast majority of students participating in language teaching programs are native Spanish speaking Latino students. Consequently, the teaching of English is primarily a concern of those who work with Latino students, and, by extension, a concern of those who prepare teachers for Latino children and youth.

Up until the 1980's, the preparation of teachers for Latino Emerging Bilingual² (EB) students, indeed all EB students, was largely ignored in the teacher preparation literature. Even the advent of bilingual education in the late 1960's failed to provide much specific training in language instruction. Bilingual preservice teachers were, by and large, simply told to teach their students in Spanish without much regard for the inevitable transition to English. Similarly, English Language Development (ELD) teachers were simply told to speak as much English as possible to their EB students and "they'll catch on." This lack of attention to specific pedagogy for language learners no doubt curtailed the academic growth of Latino EB students.

Just over a decade ago, García (1990) made clear the pitiful state of teacher preparation for all EB. Citing the results of several national reports, he concluded that many programs for EB students are staffed by professionals not directly trained

for such programs. Teachers who lack specific training in language education will likely teach using unproductive or even deleterious methods.

Now ten years after García's admonition, most preservice teachers are required to take additional courses and other forms of preparation to learn more about language and language teaching. However, a recent report Menken and Antunez (2001) found that only six states consistently required courses on second language instruction for certification; almost all others require only a "competency," often measured using only vague guidelines. The lack of strict criteria has left many ELD and bilingual teachers feeling unprepared for their EB students (Lewis et. al., 1999).

Presently, about 56 percent of all public school teachers in the U.S. have at least one EB student in their class, but less than 20 percent of the teachers who serve EBs are certified ESL or bilingual teachers. Over half of the teachers serving language learners report that they are underprepared to teach their EB students (Alexander, Heaviside & Farris; 1999). The bad news mounts with the results of a study by Irvine and York (1993), who found that teachers rank the lack of English fluency as the chief reason Latino students fail to succeed in school. Whether or not such attributions for failure are accurate, the achievement scores (dismally low) and dropout rates (much too high) of Latino EB students demand attention.

Some educators lay the blame for teacher under-preparation on teacher educators themselves. (Ada, 1986). Tedick and Walker (1994) maintain that second language teacher education has (a) undervalued the interdependence between first and second languages and cultures, (b) overemphasized the linguistic features of a language (e.g., phonology, syntax) while neglecting how form relates to language function, and (c) relied too heavily on effective teaching methods, leaving new teachers a set of "tools" but no knowledge of when or where to use them, among other shortcomings. Other second language theorists have argued that teacher education has failed to prepare teachers to work with the parents of EB students (Milk, Mercado, and Sapiens, 1992)

² I use the term Emerging Bilingual to suggest the developmental nature of language learning as well as to focus on learners' language strengths rather than their weaknesses (e.g. Limited English Proficient).

Given these critiques, which direction should teacher educators take in order to improve the preparation of teachers for Latino EB students? I have chosen to focus on two proposals. The first directs preservice teachers' attention towards the implementation of two-way bilingual immersion programs. These programs encourage all students to become bilingual and have the advantage of providing a place for preservice teachers of varying degrees of Spanish fluency.

Rubio and Attinasi (2000) detail the changes in a California teacher education program in the aftermath of Proposition 227, suggesting that preservice teachers advocate short-term compliance with Proposition 227 and structured English Immersion approach (ELD) with the long-term goal of creating two-way bilingual programs for each and every student. All preservice teachers should understand deeply the linguistic and social advantages of two-way programs.

The implementation of two-way programs provides advantages for all teachers who wish to work with Latino EB. A common model for two-way bilingual immersion invites students to switch teachers as the language focus changes; therefore, non-Spanish speaking teachers can play an important role.

Second, in response to the Walker and Tedick's critique, preservice teachers should understand the foundations of language acquisition so that they are not trapped into using inappropriate methods. Unfortunately, what we do know about second language teaching and learning turns out to be challenging content for many preservice teachers. Much of the study of language and language acquisition strikes preservice teachers as having "too many theories" for practical use (MacDonald, Badger & White, 2001). Of course, the "too much theory" refrain is familiar terrain for experienced teacher educators (Floden & Buchman, 1990), but familiarity does not make for an easy resolution. Nevertheless, teacher educators have an obligation to help preservice teachers understand the language challenges facing Latino EB children (Garrett, 1990).

Preservice teachers (both bilingual and English-only speakers) must understand the foundations of language instructional as well as specific examples of how native Spanish speaking children negotiate learning English. In my own methods courses, I have found that introducing preservice teachers to the pronoun drop (or pro-drop) parameter works well because English and Spanish differ in with regard to this syntax rule (Cook, 1993).

In English, declarative sentences such as "He speaks" require the pronoun "He". But in Spanish, sentences that "drop" the pronoun are clearly understood. For instance, one can say "habla (speaks)" and the meaning is clear without providing the pronoun reference. In this case, the context of earlier sentences in the conversation or text provides the information about who is doing the speaking. If the subject of the sentence is not clear, then the pronoun can be added without breaking any rules of the language. But the typical use of Spanish, regardless of dialect, requires no use of a pronoun in this instance.

Preservice teachers, even in their earliest field placements with Latino EB, can listen to the students and notice when they are "transferring" the patterns of Spanish to the learning of English. In the case of the pro-drop parameters, native Spanish speaking EB students will drop the pronoun when using English.

Monolingual English teachers, in particular, can be made aware that this "error" in learning to speak English is, in fact, native Spanish speaking students using their prior knowledge to produce their new language. (I have found that even many Spanish speaking preservice teacher education students who use pro-drops unconsciously have never noticed the differences in use between English and Spanish.) An understanding of pro-drop can reduce the shameful number of monolingual English teachers who interpret various set parameters from a native language as lazy or sloppy English use by Latino EB. When teachers believe this "resetting" of parameters as simply incorrect usage, and therefore requiring an immediate correction, they inhibit language fluency.

Recruitment "Solutions"

"Hispanic" students represent 16 percent of the public school enrollment, but "Hispanic" teachers compose a mere 6 percent of all public school teachers (NCES, 2002). "White" teachers, on the other hand, are well represented at 83 percent; white students remain a majority, but at only 61 percent of the total K-12 enrollment. And in specific states, the teacher/student ethnic balance is more uneven. In Texas, for instance, where over 42 percent of the students are "Hispanic" a mere 18 percent of the teachers are so represented (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

These figures disturb a great many educators. They believe that schools, of all places, should present a proportionate ethnic distribution. But those who hope for even ethnic representation soon find a wide range of obstacles facing Latinos who might become teachers. First, the retrenchment of the post-secondary student federal aid programs initiated in the 1980s has continued, preventing many low-income Latinos from pursuing a bachelors degree. Further, the cost of a university education has risen much faster than wages in the private and public sector. While the actual cost of earning a university degree has grown, the opportunity cost (which includes the cost of lost wages while going to school instead of working) has grown even faster, putting a bachelors degree well beyond the reach of many Latinos. While it is true that more Latinos than ever are attending college, completion rates remain low (Vernez & Mizell, 2002). Further, like other marginalized groups (e.g., women), Latinos were once "pushed" into teaching because other professional fields were unlikely to hire them. With the expansion of job opportunities in other professional fields, talented Latinos are choosing to a wider range of careers. While this is clearly good news for Latinos in general, it is bad news for those who wish for more Latino teachers.

We uncover more troubling news by examining the so-called pipeline of Latino teachers. Vegas, Murname, and Willett (2001) studied a large cohort of high school sophomores and found that only 17 percent of those who completed college were "Hispanic". And only 3.3 percent of "Hispanics" became teachers. These data do

not compare favorably with white sophomores, who completed college at nearly twice the rate of "Hispanics" (32 percent). Interestingly, however, is the fact that a mere 3.7 percent of the white sophomores became teachers. These figures suggest that "Hispanic" college students are choosing teaching as a career nearly as often as whites, but their overall numbers are so low that they fail to make a significant impact in the teacher population. So while policy analysts may fret over a .4 percent difference in the proportion of whites and Latinos who become teachers, the real problem is rooted in the relatively few Latinos who are prepared for college requirements in our elementary and secondary schools, a condition perhaps related to the scarcity of Latino teachers.

But what about the larger question: Are Latino teachers more effective with Latino children and youth? Grant and Secada (1990) raise an important issue in the recruitment of teachers of color. They note the increasing "homogenization" of the teaching force in the US and ask, "Is there empirical evidence that having teachers of color will positively effect the achievement scores of students of color and help white students to have more positive attitudes toward people of color" (p. 406)? They had no answer then and an intervening decade of research and policy work has not brought much resolution.

In wide-ranging paper, Osborne (1996) reviews the literature to uncover educational ideas that provide examples of culturally relevant pedagogy for marginalized students. Framed as nine assertions gleaned from the literature, Osborne's first assertion is "Culturally relevant teachers need not come from the same ethnic minority group as the students they teach." His review is equivocal on the issue: a review of more than 25 studies reveal half confirming the fact that teachers should be of the same cultural background as the students they teach, the other half suggest that it is not necessary.

Darder (1993) argues that Latino teachers have a clear advantage when working with Latino students. She writes,

While white educators can utilize their knowledge to construct classroom experiences that enhance academic achieve-

ment, produce opportunities for democratic participation, they are, nonetheless, unable to participate in the consistent and implicit affirmation and reinforcement of the Latino cultural experience (p. 219).

And yet in spite of this view, Darder does not suggest that Latino students should be taught only by Latino teachers. She is careful to point out that white critical educators who embrace the principles of critical pedagogy “make significant contributions to Latino students and the schools they attend” (p. 213). But Darder cannot escape the tension between promoting Latino teachers for Latino youth and avoiding the suggestion that white teachers should only teach white youth. She suggests that white teachers can contribute to the education of Latino youth by assisting their students in understanding white culture. The premise of Darder’s work is that Latino teachers understand Latino culture. In many cases, this is likely to be true. But we might argue that a third generation Latino teacher whose family traces its heritage to Mexico City may have a difficult time understanding, much less legitimating, the culture of a family recently emigrated from rural Mexico. Such a family may have little understanding of formal schooling, no experience of urban life, and speak not Spanish but one of the many indigenous languages of Mexico (e.g., Mixtec or Nahuatl). In this case, any cultural verification or affirmation is unlikely, and the Latino teacher may be as disadvantaged as the European-American, monolingual English teacher.

Even second-generation Latino teachers may have little in common with life in Mexico, and thereby little understanding of recent immigrant children and their families. In a unique project, Walker de Felix and Peña (1992) led 20 Latino, elementary bilingual teachers on a tour of Mexico. With the goals of improving their Spanish and understanding more about the cultural life in rural areas of the country, the teachers found themselves frustrated and longing for home. Some of their frustration was clearly owing to the difficulties of facing their own family histories, which life in the US would have them deny. But other challenges came simply from not understanding-and not wanting to understand-the way Mexicans conducted

everyday life. They became irritated by the lack of a strict schedule and the general lack of attention to detail on the part of their Mexican hosts. Of course, they missed their own families, but they also reported missing life in the US, and none of the teachers expressed a desire to live in Mexico or even make another extended visit to the rural regions, home to the majority of their immigrant students. A more recent study (Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000) found a similar cultural disconnection between US Latino teachers and Mexican families.

Finally, Foster (1995) argues that teachers of color may in fact judge ethnically similar students more harshly than others. This compelling idea suggests that, in such students, teachers glimpse a former self, perhaps bringing to the surface their own painful issues of race and class.

Policy makers and teacher educators should work to bring a more balanced ethnic distribution to the student/teacher ratio. However, ethnic match alone will not likely diminish the achievement gap between Latino and European-American students in US schools. Teacher educators cannot assume that simply because student and teacher share ethnicity that beginning teachers will know how to connect student life to school curricula.

If an ethnic match does not ensure a more fluid and successful educational experience for Latino students, then what should teacher educators do? I suggest that the ethnicity of the preservice teacher should not alter the teacher educator’s efforts to help their teachers-to-be understand students. They should engage them in most effective methods for preparing teachers to work with Latino students. Preservice teachers must be given opportunities to acquire culture, then provided with a forum to discuss how best to integrate their new cultural understandings into the school setting. In addition, teacher educators should not assume that learning about one group generalizes to others.

Conclusion

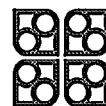
The most “efficient” era in teacher education came at a time when we were naïve enough to believe that a certain cultural outlook trumped all others and that the job of schools was an

equal measure of indoctrination and genuine education. The steamroller culture of the educators, in which we once had unlimited faith, is now correctly understood as one worldview among many. Further, we now know without a doubt that this monocultural view of schooling prevented success for many children and youth who did not share that culture. But our enhanced understanding and blossoming concern is burdened by complications. How do we best prepare teachers to work with Latino children and youth? This paper argues that teacher educators can implement curricular reforms that assist preservice teachers in understanding Latino culture, especially recent immigrant culture. They can also help new teachers in making sense of linguistics in a way that directly affects their work with Latino EB students. Finally, they must recognize the limits of targeted recruitment: Latinos do not always understand or sympathize with other Latinos. In sum, the union of recruitment and curricular changes in teacher education offers promise for Latino children and youth.

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