LATINA EDUCATORS TESTIMONIOS ON THEIR JOURNEYS THROUGH THE TEACHING PIPELINE: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED

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ABSTRACT

There is ample evidence of a leaky teaching pipeline, from attending high school, college, and teacher preparation programs to teaching in urban schools, which puts forth barriers for the success of the Hispanic population in a systemic way (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999). This qualitative study, analyzed through a lens of Latino Critical Race Theory and Latina Feminism, focused on gathering information about urban Midwestern Latina teachers' journeys through the pipeline and suggestions to clear the path for future Latina teachers based on testimonios obtained in interviews and a focus group. The inclusion of the experiences in the workplace and the collection of data in a Midwestern city adds to the research, which has focused mostly experiences of Hispanics living in the southwest. Ten educators participated in this study. Findings confirmed earlier research, particularly language, financial, and cultural barriers with added feelings of isolation and gender-based restrictions. Changes in K-16 and community building are suggested as ways to clear the path for prospective Latina teachers.

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CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION

*"Latinos don't value education" …*prominent white-middle-class professor at northeast Ohio university to me, Hispanic doctoral student.

These words stung very deeply. Looking at national education data (Kena, Hussar W., McFarland J., de Brey C., Musu-Gillette, Wang, Zhang, Rathbun, Wilkinson Flicker, Diliberti M., Barmer, Bullock Mann, & Dunlop Velez, 2016) this claim appears to be true: Latinos have the lowest cohort graduation rate; their parents have the highest rate for high school non-completion (29%), and only 17% of them held a bachelor's degree or higher as of 2014. Some progress is being made among members of this population, however. They are enrolling at a record high of 35% in college, but their completion rate is among the lowest of all subgroups (DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor, & Tran, 2011)

The problem of academic performance and achievement maybe a byproduct of the scarcity of matching cultural-ethnic teachers in the classroom: Only 7% of the country's K-12 teachers are Hispanic, which is alarming because the population of Latino children as of 2016 represented almost a quarter of all persons under 18 years of age (Kena et al., 2016). Both the poor educational achievement and the scarcity of Hispanic teachers are problematic because of the population growth of Hispanics projected by the US Census Bureau (Colby & Ortman, 2014). They report that by 2060, Hispanics will compose 30% of the total population.

But is it possible that the education system from K-16, specifically in teacher preparation programs, the way it is set up, does not value Hispanics? Is this a system that rejects our cultural heritage, history, language, and contributions? Is this a system that is set up to favor white-middle class individuals?

The history, accomplishments, and contributions of Latinos in the United States are absent from most textbooks and curriculums (Aguilar, MacGillivray, & Walker, 2002; Arce, 2004; Gomez, 2010; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999). The devaluation of Latino culture has been reported not just through K-12, but also in college-level courses (Weisman & Hansen, 2008) There is also evidence of discrimination against Hispanic students in schools by teachers and administrators (Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles, Guerrero, Howarth, & Thomas, 1999; Davila, 2010; Hill & Torres, 2010; Luna & Revilla, 2013; Mello, Mallett, Andretta, & Worrell, 2012; Nesman, 2007).

The use of Spanish in the classroom has become such a political issue that it has been outlawed in several states: in 1998, California passed Proposition 227 (Stuart, 2006) in 2000, Arizona passed Proposition 203; in 2001, Colorado passed *"The Colorado*

English for the Children Initiative"; in 2002, and Massachusetts followed suit with *The Massachusetts English Language Education in Public Schools Initiative, Question 2* (Harper, de Jong, & 2009). All these pieces of legislation effectively banned state funding for bilingual schools.

It appears schools in the US are not welcoming sites for Hispanic individuals. Schools seem to be responding to these populations using the original purpose they had in the 1800's: assimilation. Native Americans were punished for speaking their language and performing their culture instead of the mainstream one (Adams, 1995), the same way Latinos are expected to shed their heritage and conform to the national norm (Weisman & Hansen, 2008).

The demographics of teachers has barely changed since those days either. White, middle-class females still compose the majority of the teaching force (80%), while only 7% of K-12 teachers are Hispanic (Kena et al., 2016). Increasing this number and clearing the path for future Latino teachers might aid this population's academic track record. Some of the benefits described for teacher-student cultural match include: higher teacher expectations and value of the funds of knowledge children bring to school (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Ocasio, 2014), and stronger rapport due to shared background and language (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio, 2014; Villegas, 2007). In addition, the White House Hispanic initiative (2015) reports the benefits of having a matching teacher include decreased representation of Hispanics in Special Education courses, less absenteeism, and more parental school involvement. (The White House, 2016) Unfortunately, there is ample evidence of a leaky teaching pipeline for Hispanics, starting in high school and ending in teaching in urban schools that puts forth barriers for

the success of this population in a systemic way (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999).

This study focuses on gathering the *testimonios* of Hispanic urban teachers who have traversed the traditional path to teaching. Through their testimonies and suggestions, in the last chapter of this paper, I will suggest ways to clear the educational pipeline for future Latinos. I focused on urban teachers who have worked in an urban setting because most Hispanic children attend urban schools (Fry, 2008).

Their *testimonios* informed a series of suggestions to help teacher programs attract, recruit, and retain other Hispanic students interested in education. More Hispanics in K-12 classrooms can become role models for upward mobility and can provide cultural bridges between the school and families of incoming Latino children.

The need to help improve this population's achievement has been a governmental priority for many years. In 1990, Pres. George H.W. Bush created the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics as a way to address the disparities in educational opportunities this group was facing. (The White House, 2016)

> The strength of America's education system is undoubtedly connected to the academic success of Latinos. With the shift in demographics taking place in our nation's schools, securing an adequate and equal education for all students, including Latinos, should be a priority not just for the federal government but for every person in this country
>
> (The White House, 2016).

In 2015, President Obama announced a series of federal, state, and local investment of $335 million dollars to fund 150 Commitments to Actions. Among them

are 14 initiatives to provide support for individuals looking to enter the K-16 teaching field (The White House, 2016). Yet, as of the year 2011-12 only 7.8% of the country's teachers were Hispanics (Kena et al., 2016).

The current administration has continued work in this initiative and currently publishes a quarterly newsletter entitled "Nuestra Iniciativa", which showcases some Latino students' lives, but mostly focuses on the Secretary of Education's goals of privatizing schools and college; and an online initiative called #Latinos Teach which highlights the work being done by Hispanic educators in the country (USDE, 2019b).

> With the #LatinosTeach online campaign, the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics features Hispanic teachers who demonstrate that while they are underrepresented, there are many Hispanics who are dedicating themselves to serving their community through teaching.
>
> (USDE, 2019a)

These initiatives pale in comparison to the harm being done to Hispanics image and reputation by the current administration. The current president is fighting a war against what he calls an 'Invasion' from the South. This has unleashed and emboldened the dormant prejudice against Hispanics many Americans previously held. In an article entitled, "Most Latinos Now Say It's Gotten Worse for Them in The U.S.", author Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux of fivethirtyeight.com, lists the many ways Hispanics are expressing how insecure they are in their current place in America.

Thomson-DeVeaux (2019) references polls conducted by the Pew Research Center and a Latinos Decision Poll in which over half of the respondents claimed that racism was a major problem in their lives. The author graphs the perception of increased

racism and nativism to the years preceding and during President Donald Trump's presidency, and it is clear that there is connection between his rhetoric and an increase in racist acts.

The author suggests that acts like the shooting of Hispanics in El Paso, Texas. The shooter referenced his admiration for the President. A screed, allegedly written by him, was found in which he referenced the 'Invasion" of Hispanics with speech similar to that of the President.

The increase in ICE raids, the overcrowded retention centers, the building of the wall between Mexico and the US, the threats to Dreamers, are other concrete ways this administration is showing its contempt towards Latin Americans.

1.1 Research Problem

There is ample evidence of a leaky teaching pipeline, from attending high school, college, and teacher preparation programs to teaching in urban schools, which puts forth barriers for the success of the Hispanic population in a systemic way (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The pipeline mentioned above is consistently described in educational research, some stages of the pipeline are added to it (e.g., unpaid student-teaching), but, in general, there is a clear understanding of what the challenges in obtaining a teaching license and a teaching post are for Hispanic individuals interested in this profession.

This study focuses on uncovering ways to clear the educational pipeline for future Hispanic teachers based on information obtained from interviews and a focus group to Latino urban teachers. Their *testimonios* have informed a series of suggestions to help

teacher programs attract, recruit, and retain other Hispanic students interested in education. More Hispanics in K-12 classrooms can become role models for upward mobility and can provide cultural bridges between the school and families of incoming Latino children.

Understanding the lived experiences of in-service Latino teachers who have resisted and thrived in urban schools might shed light into ways of attracting, retaining, and supporting Latinos as they traverse the educational and work pipeline.

This study focuses on three distinct life-stages of these individuals: their journey through high school and their decision to pursue education as a major; their journey through college and their teacher preparation program, which includes their fieldwork and state tests; and their experiences teaching in an urban school. In each stage, I summarize the obstacles these individuals have faced as described by the available literature.

1.3 Research Questions

1) How do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, make meaning of the obstacles they encountered and how they overcame them in their journey through high school, college/teacher preparation program, and teaching?
2) What do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, suggest to clear the path for coming Latino youth interested in a career in teaching?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Latinos are the fastest growing subpopulation in the U.S. This ethnic group usually congregated in the Southwest and Eastern part of the country, but now there is evidence that more Hispanics are moving to new territories, like the one in this study, at a faster pace than the current K-16 institutions can respond.

School districts, colleges, and universities along with community, as a whole, need to be prepared to modify their practices to welcome the newcomers and help them integrate and thrive in their new settings. Safety nets should be in place to make sure that these minorities have the resources and aid to be successful members of society.

However, the current administration does not seem to agree with making room for Hispanics or any immigrant in this country. Examples of the disdain its leaders have shown for immigrants are placing Hispanic migrants in overcrowded retention camps without basic hygiene (Serwer, 2019); obtaining congress money to build a wall between Mexico and the United States -despite the numbers of undocumented immigrants being stable since 2008 (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2016) and Mexicans being less than half of the undocumented immigrants in the country (Passel & Cohn, 2019) ; increased raids and deportations (Santana, 2017), and the appointment of a known white supremacist to the National Security Council. Concern for the future of Hispanics in general, and K-16 aged individuals, in particular, make studies like the one I propose more urgent and necessary.

The research on Latino teaching pipeline is mostly undertaken in Southwestern (Texas, California, Nevada) and Eastern states such as New York and Florida. These are the states where there is more representation of Hispanics. There is a scarcity of such studies done in the Midwest where the number of Latinos is considerably less. However, this is changing. According to the Columbus Dispatch, Hispanics lead the population

growth in all but one county in Ohio. It is estimated that the Latino population has grown 9% since 2010. Some school districts near the city where this study is set have been identified as high-needs English Language Learner districts (ODE, 2017) because of the influx of Mexicans and Puerto Rican among others, to these neighborhoods.

This project is also unique in using collective *testimonios* of participants who have traversed this journey and have overcome the barriers described in the literature both as members of a community and as individuals.

I am particularly interested in the lived experiences of female educators who, in addition to facing the systemic barriers in the leaky teacher pipeline, also face societal barriers unique to their cultures and their genders.

This study also provides a space for historically marginalized voices to be heard as they describe their experiences as urban in-service teachers, since research on the leaky pipeline is relatively abundant, but research on the lived experience of these Latinos in the school buildings is moderately rare.

1.5 Summary of Methodology

In order to obtain the lived experiences and the suggestions for improving the pipeline from Latina teachers, I used the qualitative methodology of *testimonios*. This type of methodology originated in Latin America and has been historically used to bear witness of instances of oppression (Perez Huber, 2012). It is an urgent form of narrative that challenges normative discourses and gives voice to the marginalized (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012).

For this study, I interviewed six female teachers of Hispanic origin who obtained their licensure through the traditional pathway of college and teacher preparation programs

and who later taught in an urban school. Only one of the six fast tracked her teacher preparation by joining Teach for America.

Each participant was asked to participate in a 90-120-minute semi-structured interview. An explanation of the stages, which were explored during the study, were presented when recruiting individuals as well as a brief explanation of Lat Crit and Latina Feminism.

Each interview was later coded, analyzed, and organized chronologically into short narratives or testimonies of each woman's journey through the pipeline. The transcripts were reviewed again to find thematic similarities.

After all interviews had been conducted and analyzed for emerging themes, four different participants, who share similar characteristics as the original sample, were asked to join a final focus group.

Prompts were developed based on the themes that emerged during the individual interviews and presented to the group. They first had a few minutes to write down their answer to the prompt on a notebook, and then they were asked to discuss the prompts as a group.

The interviews and focus group were transcribed and coded using NVivo.

The information obtained in both instances were used to triangulate the findings and develop a set of suggestions for the teaching community, both in teacher preparation and in school districts, on how to help clear the pipeline to assist in future Hispanic teachers' success.

Participants were asked to review these suggestions and add to them based on their experiences. The final product has given voice to a community of previously silenced women in academia.

1.6 Definition of terms

Hispanic or Latino***:*** I consider the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably to mean a person born in a Spanish speaking country or born in the United States having one or two of her parents or grandparents being born in a Spanish speaking country. I focus on their heritage and ethnicity rather than their race since this subgroup is composed of individuals of every skin color and physiognomy: Indigenous, White, Black, and Asian. I understand that this grouping is flawed, but these terms are how they are described in educational data and research.

Successful teacher: This term refers to an educator who has taught and persisted teaching in a school for 5 years or more, since this is the period the literature points to in which new teachers tend to abandon their post (Barth, Dillon, Hull, & Higgins, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Urban school: The Ohio Department of Education describes an urban school as a building that hosts children with a high or very high level of poverty and in which there is an average or very high student population. (ODE, 2017)

Traditional path to teaching: This term refers to the journey from high school to college and a teaching preparation program leading to a K-12 license.

Cultural capital: refers to the set of acquired patterns of language, thought, taste, behavior, and dispositions that are shared by different cultures (Bourdieu, 1991). According to McNamee and Miller (2009) majoritarian, privileged cultures

tend to use these patterns as a way to differentiate themselves from minority subcultures, at best, and to exclude them, at worst.

Nativism: The predisposition to prioritize and protect the interests of native born over those of the foreign born. (Young, Zimmer & Jackson, 2019) or “intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign connections” (Galindo, 2004).

1.7 Structure of Chapters

The final study is presented in five chapters. A description of the contents of each of them follows: Chapter 1 is a brief overview of the proposed study. Chapter 2 summarizes the existing literature on the Leaky Pipeline Hispanics might face in their journey towards teaching. In that chapter, I also summarize the theoretical framework I use as a lens for analysis of the responses obtained through my data gathering procedures. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and research design I utilized for this project. Chapter 4 includes the description of all of the teachers who participated in the study, the six narratives of the first group of participants, the findings of the focus group and the analysis of themes , and Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions, implications for policy, and recommendations for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Leaky Pipeline

The challenges in recruitment of Hispanic teachers have been described widely in the literature (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio, 2014; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999; The White House, 2016)

In a 2016 White House, Hispanic Educational Excellence Initiative factsheet published by the United States Department of Education, it suggests that Hispanic children's academic success is tied to an increase in the number of Latino teachers. They make a call to attract, recruit, and retain Hispanic teachers in order to improve the experiences of students enrolled in K-12 public schools. They do, however, describe a leaky pipeline in which individuals must first graduate high school, pick education as a career despite it being considered low-respect and low-pay, attend and graduate from a 4-year college, take pre-licensure tests, and then teach in what generally are low income schools in which they tend to receive lower pay and support than in wealthier schools (The White House, 2016).

Some authors argue that forming Latino teachers is a problem of racism and not recruitment (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter, 2017)

In Epstein (2005) *The whitening of the American Teaching Force: A problem of recruitment or a problem of racism*, the author argues that societal structures are set up to prevent any population other than the White middle-class population access to these positions. She claims that the system against non-whites begins in high school when students are not guided into college preparation courses or receive any support or encouragement to attend college. If the minority student succeeds in attending college, he or she is placed in a setting with 86% monolingual White professors and a majority of White peers. This cultural shock, in addition to the academic, financial and navigational issues related to attending secondary education represent the next barrier. The third obstacle that the minority student faces is unpaid field experiences. Then the final hurdle takes the form of State Exams, which not only add a financial burden to the student, but also have also historically favored Whites. (Epstein, 2005).

Epstein (2005) provided an interesting opinion paper based on available literature on the barriers to becoming a teacher. The study I bring forth provides a space for current Hispanic K-12 teachers to narrate, question, and analyze the pipeline described both as individuals and as part of a community.

In the following pages, I have summarized the available literature surrounding my research questions using a Latina Feminism and Latino Critical Theory lens.

2.2 Journey through the Teacher Pipeline

High School and Choosing Education. High school preparation and choosing teaching seem to be the first two conditions that individuals need to meet in order to initiate their journey into a teaching profession (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson,

2012; Ocasio, 2014; Sleeter, 2017; Villegas, 2007). These are the factors, which I explore during the first stage of my study:

It is important to mention that there is evidence that poverty, independent of racial or ethnicity, has been correlated to lower cognitive abilities, school readiness and college completion in several studies (Holochwost, Gariepy, Propper, Gardner-Neblett, Volpe, & E. Mills-Koonce, 2016; Rindermann & Baumeister, 2015; Rumberger, 2010). Parental low socioeconomic status might affect executive function and cognitive development measured by intelligence and verbal ability tests. Rumberger (2010) posits that a high SES student is eight times more likely to graduate from college than a low SES youth. Whether parenting skills, access to resources or other variables are responsible for these differences is still undetermined.

High school preparation. Much has been written about the under preparedness of Hispanics entering college (Choy, 2001; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Pizzolato, Chaudhari, Murrell, Podobnik, & Schaeffer, 2008; Stephens, Hamedani, Destin, & 2014; Tough, 2014). The literature points to under resourced schools, tracking, and discrimination as some of the likely explanations. These factors provide the first obstacles to overcome in an individual’s journey to becoming teachers.

Schools. Hispanics tend to be enrolled in the poorest, most under resourced schools with the least experienced teachers (Choy, 2001; Ehrmann, 2007; Fry, 2008; Pinel, Warner, & Chua, 2005; Pizzolato et al., 2008). Research shows that there is a negative effect of attending a high minority school that is independent of the mean SES and other structural characteristics associated with these schools (Velez & Saenz, 2001). Hill and Torres (2010) report, “Latinos attend the most poorly equipped schools in the

most impoverished school districts and are most likely to have inadequate instruction material and teachers with less experience." (p. 97)

Furthermore, the burnout rate in urban schools causes the highest teacher turn over, which brings forth two consequences: a steady stream of inexperienced teachers (Barth et al., 2016) and the highest numbers of teachers without proper certification (The White House, 2016).

Problems specific to English Language Learners. Fry (2008) claims that the gap in achievement between monolinguals and English learners can be partially due to schools not providing the resources necessary for immigrants to learn the language. According to Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) not all states require pre-service teacher preparation targeted at attaining the skills, knowledge, techniques, and strategies that would aid teachers in their classrooms. According to the Education Commission of the States (2014) only 20 states require preservice teachers to acquire the skills and training to work with ELLs. As of 2007, only Florida, New York, Arizona and California required preservice teachers to be proficient in requirements, such as, pedagogical content knowledge pertaining to second language acquisition, language skills, and English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching strategies. The other 16 states varied in their requirements. (ECS.org, 2019)

Ohio standards do not require English Language Learning (ELL) training in their teacher preservice curricula, and any training that teachers do would have to be additional to their basic license in the form of endorsements or professional developments. In addition**,** there is no uniformity in ELL placement and instructional strategies. Depending on the school district, ELL may have access to certain resources that their peers in other

districts do not. They can enroll in bilingual schools (if available), they can be immersed in regular classrooms and only receive an hour a day of ESL instruction and/or they can have an aide in class.

Second language acquisition of conversational English can occur in approximately one year, whereas the academic English that would allow students to succeed in a school environment requires anywhere from three to seven years (Cummins & 2003). Conversational English can be misinterpreted as full English proficiency if the right tests are not delivered, and premature removal of ELL services can impede the child's achievement, widen the gap and eventually lead to increasing dropping out rates.

Tracking. Some authors add that, aside from less rigorous schools or poorly prepared teachers, the reason Hispanic students are not guided towards college preparatory courses is tracking. Tracking could be the result of discrimination or a byproduct of Hispanics' non-mastery of the English language. Researchers agree that tracking is a major problem Hispanic students face in school (Callahan, 2005; Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Hill & Torres, 2010; Nesman, 2007; Slama, 2012; Velez & Saenz, 2001; Weisman & Hansen, 2008). "Latino students are underrepresented in Advanced Placement classes and are more likely to be placed on a vocational track than on a college preparatory track, regardless of their academic background" (Hill & Torres, 2010, p. 97).

Callahan (2005), "Teachers, principals, and counselors frequently, though perhaps inadvertently, interpret limited English proficiency as a form of limited intelligence and place students in low-track classes to compensate for this perceived deficiency" (p. 310). Long-term English learners (of which Hispanics represent 70%), who are designated as

ELL for 5 years or more, “fail to acquire the grade-level academic and linguistic competency necessary to exit English learner/LEP programs. Systematic tracking of English learners results in a lack of access to high-quality content-area instruction, which in turn has linguistic, academic, and programmatic consequences.”(Callahan, 2005, pp. 306-307)

With less material covered at a slower pace, and hardly ever in advanced placement courses, ELLs might never be able to have access to college preparatory courses. Callahan (2005) claims that lack of academic rigor does not have to be a side effect of ELL courses. Students given more difficult material generally rise to the occasion.

In Ocasio (2014), the author describes this first stage of the teacher pipeline as mired by guidance counselors either not guiding Latino students towards higher math courses or simply assuming that they have no interest in attending college and therefore not spending the same amount of time with them as with students of other cultural origins.

In *Telling to Live* (The Latina Feminist Group, 1991), a compilation of *testimonios* from Latina faculty in Academia, one of the authors narrated how one of her guidance counselors refused to give her an application form for college. After much insistence, the counselor agreed to give her a form that led to a community college track. In another story, one of the authors described how in high school a math teacher told her that she did not need him to explain a problem further “because she was never going to need it”. (p. 62) Whether he was assuming that as a female she would only be procreating

in the future or that as a Latina, she would not be attending college, can only be speculated.

Discrimination. Considerable research has reported discrimination against Hispanics in school (Callahan, 2005; Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Davila, 2010; Hill & Torres, 2010; Luna & Revilla, 2013; Mello et al., 2012; Nesman, 2007). Teacher discrimination has been mentioned repeatedly as an obstacle Hispanic students felt jeopardized their academic careers.

Teacher discrimination affects educators in several ways: they might not expect students to succeed, they might expect students to not be academically inclined or able, they might expect students that look a certain way to behave in a certain way. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which educators seek instances of student's behavior that confirm their expectations as true. The term "self-fulfilling prophecy" (SFP) was coined in 1948 by Robert Merton to describe "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true" (Bearman & Hedström, 2009).

The literature on teacher discrimination towards Hispanics is vast (Cammarota, 2006; Davila, 2010; Davison Aviles et al., 1999, Hill & Torres, 2010; Luna & Revilla, 2013; Mello et al., 2012; Nesman, 2007). Teacher discrimination has been mentioned repeatedly as an obstacle Hispanic students felt jeopardized their academic careers. As can be expected, discrimination has been associated with lower levels of academic motivation (Hill & Torres, 2010), lower sense of school belonging (Mello et al., 2012), and lowered self-esteem (Nesman, 2007).

Instances of disciplinary discrimination were also addressed in some of the research (Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Nesman, 2007). Among them was differential treatment by authority figures (Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Nesman, 2007); calling the police even for minor fights in elementary school (Davidson Aviles et al., 1999); and longer suspension penalties for Latino students (Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Nesman, 2007).

Participants in these three studies also reported they felt that teachers had lower expectations set for them, did not care about teaching them, and would not disclose information that could potentially have led to them to enrolling in college-preparatory courses (Cammarota, 2006; Davidson Aviles et al., 1999; Nesman, 2007).

In McGrady and Reynolds (2013) a study was conducted based on the multivariate analysis of around 9500 Math and English 10th grade teachers' 2002 Educational Longitudinal survey that looked at the perceptions of White vs. Non-White teachers on White, Asian, Hispanic and Black students' effort, relationship with others, attentiveness, disruptiveness, use of good grammar, idea organization, etc.

> White teachers' ratings of students' academic ability and behaviors in the classroom appear susceptible to the racial stereotypes that depict Black and Hispanic youth as having lower academic potential and Asian youth as model students
>
> McGrady and Reynolds (2013)

Another example of how schools may create roadblocks specifically for Hispanic students wishing to pursue a major in education is evident in Irizarry and Donaldson (2012). In this cross-case paper that examined three independent studies, each one

focused on one of the Hispanic teaching pipeline: High school and choosing to teach, pre-service teacher experience, and in-service teacher experience in a northeastern US city. Participants were very vocal about, what they perceived as, the ‘system’ getting in the way of them coming back to their communities to help Latino kids:

> I want to be the teacher that I really never had. Most of the teachers, not all but most of them, like hate Latinos. They just don’t like us. That’s it. They treat us bad and don’t teach us the right way. They don’t think we’re going to make it in life, or like they don’t do anything to help us. They ban Spanish. They put us in the lowest classes. They put us in ISS (in-school-suspension) for stuff they let the white kids get away with. They just don’t want to teach us. That’s why we need more Latino teachers. I want to be that person…the one that comes back, believes in Latino kids and works to fix this place- Carmen, a high school student
>
> (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012, p. 167).

Teacher discrimination, on the other hand, and can be the very reason Latinos become teachers as a way to right the wrongs from their past to future generations (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Szecsi & Spillman, 2012; Weisman & Hansen, 2008).

In Irizarry and Donaldson (2012), across the data sets in each of the three independent studies the authors cross cased, the primary motive to entering the teaching field was to combat negative experiences they had gone through while in school.

Even then, Arellano and Padilla (1996) warn that Latino teachers can learn to believe the myths surrounding this population:

- Latinos don’t do well in school because they are poor.
- Latino parents don’t care, don’t help, can’t read.

- Latinos don't value education. (p. 43-44)

The statements above remove any responsibility from the teacher to try to help, connect, or guide children who are seen as defective and deficient. These overgeneralizations affect students who although Latino, might not be poor, or might be very bright, studious, and motivated. If a teacher or professor does not believe that all students can learn and succeed, his/her energies will go towards helping the ones he or she believes will.

Widespread xenophobia and racism might also be present not only in teachers but in school administrators and staff. The Latino Narrative Threat (Chavez, 2008) is a theory that the USA is undergoing a phase of widespread suspicion, if not hatred, of Hispanic individuals.

> The Latino Narrative threat posits that Latinos are not like previous immigrant groups, who ultimately become part of the nation…Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating or becoming part of the national community. Rather, they are part of an invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquering land that was formerly theirs (US Southwest) and destroying the American way of life.
>
> (Chavez, 2008, p. 3)

The current wave of nativism that the nation is experiencing could be another obstacle that Hispanics face in their motivation to integrate to mainstream America and pursue avenues towards white-collar jobs.

This xenophobia and racism have also affected laws against college entrance for minorities: "State anti-affirmative action laws have restricted the criteria used to consider

what constitutes merit in several state public institutions, and have influenced decreases in Latinos' application and enrollment rates in highly selective public institutions in California, Texas, and Washington."(Nunez, 2014, p. 89)

Studies show that overt discrimination has been replaced by racial microaggressions (Sue et al. 2007) these less overt forms of abuse can be subdivided into:

1. Microinsults (verbal manifestations): communications with intent on conveying insensitivity toward the recipient's racial heritage/identity ascription to intelligence, second-class citizenship, and assumption of criminality.
2. Micro assaults (nonverbal manifestations): explicit racial insults intended to offend the recipient, such as, "colored" or "Oriental".
3. Microinvalidations (environmental manifestations): communications with intent to exclude or invalidate a person of color's thoughts, feelings, or experiences (Solórzano et al., 2000; Sue et al. 2007).

Subtractive schooling. In Angela Valenzuela's seminal book "Subtractive Schooling" (1999), the author shared the findings of her three-year ethnographic quantitative/ qualitative study in which she observed and interviewed new Mexican immigrants and several different generation Mexica-Americans and their performance in high school. Among her findings were the lack of connection between Anglo teachers and a majority Hispanic student population; the dismissal of the student's language, history, and culture; and a curricula focused entirely on Middle Class White Americans.

They did not see themselves in their studies, they were told not to speak Spanish, their culture was derogated, and biculturalism was not given to the students as an option to navigate their surroundings.

She explained that these factors might have contributed to students feeling undervalued and disconnected from their schools. Students felt their school and their teachers "didn't care". This affected their academic performance and their dropout rate.

Valenzuela (1999) suggests schools should be additive instead of subtractive and build on the wealth and richness immigrants, and all minorities, bring to their doors. Instead, they expect minority youth to shed their heritage and adopt a White identity, which does not match their appearance.

Teen pregnancies. A problem common to Latina adolescents is teen pregnancies. According to a 2012 Center of Disease Control and Prevention report, Hispanic teens have the highest rate of teen pregnancies among all other subgroups. The strong bounds of *familismo* that characterizes the Hispanic community, the reverence to motherhood, and the stand the Catholic Church, which tends to be the main religion of Latin America, has on abortion, may serve as explanations as to why motherhood may take precedence over all other roles in Latina women's lives (The Latina Feminist Group, 1991; Wilkinson-Lee, Russell, & Lee, 2006).

According to Wilkinson-Lee et al. (2006) "*Familismo* can be described as a collective loyalty to the extended family that outranks the needs of the individual". (p. 377). In Nesman's (2007) study, family responsibilities like "working to contribute to the family's income, assisting with housework, providing childcare, and serving as translators for parents…took priority over school attendance, homework, or

extracurricular activities" (Nesman, 2007, p. 427). Children learn early on that the major responsibility they have is "*obligación familiar*", meaning their family comes before anything else (Hill & Torres, 2010).

This study attempts to understand if these were obstacles in the lives of the participants to get an education, and if they were, how they overcame them.

As described by the USDE White House Hispanic Excellence in Education initiative (2016), high achieving Hispanic high school students might not be choosing teaching as a profession because they may think of it as a low-paying, low-respect job. This problem does not seem to be exclusive of Latinos, in Barth et al. (2016), the authors claimed that enrollment in teacher education programs was down 30% and that some of the reasons behind it might be a perceived lack of respect for teachers (p. 2), a desire to find better-paid employment that will payoff student loans faster, and the perception that testing, teacher-accountability, and high-stakes teacher evaluations make this profession seem less attractive (p.9).

A problem common to Hispanics, according to Ochoa (2007), however, might be that in some subgroups of Latinos, specifically Mexicans, women are expected to live with their families until they marry. Leaving for another state to go to school to seek a better education might not be a viable option (Aguilar et al., 2002; Ochoa, 2007; The Latina Feminist Group, 1991), which might explain why attending community colleges close to home might be a more acceptable choice. It is worth noting that half of Hispanics in college attend community colleges (Fry, 2008; Kena et al., 2016).

In Aguilar et al. (2002), five beginning bilingual teachers who have been teaching from 3 to 5 years, were interviewed multiple times to explore their journey as high school

students to education students and the tensions that arose from these with their cultures and families and the strategies they employed to resolve conflicts. A constant comparative analysis was implemented to analyze their responses.

Conflicts were evident between home and school starting in elementary school where one of the participants found a haven in the classroom away from her home responsibilities: cleaning, preparing food, and taking care of siblings. Another participant described her father as her biggest obstacle to getting an education, since he wanted her to get married early and have a family. A third participant explained how after visiting two universities in northern California, her mother had exclaimed: “Oh no, what are you going to do? You’re a girl. You can’t go up there. How are you going to live by yourself?” (p. 96) which led the young woman to avoid conflict and pick a college on her bus route.

Other conflicts that arose were:

1. Participants exhibiting ‘White’ academic behaviors, such as getting good grades and enrolling in AP courses. This perception created a distance between them and their less achieving Hispanic friends.
2. Distancing between their family culture after attending college, not necessarily devaluing their heritage, but realizing the differences with what their sheltered upbringing exposed of the world and what they learned in a formal setting.
3. Having to make friends outside of their communities, with Whites and Asians, in order to fit in into college. Participants described these processes as ‘strange’ and ‘weird’. (p. 95)

Aguilar et. al's (2002) research is a valuable precursor to the study I am attempting. Their study was conducted in the Southwest, and mine was conducted in the Midwest. It is quite possible that the regional culture difference will yield different results. In addition, all of their participants were of Mexican origin and my participants were a mix of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Central American because of the demographics of this city. These differences and the use of *testimonio* as methodology add to the limited literature on Hispanic teacher experiences.

College and Teacher Preparation Program. This section was divided into three in order to maintain the chronological order from High School to teaching. The following summarizes what the literature describes about Hispanic's early college and teacher-preparation program experience, including their fieldwork and state tests. Although they may overlap, there is abundant research on the saliency of each phase as providing unique difficulties to overcome.

College experience. Hispanics tend to have the lowest percentage of parents with bachelor's degree or higher (17%) and the highest percentage of parents that hold less than a high school diploma (29%) of other subgroups (Kena et al., 2016, p. 9). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that a high percentage of these Latinos were first-generation college students and that these youths will have attended highly segregated, impoverished K-12 schools. There are several challenges associated to being the first one in the family to go to school. I describe some of them below. I also explore what the literature reports on cultural challenges minorities face in majority White campuses: among them, feelings of isolation, cultural clash, and mainstream acculturation. Research has shown that minority students need to learn the mainstream culture, and in some

instances are asked to shed their own heritage, in order to succeed in college (Aguilar et al., 2002). This section is followed by an overview of current research specific to Latinos in teaching programs, in which participants have described strategies in overcoming both 1st generation obstacles and cultural ones.

Challenges associated to being a 1st generation college student. There are two known challenges associated with being the first in your family to attend an institution of higher learning. I summarize each one below.

Academic under preparedness and absence of both procedural, and financial family support. According to the National Center for Education Statistics entitled *Students whose parents did not go to college: Postsecondary access, persistence and attainment* (Choy, 2001), first generation students are affected by their parents' education beginning in 8th grade. At that young age, students whose parents did not graduate from college had lower educational aspirations. These students are less likely to enroll in the advanced college preparation courses that will help them prepare for their postsecondary education. "High school graduates whose parents did not go to college are less likely than those whose parents earned bachelor's or advanced degrees to be academically prepared for admission to a 4-year college" (Choy, 2001, p. 11). They are also less likely to receive familial help in navigating the paperwork necessary to apply and be accepted to higher education institutions; moreover, this agency reports that school officials tend to not supplement the college prep guidance that these children are not obtaining from their parents. Once these students graduate, they are more likely to enroll in 2-year colleges. Additionally, they tend to obtain less financial support from their parents, which means

that they must work longer hours than their college-experienced peers must, or accumulate larger student debts. (Choy, 2001)

> Parents education is only one of many factors linked to postsecondary enrollment. In fact, multivariate analyses have shown that family income, educational expectations, academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influence also independently affected graduates' likelihood of enrolling in a 4-year institution. Nonetheless, parents' education –specifically having a parent with a bachelor's degree- remained significant even after controlling for these other factors. Students whose parents had some college experience, but not a bachelor's degree, did not appear to have an advantage over those whose parents had no postsecondary education.
>
> (Choy, 2001, p. 8)

Cultural challenges: Funds of knowledge different from mainstream.

The cultural capital utilized in academia is that of White, middle-class individuals , and seeing as many of the students who arrive to majority White colleges come from deeply segregated urban schools (Pinel et al., 2005), the culture shock might explain student attrition.

Their classmates have looked, talked, and behaved like them since the beginning of their academic journeys. In college, when placed in a setting when one is a minority among other races or ethnic backgrounds, the saliency of one's ethnicity or racial identity comes to the forefront (Pinel et al., 2005; Pizzolato et al., 2008) and may result in feelings of isolation.

Feeling of isolation and under preparedness in conjunction with believing the stereotypes assigned to your population have been singled out as culprits of the high attrition exhibited by minority college students (Tough, 2014). It is important for my study to understand the strategies that the current in-service teachers implemented to overcome these barriers and be resilient with their studies. Did they distance themselves from their culture and adopt the dominant one? Or did they use their heritage as propulsion to succeed? Or did they not experience anything the literature describes?

Aguilar et al. (2002) contend that in order for Latino teachers to be successful, they must develop and integrate a new identity (teacher identity) while preserving their identity attached to their home culture, and that this process can be painful if conflict arises between values taught in school vs. their home. They claim many bilingual teachers in their study were expected to shed their cultural norms and become assimilated to White American culture, but then be able to teach in "culturally appropriate ways" (p.99).

On the other hand, and Arellano and Padilla (1996) interviewed 30 undergraduate Latinos, and inquired about the mechanisms associated with academic resilience and the factors that may contribute to their academic success. They described among them, parental educational attainment, teacher and family support, and personality characteristics. They stated that perceived social inequalities and strong affiliation to Latino community were high motivators for success among highly achieving Hispanics in a selective university.

Teacher Preparation Programs. Sleeter (2017) explores how teacher preparation programs might be shaped to privilege Whiteness. She explains that focusing on

Eurocentric content knowledge, providing 'lip service' to multicultural and diversity studies that go far enough to meet NCATE requirements but not so far as to offend white students' sensibilities; assuming minorities have the financial means to be available at school all day from Monday to Friday; and imposing high stakes state tests that historically and systematically favor white students they are setting up obstacles for the success of any other group than Whites.

Eurocentrism and the historical minority 'taboo' was one of the findings in Téllez (1999) exploration of the experiences of four Mexican American student teachers who were unable to find instances of their culture, history, or language in the state mandated textbooks and curriculum. The students, however, found ways around the outdated textbooks, and crammed schedules to include books and songs in Spanish. One student claimed regarding the lack of non-Eurocentric content, "Whoever designed the books doesn't want to touch that. Maybe it's taboo to them. Most of America wants it to go away. They don't want to recognize the influence of the other cultures in our society". Another student persisted in incorporating aspects of his heritage into the curriculum by creating everything himself; his logic was "MxAm students should not have to get to the university before they learn about the lives of their families and ancestors" (p. 565).

An example of how schools might just pay 'lip service' to issues of diversity and inclusion is evident in Amos (2010) qualitative study about her experience as a professor in a mandatory teacher education diversity course. Six minority students were interviewed about their experience being in a majority white classroom (30 students). The participants shared their feelings of isolation, fear, and selective mutism as a way to respond to what they perceived as their white peers' insensitivity towards race and

ethnicity issues. They were afraid to speak up in class and stand up to their classmates' jokes for fear of being perceived as an ally to the professor and becoming ostracized.

College and Teacher Preparation Program Examples. Evidence of perceived barriers during college and teacher preparation programs and the strategies they used to overcome them are summarized below. This study will determine if there are regional differences between the experiences of university students in the South and Midwestern parts of the country.

In Battle and Cuellar (2011), six pre-service Mexican-American teachers participated in a qualitative study in order to share their insights about the obstacles and support they experienced in college. All but one of the interviewed were first-generation college students. They all reported feeling underprepared academically for the college experience; confronting financial hardships; and having to overcome feeling of alienation and intimidation associated with attending White majority campuses, in which they felt harassment from their fellow classmates. On the other h, and they claimed that sources of support included university personnel, their family, the Catholic Church, and educational assistance programs. They also spoke of how the college experience had helped them develop or reinforce their self-reliance.

In Szecsi and Spillman (2012), a qualitative study of three minority teacher candidates is conducted in order to explore the candidates' perceptions about their teacher education program. Three females from Haiti, Dominican Republic and the Philippines who had successfully completed at least three semesters of their program were interviewed. Initial 90-minute interviews followed by more than 20 hours of classroom and extra curriculum activities observations were conducted. A final 60-minute

structured interview closed the investigation. The analysis was conducted in accordance to Strauss & Corbin's grounded theory methodology.

Three themes emerged from the minority teacher candidates' experiences:

1. Teaching was not their primary choice. Various life experiences eventually led to that profession. In all cases, family, friends and the participants considered teaching a low status profession with low pay and little respect. Despite this, the participants chose this career based on favorable experiences they had in their own schooling. They cited having influential teachers as the reason they chose to override their family's complaints. They also mentioned teaching as a way of giving back to society.
2. Teaching in their own communities. All three participants grounded their desire to return to their communities on memories of prejudice and bias they had experienced during their own academic journey. They considered that their background equipped them with the understanding they would require to help students in need. They considered themselves better prepared to teach minority students because they shared the experience of being a minority with them.
3. Extensive socio-cultural support in candidates' networks. All three participants mentioned their reliance on the support of their families, communities, and school officials in helping them through their academic journey. They especially valued "the mandatory courses on culture, language, and diversity-related issues" (Szecsi & Spillman, 2012, p. 27). Field experiences were considered beneficial and helped them realize the

> differences between their ideals and the reality of teaching. Ethnic and racial specific organizations and student clubs were also mentioned as sources of support, particularly, in White majority classrooms.

Szecsi and Spillman (2012) concluded that more efficient academic, financial, and social support is needed for not just minorities, but also all individuals going through teacher preparation programs.

The theme of isolation and cultural disconnect felt by Latino college students, in general, is also discussed in Gomez (2010) life history qualitative study. Sixteen Hispanic prospective teachers were interviewed from 2 to 4 hours. Of these participants, three females were chosen since their stories were the most representative of the group. In their tales, some of the females shared “the challenges of living and learning with young white women who were dismissive of what she knew” (p. 88).

“Why do they (white, middle class, and females) get to go home and be happy after we talk in class, or just forget about the discussion, and I go home angry and upset, and cannot forget their words?” Latina prospective teacher in (Gomez, 2010, p. 88).

Some of the themes that emerged from these stories were feelings of isolation and that their cultural background and funds of knowledge were undervalued within a White, middle-class culture. The participants linked past experiences of prejudice, xenophobia, and racism directed at them, or towards their mother, to current ones in their college experience.

All participants countered these experiences with tales of courage and strength derived from their mothers. They used these nurturing and supportive relationships as protection and inspiration. If their mothers, most of whom did not speak the language,

survived in this hostile environment, so could they. They summoned the strength from their family ties to succeed in their academic journey.

Due to the large variety of Hispanics based on country of origin, generational status, SES, race, and color, it is to be expected that the stories that I gather during this project may vary by individual. That is the focus of the study by Tong, Castillo, and Pérez (2010)

In Tong et al. (2010) the constructs of acculturation, ethnic identity, and teaching efficacy were examined among 89 Latino in-service teachers serving minority students. Results showed that bilingual teachers were less likely to be assimilated to White-American culture. They tended to hold alternative certifications and hold on to their native language: Spanish. Although all teachers were Latino, their acculturation level depended on the result of program type:

1. ESL–English as sole language of instruction-more assimilated
2. Bilinguals–English and Spanish as languages of instruction–more biculturally balanced. (P. 49)

According to Tong et al. (2010), the acculturation process, as to be expected, depended on generational status: 1st generation group demonstrated greater distance to their heritage and an acculturative shift to White-American culture. (p. 43)

Weisman and Hansen (2008) also evaluated whether the experiences of Latinos vary by race, SES, generational status, etc. In their study of 10 bilingual Latino preservice teachers while student-teaching in urban and suburban schools, they further explored heritage culture and teaching. Their question was, “How do background experiences and student-teaching in different socio-economic settings contribute to their understanding of

their potential contributions to teaching in a Hispanic serving school?" They proposed that being a Latino teacher "does not guarantee cultural sensitivity or awareness of inequities that exist in schooling policies and practices" (Weisman & Hansen, 2008, p. 654), nor does it guarantee that Latino teachers always decide to teach in urban settings.

Ten Latino bilingual pre-service teachers were interviewed for approximately 45 minutes each at the end of their program. The data was coded and analyzed for thematic patterns. Four patterns emerged:

1. Influence on personal early school experiences: Answers varied among participants, the majority of them reported successful assimilation into mainstream schooling; others reported struggles with the language. One of the participants recalled having been placed in a Special Education track despite not having learning disabilities, just difficulty learning the language. She said she could read and write in Spanish, but that knowledge was not considered when placing her in the special education class from second to 7th grade, when teachers finally placed her in a regular classroom.

   Two of the other participants were placed in bilingual classrooms. One was placed there, without testing, because her parents could not speak the language. She could and was upset by the assumption that she could not. The third worked very hard to get out of this classroom since "Right off the bat, I identified with the English-speaking kids. It was very easy to see that Hispanics had a very low status. It wasn't like I was rejecting my

background, but I didn’t want to be with the Hispanics” -upper-middle class, Peruvian participant. (Weisman & Hansen, 2008, p. 660).

2. Connection to Latino students and community: Unsurprisingly, the authors found that participants identified with the low-income communities and middle-class culture based on their own SES. Discomfort in differing settings were exacerbated by the discrimination in the suburban school a participant felt. Based on her appearance, she was instructed to sit at the instructional aide table, not at the teachers’ table. Other connections to the community were shared linguistic and cultural values that improved rapport with students and parents. The majority of the participants felt that their contribution was more needed in the low-income setting. However, not all of the participants felt comfortable in the urban setting, those who identified more with White culture favored the suburban setting.
3. Awareness of inequality: Despite observing differences in resources, physical environment, teaching ability, and parental involvement, most participants did not equate them to inequalities in school policy and practices. Only one of the participants expressed awareness of the discrimination present in the schools, specifically, the lack of respect the teachers had for parents who did not speak English.
4. Desire to teach in urban schools: The majority of participants expressed their desire to teach in an urban environment, except those who identified primarily with White middle-class culture. They pointed to their knowledge of Spanish and shared cultural background as primary

> motivations to work in low-income schools. “Their commitment is rooted in personal experiences with marginalization because of language differences, devaluation of their culture, or economic hardships.” (Weisman & Hansen, 2008, p. 666).

Weisman and Hansen (2008) reflect on the fact Latino pre-service teachers were not politically aware of inequalities and cultural White hegemony, and considered that teacher education programs must prepare future teachers not only to master content matter, but also to develop critical consciousness about societal inequalities and their future role in education.

Field experience. The issue of unpaid field experiences is rarely singled out as a possible deterrent toward obtaining a teaching license in most of the other literature researched. Only Epstein (2005) mentioned the undue financial burden that this activity may pose to minorities.

“a year without income is an enormous burden for anyone, but the wealth gap makes it more possible for whites than non-whites” (p. 92)

State tests. Epstein (2005) spoke about the financial burden on students in paying for state licensing tests. In Ohio, according to the website www.oh.nesinc.com, students attempting their Ohio Assessment for Educators should plan to spend an average of $105 per test. The minimum number of tests required is two: professional knowledge test and content area, but depending on licensure track it can be up to five.(OAE, 2017)

In addition, disparities in licensing test scores by race and ethnicity have been widely reported (Bennett, Mcwhorter., & Kuykendall, 2006; Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio, 2014; Sleeter, 2017; Villegas, 2007). Epstein (2005) reports

half of the minorities that attempted the California PRAXIS in 2003 failed. Similar results have come from Texas. Ocasio (2014) and Villegas (2007) also reported that the passing rates of minorities on these tests are lower than the rates of white candidates, which has resulted in the exclusion of a disproportionally large number of Hispanics from teaching.

In Bennett et al. (2006) a longitudinal study examined the PRAXIS I results of 44 participants both African Americans and Hispanics. Findings showed significant differences between race and ethnicity, and further differences by gender and socioeconomic status by each subgroup. The authors pointed to stereotype threat and problematic question wording as possible explanations for these discrepancies.

In Steele (2011) stereotype threat (ST) experiments have confirmed that minorities' performance on tasks, in which their ability to excel has been questioned by widespread stereotypes, decreases as a result of their concern over proving these stereotypes right. The physiological response to this concern is increased anxiety that in turn increases blood pressure and decreases working memory capacity. Another effect that stereotype threat can have is disengagement from the task as a way to protect the individual's self-esteem. The effects of ST are heightened if before the performance task the saliency of the individual's race, ethnicity, or gender is brought forth. Whereas, the effects of ST are erased if the performance task is presented as something other than a test of the construct that has been stigmatized.

In Ward and Lucido (2012) *Low performance on teacher certification exams: A hidden consequence of English language learners' underdeveloped first language?*, the authors compared the scores of 259 Spanish-bilingual and English-monolingual pre-

service teachers who took the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test (GMRT) –an instrument to measure reading comprehension ability- and the Texas Examination of Educators Standards (TExES) in the year 2003. The influence on the GMRT reading ability of the Spanish bilinguals (r=.720) had over twice the influence on the TExES than that of their monolingual peers (r=.486). 52% of the Hispanics' performance in the TExES was explained by their GMRT vs 24% for their English counterparts. In addition, there was a 20-point difference between the mean bilingual and monolingual TExES score (244.32- bilinguals vs. 263.50- monolinguals). The passing rate for this test is 240, which means that Hispanics barely achieved a mean passing rate. This study suggests that there might be an additional language barrier to pass state tests.

Workplace experience in an urban school. As stated previously, the focus of this study includes exploring the experiences of oppression of teachers who work in urban schools because these are the places in which they can influence the greatest number of Hispanic students.

Unsurprisingly, Hispanics tend to teach in schools similar to where they went as children. Minorities tend to teach in schools were students look like them (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ronfeldt, Kwok, & Reininger, 2016; Villegas, 2007). There is also evidence that minority teachers enter the profession due to a stronger commitment to social justice and to a sense of responsibility to their communities (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio, 2014; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; Weisman & Hansen, 2008). According to the USDE Civil Rights Data Collection on the 2011-2012 school year, on average, teachers in high schools serving the highest percentage of minority students were paid less per year than their colleagues in schools in the

same district who serve the lowest percentage of black and Latino students. (U.S.D.E., 2014, p. 1)

The host of challenges associated with teaching in a high-needs school is well known: lack of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, scant administrative support, excessive testing, increased teacher isolation, paperwork, etc. (Barth et al., 2016; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzó & Rueda, 2003). The turnover rates for hard-to-staff schools cause a steady in-flow of new inexperienced teachers (Barth et al., 2016) who might not have the tools to improve the school climate or manage behavioral issues.

Hispanic in-service teacher experiences. Literature on the experiences of Hispanic in-service teachers has been scarce. In the next pages, I summarize some the research that has explored this topic.

Arce (2004) conducted a participatory research with five beginning Hispanic rural and urban teachers who were trying to incorporate socially conscious teachings in their classrooms. Five themes emerged from her findings:

a. *Teacher isolation, racism, and tokenism*: Hispanic teachers felt they could not share their political views with their colleagues for fear of being ostracized. They also shared instances in which they felt that although they were not the target of racism, the students that shared their heritage were. Diego …felt he was isolated from other progressive educators because he viewed the school structure as racist toward the Mexican community. He was torn by the fact that the faculty and staff were very warm and

supportive of him, yet many appeared not to extend these same attitudes of acceptance toward the Mexican children and their families" (p.238)

b. *Power imbalance among students of different ethnicities or races*: These new teachers also became painfully aware of the power struggle between white and minority students. "Marco believed that children know who has the power and the dominant group acts it out" (p. 238)

c. *Culturally bound pedagogy*: The participants complained the content was Eurocentric and that the only mention of Mexico in the textbook was "as a minimal obstacle to US expansionism" (p. 238). The participants had to create ways to incorporate multicultural content, whether in books, songs, poetry, or history.

d. *The countering of hidden curriculum through critical pedagogy*: teachers spoke of ways to engage students in dialogues in which they had them question social injustices. They did not count on their colleagues help to implement this.

e. *Development of identity and voice for both students and teachers*: The participants realized that their students were starting to internalize the demeaning perspectives mainstream society had of them and their community. They also perceived a lack of student knowledge of the contributions Mexicans had historically made in the US. It was their goal to find ways to counter this and empower their students' and their own identity and voice.

Despite the enthusiasm over having ethno/racial matching teachers and students, some Latino teachers can consciously or subconsciously use deficit thinking when dealing with students of their own heritage. (Viloria, 2015)

In a study which examined the culturally responsive teaching practices of second or third generation Mexican American teachers in Texas, (Viloria, 2015) found evidence that teacher programs cannot assume that teachers of color will naturally practice culturally relevant teaching or that they will not succumb to internalizing the same stereotypes assigned to Hispanic children. These findings might be exacerbated by generational status. The longer the individual's family has been in the United States, the more one must assume that they have distanced themselves from their mother culture and adopted the views and beliefs of the dominant culture.

2.3 Suggestions for Improvement

In order to answer the second research question, all of the participants will be asked to give suggestions to clear the path for prospective Latina teachers both during the individual interviews and the focus group.

In conclusion, the study I present, adds to the literature on minorities in teacher preparation programs focused specifically on Hispanics who teach in an urban school. There is ample evidence of obstacles in the path to becoming a teacher in the Southwest and Eastern parts of the United States. Some of the obstacles described in the literature are present in high school (discrimination, tracking, and scant ELL resources); in college (financial, navigational or cultural roadblocks, in addition to unpaid field experiences), and in the workplace (poor pay, lack of administrative support, burnout). However, there is a scarcity of studies like these conducted in the Midwestern part of the country where

there are less societal supports put in place to aid this subpopulation. In addition, there is very limited research on Latina's experiences in their workplace in the entirety of the nation.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

As seen in chapter II, there is ample evidence of obstacles set in place to favor only Whites into obtaining posts in public school systems. The study I present aims to uncover strategies to clear the pathway of prospective Latina students who are interested in a career in education.

In order to do so, I interviewed six Latina K-12 urban teachers individually for my first round of data gathering. During their interviews, we discussed the barriers they recognized in their path to becoming teachers and the strategies they used to overcome them. I finished each interview by asking the participants to give suggestions for a better pipeline for future Latina teachers.

Once I analyzed the first round of interviews, I invited four new teachers to speak collectively on some these findings. I finished the focus group by asking the new participants to contribute new ways to improve the k-16 path for Hispanics interested in becoming educators.

I analyzed the data obtained in this study using Latino Critical Theory and Latina Feminism, because they complement each other in the exploration of the lived experiences of Latinas and they offer the possibility of creating a counter narrative to mainstream positivism.

Critical Race Theory focuses on empowering human beings to transcend the socio-structural constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender (Haverkamp & Young, 2007).

Latino Critical Theory. This extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) focuses on the specific struggles of Hispanic minorities, such as language, immigration, representation, xenophobia, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, etc. (Delgado Bernal, 2001); the multidimensionality of Hispanic identity at the intersection of race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, etc. (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002); , and the creation of a pan-ethnic coalition that will give voice, representation, and political power to this highly diverse group of individuals (Valdes, 1996).

According to Delgado Bernal (2001), LatCrit and CRT are very similar. Cousins that share a cause but do not live under the same roof (p. 109). Therefore, I looked at the goals of CRT as shared by those of LatCrit, based on the epistemology comparison developed by Delgado Bernal.

Critical race theory allows us to conceptualize schools as possessing the "potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and empower" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 133); to recognize Hispanic youth as responding to structural conditions within higher education schools in multiple ways; and to use research methods that create opportunities for these participants to map out their experience and narrate what meaning that experience offered them in their development toward teaching as a profession.

According to Haverkamp and Young (2007), the primary objective of the CRT framework is to challenge the dominant structures of meaning making in order to

empower historically marginalized minorities (p. 268). This 'majoritarian' narrative is one based on White-Middle-Class-Males; it focuses on positivism and the assumptions of one main, common reality. It preaches that society is based on the values of meritocracy, objectivity, and fairness. It also, demerits and ignores whatever other worldview is dissimilar to that of the mainstream (Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Solórzano and Yosso (2009) describe the five elements that CRT lens focuses on:

1. The centrality of race, racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination.
2. The challenge to dominant ideology
3. The commitment to social justice
4. The centrality of the experiential knowledge
5. The trans disciplinary perspective (p. 63)

This study specifically focuses on Delgado Bernal (2001) interpretation of the importance of trans disciplinary approaches: "understanding and improving the educational experiences of students of color" (p. 109). In order to do so, I collected counter stories generated by the Hispanic teachers interviewed, in order to understand their journey and suggest strategies to clear the path for future Latinas interested in becoming K-12 teachers.

I believe as a Hispanic immigrant woman I have an obligation to alter the majoritarian story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009), and give a voice to these women who have been historically invisible. I aimed to create a counter-story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009), and heed the words of Gloria Anzaldúa:

“It is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we do not allow whitemen (sic) and women solely to occupy it. By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform the theorizing space” (Anzaldúa in Solórzano and Yosso, 2009, p. 143).

Latina Feminism. Female Latinas not only must unite to fight the alienation and marginalization they may face from mainstream society, but, in many ways, they still must liberate themselves from aspects of their own culture that may add to their oppression.

The Latino culture is generally a collectivistic one. As we saw before, *obligación familiar* takes precedence over the individuals’ needs (Hill & Torres, 2010; Nesman, 2007). In the one hand, and this collectivism has served immigrant families well in terms of collaboration; on the other, it is a source of conflict when younger generations either adopt the mainstream individualistic views (and clash with their families) or refuse to give in to them (and clash with society).

The fluidity of living in and out of your culture and weaving who we are based on where and with whom we are has been the topic of some of the works of Gloria Anzaldúa (who called it being *mestiza)* and Cherrie Morraga and other Latina feminists who have called it living in a *trenza*, a symbolic hair braid representing the weaving in and out of cultures (Ortega, 2015). While there are differences between authors, they all draw attention to how challenging this bicultural or tricultural experience can be for the formation of self (Ortega, 2015).

Latina women cannot equate their experiences to White women. They are a product of the intersectionality of race, religion, socioeconomic status, sexuality, ethnicity, country of origin, language and gender (Roth, 2004). Historically, they

have not embraced the ‘sisterhood’ offered by white feminists because they have felt from them the same alienation and marginalization rooted in xenophobia that Latino men have received (Roth, 2004). However, they do share the struggle for reproductive rights, equal pay, childcare, etc.

Maybe as a result of the preaching of the Catholic Church or because rigidity of gender roles make communities more efficient, since the 60s Latinas have been fighting the need to emulate Virgin Mary, the quietly suffering mother, who lives for her family and has no sexuality or voice of her own (The Latina Feminist Group, 1991). The alternative would be becoming a whore, a lesbian (still seen as a sin by many) or a man hater. This dichotomy, although present in mainstream culture, might be more problematic because of the stance the Catholic Church and most Latin American countries have on birth control and abortion. This might explain why Latinas have the highest rate of teenage pregnancies (CDC, 2014).

Machismo then and now, hopefully to a lesser degree, view women as an attaché for men, a sexual object, or a fragile child that cannot be left alone to venture the world (The Latina Feminist Group, 1991).

During the civil rights movement, Chicana feminists -the precursors of all Latina feminists- were viewed by their Raza peers as men-haters who were attempting to destroy the fabric of the Mexican family. They were not allowed as full-fledged members of the movement until they barged into meetings. Their role was seen as that of servants of men (Garcia, 1997; Roth, 2004).

Many of those struggles prevail to this day. As seen in Aguilar et al. (2002), the young girl’s father was her primary obstacle from doing well in school and the

young lady who had to choose a school close to home even if that institution would not afford her the same opportunities. In Ocasio (2014) parents of the participants did not understand why they kept attending higher institutions of learning instead of getting married and having children. In fact, one of the brothers of a female participant warned her that nobody would want to marry her if she kept on getting degrees. Another example can be seen in The Latina Feminist Group (1991), recollection of counselors and teachers who refused Latina students further math explanations or guidance to college.

Some Latina Feminists, such as Anzaldúa and Moraga, have historically embraced the telling of lived experiences as a reaction to the positivist academia. "Latina Feminists have reclaimed the notion of experience in order to provide novel understandings of selfhood and identity" (Ortega, 2015). I follow in that tradition for this study.

In conclusion, I am utilizing Latino Critical Theory and Latina Feminism to analyze the lived experiences of the Latina urban teachers who have participated in my study. I believe there are systemic societal obstacles for the integration and support of Latino communities in the United States, and in particular, women. This study focuses on the obstacles put in place to favor white teachers over Hispanic ones.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will explain the methodological framework I will be using and the methodological rationale I have chosen for this study that includes the reasons why I chose a qualitative study and *testimonios*. I also detail the research design I developed and I end the chapter with a look at my own perspective as a researcher.

3.1 Methodological Rationale

Qualitative Research. I chose to utilize a qualitative methodology because it aligns with my philosophical views, in terms of ontology, etymology, axiology, and methodology.

Ontology. I believe there is a multiplicity of realities that vary by experience; I do not believe there is an only reality that can be obtained by surveying the masses. I am interested in the lived experiences of the few, not the many. I believe there is a power struggle in society that creates an imbalance in many spheres between the majority and the minority (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009). This imbalance is present in academia as the positivist belief that only one reality exists, and only one way of gathering knowledge is valid and it happens to live in the hands of a powerful few.

Epistemology. Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) said it best when they created the term the apartheid of knowledge as a reaction to the western epistemologies that create categories of legitimate and illegitimate forms of knowledge:

> We believe the apartheid of knowledge is sustained by epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate within the mainstream research community. Too frequently, an epistemology based on the social history and culture of the dominant race has produced scholarship, which portrays people of color as deficient and judges the scholarship produced by Scholars of Color as biased and non-rigorous
>
> (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169).

I also align with the CRT and Latina Feminism thought that there should not be an imbalance between the researcher and the researched where one uses the information gathered from the other for personal gain (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000). Instead, there must be a collaboration between these two parties in which they work together to effect change (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I work with these women to tell their stories and create a list of suggestions that occupies a space in academia. By telling their stories as equals and not others, I present a faithful representation of their struggles and a list of suggestions for policy makers.

Axiology. I believe as Creswell (2013) does that research is value-laden and biased (p.21). First, I present my biases to the reader before gathering any data, and

second, once I have analyzed the data, I present my interpretation of the findings in addition to the interpretation of the phenomenon from my participants.

Methodology. I focused my attention on the lived experiences of a relatively small group of women. I am not interested in developing generalizations based on their lives, but in describing in rich detail what their experience has been during their journey from high school to teaching in an urban school. I also provided an outlet for them to express their views on how the pathway to teaching can be cleared for future generations based on their particular points of view.

Testimonios. These politically charged telling of stories by historically ignored individuals serve the purpose of creating solidarity within group members, which could in turn lead to working as a community to seek ways to obtain liberation (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). *Testimonios* as a genre has a long history in Latin America as a way for the marginalized to report the systemic struggles that have been put in place to oppress them (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Perez Huber, 2012; Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012)

Testimonios as a qualitative methodology has been adopted by Chicana and Latina Feminists in the past fifty years. It is based in critical theory and it challenges "dominant culture, laws and policies that perpetuate inequity" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 363). The researcher, in this case a member of the Hispanic population living in the US, acts as a partner to this community by providing it with a space to have their voices heard in academia.

This methodology was chosen for this study due to historical, cultural, and ideological reasons:

History. Testimonios hold a historical significance in that they originated in Latin America and have served as a genre and a methodology that brings voice to the marginalized and the oppressed. (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Perez Huber, 2012; Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012; The Latina Feminist Group, 1991). In particular, Latina women bearing witness of their struggles against classism, racism, and sexism have made testimonios their own in works such as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, *The Bridge called my Back* by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, and most recently, *Telling to Live: the Latina Feminist testimonios*.

In these uncertain times for Latinos living in the US, this methodology fits the urgency with which these educators' stories need to be heard.

Culture. This genre combines the calls to power, solidarity, and poetry that in my eyes describe Latina women's academic work. The stories told always begin with a statement of oppression, such as this:

> Erasure, el hecho de borrar la vida de alguien, hacer como que si nunca existió, que nunca estuvo, que nunca pensó, nunca habló, nunca cantó, nunca bailó, nunca tuvo, ni tiene, presencia en la historia de un pueblo.
>
> Momentos cósmicos que borran, revelando traiciones.
>
> Erasure, the act of erasing someone's life, pretending as if she never existed, as if she
>
> was never there, as if she never thought, she never talked, she never sang, she never danced, she never had, nor does she have, a presence in the history of her people

Cosmic moments that erase, revealing treacheries (The Latina Feminist Group, 1991, p. 238).

These types of statements are followed by narrations of oppression and struggle from populations that might be illiterate or not have access to a public forum. The researcher becomes the pen and the voice for these masses, the same way that Venezuelan author and anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos, became the scribe of illiterate Rigoberta Menchú in Guatemala in 1983.

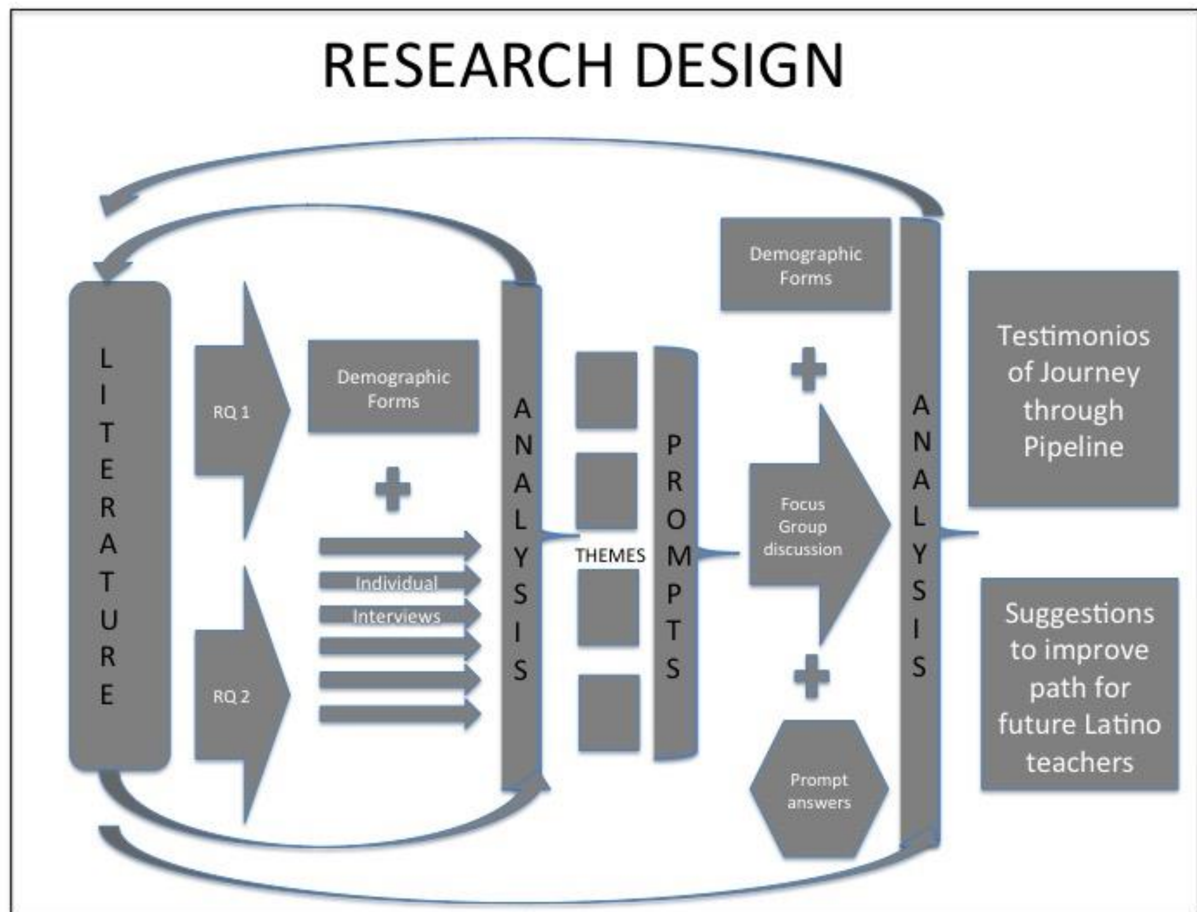
Ideology. I was the scribe that allowed the voices of these Latinas to occupy space in a mostly positivist academia concerned more with numbers than with words.

Latinas' words are barely ever there. Their experiences are not generalizable enough because they live in the intersection of race, gender, class, religion, country of origin, and immigration status. Methodology that focuses on the individual's lived experience such as *testimonios* respond to the need for Latinos to occupy academic terrain.

3.2 Research Design

The following graph describes the strategy I used to make meaning of the data through different iterations of analysis. I first interviewed six women individually, I audiotaped and coded with NVivo for themes. I analyzed their recordings and their demographic forms. Once I had made the thematic analysis, I returned to the literature to check if I had included all of the obstacles that the women mentioned. Then I ordered their testimonies in chronological order to create my narratives. I used the themes that emerged to create prompts for my focus group. Once the group of participants finished speaking collectively of their issues, I transcribed and coded with NVivo for themes. I

transcribed their written responses to the prompts and analyzed their demographic forms and I used their statements to filter some of the findings from the original data collection. In most cases, their words reinforced the experiences of the original group of women. Once I finished the thematic analysis, I went back to the literature, once again to compare my findings to those of existing research.



Research Setting. I have set my study in one of the main cities in the Midwest and its surrounding suburbs. Although, the US Census Bureau (2016) currently places Hispanics as 10% of a population in the main city and its surrounding neighborhoods, individuals of this heritage tend to agglomerate in pockets based on country or region of

origin. To the west of the city there are several Puerto Rican neighborhoods. In these neighborhoods, there are Spanish-English bilingual schools for K-8 and 9-12, and a school specifically designed to meet the needs of immigrants who do not speak the language. The population of that school is 50% Puerto Rican, 25% Middle Eastern and 25% Nepalese. There is also a myriad of nonprofit organizations aimed at helping individuals from this island find jobs and housing in the area. Towards the east of the main city, in more agricultural areas, there are less services and specialized schools available to meet Hispanic immigrant needs. Two smaller areas have seen a very recent increase in Mexican population due to migrant farming. It is uncertain whether the individuals who have migrated here have their documentation in order to work in this country. If these individuals were to be undocumented, this would bring another host of obstacles to the children attending these institutions. Because of how recently Mexicans have moved to this area, schools are ill prepared to accommodate them. These school districts are having difficulty attracting bilingual (Spanish/English) teachers that can meet the needs of these children. Other cities facing similar challenges are located about an hour away from the main school district of study. (ODE, 2017) All of the participants that answered my call were from the West side of the city.

Selection of Participants. Below I explain how I recruited my participants and how I protected their privacy and confidentiality.

Criteria. I used criterion sampling, the choosing of participants based on certain pre-determined shared characteristics, (Braun & Clarke, 2013) with the following criteria: K-12 female teachers who self-identify as Hispanic, have taught in an urban school, and possess a teaching license.

Recruitment. I recruited ten participants through personal connections to Latina teachers who have worked or currently work in The City School District and through other connections from my workplace. Most of my participants came to me through email requests sent directly to their school email (six out of 10). See Appendix I for a copy of the email sent out.

Privacy protection. I obtained Institutional Review Board approval to move forward with this research in May 2017 (See Appendix II) I created two consent forms, one for the individual interviews and one for the focus group (See Appendix III and IV). For the first one, participants agreed to choose a pseudonym and to be audiotaped during our conversation. Any identifying features were removed from their interviews. For the focus groups, participants agreed to choose a pseudonym, be videotaped, and maintain confidentiality of what is discussed. The recording was only used to aid me in transcribing the focus group, nobody else saw it. The final transcription did not include any identifying features and the pseudonyms the participants choose were used.

Data Collection. Four methods of data collection were used: a demographic, contact and schooling information form, an individual semi-structured interview, a focus group discussion, and written individual responses to the prompts given from the women attending the focus group. These different sources of information helped me enrich the description of the experiences of these women and seek common themes.

As stated in my research questions, I am interested in the individual and collective experience of the participants to be studied; therefore, I gathered data through both individual and collective interviews (focus groups). The individual semi-structured interviews occurred first in tandem with the forms. They were

analyzed and informed the prompts that were later given to the focus group participants to first respond in written form, and then discuss as a group.

Demographic, Contact, and Schooling Information Form. All the participants completed a form with their personal information, as described below. (See appendix V for full form):

Contact information. I asked participants to provide their preferred email and phone number.

Demographic information. Participants also completed information about their place of birth, their heritage country (the Spanish speaking country or region where their parents came from), the race they identify with, their parental educational attainment level, and the languages they speak. This allowed me to recognize and analyze answers based on the intersectionality of race, SES, country of origin, culture, and linguistic differences.

Schooling information. Participants were asked to fill out a section with the names of the high school(s) and the college(s) they attended, and the school(s) where they have taught. This helped me understand the settings where they encountered (or did not encounter) barriers rooted on the demographics of the schools. Based on the available literature, I expected the teachers who attended a high school, college, or work setting with a high representation of Hispanics would have different experiences than those who attended primarily white or African American institutions.

Semi-structured interviews. This type of interview was chosen because they allow the women to construct their own recollection of their journey without much direction from the interviewer. Braun and Clarke (2013) define semi-structured

interviews as ones in which “the researcher has a list of questions but there is scope for the participants to raise issues that the researcher has not anticipated” (p. 78).

I followed the strategy proposed by Galletta (2013) “each interview question should be clearly connected to the purpose of the research, and its placement within the protocol should reflect the researcher’s deliberate progression toward a fully in-depth exploration of the phenomenon of study” (p. 45). Therefore, each interview started with general question related to the parts of the research question studied that invite the telling of their stories. Each main question was followed by more specific questions related to the junctures the literature has described in the pipeline from High school to teaching in an urban school.

The Interview Protocol is provided in appendix VI.

Table 5 explains the relationship between the interview questions, the research questions and the obstacles described in the literature in the interview protocol. The research questions are:

1) How do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, make meaning of the obstacles they encountered and how they overcame them in their journey through high school, college/teacher preparation program, and teaching?
2) What do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, suggest to clear the path for coming Latino youth interested in a career in teaching?

Table 5

Explanation of interview protocol

Research question	Ties to Literature	Questions
1	Obstacles described in high school (Choy, 2001; Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio & 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2005; Pizzolato, et. al, 2008; Sleeter, 2017; Stephens, Hamedani, Destin, & 2014; Tough, 2014; Valenzuela, 1999; Villegas, 2007)	1.-Tell me about your high school experience -How were you as a student? -Were you considered ELL? -Were you enrolled in AP courses? If so, which? -Did you ever see your culture, history or language reflected in your studies? -Were there many other Latino students and Latino teachers in your school? -Do you remember if your teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, or other students, ever treated you, or any of your Latino classmates, differently or in a discriminatory way?
	Obstacles pertaining to choosing to be a teacher and applying for college as a Hispanic female. (Barth et al., 2016; Choy, 2001; The White House, 2016)	2. Tell me about applying to college -Did you have any guidance in school or at home? Please explain -Tell me about your decision to become a teacher

	-Why did you decide to become a teacher? -How did your family react to this?
Obstacles in college (Aguilar et al., 2002; Arellano and Padilla, 1996; Battle and Cuellar, 2011; Choy, 2001; Gomez, 2010; Kena et al., 2016; Pinel et al., 2005; Pizzolato et al., 2008; Szecsi and Spillman, 2012; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999; Tong et al., 2010; Tough, 2014; Weisman & Hansen, 2008)	3. Tell me about your first years in college -Did you feel academically prepared to succeed? -Did your parents support you financially? Did you have to work or take out loans? -Did your family help you navigate the bureaucracy of college? Did the advisors help? -Were there many other Latinos going to that school? Who were your friends? - Do remember if your teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, staff or other students, ever treated you, or any of your Latino classmates, differently or in a discriminatory way? If so, please explain. -Did you ever see your culture, history or language reflected in your studies? -Did you have any other family obligation apart from your studies at this stage?
Obstacles during unpaid field experiences (Epstein, 2005; Sleeter, 2017)	4.Tell me about your field experience -How long was it? -Where were you placed?

	-Were you paid during your internship? If not, how did you get by? -Did you ever feel discriminated against during this experience? -Were you allowed or encouraged to include elements of your history, culture or language into your instruction?
Obstacles related to standardized tests (Bennett et al., 2006; Epstein, 2005; Sleeter, 2017; Ward and Lucido, 2012)	5.Tell me about taking the licensure tests -How many tests did you need to take? -How expensive were they? -Did you have any problems passing them? -Were they available for you to take in Spanish (if that is your dominant language)? Would that have helped you get a better score?
Obstacles in the workplace (Barth et al., 2016, Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ocasio & 2014; Monzó & Rueda, 2003; Ronfeldt et al., 2016; U.S.D.E., 2014; Villegas, 2007; Weisman & Hansen, 2008)	6.Tell me about your experience teaching in an urban school -Why did you choose to teach in an urban school? -What is the main challenge of working in an urban school? What is the main benefit? -Are there many other Latino teachers, administrators or students in your

		building? -Have you, or any of your Latino colleagues or students, ever experienced discriminatory treatment from administrators, staff, parents, or other teachers? -Are you allowed or encouraged to include elements of your history, culture or language into your instruction? -Were there any other family obligations at this stage that pulled you away from teaching?
2	Participants are asked to focus on the obstacles they faced in their journeys and suggest solutions for future Latina teachers	7. Looking back on your journey from High school to teaching in an urban school, what are the main barriers you identify for your success and how did you overcome them? 8. What recommendations would you give school districts and teacher preparation programs to help clear the way for other Latinos interested in teaching?

Focus Groups. According to Millward (2012), a focus group is a gathering of 2-10 purposely chosen individuals who share a common experience and agree to participate in a 1-2 hour discussion. Focus group interviews aim at collecting lived experience data in a social context (Patton, 2002). I chose to hold a focus group for two reasons:

1. The genre of *testimonio* is not only interested in the individual story of those who have been victims of oppression, but also in the solidarity, that is created between communities who have all faced the same challenges and work together to fight oppression.
2. This activity allowed me to triangulate the themes identified in the first cycle of analysis with the experiences of other women of the same characteristics as the first group of teachers.

During this activity, I asked the participants to fill out the Demographic, contact and schooling information form, and then asked them to sit in a semicircle. I explained what we would be doing that day and then I projected on a white screen a PowerPoint with a slide for each prompt.

There were six prompts in total. After coding the individual interviews and observing the themes that emerged, I chose quotes that either contradicted the literature, were common obstacles faced by Hispanics or by minorities in general. See Table 6 for further explanation.

Table 6

Explanation of prompts for focus groups and relationship to research questions

Research question	Reason	Prompt
1	Language as an additional barrier to Hispanic newcomers	"English Language Learners don't get the services they need to be successful" (Helen, May 2019)
1	The literature claims that females in Hispanic communities have less freedom than other subgroups, the quote shown contradicts this.	"Hispanic parents, they want the girls close, and they don't want them to get on the bus alone and all this stuff. My parents were different. My parents (were) like, what school do you want to go to?" (Mari, June 2017)
1	The research speaks of otherness and discrimination against Latinos. This quotes counters this claim.	"a lot of them would think that something was like an unjust act because of who they were. However, like digging deeper into the problem…it was shown that they were treated the same…I think a lot of them were very defensive to start with." (Linda, March 2019)

1	The literature shows that minorities' main obstacle for attending college is financial. The quote challenges this.	"I got a full-ride to college" (Cindy, June 2017)
1	The research speaks of lack of administrative support for teachers in urban settings. This quote disputes this.	"My principal is awesome. She gives me freedom and support. Anything I've needed for my class, she has provided" (Jules, March 2019)
2	This question was asked to all the participants as it matches research question 2.	What recommendations would you give school districts and teacher preparation programs to help clear the way for other Latinos interested in teaching?

I read each aloud as the activity progressed. Participants were instructed to first write a response on a notebook with their pseudonym on it, and then share their thoughts. Discussion was encouraged. After everyone had spoken, I read another statement and repeated the process until we covered all of the themes that emerged in the first cycle of analysis. This activity took approximately 90 minutes.

Written Prompts. Participants received a notebook and were instructed to write their pseudonym on them. I used these artifacts as a tool to give focus group participants time to activate prior knowledge and recollections of lived experiences individually and

reflect on them without being dissuaded by their peers. These written answers later helped me in the transcription process.

Data Analysis. I analyzed the data in two cycles. I first transcribed the interviews and the forms. Then using NVivo and through iterations of coding (Saldaña, 2013), I identified thematic codes specific to the junctures the literature poses and the strategies the interviewees suggest for future teachers. I also identified emerging themes that may not have been predicted by the available research. Once the themes were determined, I used fragments of the original interviews as prompts for the focus group discussion and written prompts. In addition, I asked the focus group participants to suggest strategies for clearing the path for prospective Latina teachers. Once I had transcribed the focus group video, the forms, and the written responses, I analyzed these documents in light of the findings from the first round of analysis to determine if the original themes stood or needed to be modified.

For the narratives, I coded each transcript and organized it into chronological order to match the teaching pipeline: high school, college, and workplace. I also added a summary of the suggestions each woman made to clear the path for future Latina teachers. After this, I did a second round of coding of all the transcripts into themes from which I determined the prompts for the focus group. Once I transcribed the focus group, I coded for a third and last time, to produce the final themes in the thematic analysis.

After analyzing the data in great depth, I developed *naturalistic generalizations*, which are "generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases" (Creswell, 2013, p. 200). Morrow (2005) calls this *transferability* which "refers to the extent to which the reader is able to generalize the

findings of a study to his or her own context" … "This is achieved when the researcher provides sufficient information about the self (the researcher as instrument) and the research context, processes, participants, and researcher-participant relationships to enable the reader to decide how the findings might transfer" (p. 252).

Acknowledgement of Researcher's Perspective. I am a Venezuelan woman. I had always been upper middle class until I moved to the United States in 2010. As with most immigrants who leave their countries escaping social and political unrest, my socioeconomic status worsened considerably. I have been privileged in many other ways: I attended some of the best private schools in my country, I have lived in four countries throughout my life: Venezuela, UK, Spain, and the United States, I speak English without much of an accent, and my intonation only occasionally decries my status as an alien.

My father was Italian, and my mother's family was from Spain, Italy, France, and Switzerland. I do not look like the image many Americans might have of Latinos: either with Mexican indigenous features or Puerto Rican Afro Latino ones. I have very pale skin, European features and brown hair and eyes. This mismatch between my heritage and the idea that Americans have of how I should look is both a blessing and a curse.

I can pass as White. People do not assume I am poor or illiterate because of how I look. When Americans hear me speaking Spanish with my blonde and freckled mom, they assume it is French or a more sophisticated language than the one spoken south of the border. I can decide to 'come out' as Latina or pretend I am from Solon, OH. My whiteness is my shield and my privilege.

However, this same whiteness has led me to hearing conversations I should not have heard. White Americans 'forget' who I am and openly speak their opinions of

Latinos. I have heard complaints about Latinos ruining neighborhoods, taking jobs, refusing to learn English, to do well in school, and to assimilate. I have heard Americans simply just consider Latinos, as Blacks, a nuisance to the country. I have heard about how Mexicans are ruining the nation's DNA so proudly German until now. Sometimes these comments are followed by 'you're different', 'you're Venezuelan, you're not like them'. I remember my father talking to an American in the 80s in Miami, and explaining that he was not Cuban, but Venezuelan and the man responding, 'Same Shit'. In the words of Aziz Ansari: "Racists do not tend to be geography buffs".

'You're doing things right; you're trying to become American'. I hear this but instead of the intended relief, it just hurts and saddens me more. Am I betraying my culture? Am I putting on a mask to protect myself from what these individuals think of my people?

I am very aware that my circumstances would be very different if I had indigenous features, cinnamon skin, and black almond shaped eyes. I also know that if I had a noticeable accent, my 'otherness' would get in the way of my assimilation. On the other hand,, and local Latinos seem surprised when I speak to them in Spanish. They look at me and see a 'gringa'. I look like the mainstream that looks down on my language, religion, culture, and history.

I am in a position as a doctoral candidate to bring the voices of my sisters to academia. I am certainly not the first, nor do I hope to be the last, Latina to reach this level of education. The voice of a Latina who was born and raised in Ohio and has overcome many obstacles to earn a PhD would be very different from my own. My view as an immigrant, a real outsider who can be removed from this country if I ever were to

commit a felony or get divorced before obtaining my citizenship, affected how I interpreted the lives of Latina teachers in K-12. My state is precarious. I am an observer. I am an ally. I have not been socialized into thinking Latinos are inferior.

Around the time I defended my prospectus, I accepted a position as a Spanish high school in the City's urban district. I thought my teaching experience and education would prepare me to be successful in that environment. I taught in private schools and language academies back home. I taught at my university. None of that prepared me for an urban setting.

I was dismayed by the conditions of the building: mice ran around freely. The squalor was like nothing I had experienced before. There were no resources for the children, I spent from my own pocket, and did not receive books to teach with until 5 months into the school year.

The students were dealing with trauma that I could not begin to understand. Their coping mechanisms included lashing out at teachers and their peers, being completely apathetic, or clinging on to whichever caring adult was around. I encountered students who had been gang raped, whose father tried to kill their mother, whose parents were incarcerated or had committed suicide. I consoled students whose family members had died in their arms. I tried, without success, to get them counseling.

Learning and teaching became secondary. Only about 10% of the students I encountered were reading at grade level. I did not know how to teach these students to read and write in Spanish if they barely could do so in their mother tongue.

The bathroom was a hot spot for drug use. Fights broke out weekly. There was a level of violence that had me on permanent alert. There were incidences of students

attacking other students with knifes. It was nothing like the Catholic, all-girl school I taught at in Venezuela.

I was not well equipped to teach in this environment. I had dismal classroom management, and my cries for help to the administration were responded to with criticism and accusations.

I barely made it through the year. Looking back, I realize, my culture had been an additional obstacle to teaching in this environment. In Venezuela, teachers are treated with varying degrees of respect, just for being teachers. Of course, I taught in a middle-upper class school, so maybe my socio-economic status was the biggest obstacle of all.

Since then, I have changed job several times. I recently found employment at a nonprofit agency that administers federal funding and provides navigational support to foster youth in college. I still worry about Latinos and it breaks my heart that these are the kind of schools they have to attend. I chose to study K-12 urban teachers, because at the root of the worry and distress that has led me to pick this topic is the idea that Latino children, who overwhelmingly attend urban schools, are learning to think of themselves as lesser than and buying into the mainstream narrative while still in school (Cammarota, 2006; Sleeter, 2017). More Latina teachers might mean schools in which Hispanics are not taught to believe they are *less than*.

I am a woman in a highly matriarchal society. Women in my culture are supposed to be mothers. They are the center of the family and the kitchen is their operating headquarter. Women, until recently, have existed to procreate. Abortion is forbidden in my country and in most other Latin American countries, too, unless the life of the mother is in danger.

The connection Latinos have with their mothers is very difficult to explain to Americans. My mother, despite having four children of her own, has always been a feminist. She is a retired doctor. She does not cook, nor does she like to be in a kitchen. However, my father never did any household chores, and not too long ago she said, very seriously, that I now belong to my husband. She is a complicated woman. I see those same contradictions in me.

I have felt the stronghold of my culture on my ability to decide where to study and where to live. As a 17-year-old, I was given the opportunity to travel to the US to pursue my undergraduate degree through a national scholarship. As a girl, I was not allowed to go. Girls should not venture too far from home.

The words of Latina Feminist Group and Chicana Feminists, particularly, Gloria Anzaldúa and Dolores Delgado Bernal, resonate with me, and they have permeated this study. They are the reason I chose to study Latina women and my analytical lens is colored by their wisdom.

The current political state of the US, the increasing nativism and xenophobia of its leaders, the anti-Mexican sentiments, and the fear that has nested in many Hispanic families, whether undocumented or not, make studies like these more urgent. Latinos will be the country's majority soon, we must not allow ourselves to believe that we are lesser than, we must prepare and educate ourselves for the future and that means more teachers, better high school and college completion rates, and unity among all of the people from Spanish-speaking nations that have come here with the promise of freedom and justice for all.

Trustworthiness, credibility, rigor, and validity. As I mentioned above, I *triangulated* the findings from the literature to the interviews, *Demographic, contact and schooling information forms,* individual semi-structured interviews, written prompt responses, and focus group discussion in the sequence explained above. Triangulating is "an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances." (Stake, 1995, p. 113).

IV. FINDINGS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The following chapter is divided into two. The first section contains the findings: a description of the participants in my study followed by the chronological narratives of the first six participant's journey through the teaching pipeline. Next, I present the prompts, participants, and responses of the focus group. The second part is a thematic analysis of the findings, which I have grouped into themes. I presented the data by first writing a narrative for each individual interview and then reporting on the focus group. In this report, I explain why each prompt was chosen.

Description of participants. Between the first six women I interviewed and the 4 who attended my focus group, I had ten participants. Based on their demographic sheet responses, these were their characteristics:

The participants mirrored the demographics of the city's Hispanic population through no planning on my part. Only three of the women struggled with English language acquisition: two because their families came back and forth from Puerto Rico when they were young and had not yet learned the language and one because she came from a different country at the age of 12. All other participants reported learning English as their primary language and Spanish as their secondary one.

Six of the participants attended urban high schools; four were enrolled in Catholic schools. All but one of them completed a college teaching preparation programs. The exception obtained a bachelor's in Nutrition and enrolled in Teach for America.

Teach for America is a nonprofit organization that stems from Americorp, founded in 1989 in New York, whose objective is to identify potential leaders, train them to be teachers and mentor them as they commit to two years of teaching in a high-risk area. Applicants must hold a bachelor's degree, have a minimum 2.5 GPA, be legally allowed to work in the United States and be willing to participate in a five-week training in a camp with other potential hopefuls. (TeachforAmerica.org, 2019)

Table 1

Individual interviews

Pseudonym	Country of heritage	Years teaching	Main license	Additional licenses
Mari	Puerto Rico	15	K-8	Bilingual, Principal
Cindy	Dominican Republic	7	Spanish	
Jules	Mexico	1	Science	
Linda	Guatemala	3	K-3	
Nicole	Puerto Rico/DR	8	Mild to Moderate	
Helen	Puerto Rico	6	Spanish	

Table 2

Participants in focus group

Pseudonym	Country of heritage	Years teaching	Main license	Additional licenses
Amelia	Puerto Rico	35	Mathematics	TESOL
Fiblet	Puerto Rico	17	Mathematics	Bilingual ed.
Dee	Mexico	26	Language arts/ ESL	TESOL
Xotchil	Mexico	17	Language arts/ ESL	TESOL

The first six women who answered my requests for interview had collectively less experience than the women did in the focus group. The first group of participants ranged from 1 year to 15 years on the job; whereas, the four women who attended the focus group ranged from 17 to 35 years.

Another significant difference between the first group of participants and the second one was that in the first group only one out of six teachers had any advanced degrees. Specifically, only one of them held a Bilingual endorsement. In contrast, all four of the focus group participants had obtained either a bilingual endorsement or a Master's in TESOL.

Out of the 10 women, six were first generation college students. Their parental educational level is reflected on Table 3:

Table 3

Parental educational achievement

Parent	School level	Number of participants
Mother	Grade school	2
	High school	4
	Bachelors	1
	Masters	2
	PhD (in progress)	1
Father	Grade school	4
	High school	4
	Technical school	1
	(one participant did not answer)	

4.1 Narratives. In the following pages, I summarized and organized the first six participants' individual interviews in chronological order. By doing this, I created six *testimonios* of these women's struggles and the strategies they used to persist and persevere.

Mari. The first teacher I interviewed was born and raised in the Midwestern city where this study takes place. Both her parents are Puerto Rican, and they are both retired. She was a secretary for the city, and her husband was a welder for 25 years. Mari is the principal of an urban school, which primarily caters to newcomers to the city. She is a licensed early-childhood educator with two masters. When we spoke, she was preparing for her superintendent license.

All her life she attended the same school district in which she oversees today. She was the Valedictorian of her class. For the first three years of high school, she went to a school an hour away from her home, where she was one of two Latinos. She proudly

stated she was known as the Hispanic girl with the good grades. She went to a school that was preparing her to be a teacher, but somewhere along the way, she became scared and decided to transfer to a vocational school and attempt accounting. She is not sure why she was afraid. She thinks it might have been getting in front of a room and talking. She felt the same fear when she became a principal and had to address rooms filled with parents, students, and teachers.

She regrets her decision. She feels she was not advised properly. She transferred to a school that was less academically rigorous and did not offer AP courses. She felt her choice diminished her academic preparedness.

In her new school, there was far more diversity, but Mari was less concerned with making friends and joining after school activities, than in getting good grades and coming home. She said her parents were very strict and religious. She was not allowed to give her phone number out or to have a boyfriend until she was 18. According to her, it was just the regular way.

Despite her social restrictions, she credits her parents for giving her choices and supporting her growth. “Hispanic parents, they want the girls close, and they don't want them to get on the bus alone and all this stuff. My parents were different. My parents (were) like, what school do you want to go to?”

They encouraged her to accept a $40,000 scholarship from one of the best state universities in the region and took her to the summer camps they offered every summer. She ended up refusing the scholarship and attending a nearby commuter state university. Again, she was afraid: "fear of being far away from home".

Mari was clearly a gifted student and an excellent test taker. It was interesting that she said that the only test she did not do well was her SAT. She said she had to take it in a wealthy, private, mostly white school near her house. She did not feel comfortable there. I asked her to elaborate, and she said "I don't know. It wasn't my place. And then you were there with mixed… with a whole bunch of people from different places and I don't know."

She did stay at the college dormitory for her first year of college. Her mother would visit her quite often since it was less than 20 minutes from her house. "I stayed, you know, but my parents told me, you know, have that experience and they let me stay at the dorm even though they would try to come over every day, especially my mom. But you know how it is."

She took two on-campus jobs and paid for her schooling. She did not mention taking out loans nor having her parents help her financially.

During her first year, she attempted a major in accounting. It did not go well. She did not understand why she was not performing at the same level as she had in high school.

> I took courses during the day, and in the evening, I felt weird to be in next to older people, and it was mostly American people. And it was like a different grading scale. So, I, so I went from being Valedictorian to getting B's and C's and I wasn't used to it. And so that first year I was kind of discouraged and my aunt, she was, uh, she's a doctor, she has a doctorate in psychology. She was like, 'no, you keep going. The first year is always the hardest and you're going to feel this way. But once you find something that you really enjoy, you're going to see that your

> grades are going to go up'. So, I'm glad that I had my aunt. I think other students that don't have that support, they'll probably drop out that first year or be discouraged and not want to go back.
>
> (Mari, June 2017)

She eventually changed her major to Education and began performing better. She does not remember if she had any Latino faculty or if she ever felt discriminated against for her ethnicity, "it was a long time ago".

When asked if her parents opposed her decision to become a teacher, she says no, they were just very proud of her for being in college. However, she does understand why there might be a perception among Puerto Ricans that Education is not a smart career choice:

> I'm specifically thinking about Puerto Rico. Um, the teachers are not really respected, and what I mean is not respected is they will get paid whenever the government wants to give them the money… But if you're somebody from Puerto Rico, you're like, why should I go into teaching if they pay this much money? And you know, and it's a lot of work and these kids don't listen, and the parents are even worse. You know, find something else.
>
> (Mari, June 2017)

We move on to talking about her field experiences. She had several. For one of her methods class, she was placed in a suburban school. Having only attended public schools herself, she was amazed by the resources, the setting, the students, and the parents.

> The students were a little different, and I think it was because the parents, a lot of the parents didn't work. So, they dedicated a lot of time teaching our children how to read. So those kids were more prepared, and I think they were at or higher level than what I saw in the city. In the city, a lot of parents are working, and they don't have time, usually (the kids) are in daycare or someone's taking care of your children so that you can have food on the table and pay the bills. So, I noticed that difference. The parents were more home and dedicated to their children.
>
> (Mari, June 2017)

Mari did her student teaching in a suburb about 20 minutes from the city. She thought back then that they were a wealthy district; now, she realizes now that they were considered urban too. The staff was mostly white. Her face saddens when she tells the story:

> The last day I was there, I was sitting around with all the teachers and we were talking about, you know, where I applied. So, they were asking me, okay, where did you apply? I said, well I applied to this district, this district and this district. And then somebody asked me, did you apply for (the school district she was currently in)? And then I said yes. I was like, but I haven't got a call back. And one of the teachers came out and said, 'well, you're better off in urban setting anyways'. And started laughing. And she started laughing. So I was, I don't know, I still remember that day.
>
> (Mari, June 2017)

She did get a call back but did not attend the interview.

Instead, she accepted a position in an East side urban school. The regional superintendent, who used to be her Elementary principal, requested her to be in his cohort. She cried and cried because she wanted to teach in one of the West side schools where all the Latinos were. Looking back, she realizes that being assigned to an East side urban school was one of her best teaching experiences.

However, it was not smooth sailing. There were two other teachers assigned to her grade, and some of the parents petitioned to keep their children with the teachers they already knew. She had to prove that she was as effective as the other two. One boy was in her class and moved to another; he ended up getting the same grades with the other teacher, which made Mari think she was doing the job right.

She goes on to tell me the story of a very troubled little boy she taught that first year, and how she can relate to the teachers under her supervision now because she had such a difficult time with him.

Her second year of teaching, she was moved to another school. She did not know why. She was not comfortable there. The administration was always absent. There was no support or guidance. The principal of that school ended up in the news for embezzling school funds. For her third year, she asked to be transferred. At the end of that school year, there were massive layoffs. Two thousand teachers lost their jobs.

Mari found employment at a non-profit Spanish community preschool. She worked there for five years. She later was employed with the city school's multilingual department. After that, she was an assistant principal for two years (at her present school), and as of today, she has been a principal for three years.

I asked her why she came back to her old school district: "To give back. Give back to my community. That's one thing. And my family still lives in the area, and I believe in our children just like my mom believed in me and I became a professional."

Seeing as she oversees a school with students from over 40 nationalities, I ask her how she incorporates the students' culture into their school. She answers that they celebrate their cultures with plays and such, but then adds, "We have to teach them the norms here in America because they don't know how. We also teach them the laws because they're coming from other countries. And one thing that we had is the student code of conduct. Everybody's the same. Everybody has to follow the same rules... So, I think setting the norms, um, telling them, you know, this is how it is in America." It is interesting to witness an administrative point of view on how immigrants need to be assimilated through schooling.

To conclude the interview, I ask her what suggestions she would give to improve the pipeline for Hispanics to become teachers. She suggests a cultural shift for Latinos, from background people to leaders:

> I think it takes one person to notice the student's strengths and I think that one person should build on that strength. Um, a lot of the Latinos are told most of the time, when I grew up. Like, you don't talk when adults are talking. Um, it's more you're a background person and usually (I) see the American people there, the, the loud people, the speakers, the people are not afraid to talk. And I think encouraging our Latinas or Latinos to speak up. You could be a leader… But I think educating our Latino students to speak up, that's what's gonna make the difference because they'll become leaders and not be afraid.

(Mari, June 2017)

Cindy. My second interviewee was born and raised in the Dominican Republic. At the age of 12, she came to the city to visit her aunt and stayed to this day. Her mother originally had planned to move to New York City but thought this would be a better fit for herself and her two children. Cindy's mother was a teacher in her country; she holds a Master's in education. Cindy only spoke of her father once to say he only attended school until the eighth grade, after which he joined the military.

Cindy is a Spanish teacher who is going on to her seventh-year teaching in the city school district where this study takes place. Before being a licensed teacher, she was a bilingual aide for eight years in a suburban school district.

Cindy did her 9th grade in the Dominican Republic in a college preparatory school. She had enough credits to be placed in 11th grade in the USA. However, her new school wanted to place her in middle school, mostly because of her age and English language skills. After a long struggle, she was placed in 10th grade and received pull out services from her Language Arts class to help her with learning the new language. Despite all this, she still managed to graduate 3rd in her class and obtain a full ride to a well-known state university.

The high school she attended has been a historically Hispanic school in the city. About a quarter of the population was (and still is) of Puerto Rican descent. She did not fit in because of her age and the fact that she was the wrong type of Hispanic. She explained that she felt discriminated against because she was not an American citizen. Her peers jeered at her and told her to get back on the boat that brought her there.

Her mother did not fare any better. Despite her academic preparedness in her country, she was unable to find a teaching job. Cindy attributed this to her not being Puerto Rican. She did not mention whether the obstacle might have stemmed from immigration problems.

At school, Cindy only felt a meaningful connection to an African American woman who helped her learn the language. This teacher spoke Spanish, and according to Cindy, she would not have survived high school without her.

When asked about who gave her navigational support to go to college, Cindy says her counselor at school was of no use. There was a language barrier (despite there being college counselors who spoke Spanish available), and the advisor "did not even know how many credits I had". Cindy said that if it had not been for Esperanza[1], she would not have attended college. They offered her free ACT preparation, they took her on college visits, and they helped her complete the forms.

I asked her if she always knew she wanted to become a teacher; she responded:

> Sadly Yes. When I was in high school and I will tell my teachers that I was going into education and they're like, no, do whatever you want. You can be a doctor, you could be a lawyer, you know, you know, you have the tools to be whoever you want to be, but I always wanted education.
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

Once she moved into the dorms in her all-expense paid State university, her age became an obstacle in forming friendships. She was 16; nobody wanted to be friends with an underage girl. All her classmates were white Americans, including the students

[1] Esperanza, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that focuses on aiding Hispanics in achieving their academic goals. (Esperanza Inc., 2019)

learning Spanish. “Most of the people that were in the Spanish major were American”. She does not mention any Hispanic club or sorority available to her.

The only incident she remembers where she was mistreated because of her ethnicity or place of origin was when one of her Spanish professors asked her into his office to let her know that despite her 'believing' she knew Spanish, she was going to drop out before midterms. Cindy took this as a challenge and received an A in the course. She does not recall what race or nationality her professor was.

The only time she recalls learning about Hispanics in college was when she learned that they are systemically underserviced.

She continued struggling with her English. She did not feel academically prepared. During this time, she had family emergencies that kept her from her schoolwork. At the age of 19, she followed a friend’s advice and obtained employment as a bilingual aide in a suburban school. At this point, she was already married with children, so the work was better suited for her family life.

What followed was eight years of going to three different colleges, including one in the Dominican Republic, to obtain her teaching license. At one point, her first classes had expired, so she had to retake them at the state school closest to her home.

During her time as a bilingual aide, in a suburban school, she overheard teachers discussing ways to find out who was undocumented and how to inform the authorities. Despite this, they were very kind to her and to all the children. She was the sole Spanish speaker in the school, which made her not just an aide, but also the school’s interpreter. The children called her the “tan lady” but she laughed it off because they were little, and she thought there was no malice behind it.

After eight years of working at this school, she officially went back to school to obtain her license. She was placed at a dual-language school in an urban school district. The experience was taxing, both financially and emotionally. She told her husband that he was on his own supporting the family since she was not being paid. She was grateful, however, that she could take vacation days from the school she taught in, so not all the time spent there was unpaid. The other reason why she disliked the experience was that she did not feel supported.

> I was on my own pretty much. I did not struggle as much as people I know who were doing the same thing with, made at the same time. Because I went to Cleveland schools, I was one of those kids. So, I know what I needed when I was in their shoes. And I tried to provide that for them, and I tried to educate people about what they do.
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

Besides, she was pregnant while student teaching.

When it came time to take the State tests for licensure, she had to take them three times. Her English was not up to par. The first two times, she attempted them; she was not informed that she could receive extra time. The third time, she took advantage of those additional minutes and passed.

After graduation, she gave birth to her child and took some time off before accepting the position she has now.

The school she has been teaching in for the past seven years is notorious for its slant towards social justice. She credits this culture for the social harmony among the very diverse students (white, African American, Middle Eastern, and Latinos) enrolled in

it. Despite this commitment to diversity, she is one of two Hispanic teachers on staff. They both teach Spanish.

She counts herself lucky that she does not have a very thick accent. She says her Puerto Rican colleague has a more difficult time speaking English, and that could be the reason she is not taken seriously among the rest of the staff. I asked her what the main obstacles of teaching in an urban school were. She said

> Parent involvement… There's the same learning deficits in both spaces. Same demographics. You can say up to an extent, same issues… but it comes down to parent involvement, not caring. I have students that you will call the parent for behavior or meeting, no response. We will call them for an IEP… no response. You take their cell phones, they're there in 30 minutes, why are you taking my child's cell phone away?
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

She goes on to compare the attitudes she has seen towards education in this country to the ones in her home country.

> the lack of respect for education or the lack of not wanting to be educated. It's insane to me. All right. I think people take free education for granted. I never seen so many people have so many opportunities and let them go. When I've seen people with like from wooden schools, with no chalkboard, no resources, no breakfast, and they don't complain. Here, education tends to be a joke. It's a requirement. Kids go to school because they have to... Uh, there's very a very low percentage of kids that are in school cause they want to learn and they want to be someone. That is very sad to see.

(Cindy, June 2017)

On the one h, and she criticizes students quite sharply, on the other, she explains that there are social circumstances, and as in her case, language obstacles that might get in the way of student success. She is very proud of her advocacy of English language learners:

> I'm always arguing with teachers about students. 'Well so and so speaks just fine in class. I can have a conversation and so how come I have to give him, this accommodation?' because they have no idea what you're saying. They have learned to cope so well that there will be like this and they will tell you they understand and then they have no idea... So, when I got there my first year, most of the kids that were Hispanic where special education students as well, which was a luck thing for them because they have special services.
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

To this day, Cindy's major obstacle has been her command of the English language. She relied heavily on her colleagues to be able to pass her RESA; she even asks for their help when writing emails. She can empathize with the students under her care. What she does not understand is their decision to only be "Latinos at home". According to her, her students try to shed those identities and blend in with their surroundings and their peers. They act more like the majority African American student body and set aside their Hispanic heritage. This shedding of their identity is particularly frustrating for her as a Spanish teacher. She is attempting to celebrate their Latinidad.

When I ask her what she suggests could be done to clear the path for prospective Latina teachers, she says colleges should focus on preparing teachers for dealing with the whole student, particularly with those students who are attending an urban school. She is a proponent of social-emotional learning.

> it's like we always talk about academic level, so we never talk about personal levels. Like what do you do if a student has no food at their house and comes to you one day and tells you to go to hell because 1, they're hungry. 2.- They don't know where they're sleeping tonight. And what are you going to do? Send them to the office and get rid of them.
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

Jules. My third interviewee was born and raised in East Los Angeles. She is second-generation American; her grandmother crossed the Mexican border. Jules is a science teacher who at the time of the interview had just finished her first-year teaching at an urban school in the city where this study takes place. She is in her late 20s and is very pretty and fashionable with light brown skin, black hair, and black eyes. We met at a coffeehouse near her home.

Jules tells me her mother was also a teacher: Her highest degree is a master's degree. Her dad, who only completed high school, was not involved in her upbringing. She goes on to tell me she was raised in a majority Hispanic community in East LA. All of the schools she attended were 50% or more Hispanics. She had never been around so many white people until she moved to Cleveland.

She confesses she never liked school. Her favorite part about going to school was selling the other children chips or candy. Her Abuela (grandmother) was very proud of her entrepreneurial spirit. She says her culture always prioritized working over studying, or at least her family did. She started formally working at the age of 15 at Target; this took her focus entirely away from school.

She was never considered an English Language Learner, nor did she receive any service associated to this despite Spanish being her first language. She learned English in preschool. She does recognize there were many Latina teachers, which might have helped her navigate learning the language.

Throughout her schooling, in a primarily Mexican neighborhood, her history, culture, and language were extensively celebrated. Her favorite teachers were Latina. They were more like Tias (aunts) than teachers. White teachers were just OK:

> Whereas like I felt like a white person was going to feel more just like an authority figure, you know, like they're my teachers. I had like good relationships with some of them, but it was never like that, like very trusting relationship that I could have with like a Latino teacher.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

She never excelled in high school; her GPA was so low that her college counselor, an African American woman, and she both assumed she wouldn't be attending college, so they left it that.

During graduation, she cried because all her friends were going away for college, and she did not have any plans. Her mother scolded her at first but then encouraged her to attend Community College.

This institution was just a few blocks away from her house and was populated by the same demographics as her high school. It took her four years to get an Associate's in nutrition.

> I remember the first time I had to type like essays and like study, I placed into college-level English just because like I said, I've always been good test taker for some reason. Um, but when it came to like college-level courses in math and English, I struggled, which is why my first year of community college, as soon as I was 18, my first semester I signed up for four classes. I ended up only taking one…, I didn't, I didn't have the study skills... I just didn't have the discipline to take college-level classes.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

She attended community college sporadically for those four years. At that time, ages 19 to 20, she was dating a young man who was affiliated to cartels and dealt illegal substances. In the beginning, it made her feel cool to be with someone so intense. At one point, she became involved in the business transactions, and she became more and more uncomfortable with the situation. He promised he would get out of the business, but he did not. Eventually, she put an end to the relationship and went back to focusing on school.

She credits her Community College for giving her the time and space to grow and mature. It was there where she found MESA: Math Engineering Science Achievement. A STEM program explicitly designed to help Latinos enter the technology field.

Affiliation to this program included scholarships, reduced priced books, specialized labs, field trips, and tutoring. It was a cohort model that gave her the structure and support she needed to succeed in school. Through MESA, she was able to do research and present her work in the Biomedical Science Careers Program at Harvard Medical School.

Once she graduated, she attended the State University located three blocks (in the other direction) from her house. Again, same population, maybe more Chinese students.

Looking back, she did not incur in student debt because most of her Community college tuition was paid for by MESA or her mother. The cost per semester at the State University was a quarter of what it is in this region. Once all her schooling was completed, she walked away with only $4000 in student loans — a feat unheard of in these parts of the country.

In her first year at the State University, tragedy struck. Her boyfriend of two and a half years was killed in a car accident. This event took her into a grave state of depression. Fortunately, she went to the school's counselor and they were very understanding, they gave her a year leave of absence. Her job (at a very overpriced coffee shop) and her family were also highly supportive. Her place of employment gave her all the time she needed to get back; her family gave her money so she would not have to worry about going back to work too soon.

When she did return, she was determined to graduate. She did. Now she needed to decide whether to pursue a master's degree or find a job. At this point, she found a flyer with information for Teach for America. She thought it was perfect, they would pay to train her, and she would be able to leave Los Angeles.

Her mother, herself a teacher, was opposed to her daughter becoming an educator. Jules told me "She's like, 'don't do it'. She's like, 'no anything but teaching'." I asked her what her mother's reasons were. She replied "It's just money-wise. And my mom taught for like 14 years and so she ... not that teaching is not good, but she wants me to do something like better. Yeah. Especially like with the science background.

However, at 26, Jules was ready to leave home. "My mom never really cut the umbilical cord and like, and Latino families, they just want to keep you there." Her first stop was Tulsa, Oklahoma for her 5-week training. She was appalled by the conditions of the school where they had to teach. It was so run down and dirty. She felt saddened for these children to have to be in these circumstances. The only reason they had any resources was that Teach for America brought them.

It was her first time away from east LA. "So, Teach for America is the first time I've ever been around so many (expletive) white people." She felt uncomfortable; she did not like having to make white friends. I asked her why. She responds: "I don't know, I just always felt like they're kind of like better, like". I am a bit shocked when I ask:

"Better?". Jules responds

> Right. Like I always had to, like, behave around white people. Like my mom would be like, like when we would go to another neighborhood and she'd be, like, 'you guys better behave. Like, don't embarrass me', you know?

(Jules, March 2019)

Despite how troubling this statement is, I continue asking her about what brought her to this Midwestern city. She wanted the opposite of East Los Angeles, she wanted cold, a different kind of diversity (the majority population here is Black or African American, and only 10% of the population is Latino, comprised mostly of Puerto Ricans), and she wanted to be on her own.

Two weeks after she finished her Teach for America training, she began teaching at an urban school. I asked her why she chose an urban school:

> Just cause I need it to be like around kids, like in communities that I grew up in, like I need it to be in an urban school because that's what I know. That's where I live. I wouldn't be able to relate with kids from a suburban school. Like it would just be boring almost. They're just too good. You know? I like I just, yeah. In a, in an urban school district, I knew I was going to just be able to like build relationships and I, I needed that just for my own sanity.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

She has built extraordinary relationships with her students. She identifies with them, has their same background knowledge, and respect for their life situations.

> Cause like I'm from, I'm from the hood too, you know, like with especially with those types of kids, like I just know what's up. So, it's like I could get along with them. I, with my Spanish-speaking students, can talk Spanish to them. And so, my principal even told me...my Spanish speaking students do the best in my class: because I can speak to them in Spanish and like explain things.

(Jules, March 2019)

Jules is very grateful for her principal, whom she credits for giving her support, freedom, and encouragement. Everything she has ever needed for her classroom the school provided, and there was no interference on how she taught her lessons.

Jules never expected to speak so much Spanish moving up north. She has a strong affinity for her Hispanic students, even if they are from a different region of Latin America. She says the language unites them. She is always worrying that her English Language Learners are being held back because of lack of resources or support.

She tells me about a very bright student who was struggling in one of her computer classes because it was all in English. Jules took it upon herself to find a Spanish version of the program used in class and shared it with the teacher. The teacher thanked her and never used it. What infuriated Jules the most was that the teacher had a Spanish last name, "didn't even know Spanish" and refused to help someone of her own ethnicity.

Jules complains that it is all the teachers who refuse to differentiate lessons to provide ELLs with help. She says that there are fewer bilingual aides than there should be, and she has taken it as her responsibility to help her students with classwork from other courses, just to try to compensate this scarceness of resources or failure to care the school provides.

When asked if she had felt treated differently due to being one of the only three Latino teachers, she says no. The only thing she has experienced is other students complaining that she explains things in Spanish to her Puerto Ricans in class. I smile, I used to get accused of favoritism when I spoke to my Hispanic students in Spanish class while I was explaining the assignments they needed to complete.

She does go on to say, some of the other students get annoyed when the Hispanic kids walk around the halls speaking in Spanish:

> But with the Puerto Rican, loud Spanish speaking students, they are just walking around and just, I know like some of the kids are just like shut up, you know like 'There they go like speaking the language'.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

Other than this, she has not witnessed any incident where subgroups have disagreements or discord. Aside from these grievances, Jules seems satisfied with her workplace. However, the first year away from home and in this new land with a new job, was very difficult. She says she had a difficult time adjusting, making friends and keeping up with her new responsibilities. Now she is more at peace.

When I ask her what she would do to help other prospective Latina teachers, Jules responds that there need to be more programs like MESA to help Latinos. She also believes organizations like Teach for America need more diversity. She feels Hispanic students need same ethnicity teachers, the same way she needed her favorite teachers growing up.

Linda. My fourth interviewee is on her third-year teaching in a nonprofit Hispanic Core Christian preschool near her home in the downtown area of this Midwestern city. She was born and raised here, but both her parents are from Guatemala. They are still married. He is a factory worker with elementary school education, and she is a social worker with a bachelor's as her highest degree.

I met Linda through her mother while I was employed at the same nonprofit organization where her mother works. Her mom was very proud of the fact that she had never sent any of her three children to the city's public-school district, which she considered unsafe and a "mess". They all went to private schools. She also made sure to tell me that she had persuaded Linda to stay away from that school district when applying for work.

Linda is a soft-spoken young woman. She is about 5'2", medium build, and has long dark hair, brown eyes, and brown skin. She embodies every stereotype of how a Central American woman would look.

Linda attended an all-girl Irish Catholic Parochial school. She considers herself as a below-average student. She mostly obtained Bs and Cs. She was never considered or received services for English Language Learners. Her mom and her older sister taught her the language, while her father taught her Spanish. The only Advanced Placement course she ever was enrolled in was Spanish.

She does not recall any teachers, Latinos or otherwise, who had a meaningful impact on her life. She recalls her high school as a place where social harmony existed despite being part of a Hispanic minority in a majority White Irish Catholic population. Her friends were a mix of individuals. None of her best friends was Latina.

She recalls having learned about Latino culture, history, and art in her Spanish, Geography, and Art classes.

When she started looking at colleges, she relied on her sister and her mother for advice. When considering college, she initially thought about Psychology, but thought that it would take too long. Her parents wanted her to pursue nursing; she thought she

would not be able to do well in math and science at college. She decided on education because she loves children and because she thought it would be easier.

Her parents initially pushed back. I asked her why.

> …more because of money and stability… they've seen how teachers are paid and what happens to teachers after a while… they've seen the effects of I guess the school system and they just didn't want me to go into that. So… they were the ones pushing for nursing and you know, I would tell them countless times, you know, I don't think I could do that work… I know my strong suits and it's not a science realm.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

After some convincing, they accepted her wishes and supported her while she went on college trips. They did not push back about her going away for college because her older sister had already gone. They eventually settled on a private Christian college two-to-three hours from her home.

The college she attended was in a predominantly rural area of the state where this study is being conducted. Most of her classmates were white. She did not belong to an established Latino group or club but would attend the call of the college's administrators if needed to represent her ethnicity on campus.

She met several Latino international students, mostly from Central America.

> Um, the nice thing about the school is that they have their different reach out programs in other countries so that they call for the students to come. Um, when I was there, we had a very large portion of Central American, so we had, um, a lot of Ecuadorians, Salvadorians.

(Linda, March 2019)

When asked if she ever felt treated differently because of her ethnicity, she said no. In fact, she was called as a mediator between the school and the Hispanic students when they had any complaint.

> I don't know if maybe like, like a consistent complaint, um, maybe more of a lot of them would think that something was like an unjust act because of who they were. Um, however, like digging deeper into the problem, you know, it was shown that they were treated the same. Um, however, I think a lot of them were very defensive to start with. Um, as for me, I think I was raised as well as I've gone through, um, a predominantly white school to realize that not everything is just based on color. You know, it's, you are treated the same. It just may seem that way. Um, and if it is, if you are treated based on who you are, your color, I think that's going to be very prominent. It's going to show, you know, that person will show it, not just like try and sneak it in there… I was, I would help, um, a couple of the students that would think that that's what it was. Um, so, you know, the, our advisor would bring us in and be like, Yo, Linda can you, um, maybe like talk it out with them and see what the problem is. Like I'll be here, give, um, like a faculty perspective. Um, but you give a student perspective to what the problem.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

Linda did not feel any discrimination by her professors, employers, or the parents of the mostly white parents of the children she taught at the rural preschools she worked. Quite the opposite, she felt welcomed wherever she went.

I asked her about seeing her culture, history, or language represented in any of her classes. She responded that there was not any representation. The only times Latinos were mentioned were as part of a class that spoke about challenges children might present.

> I think it was included in more of those like disability realms. Like, here's what you could encounter while teaching. You could encounter someone that has a speech problem; you can encounter someone that has, um, a hearing problem. Someone that is an English language learner. Like I think it was approached more as a, a problem or a disability than like an actual other area, you know, another source of, you know, children. Um, it was always, you know, very second (sic). It wasn't like a first prominent thing.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

She did share that her Diversity class included several opportunities for field practice. Students could pick between teaching in a Chicago urban school, in a preschool where majority migrant parents sent their kids (near the college), or at a Catholic school in Belize. She chose the latter. She enjoyed the experience so much; she went twice. It was there where she met her now-husband, and who is currently waiting for immigration approval to enter the country.

The only real obstacle she identifies in completing her journey towards teaching was financial.

In order to pay for college, she took out loans, worked multiple jobs, and relied on her parents for help. Her student-teaching experience was particularly taxing. At that time, she was also trying to save money for her second study abroad in Belize. The

financial situation was so severe she asked the Church where she used to tutor in the afternoons if she could stay with them, in order to save on room and board. They agreed.

Once she graduated, they offered her the position she currently holds in the Hispanic core preschool located near her home.

At this point, Linda is saddled with student loans and does not receive enough income to live by herself. She moved back home and is hoping that once her husband is allowed in the country, they might be independent enough to move out and start their own family.

Linda describes the shock between teaching in a primarily white preschool vs. an urban school. The first difference is financial. The resources available for teachers and students in a nonprofit urban school are dismal in comparison to what was available to her before.

> I do provide a lot for my class. Um, dollar tree is my best friend... I see a lot of my own money going into my classroom. Um, but at the same time, you know, that it’s a very much that, you know, double edge sword. I want to help my children as best as I can and I'll look at my money, where's it going? I don't make enough as a teacher, you know, it's kind of that, you know, you're going to get cut either way. So, um, but I love my job.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

The second and perhaps most shocking difference was in terms of behavior.

> They do behave differently…I think the families aren't given enough resources before they even enter the school. Um, so what these kids come with are a lot of

unstable homes, a lot of financial instability… they come with some serious baggage.

(Linda, March 2019)

She relied on her administration for help.

I hadn't seen that before. Yeah. Um, you know, it was a very, it was eye-opening. Um, I went to my director a lot because she had been there, you know, right now it's going to be her 11th year…and I was just like, what am I supposed to do? Like, I need your help.

(Linda, March 2019)

Fortunately, her director and all the staff helped her adapt to her new environment. She refers to the staff as a family that will not let you fail. She uses these same words when describing the source of her strength: her own family." Without my parents, I would not be where I am today. They are huge advocates".

When asked what she would do to clear the path for prospective Latina teachers, she circles back to the need for resources. She would provide more financial help for Latinos in college. She also believes schools should provide the teachers with the classroom materials or other items they need to be successful teachers. She believes those resources would need to be specific to the culture of the teacher and the students he or she is teaching. "What you may provide for a white student is not going to be the same that you provide for Hispanic student" because they may need different resources to succeed.

Nicole. My fifth interviewee is a first-generation American born to a Puerto Rican and a Dominican in Florida. Nicole is stunning: tall, slim with black curly hair, light

brown skin, brown eyes, and delicate white features. She is in her early 30s and has been an intervention specialist for about nine years.

I came to meet Nicole through her mother, a very prominent figure amongst the Latino Community in this Midwest City. When I contacted her mother, she was excited to help a fellow Ph.D. seeker. She is the most formally educated of all the mothers of participants in this study.

During my interview with Nicole, she rarely spoke of her father, who divorced her mother when she was a child. Nicole was raised by her mom and shared a house with her extended family (grandparents, uncles and aunts, mom and brother) until her mother was financially independent enough to move her brother and her to their own house.

Nicole looks back at her childhood fondly. Even though at one point they were on food stamps, she never felt deprived. Her family made every effort to give her a happy, carefree childhood. Her grandmother would doll her up to go to church and show her off among her mostly Latino neighbors.

Her 'Abuelita' (grandmother) held a daycare in their basement. Nicole laughs when she recounts that there were pictures of her at seven or 8 years old lining up the children and reading them books or ordering them around. Her grandmother called her 'La maestra' (the teacher).

She attended an urban public school until 9th grade. She smiles when she reminisces, "it was a good experience, very, very diverse mix of students. I don't think the staff was very mixed though. I think I remember like one African American teacher. Um, but the rest were definitely Caucasian".

Once she moved out of her grandparents' house, her mom enrolled her in an all-girls, Catholic, mostly white school. She found a small group of Latinas whom she befriended. I asked if there was any bonding with the majority White group:

> There was some but not, but I mean, only like when we had like prom or you know, dances and things like that. But I would say, like, my group of friends that I would see afterschool or …invite for sleepovers, things like that. It was mostly a Latino mix.
>
> (Nicole, March 2019)

I asked her if she ever felt discriminated against for being Latina, she said no, "I don't remember ever feeling like I was being discriminated against or anything like that. Maybe misunderstood." I asked what she meant. "Maybe just the way we would carry ourselves because we definitely liked our Spanish music or we would talk a little louder than other people would." It appeared; she felt *othered* in her new environment.

There were no Latino teachers during her secondary schooling that made an impact on her. Most of her Spanish teachers were American, only one very strict Spaniard ever taught her the language. Seeing as she had only learned Spanish orally (and not academic Spanish but slang) she did not understand why she did not do well in those classes.

The only teacher she felt a connection with was a math teacher who encouraged her to express her culture:

> She was a kind of a community organizer and created um, unity… instead of, you know, getting people together to do a sport or skiing or any of those like athletic

things, it was more about getting us together to create like a culture where we can all get to know one another, understand other's cultures.

(Nicole, March 2019)

She describes herself as a below-average student. She never attempted AP courses. She was unmotivated and did not start to enjoy learning until she reached college.

I asked if she ever received English Language services and she did not. Her first language has always been English. Her mom would speak to her in English; it was only her grandparents and extended family that spoke to her in Spanish. She wishes she had a better experience learning Academic Spanish at school to improve her skills. She also reported that she only saw signs of her culture or history in Spanish class.

She mostly relied on her mother for advice to enroll in college. Her school did take her on several college tours, however. Looking back, she wished she had enrolled in a community college for the first two years. She believes she would have saved an enormous amount of money. Unfortunately, she was enamored with the idea of going away for college. When I asked her if she fell push back from her mother to go away, she responded: "A little bit. I mean, mostly out of fear. Um… she definitely likes to keep her kids close".

She eventually decided on a state university about 4 hours from home. She laughs when she recalls how homesick she was in the beginning. She would come home every weekend.

The state university she chose is very highly rated in the state; it is also more expensive than its counterparts. When I asked her about financing her studies, she says

she still is paying off a considerable debt, but she is grateful that her mother was able and always willing to help. At this point, Nicole's mom had a comfortable position in the City's most prominent community college and had remarried. Both factors allowed her to help her daughter financially.

Nicole explained that she realized she wanted to become a teacher in her second year of college. Her family was not surprised. There was photographic evidence of her predisposition for the career. She did not feel any push back on choosing to teach as her major.

When I asked her how the white-majority school she attended made her feel, she responded

> (the lack of diversity) felt shocking once you're in the classrooms. Like it, it never felt like I was an outsider when I was walking into the student union or going to Latino student union or events for Latino Student Union or the black student union…But then I would realize once I was in deep of my major requirement courses, first becoming a special ed teacher, myself and one African American girl were the only like, I guess other type of females or people who are interested in that field.
>
> (Nicole, March 2019)

She relied on the Latino Union for social and emotional support. She attributes the group helping her develop leadership skills and contribute to those less fortunate. She remembers attending a Latino Youth conference in Chicago and helping rebuild houses for the poor through Habitat for Humanity (an organization she found through the Hispanic youth group.)

When asked about her academic preparedness for college. Nicole responded that she did not feel prepared at all for the extensive writing. It is just now, after years of teaching writing to her students that she feels confident enough to write essays. So much so, she is considering going back to school for an endorsement. She believes a Master's, or an endorsement would also help her get a raise or a better job.

Despite her family being middle-class, money was still an issue, mainly when she had to attempt her student teaching. She had to share an apartment with three other girls and get a job in retail to be able to afford it. Her student teaching was in Texas. She was promised that she would get hired immediately after finishing it. They did not. It was in a southern city that her specific mix of DNA caught the student's attention. The students were mostly Mexican and had never encountered a more afro Caribbean mix. They were particularly taken by her curly black hair, which they asked to touch. Nicole did not think there was any malice, just interest in her different look among these elementary school children.

Her unique mix of features (which are very common in my country, Venezuela) is a cause of awe and mystique in this part of the world. When Nicole is out, she gets a lot of 'What are yous':

> What are you? … oh, I'm Puerto Rican, Dominican, but now I'm kind of a smart ass. And I say things like, I'm human. And then they get really mad, especially if they're drinking. Oh, what? You know what I mean? And I'll say no, what do you mean though? Like, like, where are you from? I'm like, Oh, I'm from (City of origin). You still don't understand what I'm saying. Like they'll get just so frustrated. I'm like, well, do you want me to educate you on the proper way to ask

somebody where their family is from? You can say, what is your ethnicity? And then they get mad at me because I have a brain.

So, it's like, stuff like that always pops up on me, but it rarely happens like, um, in my teaching world.

(Nicole, March 2019)

Where she did feel out of place was in a shorter field experience, she had to complete near her Midwestern university in a very rural community: “The school was in the middle of a cornfield. Definitely, zero diversity… one kid … would walk up to the pledge or during the pledge of allegiance would walk up to the flag and yell 'white power' every day. And it was just strange. I felt like I was in a time, a time warp or something.”

When Nicole returned from Texas and graduated, she had a difficult time finding a job. She waited tables at a popular Middle Eastern restaurant and did not earn enough to be independent, so she moved back in with her mother and stepfather. Eventually, she found a part-time job at a charter school. She says it was a good experience, but the school offered no benefits, retirement or teacher unions. The pay was not enough for her to move out on her own. She still was saddled with monthly student-loan payments.

Eventually, they hired her full-time, but her family moved, so she looked for a job closer to her new home, even if it meant getting a pay-cut. In this new position, she realized again that the school offered no benefits. She decided that to be more secure; she would need to apply to an urban school.

She got a job in a city 40 minutes away from her City of origin. The school and the City itself do not have a significant Latino population. Nicole longs to be able to go

back and teach at the urban district she attended when she was a child. She misses her community. “I just miss being around people who understand me.” She is one of two Latina teachers in her entire school district.

She has been in her current position for about three years. Her school is mostly African American and is located right next to the projects. She is teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities. She cares very much about her students but understands that they do not have the same resources as the children she taught in the charter schools.

> I can only do so much to help the kids who clearly don't have books at home. Education is not important at home. Um, it's hard to work with kids who come in and you can just tell they're suffering from trauma. Um, they don't have clean clothes. Sometimes it's just, it's just heartbreaking sometimes.
>
> (Nicole, March 2019)

Despite these challenges, she enjoyed her first two years in this school district. The problems began when she was “moved like furniture” to a new school in September- after she had set up her classroom- because there were not enough students to service in her school. The administration told her she had one day to pick up her materials and set up her classroom in the new school. She did. After a month of teaching in one room, her new principal interrupted her class to announce she needed to move rooms once again to another floor. Again, she had one day to do it.

This incident was just the first taste of the problems she would encounter with her new administration. She complains of lack of support, isolation, constant criticism, unannounced observations and no back up when needed to discipline students or talk to

their parents. "I've had to utilize…the teacher's Union a lot more than I've ever had to in my teaching career." This is her 9th year teaching.

Nicole is alarmed by the number of discipline problems in her current school. Elementary school children are assaulting teachers. The principal and the dean do not do much to alleviate the problem. The administration blames the teachers.

She is starting to feel the burnout amongst her colleagues, and although she did not say it, it is apparent that she might be burned out too. She feels the school has no culture of togetherness.

> It would be nice to like have in any building that I work in a sense of culture and morale across the staff and like that we could all do something together and support each other and um, feel free to bounce ideas off one another rather than this, like, keep to yourself mentality, which I've experienced these last, how many years have I ended up in (current school district), three years in (city) now where we all kind of keep to ourselves.
>
> (Nicole, March 2019)

Among her, other complaints about working in urban public schools are excessive testing and the burden placed on teachers to complete the Resident Education program (RESA).

The whole purpose of this study is to find ways to make the path towards teaching easier for Latinas, but at one point in the interview, Nicole stated something that showed how much she had lost faith in the system: "I would encourage my kid if I had someone,

if I had a kid who wanted to be a teacher, I would say just, um, you might want to find something else."

Despite this, I asked Nicole what she would recommend the school districts and teacher education programs do to make it easier for Latinas to become teachers. At this point, she stated that having Latino representation along the way (schoolteachers, school and district administration, professors, community leaders) might help Latinos feel supported. She proposed more recruitment of minority teachers, or just any teachers willing to give students a school culture based on exploration and cohesiveness instead of state tests.

> I guess… there should just be more recruitment out there to ask teachers or anybody from a different culture interested in teaching because there should be more of a diverse representation across the staff… I just feel like there should be more recruitment for teachers who want to, uh, do more expeditionary learning or want to orchestrate … all day field trips to just somewhere different for these kids.
>
> (Nicole, March 2019)

Helen. I met Helen, my last interviewee, when I was working in an urban school in the city. I taught Spanish on the first floor, and she did in the second one. She is a beautiful young woman in her early 30s shaped like a dancer: brown hair, brown eyes, and brown skin.

Helen was born in Puerto Rico; she came to the city when she was three. At that time, her father was working in a construction company. He got injured and was unable to keep working. They moved back to the island in search of health care. Eventually, they came back when Helen was six.

Helen is one of ten brothers and sisters. After moving back to mainland US, her parents mostly lived on welfare. When I start the interview, I ask Helen if she was a good student. She responds she was a fantastic student because she understood at an early age that education would be the way out of her dire living conditions.

Helen is the first and only of her siblings that went to college. Half of her brothers are in jail or are drug dealers. One of her brothers was slain right outside their home. She believes it was a drug deal gone wrong. Twenty minutes into our interview, I was amazed that she was capable of smiling at all.

Going back to her childhood, when she was six, she came to the city without knowing any English. She was set back a year and placed in a bilingual school. She received ELL services throughout most of her childhood. She explains, back then, not many services were offered, there were barely any paraprofessionals, nor were there accommodations for test taking.

When she reached high school, she started attending the building she currently works in. This school has historically housed most of the Hispanic students of the district. She calls the school her baby and says she would quit teaching or change careers if ever she was asked to transfer out.

In ninth grade, she began working at a fast food place to help support herself. Despite this, she managed to maintain a perfect GPA. She felt safe and valued in her school. She enjoyed the teachers, particularly the Latino ones who were willing to explain in Spanish for the students who had difficulty with English.

This school was known for its diversity. They would have multicultural events with different music, dances, and food. She is grateful her culture was celebrated, but she wishes she had learned something about her history or language.

She relied on her family to keep her language, culture and history alive. Her father, mostly, taught her about Taino culture and Puerto Rican history.

> My parents were like trying to force that because they saw the sadness and how we're being brainwashed kind of like where we're being Hispanics will seem like a minority and an inferiority, like you're inferior.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

She reminisces about how teachers used to care about their lives, their problems, and their growth, not just about teaching them definitions or formulas. The school at that time, however, was far from perfect. She would get detention if she spoke to her friends in Spanish, even if it was to help them understand the material in class. She was told not to greet her friends with a kiss on the cheek (a standard greeting in most of Latin America), and she was forbidden from taking Spanish courses. Instead of offering Spanish to Spanish-speakers, the bilingual students had to choose a different language. She took French for four years depriving her of the opportunity to learn the academic Spanish that would later help her become a Spanish teacher.

She fought back against the detentions by writing the superintendent, who at that time was a Latina woman. She helped them. When asked if she thought she received the help because of the woman's ethnicity, Helen states

> Sometimes we have to understand that just because they're Latino doesn't mean that they want the best for Latinos (or that) they see themselves as Latinos. Some

> people see themselves like white, they're Latinos, but they want us to be white. They want us to like, oh no, you have to walk this way, speak this way…you have to learn this way.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

The high school was equal parts Hispanic and Black. This division caused problems between races: There were fights and conflict between the subgroups. I asked Helen if teachers sided with any of the groups, she said they did not. They tried to be as fair and understanding as they could.

Violence and trauma were other obstacles Helen faced, particularly in her senior year. Nine of her classmates died, and one of her teachers overdosed during that period. Her closest female friend was shot in the face by her abusive boyfriend. Helen felt guilty because she had encouraged her friend to go to the police to report the abuse right before the incident. Miraculously, her female friend survived. Her best male friend, however, was not as fortunate. He died in a car accident a few months before graduation.

By 12th grade, Helen was working three jobs and going to Esperanza for help filling out college applications. She was enrolled in several Advanced Placement courses, she was class president, and she maintained a 4.3 GPA.

Helen's mother did not want her to go to college. Nobody in her family had gone, and she did not want to see her daughter move away. Helen was a offered a full ride to Florida State University. She was not allowed to go. Instead, her parents enrolled her in a university in Puerto Rico. Once she was settled, they returned to the mainland and left her there without any financial assistance. Helen explains at one point she was almost homeless, and none of her extended family offered her a hand.

After one year there, which she had managed to pay for with a scholarship from Esperanza, her Pell grant and the money she earned working in three different jobs, she returned to the city and enrolled in the state university near her home.

She was 18, and her mother could not afford to continue supporting her. Helen had to rent a small apartment and fend for herself. Around this time, one of her sisters was incarcerated, and she took in two of her nieces while their mother was away.

Besides the financial hardship she encountered at this stage of her life, Helen enjoyed college. She felt academically prepared and found a haven in the only Latino club available. Her mentor is a Puerto Rican professor who had a significant impact on her life. She was a little shocked that all of her classmates taking Spanish courses were American. They were all white and old. All her friends were from the Latino club.

Her worst college experience was with an American teacher who had learned Spanish in Spain. He belittled her command of the language and told her that she spoke slang and not 'real' Spanish. She remembers loathing him and his class after that exchange.

Her best college experience was when she won an all-expense scholarship to study abroad in Spain. She took 22 credits that semester and absorbed as much she could of the language, history, and culture. She explains that one of the reasons she became a Spanish teacher was because she was saddened by how 1st and 2nd generation Latinos were shedding their culture, their identity, and their language.

> Like I wanted to teach Spanish because I thought there was a need for Hispanics to learn their language…So these kids are second-generation kids going to the school. They're not being taught Spanish at home (and)… they want to learn

> English so they could, you know, fit in. , and um, it was very sad to see how people were losing their accents and their value in the culture. And I'm like, I gotta teach Spanish. So that's why I became a Spanish teacher.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

Her mother pushed back against this decision. She wanted her to pursue a more profitable career.

> She was like, No, that doesn't pay. You could be a lawyer, cause I was a fighter, a dramatic person. It's just like you could be a lawyer, you could be a Chiropractic, you can do this and you do that. Why you want to be a teacher? I'm like, that was in my blood? My grandma was a teacher. My aunt's a teacher. I'm like, I want to be a teacher.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

Immediately after Helen returned from Spain, she found her brother shot dead at the footsteps of their parents' house. She wanted to give up. Her eyes tear up when she recalls the darkest year of her life. She had to organize her brother's funeral at the age of 21, she was fortunate the basketball team, where she worked as a dancer, paid for the burial.

She experienced two distinctly opposing responses from her professors at the State University. Her Puerto Rican mentor convinced her not to drop out, not to throw everything away. Her other professors gave her a C because she had missed three weeks

of class. When the death occurred, she had emailed them and explained her situation. They did not sympathize. She felt they did not care.

Helen kept going. She began her student teaching in the same high school she graduated. Her first day there, one of the students spoke about the violent death of a local Puerto Rican. It was her brother. The student knew him and had written him a poem. She cried, and her new students cried while she shared her story and told them that if she was able to overcome everything and still be there, so could they.

She instantly connected with her students. She identified with them, and they reciprocated. It was a challenging experience, however, because her assigned mentor was absent for the majority of her stay. She feels she had no direction or guidance.

Helen's proudest moment was when she attended the "Hispanics only" graduation her school used to do. They stopped a few years ago. Her beloved mentor gave a few words about her when she handed her diploma. Against all odds, she graduated.

After her graduation, she got married and left for Washington DC for several years. She was stationed in a military base. She worked in real estate and had two babies. As sudden as her marriage was, so was her divorce. She returned to the city with her two boys and found employment where she had gone to high school.

Her old building was now three separate theme schools, one per floor. She teaches at the social justice one. She marvels at how social harmony exists among all of the students independent of race or ethnicity. The school is still over 50% Hispanic, but they have a growing influx of African immigrants, which makes it even more multicultural.

However, Helen has felt that the staff is not as open and welcoming of others as her students are. Not too long ago, in a professional development session, she was told

“Speak English. This is America” by one of the white teachers in the room. She had been communicating in Spanish to the small group of Hispanics that work there. She did not take this remark lightly, according to her, she gave the teacher a long lecture about how the US does not have a legal language, and how the comment could be interpreted as racist and xenophobic.

Despite all of this, Helen feels valued and supported at her place of employment. The principal is the same that had been there for her senior year. She calls herself the principal's "baby". The adoration is mutual. Helen has been fortunate to have an administration that believes, encourages, and supports her in all her endeavors.

Despite loving her school, Helen thinks there is much to be improved. She is shocked by the number of long-term substitute teachers who are not certified to teach their courses. She believes there should be more bilingual aides per floor, and she continues to believe that English Language Learners are underserved.

She complains that students are expected to learn the language and culture in two years when they arrive at the newcomers' school. She says research has proven that this is impossible. According to her, she must continuously defend these students from monolingual teachers who do not understand their struggle. She specifically recalls arguing with a test coordinator who refused to allow the students access to bilingual dictionaries.

We then discuss the topic of Language Learners being labeled as special Ed and how this is both a blessing and a curse. She believes it is a curse because the students believe the label set upon them, but it is also a blessing because they receive special services and are not held back if they fail the state tests.

Speaking of state tests, Helen loathes them. She says there are too many of them and they interfere with the teaching of content. She explains that encore teachers are particularly affected. I remember all those hours I proctored tests while my students forgot the little, they had learned of Spanish so far.

We talk for some time about Latinos being labeled as special Ed, and she shares that her own son was 'diagnosed' as having ADHD on his third day of preschool. Both of her children attend the same urban school district where she is employed. Helen would have none of it, she took the matter to the superintendent and demanded proof, or at least some sort of real medical diagnoses, that her child was not a 'normal' child. The school and the teacher quickly backtracked.

The matter of her children inevitably brings us back to her family. She is upset her parents have not set foot in her new home in a wealthier neighborhood 20 minutes from her school.

> but they see me like, oh, she can't associate, she don't know what this is. And I do know. I lived there, you know, it's just that I'm not putting my kids up there. Um, I was very blessed the last year was I able to buy my own home and I moved to P. and I didn't move to P. because of any like particular reason. I love (my city). I work in the community. Um, so it was more of like I don't want my kids to witness everything I saw and experienced. So, I'm breaking the cycle and I'm dedicated to that
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

When asked what she suggests to clear the path for prospective Latina teachers, Helen believes every teacher should be able to communicate in more than one language if

they are going to be prepared to work with a more diverse population. She suggests more field experiences for teachers in urban areas to prepare them to teach this specific population. She would like to see more community and school integration, particularly nonprofits like Esperanza, and she is also a proponent of smaller classrooms, less testing, and more collaboration between teachers and their administration.

4.2 Focus group

The focus group was held at the university where I am obtaining my degree. Five women accepted to be a part of it. Only four of them attended. The educators completed their consent forms and their demographic questionnaire before taking a seat. Each participant was given a notebook and a pen and asked to write the pseudonym they chose for themselves on the cover. I explained the activity and projected each of the six prompts on a whiteboard. They were instructed to respond to each prompt, first on their notebook, and then take turns sharing. Discussion after sharing was encouraged. I videotaped the activity, which lasted approximately 90 minutes. Six prompts were selected for the focus group. Five of them explored the first research question, and one of them the second one.

***Prompts related to first research question*.** How do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, make meaning of the obstacles they encountered and how they overcame them in their journey through high school, college/teacher preparation program, and teaching?

1.- *Language.* “English Language Learners don’t get the services they need to be successful” (Helen, May 2019)

This theme was chosen due to the importance language has in the Latino community. Three of the six women interviewed spoke about the lack of resources

available to immigrant children or speakers of other languages. All these women worked in settings that had a high population of ELLs. Two of these women are English learners.

Response. The teachers agreed that the resources available for English Language Learners in Ohio were inadequate. One of the teachers, who worked at a newcomer's academy in Buffalo, was surprised by how nebulous the policy for language learners was. She explained that in New York State, ELLs were treated with the same legal rigor as special education student. If the school was out of compliance with the laws pertaining these students, the parents could sue the school. In NY, students, by law, had to receive English as another language courses depending on their level of proficiency. She was shocked to find out her school did not have an English Language teacher but made do with two bilingual aides.

All other teachers agreed. One of them placed blame on the state of Ohio. She called the lack of provisions and clarity for aiding students in obtaining the language institutional racism. She is an EL teacher, and she had to fight to obtain a room to teach her students at the school she has been teaching for 11 years. The other students lamented the lack of understanding of regular education teachers who did not see the difference between academic and conversational English and expected students to perform at the same level as their monolingual peers. One of the teachers shared that she fought to obtain a Spanish-English dictionary for one of her ELLs for testing, just as two of the teachers, who were individually interviewed, had shared.

2.- *Females.* "Hispanic parents, they want the girls close, and they don't want them to get on the bus alone and all this stuff. My parents were different. My parents (were) like, what school do you want to go to?" (Mari, June 2017)

Most of the participants spoke about their parents keeping them close so, the quote above came as a surprise. I posed it to the focus group to check to see if it was the exception or the rule.

Response. All except one teacher disagreed with the statement above. One of the teachers even considered not going to college because of her parents' overzealousness:

> I knew that my parents wanted the best for me. We argued about my choices. I would look at out-of-state schools, but my parents were scared to let me go. Just like when I asked to go to the corner to play and my mother would answer "no, porque te roban." (because they would kidnap you). So, I ended up staying home and eventually enrolled at (State college) because I could attend while living at home.
>
> (Xotchil, August 2019)

3.- *Otherness.* "A lot of them would think that something was like an unjust act because of who they were. However, like digging deeper into the problem…it was shown that they were treated the same…I think a lot of them were very defensive to start with. " (Linda, March 2019)

This prompt originated when one of the participants spoke about how she was asked to mediate between her college officials and the Hispanic immigrant students at her school. She said complaints came mostly from the Central American students that the school had recruited, and that she did not think discrimination was a problem. This quote distressed me and I could not pinpoint why. This is the reason I posed it to the focus group as a way to explore what other Latina educators thought about it.

Response. All the teachers in the focus group had strong opinions regarding this prompt. They disagreed with the statement that Latinos were always treated the same as everybody else and gave multiple examples of micro aggressions or discrimination. Amelia explained how she thought discrimination affected the individuals' worldview: "because of all that negativity directed towards them. If that's all you ever experience. That's what you come to expect. No matter what situation you're in" (Amelia, August 2019)

She gave an example of how some of her students on a field trip were verbally attacked by White kids for speaking in Spanish. I asked when this incident occurred. She responded it happened around 2009, but the group agreed, that since 2016, in this political climate, it has gotten much worse: Even adults are being told by strangers to speak English-only.

Two of the other participants shared instances of racism and/or xenophobia directed at them or at their students. Dee shared that the bilingual aides were instructed by a White teacher to stop speaking in Spanish. She also shared that a 'well-intended' teacher had sent out an email encouraging the student body to dress up like "Mexicans" to celebrate Cinco de Mayo.

Fiblet placed the responsibility on the college. She said if the school was recruiting students from El Salvador or Ecuador and placing them in dorms composed of majority white students, it was their responsibility to explain the culture and to include them in the community as a way to prevent situations where the immigrants felt othered or wronged.

If you're going to take these students in, then it's your responsibility to make sure that everything is inclusive, that you are including their way of thinking into, into what you're doing and that they become part of the community. (Fiblet, August 2019)

4.- *College obstacles-finances*. "I got a full-ride to college" (Cindy, June 2017)

Three of the six participants were offered or enjoyed tuition-free scholarships to attend college. Two of them were offered this because of their academic performance, only one of them received help because she identified as Latina. This finding was a bit surprising in that the literature mentions college finances as one of the major roadblocks to obtaining an educational degree. I wanted to explore if any members of the focus group had also received financial aid for their studies.

Response. All the participants reported college was an enormous financial burden and that some of them are still paying off their student loans to this day. They complained of lack of navigational guidance (all of them were 1st generation college students) and financial support by their parents.

There was one exception, one of the teachers shared that her family (plus her Pell grant) supported her for the first two years of college, but once her parents got a divorce, the money stopped coming in. This forced her to come back home and take a job as a bilingual aide in the city schools. After a few years, the school district offered to pay her studies to become a math teacher. She had originally wanted to become an engineer, but this financial support contributed in her decision to become an educator.

Aside from Amelia, all the other teachers said they paid for their first degree with student loans. Interestingly, two of the educators were offered financial help through President's Bush initiative Project Reach to obtain their Master's in TESOL.

5.- *Workplace.* "My principal is awesome. She gives me freedom and support. Anything I've needed for my class, she has provided" (Jules, March 2019)

Three of the six women interviewed spoke in length about how supportive and helpful their principal was. They also explained how they did not have to purchase any supplies for their classroom themselves but could count on the administration either reimbursing them or obtaining them in their behalf. This fact, again, goes against the literature. I wanted to know if this had been the case for the members of the focus group. *Response*. The majority of the participants had gone through many principals throughout their careers. Each one of them at some point in their careers had had an administrator who supported them and given them the tools to succeed and help their students but only for about a year or two (Except Xotchil who has had the same supportive principal for 9 years). The consensus was that only a minority of administrators were as caring and supportive as the one described in the prompt. If the teachers were supported, they described it as the best years of their career; if they were not, then they all relied on their unions for support or protection.

> I've had a couple of principals that were like that and those were the best years of my teaching career. It's like, what do you need to be successful? And I'll make sure you get it. That's how it should be. Because it's all about the kids. Make sure that the kids are successful. But then I've had other principals where it's about the

power. I'm the principal, those people that vow to my power…(I'll) Give them what they need.

(Amelia, August 2019)

Each of the women in attendance followed this statement by sharing instances in which administrators they worked for did not support them or, somehow, impeded their work. Dee spoke in length about the obstacles her current principal is putting in place to decrease the resources English Language Learners have access to from an EL classroom, to obstacles in helping develop a program that would allow ELLs access to their local College plus program.

Fiblet also spoke about the community building that effective principals need to create to support the neighborhoods they serve.

> I found out that most administrations that don't support because they simply don't know. They don't know. They have no idea what it takes for Latino's. What is the community? What is the culture? What's the requirement for learning? …It's your job to be in the community. You should be in the, in the community walking down whatever, eating at the Puerto Rican restaurant or at the Mexican restaurant to be around your people, to get to know them and the kids need to feel like you're part of (their community).

(Fiblet, August, 2019)

Prompt related to the second research question. What do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, suggest to clear the path for coming Latino youth interested in a career in teaching?

1.- What recommendations would you give school districts and teacher preparation programs to help clear the way for other Latinos interested in teaching?

Answers varied. Most of them spoke of mentorship programs that began in middle school and that followed the student throughout high school, teacher preparation programs and the workplace. The educators mentioned Young Scholars from Ohio State University, which, despite not focusing specifically on promoting education as a career path, follows students from 8th grade and provides support and an eventual $45.000 scholarship.

The women were hopeful that the Say Yes to Education program[2] that had recently arrived in the city would open doors to all Latinos interested in a college career, whether they would go on to become teachers or not. They thought that this additional financial support would allow urban students to afford 4-year degrees and work towards a future where college was a real possibility. They thought that K-12 teachers now needed to prepare and encourage students into following an academic path.

Fiblet spoke at length of incorporating mandatory social justice and community building elements to teacher education programs. They all agreed that the way teacher education programs are designed only focus on content delivery and not in the specific needs of the urban student. They spoke of more clinical opportunities, community building, and teacher-mentorships.

4.3 Thematic analysis. In the following section, I identify and describe the themes that emerged for each research question. I analyze the themes from the lens of Lat

[2] Say Yes to Education Program is a national nonprofit that organizes community stakeholders to invest in college scholarships and other supports for underprivileged students. (Say Yes to Education, 2019)

Crit Theory and Latina Feminism, and I connect the findings to the research presented in Chapter II.

Themes related to research question number 1. How do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, make meaning of the obstacles they encountered and how they overcame them in their journey through high school, college/teacher preparation program, and teaching?

1. High school. High school experience varied significantly by participant. Six of the ten women attended urban high schools. Four of them attended private, parochial schools. Of the six that attended urban high schools, only four of them were part of the first round of interviews; therefore, I could only explore this topic with them. There was evidence of differences in support, guidance, and academic rigor between the urban and suburban schooling experience, which might affected the urban students negatively. Between the only two English Language learners in this group, there was evidence of a scarcity of resources to aid in their language acquisition.

Guidance counselors and AP courses. Epstein, 2005, spoke about how tracking and inadequate guidance counseling was one of the first obstacles non-whites faced when attempting the teacher pipeline. Ocasio (2014) also reported instances of racism among guidance counselors who held back giving minority students information or access to courses that would aid them in their journey to college. Evidence of this was found in the first round of interviews:

Three of the four women who attended urban high schools complained that they did not receive enough guidance from their counselors to be placed in courses that would prepare them for college and that this impacted their long-term academic achievement.

None of them attempted advanced placement courses, despite two of them being among the top five of their respective classes.

Each of the instances of guidance counselors failing to aid students' college readiness by holding back information on Advanced Placement courses or test preparation were different. Cindy, who eventually received a full-ride scholarship to her state school, spoke of how there was a language barrier between her and her guidance counselor and that she "didn't know how many credits she had" and therefore was unable to help her. Mari, who was the Valedictorian of her class, graduated without completing a single advanced placement course. Despite being a gifted student, she received no advice to steer her towards a college education. Unlike them, Jules reported she was a mediocre student and shared that her guidance counselor decided that she would not go to college, so no help was given to her. In comparison, both participants who attended private schools spoke of guidance counselors who worked with them to prepare them for college.

English Language Acquisition. Only two of the original six participants were considered, and received services for, English Language Learners. They complained about the scarcity of services and/or accommodations provided to them in their day. Both spoke about being placed in mainstream classes with just access to a bilingual aide per floor. In Helen's case, when she was a child she was placed in a bilingual school and that, and her age of acquisition, may explain her present command of the English language, but she claimed that in high school, she still relied on the teachers willing to translate complicated concepts to Spanish. She said these teachers were a minority. In Cindy's case, she relied heavily on a bilingual African American women, whom she says was responsible for helping her graduate from high school. She believes that she did not

receive the services needed to master the language. Despite arriving here as a 12-year-old, her speech is mired with grammatical errors, and she has a thick accent. According to her, her writing is worse. Four of the teachers interviewed in the first round, work daily with English Language Learners. Three of them explained that it was their job to defend and assist this youth from monolingual teachers that would refuse to give them additional resources or differentiate for them.

> And then there's teachers who are just very old school. They're not trying to help, they're not trying to learn strategies to differentiate, you know, they throw so much PD at us that it's so hard to incorporate everything. Um, I, at one point, forwarded some resources to another teacher, um, that I felt can be helpful for her (student) in that class because she was failing computer science and there was Khan Academy in Spanish for computer science. And so, I aligned it with everything that she was going to teach and I was like, 'Hey, like I think you should really, you know, help her. I know she'll do the work, give her the reading' and she's like 'okay like I was looking at some other resources too, so thanks'. Never used 'em.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

When this topic was brought up to the focus group, as one of the prompts, there was a consensus that ELs do not receive the help they need to learn the language. The teachers lamented the lack of a specific English as a Second Language class, which was replaced by the presence of bilingual aides that were not trained to teach ESL. Moreover, the EL teachers spoke of the barriers their administration had set against them to prevent the implementation of block ESL classes, study halls, assistance in bridging the ELLs to

be part of College Plus programs, and essential resources to aid in their academic success. All these women presented themselves as advocates for these students, whether Latinos or not. They took it upon themselves to explain to mainstream teachers that conversational language does not equal academic language and that ELLs go through a silent phase and should not be pushed out of it too soon (Cummins, 2004). They all told stories of how at some point, they had had to defend these children from monolingual teachers that simply did not understand their needs. The statements offered in the focus group and interviews provided evidence to Fry's, 2008, claim that schools are partly responsible for the gap in achievement of Latino students. The absence of support, inadequate resources, infrastructure, and trained staff could partly explain the underachievement of English Language Learners in the United States (who are overwhelmingly Hispanic). Callahan (2005) denounced that limited English proficiency could be interpreted as a sign of limited intelligence, which resulted in students being placed in Special Ed. Courses. This topic came up during the individual interviews and the focus group. Interestingly, three of the teachers thought that being placed in Special Ed was a blessing in that students could not be held back due to poor performance in state tests, they would receive additional services, and in addition, a small monthly sum. Only one teacher thought that being labeled as Special Ed would affect the students' self-image and academic performance. When I worked at an urban school, I was surprised to find out that some of my brightest students were labeled Special Ed. I brought it up with one of the parents of one particularly intelligent Puerto Rican young woman at a teacher-parent conference, and they said they were grateful for the monthly check they received because of it. Helen, however, was deeply disturbed when her own son was 'diagnosed' as having

ADHD on his 3rd day of preschool. She did not accept his teacher's word and took matters up to the superintendent's office.

Choosing to be a teacher: The USDE White House (2015) stated that some of the reasons that youth is not choosing to be teachers is that they are receiving pushback from their environment due to the poor pay, lack of respect and autonomy, and teacher burnout. The report cited referred to urban schoolteacher and since most minority teachers are attracted to teach in students who look like them (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Ronfeldt, Kwok, & Reininger, 2016; Villegas, 2007) this could affect black and brown teachers the most.

Of the six women interviewed, four explained how their social networks attempted to dissuade them from becoming educators. One of the remaining two explained why she understands youth is told to stay away from teaching.

> I'm specifically thinking about Puerto Rico. Um, the teachers are not really respected and…will get paid whenever the government wants to give them the money…But if you're somebody from Puerto Rico, you're like, why should I go into teaching if they pay this much money? And you know, and it's a lot of work and these kids don't listen, and the parents are even worse. You know find something else
>
> (Mari, June 2017)

Even more troubling, the remaining teacher, Nicole would counsel her own children against a career in education.

2.-Gender: Societal barriers imposed specifically on Latina women varied between participants, specifically parental refusal to allow young women to leave home

before marriage (Aguilar et al., 2002; Ochoa, 2007; The Latina Feminist Group, 1991). It was prevalent enough among all the individual interviews that it was chosen as a prompt for the focus group.

> I was the oldest of all my brothers and I couldn't do anything they did. Once I was home, I was home. I wasn’t allowed to go out. I couldn't do anything.
>
> (Amelia, August 2019)

All three Mexican American complained that their parents never cut the umbilical cord. One of them almost decided not to attend college at all because she was not allowed to go to out-of-state schools, that would have served her better, as she was a gifted student. Eventually, she decided to attend the commuter school near her home. One of the other Mexican American chose to work in a far-away Northern city in order to leave her home at the age of 26.

The level of familial control over females varied among the rest of the participants. Two of the youngest participants, who were Puerto Rican and Guatemalan, barely had any restrictions. Only one participant’s life was severely impacted by her family’s control. Helen lost a full-ride scholarship to the University of Florida because she was not allowed to attend. She eventually completed her studies in the same commuter college her Mexican American colleague above attended.

In contrast, participants shared stories of how their brothers were allowed more freedom to come and go as they wished and how it was their responsibility to take care of the house and do more chores than any of their male siblings had to do. “Rules were different. I couldn't do certain things. I was a girl, but I was expected to take care of my brothers.” (Fiblet, August 2019)

3.-College and teacher preparation programs. The literature predicted many barriers that were apparent in the participants' lives in this section. Among them were obstacles associated to being first generation (Choy, 2001) and having attended an urban high school (Velez & Sanz, 2011). Other obstacles mentioned in the literature which were evidenced in the interviews and/or focus group included isolation (Pinel et al., 2005; Pizzolato et al., 2008) and unpaid student-teaching (Epstein, 2005).

According to Choy, 2001, some of the obstacles associated with being a first-generation college student include academic under-preparedness and absence of both procedural and financial family support.

Six of the 10 participants (Amelia, Helen, Mari, Dee, Xotchil, and Fiblet) were first generation college students and one of them, Cindy, was a recent immigrant to the US, whose mother had minimal knowledge of the higher education system in this country and had attended an urban school for high school.

Six participants (Cindy, Helen, Mari, Jules, Fiblet, and Xotchil) attended urban high schools, which literature suggests (Velez & Saenz, 2001) might affect academic preparedness.

Academic under-preparedness. Three of the six women interviewed (Mari, Cindy, Jules) spoke of feeling under prepared for college. Mari and Cindy were both top of their class. Once they started attending classes, they realized that they did not have the prior knowledge or academic preparedness to keep up with their peers. When Jules began attending community college, she did not know how to write essays, and she had to drop three of the four courses she had enrolled in because she was incapable of performing at a college level.

Mari, fortunately, had the support of her aunt, a Ph.D. holder who mentored her during the first difficult semesters of school. Cindy and Jules floundered and took considerably more time in obtaining their respective degrees. Along the way, Cindy lost the scholarship she was offered that included tuition, room and board and books Other life events were also partly responsible for them taking almost ten years (Cindy) and seven years to complete a bachelor's (Jules). It is a testament to these women perseverance that they obtained their degrees at all.

Jules credits the MESA program and the extra support they provided her with her resilience and progress in college. They provided services specific to Hispanics in STEM, which included financial assistance, books, field trips, among others.

Limited family financial support. Three of the first six women I interviewed were offered financial assistance to college. Cindy accepted a full-ride scholarship to a state university but eventually lost it due to unsatisfactory academic progress. Helen was not allowed to move to Florida and make use of the full-ride scholarship Florida State University offered her. Jules was a part of a Latino program, MESA, which paid her tuition at her community college and at the state college.

This information was unexpected so; I posed it as a prompt to the focus group. All the remaining women (Mari, Nicole, Linda, Xotchil, Fiblet, Dee, and Amelia) shared stories of incurring in massive student loans, despite in some cases, working two jobs. Some of them even considered not attending college in order to avoid being saddled with debt. Most of the parents of the women had not attended college themselves or if they had, they were single mothers, which is consistent with Kena et al., 2016. Therefore, it is to be expected that they might not have the financial means to help even if they had

wanted to do so. Of the women above, Nicole, Linda, and Amelia did receive some family help, but it was insufficient to cover the costs without also working themselves and incurring in debt. Amelia, eventually, received financial help from the school district where she was working as a bilingual aide to become a teacher.

Xotchil and Dee received government help through Project Reach to obtain their masters in TESOL.

Isolation. According to the literature, in college, when placed in a setting when one is a minority among other races or ethnic backgrounds, the saliency of one's ethnicity or racial identity comes to the forefront (Pinel et al., 2005; Pizzolato et al., 2008) and may result in feelings of isolation.

Evidence of isolation among the six participants interviewed was present in Mari, Helen, Cindy, Nicole and Linda's testimonies. Even when participants were studying Spanish, their classmates were white. Interestingly, Mari referred to her classmates as Americans, even though she is an American as well (born and raised in the city of the study).

Field experience. As predicted by Epstein (2005), the unpaid field experiences of five of the six women interviewed proved to be an enormous financial burden. Jules was the only one who was paid through her 5-week training with Teach for America. The other women shared tales of taking on two or 3 other jobs while attempting the experience or incurring in additional student-loans or relying on their spouses (Cindy). The case of Linda, having to leave her dorm and live in the basement of a church, was perhaps the most extreme. The saddest case was Helen having to take care of her nieces, organize her brother's funeral, work two jobs, and partake in the student teaching.

Eurocentric content and deficit thinking. None of the five participants who attended college in the Midwest (Jules attended California State University) reported seeing any of their culture or history in their studies. The participants did not learn about any contributions Latinos had made in the United States or in the world. Even Jules, who attended a majority Hispanic school did not learn about Spanish or Latin American scientists or Hispanics in literature. Only Helen learned about important artists, authors and scientists from the Spanish-speaking world when she went to Spain for her study abroad.

The only way Latinos were talked about was as an underserved community, or in Linda's case, as English Language Learners who were problematic because of their scarce mastery of the English Language. This view of Latinos as deficient, due to not knowing the language or being poor, might add to feelings of inferiority among members of this community.

None of the participants mentioned having been taught to differentiate their lessons to aid in their learning. When they did speak about differentiating, it was as a part of some professional development they received in their workplace, but not as a subject taught in college.

Eurocentrism and the historical minority 'taboo' was one of the findings in Téllez (1999) exploration of the experiences of four Mexican American student teachers who were unable to find instances of their culture, history, or language in the state mandated textbooks and curriculum. This study evidences the eurocentrism in the Midwest. It also adds to the literature by demonstrating the perception of Hispanics in education as a problem that needs to be solved.

These findings mirror the ones obtained by Valenzuela (1999) in a high school setting in Texas and could reasonably explain why Anglos hold a deficit view of Hispanics. They are not taught to add to the wealth of knowledge that they bring, but to see them as problems that need to be solved by assimilating them into White culture.

4.-Workplace. The majority of the themes found in the literature of Hispanic urban teachers experiences in K-12 were present in this study. The themes found were wanting to teach in their own communities (Szecsi & Spillman, 2012); awareness of inequalities (Weisman & Hansen, 2008), poor administrative support and resources (Barth et al., 2016; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzó & Rueda, 2003; poor pay (The White House, 2016, U.S.D.E., 2014), and feelings of isolation in the workplace (Arce, 2004)

Choosing an urban setting. When I asked the six participants to explain why they chose to work in an urban environment, the majority of the answers had to do with wanting to be in the same communities they grew up in, working with children who were like them and spoke their language. Mari spoke about how she cried when she was placed in an east-side school because all the Latinos were in the West. Nicole said that she yearns to be part of her city's school district so she can be around people who 'understand her' (she is currently the only Hispanic teacher in her school and one of the two Latinas in the school district). Helen, Cindy and Jules said they knew how to connect with urban kids because they had been urban kids themselves. And Linda wanted to work in a place close to home and her community resources. When asked why she chose to work in a Hispanic core school, Linda said:

> It wasn't necessarily because it was Hispanic, but it was because it was right by my house. It is a 10-minute drive to my job every day. Um, and it is in a familiar place. Um, and you know, I think finding out afterwards that it was a Hispanic, um, core and that all, you know, all the people there are Hispanic. I think that's what made going to work that much better.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

Connection to Latino students. Consistent with Weisman & Hansen, 2008, findings. The teachers who shared the socio economic, linguistic and cultural values of their students had improved rapport with them and their parents.

> Cause like I'm from, I'm from the hood too, you know, like with especially with those types of kids, like I just know what's up. So, it's like I could get along with them. I, with my Spanish-speaking students can talk Spanish to them.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

> Because I went to Cleveland schools, I was one of those kids. So, I know what I needed when I was in their shoes. And I tried to provide that for them and I tried to educate people about what they do. Um, still now
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

Awareness of inequalities. The participants who had taught in suburban settings (Nicole, Cindy, Mari, and Linda) mentioned how different wealthier school districts were from urban ones in terms of resources, student behavior, culture, and parental involvement. They all spoke about how the students in their classrooms were not having their basic needs met: they might not have had enough to eat, or a place to stay, or clean clothes or books at home. Some of them blamed the parents, whereas others thought that they were

doing the best they could in their position. Linda spoke about even her preschoolers coming into the classroom with baggage, despite their young age.

These four women also spoke about the differences in cleanliness and infrastructure between suburban schools and urban schools and the lack of resources to help students succeed. Linda shared how she saw part of her paycheck disappear every month while she tried to compensate for her lack of classroom materials with her own money.

This last issue was brought up during the focus group, and all the educators there explained how it was their mission to advocate for their students and make sure they received what they needed to succeed from the school's administration. They explained that sometimes they were successful and other times they were not.

Critical race theory allows us to conceptualize schools as possessing the "potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and empower" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009, p. 133). Maybe the participants of this study will be able to empower their students and help them overcome the societal barriers their unequal, under resourced schools set for them.

Administrative support in the workplace. There was much variation in terms of administrative support among the first participants. Jules, Helen, and Linda shared that their principals were a source of support, comfort, and guidance. Mari, herself is a principal, mentioned the importance of having a good leader in the helms, and how in one of her schools, when she was a teacher, she felt lost because her administrator was never there. Cindy was neutral in speaking of her school leaders; whereas, Nicole denounced in

length the trouble she was having at her new school because of her principal and assistant principal. She explained that she had had to utilize her union more than ever.

When the issue was brought up in the focus group. The four educators, who had been teaching for considerably longer than the first group, explained that they had had both wonderful supportive administrators and power-hungry ones. They mentioned that the union shielded them from the combative ones and that for they had to develop a thick skin to deal with the less supportive ones.

Poor pay. Four of the teachers brought up the issue of poor pay. All of them teachers who were employed in, or who had recently left, different school districts from the main city's one. Linda and Nicole shared that due to low wages and high student-debt, they had to return home after college. Dee wrote in her notebook when asked about the financial burden of going to college to be a teacher:

> "There needs to be help with $. Why should you go into debt for a $40,000 job? If you go into debt you want it to be for making more $."

Tokenism in the workplace. Nicole, Cindy, Mari, Amelia, and Jules spoke about sometimes being the only Latina or one of two Hispanics even in schools that were committed to diversity and social justice. They explained that they were the official translators (I was the unofficial translator at my school), and that they were misunderstood, and that they would overhear conversations about Hispanics from other teachers.

> Um, yeah, it was a struggle. Like sometimes I will (sic) be sitting in the teacher's lounge or listening to the conversations. What people will say about immigrants and it was a changing experience for me. Like, I loved them. They had good

intentions. There was no malice, but their lack of understanding. Empathy was pretty sad.

(When asked about being the only Latina in an all-white school, Cindy, June 2017)

5.-Otherness. All except one participant at some point in their interview or in the focus group shared stories of either nativism in the form of verbal abuse (Galindo, 2004; Young et. al, 2019), discrimination or micro aggressions (Sue et. al, 2017), internalization of stereotypes assigned to Latinos (Arellano et. al, 2016; Steele, 2011), generational impact on distance to heritage (Arce, 2004; Tong et al., 2010; Viloria, 2015), or isolation.

Verbal abuse. Helen, Amelia, Dee, Cindy, and Fiblet shared stories of how they, their students, their peers or paraprofessionals were told to speak English 'because this is America'. In Helen's case, she was sent to detention if she spoke in Spanish in high school; even if she was helping her classmates grasp the material being taught. Now, as a professional, she was recently told to speak English again, by one of her colleagues. Dee had a similar experience in her school with the bilingual aides being told the same by another teacher. Amelia shared the experience of students at the field trip being verbally attacked by others for communicating in their language. This occurred around 2009. The rest of the focus group participants denounced that these incidents had become more frequent under the new administration. They shared that now strangers on the street felt emboldened enough to tell other adults to speak English.

Discrimination and micro aggressions. None of the participants felt that they had been the victims of overt discrimination. There were only two examples of verbal abuse:

The field trip experience Amelia spoke of above and Nicole's tale of how the special education student from the rural school would shout 'White Power' every morning after the Pledge of Allegiance. However, most of them spoke of subtle remarks that were hurtful enough to be memorable. Some examples of micro aggressions are described below:

Mari remembered an incident that happened over two decades ago, when she was told 'she would be better off in an urban environment'; Dee shared that when her principal spoke of helping the black and brown students at her school, she was only referring to the black students. She shared that resources and help were refused to Hispanics and their cultural contributions were ignored. Aside from this, she shared the story of students being encouraged to dress up like 'Mexicans' for Cinco de Mayo. Cindy shared how she overheard white teachers talking about uncovering the children's parents who were undocumented so that they could be deported, but she said they were nothing but supportive of her. She also shared that Puerto Ricans in her high school taunted her for being the 'wrong' kind of Latino and told her to get back on her boat and go home.

Aside from these comments, there was talk of differences in physical appearance that confused white Americans or the students. Cindy's students called her the tan lady; Nicole's students commented about her looks and wanted to touch her hair. Strangers asked her 'what are you?' in social settings. None of the educators thought there was any malice in the children's words or actions. In Nicole's case, she just seemed tired of having to educate adults on how to ask someone else about their ethnic background.

Xotchil spoke of how, as a Mexican American woman, people expected her to conform to the stereotype of "Marianismo", that is of a subservient, quiet, woman like the

Virgin Mary, and how others would be shocked if she behaved outside of their preconceived notions.

Internalization of stereotypes. There are many stereotypes associated to being Latinos in a country where they are minority. Some of them include being illegal, poor, lazy, not valuing education, etc. These beliefs can affect an individuals' self-esteem and cause feelings of inferiority. Jules verbalized this phenomenon when she said that she thought that Whites were 'better' since her mother had always asked her not to embarrass her when she was in white neighborhoods. Dee shared the story of her principal who said, despite being of Puerto Rican descent, that she was not raising her children 'in that culture'. Helen explained that she made a conscious effort to be more visibly Latina and have an accent to combat what she felt was a sense of inferiority that came along with being of her ethnicity.

Generational impact. Tong et. al, 2010, explained how generational status affected identity affiliation in his study of Hispanic preservice teachers. Of the ten women interviewed, only one was born outside of the United States (Cindy), and one was born in Puerto Rico (Helen). Eight of the participants were either 1st, 2nd, or 3rd generation Latina. From the evidence I gathered, identity and solidarity with Latinos depended more on the environment in which they grew up in, including their schooling, and their parental identity rather than their generational status.

Jules is third generation Latina but was raised in a majority Hispanic neighborhood in East Los Angeles. She maintains her language and culture, and from her words, it appears she had difficulty adapting to an environment in which she was a minority. "I've never been around so many (expletive) White people" (Jules).

Fiblet was born in New York but raised in Puerto Rico until she was 14. When she came to mainland, and she did not know the language. Her primary language remains Spanish and her Latina identity seems very strong: she spoke of her pride in being Puerto Rican and was offended by how Dee's principal had denied her roots.

All the participants spoke Spanish to a certain degree. Only Linda and Nicole admitted that their dominant language was English and had problems communicating in Spanish with confidence.

Nicole's mother is a prominent figure in the Hispanic community, which might explain how strongly Nicole identifies as Latina, despite not having a strong language background. She was happiest when she was at the urban school surrounded by other minorities and spoke of feeling othered at her private high school, college, and her workplace.

Linda is perhaps the participant who felt the most comfortable in the mainstream. She attended mostly white private schools from K-16. She did not provide any evidence of discrimination or micro aggressions and said that sometimes Hispanics could be too defensive and attribute all their problems to their skin color. Despite this, she married a Central American man and worked at a Hispanic core church, which she picked because it was close to her community.

During the focus group, Amelia lamented that Hispanic students were not learning about their history or language from their parents, which was a confirmation of what Spanish teachers Cindy and Helen had stated. Cindy said her students were only "Hispanic at home" and tried to shed their identity to fit in with the majority population in their school: African Americans. Helen said the reason she became a Spanish teacher

was out of concern over how Latinos were losing their language and identity in the United States, as if they were embarrassed by it.

Isolation. Feelings of isolation have been mentioned in each stage of the pipeline and seem logical considering how few Hispanics live in this area. Nicole felt like an outsider in her private high school. All the women except Linda and Jules (who went to a majority Hispanic State University) felt isolated in their respective colleges. Cindy, Jules, Mari, , and Nicole felt like they did not belong when they were employed in all white environments. Those teachers who have been able to choose, have selected schools with a high percentage of either Hispanic students or faculty.

Perhaps the most troubling example of what can only be considered a mix of isolation, internalized nativism and otherness was when Mari referred to her classmates as Americans, even though she is an American as well (born and raised in the city of the study). I refer to white people as Americans, I also refer to African American or other minority American as American, but that is because I am a recent immigrant. I did not ask Mari to explain why she chose that word (I should have) but it could be the result of her hearing her recent immigrant parents refer to Whites as such. Or it could be that Mari internalized the notion that Puerto Ricans are not 'real' Americans. They are after all a colony. In fact, many common folks I spoke to after Hurricane Maria were shocked to find out that Puerto Rico was part of the US.

Based on the government response to the tragedy, even the President thought they were deserving of less aid than disaster victims in the mainland were. According to Willison, Singer, Creary, and Greer (2019), the federal government spent more money

and resources more expeditiously on hurricanes Irma and Harvey, which hit Texas and Florida, respectively, than on the more destructive hurricane Maria.

6.-Support systems. The participants spoke of community, religious, and family support as sources of strength and resilience. Consistent with Arellano and Padilla (1996), the participants credited their families and their strong affiliation to Latino community as reasons behind their persistence and success. Mari spoke of the aunt who mentored her through her first years of college. Jules spoke of how her family came together to support her after the death of her boyfriend. Linda attributed everything she has accomplished in her life as a product of her family's encouragement.

> Without my parents I would not be where I am today. They are huge advocates for… all of us, all of my family, all my siblings in succeeding in being, I guess better than what they were.
>
> (Linda, March 2019)

Consistent with Gomez, 2010, mothers took a prominent role in supporting the participants' journey. Of the six women interviewed all but one credited their mother as a source of encouragement and resilience.

From the four mothers who obtained higher education degrees, all of them were in some way involved in education. Cindy and Jules' mothers were, themselves, teachers. Nicole's grandmother ran a daycare and her mother works in a community college. Linda's mother is a social worker who worked at an afterschool program and now a non-profit. Other strong female family members, such as Mari's PhD aunt and Helen's teacher relatives, served as role models for these women at an early age.

Another source of support was Hispanic associations or clubs. All of the participants spoke of the importance of the Latino community resources as safe places where they could obtain information, help, and a sense of belonging.

Community procedural help. The women who had mothers who attended college relied on them for procedural support. The participants, who did not, found support in a local Hispanic nonprofit called Esperanza. "The mission of Esperanza is to improve the academic achievement of Hispanics in Greater C. by supporting students to graduate high school and promoting post-secondary educational attainment." (Esperanza Inc., 2019)

Three of the six women interviewed in the first round of data gathering (Cindy, Helen and Mari) all credit Esperanza in helping them navigate the convoluted admissions and financial aid process of higher education. Helen even obtained a scholarship from this organization that helped pay for her tuition.

Helen, Nicole, and Linda shared how they relied on organized Hispanic clubs (or in Linda's case calls from her school to represent Latinos) for support and friendship.

> So, in (college) we had (name of Hispanic organization). And that was my blessing… It gave us a sense of leadership and a sense of community and we did everything together and it was a unity. I feel that having those things in universities, it's amazing how the unity and support (helps you)
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

Of all the participants interviewed, only Helen spoke of a Hispanic professor who mentored her and supported her through difficult times. There was no other mention of Latinos faculty members from any of the other participants who attended college in the Midwest.

7.-Personal characteristics. Five out of the ten women who participated in this study have attained master's degrees, one of which also earned a PhD. Two other women received academic performance scholarships for college. This level of academic achievement shows evidence of the participants' studiousness, and some would argue intelligence. These women thrived in educational settings and enjoyed school.

> Our education system, it was created from the point of view of always separating the better from the worse. I was really a good student. I was super bright, I learned real fast. So, for me that system works.
>
> (Fiblet, August 2019)

> Yes, I was a great student and I'll say that because I took my academics very seriously…
>
> Um, I was one out of 10 brothers and sisters and I became the second to graduate in my family the second and only to graduate from my family. Um, so for me it was like an escape from what we were living in conditions, economic conditions that we were living at. I saw that as an opportunity to better my life.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

Aside from being academically gifted, most of the women (Helen, Jules, Amelia, Fiblet, Xotchil, Dee, and Cindy) seemed to share a passion for social justice and social responsibility. They saw themselves as advocates for their students and as allies that could help them achieve social mobility through education.

Themes related to research question number 2. What do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, suggest to clear the path for coming Latino youth interested in a career in teaching?

1.-Modifying teacher education programs. Fiblet, Amelia, Cindy, Xotchil, Linda, Helen, and Dee spoke about how teacher education programs must incorporate mandatory courses that prepare preservice teachers to work in urban environments (including field experiences in high-needs schools), in order for prospective educators to understand and be able to meet the special needs of minorities; specifically, learning about teaching students who have experienced trauma. In addition, all preservice teachers need to learn how to teach English Language Learners or acquire Spanish so that they can aide Hispanic children. The focus group members agreed on the necessity of incorporating elements of social justice and community building into the curriculum to combat what they perceived as systemic racism in K-12 settings.

> Are you including in your, how are you reaching the students at all that it's like we always talk about academic level so we never talk about personal levels. Like what do you do if a student has no food at their house and comes to you one day and tells you to go to hell because one, they're hungry. two- They don't know where they're sleeping tonight and what are you going to do send him to the office and get rid of them.
>
> (Cindy, June 2017)

The participants spoke about incorporating community building and social justice, they also need to have experience teaching in urban settings, otherwise they might not be able to develop the skills to be successful in that setting. "Some of these teachers, they just get the education courses in college and then they come and they get so disillusioned." (Dee, August 2019).

Helen also suggested teacher education programs require students to acquire a second language as a way for them to be able to communicate with the students they will be teaching.

> Every teacher should be…competent in language because all these kids that are from different countries speak more than one language and you need to understand where they're coming from in order to teach them.
>
> (Helen, May 2019)

2.-Mentorship programs or magnet high schools to prepare teachers. Amelia, Dee, Xotchil suggested bringing back high schools created to attract future teachers and then assigning mentors for the students throughout high school, college and the workplace to help them learn what is going to be expected of them.

> We need to have like a mentorship program that follows a student from middle school to high school to college and then the workplace. What you learn in college isn't necessarily what you're teaching in the, in the classroom. And then you get hit with all these other surprises and you think, is this normal? Is this what I should be doing? You have that person there that is coaching you and reassuring you to what you haven't signed up for. It's going to get better, but you have to make it your own.
>
> (Xotchil, August 2019)

3.-Creation of Merit-based College Scholarships or Programs specifically created to aide Hispanics. The members of the focus group were hopeful that Say Yes to Education! was coming to their city but thought that there needs to be merit-based or

ethno-racial scholarships specific to Hispanics intending in becoming teachers. Jules suggested creating programs such as MESA in the Midwest.

> So, when I decided that I wanted to study science, I found out about that program. I applied and basically through MESA they built like a, kinda like a, a cohort of students and all the students were majoring in STEM, but they were all Latinos. So, a lot of my friends were like dreamers...We were all majoring in science, so they had a special like lab for us, they had all the books for the science classes to rent out. They had free tutoring and more than anything, they had a bunch of trips and everything was free and they had retreats for us. Um, we would go on retreats. I went on like a three-day bus tour of Nevada and Reno and we were looking at engineering. So basically, the program was meant to just kind of build a of science majors, Latinos in the college and just kinda help them and give them so many opportunities… I think just more just programs like MESA … because I always had that support from people that look like me and women especially. So, it's kinda hard to look at like a district like (the one in the study) where there isn't a really big Latino population.
>
> (Jules, March 2019)

To summarize, this chapter explored the lived experiences of the six women interviewed in the form of narratives. I first described the women in terms of demographics and then organized their responses in chronological order to present a detailed view of the obstacles they overcame and the supports they made use of along the

way through the teaching pipeline. I ended each narrative with a summary of their suggestions to clear the path for other Latinas interested in teaching. I followed the narratives with a report of the focus groups and an explanation of the choosing of the prompts and the responses of the participants. I concluded the chapter with a detailed analysis of the themes that emerged during the collection of date and their connection to the available literature.

V. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter gives a short summary of the findings of this study and it is followed by the conclusions, implications for practice and recommendations for future research I suggest as a result of my study.

5.1 Summary of findings

The purpose of this study is to uncover ways to clear the educational pipeline for future Hispanic teachers based on information obtained from Latina urban teachers in a Midwestern city. Six individual interviews and one focus group were conducted, transcribed, coded, and analyzed through the lens of Latino Critical Theory and Latina Feminism. The findings were separated by the research question they answered.

The first research question was: How do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, make meaning of the obstacles they encountered and how they overcame them in their journey through high school, college/teacher preparation program, and teaching?

The findings for this question were divided into seven themes: High school, Gender, College, Workplace, Otherness, Support Systems, and Personal Characteristics. Most of the findings were consistent with research conducted in states with a higher population of Hispanics.

Within the theme high school, the data was further sub coded into guidance counselors, deciding to become a teacher, and English Language services. The findings suggest differences or scarcity of support for urban Latina high school students for college preparation in terms of placement in advanced courses and general information about higher education. Most of the teachers also reported family and community push back against a profession in education due to perceptions of it being low pay and low respect. There was also ample evidence of insufficiency of services provided to English Language Learners due to state, district, school or teacher misinformation or refusal to provide extra accommodations, English language classes and/or professionals to students.

The theme of gender barriers in the Latino community for females was explored throughout the interviews and focus group. Most of the women interviewed reported how, in differing degrees their academic careers were affected by societal obstacles related to gender. The most severe consequences of curtailing women's freedom were participants losing opportunities to have access to scholarships in distant colleges. There did appear to be generational and regional differences in women's freedom to choose. The two of the youngest participants, Linda and Nicole, complained of fewer restrictions than their older counterparts; whereas Mexican American participants, independent of their age, reported more restrictions.

Within the theme of college, several subthemes emerged. The most prominent obstacle appeared to be financial. Participants incurred in great debt in order to obtain their degrees and the direst time in their academic career was their unpaid field experience. Other impediments were consistent with the hurdles first-generation college students exhibit academic under preparedness and isolation. A fourth subtheme, which

was entitled, Eurocentric content, explored how there was no evidence of history, art or scientific contributions of Hispanics in their studies, rather, Latinos were presented as a 'problem' due to being poor and/or not knowing the language.

In the theme workplace, there was evidence of several subthemes. The most prominent one was choosing to work in an urban school district, specifically one near the communities were the participants live or grew up. Rapport with students because of shared socio-economic status, language, and culture was notable among most participants. Despite choosing to work in these school districts, the participants were very aware of the inequalities between suburban schools and urban schools in terms of resources, cleanliness, parental involvement, and student behavior. They understood that students brought with them more challenges and different needs than their wealthier counterparts and that this could get in the way of their education. Another subtheme present in the data was administrative support, or lack thereof, participants varied greatly in reporting their principals as highly supportive or as hindrances in their professional lives. The teachers interviewed for this study also spoke of low pay, which was worsened by them having to provide resources for their classroom, as an obstacle in their professional life. Both lack of administrative support and poor pay are consistent with the literature for all teachers in urban areas. A theme specific to the women in this study who worked in a majority White or African American school was tokenism and the complications that derived from being the only person of their ethnicity and/or language in their building.

The theme entitled Otherness explored instances of discrimination and/or micro aggressions participants have encountered in different phases of their lives. This theme

also explores internalization of stereotypes, generational impact on Latina identity, and isolation. All but one participant shared that at some point in their lives they, or their Latino students' life, were made to feel different, verbally abused, or were victims of discrimination and/or micro aggressions. The participants also discussed how some stereotypes against Hispanics have seeped into the members of their ethnic group self-image and how some of their students and peers were shedding their identity, language, and heritage. This theme also included the theme of isolation throughout their academic and professional careers when in White or African American majority settings.

The first part of the research question asks about the obstacles participants' faced, the second part touches upon how they managed to overcome them. This led to the final theme of Support Systems. Participants spoke of their family as their primary source of strength, although their relationship with their parents was complicated by gender roles, particularly among older participants. All but one woman spoke of the importance their mother had in aiding them to become who they are now. The second most important source of support was Hispanic community organizations, be them non-profits or clubs and organizations. Participants were able to obtain guidance, leadership skills, and a sense of belonging by being a part of organizations that catered to their specific needs as a subpopulation. This need of being in their own communities might explain their choice of working in schools with a high degree of Latinos.

The main personal characteristics these women exhibited were studiousness, intelligence, and social responsibility. Most of them thrived in school and believed education was the way out of poverty. These traits might be the reason behind their choice to persevere and become urban teachers.

Three themes were found for the second research question, ‘What do Successful Female Hispanic Urban Teachers, individually and collectively, suggest to clear the path for coming Latino youth interested in a career in teaching?’ 1.- Modifying teacher education programs by including more courses related to social justice and community building , and resources to help English Language learners, be it by requiring the acquisition of a second language or courses on second language acquisition and differentiation. 2.- Mentorship programs or magnet high schools to prepare middle school or high school students interested in teaching as a career. 3.- Creation of Merit-based college scholarships or programs specifically created to aide Hispanics.

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, based on the data presented, Hispanic teachers in a Midwestern city who are successfully teaching in an urban district tend to have certain traits in common: They appear to be academically gifted, socially responsible , and have overcome most of their challenges with the support of their families, even though in some cases, their freedom to choose was curtailed due to their gender. Additional support came in the form of Hispanic communities or organizations, such as non-profits and clubs and organizations.

Personal characteristics, such as studiousness, intelligence, and a sense of social responsibility were also present among most of the participants in the findings. The majority of the interviewees are academically gifted (Mari, Cindy, Xotchil, Amelia, Dee, Fiblet , and Helen), based on their level of academic achievement (5 women have master’s degrees and one earned a PhD) or access to performance-based scholarships (2).

Most of them took their jobs as teachers as an opportunity to advocate for their students, particularly Hispanics, and propel them towards social mobility through education.

There is also evidence that one of the main reasons they have been able to persist in high needs schools, despite all of the obstacles they present, could be because they choose to teach (or were more likely to get hired) in schools with a high percentage of Latino students with whom they share socio-economic status, language, values, and culture. This might contribute to improved student-teacher rapport, which, in turn, might buffer teacher burnout.

The importance of family support among these women cannot be overstated. Although there was some degree of variance among the participants, they all tended to depend on their parents for encouragement, emotional, and to a certain extent, financial support. Despite most of the parents having limited education and resources, they mostly provided the participants with a safe enough environment where they could, to a certain extent based on gender, choose their own path and achieve their own goals. In some instances, when possible, they provided navigational support for attempting college.

The participants suggested teacher preparation programs need to respond to the needs of urban schools by preparing prospective students for that environment and the unique challenges it presents, most prominent of which are the needs of English Language learners. They also spoke of mentorship and financial assistance for future Hispanic teachers in this Midwestern state.

5.3 Implications

The findings are very similar to those of the research conducted in states with larger Latino populations. There is evidence in the Midwest of the same leaky teaching

pipeline apparent in the rest of the country. This is compounded by the theme of isolation that was evident throughout all the stages of the participants' lives. The city of the study only houses 11.2% of Hispanics and is majority African American (50.4%) and White (39.8%). (https://www.census.gov, 2019). Therefore, it is logical participants would feel a sense of isolation due to their small numbers when they veered out of their own communities.

I believe there are two major implications for practice of this study. As a result of the findings Within-Hispanic-community and Outside-changes should occur to aid future Hispanic teachers. I have named the within changes as community building and I have focused my outside changes on K-16 institutions.

Community building: There was evidence in this study that the greatest source of support for these women was within their own families and communities. Even though the Hispanic community is relatively small in this region, it still provided resources such as Esperanza, Hispanic core schools, and other nonprofits and services for recent immigrants.

In these times where Hispanic foreigners or even Hispanic Americans (such as Puerto Ricans) are maligned or villainized by politicians and regular citizens, it is important to strengthen the ties within the community and unite to help all members achieve social mobility and gain a political voice.

Most of the local population is Puerto Rican, therefore they can vote and run for office, they can be part of school boards; they can provide a voice to other Latinos in the political field and resist nativism and xenophobia through votes and policies.

Organizations like Esperanza, El Barrio, The Spanish-American Committee, El Barrio, and La Alianza Hispana can provide places where young Hispanics can feel safe and can obtain free tutoring, free English language classes, access to jobs, credits, and work force preparation. Hispanic churches also play a critical role in providing safe havens for new immigrants and young students who require assistance that they might not otherwise obtain from the government. Now more than ever, these institutions, in tandem with the local schools, must provide a place for community building so Latinos find solace and find their political voice.

There is hope that change is occurring in this region. The first Hispanic councilwoman was elected in 2017 and she is involved in the makeover of an important neighborhood in the city. Among them is the $14 million CentroVilla25 project that aims to help Latino entrepreneurs in the area. (Chilcote, 2019)

By strengthening community and achieving representation, Midwestern Hispanics might reach a level of support similar to the one available to the only Californian in the study who benefitted from schools that valued and celebrated her culture and colleges that provided specific help to members of her subpopulation.

This study also showed evidence of marked differences between the services provided to English Language learners in New York state and Ohio. The state mandated guidelines in the state with a historically higher Hispanic subpopulation reflected the influence of policy makers who understood and cared about the future of recent immigrants and their specific needs. Whether the lawmakers themselves were Latino is not known but would seem reasonable to assume.

It is important to find solace in one's culture, however, it is also as critical to let go of cultural traits that do not serve the community in this new setting. I agree with Mari's statement that Hispanics shed their culturally imposed silence. As a child in Latin America, you are taught to be quiet, to be secondary, to not voice your opinion, to not take up too much space. This self-imposed quietness puts Hispanics at a greater disadvantage against the White-American outspokenness and tendency towards leadership. In order to get a seat at the table, Latinos must learn to speak up and defend their needs collectively.

Other cultural traits that might limit Latino's growth are rigid gender roles and female submission. Latinas need more freedom to choose their futures, their schools, whether to have children or not, and whether to get married or not. These societal constraints seem to be changing within younger generations but not as fast as they are changing within other competing subgroups creating an additional disadvantage for Hispanic females.

K-16 institutions: In order to clear the path for future Latina teachers in the city, many changes would need to occur to the educational system itself. The study presented suggests that urban students will most likely choose to teach and be successful teaching in urban schools that look like the ones they attended themselves. There are not enough pages in this dissertation to fill out the many changes in society and school districts that would need to occur to fix the many problems present in U.S. city school districts. I will only focus on support. Support for talented and gifted students; support for the students as individuals and not as receptacles to fill with discrete pieces of knowledge; support for

English-Language learners; and support for minority and low-income students in teacher preparation programs.

Seven of the ten participants of this study were clearly academically gifted. Of the six interviewed, two of the most talented women went without recognition or guidance towards career readiness. As chaotic as urban schools might be, there needs to be recognition and support for talented students. Teachers, guidance counselors, and members of the administration must nurture the bright and studious children and guide them towards a college career, whether it be in teaching or not.

Many of the changes that I recommend, based on the findings of this study, should occur within teacher preparation programs. Below I summarize each suggestion individually.

Teacher preparation programs must shift their focus from exclusively preparing students for content delivery to strategies for teaching whole individuals, particularly for urban students. Students are not blank slates; they are complex individuals who may not have their basic needs met but who come to the classroom with a wealth of knowledge. This knowledge, culture, language, and experiences need to be valued and incorporated into their teaching. The most successful teachers interviewed valued and respected the differences that their students brought into the classroom and understood that they had needs beyond those of education.

As Valenzuela (1999) stated, “A community’s interests are best served by those who possess an unwavering respect for the cultural integrity of a people and their history”. This is true whether the teacher shares the students’ racial or ethnic background. (p. 265)

Mandatory courses focusing on social justice, community building, the effects of poverty, the history of segregation and discrimination against minorities might better equip preservice teachers to not only deliver their lessons but also understand and aid their students through their difficult lives and help them find their voice as a community.

Colleges should also place the preservice teachers early in their teacher preparation program in urban settings with mentors that can teach them attain classroom management techniques and strategies to be successful in these specific environments.

Teacher preparation programs must also include mandatory courses on diversity that go beyond focusing on the deficits perceived among Latinos (poverty, language) and educate teachers on the wealth of contributions that Spanish-speakers have given the world. For example, in the realm of science, a Venezuelan discovered a cure for leprosy, Spaniard scientists have found ways to kill HIV with stem cells, a Mexican scientist received a Nobel Prize for his work with ozone, a Chilean engineer developed the seismologic measurement used to gauge the seismic potential of a region, among many other.

In the arts, the richness and uniqueness of the works of writers, poets, painters, and musicians have been recognized all over the world. There have been countless contributions in the world of literature, such as Nobel Prize winners: Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia) Octavio Paz (Mexico), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Gabriela Mistral (Chile), Pablo Neruda (Chile), and Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala). Among the most notable painters are Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Salvador Dali, Pablo Picasso, and Fernando Botero. The contributions in music have produced hundreds of music styles

from salsa, cumbia, merengue, bolero, etc. There is not enough space in this paper to list the musicians who have enriched the lives of the 26 countries in which Spanish is spoken.

If you add to these contributions the work of activists, such as Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Gloria Anzaldua, Sylvia Huertas and politicians, the perceptions the students and the prospective teachers will have of Hispanics might change.

Latino children need to learn to value their culture and their people. But mostly, teacher education programs need to change the content taught to include the contributions of not just white Europeans and in order to do so, they must educate themselves first.

Hispanics are much more than poor kids who might be undocumented and not know the language, and even if they are all these things, they need to learn that a poor migrant Mexican kid exactly like them became the first Latin American astronaut at NASA. Through education, a girl from the Bronx became a Justice in the Supreme Court. Education can be the way out of poverty and Latino students need to learn that their circumstances are not fixed, and they can have an influence over their future by way of knowledge.

The curriculum in teacher education programs focused on serving urban school districts in Ohio should also include mandatory courses in English Language acquisition and differentiation for non-English speakers. According to ECS (2014), only 20 states require preservice teachers to acquire the skills and training to work with ELLs. As of 2007, only Florida, New York, Arizona and California required preservice teachers to be proficient in requirements, such as, pedagogical content knowledge pertaining to second language acquisition, language skills, and ESL teaching strategies.

Ohio standards do not require ELL training in their teacher preservice curricula, and any training that teachers do would have to be additional to their basic license in the form of endorsements or professional developments. This needs to change to accommodate for the growing numbers of Hispanics increases in Ohio. The fastest growing subpopulation in the state and in the nation.

As seen in the findings, colleges need to make sure that Latinos have access to clubs, sororities, fraternities, and organizations through which they can combat the isolation they might feel when placed in white-majority settings. Midwestern colleges need to create spaces where Latino culture is represented and celebrated. Some of the participants interviewed expressed their gratitude for having a safe place where they could be understood by others that looked and spoke like them, and who might be struggling with the same obstacles as them.

Lastly, I suggest teacher preparation programs in this region provide financial aid to minorities, specifically Hispanics, in order to increase their recruitment and retainment. This additional help could be in the form of scholarships based on ethnicity or in paid field experiences. Low-income, first generation minority students might find yearlong unpaid student teaching to be an unreasonable burden that might prevent them from attempting to be teachers at all. As seen in the findings of this study, poverty is the most prominent obstacle for Hispanics in college in this Midwestern city.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

I realize that as a recent immigrant, my views are biased towards maintaining and celebrating one's heritage and this has influenced my analysis, conclusions, and implications. It would be interesting to have a 2nd or 3rd generation Latina reproduce this

study with a perspective geared more towards assimilation of identity and integration to mainstream America. Another possible study based on these findings might be the sense of American identity and belonging among first- and second-generation Puerto Ricans have and how these affect their life choices and educational paths.

Future researchers might also modify the criteria of participants recruited to include men, in order to obtain a different perspective into their struggles and resilience in a female dominated profession. It would also be interesting to focus exclusively on recent immigrant teachers who could contrast their culture to that of their new setting.

Future studies might want to explore some of the discrete findings in this study with more detail, such as, college support for minority students dealing with trauma, homelessness and/or poverty. An interesting finding of this study, which was left unexplored, was that of all the participants, four of the mothers had attended college (from 2-year to Ph.D.), whereas, none of the fathers had attempted education past 12th grade.

Other possible studies might explore in greater depth the gender role differences between White, African American, Hispanic and Asian. This study could focus on how these affect access to education and white-collar jobs.

With this study, I have added to the limited literature focused on Hispanic female educators in the United States. I set out to give these women a voice in Academia and to tell their stories to the best of my abilities. I also sought their advice on strategies to clear the way for other Latina females who are interested not only in bettering themselves by choosing a career in education but also improving the lives of their prospective students, and ultimately impacting their communities as well.

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APPENDICES

I. Copy of Recruitment email

Hello Maria,

My name is Adriana Trombetta. I'm doing my dissertation at CSU in the Urban Education PhD program and I'm looking for Hispanic teachers that fit the following criteria:

Female

Hispanic

Did k-12, College in the US (mainland)

Got their teaching certification through a teaching education program (no alternative or emergency teachers).

Have been teaching in an urban setting for 3 or more years.

If this criteria fits you, would you let me interview you? I'm looking to find the reasons behind the success of Latina teachers in urban settings so as to inform how k-12 & college and schools could change/improve to meet this population's need.

If you are willing, I would interview you for about an hour. Let me know if you are available Friday afternoons or anytime during the weekend.

Thank you,

Adriana Trombetta

216 704 5613

Focus Group Request Email

Hello Juanita,

I found your name on your school's website. I'm writing because I am looking for participants for a focus group for my dissertation. My name is Adriana Trombetta, I am from Venezuela, I am currently doing the Urban Education PhD at CSU and I am looking for female Hispanic teachers who meet the following criteria:

-Are certified teachers- through regular Teacher education programs

-Attended high school and college in mainland USA

-Have worked in an urban school setting for a minimum of 3 years

Please let me know if you meet this criterion, and if you would be interested in participating in a focus group for about 90 minutes on Saturday morning Aug 17th at CSU. I would provide breakfast.

The abstract of the dissertation is:

Abstract

There is ample evidence of a leaky teaching pipeline, from attending high school, college, and teacher preparation programs to teaching in urban schools, which puts forth barriers for the success of the Hispanic population in a systemic way (Epstein, 2005; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Sleeter, 2017; Téllez, 1999). This qualitative study, analyzed through a lens of Latino Critical Race Theory and Latina Feminism, will focus on gathering information about successful urban Latina teachers' journeys through the pipeline and suggestions to clear the path for future Latina teachers based on testimonios

obtained in interviews and a focus group. The inclusion of the experiences in the workplace and the collection of data in a Midwestern city will add to the research, which has focused mostly on the leaky pipeline and the experiences of Hispanics living in the southwest. The use of testimonios will respond to the urgency of giving space to Latina teachers' voice in academia in order to counter the current nativist and xenophobic political US climate that will likely permeate K-16 settings. Keywords: Latinas, testimonios, K-16, teaching pipeline

Thanks!

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II. IRB Approval

IRB #: IRB-FY2017-318 Title: LATINA EDUCATORS' TESTIMONIOS ON THEIR JOURNEYS THROUGH THE TEACHING PIPELINE: WHAT CAN BE LEARNED Creation Date: 5-2-2017 End Date: Status: Approved Principal Investigator: Joanne Goodell Review Board: CSU IRB Sponsor: Study History Submission Type Initial Review Type Expedited Decision Approved Submission Type Renewal Review Type Expedited Decision Approved Submission Type Renewal Review Type Expedited Decision Approved Key Study Contacts Member Joanne Goodell Role Principal Investigator Contact j.goodell@csuohio.edu Member Adriana Trombetta Role Co-Principal Investigator Contact a.trombetta@csuohio.edu Member Adriana Trombetta Role Primary Contact Contact a.trombetta@csuohio.edu Initial Submission Personnel PI Principal Investigator Please note that students are not permitted to be identified as Principal Investigators. Name: Joanne Goodell Organization: Dept of Teacher Education Address: 2121 Euclid Avenue JH 346, Clevel, and OH 44115-2214 Phone: 216-687-5426 Email: j.goodell@csuohio.edu After reading the information below, please select the button. ✔ I understand that students are not permitted to be identified as Principal Investigators. I further understand that if a student created this application, he or she will appear as the Principal Investigator by default and that his or her name should be deleted, replaced with a Principal Investigator who is not a student (for example, a faculty mentor), and then the student can be added below as a Co-Investigator. Co-Is Co-Investigators? ✔ Yes No I am unable to locate one or more Co-investigators. Please identify Co-Investigator Name: Adriana Trombetta Organization: College of Education & Human Address: 2121 Euclid Avenue , Clevel, and OH 44115-2214 Phone: 216-687-

2000 Email: a.trombetta@csuohio.edu Primary Contact The primary contact may be the Principal Investigator, a Co-Investigator, or an assistant who is not an investigator on the study (for example, an administrative assistant or a student assistant who is not otherwise involved in the study). However, it must be someone who you can locate when clicking the "FIND PEOPLE" button below. Name: Adriana Trombetta Organization: College of Education & Human Address: 2121 Euclid Avenue, Clevel, and OH 44115-2214 Phone: 216-687-2000 Email: a.trombetta@csuohio.edu After reading the information below, please select the button. ✔ I have read the file "Researcher Intro to Cayuse IRB" that is available on the IRB website. I understand that having this file accessible should help me complete and submit my IRB application using Cayuse IRB. I further understand that if I have any questions, I should attempt to locate the answer to my question in Cayuse IRB Help (available by clicking HELP above). If I am unable to locate the answer to my question in Cayuse IRB Help, or if I need any further assistance, then I should send an email to cayuseirb@csuohio.edu, or contact Mari Jane Karpinski in Sponsored Programs and Research Services, at m.karpinski2@csuohio.edu or 216.687.3624. Other IRB Approval Has this study already received IRB approval from another university or institution? Yes ✔ No

III. Contact, Demographic and Schooling Information Form

Name (please pick a pseudonym)	
Place of birth	
Race you identify with	
Family's country of origin	
Languages spoken	
Parents' educational achievement	
Preferred email address	
School(s) you attended during high school	
City or cities where high school(s) are located	
Approximate percentage of Latino classmates for each school	
Approximate percentage of Latino teachers for each school	
College(s) and universities you attended	
Approximate percentage of Latino classmates for each school	
Approximate percentage of Latino faculty for each school	
School(s) where you completed your student-teaching	
Approximate percentage of Latino students for each school	
Approximate percentage of Latino faculty or administration for each school	
School(s) where you have been employed	
Circle the best description for each	1.-Urban 1.-Suburban 1.-Rural 2.-Urban 2.-Suburban 2.-Rural 3.-Urban 3.-Suburban 3.-Rural
Approximate percentage of Latino students for each school	
Approximate percentage of Latino faculty or administration for each school	

IV. Interview Questionnaire

1. Tell me about your high school experience

-How were you as a student?

-Were you considered ELL?

-Were you enrolled in AP courses? If so, which?

-Did you ever see your culture, history or language reflected in your studies?

-Were there many other Latino students and Latino teachers in your school?

-Do remember if your teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, or other students,

ever treated you, or any of your Latino classmates, differently or in a discriminatory

way?

2. Tell me about applying to college

-Did you have any guidance in school or at home? Please explain

-Tell me about your decision to become a teacher

-Why did you decide to become a teacher?

-How did your family react to this?

3. Tell me about your first years in college

-Did you feel academically prepared to succeed?

-Did your parents support you financially? Did you have to work or take out loans?

-Did your family help you navigate the bureaucracy of college? Did the advisors help?

-Were there many other Latinos going to that school? Who were your friends?

- Do remember if your teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, staff or other students, ever treated you, or any of your Latino classmates, differently or in a discriminatory way? If so, please explain.

-Did you ever see your culture, history or language reflected in your studies?

-Did you have any other family obligation apart from your studies at this stage?

4. Tell me about your field experience

-How long was it?

-Where were you placed?

-Were you paid during your internship? If not, how did you get by?

-Did you ever feel discriminated against during this experience?

-Were you allowed or encouraged to include elements of your history, culture or language into your instruction?

5. Tell me about taking the licensure tests

-How many tests did you need to take?

-How expensive were they?

-Did you have any problems passing them?

-Were they available for you to take in Spanish (if that is your dominant language)? Would that have helped you get a better score?

6. Tell me about your experience teaching in an urban school

-Why did you choose to teach in an urban school?

-What is the main challenge of working in an urban school? What is the main benefit?

-Are there many other Latino teachers, administrators or students in your building?

-Have you, or any of your Latino colleagues or students, ever experienced discriminatory treatment from administrators, staff, parents, or other teachers?

-Are you allowed or encouraged to include elements of your history, culture or language into your instruction?

-Were there any other family obligations at this stage that pulled you away from teaching?

7. Looking back on your journey from High school to teaching in an urban school, what are the main barriers you identify for your success and how did you overcome them?

8. What recommendations would you give school districts and teacher preparation programs to help clear the way for other Latinos interested in teaching?