Learning to advocate for educational equity in a teacher credential program

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Abstract

Drawing on a 5-year program-wide investigation of ways preservice teachers learn to teach to diversity, this study uses focus groups of graduates to illuminate survey results of their feeling well prepared to advocate for equity in classrooms and schools. Offering suggestions for improvement, graduates nonetheless reported two broad categories of program strength. The first was the value of infusion of culture, language, and equity content in coursework. Themes in strong coursework included focus on culturally responsive, equity-focused pedagogy; preparation to teach English language learners; developing cultural knowledge and sensitivity; and learning advocacy beyond the classroom. Faculty taught and modeled these concerns through many means. The second, which extended coursework, was sustained and scaffolded apprenticeships in teaching for equity, including student teaching supervisors as equity mentors, placements that support teaching for equity, and ongoing cohort discussions of equity teaching.

1. Introduction

Just over a decade ago there was a paucity of research on preparing teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse youth, with no studies of programs providing multicultural and social action education throughout the preservice experience (Grant & Secada, 1990). Since then, we have seen promising results in strengthening teachers' knowledge and attitudes about diverse youth. Two problems emerge from this work, however.

First, most of the inquiry is short term and cannot capture preservice teachers' evolving knowledge and stances regarding diversity and how early career jobs and contexts shape and constrain teachers' ideologies, goals, agency, and practice in teaching diverse learners (Buendía, 2000; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Stodolsky & Grossman, 2000). Second, studies still mostly examine impact of individual preservice classes, with little comprehensive study of program-wide processes in preparing teachers for diversity and their impact on teachers (Sleeter, 2001).

The present study addresses these issues by examining: (a) ways preservice teachers learn to teach to diversity across a teacher credential program and (b) these teachers' conceptions of the

process a year or more after completing the program. The study triangulates data sources (year-end assessments, surveys, interviews, and coursework) from a larger program investigation and, using focus group methods, elaborates teacher perspectives. The central research question was this: Given a program's claim to preparing teachers to advocate for educational equity, what do graduates report about specific program strengths and problems in preparing them for this work?

2. Framework

2.1. Learning to advocate for educational equity

Learning to advocate for educational equity begins with a focus on student learning. In professional development for *experienced* teachers, especially of low-income youth, this focus helps teachers reach all students (El-Haj, 2003; Timperley & Phillips, 2003). It can challenge *new* teachers more, given early career concerns of self-image, resources, and procedures, with focus on curriculum and students typically occurring later (Farrell, 2003; Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992). Teacher education can and should jumpstart a student learning focus, with attention not only to celebrating students' cultural and linguistic diversity but also to developing a disposition to oppose inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Diversity as a focus of study highlights rich racial, ethnic, and linguistic traditions that comprise societies but also examines how social, economic, and political forces shape access and achievement patterns for students as well as how school structures can reinforce and reduce inequities (Nieto, 2000). The primary achievement gap in the US exists between White, native English speaking, middle to high income students on the one hand, and generally lower income, culturally and linguistically diverse (primarily Latino, African American, American Indian and some Southeast Asian) students on the other. With education of all children as a goal, a legal and economic perspective on equity means funding should go to those in greatest need (Kohl & Witty, 1996). Beyond finances, equity redistributes time and attention to students in need, differentiating supports to ensure equitable outcomes (Haycock, 2001); and in striving for high achievement for all learners, seeks to close achievement gaps (Cohen, 1997).

An equity focus requires, at minimum, cultural competence, particularly in a nation as culturally and linguistically diverse as the US. Teachers need knowledge of culture in education, a commitment to learn about students' culture and communities, and ways to use culture as a basis for learning (Ladson-Billings, 2001). An equity focus includes monitoring teacher–student interactions for fairness and cultural sensitivity (Grant, 1989) and asking who is and is not served by instruction and why. Other key concerns are creating empowering school cultures for underserved youth of color (Banks, 1995) and developing commitment and skills to act as agents of change (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). From the perspective of this equity framework, teaching is not ethically neutral but steeped in care and justice (Hargreaves, 1995; Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; Noddings, 1984; Secada, 1989; Witherell, 1991). It includes casting all aspects of school as problematic rather than given; learning to locate expertise inside oneself rather than merely outside; and knowing how to examine what *is* in schools and how to determine or imagine what *could be* (Richert, 1997). Moving from imagining to action aligns with core *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of advocacy: "to intercede on behalf of another" or "to publicly recommend a proposal or action" (Merino, Martin, & Pryor, 2001). These are central tenets of our framework.

2.2. Teacher education to prepare advocates for equity

Several issues may impede preparation of teachers for such work. Problems may arise due to striking cultural and linguistic differences between students and their teachers. Many new teachers hold cultural deficit perspectives on student learning and achievement (King, 1991) or popularized myths about children from low SES families or homes where English is not the primary language (Garcia, 1996). Preservice teachers' explanations for different academic performances among students of varied ethnic groups may ignore societal factors (Avery & Walker, 1993), and few interactions with people of different backgrounds can limit knowledge of historical contributions by those outside the dominant culture (Taylor & Sobel, 2001). Preservice teachers' conceptual maps provide the backdrop for acquiring new knowledge and interpreting new information. As Holt-Reynolds (1991) noted, "experience-based knowledge that pre-service teachers bring with them to their study of teaching constrains as much as it illuminates, prejudices even as it

colors, and short circuits as it leads to fresh insights'' (p. 3).

Two areas, however, may facilitate change in preservice teachers' cognitions regarding education: actions of the instructor and involvement of the student (Craig, Bright, & Smith, 1994). In short-term work, veteran teachers have used professional development on culturally responsive teaching to reflect on empathy in their work and to recast learning environments to better serve youth of color (McAllister, 2002). Others have used antiracist development to make interpersonal relationships, curriculum, and institutional efforts better serve students of color (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). A doctoral course on multicultural education provided occasion to revise units and engage K-6 colleagues in rethinking curriculum (Jennings & Smith, 2002). Course-specific work with preservice teachers has strengthened knowledge and attitudes about diverse learners (e.g., LaFramboise & Griffith, 1997; Olmedo, 1997; Troutman, Pankratius, & Gallavan, 1999).[1]

Program-wide efforts with preservice teachers include small cohorts learning to use an academic focus, cultural competence, and a civics/citizenship focus as they ''Teach for Diversity'' (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Others feature social justice through texts addressing diversity, original case studies of diverse students, strategies to support equity pedagogy, and increasingly diverse yearlong student teaching placements (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Graduates of a program on social justice education for urban schools remain in teaching at higher rates than most novices by learning to be curriculum and pedagogy change agents; participating and leading in committees and after-school programs; and promoting structural changes such as detracking and facilitating college access (Quartz & the TEP Research Group, 2003).

The program in the present study, which includes developing teachers as advocates for educational equity, has been the subject of related work. Program documents, notes from faculty meetings and retreats, students' work on conceptions of advocacy, and teacher educators' syllabi, portfolios, interviews, and questionnaires revealed program-wide attention to preparing teachers to teach culturally and linguistically diverse youth and to advocate for equity in and beyond the classroom (Athanases & Martin, 2001). In reports of over 300 program graduates, surveys indicated graduates felt well prepared to assume the role of advocate for equity in classrooms and schools (Merino et al., 2001). Graduates reported that they took on challenges of meeting learning needs of highly diverse students and that needs of English language learners (ELLs) especially prompted acts of advocacy, including instructional tailoring, out of class tutorials, hunts for better texts and tests, field trips, creation of a culture/computer club, improved parent contacts, and launching of bilingual parent groups (Athanases & de Oliveira, in press). Even in the throes of the induction period, teachers reported advocating in and beyond the classroom for those in need of someone interceding on their behalf. However, we still needed to know more about graduates' retrospective reflections on specific ways their credential program did and did not prepare them to be advocates for equity. The ways graduates link their advocacy practices to their credential program is the focus of the present study.

3. Method

3.1. Value of focus groups

As indicated, a larger investigation gathered syllabi, portfolios, questionnaires, and interviews with 16 faculty members; selected classroom observations; and surveys of over 300 program graduates from a 10-year period. However, mindful of how programs often fail to use adequate methods to discern sources of impact, we used focus groups as a research tool to triangulate other data and to illuminate survey results (Flores & Alonso, 1995; Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups yield responses explicitly dependent on and shaped by others. However, because focus groups use responses and reflections shared in small cohort settings, they can uncover trends obscured by consensus in surveys and aid theorizing about phenomena (Fern, 2001). Unlike surveys and structured individual interviews, focus groups allow participants to take some control of the conversation by articulating ideas in the context of others' remarks (Bergin, Talley, & Hamer, 2003). They allow participants' voices to be more dominant in the research process (Krueger, 1994) and, in a Vygotskian sense, capture dialogic and fluid aspects

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[1]Studies also have documented the impact of teacher education coursework attention to other forms of diversity, including multiple forms of disability (Gabel, 2001) and lesbian- and gay-identified youth (Athanases & Larrabee, 2003; Kissen, 2002).

of opinion formation (Fern, 2001). During the focus groups, then, we sought to promote teachers' deep reflections on their preparation for advocacy (influenced by their current professional needs) and scaffolded by the social construction of knowledge in groups of other new teachers.

3.2. Context and rationale for the study

The site for the study is a California research university with a relatively small program preparing teachers for multiple and single subject credentials. Though now doubled in size, at the time of the study the program prepared an average of 67 candidates per year and 40–60 more in summer and weekend coursework through a collaborative program with a nearby state university. Students complete a cross-cultural language and academic development (CLAD) or bilingual cross-cultural language and academic development (BCLAD) credential–designed to increase knowledge of culture and diversity and to prepare teachers to work effectively with students developing English proficiency. Assignments and experiences address these issues in courses such as cultural diversity and education, language development in the Chicano child, teaching language minority students in secondary schools, teaching english as a foreign language (for English teachers), and BCLAD courses such as communication skills for bilingual teachers. In 1995, the programs were designated "experimental" by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, an incentive to review guiding principles, investigate practice, and conduct a self-study. The program claims to develop four teacher roles. The primary role is advocate for educational equity; documents boast a focus on addressing inequities of schooling and society, especially in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Three others roles support the advocate role: reflective practitioner, collaborator, and researcher on one's practice.

A self-study goal of the experimental program was to understand how to develop teachers as advocates for equity. To accomplish this, the program places student teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse, generally high need sites in primarily urban and rural settings with an average of 60% of students on free or reduced lunch. Uncredentialed teachers disproportionately get hired in such settings in the US (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Lankford et al., 2002; Oakes, 1990;

Shields, et al., 2001), and early departure from the profession among this group exceeds that of new teachers as a whole. Graduates of this program, however, tend to work in high need schools and continue teaching at unusually high rates (Merino et al., 2001), suggesting that the program possibly prepares teachers well for work in such settings. While diversity in teacher education often gets segregated in single or several preservice classes, it can be infused in programs (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996), as this program claims. Finally, though the US teaching force is increasingly White, some programs recruit and support students of color, enabling more diverse perspectives to shape teacher education dialogue and experiences (e.g., Bennett, 2002). This program made such efforts, moving from no students of color to an average of 27% in four years and slightly higher rates later (Merino & Holmes, 2002).

3.3. Participants

Thirty-eight graduates, all currently teaching, participated in the focus groups. Most had taught 1–3 years at the time of the study, with several having taught 4–10 years. Participants convened at the university in groups of 5–10 each for five separate three-hour focus groups. We recruited 6–12 members per group—a minimum of 6 for lively interaction and a maximum of 12 to ease members' participation and moderator control (Flores & Alonso, 1995). Due to teachers' last minute time constraints and unexpected events, one group had a low of 5, other groups had 7–10 members. Three conditions increased generalizability of results (Fern, 2001). First, participants represented the larger population of teachers under consideration. Second, they were recruited independently to mirror the larger population and to promote group heterogeneity. Third, discussions focused on a small enough number of issues so responses could be potentially generalized, not diluted or muddied by too many concerns. Just over 1/3 of participants were teachers of color, mostly Latino (generally Mexican American), with several African American and Asian American. Despite recruitment efforts, male teachers were underrepresented (13% of participants were male, compared to 19.6% of students in all programs). Participants taught elementary school, some in bilingual or English language development (ELD)

contexts, and middle/high school, with slightly more English teachers than math or science.

Participants' teaching contexts varied with a preponderance of lower income urban and rural communities, with culturally diverse students and high numbers of ELLs in the schools and teachers' classrooms. Urban sites tended to be very poor, often with populations at nearly a third African American, a third Latino (mostly Mexican American), a third Asian of varied ethnicity, and small numbers of White students. Most ELLs were native Spanish speakers but several teachers reported high numbers of students whose native languages were Vietnamese, Hmong, Lao, and Russian/Ukrainian. Several urban teachers reported large student groups living in housing projects, and several rural schools had many children of migrant farm workers.

Though not participants in the present study, 16–18 faculty members from the university participated in the advocacy-related work of teacher education during this period, and their work is referenced. Faculty members included 6 tenure track professors in education and linguistics from the university and its partner institution; 12 full- or part-time clinical faculty members, over half of whom served also as student teaching supervisors; and several K-12 teachers who taught individual program courses or participated in supervision. Several of the tenure track faculty and nearly all of the clinical faculty members participated in the larger program investigation through interviews, discussions, written reflections, and documentation of teaching.

The authors served as focus group moderators. Both are White, one male, one female. The first, a new faculty member at the time of the study, teaches courses that address cultural diversity and education and conducts research on diversity and equity and LGBT issues. The second, a lecturer and postdoctoral researcher, studied the experimental credential program and has taught courses on teacher leadership, and race, culture, and politics. Also, two female undergraduate prospective teachers, one African American, one Mexican American, served as research assistants. A non-native English speaking graduate student with expertise in language education, linguistics, K-12 second language development issues, and adult education assisted in analysis. We all had knowledge of the credential program but no direct involvement at the time of the study.

3.4. Participants' roles and actions

Following work in several professions, we used artifacts and social interaction to support reflection (Richert, 1991). In focus group rooms, we supplied participants with credential program artifacts including program statements and brochures; course and practicum syllabi, resource lists, and sample lessons; student work samples, teacher portfolios, and reflections on teaching; and photos of classroom interactions. Group discussions began with brainstorming credential year recollections. Participants called out names of assignments and faculty members, topics and themes, issues and challenges. A research assistant recorded ideas on large paper then hung these sheets so participants had these recalled program features to promote reflection during discussion.

Participants introduced themselves using a brief teaching autobiography and description of their teaching contexts. This highlighted distinctiveness of members, deterring a tendency for dissenters to suppress disagreement in favor of group consensus (Morgan, 1988). To increase the possibility that all participants might participate fully, discussions began with ordered turns to answer core questions, and participants were invited to hold the floor as fully as needed. After each round of turns in response to a single question, often scaffolded by moderator probes for elaboration, participants were invited to engage in crosstalk, commenting on each other's remarks, asking questions and reacting. Discussions continued with this pattern of ordered turns then crosstalk, until a final round of open-ended questions in which participants were encouraged to comment on any strengths or weaknesses of the program not yet addressed.

3.5. Moderators' roles and actions

Efforts were made to establish a climate of trust, safety, and respect, by providing refreshments, welcoming acknowledgement as participants arrived, and assurances of privacy and anonymity. As moderators, we adopted a nonjudgmental reflective listening style for discussion, conveyed through nonverbal communication and verbal means of clarifying, paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, and summarizing (Fern, 2001). Distrust of a moderator can cause participant resistance, stepping back, and dropping out (Fern)—salient concerns since our lead moderator was a White male

academic and most participants were female classroom teachers, over a third people of color. For all focus groups, moderators followed the same protocol of room set up, participants' opportunity to talk, and method of probing for response. We also asked the same protocol of questions of all groups. We used a constant moderator style in a scripted but flexible format with probes for elaboration. Though a protocol of questions was followed, open-ended opportunities also enabled us to capture unique reports and insights. As moderators, we avoided dominating the conversations, overly directive talk, and censure of participants' talk except in cases where a participant began to speak for extended periods of time or refused to yield the floor. We actively reflected on biases before, during, and after moderating the groups.

Members of discussions often participate unequally, due in part to gender, cultural norms, and perceived status of group members, and in focus groups men typically tend to dominate and interrupt (Brown, 2000). Our groups had few men, and their participation did not reveal dominance. However, we worked to ensure that no participants were silenced. We attended to nonverbal signs of desire to speak, intervening at times to encourage the silent and discourage the dominant, particularly watching to see if those culturally or linguistically in the minority of otherwise homogeneous groups might withdraw, especially in disagreement.

3.6. Data sources and analysis

Discussions were audiotaped with names of participants and program faculty changed after transcription to assure anonymity. Data sources included transcripts and moderator field notes from five focus group discussions. Teachers reflected on, among other topics, their current conceptions of advocacy, relevant practices, ways the program did and did not prepare them for this work, and ways their schools supported and constrained their advocacy goals (Appendix).

We transcribed focus group discussions then reviewed all transcripts totaling 300 double-spaced pages, along with moderators' reflective notes written directly following focus groups. Because we primarily were interested in teachers' reports of ways the program did and did not prepare them to advocate for equity, we isolated transcript portions concerning these perceptions and independently reviewed these for key themes. We then discussed

emerging categories, coded all data, and typed these into files for further analysis. We used the constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998) to revise categories until they accommodated all data. We used charts and data displays in an iterative process (Miles & Huberman, 1994), resulting in tables of categories and themes. We refined final categories by examining relationships between results of this study and triangulated data sources. In reporting results, we balance summary and quotation to capture both patterns and precise illustrations (Morgan, 1988).

4. Results

Table 1 shows analyses yielded two broad categories of program strengths, with themes in each case. Categories were reported by teachers across all five focus groups. Program weaknesses and areas for growth in preparing advocates were fewer; these results are reported later.

4.1. Strength in infusion of culture, language, and equity content in coursework

As Table 1 shows, the infusion of culture, language, and equity content in coursework was

Table 1
Graduates' reports of credential program strengths in preparing them to advocate for educational equity

Program strength	Number (and %) of teachers reporting ($N = 38$)
Infusion of culture, language, and equity content in coursework	*30 (79)*
Focus on culturally responsive, equity-focused pedagogy	23 (61)
Preparation to teach English language learners	17 (45)
Developing cultural knowledge and sensitivity	14 (37)
Learning advocacy beyond the classroom	12 (32)
Sustained and scaffolded apprenticeships in teaching for equity	*29 (76)*
Student teaching supervisors as equity mentors	20 (53)
Student teaching placements that support teaching for equity	12 (32)
Ongoing cohort discussions of equity teaching	11 (29)

Table 2
Strengths in infusion of culture, language, and equity content in teacher education coursework (30 teachers, 79% of focus group participants, reporting)

Theme cited	Number (and %) of teachers reporting ($N = \cancel{38}$)
Focus on culturally responsive, equity-focused pedagogy	*23 (61)*
Focus on individual student learning is foundation for equity	
Need for challenging curriculum and high standards for all	
Strategies to ensure equitable learning opportunities	
Reflection on one's teaching practices as they relate to equitable learning	
Historical perspectives on inequities	
Grouping strategies to promote equity and to accommodate all learners	
How to use multiple learning modalities	
Preparation to teach English language learners	*17 (45)*
Knowledge of language and its development	
Pedagogy to scaffold language demands in content learning	
Methods for classroom inquiry and intervention to strengthen learning of ELLs	
How social, cultural, and political forces impact education of ELLs	
Developing cultural knowledge and sensitivity	*14 (37)*
How to learn about a school community's cultural and linguistic profile	
How to tap community members as cultural resources for classroom work	
Struggling beyond comfort zones regarding diversity and equity issues	
Learning advocacy beyond the classroom	*12 (32)*
Learning merits and strategies for outreach to families and communities	
Advocacy for special needs students and their families	
Being proactive about educational inequities at schools and beyond	
Developing and using knowledge so advocacy is effective	

the category reported slightly more frequently as strength in preparing teachers as advocates for equity. This result contrasts with ways teacher education coursework frequently gets cast as simplistic and irrelevant to the superior preparation of the K-12 classroom laboratory. Table 1 shows teachers reported that diverse student teaching placements did indeed serve as meaningful labs in the context of sustained and scaffolded apprenticeships in teaching for equity. However, participants provided powerful and consistent reports that teacher education coursework provided the foundation for learning to advocate for equity. Because this category contains responses from almost 80% of participants, we specifically pull out and detail four themes in this category and present them again in Table 2 with *elements* of each theme identified by focus group participants.

4.1.1. Focus on culturally responsive, equity-focused pedagogy

Table 2 shows 23 teachers (61%) reported a focus on culturally responsive, equity-focused pedagogy supported their development as advocates for equity. The first element of this theme is a focus on individual student learning as foundation for equity. While attention to diversity and equity could remain abstractions, participants consistently reported learning that to address equity, a teacher must first place the learning of each individual student at the center of teaching. While this may seem obvious, it contrasts sharply with recommendations often made that teacher education should feature classroom management and technical rationality (e.g., Kagan, 1992). Several models of teacher learning frame the new teacher as focused on the self, then curriculum, then finally students (Fuller, 1969; Fuller, Bown, & Peck, cited in Worthy & Patterson, 2001; Kagan, 1992). In that view, student learning gains focus only after teachers no longer are consumed with worries about survival as new teachers. Participants in our study, however, consistently reported that a focus on individual student learning anchored their credential program work from the start.

Assignments, projects, and role-playing supported this stance across many different courses. A shadow assignment asked students to "spend a

whole day with students, getting inside their heads,'' positive reinforcement training taught ways to support students' development based on individual needs, and role-playing enabled practice in responding to challenging students with their best interests at heart. Several participants reported the impact of researching a student's learning and developing individual learning plans for ELLs or underperforming students.

Faculty modeling of a student focus emerged as particularly salient. Elementary school teachers recalled individualized attention in math methods with Morrie Adams,[2] including diversified support and confidence building for those "math phobic," Adams' extensive written feedback in journals, and his treating prospective teachers in ways they should teach their students. Carlos Juarez, on the collaborative program faculty, also emphasized and modeled child-centeredness: "He embodied it, he modeled it, he preached it, he gave it out as assignments." One teacher learned from Juarez, "I'm an advocate for these children, these are *my* children, they're *my* students, I'm here for them, and I have their best interests at heart. And that's what has to come first." An English teacher, noting how a learner focus was modeled and explicitly taught in Harriet Powers' methods class, was shocked to hear several new teachers from another program "come in talking about how 'I hate working with these kids, these kids don't know anything.'"…I mean that was the exact *opposite* of what we were taught. It was really a student-centered viewpoint."

Building on individual learning of *any* student, Table 2 shows participants valued repeated coursework attention to theory and practice in equity and diversity. Principles were challenging curricula for all students, high standards plus support (taught and modeled by instructors' high expectations), and developing cultural competence. One teacher noted: "All that CLAD training was built in to many classes." Teachers learned how students historically have been left out due to race, language, and class, and learned to monitor their pedagogy for equitable access: "Don't leave anybody out." One noted how he learned to write in his reflective journal daily: "Did I meet their needs?" Another echoed this, noting she still uses skills from Kay Austin's instruction to focus on her own behavior and

performance to rethink her tendency to respond to disruptive students by writing referrals. Concrete strategies and resources to teach for diversity included practice in grouping students through assessment of academic skill; learning to accommodate all different kinds of learners, not just one or two; learning to teach through multiple modes and media such as visual and kinesthetic, as well as verbal; and learning to address diversity in a specific lesson.

4.1.2. Strong preparation to teach ELLs

Table 2 shows a second coursework theme was strong preparation to teach ELLs as fundamental to being advocates for equity in teachers' current jobs (17 teachers, 45% of focus group participants). These teachers felt well prepared to meet the needs of ELLs in bilingual, ELD, and mainstream classes. A key element of the theme was gaining foundational knowledge of language and its development. One teacher noted how she uses the "powerhouse of information" from Martina Bolos' course Language Development in the Chicano Child that was "heavy on linguistics and theory." English language arts teachers valued the academic rigor of a linguistics course on Teaching English as a Foreign Language. One remarked, "When we came out we had a knowledge. I can pick up a paper now from a kid, and I can pretty much tell you where he's from, by the grammar errors." A science teacher noted that what she learned "about English as a second language…we could then apply to science," adding that she would have liked more linguistics preparation to help her evaluate "written and vocal work…tools to look at how they approach language." Another key element was learning to scaffold language demands in any content learning. One teacher reported how Felicia Marisol read a story to model scaffolding comprehension for younger learners when vocabulary is difficult: "It was…the one where the sky is falling. And she's reading it in Spanish and she has puppets and so she's being very theatrical and she's walking around the room." This teacher explained how she recalls and uses Felicia's strategy of dramatic reading when students encounter "high vocabulary and they won't understand that word."

A third element in learning to teach ELLs was methods for classroom inquiry and interventions to aid student learning. Both science and English teachers reported how case studies of ELLs, using observations, student work, and interviews, helped

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[2] Names of all teacher credential program faculty and graduates have been changed.

them, as one put it, "get inside the heads of my students and understand them a little better." Several teachers recalled the value of an instructional intervention completed in Martina's Language Development class. Student teachers selected an ELL in their class who needed extra support. Katherine, a Spanish speaking White teacher with a BCLAD credential, told how she replicated that project a year later for her student Miguel in her first year teaching K-1 bilingual immersion. She created a curriculum for Miguel, with unique learning goals, tutoring sessions, and extra language and writing practice to support and stretch him. She reported Miguel's improvement in spoken and written literacy because she used what she had learned in her Language Development class about individualizing and closely monitoring Miguel's learning and about engaging others' support in advocacy, including a teacher's aide and Miguel's mother, aunt, and sister. A teacher in another focus group echoed these remarks, saying she learned from that class how to research an individual ELL's learning "beyond what you see" and how to take that knowledge and use it, something "beneficial to the way I approach my classroom and the kids."

The fourth element in preparation to teach ELLs was learning to address ways social, cultural, and political forces impact the work. Several teachers reported learning in classes how the political and policy climate regarding "English Only" instruction, particularly in California, would impact their teaching. Much of this related to Proposition 227, a ballot initiative in California that passed in 1998, restricting bilingual education in the state. Even before 227 passed, teachers learned in the program how they would need to make instructional choices informed by not just political debate but research on teaching and learning. A few teachers recalled how instructors addressed biases against ELLs and student teachers' own resistance to meeting ELL needs.

In one group, Susan, a new 3rd grade teacher with many ELLs in her rural school class, illustrated children's resistance to meeting ELL needs. She told how some Anglo students objected to ELLs using Spanish as they worked on assignments. Susan, who felt strongly that ELLs "should be free to express themselves when they can't find the words in English," performed a simulation in class. She began to teach a difficult subject, gave out dittos and a picture, but spoke in sounds of a made-up language. She then led students through a discus-

sion linked to experiences of ELLs in US classrooms and reported a strong impact on her students. After she told this story, three teachers in her focus group chimed in about their experiences of using and reflecting on this simulation that they recalled from Morrie Adams' math methods class. One recalled:

It put those of us that were in the teaching program in the position of being students in the classroom because he had someone come in and teach a [math] lesson to us in one of the African dialects, so obviously none of us were following the lesson too clearly.

Another recalled how the guest "taught us a few basic words, and all the numbers, and then when he started to get in the lesson it was just…ohmigod, this is terrible! It was very frustrating, very funny." Other group participants were surprised that Susan did not recall it as Morrie's simulation since she replicated it exactly. Susan concluded that "it was probably subconscious." Her use of the simulation was an act of education for 3rd graders and an act of advocacy for her ELLs. The focus group dialogue revealed how Susan's practice related to language education was rooted in the program and, through an unexplained process she called subconscious, apparently took hold.

4.1.3. Developing cultural knowledge and sensitivity

Our first two themes in Table 2 (culturally responsive teaching and teaching ELLs) concerned ways graduates felt the program prepared them with principles and practices to guide equity pedagogy to meet diverse learners' needs and to close achievement gaps. However, teachers' reports about learning to advocate for equity included a theme that was not specific to pedagogy but related to developing knowledge and dispositions about cultural diversity that could *inform* their practice. Table 2 shows 14 teachers (37%) reported the program's development of cultural knowledge and sensitivity as key to being advocates, and the table identifies elements of this theme. Learning about a diverse school and community apparently had a lasting impact. A community study was praised as a way to help new teachers learn perspectives "beyond stereotyping" on a school's local cultures, languages, community spaces, events, problems, and strengths. Teachers also reported learning to tap community members as resources and guest teachers, in one case having two Hmong mothers teach gardening.

Another element in developing cultural and linguistic sensitivity was struggling with diversity issues, often beyond comfort zones. In one group two women argued over the value of heated debates on diversity issues. One woman disliked divisions that developed based on political and cultural biases, as "when we had the gay/lesbian speakers, we had some people whose religion said 'I don't want to do this.'" The other valued controversy, noting that teachers needed to be stretched, and that the out gay middle school science teacher who was a guest speaker helped her to learn strategies to address homophobic remarks in class. She also recalled things heating up about socioeconomic differences at teaching sites after students completed community studies:

> I think she really wanted us to feel uncomfortable. There was a huge division. Some were sitting there going, "So you have golf courses and we have nothing." It was very stark. But that was valuable to us because it was clear there was inequity, and problems some people were talking about were so minor compared to things other people were going through.

Such discomfort was viewed by some as small price to pay for digging deep on inequities. Further, one teacher's remarks about Carlos Juarez used verbs (our emphasis) that highlight his supportive but challenging engagement: purposely *drawing* us out, *trying* to make us understand what it was like to be in that position, *playing* the devil's advocate, sometimes *offending* us. Another teacher noted that when things got heated it often changed her perspective, hit people on an emotional level, and helped them see beneath surfaces "which helped me in the classroom to empathize."

4.1.4. *Learning advocacy beyond the classroom*

A final theme on infusion of culture, language, and equity in teacher education coursework (12 teachers, 32%, reporting) concerned ways student teachers learned that to be advocates for equity they would need to step outside the classroom at times and, as our framework specified, be prepared to intercede on behalf of another or publicly recommend a proposal or action. Those reporting this theme noted that program attention in this area had a lasting impact. This is particularly important because these mostly new teachers are typically cast in the literature as consumed with survival and unable to focus on individual student learners till a

few years into the profession. In our study, however, the group reporting this theme identified ways their credential program prepared them not only to see students as individuals with particular learning needs but to advocate for youth by working with community and families, with colleagues, committees, administrators. Teachers spoke of learning to advocate for parental rights for special needs students, recalled explicit direction in coursework to make constant contact with families, and learned and practiced ways to engage parents as fellow advocates guiding students' learning, rather than as mere recipients of bad news. This was illustrated particularly in working with families culturally and linguistically outside of mainstream White English-speaking norms.

Several teachers recalled learning in the program that to advocate for equity means to address school problems proactively. Sondra, a second year teacher at a middle school with mostly Latino students and 98% of students on free lunch, told how her school staff continually discussed children missing school in December for trips to Mexico for family reunions and celebrations. She proposed that "instead of complaining and fussing about it," the school should change the calendar due to the large number of students involved. Several teachers and the new principal responded favorably and the school board appeared poised to institute a calendar change for the coming year based on Sondra's suggestion. She traced the success of this advocacy to credential program meetings with Felicia Marisol where they were taught: "Instead of complaining, to look at what's going on and figure out how to fix it so it's okay for both sides instead of being divided like that–to try and find a solution." Sondra noted, "It was directly from the program that I was able to be strong enough to not complain but to try to figure out something so it could work for everybody."

The important final element of this theme of advocating beyond the classroom is that new teachers tended to be more willing to risk interceding and speaking publicly when they felt they had ways first to feel informed on relevant issues. Teachers' reports clarified that a disposition toward caring and speaking out often was insufficient. Because many of these teachers earned credentials at the time that Proposition 227 was debated and became policy, they were teaching ELLs in a time of institutional ambiguity and flux about practices and with some professional risk related to classroom use

of language other than English. Several reported the importance and usefulness of knowledge they gained in the program about linguicism and English Only policies related to not just classroom practice (as already reported) but to advocacy beyond the classroom for ELLs, as well. They valued practice in the program with articulating positions on bilingual education issues, recalling how at least three instructors engaged them in politically charged discussions and prepared especially BCLAD teachers for an English Only climate. One recalled instruction in legal ramifications of classroom actions, how school-site debates would arise, where to go for legal support if needed. Another noted how in a class simulation with Martina Bolos students had to "speak to the [school] board and try and explain what a bilingual program is." She recalled how they examined research that supported and did not support bilingual education: "I felt really prepared to speak to that, to those doubts and the parents that said, 'Well, convince me of this, this, and this.' "She noted that she could respond with detailed research-informed rationales. Another teacher echoed this: "Through a non-biased perspective I was trying to educate the parents so they could make a decision and I felt really like I knew what I was saying and sometimes I was amazed about how much I knew from Martina's class." In fact, figuring out "what you believe in and what you are passionate about," and learning how to articulate these, particularly in the community of colleagues with whom you are working closely, with an emphasis on resolving conflict, is critical in teaching. In support of self-inquiry, instructors also guided students in use of surveys of school practices and education about political perspectives: "Felicia was really in to educating us on 227, how to even go outside of the program to learn about it or go to different protest type of things. We went to government forums. That really helped me."

One new teacher's advocacy beyond the classroom for low income youth and their families illustrates how she used a strong knowledge base grounded in the credential program to inform and justify actions she proposed and took. Angela created "an 8th grade library in a town where we didn't even have a card catalogue, we didn't have a book in our library because we don't have any funding." She sought and got funding from local Rotary and Lyons Clubs to buy young adult novels, then instituted an annual book party to welcome

family members to a book-based evening. Community members also could contribute the cost of a book and get their picture on a dedication sticker in the book so they could "go down in history in the 8th grade library." She raised $1000 the first year, and $3000 the next year. She traced this advocacy for students and their families to the credential program and learning to act in response to inequities related to funding and resources. Further, though she had been an English major, she was "stupefied," "dumbfounded" by adolescents' reading levels in schools. Fortunately, she learned in her reading methods class about why kids read and don't read, how to identify and address reading problems, how to inspire reading and how to engage parents in talking about books with their children. This knowledge gave her confidence to teach reading and gave her reasons to create a library. She reported that the Lyons Club "grilled me like a tuna sandwich about why particular books were important." Angela used three sources of knowledge learned from her English methods class to articulate rationales for her book choices: merits of Young Adult literature, uses of non-canonical works to engage diverse learners, and ways the chosen subject matter connected to standards. She noted, "I never without this credential program would have thought of that."

4.2. Sustained and scaffolded apprenticeships in teaching for equity

Beyond teacher education coursework, participants pointed to other credential program features as significant in preparing them to advocate for equity. The second major category in reports of credential program strengths was sustained and scaffolded apprenticeships in teaching for equity (29 teachers, or 76%, reporting). This category included three themes.

4.2.1. Student teaching supervisors as equity mentors
Table 1 shows 20 teachers (53%) reported that supervisors served as equity mentors. In focus groups, three supervisor roles emerged as key in mentoring student teachers as they learned to teach for equity. We reported earlier that teachers noted learning in coursework through faculty modeling and direct instruction that seeing students in their individuality and diversity was foundational for equity pedagogy. Similarly, student teaching supervisors served from the start as *role models* of

student-centered instruction. This modeling laid the groundwork for other supervisor work in advocacy. Teachers noted Kay Austin's modeling how "to connect with the kid first. …Then you can teach them" and being responsive, as when one's placement was not working: "Immediately she moved me and put me with someone I felt was better for me. So that made me feel like Kay was an advocate for me." Will Duggan's modeling of an individual student focus anchored several teachers. One recalled a time Will knew of a playground tussle with residual tension and Will "coming in and sitting down and having a conversation with a kid in the back, one of the ones that was pushed." She noted, "We were led to teach that way, to have compassion and understanding." Another said, "Will shows it in the conversations he has with you about specific kids." Another chimed in, "He showed me by example how to adjust to the kids. He adjusted with me."

Just as coursework builds education in diversity and equity on a foundation of attention to individual learners, several teachers reported that supervisors did the same. A key supervisor role in this work was *critical supporter* through frequent, often immediate, and plentiful written and spoken feedback on ways lesson plans and pedagogical practices, including ways teachers reached diverse youth. Teachers reported the importance of critical but supportive feedback on lessons that did and did not meet the needs of low performing students but also allowed a safe space to take risks and grow in the vulnerable time of learning to teach. A third supervisor role was *tutor* in focusing teachers more directly on equity. Participants valued supervisors' "meaty" knowledge, rich classroom experience and resources ("She was a storehouse of knowledge and strategies"), and ability to guide tailoring of lessons to meet diverse learners' needs. Teachers valued guidance in their instruction since supervisors bridged university and school, often extending coursework ideas and strategies such as revising lessons and resources to meet ELLs' needs. The supervisor as tutor sometimes directly challenged teachers to reflect on equity in practice. A doctoral student/teacher education fellow was direct: "I remember she said, 'You told them to sit down and stop acting like a bunch of wild Indians.' You know, it was like—'Oh my gosh, I can't believe I said that." This interaction challenged her cultural sensitivity in a way that she valued.

4.2.2. Student teaching placements that support teaching for equity

During the credential year, teachers had yearlong school placements (or two different semester-long placements) in highly diverse and often high needs schools. Teachers pointed to these sustained placements with diverse student populations as essential grounding in the real world and real work of classrooms. One reported how she valued learning to work with newcomers, with students of different first languages, and how the experience had an impact on her choice of a first job. Faced with two contrasting offers, one in a state of the art school in an affluent area, she chose instead a position in an urban school where she could use her training and practice. The decision was one she was pleased with, one that felt meaningful and rooted in her credential year: "I think there's an appreciation for that in the program." A second theme was the value of master teacher models of teaching for equity. While there are things to learn from teachers with varied philosophies and orientations to the profession, teachers reported the need for master teachers who could model teaching that attended to diversity and equity.

4.2.3. Ongoing cohort discussions of equity teaching

Cohort-based seminar discussions occurred regularly through the academic year, and focus groups illuminated merits of these discussions as a third theme in teachers' apprenticeships, as reported in Table 1. Eleven teachers (29%) reported the value of openly exploring diversity and equity issues among cohorts that were themselves often diverse. One said she learned a lot from the "really rich backgrounds and perspectives of (teacher credential) students," and another noted that student teachers could "really feel or get the perspective from those people that maybe were some of those kids that need to be advocated for." Others reported being taught explicitly to work together, to talk to others about concerns and to ask for advice. A teacher now in charge of science for 4th and 5th graders had valued collaboration in cohort groups and continued to practice it, consulting students' other teachers to find ways to work as a team for students needing support. In contrast, several teachers reported now being isolated from adults during the teaching day, unable to collaborate in ways to which they had grown accustomed in the credential year. Several despaired at the degree of complaining in school staff rooms. During a focus

group, one teacher retorted: "To hell with these people. They don't feel the same passion I do; they don't love these kids. I'm going to do the best I can because I want the school to be a better place for kids." She exemplified the act of taking personal responsibility for speaking out on behalf of students (by joining several school policy committees), a principle she learned from the program. In this way, she also aligned herself with other advocates, engaging a kind of cohort structure to which she had become accustomed in the credential program.

4.3. Reports of needs in preparation to advocate for equity

We have reported the two dominant categories of graduates' reflections on ways their program prepared them to advocate for equity—teacher education coursework and scaffolded apprenticeships. However, teachers also raised issues about ways the program could better prepare them to be advocates for equity. Of these, no individual issue was raised by more than three teachers from the full group of 38 focus group participants. Therefore, reporting these concerns about program weaknesses or areas for growth does not benefit from tabular representation. However, the concerns warrant reporting because often outlier perspectives help uncover issues worthy of further exploration and can identify concerns not typically identified by dominant group members. Teachers reported program needs in coursework, supervision, and placement sites.

Several areas of coursework were targeted for better instruction to meet new teachers' need for support in advocating for equity. First, several teachers called for preparation in standardized, prescriptive school practices related to reading and writing, since so many of these recently had taken hold in schools. Two teachers in one group negotiated how much of this preparation they needed. One argued the program presented progressive models of teaching that enabled teachers to work toward ideals. The second argued for learning prescriptive models. Through dialogue, the latter revised her proposal to the importance of at least knowing how to work creatively within constraints of prescriptive programs and an abundance of standardized tests. Second, several teachers called for more concrete, hands on tools they could use to address the myriad challenges that arose related to special needs students and classroom management.

Third, several BCLAD teachers argued that their university instruction in Spanish needed more attention to daily uses of Spanish by youth in local schools or what two teachers called "more street Spanish." Fourth, several teachers called for better preparation in assessment of students, particularly in using results to inform one's teaching, and three called for better faculty modeling of assessment practice, including more performance assessment and less multiple choice. Finally, one teacher criticized the popular community study assignment. She felt it needed to go deeper with more exposure through interviews to understand issues in communities for the people, not just demographics and photos and community statistics: "That was collecting data on something you already knew." A Latina and Chicano studies major, she felt the project did not enhance her learning and argued that others needed deeper exposure to local communities. This insight seems particularly relevant given the predominance of White female teachers with middle class socioeconomic backgrounds.

Supervision and school-site needs in learning to advocate for equity paralleled strengths reported. Mostly teachers credentialed by the new collaborative program with the nearby state university voiced concerns of too little ongoing contact with and feedback from supervisors, and too few role models of advocates in placements. These structural concerns had yet to be sorted out by the new collaborative at the time of this study. One teacher found supervision plentiful but only supportive: "I wanted more constructive criticism more than I wanted compliments." Also, several teachers called for more continued support beyond the credential year. One noted, "You lose this layer of your immediate supervisor who is an advocate for you and all of a sudden you are in a way stranded." Related to this, another called for improving the new teacher e-mail network the credential program had initiated. At least one teacher benefited from having a strong mentor for her first 2 years of teaching, someone who built a continuity of support.

Two teachers raised general program concerns. One, whose first language is Spanish, challenged the claim that a strong community had developed within the cohort. She noted teachers at her school making assumptions about ELLs' intellectual levels as lower based on their accents when speaking English, and she recalled feeling similar assumptions were made about her by other members of the

credential program. She reported surprised responses when she revealed intelligence in her coursework or in oral remarks in class. Her comments signal a possible need for open discussion of the ways biases surface, even among credential program members in relation to each other, particularly when programs diversify their student bodies.

The second teacher reported how he was working hard to teach well and to advocate for students in need, with too little time to do so:

> We are workers and we should have lives….An economy of work is not taught here. This program inspired me to be the best teacher I can be. I want to be a fantastic teacher and I want to be an advocate for educational equity and I can look at ways over the last year that I have done those things. But what it comes down to is I'm working 65 hours a week.

Again, while the only one raising this concern, this teacher highlights a key issue—the need to examine responsibly what a framework of advocating for equity asks of teachers, especially those new to the profession, beyond the normal demands on their time.

5. Discussion

Results of our study elaborate what other data sources from the larger investigation, particularly surveys, suggested. Graduates' provided their perspectives of *how* the credential program prepared them to assume the role of advocate for equity in schools and some ways it could do this better. Far beyond a segregated approach of locating diversity within single or several preservice classes, our participants recalled attention to diversity and equity infused in the program—in education and non-education courses; taught by tenure-track, clinical, and adjunct faculty; for single and multiple subjects teachers; in the "diversity course" and far more. Teachers reported that attention to diversity and equity was modeled by several instructors, extended by student teacher supervisors, supported by highly diverse placements and, in some cases, modeled by master teachers.

Teachers who cited preparation to teach ELLs as significant offered particularly compelling accounts of ways they were prepared to work with ELLs in mainstream, ELD, and bilingual classes. These results contrast with recent survey studies in the US. Nearly 3000 New York City teachers of 3 years or less experience reported overall preparation less than adequate to teach ELLs, regardless of preparation in a credential program or alternative pathway (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Hundreds of new teachers in 29 districts in central California reported ELLs' learning needs among the greatest challenges in their work, and many had no credential or little teacher education preparation to meet these needs (Baron, 2006). Even when teacher education programs incorporate aspects of multicultural education, typically little attention is given to issues of linguistic diversity and ELLs (Zeichner, 2003). Teacher education efforts in this field also have been impaired by insufficient placements in schools with adequate numbers of ELLs, lack of supervisor knowledge to guide relevant instruction, and a slim research base that has yet to inform educators about which disciplinary and pedagogical bases best prepare teachers for such work in which kinds of communities (Merino, 1999). Nonetheless, such preparation is particularly important in a region such as that of our study where many native languages are spoken and, with changing demographics, teachers in especially urban and rural schools throughout the US need to be responsible and prepared for the learning of their ELLs.

Teacher education coursework emerged as profoundly influential in preparing teachers to advocate for equity. Teachers valued theoretical principles and rich research on culture and language development, and many reported feeling prepared with a repertoire of research-informed strategies to diversify instruction and to promote equitable learning. These results challenge the inherited discourse of university cast as home of irrelevant theory, caught in abstraction, removed from reality, and school as site of practice only, of technical and managerial functions, of acting unencumbered by theoretical principles. These teachers did not report being tripped up by the two-worlds pitfall, the conflict many student teachers feel between demands of the academy and those of the school, often resulting in a rejection of university influences as irrelevant to K-12 teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). This appears attributable to several factors. First, courses included rigorous work on topics directly relevant to educating all youth in a society in which inequities persist. Second, coursework pedagogy was richly varied (summarized in Table 3), including vivid modeling, simulations, and challenging

Table 3
Graduates' reports of coursework pedagogy that supported their learning advocacy for equity

Pedagogical approach
Explicit teaching of equity issues and pedagogy
Theory and practice links
Concrete strategies and tools
Role playing
Instructor modeling of equitable practice
Strategies for observing language learners' work and low performers' struggles
Inquiry projects focused on community and individual learners
Structured reflection on one's developing practice as it relates to equity
Class discussions of equity teaching
Review of relevant research on areas of teaching and learning
Development of rationales to support equity-oriented instructional approaches
Survey of schools' positions on curricula

discussions, with case studies and inquiry projects enabling learning about language development of individual students and cultures and communities in which schools were situated. Third, teachers cited supervisors' extensive teaching experience and knowledge of K-12 classrooms as important in extending coursework emphases and, as many supervisors also taught methods, seminars and other courses, they easily provided a continuity of content from campus to school.

In teacher education pedagogy, modeling plays several roles. These include highlighting subject matter pedagogy explicitly and implicitly (Grossman, 1991; Jay, 2002), teaching reflective practice (Fletcher, 1997), demonstrating complexities of pedagogical decision-making (Gorrell & Capron, 1990), and using problematic teaching moments as cases of decision-making in the moment (Wineburg, 1991). Our study contributes to this work, highlighting functions of modeling by teacher education instructors and supervisors in learning to advocate for equity. This included enactments of pedagogical strategies to scaffold learning for ELLs, demonstrations of teaching focused on diverse learners, demonstrating and embodying a caring for and connection with each learner. Preservice teachers participated in parallel practices (Regenspan, 2002), pedagogy they could experience and emulate as new teachers. This work is particularly important since teacher education historically has lacked models and theories of effective pedagogy, the

"black box" of instruction too often closed to scrutiny and inquiry (Yarger & Smith, 1990; Zeichner, 1999).

We isolated three roles supervisors played in preparing teachers to advocate for equity, two of which (tutor and role model) arise in mentoring cases in business, community, and national organizational contexts (Evans, 2000). Participants in our study also reported the role of critical supporter who provides ongoing feedback about equity pedagogy and space to grow, essential for those learning to take on challenges of teaching (Stanulis & Russell, 2000) and challenges of highly diverse classrooms in often constraining school contexts. In the caring of infants, being cared for may be a necessary prerequisite to learning to care (Noddings, 1991). Perhaps with teachers it is too strong to claim a prerequisite, but there is a resonance, as teachers reported in several instances that they learned how to bring care to their own teaching from observing and experiencing instructors' and supervisors' personalized examples of care. In other cases, teachers sought critically challenging support, upholding high standards, using rigorous theory, being stretched beyond comfort zones. In this way, they mark the value of the flexible supervisor who can read the mentoring situation (Orland, 2001) and respond in varied roles, with appropriate forms of support for teaching diverse youth. A balance of challenge and support may be what student teachers need most, as too little challenge yields stasis, and too little support yields stepping back and loss of confidence (Tang, 2003).

That graduates reported teacher education attention to advocacy beyond the classroom was striking. They reported ways they felt prepared to address issues related to use of students' native language in class in an English Only climate and to articulate to various parties what different pedagogical approaches to language might yield. Learning how teaching is situated within political spheres is important for new teachers. When they were teacher education *students*, these teachers participated in graduate school as a site of social justice education which has a long, rich, and well documented tradition in African American communities (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Also, several teachers felt prepared by the credential program to engage families as education partners. However, there were not many such reports in the focus groups. This may suggest a need for research-based teacher preparation in

needs of families related to schooling and ways parents and guardians need advocacy about legal rights and opportunities for children. Preservice teachers bring to their education limited constructions and expectations of family involvement in children's education and need knowledge, support, and collaboration to plan productive interactions that engage families instead of holding them at arm's length (Graue & Brown, 2003). Many White teachers working with families of color need particular assistance in such work, given complex ways race and power relations play out in even fleeting performances of teacher and parent in parent conferences (Duesterberg, 1999). National Board certification of exemplary teachers in the US requires documentation of attention to engaging families; preparing teachers for such work at the start of their careers requires creative and careful planning.

Results of our study raise and reinforce issues in developing cultural competence and sensitivity. The student who felt the community study did not go deep enough raises two issues. She reinforces the notion that teachers benefit from guided immersion in non-school culture-based experiences (Irvine, 2003). Second, her familiarity with local cultures as a Latina and Chicano studies major suggests a need to diversify projects that tap prior experiences and knowledge of preservice teachers regarding culture, language, class, and region (Au & Blake, 2003). Also, the varied perspectives on being challenged beyond one's comfort zone in exploring diversity issues marks again a need to develop safe spaces in teacher education where questions and challenges can be raised, as conflict and controversy are part of teacher community (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). Nearly a third of participants reported the value of cohort discussions of equity teaching as important in preparing them to be advocates for equity. However, we can only wish that the teacher who felt judged as intellectually inferior because of her accent had the occasion, support, and courage to raise that issue openly in discussion so that all members of the cohort could have benefited from confronting this concern. As in the past, too often those from historically disenfranchised groups continue to have their ideas and knowledge marginalized within the current ''multicultural'' rhetoric. Yet, engaging these voices is particularly important since they provide insights and awareness historically not recognized.

6. Conclusion

This study offers insights into the importance of program coherence and integration across courses, fieldwork and ideology. It serves as a marker of what can be done when a program offers an integrated approach to preparing teachers who are guided toward becoming teacher leaders, concerned with low SES environments, and actively engaged in working for educational equity for all students. Our study illuminates this work through focused discussions of graduates based on quantitative data collected over 5 years, with significant issues surfaced and explored through qualitative data gathered in focus group discussions. Without this type of data collection and focused discussion with graduates, we would not have gained some of the depth of insight offered by graduates. Too often in the past, studies of teacher education programs have used limited repertoires of assessment tools (Galuzzo & Craig, 1990), not accessing this type of understanding or insight in a coordinated way. Our study provides documentation and evidence of ways that a carefully designed focus group method can serve as a valuable research tool in a credential program's portfolio of triangulated assessments. Supported by program artifacts as prompts and with careful moderation, the focus groups stimulated thought and recall of events. In addition, in at least one case, the focus group served as a forum to enable a teacher to realize how a classroom simulation she used was rooted in a credential program course. Several participants in fact reported the value of the focus groups in prompting their reflection on links between their preparation and current practice and called for more of such occasions to facilitate such reflections as part of meaningful ongoing professional development.

Teacher education needs longitudinal research, particularly in preparing teachers for urban and poor rural settings (Sleeter, 2001; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). This study examined the process or delivery of teacher education and graduates' perspectives, providing a longitudinal look at development of teachers particularly equipped to work in poor, traditionally underserved communities. Linking the program's process and the outcome for graduates is a critical element of the study. Further research on observations of graduates' classrooms combined with reports of their students' achievement would provide additional insights into program connections and ways

graduates take up the program's roles of advocate, reflective practitioner, collaborator and researcher on one's practice. More specifically, this study analyzed graduates' links between their practices and the credential program, in meeting the needs of all learners. They described a range of ways they felt prepared for this work, benefiting from challenging and relevant coursework, theory and practice, instructor modeling, supervisor mentoring, effective student teaching placements, structured reflection, and ongoing cohort discussion. This range of supports suggests critical roles of preservice education in teaching for equity and highlights the serious problem for many new teachers entering the profession underprepared or with no credential at all. Too often, it is the least prepared teacher who is placed in high needs schools. The picture is disturbing. As teachers in our study reported, inequities in such schools are apparent, and strong preparation to address them is valued, memorable, and essential.

Appendix

A.1. Focus group questions

Focused questions:

- What is your current conception of the role of being an advocate for educational equity?
- Can you describe any examples from your teaching of how you have enacted this role or tried to enact it?
- Can you think of any examples of your non-classroom experiences at your school site or in your district of enacting this role?
- In what ways do you believe your credential program prepared you or did not prepare you to assume this role as a teacher?
- To what degree does your school environment support this teacher role?
- Now I would like to have us turn to the three supporting roles of reflective practitioner, professional collaborator, and researcher of one's practice. In what ways do you believe that your credential program did or did not prepare you to assume these roles?

Open-ended questions:

For more freeform remarks on any dimension of the program that participants want to comment on:

- What are some of the real strengths of the program in preparing teachers for work in schools and especially for work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners?
- What are some of the weaknesses or problems in the program?
- What suggestions might you have of ways to improve these?

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