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# Tensions in the Student Teaching Triad: A Case of Competing Views of Responsive Instruction for Latinx students

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## Abstract

This case provides opportunities for students to think more deeply about tensions that arise in the pre-service teacher (PST)-mentor teacher-supervisor triad when there are competing views about responsive instruction for Latinx students. Furthermore, this case illustrates how shared social identities among triad members do not necessarily mean there is a shared stance of how to work with Latinx students that aligns with research-based recommendations. The accompanying teaching notes, discussion questions, and classroom activities expose students to relevant literature, introduce them to the concept of courageous conversations, and enable them to role play.

## Keywords

student teaching; pre-service teacher; mentor teacher; supervisor

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## **Introduction**

The preparation of pre-service teachers (PSTs) is complex as PSTs have much to learn about the art and science of teaching, and yet time in teacher preparation programs is limited (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). Instrumental to their preparation is the student teaching experience when PSTs can be in real classrooms with real students as they gradually assume more responsibility as the lead instructor (Brown et al., 2015; Goldhaber et al., 2017; Orland-Barak & Wang, 2021). Underscoring the importance of the student teaching experience, Borko and Mayfield (1995) share, “Student teaching is a central component of virtually all preservice teacher education programs” (p. 502). In this context, PSTs are situated in what scholars have referred to as the PST-mentor teacher-supervisor triad (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Hart, 2020; Veal & Rikard, 1998), in which PSTs are dually supported by a supervisor, who is affiliated with a local institution of higher education, as well as a mentor or cooperating teacher, who is the classroom teacher of record.

The PST-mentor teacher-supervisor triad is important as these mentoring relationships are instrumental to the PST’s ultimate success as a future teacher (Clarke et al., 2014). In this vein, Weiss and Weiss (2001) assert that, “co-operating teachers are the most powerful influence on the quality of the student teaching experience and often shape what student teachers learn” (p. 134), while Koerner et al. (2002) state that “the supervisor can play a critical role in the success of the experience” (p. 38) for PSTs. And yet, these relationships between the PST, mentor teacher, and supervisor are often described as “complicating and challenging” (Valencia et al., 2009, p. 305). Previous research has explored various tensions that surround the PST-mentor teacher-supervisor triad, including: struggles related to how triad members negotiate power (Bullough & Draper, 2014); a lack of support for both mentor teachers and supervisors (Valencia et al., 2009); conflicting goals for student teaching and beliefs about high-quality instruction among triad members (Fernandez & Erbilgin, 2009; Rajuan et al., 2007; Valencia et al., 2009); and a lack of connection between student teaching and institutions of higher education (Zeichner, 2010).

This pedagogical case explores one of these tensions in-depth; in particular, challenges that arise when there is a disconnect between the PST, mentor teacher, and supervisor regarding their beliefs about high-quality instruction for students who are marginalized in their schooling experiences. Specifically, how to be culturally and linguistically responsive to multilingual learners. Given that all triad members in the pedagogical case below were first generation, Latinx immigrants, one would assume that there would have been a shared stance for working with Latinx students that valued their identity, honored their language development, and supported high-quality instruction. As we illustrate below, this was not the case.

## **Literature Review**

In this section, we discuss several bodies of literature that are relevant to this pedagogical case. We begin by describing power relationships in university supervision. Then, we discuss research-based ideals regarding responsive instruction for language learners and conclude by examining courageous conversations as they relate to issues of justice and equity.

### **Power Relationships in University Supervision**

PSTs tend to consider student teaching to be the most important experience during their teacher education program (Graham & Roberts, 2007; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Walshaw, 2014). They look forward to developing positive working relationships with mentor teachers and university supervisors, receiving constructive feedback, and having the freedom to experiment with their teaching practices (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Rajuan et al., 2007). However, underlying the student teaching triad are unequal power dynamics (Anderson, 2007; Graham & Roberts, 2007; Slick, 1998; Smith, 2005, 2007). Furthermore, different conceptions of the purpose and/or goals of student teaching by the mentor teacher and university supervisor can impact the student teaching experience (Graham & Roberts, 2007; Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Leatham & Peterson, 2010; Rajuan et al., 2007;).

While all triad members may value developing a collegial working relationship with one another, different members prioritize additional goals. In this vein, some studies illustrate that mentor teachers do not consider developing collegial relationships with PSTs as their primary goal (Johnson & Napper-Owen, 2011; Leatham & Peterson, 2010; Rajuan et al., 2007). Supporting PSTs' classroom management skills, as well as pedagogical and content knowledge tend to be the most common responses when asked about their primary goals as mentor teachers (Leatham & Peterson, 2010; Rhoads et al., 2013; Smith 2005). When asked about their goals, supervisors want to "bridge" university coursework and classroom practice (Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020; Jacobs, 2006; Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021) and support PSTs to enact reform-based teaching (Brendefur & Frykholm, 2000; Leatham & Peterson, 2010; Rhoads et al., 2013). Some supervisors also have the goal of promoting practices grounded in social justice and inclusive pedagogies (Jacobs, 2006; Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021). Underlying these various goals during student teaching are unequal dynamics among the PST, mentor teacher, and supervisor.

In addition to having different goals, triad members are also subject to asymmetrical relationships that may develop amongst them (Anderson, 2007; Graham & Roberts, 2007; Slick, 1998; Smith, 2005, 2007). For example, both the mentor teacher and university supervisor evaluate PSTs, and the student teachers recognize the "high-stakes" nature of these evaluations. Some PSTs have expressed the need to "conform" to their mentor teachers' pedagogical practices to receive a passing evaluation (Anderson 2007; Graham & Roberts, 2007; Walshaw, 2014). Additionally, the influence that mentor teachers have on the purpose and outcomes for student teaching can result in awkward planning sessions where PSTs' input is dismissed by mentor teachers who exert their authority and determine the focus of the student teaching experience (e.g., classroom management, content, pedagogy) (Leatham & Peterson, 2010; Smith 2005, 2007). In extreme cases, some PSTs left the profession because they felt they were not treated as professionals while co-planning and teaching lessons (Graham & Roberts, 2007), which was a symptom of the asymmetrical relationship with their mentor teacher.

Regarding the third triad member, university supervisors are not only charged with supporting student teachers in their field placements but also serve as the "bridge" between the classroom and the university (Cuenca et al., 2011; Diacopoulos & Butler, 2020; Jacobs, 2006; Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021; Slick, 1998). Where social justice and inclusive practices are a core mission, certain teacher education programs tasked supervisors to support these practices during

student teaching (Jacobs, 2006; Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021). Results indicate that supervisors did not seek to leverage mentor teachers' support in promoting social justice and inclusive practices. Instead, supervisors pointed to practices such as critical reflections (Jacobs, 2006), lesson study, and breakout rooms during a student seminar, which took place in a university setting (Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021), to promote conversations about social justice and inclusive practices with PSTs. Yet, and in the context of these studies, PSTs' practices and their conceptions of social justice were limited and inconsistently applied. Researchers recommend that programs provide supervisors with ongoing and meaningful professional development opportunities that will support them to promote teaching for social justice (Price-Dennis & Colmenares, 2021).

In summary, the student teaching triad dynamics are complex. PSTs are eager to practice teaching. Mentor teachers implicitly and explicitly set the tone and expectations for student teaching. Supervisors constantly negotiate their role as well as how they "bridge" coursework and the mission of the teacher education program.

### **Responsive Instruction for Language Learners**

Research has begun to coalesce regarding the features of responsive instruction for language learners. A central tenet of such instruction, no matter the disciplinary backdrop, is the idea that language learners come to school with "funds of knowledge" which teachers should leverage as they seek to enact high-quality instruction (Gonzalez et al., 2006; Moll & Arnot-Hopffner, 2005; Moll et al., 1992). For example, teachers must consistently incorporate students' families, communities, cultures, and home languages into their daily lesson plans and curricula, viewing students' home knowledge bases as assets that will enhance equitable instruction for all students. Given that this pedagogical case is situated in a secondary social studies classroom, we provide further elaboration of responsive instruction for language learners with this disciplinary backdrop in mind. In their case study of four high school social studies teachers, Jaffee (2016) forwarded five principles of culturally and linguistically relevant citizenship education for Latinx students. This included a pedagogy of 1) community; 2) success; 3) making cross-cultural connections; 4) building a language of social studies; and 5) community-based, participatory citizenship. Furthermore, in their seminal review of research on practices and programs that seek to enhance educational outcomes for language learners, Calderón and colleagues (2011) delineate practices and programs that were determined to be effective. Of importance to this pedagogical case, the authors recommend that language learners in secondary settings are provided with regular opportunities to work collaboratively in mixed ability groups with their peers, engaged in explicit disciplinary vocabulary instruction, provided with direct and explicit reading comprehension strategy instruction to help them access the grade-level text, and given regular opportunities to write to support their vocabulary and reading comprehension.

### **Courageous Conversations**

In the teaching notes below, we utilize Singleton's (2015) conceptualization of courageous conversations as a tool to engage participants in thinking more deeply about this pedagogical case. According to Singleton (2015), courageous conversations have the following overarching goal: "engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race in order to examine schooling

and improve student achievement” (p. 26). Specifically, a courageous conversation “engages those who won’t talk, sustains the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, and deepens the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur” (Singleton, 2015, p. 26). For courageous conversations to take place, involved parties must practice the following four agreements which provide guidance about how to engage in such conversations: (a) stay engaged, (b) speak your truth, (c) experience discomfort, and (d) expect and accept non-closure (Singleton, 2015, p. 27). Furthermore, Singleton (2015) articulates six conditions that delineate the content participants should address when engaging in courageous conversations. To provide an example, condition six seeks to “examine the presence and role of Whiteness and its impact on the conversation and the problem being addressed” (Singleton, 2015, p. 28). The idea is that by providing individuals with tools to engage in dialogue about racial disparities, schools can take steps towards addressing inequities that exist for all students (Singleton, 2015, p. 26). While Singleton (2015) discussed courageous conversations as a tool to discuss racial disparities, like others (see Mansfield & Jean-Marie, 2015), we believe this framework applies more broadly to encompass additional identity markers. In the context of this case, we ask participants to leverage courageous conversations to discuss disparities for language learners.

In the space that follows, we begin by describing the context in which this case is situated, as well as the participants. We then present the pedagogical case and conclude by providing teaching notes and a discussion of how to use this case in a classroom setting.

### **Context and Participants**

Playa del Mar (all participant and location names are pseudonyms) is an upper middle class, beach front community in Southern California with a population of 24,000 residents. The median household income was slightly below \$100,000 with a median property value of \$1 million dollars for the city. Demographically, 86% of the residents are White, 5% Latinx, 4% Asian, and less than 1% Black. The city was not a demographically or economically diverse community. As described below, the school demographics reflect the community in which it resides.

#### **School and Classroom Description**

This case is situated in a public high school, specifically a 9<sup>th</sup> grade dual language history classroom, in an upper middle class, coastal beach city in Southern California. Recently, the high school gained national and state recognition given that, on average, students scored above the state and national averages on both the SAT and ACT. Furthermore, their average score on the state mandated standardized assessment was more than 100 points above the state average. Regarding the teachers, half had master’s degrees while two held doctorates. The teachers were experienced with an average of 15 years of teaching experience. Most teachers were White with a few Asian and Pacific Islander and Hispanic teachers. Demographically, the students reflected similar numbers: the majority were White with Hispanic and Asian being the next largest sub-populations. Within this context, the high school offered a dual-language program in select content areas.

Dual language programs are a particular approach for supporting students' bilingualism. Such programs are designed to maintain both the primary and secondary languages for native and non-native speakers. Dual language programs are most common in the elementary grades with some middle schools offering some stand-alone, dual language content courses. Dual language programs tend to decrease in their availability in high schools. Yet, this school district offered a dual-language Spanish program for its high school students.

### **Members of the Triad: Ausberto, Noé, and Eloísa**

The triad members featured in this pedagogical case are Ausberto (the university supervisor), Noé (the student teacher), and Eloísa (the mentor teacher). Ausberto was a university supervisor for a Hispanic Serving Catholic University. The School of Education's mission included promoting social justice and cultural responsiveness, as well as nurturing moral, intellectual, and caring leaders. As a university supervisor, Ausberto visited the classrooms of single subject Teach for America<sup>1</sup> teachers as well as student teachers working towards bilingual authorization to work with English language learners. Ausberto had to observe the student teachers eight times over the course of the semester. Ausberto expected pre-service teachers (PSTs) to send lesson plans at least 24 hours before each observation, and Ausberto read the plans and provided detailed feedback. During observations, Ausberto filled out an observation protocol that had been adopted by his institution, and typed observation notes that attended to a chronological account of teacher moves and student participation.

Ausberto had just completed a Master of Art in Teaching and a single-subject credential in mathematics with bilingual authorization. Furthermore, he had over 10 years' experience working with youth and more than five years as a middle school teacher. Ausberto had worked in highly diverse settings as well as in schools where most students were Black and Latinx who were primarily from working class backgrounds. Ausberto did his best to communicate with parents about their child's progress and develop positive working relationships with students. He consistently strove to integrate current events, share cultural experiences with students, and show he cared for students' overall well-being. While enrolled at the Catholic University's Social Justice Leadership Ed. D program, the college recruited him to be a university supervisor, as they needed supervisors with the expertise to observe student teachers pursuing bilingual authorization.

In this pedagogical case, Ausberto worked with a mentor teacher, Eloísa, and student teacher, Noé. All three triad members were Latinx. Eloísa was a first-generation immigrant from Argentina, and a native Spanish speaker from a middle-class family. She was a veteran social studies teacher, with 10 years of teaching experience. She had taught AP US History, AP World History, as well as the dual-language history class. She had been a mentor teacher before and Noé was her fifth student teacher. Noé was a first generation Mexican-American who grew up working class. Recently, he had finished his commitment to the military and wanted to become a teacher, which is why he enrolled in the teaching program. Ausberto identified as a first generation, formerly undocumented, Mexican immigrant, and from a working-class family. The triad members may have shared a common native language and a passion for education, but

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<sup>1</sup> Teach for America is an alternative certification program for individuals who hope to become teachers in underserved areas.

Ausberto came to realize that each member had distinct views of how to be culturally and linguistically responsive to Latinx students. Table 1 summarizes information about each participant is below.

**Table 1**

*Participant Information*

Name	Position	Higher Education	Teaching Experience	Demographics
Ausberto	University Supervisor	Master of Art in Teaching and pursuing doctorate in education (Ed. D)	5 years	Mexican male, working class background, bilingual in English and Spanish
Noé	Student Teacher	Undergraduate degree in history and pursuing a Master of Art in Teaching	n/a	Mexican American male, working class background, bilingual in English and Spanish
Eloísa	Mentor Teacher	Master's degree in Social Studies Education	10 years, 5 years as mentor teacher	Argentinian female, middle class background, bilingual in English and Spanish

### Case Narrative

Ausberto arrived during a passing period and sat at a table in the back of the room. He opened his laptop so that he could be prepared to type notes. The classroom space was divided in two halves to his right and left. There were six rows with four desks in each row to his right and the same arrangement to his left. The door was located at the right corner farthest from Ausberto on the right and the teacher's desk was in front of the class in the farthest left corner.

Students started to trickle into the classroom. Ausberto noticed a mixture of White and Latinx students, and immediately took note of where students decided to sit. As a group, the Latinx students made their way to the seats at the back of the rows. The Latinos sat at the very back whereas the Latinas sat in the middle or the back. None of the Latinx students sat in the front desks. Only the White students sat in the front desks. Ausberto hoped that how students were seated would not reflect student participation. That is, he did not want students seated in the front (e.g., the White students) to be the ones who were most engaged. In total, there were 25 students, 13 of whom were native Spanish speakers.

The bell rang and students continued to talk. The student teacher, Noé, walked around the classroom taking attendance and checking off homework. Each student received a packet of work for each chapter, and they were expected to complete sections during class and finish them at home. Overall, students were at various stages of readiness for class. Those nearest to Noé showed him their homework while those farther away were either talking or taking sips of a soda. The talking would stop as Noé made his way around the classroom, but mostly those students who were closest to him.



Once Noé finished checking attendance and homework, he called for students' attention, turned on the computer at his mentor teacher's desk, and started the PowerPoint presentation. That day's topic was the Cold War. Noé began with a YouTube video of a newsreel discussing the end of World War II, and how Stalin and Truman began to distrust each other and that this would begin a Cold War between these two countries and their allies. Not all students paid attention, but they were quiet. Once the video ended, Noé asked the students for their thoughts, "¿Pues, ¿qué piensan? ¿Qué opiniones tienen de los hechos del video?" [So, what are your thoughts? What are your reactions to the video?]. Noé did not communicate norms or expectations, so there was a cacophony of voices that filled the room. Since too many students were talking all at once, Noé called on Nathan, a White student, who recalled the leaders of the time (Stalin and Truman) and described the circumstances of the Cuban Missile Crisis during the Kennedy presidency. "¿Alguien más?" [Anyone else?]. Another White student described the immediate aftermath of World War II and the division that occurred in Berlin. This dynamic of the White students primarily answering the student teacher's questions continued over the course of the PowerPoint presentation as Noé showed editorial cartoons; photographs; and dates, names, and places that he wanted his students to remember.

The longer Ausberto observed this class, more and more questions bubbled to the surface for him. For example, he had questions about the seating arrangement. He wanted to better understand why the students were segregated, why were the Latinx students sitting in the back of the rows while White students sat in the front of each row. Furthermore, he had questions regarding the participation pattern that took place during the observation: those raising their hands and answering Noé's questions were mostly the White students. What about the Latinx students, whose primary language is Spanish? Why did they not participate? The Latinx students only appeared to participate when called on, and even then, they seemed hesitant to respond to Noé's questions. For example, during one exchange, Noé called on a Latina for her opinion about an editorial cartoon. She spoke in such a low voice that Noé asked her to repeat her answer with a louder voice. She repeated what she said, but in a voice only slightly louder than before. It appears a program designed to value and leverage the primary language of native speakers was not fulfilling its purpose.

After reaching the end of the PowerPoint presentation, Noé reminded students to take out their chapter packet and begin their homework for the day. Students would have the rest of the period to get started. Noé walked around the classroom for the remaining portion of class. Ausberto noted that while monitoring students as they worked, Noé primarily walked by the White students' desks unless he was specifically summoned by the Latinx students for help. When the bell rang, students jumped out of their seats and left class.

As students left, Ausberto decided to stay for the last period of the day so he could talk to both Noé and his mentor teacher, Eloísa. As Ausberto waited for them to be ready, he sat at his desk and reflected on the lesson. Ausberto was troubled. He believed he just witnessed, from a Latinx teacher, unjust pedagogy within what is supposed to be a culturally linguistic language program (Howard et al., 2007). Furthermore, Ausberto wondered about missed opportunities to integrate linguistically responsive approaches (Lucas et al., 2008) into the content and lesson. Instead of witnessing the Latinx students flourishing, engaged, and participating, he witnessed the

continuance of Latinx student marginalization in a program designed to support bilingualism. The dual language social studies class benefited only the White students. Instead of equitable inclusion and participation, the lesson was a stark reminder of how this was an additive experience for the White students but, ironically, subtractive for the Latinx students (Valenzuela, 1999).

For the next 45 minutes, Ausberto kept wondering, “How can I diplomatically challenge the dynamic I witnessed but not attack the mentor teacher or the student teacher?” Ausberto contrasted Noé with a different student teacher, Rosa, he had been working with. Rosa worked in a diverse high school and placed in literature course, and Ausberto was able to engage in courageous conversations (Singleton, 2015) and raise issues about inequitable participation of her students with Rosa. Somehow, in this setting with Noé in which the high school was situated in an upper middle class beach area, Ausberto felt out of his comfort zone. Fortunately, by the time the class had ended, he realized his approach. To not overwhelm Noé, he would simply ask the following questions: Which students were participating and how was the seating chart determined?

### **The Debrief**

The last class period ended and Ausberto waited a few minutes as Noé and Eloísa tied up loose ends, which included talking with students, talking with each other, and shutting down technology. Ausberto moved from the back of the room to a desk closest to the teacher’s desk at the front of the room. Eloísa grinned in satisfaction, beaming with pride as she glanced at Noé. Noé settled into a chair off to the side of her desk with a look of relief. Ausberto hoped that his outward demeanor did not betray his internal rage. Ausberto did not want to come off as accusatory or angry, and he did not want to raise his voice. This was a professional setting and student teaching, deemed the most important experience by PSTs (Borko & Mayfield, 1995), has the potential to steer them toward teaching or deter them from continuing into the teaching profession (Graham & Roberts, 2007). Ausberto was determined to not express his internal outrage and conduct the debriefing in a professional manner.

During debriefings with student teachers, Ausberto tended to ask three questions: “What were your expectations for the lesson? How was the lesson? If you were to teach the lesson again, what would you have done differently?” Ausberto found that student teachers could honestly assess themselves, reflect on their own experiences, and usually identify changes that he would have suggested. For this debriefing, Ausberto’s goal was to raise the question about equity regarding the difference in seating and participation by the Latinx students in comparison with the White students. The following dialogue is an abbreviated version of what transpired during the full debrief conversation.

“So, Noé, how was teaching?” Ausberto asked.

“Oh, I think it went well. I was satisfied with my teaching. I prepared my PowerPoint; I think I found good resources like movie clips and editorial cartoons. With the help of Eloísa, we prepared a study packet for the students. I don’t think it’s easy to teach high school history, it might be hard for the students to connect to the past. And it’s called the Cold War but there never

really was a war. It was just an era. So that might be a little abstract for the students. Overall, I think it went well.” responded Noé.

Eloísa chimed in, “Noé has done extremely well during student teaching. He’s organized. He prepares well for teaching. He could improve on classroom management, but all student teachers can improve on that. But day in and day out he does his best. I’m really proud of him.”

“Hmm, could I ask a question?” asked Ausberto.

“Sure!” responded Noé.

“How are students assigned seats?” asked Ausberto.

“Well, they are high schoolers, so I thought that they could choose their own seats. Of course, if they talk too much then I move them.” responded Noé.

“Hmmm, notice anything with where students are seated?” asked Ausberto.

“No, not really.” responded Noé.

“Hmmm, then how about this other question, who seemed to be raising their hands?” asked Ausberto.

“Well, uh, the students in front of the class.” responded Noé.

“Okay, yeah, I saw that. Well, I think I noticed something else. It seems that the students in the back and middle of the room are the Latinx students, while the majority of the White students are in the front seats.” Ausberto shared.

“But I did call on José Luis and on Petra. And they both answered my question. Although, I had to tell Petra to raise her voice. She’s shy but a good student.” said Noé.

“Is there anything we could think of doing to, well, mix up the class a little better?” pressed Ausberto.

“You mean, like a new seating chart?” asked Noé.

“Yeah, that would be a good start.” responded Ausberto. “And, what about participation?” asked Ausberto.

“Well, I could call on students even though they don’t have their hands raised.” responded Noé.

“If I could interrupt. Noé is a good student teacher. As you can see, he uses technology, asks the students questions, and his Spanish is superb. What you are asking is easily fixed and we can address it by the next time you observe again.” interjected Eloísa. At that point, Ausberto decided to wrap up the post-conference. He could tell that his line of questioning failed in

engaging Noé to think deeply about equitable participation patterns in his classroom. He could also sense Eloísa's defensiveness.

Ausberto never did engage Eloísa directly about his concerns. She loved Noé's effort and praised him. For some reason, Ausberto did not feel comfortable talking to her about equity and her dual language immersion history class. As much as he wanted to continue challenging Noé, he never wanted to be perceived as attacking Eloísa's teaching practices. Ausberto raised the questions he wanted. But he knew he left much to be desired and never truly engaged in the uncomfortable, courageous conversation with both Eloísa and Noé.

### **Epilogue**

Here, we provide a summary regarding how the rest of the eight observations went that semester. Overall, Noé was adept at integrating technology. As previously mentioned, he created good PowerPoint slides with sufficient information and included a lot of multimedia (e.g., videos, photographs, editorial cartoons, music, etc.). Because he was in the military, he would describe his personal experiences that could relate to the topics and sometimes even brought in his home life (i.e., being a son of immigrant parents). His classroom management improved over time. He improved in communicating norms and expectations for students regarding their engagement in class. However, his pedagogy tended to remain teacher centered. Sometimes he had students work in pairs or in small groups, but this was not very common. And, as Eloísa said, his Spanish was impressive. He did a superb job with the academic social studies language. Eloísa was very supportive of him and always sang his praises. Ausberto knew that there were moments where he was quite tough on Noé in his feedback. Unfortunately, it might have been Ausberto's passive aggressive way of not being able to discuss honestly what he deemed as a disservice to the Latinx students in his classroom. Ausberto just never sensed a stance for equity from either Noé or Eloísa.

### **Teaching Notes, Classroom Activity, and Discussion Questions**

This case illuminates' tensions that arise when members of the PST-mentor teacher-supervisor triad have conflicting views about responsive instruction for Latinx students. In the debrief conversation, we could see how this tension continued to play out as Ausberto struggled to engage in open and honest dialogue with Noé and Eloísa about his concerns. Hard or courageous conversations between members of the student teaching triad may be avoided to "maximize comfort and minimize risks during student teaching experience" (Borko & Mayfield, 1995, p. 516). In these teaching notes, we describe classroom activities with accompanying discussion questions that can unpack the complexity of this case more fully.

Students should begin by reading several resources to gain a deeper appreciation of the focal tension in this pedagogical case. Students should read one to two of the pieces found in the first section of Appendix A to better understand research-based ideals regarding responsive for English Language Learners. Furthermore, students should read one to two of the pieces found in the second section of Appendix A to think more deeply about tensions that may arise from competing views of high-quality instruction among student teaching triad members.

After students have read the suggested pieces, have students work in small groups to discuss the following questions about the pedagogical case:

- Triad members had different perspectives about how to be culturally and linguistically responsive to their students. Discuss each member's perspective of responsive instruction and fill out Table 2 below. Make sure to also cite evidence from the pedagogical case to support claims made.

**Table 2**

*Triad Members' Perspectives About Responsive Instruction for Language Learners*

Name	Role	Perspective	Evidence
Ausberto	University Supervisor		
Noé	Student Teacher		
Eloísa	Mentor Teacher		

- To what extent do these visions align with research-based ideals regarding responsive instruction for multilingual students?
- How did Ausberto try to structure the debrief conversation with Noé and Eloísa?
  - What questions did he ask?
  - What opportunities for learning did those questions open up?
  - What questions do you wish that Ausberto had asked during the debrief conversation?
  - What learning opportunities do you think those questions would have opened for the PST?
- Why do you think Ausberto felt he could not more directly address these conflicting views about responsive instruction for multilingual learners?
- Discuss the social identities (e.g., class, gender, race, ethnicity) of each triad member, as well as the context in which this case took place. How do you think these social identities and this context may have impacted the debriefing experience, if at all?

After students have had the opportunity to discuss these questions in small groups, come back together as a whole group and allow students to share their thoughts and raise further questions.

Students will now have the opportunity to learn more about courageous conversations and think about how to apply what they learn about courageous conversations to this pedagogical case. As previously discussed, and in a broad sense, courageous conversations are difficult conversations that take place between individuals of an organization or school (Singleton, 2015). After broadly introducing students to the phrase and meaning of courageous conversations, have students work in the same groups as before to create KWL charts, which will help them organize their learning surrounding courageous conversations. Pass out one piece of chart paper to each group and markers for them to record their thinking. If students are unfamiliar with KWL charts, model

how to set up a KWL chart by drawing three columns with the following headings for each column: “K” What I Know; “W” What I Want to Know; “L” What I Learned. Give students 7-10 minutes to discuss what they already know about courageous conversations and what they’d like to learn, and to record their thoughts in the first two columns of the graphic organizer.

Next, share the list of blogs and short articles that found in Appendix A about having courageous conversations in education spaces. Give students 15 minutes to independently read. After 15 minutes, ask students to share their key takeaways from the articles in small groups, and to jot down their thoughts in the very last column as they record what they learned. Bring students back together as a whole class and ask the following questions before moving on: What are some of the big ideas you learned regarding courageous conversations? How do you think some of these guidelines regarding engaging in courageous conversations may have supported Ausberto during his debrief with Noé, is there anything else you’d like to share?

In this next activity, students will apply what they have learned about courageous conversations. Tell students to imagine that Ausberto has the opportunity for a follow-up debriefing with Noé and Eloísa. He feels as though he did not discuss explicitly the Latinx students’ limited participation and engagements in the dual-language history class. Ausberto feels compelled to address his concerns anew. In this context, tell students they will take on the role of Ausberto. In the same small groups as before, tell students to think about, discuss, and record their responses to the following questions:

- As the supervisor, what questions will you ask Noé?
- What will you do if Eloísa is defensive of Noé?
- What will you do if Noé still is not deeply reflecting on his practice?
- What will you do if Noé and Eloísa seem ambivalent regarding the Latinx students’ participation and instead want to discuss “all” students’ participation?

As part of this concluding activity, engage students in the following reflection questions that have the goal of prompting students to reflect on their own practice as teacher educators, university supervisors, mentor teachers, administrators, etc. across varied settings:

- What questions does this case raise for you that may require further investigation?
- How does this case help us to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the triad dynamics?
- How has this case have you reflect on / impact your teaching practices?
- What are the ways in which we can support student teachers to work alongside Latinx students and/or language learners?

### **Extension Activity**

If time permits, students can continue to work in small groups and role play (e.g., Gutiérrez et al., 2017) the following scenarios. In the context of each scenario, one student will take on the role of Ausberto, one will take on the role of Eloísa, and one will take on the role of Noé. Students should switch roles for each scenario.

- **Scenario 1:** Ausberto seeks to discuss with Eloísa and Noé the lack of Latinx students’ participation, but their concern is how “all” students participate. They fail to acknowledge that it was only the Latinx students who did not participate during the

lesson. Ausberto is attempting to redirect the conversation to discuss responsive teaching of Latinx students.

- **Scenario 2:** During their debrief conversation about Latinx students' lack of participation, Eloísa and Noé express deficit perspectives of the Latinx students to explain their lack of participation. Ausberto feels frustrated and wants to redirect the conversation toward teacher actions instead of 'blaming' the students.
- **Scenario 3:** Ausberto begins by raising his concern regarding Latinx students' limited participation, but Noé and Eloísa become defensive as they disagree with Ausberto's perspective. Ausberto wants to decrease the tension and discuss how to more equitably increase the Latinx students' participation.

After students have had 10-15 minutes to role play in small groups, come back together for a whole group discussion. Discuss the following questions:

- What were students' feelings and thoughts who were role-playing the various roles?
- What would students have done differently as they role-played?
- Have observing students get into groups of four to discuss what were their feelings and thoughts as they saw the scenario unfold? What would the observing students have said or done in any of the triad roles?
- Consider extending the conversation to future interactions with colleagues, such as administrators and teachers, to discuss how students would respond to ambivalence for responsive teaching practices, deficit views of Latinx students, or colleagues who become defensive when discussing responsive teaching approaches.

## **Conclusion**

University supervisors play an integral part of the PST-mentor teacher-supervisor triad. They are the representative as well as the bridge between the classroom practices of the student teacher and the goals and expectations of the teacher education program. But this relationship can be fraught with tension: overstepping boundaries within the mentor teacher's classroom, negotiating the differences between the mentor and student teacher's goals and those of the university, and acknowledging competing stances and sensibilities regarding equity between triad members. Therefore, it is important for supervisors to be cognizant and have the necessary tools to engage in courageous conversations with mentor teachers and student teachers to reflect on their stances and sensibilities for teaching students who are minoritized, as in this case Latinx students.

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**Eythokia Stephanie Saclarides** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Cincinnati. Her research centers on exploring how coaches (e.g., instructional, content, state-level, etc.) can support in-service teachers to enact high-quality mathematics instruction for all students. Dr. Saclarides is a former teacher, instructional coach, and administrator.

## Appendix A

### Suggested Readings: English Language Learner Teacher Education

- Calderón, M., Slavin, R., and Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective instruction for English learners. *Future of Children*, 21(1), 103-127. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41229013>
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### Suggested Readings: Tensions in Student Teaching Mentorship Triad

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### Suggested Readings: Courageous Conversations in Educational Spaces

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