How Does the Classroom Teacher Promote Academic Success in the Spanish Native Speaker Class: A Study of Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Spanish Native Speaker Course at the High School Level

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HOW DOES THE CLASSROOM TEACHER PROMOTE ACADEMIC SUCCESS
IN THE SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER CLASS:
A STUDY OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF
CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY IN THE SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER
COURSE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BY
MICHAEL ANGELO AYALA

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 2018
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This work is dedicated to my mother, María de los Ángeles, my father, Ramiro and my wife, Susana who truly supported me in so many ways throughout my dissertation process. Les agradezco todo el ánimo, amor y apoyo que me brindaron, los amo muchísimo. I thank my family for all their support and unwavering love and encouragement. I am very grateful for all the sacrifices my mother and father went through to give us the opportunity to earn a degree. They understand the importance of a high-quality education and encouraged my brothers and I, to meet our potential and instilled in us the love for our culture, language and education. I also thank my brothers and sisters, who believed in me throughout this endeavor and to my son, Michael Jr. and daughter, Yesica, for all your love, support and giving me the confidence needed to complete my dissertation even when I was ready to give up. And most importantly I thank my beloved wife who is my best friend and my greatest support network. ¡Te amo más que ayer pero menos que mañana!

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¡Gracias! Con Amor Michael Angelo Ayala
I dedicate this dissertation to my wife,

SUSANA GEORGINA AYALA

my parents,

MARIA y RAMIRO AYALA

and everyone in my family, past, present and future generations.
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ABSTRACT

The achievement gap between Latino and White students is a significant problem, prompting the need to address the cultural conflicts that hinder relationships and compromise learning opportunities for Latino students in the United States. This exploratory qualitative study focused on Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teachers’ perceptions and use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) at the high school level. Framed with theory related to CRP, data were collected through interviews and classroom observations with four SNS teachers who teach a SNS class at various high schools in the suburbs of Cook County. A thematic analysis and an analysis using Herrera’s (2010) evaluation tool provided a complete picture of what was observed in the classroom. Participants’ responses led to critical themes that included causes of and strategies for the use of CRP in the SNS classroom. This study provided insight for all teachers on how to promote CRP in the SNS classroom, meet the needs of Latinos in SNS programs, implement CRP, and understand their students. This study contributed to positive social change by recommending the use of CRP in the SNS classroom.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

-Sir Winston Churchill
British politician (1874-1965)

My own personal experiences motivated this investigation as an English language learner (ELL) in the United States public school system. In the ELL program, I tried to assimilate into the American school system and culture. During my high school years, I struggled with my identity as a Mexican and as an American, but it always came back to labeling myself as Mexican-American. I was acutely aware of the lack of cultural representation in our school curriculum and the lack of cultural relevance to me in particular. I also noticed that the more I tried to assimilate into the United States, the less Mexican I felt. I did not know it back then, but I had chosen to acculturate over assimilate into American culture.

For over five decades, one of the most enduring debates in education has been on how to close the achievement gap between White students on the one hand and Black and Latino students on the other (Jeynes, 2015). According to Gándara and Contreras (2010), “Today the most urgent challenge for the American educational system has a Latino face. Latinos are the largest and most rapidly growing ethnic minority in the country, but academically, they are lagging dangerously far behind” (p. 1). Jeynes (2015) and Olneck (2005) contended that by eighth grade, the achievement gap between Latino and White
students is usually about two years. Furthermore, Gándara and Contreras (2010) stated that only about half of Latinos graduate from high school and there is almost no progress in over three decades for Latinos, while all other ethnic groups, including African Americans, have gradually increased their college graduation rates. Furthermore, Gándara and Contreras stated that,

The Latino education crisis is not simply a result of immigration...on the contrary, Americanization is bad for immigrants… [it is] counterproductive for educational achievement…Therefore, the low educational attainment of Latino students cannot be attributed solely, or even largely, to factors associated with immigration; rather it is the result of circumstances encountered in this country.

(p. 3)

The Latino population has drastically changed, and the percentage of these students enrolled in U.S. schools is greater than ever and will continue to change. By 2025, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that one in every four students will be Latino and that the population will continue to become more Latino. By the year 2060, the nation’s population will be described as a majority-minority nation with the Latino population composing 31% of the population and the non-Hispanic White population will comprise less than 50% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). In this way, our Latino youth are inextricably linked to the nation’s future. Nonetheless, according to Gándara and Contreras (2010), the educational system for our Latino students does not look hopeful. What's more, there is evidence that suggests that there is a cause to worry and even be alarmed about the condition of the ever-growing school-age Latino population.
Hispanic or Latino

The term Hispanic is used in most government records and the U.S. Census. Although, we see the word Latino or Latina in many places such as magazines, commercials, and advertisements. The use of Hispanic or Latino has become an issue for many Latinos, bringing us to ask the question, which term is correct? The Hispanic population numbered the 50.5 million in 2010. Hispanics are the nation’s fastest-growing minority and so is our buying power and cultural presence.

To dwell more on the term Hispanic, it refers to a person from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America. All these areas were conquered and settled by Spain and were once called Hispania. The term Hispanic references a cultural group, but in the United States it is considered to be a race or ethnicity and this cannot be further from the truth. The Nixon Administration first used the term Hispanic in 1970 for demographic clarification reasons on the U.S. census. Hispanic refers to the place of origin regardless of race. In contrast, nowadays, Latino has become the most politically correct term, and it refers to a group of people who live in Latin America and speak a language derived from Latin. Latino has become a self-identifying and unifying word in recent years for many of these people who are living in the United States. The term Latino has become a way to unify the different groups in Latin America and the children of those who are here from different countries. Although most Hispanics/Latinos prefer to self-label one or the other, they would also first choose to identify themselves by their country of origin. Whether documented or undocumented, there is pride in letting people know what country you are from. One reason why the term Latino is preferred is since it
includes all of the Latin American countries giving Hispanics a stronger sense of identity to their country of origin. For this very reason, I chose to use the word Latino in my study and I lay out the terms and the definitions that are presented:

**Terminology**

*Hispanic* refers to a person from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

*Latino* has become the most politically correct term, and it refers to a group of people who live in Latin America and speak a language derived from Latin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

*Spanish Native Speaker (SNS)* is someone who has been raised in a home where Spanish is spoken, who speaks or at least understands Spanish and who is to some degree bilingual in English and Spanish (Fairclough, 2012).

*Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) class* caters to the Spanish language needs of the SNS student, with the intention of serving not only as an academic outlet for language but a support unit to encourage exposure to the culture for Latino students.

* Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) *empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically and CRP allows the teacher to be the person in charge of creating and changing the curriculum to fit the needs of the students (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

*Acculturation* is adapting to new cultural patterns while continuing to maintain values, perspectives, and features of your own culture (Zimmerman, 2002).
Ethnicity is described as having, “an identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group; and observance of that group’s customs, beliefs, and language” (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 2002, p. 37).

Social justice education suggests that “students and teachers are active and equal participants in all schooling” and that “schools are often demeaning and disempowering places” (White & Talbert, 2005, p. 60).

Interest in CRP

As a high school student, I went through the Spanish for Native Speaker class, and I felt that it helped me learn Spanish at a more appropriate level as compared to the Spanish class for students who were learning Spanish for the first time. This course helped me better understand my roots and helped me relate to others like myself who were going through very similar experiences and conflicts of identity. Now that I am a Spanish teacher of a Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) class, I am interested in learning how culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) might be effectively carried out in this setting. CRP is an instructional approach that focuses on creating an educational environment that is culturally relevant and respectful. The idea of CRP is not new. The first researchers who coined the term culturally appropriate and investigated CRP were Au and Jordan (1981). Mohatt and Erickson (1981) while working with Native American teachers and the teaching practices referred to this as culturally congruent whereas Cazden and Leggett (1981) added to the literature the term culturally responsive teaching. In 1994, the term culturally relevant was used by Ladson-Billings (1994) which is associated with other terms such as culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural, culturally congruent,
culturally diverse, culturally appropriate, and biography-driven practices. According to Greenwood (2011), “There are many variations of terminology, but all [are] focused on curriculum and pedagogy” (p. 23).

A culturally relevant and respectful environment has teachers who are highly aware of their own beliefs, attitudes and biases, empower their students to use their own cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives for academic success, and engages and affirms student’s identities, worldviews, and cultural and experiential reference points in the learning process. Prior to culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy was termed and labeled by Cazden and Leggett (1981) which Ladson-Billings (1994) later used the term culturally relevant in a study of the teaching practices of teachers who were successful with African American students. Culturally responsive pedagogy, as defined by one of the most prominent authors in the field, Geneva Gay (2002), is “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). According to Ladson-Billings (1992), the implementation of CRP leads to “empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” (p. 382). CRP allows the teacher to be the person in charge of creating and changing the curriculum to fit the needs of the students better. For this reason, I purposefully chose to use CRP as the framework to investigate the SNS teachers’ beliefs, actions, and responses to the use of CRP. To this end, my focus was to investigate the SNS teacher in order to analyze how these teachers used CRP to teach the educational material to their SNS students. Additionally, I
analyzed how Spanish Native Speakers who teach in the SNS program facilitated the use of CRP.

**Assimilation versus Retaining Cultural Identity**

As a high school teacher, I have noticed the positive effects students have when they are involved in school. The more popular students tend to be more accepted by their classmates creating a more positive experience for these students (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Guest & Schnieder, 2003). High school can be the best or worst of times for teenagers. Now visualize how difficult it might be for a student who is different from the mainstream in one way or another and is struggling with their identity. Teenagers tend to be in search of their identity during their high school years; creating a complicated, awkward and sometimes thorny or messy situation, which can be especially for a Latino student. Imagine trying to navigate between two cultures, two distinct sets of rules, one at home, the other at school, not to mention the language differences that are encountered between home and school. What might a Latino student face in an environment that encourages assimilation versus retaining their cultural identity? It is our duty as educators to share our knowledge and to validate the values, ideas, and beliefs of our students. I hope that with the resulting research, I might be able to provide the necessary tools to educators so that our students of all races and ethnicities have a brighter future. As educators and educational leaders, it is our responsibility to understand this need and promote the use of CRP.

One of the many aspects that make the United States such a great place to live is its diversity. Educators and others sometimes misunderstand this message of diversity
because the idea of assimilation is the desired outcome. Unfortunately, assimilation asked students to sacrifice their beliefs, traditions, culture and even their language for the sole purpose of fitting in to society and the school’s norms. According to Hirsch et al. (2002), assimilation is a process that imitates or acquires the social and psychological aspects of a group, in this case, the culture of the United States. Many researchers (Grant, 1993; Hirsch et al., 2002; Nieto, 2005) state that when you assimilate you must lose something to gain another, which results, many times, in the loss of a person’s traditions, culture, and even language. Complete assimilation would lead to the collapse of cultural diversity and a dramatic change in our country. It would go from being multicultural to one, which is not tolerant of all or any diversity. Discovering one’s identity is part of the growing pains of a teenager, and it is complicated when a culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student is receiving messages of their need to assimilate.

The assimilation process caused a lot of my friends to forget their language and pretend to be someone else. I realize now that as a high school student, I was in a constant battle to assimilate or acculturate. As I mentioned before, I did not realize it back then, but I was choosing to acculturate. Acculturation is adapting to new cultural patterns of the dominant American culture while continuing to maintain values, perspectives, and features of my own Mexican culture.

**Latino Achievement Gap**

The Latino achievement gap is, in fact, a significant problem not only in education but the United States economy. According to Santiago and Soliz (2012), it is not only important to increase Latino student’s success rate in college, but it is crucial to
the future of the United States. This study included individual fact sheets for each of the 50 states and compared them all to our nation’s need to act on the devastating achievement gap between Latinos and African Americans with White and Asian students. Nationally, Latino youth represented 22 percent of the K-12 public school population and 15 percent of the U.S. population overall in 2010 (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). Furthermore, the median age for Latinos of 27 as compared to the median age of 40 for White, non-Hispanics in 2010 is consistent with in all states. This is further evidence of the need to educate our Latino youth since they are much younger as compared to the non-Hispanic White and will have the most significant impact on the U.S. economy.

The state-level data on Latino college completion show today’s investment, or lack thereof, in Latino academic preparation in degree attainment can have a compounding effect on state populations, economies, and communities in the near future. State policymakers, as well as institutional and community leaders, have opportunities to improve their educational attainment, economic strength, and community engagement by investing now in the academic preparation and achievement of Latinos. As a result of the graduation rates for Latinos being lower than that of White, non-Hispanics, Latino adults have lower degree attainment levels than any other groups. With Illinois being a state with a wide gap of 15 percent of lower degree attainment. The study suggested, that “increasing Latino degree attainment in states is critical to meeting the national goal” (Santiago & Soliz, 2012, p. 3), which needs intentional policies and practices to include Latinos in degree attainment and preparation.
According to the U.S. Census, only 20% of Hispanics in the United States had earned an associate degree or higher in 2010. In comparison, 39% of Whites, 28% of Blacks and 59% of Asians had earned an associate or higher in 2010. Even though demographic predictions show Latinos will represent 22% of the U.S. population by 2025. In combination, these facts create a compelling call to action. According to Gándara and Contreras (2010), the very high rates of Latino student dropouts across generations are stalled at the high school level of completion. In more than two decades, Latino students have not increased their share of college degrees while all other groups have increased. Unfortunately, only one in ten Latino students has a college degree as compared to more than one in three Asians and more than one in four white Americans.

The achievement gap is real and needs to be addressed. As I recall my schooling experiences, I was always aware of the lack of Latinos in my classes. I was even more surprised to see that I was only one of two Latinos graduating with my masters’ degree. This past weekend, I was proud to be present at my little sisters’ graduation and I was ultra-aware of the fact that she was one of three Latinos who earned a Physician Assistant degree from Emory Medical School. It is incomprehensible to me that we, Latinos, are still lagging far behind every other group when it comes to academic success. The Achievement gap is real and I believe that one way we can make an impact is to teach in a culturally relevant manner and to help students see that they too can have these opportunities. I have confidence that the use of CRP can help our Latino students and reduce the achievement gap to help them be more successful and aspire to attain a degree.
Rationale: An Argument for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The problem directly connected to the field of education is the need to address the cultural conflicts that hinder relationships and compromise learning opportunities for Latino students, due to the lack of CRP, which is an “educational challenge that becomes critical not only for teachers to understand but also school leaders to both recognize and manage successfully as education professionals” (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011, p. 583). Researchers (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gay, 2002; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2014) believed that CRP is a bridge between home and school. CRP is an ideology that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 18).

I will never forget how different things were for me when I got home after school. Besides listening to music and watching television in Spanish, hearing and speaking Spanish to my parents, the rules were completely different. I remember telling my parents that I wanted to do things my friends would do and their response was always the same. “You are our son and you will do things our way.” I did not understand what my parents meant but I always listened, since that was how I was taught. I look back now and I understand that my parents wanted to protect me and the only way they knew was in the way they were taught. Thus, keeping their environment as familiar as they could, was their way of navigating through the system in the United States.

With the help of my SNS teacher and friends, we were able to make a bridge between home and school. I do not remember if my teacher used CRP but the fact that we
were in a class that allowed us to be proud of who we are, helped me gain confidence in my Latino identity. Along with my classmates, we went through similar situations, which helped me acculturate to the mainstream school system. This acculturation enabled me and many of us to become successful at school allowing me to attain my degree.

A void of cultural relevance still exists and must be bridged to meet the needs of ALL of our students. According to Horsford et al. (2011), there is a demographic divide between students and those who serve them and a cultural mismatch due to the incompatibility between students’ school and their home culture. It is important for educators to be aptly prepared or at least be willing to meet the needs of students who are underserved. Social justice demands that we are responsible for all of our children’s success. “The implementation of culturally relevant and social justice pedagogies help prepare students to effect change in their communities and the broader society” (Esposito & Swain, 2009, p. 38). As educators and school leaders, we have a responsibility to find the best teaching practices to help facilitate students’ learning. Esposito and Swain believed that issues of “social justice naturally arise as teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 38) and they agree that “there is an inextricable link between culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice pedagogy” (p. 41). It is essential to create a safe learning environment in the classroom and to provide situations where students can see themselves represented in the curriculum. It is vital for school leaders to learn about what it means to make teaching and learning relevant to students’ culture and the qualities of innovative teachers who are willing to learn about their students and choose research based culturally relevant practices.
The results of this research study will give school leaders a better understanding of what qualities are essential in a culturally-sensitive SNS teacher. This qualitative study aims to better understand the beliefs of a SNS teacher and their use of CRP to provide support by approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens. The conceptual framework is going to be taken from CRP.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation was to conduct an exploratory qualitative study to investigate SNS teachers and their use of CRP. This research will fill a gap in the literature by focusing on the high school level and concentrating on SNS teachers. I planned to add to the research by studying teachers who are SNS, teaching a class of Spanish Native speaking students to understand how they carry out CRP. The pre-observation interview determined which SNS teachers used CRP and which teachers were to be included in this study. If the pre-observation interview showed that the SNS teacher used CRP, then that SNS teacher was observed and (post-observation) interviewed. If, after the pre-observation interview, it was determined that the SNS did not think, know or believe, about CRP, then another SNS teacher would go through the pre-observation interview, until this criterion was met.

Native speakers are defined as someone who has been raised in a home where Spanish is spoken, who speaks or at least understands Spanish, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and Spanish (Fairclough, 2012; Valdés, 2000) and “Heritage language (HL) learners is also another term used to identify such speakers” (Ellison, 2002, p. 14). For purpose of this study I will use the term SNS to refer to both HL and
SNS. I studied four SNS teachers who teach a SNS class at various high schools in the suburbs of Cook County. It is also important to understand how teachers might effectively use CRP in their teaching investigated through pre-observation interviews, observations and post-observation interviews of four SNS teachers. I interviewed four teachers to find out their beliefs before he observed them in their classroom. By interviewing the SNS teachers before observing them, I had a better understanding of what the teacher believed to be effective teaching practices. This allowed me to connect and explore any relationships to their beliefs and their practices in the classroom. This study will help enrich the literature on CRP with the data collected through the observations of SNS teachers and their teaching strategies concerning their use of CRP.

What makes this a case study is the fact that it is bounded (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995) and it is “a specific, a complex, functioning thing” (Stake, p. 2). As Merriam (2009) stated, “A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system…The “what” is a bounded system… a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 40). I am more interested in making sense of the SNS teachers’ experiences rather than just finding statistical data to come to terms with the meaning of these experiences. Merriam quotes Manen (1997) that qualitative research is “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (p. 520).
Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How do Spanish Native Speaker educators conceptualize Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?
2. How do Spanish Native Speakers educators bring their own culture into the classroom to inform instruction?
3. To what extent do Spanish Native Speaker educators’ practices match their conceptualizations of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

Theoretical Framework

CRP is an approach that enhances academic, social and emotional development and consciously strives to work more effectively with students of color. According to Scherff and Spector (2011), it strives to use learners’ cultural ways of being and knowing as a vehicle for instruction as well as a source of content. CRP creates caring communities of learners that foster the joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise. According to Irvine (2010), CRP “is a term that describes effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms” (p. 57). Many researchers have written about the benefits of teaching in a culturally responsive manner and the use of CRP (e.g., Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Scherff & Spector, 201).

Many of the characteristics of culturally responsive practices are the same as those of CRP. Gay (2002) explained what culturally responsive practices are in the classroom and how these practices help CLD students achieve academic success. Gay
(2000) stated, that to be a culturally responsive teacher, one should use students’ own cultural experiences in order to make it easier for them to access their prior knowledge. By doing this, students will be able to add to it and allow them to become more motivated since the information becomes more personal, meaningful and has a higher interest appeal, which in turn facilitates its learning and retention. Consequently, this research posits that CLD students will improve their academic achievement when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters. According to Gay, “the processes of learning – not the intellectual capability to do so – used by students from different ethnic groups are influenced by their cultural socialization” (p. 147).

For Herrera (2010), who writes extensively on “biography-driven culturally responsive teaching”, the key for educators is to remember to use our students’ biographies to center our instructional efforts. Walqui and van Lier (2010) felt that a teacher’s role should be that of one who creates enticing opportunities for students to interact around key disciplinary topics and not worry about what the student has or has not learned thus far. Creating situations that entice students’ learning, allow teachers to better understand our students by providing them the opportunity to share how they come to know their world with us and in turn giving us ways to make our teaching more significant to their lives. According to Gay (2000), educators should try to recognize and use ethnically diverse students’ untapped intellectual ability and their many other kinds of intelligences. School achievement will improve drastically if we could tap into their mental ability and use it in the instructional process. “Culturally responsive teaching is a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by
simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities” (p. 20). By teaching using CRP, the teacher allows the students to use their prior knowledge and become motivated in their learning. It will enable our CLD students the opportunity to reach their intellectual ability.

CRP reflects Dewey’s (1991) and Freire, Macedo, Koike, and Oliveira’s (1998) concepts of education. Dewey advocated for experiential learning as social inquiry and Freire argued for an education involving a dialogic and problem-posing approach that challenges the real problems of oppressed groups in society. According to Herrera (2010), the best way to understand CLD students is to learn these students’ biopsychosocial histories to create optimal classroom learning conditions through the use of biography-driven practices thus allowing us to see the CRP in action. Herrera states that it is essential to understand and to know how these aspects impact the motivation, engagement, and learning of CLD students. The term biopsychosocial histories describe elements of human experience, including the biological, psychological, and sociological aspects of an individual. Herrera stated that CLD students carry with them lived experiences and intrinsic traits that have shaped their learning styles, skills, and knowledge. Due to the fact that CLD students bring more than their backpacks to our classroom, it is crucial to their academic success for us to comprehend their biopsychosocial histories or situation.

**Research Methodology**

To respond to the three research questions that guided this investigation, the present study took place in a SNS classroom, and the participants were the four SNS
teachers teaching those SNS classes. I chose the SNS teachers from the survey which indicated which teachers fit the criteria. I gathered data using three sources; SNS teacher pre-observation interview, teacher observation, and post-observation interviews. The method of data analysis included the data collected from the three data sources, analyzed with Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practice observation tool (see Appendix A) in order to triangulate the data to try to answer all the research questions. Merriam stated that “Though qualitative researchers can never capture an objective ‘truth’ or ‘reality,’ there are a number of strategies that … can [be] use[ed] to increase the ‘credibility’ of your findings” (p. 215), or as Wolcott (2005) wrote, “increase the correspondence between your research and the real world” (p. 160). Probably the most well-known strategy to shore up the internal validity of a study is what is known as triangulation (Merriam, 2009, p. 215).

**Pre-Observation Interview**

First, I interviewed four SNS teachers from different schools for approximately 30-40 minutes in a place of the teacher’s choice for the purpose of investigating the use of CRP. I used semi-structured interview questions in English (see Appendix B) and Spanish (see Appendix C) based on the related literature. At the time of the interview with the SNS teachers, I asked if the SNS teachers had any lesson plans that they were able to share that exemplify the use of CRP.

**Observations**

The role of researcher as interpreter as described by Stake (1995) was the role I played in this study. I was not a participant, sat back and observed only the SNS teachers
in their classroom. I observed these same four SNS teachers from different schools in their classrooms once per teacher for the duration of the class period approximately 50 minutes. The use of Herrera’s biography-driven practices observation tool (Herrera, 2010) (see Appendix A), which was adapted from CREDE (1999) standards for Effective Pedagogy and Learning, was used during the observations. I chose this observation tool because it is a tool meant to help teachers focus their teaching on biography-driven practices which are conducive to CRP. This tool evaluates explicitly the teacher and their use of biography-driven practices by rating the use of joint productive activities, language and literacy development strategies, contextualization, challenging activities and instructional conversations and how these are used for CLD students.

The evaluation tool by Herrera (2010) is composed of five sections: I. Joint Productive Activity, II. Language and Literacy Development, III. Contextualization, IV. Challenging Activities, and V. Instructional Conversation (see Appendix A). This evaluation is divided into specific categories for each section and is scored with a 0 - 4 for each subsection. The scores are as follows; Not Observed = 0, Emerging = 1, Developing = 2, Enacting = 3, and Integrating = 4. Here is the first section; Joint Productive Activity, the categories are (LE) Learning Environment, (TC) Teacher Collaboration, (TPSI) Total Group, Partner, Small Group, Individual, (PGD) Partner/Grouping Determination and (AC) Activity Connections.
Post-Observation Interview

Lastly, I interviewed the four SNS teachers for the purpose of investigating the SNS teachers’ perception on their use of CRP. The SNS teachers were asked whether they believe that they used CRP in their lesson in order to triangulate the data.

Limitations: Presumptions and Constraints of the Study

I understand that a limitation of the study is that I teach a Native Speaker classroom and I have a preconceived notion that a SNS teacher would be more culturally relevant for his or her students. As a SNS and teacher of a Native Speaker class, I believe that this may also be a strength of the study. I do have an insider’s look, which could be of benefit when observing and interviewing since I know how to probe deeply and be able to recognize CRP.

Yet another limitation is that of a researcher, regarding the personal biases I might potentially bring to the study. A few of the personal biases could be that a SNS would be better prepared to teach SNS students. I know that I was not aware of the various opportunities for me when I was attending high school. The fact that my Spanish teacher was a SNS helped me see myself becoming a teacher. I did not know if I would have worked towards becoming a teacher if it were not for this relationship I created with my SNS teacher. As a SNS, I believe that my SNS students can relate to me precisely due to my Mexican culture and the ties, which exist in their culture. I also think that if students can see themselves in positions of power such as that of a teacher, then they may see that they too may have the same opportunities. For this reason, I propose to study SNS teachers at schools with a similar situation to the SNS classroom I teach. To prevent
personal biases from influencing my study, I kept a reflective journal to make my opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings transparent. According to Ortlipp (2008), “Keeping self-reflective journals is a strategy that can facilitate reflexivity…” (p. 695), with the intention that researchers will talk about their experiences, choices, and actions during the research process to clarify personal belief systems and subjectivities.

I audio recorded the interviews, and I used a journal to be able to refer to any information from my observations and field notes. I destroyed the audio recordings of the interviews once the study was completed.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the rationale for conducting this study. Primarily, investigating teachers, specifically, SNS, who teaches in the Spanish for Native Speaker classes at the high school level. I investigated if these teachers used CRP and if there is a relationship between their belief and their use of CRP. The lack of research justified this qualitative study on SNS and CRP and is in response to the rapidly changing demographics throughout our schools today. Finally, I posed the research questions, and noted the limitations of the study.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

“I have great respect for the past. If you don't know where you've come from, you don't know where you're going. I have respect for the past, but I'm a person of the moment. I'm here, and I do my best to be completely centered at the place I'm at, then I go forward to the next place.”

-Maya Angelou
Poet (1929-2014)

The focus of this thesis is Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teachers’ perceptions of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP), whether positive or negative and how these practices are being conducted in the SNS class. Moreover, I investigated whether the four teachers’ beliefs match what I observed in their classroom.

Chapter II will summarize the literature surrounding the topics addressed in this study; CRP, assimilation and acculturation, social justice and biography-driven practices.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In the past century, a goal of the U.S. educational system has been to assimilate newcomers into the so-called mainstream. Zajda, Majhanovich, and Rust (2006) supported this statement by saying,

Education has been used as one of the primary channels through which cultural alienation and annihilation have occurred… In addition to using education as a divisive tool based on color among students, cultural alienation and annihilation have occurred through the transmission of education. (p. 42)
The U.S. metaphor of the *melting pot* indicates that for mainstream America, the goal of assimilation is to create a monolingual, monocultural, homogenous society (Freeman, 1999; Zajda et al., 2006). Hirsch et al. (2002) used the metaphor of a *melting pot* to express the view that U.S. immigrants have been *fused* or *melted* into a single people. This assimilation may cause internal conflicts in ethnic minority students as it requires a student to choose whether to assimilate to the dominant culture and language entirely or not be able to function in the dominant culture properly. Zajda et al. (2006) quotes Skutnabb-Kangas (1988)

Thus, the [assimilation] process itself poses a wrenching dilemma for culturally dominated youths: either assimilate to a homogeneous model, or resist assimilation and in the long run, lose out on the educational opportunities, and other resources, that may provide more enriching life options. (p. 32)

According to Horsford et al. (2011), there is a demographic divide between students and those who serve them and a cultural mismatch due to the incompatibility between students’ school and their home culture. It is important for educators to be aptly prepared, or at least be willing, to meet the needs of students who are underserved. Culture is central to learning and it not only plays a role in communicating and receiving information, but it is key to shaping the thinking process in the individual (Greenwood, 2011). For this very reason, CRP is the catalyst that bridges the mainstream culture while validating, acknowledging, and celebrating every student’s culture as essential to the learning process. This creates communities that empower students who can lead and excel in their communities.
The problem directly connected to the field of education is the need to address the cultural conflicts that hinder relationships and compromise learning opportunities for Latino students, due to the lack of CRP, which is an “educational challenge that becomes critical not only for teachers to understand but also school leaders to both recognize and manage successfully as education professionals” (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 583). Researchers believe that CRP is a bridge between home and school making their education meaningful (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gay, 2002; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Many researchers have written about the benefits of teaching in a culturally responsive manner and the use of CRP (e.g., Gay, 2000; Greenwood, 2011; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Scherff & Spector, 2010). CRP is an approach that enhances academic, social, and emotional development and consciously asks the teacher to work more effectively with students of color. According to Scherff and Spector, CRP strives to use learners’ cultural ways of being and knowing as a vehicle for instruction as well as a source of content. When implemented with fidelity, CRP creates caring communities of learners that foster the joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise.

Herrera (2010) looked particularly at how the work of Vygotsky and Krashen reinforces the use of biographies of our students. She stated that by understanding our students, it will help us make our instruction more efficient, allowing their learning to be advantageous, creating a thriving learning environment. The findings of Krashen (1984/2002) on the development of a second language have guided teachers’ practice for a long
time. At the core of this research, Krashen explained, the input hypothesis that language is acquired “by understanding input containing i + 1; that is, by understanding language that contains input containing structures that are a bit beyond the acquirer’s current level” (p. 54). Krashen’s small i could be taken to mean a snapshot of an individual student in the present moment of development. Krashen’s widely accepted theoretical construct is a valid reason for the use of Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven culturally responsive teaching to prepare classroom plans that are organized around the biography of the student. We need to help facilitate the learning of second language learners by placing them in contexts and situations designed to carry them linguistically to i + 1, where they are stretched just beyond the current limit of their language acquisition.

Vygotsky (1978) asserted that all individuals have the potential to learn and learning is highly dependent upon the particular context, situation, and social interaction. He believed that learning involves all styles of learning academically and knowing the students both emotionally and culturally are as important as understanding how the student learns. In other words, students’ sociocultural experiences influence learning and the more we can culturally relate to our students, the better learning environment we may be able to create for them to be successful in our schools. Vygotsky also believed that our learning comes from our social interactions which is co-constructed and transformed the social learning into individual learning over time, in other words, what students can do with support today, they may be able to do alone tomorrow. Walqui and van Lier (2010) stated that Vygotsky recognized that “learning happens in advance of development and with particular kinds of support, a future-oriented pedagogy enlists students’ innate drive
to belong to social groups, to learn with and from others, and to develop” (p. 1).
Vygotsky’s (1978) formulation of ideal learning conditions is termed the zone of proximal development (ZPD), defined as, “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with capable peers” (p. 86).

By understanding Vygotsky’s ZPD framework, we might be able to see the importance of teaching in a culturally relevant manner. Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) described the ZPD as a framework that exemplifies the learning process. They stated that ZPD brings the teacher, learner, and the students’ own identity; including their social and cultural history as well as their goals and motives, “…and all the resources available to them, including those that are dialogically constructed together” (p. 468).

According to Bruner (1996), our cultural resources play an essential role in what we think and learn. Unfortunately, many of our CLD students come from a low socioeconomic status (SES) which makes it difficult for them to concentrate in school and plan for the future. As teachers, we need to make the future more palatable and relevant to our students but especially our CLD students. We need to give our students hope and help them understand that their future is now. This idea of seeing the future as a time when what we now are working toward will potentially be a reality that will help our CLD students be more successful in their academic studies. We must remember that all students want to be successful and want to learn and our CLD students are no different. They want to experience a sense of hope and accomplishment, a safe, encouraging, and
supportive place to learn, and opportunities to share and be evaluated in meaningful ways.

What students need to see is that teachers care about them, as individuals and have hope for their future. Hope, in and of itself, can become a source of motivation, more significant than any strategy, which we might use in a lesson. Herrera (2010) firmly believed that we need to create a safe environment and set conditions, which allow our students to hope “… regardless of sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, or academic background, the hope they need to become motivated and engaged learners in our classroom” (p. 66). Kuhrt (2007), stated that hope is one of the leading dynamics which permits us the opportunities necessary to be successful and goes further by saying that hope makes it possible for “even the poorest most destitute individual to succeed” (What is Hope section, para. 1). Becoming aware of what we teachers do to orchestrate a learning environment that promotes (or hinders) a sense of hope is important to developing a pedagogy that is both culturally responsive and relevant to the CLD student. Herrera (2010) referred to, one of the most important ways we give or take away a sense of hope is in the way we provide feedback (p. 63).

Herrera (2010) stated that we often fail to observe and listen to the cultural aspects of students’ thinking. According to Nieto (2005), there is an obvious connection between students’ thinking processes and the influences, which have been formed by their cultural background. Vygotsky (1962) discussed the interrelatedness of learners’ thought, language, and culture. In his work, he stated an indisputable fact; “thought and development is determined by language … and the sociocultural experiences of the child”
Although culture cannot force us to think in a certain way, it does shape our way of thinking (McDaniel, Samovar, & Porter, 2009).

For us to teach in a culturally relevant manner, we need to understand that the way we think and our culture shape how our brains are accustomed to work. As Gay (2000) noted, “Even without our being consciously aware of it, culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, and these, in turn, affect how we teach and learn” (pp. 8-9). To this end, we need to continually reflect on our teaching and how we include CRP in our classroom. Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices tool allows for this check of cultural relevance and connection to the students’ identity.

Walqui and van Lier (2010) stated that students “arrive in our classrooms with immense potential, strengths to build on, and dreams for their future… [we must] help them realize that potential and to provide …learning opportunities so that they can address rigorous academic content…” (p. 1). Walqui and van Lier believed that all students should be engaged in intellectual challenges, especially our CLD students, and with the right support they will succeed. To give CLD students rigor, we need to make their learning accessible and attainable but hold them to high expectations. Teachers are consistently learning, mostly because we have high expectations for ourselves, why would it be any different for our students? We need to have high expectations for our students. Walqui and van Lier stated that “teachers build their own expertise, in similar ways as their students, through intellectual challenges that are appropriately supported in collegial interactions, with reflection, and through ample practice” (p. 2). Through this understanding, holding high expectations for our students with the appropriate help will
allow our students to develop and learn within their ZPD. Holding high expectation for CLD learners is essential to providing equitable access to education. Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton (2006) asserted that their research has proven that all teachers have expectations in a classroom, whether these are high or low, these expectations will have a positive or negative influence on students’ performance.

Scaffolding refers to supportive interaction that is temporarily provided to assist learning (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). The scaffolding process works best when the teacher takes on the role of facilitator, supporting and encouraging students. Walqui and van Lier expanded the idea of scaffolding to include a relationship of equal knowledge stating that groups of learners comprised of students of equal knowledge will help each other create a ZPD that will mutually engage in scaffolding. The use of scaffolding is a strategy that fits right into the framework of CRP because it allows the students to work together to develop the ideas, which emerge in their interactions shared with peers. Walqui and van Lier has proposed two other contexts expanding the ZPD construct to include that a learner teaching another learner and a learner working alone can work within their ZPDs. According to Walqui and van Lier, pairing students with a less able student or by themselves will allow them to verbalize, clarify and learn more information on the material being taught even if the student works alone. “Working alone, students can benefit by using internalized teaching and learning strategies, inner speech, resources in their environment, and experimentation” (p. 31).
Assimilation versus Retaining Cultural Identity

Educators are fortunate to be able to earn a living by sharing their knowledge with students. For a teenager, the high school years can be the best or worst of times. Popular students who are accepted by their peers have more positive high school experiences than those who are not (Diez, 1995; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Guest & Schnieder, 2003). Imagine for a moment the difficulty a Latino student might face in an environment that encourages assimilation versus retaining one’s cultural identity. As educators and educational leaders, it is our responsibility to understand this need and encourage the use of CRP.

Hirsch et al. (2002) defined assimilation as the process by which a person or persons acquire the social and psychological characteristics of a group. Grant (1993) described assimilation as the degree that a person moves from one culture to another. Nieto (2005) stated that the problem with assimilation is it assumes losing something in order to gain something else. As a result, linguistic and cultural assimilation has not only meant learning the national language, but it has also involved forgetting one’s native language. It has meant not only learning the new culture but also learning to eat, dress, talk, think, and behave like those in the dominant group. The assimilation process almost certainly means the inevitable loss of a significant part of one’s identity (Grant, 1993; Nieto, 2005). Discovering one’s identity is especially important in the adolescent years.

Since the United States is made up of a variety of cultures, it is essential for us to learn from each other. One of the many aspects that make the United States such a great place to live is its diversity. Because of its importance, people have chosen to hold on to
their cultural identity, diversity, and language by not settling entirely for the norm. Complete assimilation would lead to the collapse of cultural diversity. When a person maintains their cultural diversity and roots, it allows for a better self-understanding of who they may become. People need to be proud of who they are and who they may become. I believe that knowing your roots is paramount to understanding where you are headed. Noddings (2003) stated that to reach personal happiness and citizenship, there must be some self-understanding; that studying the past through history, geography, and sociology increases a person’s self-understanding and self-reflection.

Studies concerned with the importance of cultural maintenance are challenging the equation that public education equals assimilation (Freeman, 1999; Nieto, 2005). These studies also found that minority groups tended to be under-utilized. Under-utilization of human potential is defined as a too-narrow definition of talents (what constitutes merit), matching of abilities with tasks (under-employment), or the lack of use of talents (unemployment), which prevents individuals or groups form maximizing their capabilities or productivity (Freeman, 1999). Under-utilization of the human potential takes on many dimensions across cultures. For example, it can occur in the case of discrimination, differential educational opportunities among individuals or groups, the inappropriate training for the market, or a division in the distribution of technological knowledge. “Understanding the under-utilization of human potential has merit because it can help us better grasp educational inequality, the under-employment and economic division between the have and have-nots” (Zajda et al., 2006, p. 44). Freeman (1999)
found that minority groups tended to be under-utilized across societies for the following reasons:

1. Students transitioning into school;
2. Student experiences within the educational school setting;
3. Students transitioning to the labor market; and,
4. Experience in the workplace.

In the case of Latino students, the process in which education is transmitted through teaching style and content of material has discounted the social capital of Latino populations and therefore minimized their culture. It is essential to look at who teaches, what is taught, and how it is taught over time, to understand how the cultural identity and educational opportunities of Latinos have been severely eroded. Although this has historically been the case, Latino educators and researchers (particularly in the U.S.) are now examining and discussing ways to undo the intellectual damage to Latino children by demonstrating the importance of valuing the culture of Latinos rather than eradicating their culture. This is why the focus of Latino educators has been on the inclusion of CRP, and the valuation of the Latino culture in the educational system.

According to Zimmerman (2002), acculturation is also used to describe the results of contact between two or more different cultures in which a new, composite culture emerges, where some existing cultural features are combined, some are lost, and new features are generated. Usually, one culture is dominant as in the case of colonization. Cultural alienation and annihilation can be defined as the process that controlling populations use to minimize or eradicate the culture of minority populations. In the words
of Anderson (1994), “the group with the greater power annihilates the powerless group or drives them out of the territory” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 35).

Latino teenage students need to be able to find out who they are and have the ability to assimilate (without losing their culture) while maintaining their culture. Latino students need the opportunity to network with other students similar to themselves so they can learn more about who they are and how to use their ethnicity to better society (Freeman, 1999). A SNS class caters to the Spanish language needs of the SNS student, with the intention of serving not only as an academic outlet for language but a support unit to encourage exposure to the culture for ethnic Latino students. Ethnicity is described as having, “an identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group; and observance of that group’s customs, beliefs, and language” (Hirsch et al., 2002, p. 37). I believe that the use of CRP facilitates the interactions of SNS students who identify and relate with others from similar backgrounds and encourages students to be proud of who they are while maintaining their true cultural identity. Being able to relate and identify with members of the same ethnicity is vital for the formation of an ethnic student’s identity. Nieto (2005) referred to this as part of knowing one’s own background in order to continue growing both culturally and emotionally.

**Purposes of a Spanish Native Speaker Class**

The purpose of the SNS class is to improve students’ bilingual skills to help them achieve more precise language in Spanish while encouraging the knowledge to transfer to English and vice versa. The SNS class works on building students’ prior knowledge to
build their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in Spanish. These skills also transfer to their other academic classes.

The SNS class through the teaching of CRP is meant to help increase students’ self-esteem and cultural pride with the hope that they challenge themselves to enroll in college readiness classes and advance placement classes. Gándara and Contreras (2010) made a reference to the very high rates of Latino student dropouts across generations and how they are stalled at the high school level of completion. It is regrettable that Latino students have not increased their share of college degrees in more than two decades while there has been a gradual increase in all other groups. Unfortunately, only one in ten Latino students has a college degree as compared to more than one in three Asians and more than one in four white Americans (Gándara & Contreras, 2010).

Social Justice

According to Fullan (1999), Bhatti (2003), Vincent (2003), Zajda et al. (2006), Noddings (2007), and Horsford et al. (2011), the United States has a social and moral obligation to ensure that its schools educate all students—regardless of country of origin or race. In particular, educators must accept their profession as a noble calling dedicated to the premise that all children can learn and succeed. All teachers, regardless of ethnic background and race, must be learned enough not only on subject matters but also in cultural facets that better prepare them to work with a diverse student population. Educators should take on the moral responsibility of understanding diversity in order to ensure growth and integrity for all students. Fullan (1999) wrote about moral purpose in education and how we as educators should make a difference in the life-chances of all
students. Due to our ever-changing complex world and global diversity, Fullan stated that “…figuring out moral purpose, getting or staying committed to it and making progress in achieving it are enormously difficult” (p. 1).

Without reforms to address the disparity that minority and ethnically diverse students face, the system does not work for the most vulnerable members of society already facing obstacles. Bhatti (2003) and Vincent (2003), along with White and Talbert (2005), felt it is incredibly challenging, but of the utmost importance to empower students who society has previously failed. But this reform will not occur overnight. Until such a comprehensive reform takes place, all teachers should promote the participation of diverse students in programs that celebrate their uniqueness and improve the in-student-experience. Otherwise, educators will fail, collectively.

Social justice demands that we are responsible for all of our children’s success. “The implementation of culturally relevant and social justice pedagogies help prepare students to effect change in their communities and the broader society” (Esposito & Swain, 2009, p. 38). As educators and school leaders, we have a responsibility to find the best teaching practices in order to help facilitate students’ learning. Esposito and Swain believed that issues of “social justice naturally arise as teachers implement culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 38) and they agreed that “there is an inextricable link between culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice pedagogy” (p. 41). It is essential to create a safe learning environment in the classroom and to provide situations where students can see themselves represented in the curriculum. This research will provide information to school leaders about what it means to make teaching and learning relevant to students’
culture and the qualities of innovative teachers who are willing to learn about their students and choose research-based culturally relevant teaching.

“Recent [social justice] research in education has emphasized the contradictory ways in which seemingly good intentions may be reflected in practice” (Bhatti, 2003, p. 67). It is important for teachers to understand their biases, so that good intentions are reflected. White and Talbert (2005) believe that social justice education suggests that “students and teachers are active and equal participants in all schooling” and that “schools are often demeaning and disempowering places” (p. 60). Engaging students to take ownership in their education through the use of CRP is not only a solution in making the educational system a more empowering institution, but it should be every educators’ mission, as their social duty and obligation, to ensure no child gets left behind. While each student’s path toward success is distinct and unique, the contributions an educator can and should make toward empowering students to be active participants in their education can be life-altering for many students—especially Latino students who are more likely to feel disenfranchised, in and outside of the school environment. When both the student and the educational system work jointly in symbiotic unison towards social justice education, the positive outcomes are limitless. At the core of CRP is its mission: to engage diverse students, within the school’s atmosphere, in a way that many students have never been engaged before. SNS students who see themselves reflected in the curriculum are more likely to learn and participate in the school environment. Thus, it behooves a school’s administration and its leaders to establish, grow, and institutionalize SNS classes as a vehicle to achieving educational social justice for Latino students.
Researchers such as Zajda et al. (2006) and Esposito and Swain (2009) stated that most conceptions of social justice refer to the principles of equality and solidarity, which understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being. Morwenna Griffiths (1998) defined social justice as having a temporal and spatial dimension. In other words, what might be considered to be just to some may be regarded as unjust to others. “Social justice is viewed as simultaneously concerning the distribution of goods and resources on the one hand and the valorization of a range of social collectivities and cultural identities on the other” (Gewirtz, 2001, p. 15). “A concern with social justice is a concern with the principles and norms of social organization and relationship necessary to achieve, and act upon, equal consideration of all people in their commonalities and differences” (Vincent, 2003, p. 18). Connel (1993) made a similar case arguing that education is a social process where the “how much cannot be separated from the what” (p. 4).

Vincent (2003) argued that if we take the pluralist nature of social justice seriously, then we need to find ways of adequately engaging with the tensions between different facets of and claims to social justice in ways which help to inform the work of those struggling in and around schools to create more socially just educational policies and practices. (p. 16)

Vincent also felt a few points needed to be understood in order to interrogate the concept of social justice. These points are (a) Who we are, (b) the others with whom we identify,
(c) those with whom we do not, and (d) how the social groupings to which we belong are perceived.

Social justice within the constraints of school environments have many facets and include many individuals. Whether it is faculty, administrators, or students, each individual identifies with distinct social groups and holds differing perceptions of themselves and each other. Faculty members are more likely to identify with their educational counterparts than with their students; students are more likely to identify with other students who are similarly situated or have common ethnic or cultural background. Generally, it is natural for faculty to hold a more positive perception of overachievers than unengaged, or otherwise not like them. Unfortunately, the group most negatively-impacted by perceptions are ethnically diverse students who tend to be less engaged, and more likely are not overachievers. Thus, there is an inherent disconnect in social justice education when educators do not identify with the students who need them most: or worse, when educators and overachieving students hold negative perceptions of disengaged and ethnically diverse students. This is where CRP brings social justice to the classroom. A comprehensive and complete overhaul of current attitudes toward SNS students and the use of CRP is urgently necessary, so Latino students can have an equitable opportunity to become fully engaged in the educational process. Educators must lead the effort in shifting perceptions in support of SNS students so that they fully engage all students, fulfill their calling as teachers, and achieve true, educational social justice (Horsford et al., 2011).
Summary

This chapter has presented the rationale for conducting this study. Primarily, the investigation into the use of CRP is justified by the lack of research in the Native Speaker classroom at the high school level and is in response to the rapidly changing demographics throughout our schools today. Finally, the research questions were posed and a background on CRP, assimilation versus retaining cultural identity, achievement gap between Latino and White students, and social justice.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

-Martin Luther King Jr.
Civil Rights Leader (1929-1968)

Chapter III includes the research questions, a description of the research design, and participants. The relevant theme of this study, cultural relevant pedagogy (CRP), is also described. To understand how Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teachers conceptualize and implement CRP in their teaching, I will answer the research questions that guided this dissertation study: (Q₁) How do Spanish Native Speaker educators conceptualize Culturally Relevant Pedagogy? (Q₂) To what extent do Spanish Native Speaker educators bring their own culture into the classroom to inform instruction? (Q₃) Do Spanish Native Speaker educators’ practices match their conceptualizations of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

In this chapter, I collected the results of data gathering from three sources: (1) pre-observation interview, (2) observation, and (3) post-observation interview. The interview questionnaire used to measure Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teachers’ perceptions and beliefs of CRP is included in Appendix B. The chapter concludes with details of the interview process with the SNS teacher and the process of the classroom observation.
Purpose

The goal of this research was to conduct an exploratory case study to understand how SNS teachers conceptualize and implement CRP in their teaching.

Research Design

This study was an exploratory qualitative study. Qualitative research is designed to provide an in-depth description and understanding of social behaviors and the human experience and not to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories (Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 1998). The reality is that qualitative research means different things to many people. In other words, qualitative research deals with the way I see the world while quantitative research looks for an objective reality, a measurable truth. Making sense of the world that was observed is the role of the researcher in qualitative research, and since this research dealt with the investigation of teachers, specifically SNS who teach in the SNS program to see if their perceptions about CRP equal their practices in the classroom, a qualitative approach was used. I observed SNS teachers in their SNS classroom to investigate if these teachers used CRP. Since there is a possibility of having multiple realities, there was a need to use the qualitative design because this study did not test a hypothesis nor looked for a cause and effect. The purpose of this research was to understand and interpret social interactions. Quantitative research starts with the creation of a hypothesis and prediction of an outcome, which is a major difference between a qualitative study and a quantitative study (Lichtman, 2006). I concentrated on the interpretation, discovery, and insight rather than hypothesis testing.
According to researchers, there is a wide view of what qualitative research encompasses. There is plenty of room for interpretation of qualitative research, but it seems that most researchers agree that it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument; it is descriptive and it is concerned with the process rather than the outcomes or products. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively, and they are essentially concerned with the understanding and interpretation of the description. Qualitative researchers are concerned with capturing perspectives accurately (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Lichtman, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Shank, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

This study investigated the perceptions of the SNS teachers from the pre-observation interview, my notes of the classroom observation, and post-observation interview to see if the teachers’ perceptions about CRP equal their practices in the classroom. I observed SNS teachers in their Spanish for Native Speaker classroom to investigate if these teachers used CRP. With this in mind, I wanted to determine how SNS teachers carried out CRP in the classroom at the high school level.

Each of the four teachers received a pseudonym to help keep their identity anonymous. In keeping with the idea of CRP, I have chosen common unisex Latin names to identify the four SNS teacher. Teacher 1 (Ale), short for Alejandro or Alejandra, Teacher 2 (Gabi), short for Gabriel or Gabriela, Teacher 3 (Lupe), short for Guadalupe used for both men and women, and Teacher 4 (Ariel), also a unisex name.
Participants

I collected the data for this study from the pre-observation interviews, observations and the post-observation interviews of four SNS teachers from high schools in Illinois. The criteria for the SNS teacher were as follows: for the purpose of this study, it was not required that the Spanish Native Speaker be born in a Latin American country nor exposed to academic Spanish. González-Pino and Pino (2005) reported that SNS learners differ from second language/foreign language learners especially because they “exhibit a wide range of dialects, relating to their many cultures of origin, varying length of residency in the United States, and the particular language, social class, and educational variables of their families and communities” (p. 170). The SNS that I concentrated on were SNS teachers. According to Fairclough (2012), a SNS is someone who has been raised in a home where Spanish is spoken, who speaks or at least understands Spanish and who is to some degree bilingual in English and Spanish. In order for a SNS teacher to be able to teach, he or she needs to have an endorsement to teach Spanish at the high school level. Since the study focused on the use of CRP by a SNS teacher as the participant of this study, it is important that the participant be a SNS. The hope of this study is to see how these SNS teachers use their culture to better relate to the students they teach. This study should bring awareness to all teachers of culturally diverse students and school leaders of the importance of the use of CRP.

The very first step was to select the participants, the SNS teachers, who participated in this study. I obtained teacher emails from an email list through Illinois Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ICTFL). The criteria survey (see Appendix
G), was sent to a variety of SNS teachers through Google forms. The list of questions helped me narrow down the SNS teachers who met the criteria needed to participate in this study. The survey included questions on their personal demographics as well as their understanding of CRP. Criteria questions similar to these: How long have you been teaching? Do you teach a heritage class? Do you consider yourself to be a SNS? Can you explain what cultural relevant pedagogy means to you? and others that helped me decide who meet the criteria to participate in the study. Once the responses were in, I chose the four SNS teachers who participated in this study.

In order to find participants for the study, I created and emailed a criteria survey on Google forms (see Appendix G) to 28 SNS teachers, whose email I chosen from an ICTFL email list, and allowed a two-week window for them to answer before the criteria survey closed. Out of the 28 teachers who received the Google form, only four teachers, each from different schools responded to the survey. Two teachers emailed but didn’t answer the Google form, to state that they did not consider themselves to be SNS; I omitted them from the sample.

Do you consider yourself Hispanic? ¿Te consideras hispano?

4 responses

Figure 1. Do you consider yourself Hispanic? ¿Te consideras hispano?
The question from Figure 1 distinguished someone who is considered by others to be a SNS and their own personal belief or perception that they are a SNS. It is important that the participants consider themselves to be a SNS teacher because I explored how SNS teachers conceptualized and implemented CRP in their teaching.

Responses to the Google survey also revealed that teachers had varying levels of teaching experience (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. How long have you been teaching? ¿Cuánto tiempo tienes enseñando?](image)

Figure 2 illustrates that two of the SNS teachers had been teaching for between 16-20 years, one SNS teacher had been teaching for five to nine years, and the other SNS teacher had been teaching for one to four years.

**Permission**

First, I acquired permission to pre-interview, observe a classroom, and post-interview the SNS teacher. I sent a letter of introduction to the principal of the school where the SNS teacher teaches (see Appendix D). Once cooperation (see Appendix E) was obtained, to interview and observe the SNS teacher, I acquired the permission from
each SNS teacher. A letter of consent to participate in research (see Appendix F) was
given to each SNS teacher to sign. In the Consent to Participate in the Research letter, the
SNS teacher was given the purpose of the research, the research questions and the
procedures that I followed to ensure confidentiality. After getting permission from the
SNS teacher, there was an appointment time scheduled to interview each SNS teacher. I
reminded the SNS teachers that all their information will remain confidential and that
they may choose to stop at any time without fear of penalty.

Data Sources

I used three data sources in the present study: pre-observation interviews,
observations, and post-observation interviews, all of which were used to triangulate the
data. All of the SNS teacher participants choose to conduct the interviews in Spanish. By
choosing to use Spanish and maintaining the pre- and post-observation interviews in
Spanish, the SNS teachers demonstrated their preference and natural ability to
communicate in Spanish. This confirmed that they were comfortable using Spanish and
reaffirmed their status as SNS teachers.

Interview Protocol

After getting permission from the principal, I procured the SNS teacher to agree
on a time and place for us to meet at which time the SNS teacher signed the consent to be
interviewed. The interview used semi-structured questions. The SNS teacher did not
receive the interview questions ahead of time allowing for the SNS to give a natural,
more spontaneous response to the questions on CRP. The interviews, both pre-and post-
observation, were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded to align with the Herrera’s
evaluation tool in order to triangulate all data sources. I also kept a journal to be able to record any information from my observations and field notes. Once I concluded all the interviews, I destroyed all records of the transcription and audio recordings.

Pre-Observation Interview

The first data source was the interviews, which took place before the classroom observations. I interviewed four SNS teachers. The interview used semi-structured questions. Semi-structured questions are open-ended yet specific in intent, allowing for individual responses, but it is still the case that all interviewees are asked the same basic questions (McMillan, 1996; Shank, 2006). These types of semi-structured questions are the most common type of interview questions in educational research because they allow for further clarification and follow-up (McMillan, 1996; Shank 2006).

This study used semi-structured interview questions to examine the perceptions of the SNS teacher (see Appendix B). I interviewed each teacher once for about 30-40 minutes in a place of the teachers’ choice for purpose of investigating their perceptions of the use of CRP. The pre- and post-observation interview, were audio-recorded to insure that I took accurate notes. The methods used in this research followed this protocol. Once I obtained the consent, I asked the predetermined questions and pursued other related areas of interest that arose at the interview. I took notes and direct quotes from the interviewee during the meeting.

Observations

Classroom observations provided the second data source. I played the role of researcher as interpreter as described by Stake (1995) in this study. I observed and took
notes of only the SNS teachers in their classroom. I observed four SNS teachers from four different schools in his or her classroom once per teacher for the duration of the class period using Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices tool which was adapted from CREDE (1999) (see Appendix G).

I used Herrera’s (2010) observation tool to guide the SNS teacher observations and to identify themes and sort the data into categories (see Appendix G). The observation tool by Herrera is composed of five sections: I. Joint Productive Activity, II. Language and Literacy Development, III. Contextualization, IV. Challenging Activities, and V. Instructional Conversation. This observation tool is divided into specific categories for each section and is scored with a 0-4 for each sub section. The scores are: Not Observed = 0, Emerging = 1. Developing = 2, Enacting = 3, and Integrating = 4.

Here is the first section; Joint Productive Activity, the categories are (LE) Learning Environment, (TC) Teacher Collaboration, (TPSI) Total Group, Partner, Small Group, Individual, (PGD) Partner/Grouping Determination and (AC) Activity Connections.

I identified common themes from the pre-observation interviews, observations, and post-observation interviews identified by the related literature described in chapter II. I assigned each SNS teacher a code [Pseudonym, teacher 1 (Ale), etc.] to protect his or her confidentiality.

I audio-recorded the pre- and post-observations interviews, and I kept a journal to be able to record any information from my observations and field notes. The audio from the pre- and post-observation interview was transcribed. Once I completed the research, I destroyed the tapes, transcriptions and notes.
Figure 3. The Common Strands

Post-Interview

The third source of data was the post-observation interviews following each lesson observation. The post-interview allowed me to ask the teacher about the lesson, eliciting the teacher’s perspective on the use of CRP during the observation. There is a difference between believing that CRP is important, preparing to use CRP, and actually using CRP in the classroom. Simply believing does not mean that CRP was implemented and in order to use CRP one must prepare for the implementation of CRP. I found the post-observation interview useful to see if the use of CRP in the lesson was to the SNS teachers’ liking, allowing me to compare the beliefs of the SNS teacher from the interview, to the actions taken in the classroom by the same SNS teacher. For this reason, the post-interview was the final piece helping to triangulate the data.

Triangulation and Analysis of the Data

I compared the SNS teacher pre- and post-observation interviews and teacher classroom observations to help triangulate the data. I coded and transcribed the pre- and
post-observation interviews to be able to find common themes. I did not audio record the observation. I evaluated and coded the observation for these themes not rated with Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices observation tool.

**Figure 4. Triangulation of the Data**

Once I evaluated the data source, I compared the data to determine whether the SNS teachers’ beliefs and practices, reflected the use of CRP. By conducting the pre-observation interview with the SNS teachers before observing them, I had a better understanding on what the teacher believed to be effective teaching practices in order to connect and explore any relationships to their beliefs and their practices in the classroom.

I used the Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices observation tool for the observation data source. After interviewing the SNS both before and after conducting the observation, I compared the result of the Herrera biography-driven tool with the result of the pre- and post-observation interviews to the actual observation. Through this triangulation, the hope was to observe the belief, use and reflection of their use of CRP in
the SNS teachers’ practices. The purpose was to investigate SNS teachers and their use of CRP.

**Results from Pilot Study**

I piloted the methodology in my school and district to make sure that my tools and my methodology process made sense and were transferable. This allowed me to check with my colleagues to verify that the information that I discovered from my observations would be valid and true. I conducted the pilot at one of the high schools in the district where I currently work. Since there are SNS programs at most of the schools in my district, I asked one of my colleagues who also is a SNS teacher at one of these schools, if he would be willing to be pre-interviewed, be observed and post-interviewed. The SNS teacher agreed to be included in this study as part of the pilot to help me improve the process, interview questions, and serve as a member checker to help validate the methodology.

**Pre-Observation Interview**

I conducted the interview in Spanish as requested by the SNS teacher. He added that it might be beneficial to allow these SNS teachers the option to conduct the interview in Spanish thus having the interview question in both languages might be appropriate. I agreed that the option to conduct the interview in English or Spanish was also appropriate (see Appendix E). During the interview, the teacher was advised and reminded that he would be audio-taped and that I would delete the audio-tape once the pilot was completed. I scheduled the interview at the SNS teacher’s convenience, at a time and location of his choice, and it lasted 33 minutes. I used the Herrera (2010) biography-
driven practices observation tool to identify the use of CRP and the responses of the SNS teacher for each of the five categories on the Herrera biography-driven practices evaluation tool. Herrera’s biography-driven practices observation tool was used for the pilot and was also used for the data source to determine the use of CRP. For the first category, I. Joint Productive Activity (JPA) the SNS teacher scored an “integrating-level 4” for Learning Environment, Teacher Collaboration, Activity Connections the other two sub-categories did not apply. Under the JPA category, this SNS teacher, during the interview, exemplified the way he: orchestrated conditions and situations to ensure that students collaborated as equal members in a low-risk learning community; collaborated with students to create joint products that integrated language and content standards; and, consistently used insights from the activity to make connections, affirmed learning, and modified instruction as needed. The interview of the SNS teacher resulted in a total of 13 labels of “integrating-level 4” out of 22 sub-categories. It was important to note that some of the categories were not revealed in the interview since the Fifth category of “Instructional Conversations” (five out of the 22) was about the interactions with students and these were not visible in the interview. If these were deducted from the 22, the new total would be 13 out of 16 at the level 4 (integrating). Besides the fact that the SNS teacher stated in the interview that CRP was the only way to teach these students, it was reaffirmed by the results in the Herrera tool. Thus, confirming the SNS teacher statements that he truly believed that CRP was important and a definite must use in the SNS classroom.
Observations

During the observation, the SNS teacher was a facilitator who allowed students to respond to questions, rephrased what they said, and modeled what was expected. Even before the class started, he arranged the student desks into small groups in clusters of three. As students came in, he greeted them by name and gave each student a positive statement. This gave me the impression that the teacher knew about the students’ lives. Even before class started, one student had already started working without being told what to do. Students knew where they belonged and seemed to know the routine. The class was conducted in Spanish, but I noticed that the SNS teacher allowed his students to express themselves in English or Spanish although the SNS teacher always answered in Spanish. The class started with a building of prior knowledge and reviewing what was done in prior classes. This allowed for students to participate and add to the list of vocabulary the teacher was writing on the board. The lesson brought together what students had learned about Latin American countries and Chicago.

The SNS teacher asked the students to open the envelope with the article cut into short sections and instructed them to place them in sequential order. Students were engaged and took it as a competition (even if it was not). They got through it quickly, and the SNS teacher continued the lesson by giving them a worksheet that included words from the reading. He had them read the words in their group and write a four, three, two, or one by the word. The four meant that it was a word that is so well known that the student could teach it while the one was for those words that were not known by the student. After the students gave their explanation of the words to the class, the SNS
teacher asked them to turn the word cards over where an article from the “Hoy” newspaper was typed and split into paragraphs followed by a question after each paragraph.

The SNS teacher modeled the reading and then had the students continue the reading in their groups. They read one section after another, to help clarify the meaning of each paragraph among the groups. While this was happening, the SNS teacher moved from group to group monitoring and then asked them to answer the questions in their groups. Then, he asked them to generate an answer based on their discussion. Later, the teacher asked the class about the article and included personal questions. He also related the article to what they had been learning. In addition, students added their own personal stories.

I also compared the observation to the Herrera tool and the score was 19 out of 22 “integrating” – level 4 with 2 at level 3, “Enacting” for a grand total of 22 out of 22. All categories were seen in the observation at the high level. The use of CRP was evident in the classroom observation in all of the categories listed in Herrera’s biography-driven practices tool.

Post-Observation Interview

I used the post-interview to identify the perception of CRP in the lesson. After reviewing the lesson and using Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices tool to allow for triangulation, the post-interview was reviewed and given a score. The Fifth category of “Instructional Conversation” was not visible in the interview but it was apparent in the post-interview. The score of 4 “Integrating” for Eliciting Student Talk (ESTK), Basic
Interpersonal Communication Skills/Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (BICS/CALP) and Students Articulate Views (SAV) were present in the post-interview. There was also a score of 3 “Enacting” for the sub-category of Revoicing (REV) was evident. The lesson as discussed in the post-interview indicates the desire of the teacher to elicit student talk about the content through student-led discussions and questioning, allowing for teacher facilitation of student-led academic conversations using key content vocabulary and promoting the articulation of students’ views and judgments. The post-interview received a total of 16 “integrated–level 4” out of 22 and 2 “Enacting–level 3” for a grand total of 18 out of 22 for Enacting and Integrating CRP in the lesson. This also provides a positive result of support for the use of CRP.

The pilot allowed me to go through the process, which I used for the study and allowed for member checking and validation of the methodology. The use of Herrera’s biography-driven practices observation tool was used in the study since both my colleague who participated in the pilot study and myself validated it. The results were not used in the study and are only being used to improve the implementation of the methodology of the study.

Member Checking and Validity

I audio-taped the pre- and post-observation interviews in order to increase reliability, I took the notes and direct quotes and made a transcription of the recorded interview. A copy of these were given back to each SNS teacher with the opportunity for them to make revisions and to allow for member checking. Once I completed the dissertation, I destroyed the audiotape and any notes I took.
I also used member checking (Stake, 1995) by allowing the SNS teachers to read the transcript of the interview to verify that the information was interpreted correctly thus confirming and allowing further illumination. This is a process that “the actor is requested to examine rough drafts of writing where the actions or words of the actor are featured…usually when no further data will be collected from him or her… to review the material for accuracy and palatability” (p. 115). I handled the interview of the SNS teachers as described above. I returned a written copy from the recording to them; once they agreed to the written copy of the interview, I analyzed the interview using the Herrera (2010) biography-drive practices evaluation tool (see Appendix G). The SNS teacher’s response aided in the triangulation of the data.

**Bias Reduction**

I understand that there was a personal bias due to my work and experience with SNS classes. For this reason, I did not use any archival or student data. Through the data collection process, I kept a reflective journal in order to help with the understanding of the information collected, and to note my own biases as they arose (Ortlipp, 2008).

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter reiterated the three research questions and described the methodology of the study. The participants, purpose, procedures, and instrumentation used to answer the research questions were described as well. Chapter IV will display the data as described in Chapter III.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
-Nelson Mandela. President of South Africa (1918-2013)

In this chapter, I describe the results of data gathering from three sources: (1) pre-observation interview, (2) observation, and (3) post-observation interview. To understand how Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teachers conceptualize and implement culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) in their teaching, I will answer the research questions that guided this dissertation study: (Q1) How do Spanish Native Speaker educators conceptualize Culturally Relevant Pedagogy? (Q2) To what extent do Spanish Native Speaker educators bring their own culture into the classroom to inform instruction? (Q3) Do Spanish Native Speaker educators’ practices match their conceptualizations of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy? I used Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices evaluation tool for the observations to help better understand the perceptions of the SNS teachers’ instruction and their use of CRP.

Initial Survey

All four teachers demonstrated that they had an understanding of CRP and mentioned the importance of taking advantage of their culture to guide them to learn about themselves. When probed about their understanding of CRP, the SNS teachers responded as follows:
Ale, Usando y capitalizando en la *background knowledge* que nuestros estudiantes aportan a la clase, incluyendo ejemplos, historias, noticias, etc… que reflejan su mundo y su realidad. (Google form, Criteria survey)

**Translation:** Utilizing and capitalizing on the *background knowledge* that our students bring to class, including examples, stories, news, etc. that reflect their world and their reality. (Google form, Criteria survey)

Gabi, Creo que parte de nuestra misión en los cursos de SNS es ayudar a los estudiantes a forjar una identidad propia y ser orgullosos de esta identidad. Por eso, creo que cuando nos ponemos a estudiar o aprender sobre un elemento cultural, es algo sagrado para los estudiantes y debe ser una oportunidad para ellos para compartir y comparar y contrastar con sus experiencias personales. (Google form, Criteria survey)

**Translation:** I believe that part of our mission in our SNS courses is to help students to forge their own identity and be proud of this identity. For this reason, I believe that when we study to learn about a cultural element, it is something sacred for the students and should be an opportunity for them to share and compare and contrast with their personal experiences. (Google form, Criteria survey)

Lupe, Teaching to meet the individual academic needs of a student while incorporating their cultural identity. (Google form, Criteria survey)

Ariel, If you don’t know the history behind the language and how the language was forced on all the new slaves the Spanish Empire acquired you can never
understand the importance of learning it and it does become a true part of who they are. (Google form, Criteria survey)

The survey gives a glimpse into the SNS teachers’ understanding of CRP which allowed me to identify whether these teachers had a slight understanding of CRP. The four SNS teachers all started with an understanding of CRP.

According to the Google form Criteria survey, Ale and Gabi were the only two SNS teachers to postulate that CRP consist of sharing students’ experiences which reflect their world and their reality. Both Ale and Gabi referred to using stories which relate to their students’ lives to tap into their prior knowledge. Although, Gabi and Ale both mentioned the importance of accessing students’ background knowledge and allowing them to share personal experiences; Gabi adopted a broader definition to include pride in their cultural identity. By teaching the students cultural elements and allowing them to share their stories and personal experiences they can take pride in who they are. Both Ale and Gabi take advantage of the students’ individual stories to teach their students about their world and help them gain pride in their cultural identity.

Lupe was the only teacher who addressed differentiation through the use of CRP in the survey. Lupe’s comment about teaching to meet the academic individual needs of every student describes the need to adapt your teaching not only academically but culturally. This comment references the need to teach in a culturally relevant manner, is not only, to teach the culture but to make it accessible to every student at their level, in other words, to differentiate instruction. Lupe, like Gabi, both mentioned the influence of students’ cultural identity in order to be Culturally relevant. Lupe added that, through the
individualization of academic learning and the influence of cultural identity students will benefit, improve, and better access their prior knowledge to conceptualize the information that they are learning. This inclusion of cultural identity, is similar to Ale’s comments on teaching students through stories that are relevant to their lives and on taking pride in their cultural identity.

Ariel’s response to the survey was the most different of the group but nevertheless, he believed that teaching history through the Latino point of view, allows students to embrace their cultural identity, the importance of learning, and sharing one’s story. The topic of cultural identity was a commonality and was evident in all of the responses of all four teachers.

**Pre-Observation Interviews**

**Conceptualization of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Overall, the four teachers conceptualized CRP as important. They highlighted reasons for its importance, such as helping students (a) identify themselves with their culture, (b) tell their story and to learn their history, and (c) involve their culture and self-discovery, as well as for educators to do this in a respectful manner. All SNS teachers talked about the importance of creating safe and caring environments in classrooms. They indicated the desire for students to be themselves, share their stories, and being able to take a risk with their language. In this way, students were allowed to make mistakes to build language skills, learn about their identity, gain confidence, and build their self-esteem. All four teachers talked about the importance of helping students to feel pride in
being Latino. However, Ale and Gabi focused on self-esteem and the importance of strengthening it, especially in today’s day and age.

**Ale**—Se busca que los alumnos sobre conecten con su cultura y su lengua de herencia y que fortalezcan esta identidad que es bilingüe y que es uni-cultural y esto se hace a través de los materiales, materiales que sean relevante…los estudiantes tienen un fuerte lazo afectivo con la lengua y que lo afectivo es muy importante dentro de la clase porque muchos de estos estudiantes tienen una baja autoestima frente a la lengua y como maestro se necesita fortalecer esa autoestima.

**Translation:** I hope for students to connect with their culture and their heritage language so that they strengthen this identity, which is bilingual and uni-cultural and this is done through the material, material that is relevant…students have a strong affective tie with their language and the emotional aspect is very important within the class because many of these students have a low self-esteem.

**Gabi**—involucrar la cultura de los estudiantes y el autodescubrimiento de donde vinieron y de sus antepasados para que se vean identificados y ayudarles sentirse orgullosos de ser latinos.

**Translation:** To involve the student’s culture and self-discovery of where they came and their ancestors so they can see themselves identified and to help them feel proud to be Latino.

Lupe and Ariel agreed with Ale and Gabi that SNS students need to see themselves reflected in the material and allow them to feel the pride of being Latino.
Although, Lupe and Ariel specifically referred to the teaching of the SNS students’ cultural history. They explained that the SNS students not only need to see themselves in the material, but it is also vital for them to feel respected and that it is our duty as their teacher to teach them who they are and where they come from through history lessons that are relevant to them. Lupe and Ariel, added that we need to respect our students to the point that they actually feel respected; in other words, not just say that we respect our students but for our students to feel respected and to allow them to be themselves.

Lupe-Es vital que la clase pueda verse identificados y que los estudiantes se sientan que ellos, su familia, su país e idioma son respetados. La importancia de aprender quienes son y de donde vienen y poder compartir su historia.

Translation: It is vital that the class can see itself identified and that the students feel that they, their family, their country, and language, are respected as well as the importance of learning who they are and where they come from and be able to share their story.

Ariel-Cultura, debemos enseñarles su historia, es importante para que sepan quienes son. La enseñanza de CRP debe enseñarles a identificarse y ser orgullosos de que su cultura, idioma e identidad es parte de ellos. Nuestro trabajo es enseñarles de manera respetuosa y darles la oportunidad de que sean ellos.

Translation: Culture, we must teach them their history, it is important so that they know who they are. The teaching of CRP should show them [the students] to identify with and to be proud that their culture, language, and identity is part of
them. Our job is to teach them in a respectfully and to give them the opportunity to be themselves.

All four SNS teachers referred to the importance of CRP in classrooms, describing it as a vital component of the SNS class. The research on CRP, my personal experience and research allowed me to better understand teachers who use CRP. I believe that a teacher using culturally relevant instruction focuses on creating an educational atmosphere that is not only culturally relevant for their students but also respectful of who they are and what they believe. A teacher who uses CRP must be highly aware of their own beliefs, attitudes, and biases to create a respectful environment that empowers their students to use their cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives for academic success.

These SNS teachers also stated that the SNS class encourages Latino students to identify with their cultural backgrounds and allowed them to feel a sense of belonging to the school. From their perspectives, this class helped fill the void in schools to make the school more inviting to Latino students and gave students the opportunity to be themselves and learn through culturally appropriate and relevant materials. These teachers described engaging and affirming students’ identities, worldviews, and cultural and experiential reference points in the learning process.

**Personal Cultural Experiences**

All four teachers believed that they brought the experience of their own culture into the classroom to help with their teaching and to make it more culturally relevant. All SNS teachers referred to themselves as being a Spanish Native Speaker, but each had a
way that they identify themselves. The life experiences shared by the teachers in their classrooms were done for a few reasons: (a) helped students tap into or build their prior knowledge, (b) helped students understand that they are not the only ones going through these difficult times, (c) created a safe environment in the classroom and (d) showed that the teacher understood their students and allowed the teacher and students to share their stories.

All participants came from diverse backgrounds: Ale had lived in Mexico and had studied in Spain and identified as Hispanic and Mexican-American, Gabi lived and studied in Spain and identified as Latino and Spanish, Lupe and Ariel both lived in Mexico as children and came to the US as teenagers and identified as Mexican. Lupe was working as an educator under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and shared the personal story of being undocumented and the challenges to become who he is today. Lupe stated that it is important for Latino students to hear these types of stories because not only do many of their students relate to these stories but also, most importantly, it gives them hope and the desire to succeed.

Es importante que los estudiantes vean a Latinos exitosos o profesionales para que ellos se puedan ver reflejados en estas posiciones de liderazgo y de prestigio para que ellos se puedan imaginar en este tipo de trabajo y puedan aspirar a mejorarse.

Translation: It is important that students see successful or professional Latinos for them to see themselves reflected in these positions of leadership and prestige so that they can imagine themselves in this type of work and aspire to better themselves.
Lupe reported that he used personal life examples to help students better understand the readings and this teacher believes that being Latino helps give credibility to teaching the Heritage Learner classes. He stated that culture has formed who this teacher is and has become and by sharing personal experiences, students will better relate to each other due to the common cultural experiences. This teacher used examples from life as a way to bring personal culture into the classroom.

Gabi talked about bringing experiences from life in a timely manner to help students understand the material and to help students tap into their prior knowledge because many of these experiences are familiar to the students.

No se les hace raro que les enseño a mis hijos en español ahora que me conocen, pero al principio como soy de piel clara y tengo acento español no creían que supiera español como ellos y por eso no podían creer que yo les hablaría a mis hijos en español. Trato de compartir con ellos mi cultura cuando es oportuno.

**Translation:** It does not seem strange [to my students] that I teach my kids Spanish now that they know me but at the beginning, as I am fair-skinned and have a Spanish accent, they did not believe that I knew Spanish like them and therefore they could not believe that I speak to my children in Spanish. I try to share my culture with them when it is appropriate.

One of the stories that Gabi shared was that students knew about his love of soccer and without any planning nor even for that matter inviting students, students started showing up before school to talk soccer. Through personal, cultural life experiences and examples
given by their SNS teachers, students can identify their commonalities with their teacher, helping to promote a safe environment for learning, sharing and expressing oneself.

Ale explained that cultural experiences are important to the SNS classroom and that she always brings examples from life. She mentioned that this experience goes way beyond music, celebrations, and food. The cultural struggles and differences from mainstream America that our students deal with day in and day out are made easier to understand through examples that allow them to feel “normal.” These types of experiences help Latino students validate their feelings and allow them to see that their life experiences are not that strange nor different.

**Conceptualization=Practice**

All teachers spoke about the importance of CRP in their SNS classroom and gave examples of how they have done it in the past. According to the answers given in the interviews, teachers believed in four major themes: (a) safe environment, (b) positive self-esteem, (c) history = identity, (d) identity = pride (in language, culture, and self)

All four SNS teachers gave examples of what is important to teach in the SNS classroom and how they incorporate CRP in their lesson. Each one of them believed that it is important to use CRP when they teach SNS students. Here are some ways in which they created a safe environment, encouraged self-esteem and taught culture, history, identity, and pride. The following teacher quotes are used to highlight each theme.

Gabi spoke about pride and identity and the importance of making sure to show the beauty of the students’ country, in this case, Mexico, and not to only concentrate on the negative aspects, since 99% of the students he teaches are Mexican. Elevating and
giving importance to their culture is especially helpful since students are constantly exposed to all the negative aspects of their culture.

La exploración les ayuda a verse identificados y les ayuda a involucrase en su estudio…muchos carecen de conocer que es ser mexicano, les ayudamos a descubrir quiénes son para que tengan confianza en sí mismo.

**Translation:** Exploration helps them to see themselves identified and helps them to get involved in their study…many lack the knowledge of what it means to be Mexican; we help them to discover who they are so they have confidence in themselves.

Ariel also mentioned the importance of giving SNS students pride in their culture and language and for them learn to be proud of who they are by teaching them grammar in context while teaching their history. Ariel compared his students to *parrots* because they only repeat but don’t understand the use of their native language. Ariel stated that he needs to teach his SNS students in a very different manner than his non-SNS Spanish students. He said that “I need to teach their history mixed with a bit of grammar.”

Les enseño de donde viene el español desde la conquista hasta el presente y como hay diferentes puntos de vista y dependiendo quien cuenta la historia. Mi trabajo es ayudarles verse reflejados en lo que aprenden para que les interese y se sientan orgullosos de quienes son y que sepan que en mis clases tendrán la oportunidad de contar su historia y sentirse con la libertad de expresarse en un ambiente seguro.

**Translation:** I teach them where Spanish comes from [starting] with the Spanish conquest to the present and how there are different points of view and depending
on who tells the story/history. My job is to help them to see themselves reflected in what they learn so that it interests them and they feel proud of who they are and so that they know that in my class they will have the opportunity to tell their story and for them to feel free to express themselves in a safe environment.

Ariel and Ale fostered a safe atmosphere by allowing students to share their stories. Ale stated that she created opportunities for students to become leaders and express themselves by allowing them to search for news that speaks about issues that are important to them. Ale included in her lesson an opportunity for students to be “El maestro” (the teacher) by allotting a 15 minute slot once a week for a student to present on an issue, in the news of their interest, concerning Latin America.

Demóstrarles que son respetados, escuchados, comprendidos y queridos es súper importante, especialmente para estos estudiantes que, la mayoría, simplemente no se siente parte de la escuela.

**Translation:** Showing them that they are respected, heard, understood, and loved is super important, especially for these students that, the majority, simply do not feel part of the school.

All of the SNS teachers spoke about the importance of creating a safe place for their students and how it influences the students’ sense of belonging to the school. Lupe added that the fact that he is Mexican allows him to relate to his SNS students and also gives them a sense of security.
Muchos se sienten validados cuando escuchan sus historias y la mía y todavía mejor cuando se dan cuenta de que yo pasé por experiencias similares a la de ellos cuando yo estaba en la escuela.

**Translation:** Many students feel validated when they listen to their stories and mine and even better when they realize that I went through similar experiences to theirs when I was in school.

All four SNS teachers expressed the use of CRP without using this term, but it was clear and evident through their examples that teaching in a culturally relevant manner was an important aspect of the SNS class. Researchers believe that CRP is a bridge between home and school (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2014; Gay, 2002). CRP is an ideology that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 18) All four teachers’ practices matched their conceptualizations of CRP, and this became more evident when I was able to observe them in action. Findings from classroom observations are shared in the next section.

**Observations**

I started with a thematic analysis of the observations to give a narrative of what I observed when I visited the SNS teachers’ classroom. This analysis allows the reader a deeper understanding of the use of CRP in the SNS classroom followed by the analysis of the use of the Herrera’s biography-driven practices evaluation tool. Both, the thematic
analysis followed by the analysis of Herrera’s (2010) evaluation tool gives the reader a complete picture of what I observed in the classroom.

During the observations, SNS teachers took the role of facilitator, allowing students to respond to questions, rephrasing what they said, and modeling what was expected. There were four aspects that teachers had in common: (a) teacher as facilitator, (b) comfortable and welcoming atmosphere, (c) teacher and students know each other, (d) calm entry into the classroom.

**Teacher as Facilitator**

All four teachers adopted roles as facilitators rather than being the instructor who exclusively lectures. They had the goals and objectives written on the board, making it clear to the students what they would be learning on that day. For example, Lupe had written on the board the words “positive and negative relationships.” The language and content objectives were also written on the board: “Students will use relationship vocabulary as they work with partners. Students will be able to identify positive and negative relationships as they sort their ideas on a T-chart.”

All four teachers conducted the class in Spanish – responding to students in Spanish and allowing students to express themselves in English or Spanish. Out of the four, only Lupe made a point to ask students to express themselves in complete Spanish when they would start speaking English. The other three teachers would accept students’ use of English or Spanglish since the use of English was kept to a bare minimum. Allowing students to express themselves in English or Spanglish and encouraging them to respond in Spanish is a way to validate who they are and respects their identity as
bilingual students. Understanding students’ stories and being sensitive to them are at the base of CRP. Geneva Gay (2002) stated that CRP is “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106).

Working as a facilitator takes preparation prior to giving the lesson. Everything must be set to allow students the opportunity to work together. Lupe used CRP, allowing the students to use their prior knowledge and become motivated in their learning. Lupe’s class started with a Quizlet live game to reinforce their prior knowledge and reviewing what was done in class in preparation for the quiz that took place the next day. Students signed into the Quizlet site and typed in the code to participate in the teacher-made-practice on the cities and capitals of Latin America. The students worked in small groups of three or four students (picked at random by the online program) and participated as a group to answer the questions. The lesson brought together what students had learned about Latin American countries and was a review in preparation for the upcoming quiz. Students were engaged and took it as a competition. Instead of the teacher picking students to answer questions, through thoughtful planning prior to class, Lupe was able to facilitate during the review and gave the class the ability to work together.

In another class, Gabi worked in groups to create their own government. Gabi had taught the students about the dictatorships in Latin America and our democratic government and specifically the various political parties in Mexico. Today they were going to work together in small groups of three or four to come up with a slogan for their political party. They were going to use the information that they learned to create a
political party and establish a government, according to them. Gabi served as a facilitator, going around asking and answering questions. Students worked hard to complete the work. All groups were able to complete the slogan and the drawing of their political party. They worked for about 25 minutes while the teacher helped the groups that needed assistance.

Ariel also acted as facilitator. In class, students answered questions to a short history film on the Mexican-American War. The groups worked together to come up with the answers, and the teacher moved from group to group making sure that they understood and were able to complete their task. Ariel was also a facilitator and made it easy for students to ask for help, and the students would wait for Ariel to be done with one group before interrupting the teacher. This activity took about 15 minutes to complete, and with the information, Ariel reviewed a grammar point on the preterit tense. Ariel used the content to go over grammar. Ariel was the only teacher to teach grammar in the lessons I observed. Although the other SNS teachers also mentioned about teaching grammar through content, I only witnessed Ariel.

Ale was also a facilitator; this teacher allowed the student to present on a newspaper article which took about 15 minutes. The teacher made sure to help out with the transitions of the activities and was able to give non-verbal cues whenever necessary to the student to facilitate the presentation. Ale was the best at non-verbal cues. She was able to communicate with the class without having to say a word. This was very noticeable during the student lead presentation and it was done mostly to guide the student and to keep order in the class.
Comfortable and Welcoming Atmosphere

All four teachers welcomed students by name and greeted them as they walked into class. The students returned the greeting and greeted other classmates. Another example of a safe environment in the classroom, all four teachers created an atmosphere where students shared their stories and offered each other kind words of encouragement. For example, Lupe helped create a safe environment by giving personal experiences and examples of positive and negative relationships, then asking the class to write three positive and three negative relationships and the reasons in Spanish. The students worked quietly thinking and writing down their responses as Lupe moved around the room helping out a few students. About six minutes were given for students to think and respond before they got the chance to share in small groups. Lupe created an atmosphere allowing the class to share freely, some examples were very personal, but due to a climate of acceptance and respect, the students freely and openly shared their thoughts and feelings.

In Ale’s class, a student took the role of teacher and explained his newspaper article and gave his presentation with pictures and background information to allow the class to understand the newspaper article better. The class was completely respectful, and they asked the students questions without any fear of being mocked. The student presenter was in charge of the class for about 15 minutes while the teacher monitored and helped facilitate the transition from one activity to the next.

In another class, Lupe had a new game he was trying out for the first time. The students were patient and willing to try. The game had questions that would show up on
the screen from the teacher’s computer, and each student would hold up a unique printed square design which had the option of A, B, C, or D. The students would hold the square with the side of the letter (answer) that they wanted to give and the teacher would use a phone to quickly scan the room. As the teacher went past the students’ choice, it showed up on the screen letting the student know if they were correct or not. The class participated and was respectful of each other. Lupe was the only teacher to use technology in a kinesthetic way; by having students turn and raise the cards, students were more alert and engaged. This helped differentiate the lesson and allowed student to see the material in a different manner. Latino students are social and teaching with this in mind helps students work together.

**Teacher and Students Know Each Other**

All four teachers spoke to students on different occasions about something personal throughout the class period. The teachers would not know students if they did not take the time to talk to them. All teachers greeted students with positive statements and addressed each one by name. Statements were specific to each student and indicated that the teachers knew the students. There were comments specific to the student’s life after school such as participation in a school sport, a job, or taking care of siblings at home. Gabi made a comment that stood out. This was the only comment which demonstrated that the students talked with their parents about the SNS class.

*Miguel, Dale las gracias a tus padres por pensar en nosotros, ya está por nacer nuestro bebé y me da gusto que le hayas contado a tus padres.*
Translation: Miguel, tell your parents thank you for thinking about us and our soon to be born baby, and it pleases me that you shared the news with your parents.

Gabi’s comment gives a better understanding of the type of classroom environment he created. Gabi believed that this example validated his use of CRP since not only did it make it clear to him that he cares about his students but that this particular student felt comfortable sharing with his parents.

Ariel made a comment to a student that exemplified a culturally responsive and relevant teacher. Ariel is a teacher who was aware of his student’s culture and home life to help build relationships in the classroom and build a bridge by creating ties with the student’s school and home life.

Te prometo que le llamo a tu mamá esta noche para dejarle saber que sí voy a tu fiesta de quinceañera.

Translation: I promise that I will call your mom this evening to let her know that I will be going to your quinceañera party.

These comments to their students, made it evident that these teachers not only knew their students but had constant communication with the students’ parents. All four SNS teachers had a comment similar to this one made by Gabi as he greeted a student and called him by his name and said.

Me mandó un correo tu papa que no ibas a poder venir a la práctica porque tenías que llevar, no sé dónde. ¿Cómo les fue a ti y a tu mama ayer? ¿Todo está bien?
**Translation:** Your dad sent me an email that you were not going to be able to go to practice because you had to take your mom somewhere. How did it go yesterday? Is everything okay?

These were just a few of the comments that the SNS teachers made as their students walked into class. Although these were visual examples I saw in the classroom, all four teachers provided the opportunity for them to get to know their students in the classroom through a variety of activities. Here is just one of the classes that I observed that allowed the teachers and students to get to know each other.

Lupe asked the students to open their reading books and asked what a relationship meant to them. As he went around asking students about *what is a relationship*, the students started giving examples about relationships from their own experience as well as those found in the chapter from the book they read. Lupe asked them for the definition of relationship, students gave examples, and the teacher kept probing to get more out of them and for them to think and give examples in Spanish: Does it have to be with a person? Can you have a relationship with your TV? Can you have a relationship with money, a sport, or school? Lupe told them that it is a connection, interaction and a bond with someone or something, Lupe asked the students to find out how to say *bond* in Spanish, one student gave the answer and the SNS teacher wrote it on the board. Students found it difficult to give the answer in Spanish, but the teacher kept probing to have them give the answer in Spanish. Students were encouraged to interact and respond; then the SNS teacher stated that we all have relationships, Lupe drew a chart on the board and asked for the students to give three positive relationships that they had and to give the
reason as to why they were positive. Lupe modeled and gave a few relationships from this teacher’s own experience and explained why they were important. This allowed students to learn more about Lupe. The three examples that Lupe gave were to talk about positive relationships; “I have a positive relationship with my family because everything I do is for their benefit,... [another] with my students because you are important to me and another [relationship] with my sport.” He also gave three negative examples, one with a family member, another with a few friends and the last was with a video game that he spends too much time playing. Lupe was able to use the book that they read to connect it to his life and by doing so he opened up communication, allowed his students to know more about him and created a safe environment for his students to share their stories.

**Calm Entry into the Classroom**

Creating a culture of learning and fostering a joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise was facilitated by the classroom set up of two of the four SNS teachers. Gabi and Lupe, even before the class started, had arranged the student desks into small groups in clusters of three. In each of the four classrooms, the students knew where they sat and were aware of the class expectations. Ale and Ariel already had them sitting in groups of three or four while Gabi and Lupe had them set up in pairs.

Ale, who set up the students in pairs, had tables in her room that could not be moved, but students were able to turn around and make groups of three or four very easily. She set students up in a traditional fashion with rows of tables all facing the board with two students at each table and no space between each table preventing students from moving up a row. Once a student sat down, they would have to ask the others in the row
to get up in order for them to move out of the row. There were 30 student seats, five rows of tables with six students in each row. Although the space didn’t allow for much movement, Ale made this set up work by having her students work with *sus compañeros de codos* (their elbow partner). She said, “Latinos work very well as a team and are more social and are more likely to participate in a large group if I give them time to solve the question among themselves.”

As students filled the room in all four classrooms, they knew where to sit and were talking to each other, smiling and laughing; they seemed comfortable and glad to be in class. Students knew where they belonged and seemed to know the routine. All four teachers referred students to the objectives that were written on the board, but only two started with calling attention to the objectives. Lupe started with a reminder of an opportunity for them to go and listen to college students and professionals talk about their experiences in college and tips on how to be successful. He encouraged them to go and started off class.

Then Lupe asked the students to share as a whole group, the students started to give examples such as a negative relationship, then he moved to fill in the chart on the board with students’ responses such as: negative relationship with the alarm clock, junk food, girls, time (Lupe asked for explanations to each of the student responses), telephone, one student said family (students reacted and Lupe replied that it could be possible.) As a class, they continued to fill out the chart with the positive, but students went back to the negative examples. The conversation began with students adding and moving the examples from positive to negative and back and forth, and the students tried
to explain their reasoning. As the students gave their reactions, Lupe brought them back to the fact that these are results of the decisions that they have made. He asked them to pick the four most important relationships they see themselves having in ten years. Lupe asked them to draw a pyramid to put their number one on top and the other three below, with the top one being the most important. After doing this, Lupe asked them to reflect on their top four relationships at this time in their lives and to draw another pyramid. Lupe split them up into pairs; the discussion was personal and pertinent to each and every student. Then the question was asked, are your two pyramids exactly the same, who has a completely different pyramid? The conversations were about the change of priorities and what they needed to do to prepare for their future. Lupe referred to the percentage of the Latinos who are successful and those who are not. Lupe gave an example of one of the students in the class who recently broke up with his girlfriend and used this as a way to show how priorities change and what they needed to focus on at this moment. Lupe reminded them about the relationship with money, at their age, should not be a priority because if they work hard and study, they will be successful and the money will follow. The SNS teacher gave them the opportunity to reflect and think about the future in a safe and caring environment. Each teacher created a culture of learning that fostered a joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise. The mood was set from the moment the student entered the classroom.

This analysis allows the reader a deeper understanding of the use of CRP in the SNS classroom followed by the analysis of the use of the Herrera’s (2010) biography-driven practices evaluation tool. Both, the thematic analysis followed by the analysis of
Herrera’s evaluation tool gives the reader a complete picture of what was observed in the classroom.

**Herrera’s (2010) Biography-Driven Evaluation Tool**

Herrera’s (2010) biography-drive practices evaluation tool was also used to analyze the SNS teachers’ classroom observation to help triangulate the data with the thematic analysis above. This allowed for two different types of analysis to have a deeper understanding of the data. The results of the SNS teacher observation are listed below.

Table 1 shows the scores of all four SNS teachers for category I. Joint Productive Activity.

Table 1

*Teachers' Scores on Joint Productive Activity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biography-Driven Practices</th>
<th>I. Joint Productive Activity (JPA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Not Observed</td>
<td>1 Emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Environment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Collaboration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*TPSI</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner/Grouping Determination</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Connections</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TPSI=Total Group, Partner, Small Group, Individual*
For the first category, I. Joint Productive Activity (JPA) all four teachers scored 4 out of 4 for all categories except Ale, for whom partner/grouping determination was given a rating of 3. The set-up of the room with long tables made it difficult to move things around and for students to move the tables. In this class students worked with the person to their left or right or the person sitting in front or behind of them.

These four teachers (a) orchestrated conditions and situations to ensure that students collaborated as equal members in a low-risk learning community, (b) collaborated with students to create joint products that integrated language and content standards, (c) provided consistent structured opportunities for purposeful student interaction that promoted development of the CLD student biography and, (d) consistently used insights from the activity to make connections, affirm learning, and modified instruction as needed.

Ale was the only teacher with a different result to the questions in the I. JPA. As for the other SNS teachers; Gabi, Lupe and Ariel had similar results in the Herrera biography-driven practices observation tool. For the category “I. Joint Productive Activity” Gabi, Lupe and Ariel received five “Integrating” scores of 4, which is the highest score possible in five of five sub-categories adding up to a 20/20. All but Ale got a four in all five sub-categories.

There was little variation in findings for the second category “II. Language and Literacy Development” (see Table 2). All four teachers scored a four out of four on all sub-components, except for Ale, who scored a 3 out of 4 for questioning, rephrasing, modeling. Ale received a score of three (Enacting) in this category because the teacher
made frequent use of purposeful “Questioning, Rephrasing, Modeling” (QRM) to assist language and literacy development.

Below is the result of the second category “Language and Literacy Development” for all of the SNS teachers. As mentioned before, it was clear that all of the teachers had similar beliefs and were similar when it came to the development of language and literacy in Spanish. Ale received a 15/16 and the other three SNS teacher scored a 16/16 on the observation tool as seen here.

Table 2

Teachers’ Scores on Language and Literacy Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biography-Driven Practices</th>
<th>II. Language and Literacy Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Not Observed</td>
<td>1 Emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*LSRW</td>
<td>Ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning, Rephrasing, Modeling</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Language (Spanish)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*LBK</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15/16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*LSRW=Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing
*LBK=Background Knowledge of Language/Literacy

Once again, the only teacher with a slightly different result was Ale with a score of 15/16. The SNS teacher received a three on the sub-category of (QRM) for the II.
Category of “Language and Literacy Development.” The SNS teacher gave an example of the importance for the students to express themselves in Spanish and to elevate the language to academic Spanish.

**Ale**- Entonces siempre antes de empezar cualquier actividad trato de relacionar el tema con ellos y con lo que ya saben. Motivarles de siempre estar hablando español porque con las presiones políticas y todo últimamente a veces tenemos miedo de hablar español en público porque nos van a buscar o decir que no sabemos inglés, entonces eso es otro punto importante.

**Translation:** Well, always before starting any activity I attempt to relate the issue with them [SNS students] and with what they already know. I try to motivate them to always talk in Spanish because with today’s political pressures and everything, lately sometimes we are afraid to speak Spanish in public because people are going to look for or say that we don’t know English that is another important point.

This quote gave us a look into the SNS teacher’s thinking and belief of the importance of using the students’ language and the complications which might accompany its use especially in today’s new world. Gay (2002) stated that the teacher should use the students’ own cultural experiences in order to make it easier for them to access their prior knowledge. This allowed us to see the consistent use of students’ culture-bound ways of comprehending, communicating, and expressing themselves to help aid and serve as a springboard for academic language and literacy development.
Findings indicated that the teachers varied more on the third and fourth categories of the scale. Scores on category three, “III. Contextualization,” are shown in Table 3. In the category III. Contextualization (see Table 3), only Gabi received a 12/12 and the other three SNS teachers received an 11/12.

Table 3

*Teachers’ Scores on Contextualization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biography-Driven Practices</th>
<th>III. Contextualization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Not Observed</td>
<td>1 Emerging Ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>BK3</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets/Community of Learners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography Connections</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BK3=Funds of Knowledge (family), Prior Knowledge (community), Academic Knowledge (school)*

With only three sub-categories, both teachers Ale and Ariel received a score of three (enacting) for the sub-category of “Assets/Community of Learners” (A/CL) they provided frequent opportunities for students to share/document their content-related connections to their background knowledge and purposefully listen/observe as students share/document. While only Lupe received a three (enacting) on “Background Knowledge: family, community, school,” (BK3) the teacher provided all students the opportunity to share/document their funds of knowledge, prior knowledge, and academic
knowledge about the topic but came short when it came to documenting students’
background knowledge to be used throughout the lesson. The other three teachers
provided the latter, earning a rating of four (Integrating). Ale, Lupe and Ariel rated a
score of 11/12 while only Gabi rated a score of 12/12.

Ale’s observation resulted in a total of 17 labels of “integrating-level 4” out of 22
sub-categories. Ale received a 17 out of 22, Ariel, Gabi, and Lupe received a 19 out of
22, at the level four (integrating). All four SNS teachers were observed either enacting or
integrating the components of the Herrera evaluation tool, rating very high in most sub-
categories scoring between a three (enacting) or four (integrating). Besides the fact that
Ale stated in the interview that CRP is the only way to teach these students, it was
reaffirmed in the observation through the results in the Herrera tool. Ale’s statements of
truly believing that CRP is an important must use in the SNS classroom.

Obviamente el curso para hispanohablantes es muy relevante a ellos por
naturaleza, pero hay que hacer la conexión por ejemplo con la historia en su
historia.

**Translation:** Obviously the Spanish Native Speaker course is very relevant to
them [SNS students] by nature, but one must make the connection, for example
with history through their history.

Findings indicated that the teachers varied more on the third and fourth categories of the
scale. Scores on category four, “IV. Challenging Activities”, are shown in Table 4.
Table 4

*Teachers’ Scores on Challenging Activities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biography-Driven Practices</th>
<th>IV. Challenging Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Not Observed</td>
<td>1 Emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ale</td>
<td>Gabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content/language Objectives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards/Expectations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Filter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*TPSI=*Total Group, Partner, Small Group, Individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/20</td>
<td>18/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings indicated that the teachers scored a four (integrating) in all sub-categories of the scale for category five, “V. Instructional Conversation,” are shown in Table 5.

All four SNS teachers helped students build prior knowledge, encouraged and elicited students to speak about the material, used the vocabulary to guide their students to state their opinions and helped clarify students’ thoughts. This was present in all the classes, which were observed. According to Gay (2000), “the processes of learning – not the intellectual capability to do so – used by students from different ethnic groups are influenced by their cultural socialization” (p. 147).
Ariel allowed students to express their concerns about the information they learned on the Mexican American war. Students were given the opportunity to discuss, in Spanish, how they felt about the land grab and the expansion of the United States. Ariel guided the students to articulate their point of view. Ariel facilitated the discussion and allowed students to help each other in small groups.

Gabi allowed the same level of discussion and aided students to articulate their thought on the subject of political parties. They worked in groups to use what they had already learned and to use their prior knowledge to use their interpersonal communication skills, with the help of the vocabulary, for them to express their thoughts, allowing students to talk to each other form their own political party. Gabi moved from group to group helping the students identify the important aspects of their group’s ideas.

Lupe elicited students to talk in small groups and as a whole group allowing them to express their views to the class. He helped by rephrasing the students’ thoughts to help the class understand each other’s point of view. They were asked to think about their relationships and to build their prior knowledge to better predict what relationships they might need to form in the future.

Ale also aided the students to articulate their views and to express their opinions using academic language in Spanish to communicate with the entire class. Students freely shared their opinions, expressing what they have learned. All four teachers demonstrated all of the sub-categories in class the day of the observation as described in the Herrera tool for category five “V. Instructional Conversation.”
Table 5

*Teachers’ Scores on Instructional Conversation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biography-Driven Practices</th>
<th>V. Instructional Conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 Not Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliciting student talk</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Known to Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BICS/CALP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-voicing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Articulate Views</td>
<td>20/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BICS/CALP= Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills/Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

**Post-Observation Interviews**

After teachers were interviewed and observed, they verbalized what CRP meant to them. They reflected on the lesson and how they used CRP in their classrooms.

According to the answers given in the post-observation interviews, these teachers all referred to three principal themes: (a) use of CRP, (b) conceptualization of CRP, and the (c) need for SNS classrooms and SNS leadership.

The four SNS teachers spoke about how they used CRP in their lessons. They also referred to the importance of bringing their personal experiences to class, allowing students to tell their stories and helping them build on their prior knowledge. Sharing
their personal experiences allowed these teachers to make connections to their students’ lives and for them to more easily teach in a culturally relevant manner. All four SNS teachers also felt that the lesson I observed went well, and when asked if they would re-teach it the following year, they all responded that they would revisit that lesson. They also made suggestions on how they might change or do the lesson slightly different. They were self-reflective and willing to make changes to improve their use of CRP. These examples revealed their use of CRP and willingness to adapt their lesson in order to improve it for next year.

**Gabi**—Sí volveré a dar esta lección porque estaban enganchados, involucrados, interesados y emocionados con el tema. Este es el primer día y si no tenemos esa motivación, mal nos va ir por el resto de la lección…

**Translation:** Yes, I will do this lesson again because they were engaged, involved, interested, and excited about the topic. This was the first day [of the lesson] and if we don’t have that motivation the rest of the project will not turn out well.

Gabi mentioned that the lesson was a bit difficult for the students and that next year he would create posters with the information to help them better understand the material prior to starting the lesson. Gabi reflected for a bit before answering; he told me that next year he would start with a “Brainstorming” session before putting them into groups in order guide them through the process to see how to develop a solution. Gabi also said that he would work with the students to make a list of the problems and help them develop it more before putting them into groups.
Hicimos un proyecto de campaña presidencial en donde los estudiantes se anunciaban con propuestas electorales para ser presidente de México. Fue una experiencia muy reveladora para nuestros estudiantes. Nos permitió dialogar sobre problemas sociales, económicos y gubernamentales en un contexto muy relevante y motivador para ellos.

Translation: We made a presidential campaign project where students were advertising, with electoral proposals, to be president of Mexico. It was an enlightening experience for our student. It allowed us to discuss social, economic and governmental problems in a context that is very relevant and motivating to them.

Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The SNS teachers created a culture of learning that fostered a joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise. The mood was set from the moment the student entered the classroom. I brought up this observation at their post-observation interview to all four SNS teachers and they all perceived that their SNS classroom was a safe haven for their students allowing them to be whom they are and giving them a sense of security and calm.

Ale and Lupe were the only two SNS teachers who specifically spoke about their use of culturally relevant readings and the reason why they used these in their classroom. Ale called her students camaradas because both her and her students, share ideas, activities or experiences, and work towards the same goal to succeed in class. Ale included in the SNS curriculum a book that she believes to be culturally relevant: “La
travesía de Enrique” (Nazario, 2006) is the story of a young man who crosses the border to come to the United States. She stated that teaching in a culturally relevant manner involved everything from the planning, implementation and material to the way the information is presented. The instructional content must be connected to their culture, customs, and even their being Latino. Ale was not the only SNS teacher to perceive the need to teach SNS students differently from non-SNS students and that SNS classroom must be taught in a culturally relevant manner.

Tengo que enseñarles un poco diferente a ellos que a mis estudiantes de español tres regular.

Translation: I have to teach them a little different than my regular three Spanish students.

Lupe used a book by Gary Soto, “Tomando Partida” (Soto & Mercado, 2016) which he told me is completely relevant for his Spanish-speakers. The book is about a young man, a teenager, who moved from a poor neighborhood to the suburbs and how he needs to learn to adapt to his new environment with new friends of another race. Lupe told me that the SNS class must be taught in a culturally relevant way and that by using diverse books students may see themselves reflected in what they are reading. This is especially important when they began to talk about their family; one of the themes of the book is relationships. Lupe helped his students better understand what positive and negative relationships were by sharing examples from his life and comparing them to the book. This helped lead the conversation making it easier to talk about their identity and discussion about who helps us shape our identity. Lupe believed that “Finding culturally
relevant topics is extremely important so that students can develop academically.”

Through stories, whether from personal experiences or a culturally relevant book, the student can see themselves represented allowing them to become more interested, engaged and adapt to learning and procure their prior knowledge.

Entre más puedan verse reflejados en las historias, estarán más dispuestos a compartir sus propias experiencias de una manera auténtica y real.

**Translation:** The more they can see themselves reflected in the stories, they will be more willing to share their own experiences in an authentic and real way.

Ariel made a statement that goes to the core of learning, he said that what students learn today will help them make the connections tomorrow. He was speaking mainly about teaching students their history so that they might be able to tie together their sense of identity and through this build their pride in who they are.

**Ariel**-Hoy les va a ayudar a comprender y después hacer conexiones con el movimiento Chicano y la lucha de los derechos civiles de los Latinos.

**Translation:** Today I will help them understand the lesson so that in the future they can make the connection with the Chicano movement and the struggle of Latinos’ civil rights.

All of the SNS teachers were self-reflective and gave ways in which they might do the lesson differently the following year. These four teachers were aware of the importance of including the students’ backgrounds and culture in their lesson and even after implementing a successful lesson, they wanted to improve it to make sure that they help their student see themselves in what is being taught. CRP allowed them to be the
person in charge of creating and changing the curriculum to fit the needs of the students better. A culturally relevant and respectful environment has teachers who are highly aware of their own beliefs, attitudes and biases, empower their students to use their own cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives for academic success, and engages and affirms student’s identities, worldviews, and cultural and experiential reference points in the learning process. CRP is an instructional approach that focuses on creating an educational environment that is culturally appropriate and respectful. These are just a few of the comments that the teachers shared during the interview.

**Ale**-todo lo haría igual con la excepción del Quizlet live. Yo creo que la próxima vez empezaría con el ejercicio del lenguaje y la corrección de los errores del lenguaje.

**Translation:** I would do everything the same with the exception of Quizlet live. I think that the next time I would begin with the language exercise and the correction of language errors.

**Gabi**-Claro, pero creo que cambiaría el juego para el final de la clase [ya que] fue un repaso para la prueba de mañana y creo que hubiera sido más productivo al final.

**Translation:** Of course, I think that I would change the game to the end of the class since it was a review for tomorrow’s quiz and I believe that it would have been more productive at the end.

These SNS teachers were able to see the positive that came out of the lesson and for that reason they plan to re-teach the same lesson with a few changes. Ale and Lupe
both felt that the use of the game could be used at a different time and that although it allowed for a transition and an opportunity for students to work in small groups, they both felt that it would be wise to move the game to another day or to the end of the class time, for them to improve their lesson. Gabi did not play a game during the lesson, but he also kept his students engaged, interested, and motivated to learn as evident by the students’ active participation in the class while in small groups or whole group instruction.

Gabi was the only teacher who gave a detailed example of what he would do differently in the lesson the next time he taught it. Gabi spoke the change he would include the next time he taught this lesson. Gabi mentioned that he would model the process expected of his students prior to starting this lesson and allowing them to work through this process so that it would not feel foreign when he needed them to produce the product.

Lupe mentioned that he would like to do a pre-lesson a day or two before he actually presented it to the class in order to help them know what was expected. He explained how he would first break them up into small groups, then how he would guide them through the process with the aid of posters. Lupe also added that he would facilitate the brainstorming process to promote independence in their thinking and assist in the organization of the material to be used. After reflecting, Lupe realized that what he asked his students to do was much more challenging but he believed that with a little more preparation prior to the lesson his students would be more likely to produce a much better product.
Ale and Gabi demonstrated cultural awareness and a way to build identity in the classroom through the use of nicknames. Ale and Gabi were the only two SNS teachers of the four to use positive nicknames (apodos) to refer to some students, Ale and Gabi shared their use of *apodos*. This was interesting since this practice of giving nicknames to each other is common in Latin America and is another example of how Ale and Gabi used CRP to help make students feel welcomed and safe.

**Ale** - Le di el apodo de maestro [al estudiante], no solo porque se preparó como maestro y estaba liderando la lección, pero también porque en la cultura latina es muy común dar apodos o un título y también le da credibilidad, más confianza, y más seriedad a los muchachos que le ponían atención.

**Translation:** I gave the student the nickname of “maestro”, not only because he was prepared like a teacher and he was leading the lesson, but also because in the Latino culture, it is customary to give a nickname or a title, which also provides credibility, more confidence, and brings a sense of seriousness so that the students pay more attention [to him as he presents].

**Gabi** - También me gusta darles apodos, al muchacho que le llamamos alcalde, fue porque él hizo una presentación sobre una persona que nació en el pueblo Guzmán y él [muchacho] se apellida Guzmán y creo que [los apodos] les ayudan a identificarse con lo que estamos haciendo y le crea un sentido de orgullo e importancia.

**Translation:** I also like to give them nicknames, the boy we call “the mayor”, was because he made a presentation on a town called Guzman and this boy’s
name is Guzman and I believe that this helps them identify with what we are doing and creates a sense of pride and importance.

**Conceptualization of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

All four SNS teachers believed that there is a need to use CRP in their SNS classroom. All four teachers used CRP to teach the material to their students but they had not been aware that they were using CRP. Of course, they wanted to make the class relevant to their students and used culturally relevant instructional material but it wasn’t until they reflected through the process of this study that they were able to put a name to the theoretical framework they used in class, acknowledging their use of CRP in their lesson. According to Ladson-Billings (1992), the implementation of CRP leads to “empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” (p. 382). Gabi made a statement that he I felt like a light bulb went off for him and he said “I now understand that what I am constantly doing [in my classroom], is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy!” He was not the only teacher to realize that what they have been doing was to teach in a culturally relevant manner. Lupe added that the teacher who creates lessons that have all these components and take into account the students and relate the instruction to their personal lives uses CRP.

**Ale**-Me da mucho gusto que tuve la oportunidad de reflexionar…Ellos tienen que saber cómo manejar, manipular dos mundos diferentes.

**Translation**: I’m glad that I had the opportunity to reflect…They have to know how to handle, manipulate two different worlds.
Gabi-Después de hablar contigo he llegado a eso…proveerles materiales culturalmente relevante es como darles un espejo para que ellos se vean reflejados en el currículo.

Translation: After talking with you, I have come to this …providing culturally relevant materials is like giving them a mirror so that they see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Lupe-La pedagogía culturalmente relevante es una manera de enseñar en la cual puedes motivar y educar a tus estudiantes de una manera en la que ellos sientan que tienen valor, son aceptados y respetados, y sepan que su cultura vale y que es reconocida.

Translation: CRP is a way of teaching which can motivate and educate your students in a manner in which they feel valued and feel that they are accepted and that they are respected and that their culture is worth and recognized.

The four SNS teachers were not asked if the study or this process helped them gain a better knowledge of CRP. They expressed freely their feelings regarding the insight they gained, by participating in this study, about themselves, their teaching and the use of CRP.

Need for Spanish Native Speaker Classrooms and Leadership

The SNS teachers asserted a tremendous need for SNS classes. These classes are not taught like a traditional foreign language and are necessary to the instruction of Spanish for the native speaker student. Ale stated that the SNS class is the most appropriate class for SNS students because the use of relevant themes allows them to take
risks because they feel comfortable and they identify with their classmates who come from similar situations.

**Ale**-Hay que llegar a saber las historias de nuestros estudiantes. Una clase de SNS es muy diferente a una clase regular y es única para los estudiantes Nativos. Ellos ven temas relevantes a ellos y pueden tomar más riesgos porque se sienten identificados con sus compañeros y por supuesto con su maestro.

**Translation**: We must get to know the stories of our students. A class of SNS is very different from a regular class and is unique for native students. They see issues that are relevant to them and they can take more risks [in the classroom] because they identify with their classmates and of course their teacher.

Ale stated that one of the most significant benefits of a SNS class was that SNS students have a shared experience giving them a safe place and opportunity to understand their culture with profundity. All four SNS teachers spoke of the importance to teach their SNS students’ academic Spanish, including grammar, through their culture and in context. Lupe explicitly stated, “You cannot separate the language from the culture and this is why it is important to teach them in a culturally relevant manner.”

**Gabi**-Les estamos enseñando su idioma materno, su lengua de sus antepasados para que se vean reflejados, tiene que ser un espejo donde ellos se ven y donde se ven representados.

**Translation**: In this [SNS] course, we are teaching them their mother language, the language of their ancestors so that they see themselves reflected.

Lupe was the only SNS teacher to mention the parents of the SNS students and he spoke
of the disadvantages, low academic level, and lack of time due to their need to work. According to (Bahena, 2014), socioeconomic status (SES) contributes to the lack of necessary educational resources like books and computers in these students’ homes. She said that SES students are less likely to have attended center-based child care, and are read to less often by their parents than are more advantaged Hispanic Subgroups (South America- and Cuban-origin students, Third-generation Mexican students, students from homes where English is the predominant language used (Bahena, 2014).

The *immigrant optimism* is an important factor that contributes to first-generation immigrants’ success in school. Kao and Tienda (1995) defined the term *immigrant optimism* which describes academic success through the high expectations and behaviors of immigrant parents that promote the academic success of their children. Parental educational expectations, however, are highest among the most disadvantaged groups—higher even than the expectations of non-Hispanic White parents, consistent with a pattern of *immigrant optimism* (Fuligni, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1995).

Lupe told me that he teaches mostly first-generation students, most of his students are born here in the U.S. of immigrant parents, specifically from Mexico. He noted that his students did not come with the same academic level as compared to English-speaking classmates. He perceived that Latinos are at a disadvantage due to having a late start in school and the struggles their parents had to endure but they are also very grateful of the opportunities they have and this correlates with the term *immigrant optimism* (Fuligni, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1995) which allows his students the *ganas* (will/desire) to succeed.
Estos padres vienen de un nivel académico y social-económico bajo, los hijos no están recibiendo los mismos apoyos académicos que alguien que nació aquí en una clase media o alta y están en una desventaja educativa desde que empiezan la escuela.

Translation: These parents come from low level of academic and social-economic status, the children are not receiving the same academic support as someone who was born here in the middle or upper class and are in an educational disadvantage when they start school.

To help SNS students learn their native language and get ahead in all the classes, Ariel believed that the SNS class must be implemented in all schools where there are Spanish-speaking students because “these SNS classes open the door for [Spanish-speaking] students to take an advanced placement (AP) course in Spanish and that encourages them to take other AP classes.” All of the SNS teachers believed that if a student is not fluent or strong in their native language, they will not be able to command the second language. According to Lewelling and Payton (1999), “the average heritage language student possesses a level of competence in many aspects of his or her ancestral language that far exceeds what typical students in foreign language courses can attain after many years of formal study” (p. 2). This was the very point that Ariel makes below in his quote; the SNS teacher’s job is to strengthen and improve on the SNS students’ skills. Ariel commented that everyone expects the SNS student to know Spanish but why if “they are not fluent because they have never studied their own language.”
**Ariel**-Es como un edificio que los cimientos no están tan fuertes y necesitan arreglo; la clase de hispanohablantes les ayuda a reforzar su edificio en la base enseñándoles, historia, cultura, idioma, vocabulario y esto les ayuda a mantener su cultura.

**Translation:** This is like a building that is missing levels, but the foundations are not strong and need fixing; the Spanish-speaking class helps them reinforce their building at the base, by teaching them history, culture, language, and vocabulary, this helps them maintain their culture.

As the conversation went on during the interviews, all four teachers believed that the most appropriate teacher to teach a SNS class would be a SNS teacher. Much of the formal training strategies and methods these non-SNS teachers received was not suitable to meet the needs of their native Spanish-speaking students (Lewelling & Payton, 1999; Pino, 1997).

Only Ale commented about the possibility of having a non-SNS teacher. She believed that it might be possible for a non-native teacher to teach a SNS class with caution.

Hay que proceder con cautela. Digo esto porque si [el maestro] tiene la pasión, la energía y las ganas de aprender de ellos [los estudiantes] y conoce la cultura, aunque va a ir aprendiendo junto con ellos, puede enseñar estas clases. Es importante que les den a ellos [los estudiantes hispanohablantes] el respeto y reconocer que algunos de ellos hablan mejor español que uno, solo así sería
posible que un maestro no-nativo enseñe esta clase [español para hispanohablantes].

**Translation:** We must proceed with caution. I say this because if [the teacher] has the passion, energy and the desire to learn from them [the SNS student] and learn their culture, although they will be learning [their culture] along with them [Spanish-speaking students] while understanding how crucial it is to give them [the SNS students] the respect and recognize that some of the SNS students speak better Spanish then them, only then can it be possible that a non-native teacher teach this class [Spanish for Spanish-speakers].

Ale brought up the possibility of a non-SNS teacher teaching a SNS class but stated that it is vital for that teacher to work on getting to know the students, their culture, their story and their language. Ale referred to a possible challenge of the non-SNS teacher, not being as proficient in Spanish as the SNS students. Ale’s statement is supported by Campbell (1996) who stated that in some cases, the Hispanic students were more fluent in oral Spanish than the teacher. This might be a significant reason why some non-SNS teachers would prefer not to teach a SNS class. Ale made it clear that even if a non-native teacher can speak Spanish well, it is critical for this teacher to want to learn and respect their students’ culture and to teach the SNS class in a culturally relevant manner.

If the SNS teacher doesn’t know the culture, they must learn it as they go from the *experts* the SNS students. A non-SNS teacher, might not have many similar experiences that could be shared but he or she can still share examples of their life and emphasize the
similarities of the life experiences from the students’ stories to another students’ in the class. Sharing life stories are important to creating pride and building self-esteem and confidence because they share a common story. Sharing students’ stories, help students create a bridge between school and home. These conditions are characteristics that the SNS teacher naturally bring to the SNS class.

Only Gabi and Ariel talked about the importance and the need of having SNS administrator not only to help build the SNS program but to better understand the SNS students in their schools. The issues of not knowing the language and culture by school leaders affect the support they get for the SNS programs. Gabi and Ariel mentioned that it is essential to have at least one SNS administrator to better serve the needs of the Latino population in their school. Ariel further explained that a reason to have a SNS administrator at a school with SNS students is the lack of understanding of the SNS students’ and teachers’ culture.

Socialmente, dos personas pueden interpretar un acontecimiento en diferentes maneras simplemente porque las dos personas no comparten la misma herencia. Muchas personas saben lo que está pasando, pero sus reacciones sobre lo que vieron va a ser diferente ya que pueden ser de diferentes culturas.

**Translation:** Socially, two people can interpret an event in different ways simply because they do not share the same heritage. Many people know what is happening, but their reactions to what they saw will be different since they may be from different cultures.
Ariel was referring to the lack of Latino administrators and the need to have the student body represented even at the highest levels of administration. He explained that there is a difference between being just bilingual and being bilingual/bicultural.

Gabi also talked about the importance of having a person that is bilingual and bicultural evaluating him because what the administrator sees going on in class might not translate to what is actually going on. Gabi told me that he wanted people to understand the cultural nuances that were going on in his classroom. He felt that a SNS administrator would catch the connection between his students and him and see the importance of the use of his culture in the classroom.

Gabi gave an example that was displayed right outside his room. On the walls of the hallway, there were pictures depicting famous world leaders. Gabi reminded me that half of the school population was Mexican and then told me in disgust that the three leaders on the wall were not culturally relevant, coming from Spain including Christopher Columbus who was not even Spanish. Gabi stated that the administration tried to be inclusive but due to their lack of understanding, no culturally relevant Latino heroes were represented such as Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, Sonia Sotomayor, Sylvia Mendez, or Sandra Cisneros. The school’s lack of diversity at the administration level is also due in part to the lack of SNS administrators. This is why Gabi stated that it is essential to at least have one administrator who is aware of CRP and is diverse in order to make changes to school hiring and better represent the student body.

Both Gabi and Ariel brought up this issue of the need for SNS administrators, even though the questions were not presented to them. They wanted to verbally express
their concerns regarding the perceived void of SNS administrators during the post-
observation interview.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reiterated the three research questions and discussed the data
sources of the study. SNS teachers’ pre-observation interviews, observations and post-
observation interviews indicated that CRP was present in the SNS classroom. All four
SNS teachers expressed that participating in this study aided their comprehension of CRP
and confirmed that their teaching practices aligned with the belief of the SNS classroom
and the framework of CRP. Interviews with the SNS teachers demonstrated their working
definitions of CRP, as well as intentions and plans of implementation in classrooms.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

“When everyone at school is speaking one language, and a lot of your classmates’ parents also speak it, and you go home and see that your community is different—there is a sense of shame attached to that. It really takes growing up to treasure the specialness of being different.”

-Sonia Sotomayor
First Latina Supreme Court Justice (1954)

I begin this final chapter with a reflection on my own practice: How am I—as a teacher, mentor, and advocate for under-privileged student populations—changing as a result of CRP and social justice? I became a teacher after a calling to this profession. I take offense to the cliché comment: *Those who cannot do, teach*. The teaching profession—particularly the teaching of languages—needs talented, highly qualified, and dedicated people who can indeed *do*. According to the commission on language learning from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Randel & Fanton, 2017), one of the most significant obstacles to improve language learning is the national shortage of qualified teachers. I am sure that like me, there are many who think that teaching is not only a profession but a calling, a passion. Teachers, who have been called to teach, have a passion for the job, and most importantly for their students. The majority of teachers who enter the teaching profession do so to be advocates for students. I believe that teachers who are passionate about teaching, care about their students, and take the time to listen to student stories already use aspects of CRP in the classroom.
Prior to learning about CRP, I was using aspects of CRP in my classroom as a language teacher. When I began to research CRP, I became aware of my consistent use in practice. I also realized my unconscious use of more culturally relevant material in my SNS classes than my other Spanish non-SNS classes. CRP seemed necessary in SNS classes to make instruction meaningful for my Latino students. After my research, I reflected on my use and the importance of CRP in my SNS classes. I became attentive to my use and wanted to find out if other SNS teachers were aware of CRP and if they were applying this framework in their SNS classes.

Reflecting on my dissertation journey, I have learned a lot about myself as a teacher, leader, and researcher in the SNS classroom. Initially, I set out to tell the stories of the SNS teachers and to give them a voice of what goes on in the SNS classroom. I anticipated that these SNS teachers would naturally be using CRP in the classroom in part because I am a SNS teacher who does the same. In this way, I was not surprised to see that all four teachers were implementing aspects of CRP to different degrees. Ale, Gabi, Ariel, and Lupe embraced students’ backgrounds as resources for learning, created a safe environment, and encouraged self-esteem. Nonetheless, they varied in some regard based on lesson delivery of culture and history.

**The Current Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine SNS teachers’ perceptions and use of CRP in the SNS classroom. CRP (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gay, 2002; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2014) is an approach that enhances academic, social and emotional development and consciously strives to work more effectively with students of
color. CRP uses students’ cultural ways of being and knowing as a source of content for instruction (Scherff & Spector, 2010).

I investigated four SNS teachers from different schools to see whether their beliefs matched the practices observed in their classroom. The following questions guided my research: (a) How do SNS educators conceptualize CRP? (b) How do SNS educators bring their own culture into the classroom to inform instruction? and (c) To what extent do SNS educators’ practices match their conceptualizations of CRP?

Overall, extant literature has indicated Latino students’ being marked by poor school experiences and inadequate academic achievement in U.S. public schools (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). In 2010, Latino youth represented 22% of the K-12 public school population and 15% of the U.S. population overall. Because of this core mass of students in the larger population in rural, suburban, and urban regions across the country, schools must reconsider how to teach Latino students, including teaching them Spanish in a relevant way through the use of CRP (Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2005).

There is a plethora of scholarship on CRP (Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Scherff & Spector, 2010), but the research on its use in the SNS classroom is limited. This study adds the use of CRP by the SNS teacher in the SNS class to the current literature. Through the CRP framework, I interviewed and observed SNS teachers in their SNS classroom. CRP provided a lens to examine the SNS teachers’ teaching strategies and methods in the SNS classroom. As
part of CRP, Herrera’s (2010) Biography-driven evaluation tool was used to study the use of CRP by the SNS during the classroom observation.

In this case study research (Stake, 1995), framed using CRP (Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Scherff & Spector, 2010) and implemented using qualitative methods (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995), I identified what teachers believed they must understand to teach a SNS class, their perceived roles in preparing and supporting SNS students, and the use of CRP in lessons to prepare SNS students better to learn their native language.

In this dissertation, I presented findings that SNS teachers conceptualized CRP as appropriate to use in the SNS classroom. All four SNS teachers verbalized the importance to include CRP as part of their instructional planning. Teachers understood what CRP meant, giving definitions as to what it signified to them. As the study went on, interviews and observations indicated still-developing understandings of CRP as a framework, with teachers primarily doing what they felt had an impact on students. I did not observe a wide variety of strategies in each classroom. Nevertheless, all four SNS teachers spoke about the importance of helping students tell their stories as a means to relate to their cultural backgrounds. They also stated that CRP creates caring communities of learners that encourage the collaborative construction of knowledge and shared expertise.

In this final chapter, I build upon the findings presented in chapter IV to discuss the impact of SNS teachers’ conceptualization and use of CRP in SNS classrooms. I organize this chapter in four subsections: (a) Discussion, (b) Implications and Recommendations, and (c) Conclusions and Reflections.
Discussion

Through this dissertation study, I shared the voices of SNS teachers regarding their experiences and beliefs around SNS students and their use of CRP. In this section, I discuss the findings presented in chapter IV: (a) promoting CRP in the SNS classroom, (b) meeting the needs of Latinos in SNS programs, (c) implementing CRP, and (d) understandings their students. In each sub-section, I consider what these findings suggested for the conceptualization of CRP by SNS teachers and their use in SNS classrooms.

Promoting CRP in the SNS Classroom

The finding of SNS teachers promoting CRP is significant and adds to the research on CRP. This research fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the SNS teacher at the high school level. There is a long history of research on CRP (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Gay, 2002; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2014) but a lack on its use in the SNS classroom. This study adds to the literature by focusing on CRP in the SNS classroom, including SNS teachers’ perceptions and conceptualizations of the CRP framework.

In this study, SNS teachers used techniques and strategies aligned to principles of the CRP framework. Although the SNS teachers had limited understanding of CRP and its use, they used aspects of CRP in the classroom. By caring enough to adapt and make accommodations to SNS students, teachers created a safe and caring environment, allowing students to share stories and see themselves reflected in the curriculum. But SNS teachers taught in a culturally relevant manner without consciously choosing to use
CRP. The SNS teachers taught the SNS class using strategies, such as group and individual activities to scaffold (Walqui & van Lier, 2010) and facilitate the lesson, created a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere, which allowed students and teachers to share their stories. By tapping into their mental ability, prior knowledge, and using their stories in the instructional process, they increase their student’s chance for success (Gay, 2000).

Overall, teachers utilized their voices in the educational experiences of their students through their efforts of promoting culturally relevant materials and practices in the SNS classroom. This use of CRP helped them move beyond the American dominated curriculum and methods of instruction; therefore, achieving a culturally relevant classroom and helping our Latino students to acculturate (Zimmerman, 2002). A void of cultural relevance still exists and must be bridged to meet the needs of all students. According to Horsford et al. (2011), there is a demographic divide between students and those who serve them and a cultural mismatch due to the incompatibility between students’ school and their home culture. It is important for educators to be aptly prepared or at least be willing to meet the needs of students who are underserved.

**Meeting the Needs of Latinos in SNS Programs**

All four SNS teachers stated the need to prepare teachers on the use of CRP and to create a Spanish class for Latinos. All four of the SNS teachers noted the need to offer SNS classes to Latino students to not only improve their Spanish skills but to give them the opportunity to share their stories (Herrera, 2010) and gain a sense of pride and belonging. These classes are not taught like a traditional foreign language and are
necessary to the instruction of Spanish for the native speaker student (Gignoux, 2009).

The use of relevant themes in the SNS class allows SNS students to learn in the most appropriate manner to meet their needs.

Students of color are expected to learn from a traditionally Eurocentric perspective which included learning Spanish taught in a foreign language class (Scherff & Spector, 2010). Students of color, in this case, Latino students, are often being referred to the deans, suspended, and expelled at a higher rate (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). Howard (2003) stated that socially and emotionally, African American and Latino students have struggled to adjust in U.S. schools and that they are grossly overrepresented in special needs categories.

The disturbing educational trends of African American and Latino students has led to reified images of students who appear to be more suited for special education and remedial schooling, and less suited for gifted education and advance placement. (p. 195)

SNS classes are created to help students learn Spanish, but a positive result of these courses is the impact they have on the students’ self-esteem and confidence (Gignoux, 2009).

SNS students need to have a class that meets their needs and allows them to learn their native language in an appropriate way. Bills (1997) stated that teaching Spanish to non-SNS is clearly different from those involved in helping SNS students develop a broader understanding of the language in which they already have considerable competence. Lewelling and Payton (1999) stated that non-SNS teachers of Spanish
acknowledged that Spanish instruction that had been developed for monolingual English speakers was inappropriate for Spanish speakers.

Implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

All four SNS teachers conceptualized CRP in these five themes: (a) academic language, (b) background knowledge, (c) cultural connections, (d) history, and (e) students’ biographies (i.e., knowing the students). Each theme helped to identify the use of CRP in the classroom and how the SNS teachers were using it, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Findings of this study made clear that the SNS teachers used CRP in their classrooms and enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practices and its use in their SNS classrooms. Through these SNS classes, educators can help motivate the Latino students to continue their education, become bilingual-bicultural and prepare them as influential professionals to better serve the Latino community. Gay (2000) emphasized that teachers must understand how culture operates within the classroom’s daily routine and purposely design an environment that emanates cultural and ethnic diversity, while encouraging student’s high academic achievement. Educators need to provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds to be able to express themselves and share their stories. Allowing them to “have free personal and cultural expression so that their voices and experiences can be incorporated into teaching and learning processes on a regular basis” (p. 42). This accommodating requires the use of various culturally centered ways of knowing, thinking, speaking, feeling, and behaving. When considering
the role of cultural relevance in the classroom, the SNS teachers all used CRP to teach language.

Teachers must remember to use students’ skills to connect the curriculum to their lives while maintaining high expectation allowing students to use their background to facilitate the use of academic language. According to Ladson-Billings (1992) culturally relevant teachers are those who develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by using “cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382). These teachers saw the whole child and recognized who they were and understood their stories to help them use the language they have inherited from their parents to elevate it academically. The SNS teachers created an academic community of learners by allowing students to rely on each other to teach and learn the material. These teachers set high expectations and held the students responsible for their own learning. Paulo Freire’s (1970) premise that rather than “seeing students as an empty vessel to be filled with the expert knowledge of teachers…students must make their own meanings; they must be producers of knowledge themselves” (p. 31).

Understanding Their Students

There were four aspects that all of the SNS teachers had in common: (a) teacher as facilitator, (b) comfortable and welcoming atmosphere, (c) teacher and students know each other, (d) calm entry into the classroom.

The SNS teachers validated who their students were by using their background knowledge to show their students respect. Gay (2000) suggested that culturally responsive teachers are those who validate and affirm their students’ culture and their
prior knowledge. These SNS teachers acknowledged their students’ Latino background and their home community. The SNS teacher who used CRP implemented into their lesson a variety of instructional strategies that are connected to the various learning styles. These teachers also used group and individual competitive and cooperative activities. They all took the role of facilitator allowing students to work with each other to help each other problem solve and come up with the answer. These teachers allowed students to take control of their learning, freeing up the teacher to move around the class moving the group work along. Walqui and van Lier (2010) felt that a teacher’s role should be that of one who creates enticing opportunities for students to interact around critical disciplinary topics and not worry about what the student has or has not learned thus far. These teachers validated students, helping them develop a positive self-concept; enabling students to be able to challenge existing social orders and power structures.

All four SNS teachers affirmed and validated their SNS students through the use of CRP by bringing into the lesson the students’ background and the opportunity for them to tell their stories. Allowing students to share their stories is empowering them to be an individual, creating successful learners and better citizens. These SNS teachers all believed in teaching the SNS students about themselves, helping them improve their Spanish grammar, and teaching them their history to help them become proud of their culture and most importantly of themselves. All four SNS teachers included group and individual work in their lesson and allowed students to share their stories. The SNS teachers built a bond with their students; giving the students a positive perspective of school, helping them build a sense of belonging. Through the use of CRP, the SNS
teachers allowed students to reflect on who they are, develop their self-esteem and identify with their culture. CRP is an instructional approach that focuses on creating an educational environment that is culturally relevant and respectful.

The comfortable and welcoming atmosphere is another example as to how these four teachers were practicing CRP since it is vital to create a safe learning environment in the classroom and to provide situations where students can see themselves represented in the curriculum. According to Scherff and Spector (2010), CRP strives to use learners’ cultural ways of being and knowing as a vehicle for instruction as well as a source of content creating a caring community of learners, which fosters the joint construction of knowledge and shared expertise.

The SNS teachers used a variety of strategies to teach their SNS students and social justices goes hand in hand with CRP. Their teaching was multifaceted including a curriculum that focused on teaching content in Spanish, grammar through context, instructional techniques, and performance assessments. They used students’ experiences or topics that are of interest to them while understanding that classroom climate, respect, relationships between students and teacher, allowed the teacher to make connections with their students, making the class more culturally relevant to them. To be a teacher who is multifaceted, one must be collaborative and use a wide variety of strategies to develop curriculum so that students are represented in the material. Students who saw their own Latino identity in the lessons, apportioned them to become reflective about themselves and open up for them to share their stories. Gay (2000) stated that it is essential for students to be responsible for their own cultural socialization.
Implications and Recommendations

My research investigated how SNS teachers conceptualized and implemented CRP in the SNS classroom. As with most research, this study holds implication for practice and research, which I outline below. I begin by exploring the three implications for practice related to: (a) Creating a peer network, (b) SNS educational professionals, and (c) SNS teacher training.

Practice

Creating a peer network. The SNS class is often an island in a high school without support, materials, or collaborative opportunities. Teaching a SNS course is extremely rewarding even if the workload is at times overwhelming. Unlike the traditional Spanish class, which already has a set curriculum, scope and sequence, teaching and assessment materials prepared for the teacher, most SNS teachers must create or design their own curricula. As a result, SNS teachers are constantly searching for educational material anywhere and everywhere to bring to the SNS class authentic material to better fit the needs of the Latino student.

Although these four schools all had SNS programs, all SNS teachers indicated the need for more support. In this way, school leaders are needed to support the SNS teachers, CRP, and the implementation of SNS programs. Aside from the creation of the SNS class, there is a limited amount of support from school leaders. The findings indicate that the school leader’s lack of CRP knowledge lead to a less culturally relevant school environment. The SNS teachers’ self-reported of issues related to school leaders and at no point during the study was there any data collected from school leaders or the school
With the support of school leaders, SNS teachers could then engage in peer observation network to help each other use of CRP. SNS teachers want to see other teachers’ use of CRP in action. Although Cosh (1999) asserted that the “focus [of peer observation] is on the teacher’s own development, rather than on any presumed ability to develop the teaching of one’s peers or colleagues” (p. 4). Peer observation can create collaboration between the SNS teachers. According to Bennett and Barp (2008), peer observation is described as a process by which a teacher observes a lesson taught by a colleague or another teacher for purposes of exploring the learning and teaching process and environment. This observation leads to reflection and discussion, with the underpinning long-term aim of improving students’ learning. Peer observation helps teachers become more reflective in their teaching (Cosh, 1998; Gosling, 2002; Hammersely-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Marshall, 2004) and if they also reflect and become aware about their personal beliefs and biases (Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Scherff & Spector, 2010), they would become more culturally aware. Gosling (2002) and Lave and Wenger (1991) proposed a peer review model where colleagues mutually observe and reflect on each other’s teaching in a non-judgmental environment.

In many schools, you might be the only SNS teacher in the SNS program. Seeing these magnificent teachers in action was profound and humbling. A peer observation program resembling the one proposed by Gosling (2002) and Lave and Wenger (1991) would allow SNS teachers to give each other mutual support and advice and share
instructional tips and strategies. Especially if there is only one SNS teacher, a peer observation program which allows each SNS teacher to visit other schools that have SNS programs could help promote better teaching. Through peer observations that focus on CRP, SNS teachers would have the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and support each other, even across school districts. For support to be possible, the school administrator would have to be inclined to permit the creation of a learning environment which fosters collaboration between the SNS teachers.

**SNS education professionals.** Findings also suggested the need to hire SNS teachers and administrators who know and understand CRP to teach not only SNS classes but other subjects. SNS teachers were more likely to teach the SNS class using CRP even though they were not aware or did not know that they were using the CRP framework to do so.

According to Allen, Hancock, Starker-Glass, and Lewis (2017), U.S. school mostly maintain Eurocentric methodologies in the curriculum directed from administration and school leaders. They agree with Ladson-Billings (2011) that approaches to recruitment, hiring, tenure and promotion, often inherently maintain policies that privilege the majority, “maintain Whiteness as the normative standard for expectations and behaviors” (Allen et al., p. 9), and disenfranchise people of color and other minorities (Harper, 2012).

Allen and colleagues (2017) specifically address the issue of *institutional hiring policies* as a front to address the *need* to diversify the teacher force but merely inviting a faculty candidate of color as a finalist does not suffice if educators of color are not hired
on a regular basis. The justification for search committees’ and administrators’ paying
attention to diversity policies simply by diversifying the pool of potential candidates or
finalists is a farce, which more often than not, overlook a faculty candidate of color over
a White faculty candidate. According to Allen and colleagues, faculty of color are
disregarded even if they are capable of doing similar work neglecting their bilingual/
bicultural talents, other skills, and benefits they would offer to the school. Furthermore
Rockquemore and Laszloffy (2008), have extensively documented that when faculty
members of color are in fact hired, their work is often invalidated, and they are often left
on the margins. In fact, Hayes and Juárez (2012) stated that faculty of color are subject to
policies that influence how they think, inspiring these teachers to take up issues of
diversity and equity in their classes. These hiring policies mentioned here have a direct
impact on the SNS programs.

**Teacher training.** Based on these findings, I recommend that teacher training on
the use of CRP be implemented not only for SNS teachers but to any and all teachers.
Educators and candidates are mostly White, yet they will serve in classrooms that are
becoming more and more diverse (American Association of Colleges for Teacher
Education, 2013). Teacher education programs continue to foster cultural mismatch due
to the need for teachers of color. This cultural mismatch often detaches teachers and
school leaders from children of color (Cross, 2005). According to Howard (2003), we
must prepare all teachers and pre-service teachers and provide more meaningful
knowledge and skills for teaching in today’s cultural context.

Teacher educators must be able to help pre-service teachers critically analyze
essential issues such as race, ethnicity, and culture, and recognize how these crucial concepts shape the learning experience for many students. More specifically, teachers must be able to construct pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students’ social and cultural realities. (p. 195)

There is also a great need to help the SNS teachers who are presently teaching in a SNS class. There is a need to better prepare teachers to reach our Latino students. The use of CRP should be considered in teacher training programs (Allen et al., 2017) and to not only prepare the next generation of teachers but to help all teachers better teach our SNS population. According to Allen et al. (2017), the extant literature has documented that “teacher education programs have struggled to effectively arm teacher candidates with effective pedagogies to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student population” (p. 1). Darling-Hammond (2010) stated that education programs are charged with the overwhelming task of preparing the next generation of teachers, but if we want to give students of color an opportunity to succeed, we must incorporate CRP in the programs. Programs must be self-reflective in order to examine Whiteness, power, and privilege at their own foundations.

Teacher education programs that structure their programs in a manner that acknowledges and embraces the diversity of learners along cultural, class, and racial lines, are the programs that meet the task of producing academically and culturally competent teachers (Howard & Denning del Rosario, 2000, p. 131). Teacher educators must understand that the purpose of education should be relative to the cultural and social experiences of the students in schools.
Access to SNS class for SNS students. How common is it for students to have access and take SNS classes? Besides the creation of the SNS class for SNS students, it is vital to increase the access to the SNS classes for Latino. I recommend that SNS students be placed in a SNS class and SNS students be invited to take this course. This could be promoted in the elementary level so that SNS students are aware of the opportunity to learn their language in an appropriate and culturally relevant manner. Further, putting a SNS student in a foreign language classroom is basically the least culturally responsive thing that can be done.

The problem directly connected to the field of education is the need to address the cultural conflicts that hinder relationships and compromise learning opportunities for Latino students, due to the lack of CRP, which is an “educational challenge that becomes critical not only for teachers to understand but also school leaders to both recognize and manage successfully as education professionals” (Horsford et al., 2011, p. 583). Unfortunately, teacher education curriculum maintains hidden assumptions and practices that actually sustain inequality in schools through the lack of culturally relevant curriculum and instruction (Cross, 2005).

Further Research

The study was conducted with SNS teachers in a SNS classroom. Three recommendations to further the research of CRP can be duplicated with: (a) other SNS teacher and non-SNS teacher, (b) SNS in other courses, (c) SNS classes impact on the achievement gap and Latino success in school.

To add to the body of knowledge of CRP with SNS teachers, this study could be
duplicated, and further research needs to be continued with other SNS teacher and non-SNS teachers in a SNS classroom. According to Ale, she commented about the possibility of having a non-SNS teacher teach the SNS students which agrees with the Ladson-Billings’ (2014) statement about educators from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are capable of transforming learning for any student, regardless of their backgrounds. This study could be expanded to include the use of CRP by SNS teachers and non-SNS teachers and compare the use of CRP in the SNS classroom. This same research could be further studied by investigating the use of CRP by non-SNS and SNS teacher in a regular Spanish classroom.

This study could be duplicated with SNS teachers in other subject or courses of study, i.e., in an ESL/Bilingual class, science or math class, to compare their use of CRP and determine if the SNS class is genuinely conducive to the use of CRP. Taking a closer look at how the SNS classes impact the achievement gap and Latino students’ success in school could be another way to further the body of knowledge of CRP and further investigate the use of CRP and its impact on SNS sense of belonging.

This study postulates the need to provide and create SNS programs. These program support SNS students in their native language learning. These programs complement and work towards meeting the needs of our Latino student population. The suggestion from two SNS teachers on the need for administrators to hire SNS teachers not only for the SNS class but in administrative positions was noted. I hope to help other teachers to build upon their prior knowledge of CRP and encourage its use in the classroom.
Conclusions and Reflections

The American school system has failed our Latino students (Gándara & Contreras, 2010). To begin to improve the education provided to this large and growing group of students, there is a need for teachers who are culturally responsive to the needs of students. The American school system is traditionally more Eurocentric and this makes it more difficult for students of color, specifically Latinos, to learn from this perspective (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). The use of CRP by these SNS teachers helped fill a void for these Latino students and gave them the opportunity to learn about their culture and develop their native language so that they may be bilingual and bicultural. “CRP is mindful of how traditional teaching practices reflect middle-class, European American cultural values, and thus seeks to incorporate a wider range of dynamic and fluid teaching practices” (Howard, 2003, p. 195). We must recognize that our students, especially our Latino students, need to be reflected in the curriculum, listened to and above all respected (Gay, 2000; Herrera, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2005; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Scherff & Spector, 2010).

The SNS class is an avenue to teach in a culturally relevant and responsive manner. Acknowledging, connecting with and encouraging students’ culture can facilitate an increase in student achievement. Through the use of CRP in the SNS classes, the teacher will be able to teach in a way that reflects the cultural backgrounds of the Latino students. Latino students are presently grappling with the mistrust and anger that is being created in America towards them and now more than ever; we need to deal with social
justice issues within our schools, school districts, and the nation. As described in the literature review, CRP is directly related to social justices (Esposito & Swain, 2009).

Based on my findings, I plan to design a presentation to deliver on the use of CRP and its implementation in the SNS classroom. My goal is to present at least at one of the following conferences: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL), Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCTFL), Illinois Council on the teaching of Foreign Languages (ICTFL) and Network of Illinois Educators of Spanish for Heritage Learners (NIESHL). I hope to help other teachers to recognize and identify the use CRP and to help them to become more aware of its use, as well as expand or create SNS programs in their school. I hope to be able to promote CRP as one of the frameworks to build the foundation of SNS curricula.

The SNS class is not only about being culturally relevant but most importantly it’s helps student discover who they are, where they come from, in order for them to become who they want to be and achieve their full potential. The SNS class is much more than simply being culturally relevant for the SNS students, it is the most appropriate class for them to learn about their culture, language and identity. The SNS students culture is so connected to their language and vice versa that these two cannot be separate and the SNS class helps students love their culture, enjoy learning their language and take pride in who they are so that they may continue their life long journey of learning.

I decided to pursue a research agenda around CRP after reflecting on what I went through as a SNS student and now a SNS teacher. I purposefully connected my study with my Latino culture and my school experience. My interest in learning about my
culture started in the SNS high school classroom over 30 years ago, and it has only flourished into a desire to perfect my Spanish and discover the history of my culture. My experience as a SNS student in a SNS classroom changed my life and gave me the desire to further my education to give back to the Latino community. I was committed to learning more about positive approaches and techniques to better meet the needs of my SNS students. I learned about CRP and realized that I was using this framework in my SNS classroom and I wanted to find out if other SNS teachers were like me.

Throughout this dissertation process, there were times that I felt that I would not be able to complete my work, due to circumstances beyond my control. I remembered my parents’ struggles to give me the best education possible. As a first generation Mexican-American, I am proud of my parents, my family, and my culture. I still remember the stories my parents would tell us about their adventure of coming to the United States and how both of them, with only a third-grade education, were able to raise six children who are now all professionals. And I think of my wife’s story, of her coming to America at the age of 22, without knowing any English, taking ESL classes to pass the GED test in English, struggling through 30 hours of courses (without credit) just to be able to apply to the city college, earn summa cum laude and her masters’ in education, all this while working a full-time job, being a mother and a wife. My parents’ and my wife’s story helped me find the strength to complete my dissertation.

I believe that it is my responsibility to continue educating Latino students about their culture and the SNS class is the perfect venue to teach in a culturally relevant manner by teachers who are culturally responsive. I hope that the SNS students can see
themselves reflected not only in the material being taught but in the SNS teacher so that they might see the opportunity for them to be an educator and do the same for other Latino students. I am confident that as Latinos, with access to culturally responsive teachers and relevant educational experiences, we will continue our Latino traditions for many generations to come. With these aspirations, I conclude this dissertation in the words of Benito Juárez (Mexican President), “Entre los individuos, como entre las naciones, el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz – Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace” (Juárez, 1867).
APPENDIX A

HERRERA OBSERVATION TOOL
## II. Training & Career Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
<td>Experience in a specific field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>Support for research or training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Guidance and advice from an experienced professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Attendance</td>
<td>Opportunities to network and learn from experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Internships are available in various fields, including engineering, business, and healthcare.
- Fellowships are competitive and require a significant application process.
- Mentorship programs can be tailored to individual needs.
- Conference attendance is encouraged for updates on the latest research and industry trends.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)
SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHER

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

a. Do you identify yourself as Latino? If so, what is your Latino background and can you give a few examples of how you live your culture?

b. What do you do to help students identify with their culture?

c. In your viewpoint, how important is it for Spanish Native Speakers to identify with their culture? Are there any instructional materials used in your class that portrays the life, customs, and traditions of your students?

d. Describe the support you believe is needed for the Spanish Native Speaker class from the school leaders?

e. Does the attitude/support of the school leaders for this Spanish Native Speakers program affect your perception of it?

f. What does the term culturally relevant pedagogy mean to you?

g. How does your culture influence your use of culturally relevant pedagogy?

h. What do you believe are the benefits of using culturally relevant material to teach your Native Speakers?

i. How do you use CRP in the classroom?

j. Can you provide me with some examples?

k. How do you believe your use of CRP has influenced student achievement?
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (SPANISH)
a. ¿Se identifica como hispano? ¿Si es así, cuál es su formación hispana, o sea, de dónde son sus raíces y me podría dar algunos ejemplos de cómo vive su cultura?
b. ¿Qué hace para ayudarle a sus estudiantes a identificarse con su cultura?
c. De su punto de vista, ¿Qué tan importante es para un hispanohablantes que pueda identificarse con su cultura? ¿Utiliza usted algún material educativo en su clase que refleja o representa la vida, costumbres y tradiciones de sus estudiantes?
d. ¿Describa el apoyo que usted cree que sea necesario, por parte de los líderes escolares, para la clase de español para nativos o hispanohablantes?
e. ¿El apoyo o actitud por parte de los líderes escolares hacia el programa de hispanohablantes afecta a su percepción de este programa?
f. ¿Qué significa para usted el término, la pedagogía culturalmente relevante o pertinente, o sea, el término en inglés “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy”? g. ¿Cómo influye su cultura en el uso de la pedagogía culturalmente pertinente?
h. ¿Qué cree que son los beneficios de la utilización de materiales culturalmente pertinentes para enseñarles a sus hispanohablantes?
i. ¿Cómo usa la pedagogía de ser culturalmente relevante en la clase?
j. ¿Podría mostrarme algunos ejemplos?
k. ¿Cómo cree que el uso de la pedagogía culturalmente pertinente ha influido en los éxitos o logros de sus estudiantes?
Dear Principal (Insert Name),

As a doctoral student at Loyola University Chicago, I am writing to you in hopes that you would be interested in participating in a study being conducted on Spanish Native Speaker teachers. This study is being conducted through my doctoral work at Loyola University of Chicago.

If you are interested, please let me know. I can be reached at mike.ayala@d214.org or 847-219-1487, my cell phone. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Most sincerely,

Michael A. Ayala
APPENDIX E

LETTER OF COOPERATION FOR THE PRINCIPAL
To: Principal
From: Michael A. Ayala

Project Title: How does the classroom teacher promote academic success in the Native Speaker Spanish class: A study of classroom teachers’ perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Native Speaker Spanish course at the high school level.

Researcher: Michael Ayala
Loyola University of Chicago

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kristin Davin
Foreign and Second Language Education

Introduction:
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Michael Ayala for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Kristin Davin in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because there is a Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) who teaches a Spanish Native Speaker program/class. As Principal your permission to allow a Spanish Native Speaker teacher to participate in this study will provide other teachers and administrators the chance to learn from the NS teacher’s experiences as they try to meet the needs of their ever-changing diverse student population.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to conduct an exploratory case study to understand the current literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and to seek connections to improve instructional practice for teachers through the pre and post interviews, and observations made of the Native Spanish teacher and the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). This study will bring awareness to teachers of culturally diverse students and school leaders of the importance of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:
• Allow the researcher, Michael Ayala, to interview the Spanish Native Speaker teacher: I would like to interview the Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teacher. The NS teacher will be asked questions pertinent to their teaching the Spanish Native Speaker class and their teaching philosophy. The interview will last about 30 minutes. It will be audio taped and later transcribed. The copy of the transcribed interview will be shown to the NS teacher and each NS teacher will be given the opportunity to add or delete any of his or her responses. Each NS teacher will not be mentioned as an individual and his or
her name and identity will be kept confidential. The interview will be held at your school at a place agreed upon by the NS. I will set up a time that best works around the NS teachers’ schedule and meet with them when they are available.

- **Allow the researcher, Michael Ayala, to observe the Spanish Native Speaker teacher in his or her NS classroom:** The classroom observation, using the Herrera observation tool, will be specifically to observe the NS teacher and NOT the students. Although the NS teacher interactions with students will be noted, the teacher or the student will not be mentioned as individuals and their names and identities will be kept confidential.

**Risks/Benefits:**
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results from this study will bring awareness to teachers of culturally diverse students and school leaders of the importance of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy.

**Confidentiality:**
- Each person being observed/interviewed will be given a pseudonym and will be recorded on a separate audio recording. The audio recordings will be given to the transcriber and will only be stored for the purpose of having them transcribed. Once the audio recordings are transcribed the audio recordings will be destroyed. At the conclusion of the research, the written transcriptions will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**
Thank you in advance for your participation in this very important study. If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:

  Michael Ayala
  847-219-1487
  michaelaya@gmail.com

You may also contact Dr. Kristin Davin, my dissertation director at Loyola University at 312-915-6104 if you have questions or concerns regarding the validity of this study.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.
Please sign, date, and mail the **letter of cooperation** to Michael Ayala through mail at 2822 Sweet Clover Way, Wauconda IL 60084 or e-mail with an electronic signature to mike.ayala@d214.org.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Michael Angelo Ayala, Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

**Statement of Consent:**
I approve and give consent for the research to be done within my school by Michael A. Ayala, a Loyola doctoral student. His project, entitled “How does the classroom teacher promote academic success in the Spanish Native Speaker Class: A study of classroom teachers’ perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Native Speaker Spanish course at the high school level,” Along with the outlined research protocols, are fully understood. My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the information provided above, I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

____________________________________  __________________
Principal’s Signature  Date

____________________________________  __________________
Researcher’s Signature  Date
APPENDIX F

SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHER CONSENT LETTER
To: Spanish Native Speaker Teacher  
From: Michael A. Ayala

Project Title: How does the classroom teacher promote academic success in the Native Speaker Spanish class: A study of classroom teachers’ perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Native Speaker Spanish course at the high school level.

Researcher: Michael Ayala  
Loyola University of Chicago

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kristin Davin  
Foreign and Second Language Education

Introduction:  
You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Michael Ayala for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Kristin Davin in the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a Spanish Native Speaker who teaches a Spanish Native Speaker program/class. As a Spanish Native Speaker, your participation in this study will provide other teachers and administrators the chance to learn from your experiences as they try to meet the needs of their ever-changing diverse student population.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:  
The purpose of this study is to conduct an exploratory case study to understand the current literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and to seek connections to improve instructional practice for teachers through the interviews, lesson plans and observations made of the Native Spanish teacher and the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). This study will bring awareness to teachers of culturally diverse students and school leaders of the importance of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Procedures:  
If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- **Allow the researcher, Michael Ayala, to interview the Spanish Native Speaker teacher:** I would like to interview the Spanish Native Speaker (SNS) teacher. The NS teacher will be asked questions pertinent to their teaching the Spanish Native Speaker class and their teaching philosophy. The interview will last about 30 minutes. It will be audio taped and later transcribed. The copy of the transcribed interview will be shown to the NS teacher and each NS teacher will be given the opportunity to add or delete any of his or her responses. Each NS teacher will not be mentioned as an individual and his or
her name and identity will be kept confidential. The interview will be held at your school at a place agreed upon by you. I will set up a time that best works around the NS teachers schedule and meet with them when they are available.

• **Allow the researcher, Michael Ayala, to observe the Spanish Native Speaker teacher in his or her NS classroom:** The classroom observation, using the Herrera observation tool, will be specifically to observe the NS teacher and NOT the students. Although the NS teacher interactions with students will be noted, the teacher or the student will not be mentioned as individuals and their names and identities will be kept confidential.

**Risks/Benefits:**
There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but the results from this study will bring awareness to teachers of culturally diverse students and school leaders of the importance of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy.

**Confidentiality:**
• Each person being observed/interviewed will be given a pseudonym and will be recorded on a separate audio recording. The audio recordings will be given to the transcriber and will only be stored for the purpose of having them transcribed. Once the audio recordings are transcribed the audio recordings will be destroyed. At the conclusion of the research, the written transcriptions will be destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation:**
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Contacts and Questions:**
Thank you in advance for your participation in this very important study. If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:

Michael Ayala
847-219-1487
michaelaya@gmail.com

You may also contact Dr. Kristin Davin, my dissertation director at Loyola University at 312-915-6104 if you have questions or concerns regarding the validity of this study.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.
Please sign, date, and mail the **Statement of Consent** to Michael Ayala through mail at 2822 Sweet Clover Way, Wauconda IL 60084 or e-mail with an electronic signature to mike.ayala@d214.org.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Michael Angelo Ayala, Doctoral Candidate, Loyola University Chicago

**Statement of Consent:**
I approve and give consent for the research to be done within my school by Michael A. Ayala, a Loyola doctoral student. His project, entitled “How does the classroom teacher promote academic success in the Spanish Native Speaker Class: A study of classroom teachers’ perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy in the Native Speaker Spanish course at the high school level,” Along with the outlined research protocols, are fully understood. My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the information provided above, I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study.

__________________________________________  __________________
Teacher’s Signature Date

__________________________________________  __________________
Researcher’s Signature Date
APPENDIX G

SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER (BILINGUAL) CRITERIA SURVEY
These questions were added to a Google form to help me identify who answered the survey. The questions are in both English and Spanish to also help me decide as to whom I would like to include in the study.

Are you a Spanish Native Speaker (SNS)?
¿Eres Hispanohablante?

Do you teach a heritage class or SNS class?
¿Enseñas una clase de hispanohablantes?

How long have you been teaching?
¿Cuánto tiempo tienes enseñando?

What endorsements do you have on your license?
¿Cuáles especialidades tienes en tu licencia de maestro?

How long have you been teaching a Heritage or SNS class?
¿Cuánto tiempo tienes enseñando clases para hispanohablantes?

How would you self-define your cultural background?
¿Te consideras hispano? ¿Cómo te identificas en cuanto tu raíz?

Explain what CRP means to you?
¿Explica, para ti, que significa ser culturalmente relevante?
APPENDIX H

POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)
SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKER TEACHER

POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

a. What do you think was most successful in the lesson I observed?

b. After teaching the lesson, did your lesson go the way you planned?

c. Would you teach this lesson again, if so what would you keep and what would you change?

d. Can you give examples where the lesson helped your students identify with their culture?

e. What are some of the instructional materials used in your class that portrays the life, customs, and traditions of your students?

f. What does the term culturally relevant pedagogy mean to you?

g. How does your culture influence your use of culturally relevant pedagogy?

h. What do you believe are the benefits of using culturally relevant material to teach your Native Speakers?

i. Can you give examples as to how you used CRP in the classroom?

j. How do you believe your use of CRP has influenced student achievement in today’s lesson?
APPENDIX H

POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE EN ESPAÑOL
MAESTRO HISPANOHABLANTE
PREGUNTAS DE LA POST-INTERVISTA
EN ESPAÑOL

a. ¿Qué cree que fue lo más exitoso de la lección que observé?
b. ¿Después de enseñar la lección, salió la lección como lo había planeado?
c. ¿Volvería a enseñar esta lección de nuevo, si sí, que mantendría igual y que cambiaría?
d. ¿Me puede dar ejemplos donde la lección ayudó a sus alumnos a identificarse con su cultura?
e. ¿Cuáles son algunos materiales educativos que usó en su clase que refleja la vida, costumbres, y tradiciones de sus estudiantes?
f. ¿Qué significa para usted el término, la pedagogía culturalmente relevante o pertinente, o sea, el término en inglés “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy”?
g. ¿Cómo influye su cultura en el uso de la pedagogía culturalmente pertinente?
h. ¿Qué cree que son los beneficios de la utilización de materiales culturalmente pertinentes para enseñarles a sus hispanohablantes?
i. ¿Podría mostrarme algunos ejemplos del uso de la pedagogía culturalmente pertinente en la clase?
j. ¿Cómo cree que el uso de la pedagogía culturalmente pertinente ha influido en los éxitos o logros de sus estudiantes en la lección del día de hoy?
i. ¿Cómo usa la pedagogía de ser culturalmente relevante en la clase?
REFERENCE LIST


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VITA

Michael Angelo Ayala is the son of Ramiro Ayala and María de los Angeles Ayala, and son of migrant workers. He was born in Salinas, California and is the oldest of six. His parents returned to Atotonilco, México when he was only months old where his sister, Karina, was born. Three years later, his parents, came to Chicago and had his brother Oscar, sister Esmeralda, brother Christopher and his little sister Marielva. The running joke is that they are the Mexican Brady Bunch, when Michael tells this story he states that he is Greg, “Hi I’m Greg.”

Michael attended Sullivan public grammar school for four years but later received a Catholic education at Saint Michael’s elementary school in the South Side of Chicago and attended the Quigley South Seminary high school. He graduated from Loyola University in 1991 with a B.A. in Education, a Spanish Major, and three minors; history, philosophy and theology. In 1997, he earned an M.A. in Curriculum and instruction from National Louis University and another M.A. in 2001, in Educational Leadership and Administration from Aurora University. Michael has worked in the field of education for the past 28 years. He began teaching at Archbishop Preparatory High School as a Spanish teacher, Department chair, and LASO Sponsor. After three years he started teaching at John Hersey High School where he is still teaching high school.

Michael has been an active member in the Hersey community, working on a variety of committees during his tenure at Township District 214 ranging from; staff
development committee member, diversity committee chair, athletic events coordinator
to the Latin American Student Organization (LASO) founder and Sponsor. He has taught
all levels of Spanish and is presently teaching the Spanish for Native Speaker classes. He
developed the curriculum for the Native Speaker course, now with a new focus on the
framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), he hopes that more SNS programs
are created to better serve the needs of the Latino student population. He is an AP reader
for the Spanish language and culture Advance Placement test and this year was invited to
be a table leader.

Michael has just started to travel to Spain with students last year and continues to bring this opportunity to the students in the Spanish department and has invited and motivated other teachers to also travel with students.
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

The Dissertation submitted by Michael Angelo Ayala has been read and approved by the following committee:

Amy Heineke, Ph.D., Director
Associate Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Sarah Cohen, Ph.D.,
Clinical Assistant Professor, Bilingual Education
Loyola University Chicago

Kristin J. Davin, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Department of Middle, Secondary & K12 Education
UNC Charlotte, Cato College of Education