

The Boys in the Back: Using Culturally Responsive Teaching to Connect with Latino Male  
Students in Middle School

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

Approved October 2019 by the  
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2019

## ABSTRACT

This study utilized a Culturally Responsive Teaching training and bi-weekly collaboration sessions to improve the connectedness between teachers and their Latino male students. Three first-year teachers and 21 students participated in this study to learn how teaching practice and student classroom experiences changed as a result of the innovations. The findings showed teachers modified their planning and teaching and demonstrated more frequent culturally responsive teaching behaviors at the end of the implementation period. Participating students also showed increased classroom engagement and stronger relationships with their teachers, in addition to feeling more valued and included in the classroom. This study highlights effective structures and practices in areas such as cultural responsiveness implementation, teacher collaboration processes, teaching evaluations, and professional development models.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Larger Context.....	2
School Context.....	4
Cultural Context.....	8
Researcher Personality.....	11
Purpose Statement and Research Questions.....	13
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
Overview.....	14
The Gender Gap and Latinos Boys’ Identity Formation.....	14
Latinos and Media.....	17
An Institutional Issue.....	19
Latino Identity and Schools.....	21
Teacher Preparedness.....	23
Latinos in the Classroom.....	25
The Importance of Teachers.....	28
Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	30
Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	34
Culturally Responsive Teaching- Identity, Connectedness, and Engagement..	37

CHAPTER	Page
3 METHODS.....	39
Purpose.....	39
Setting and Participants.....	39
Role of the Researcher.....	41
Innovation.....	42
Data Collection.....	43
Data Analysis.....	50
3.5 INNOVATION.....	58
Innovation Development.....	58
Innovation Reception.....	63
4 FINDINGS.....	67
RQ 1: How Do Teachers Modify their Classroom Instruction as a Result of a Culturally Responsive Teaching Training and Collaboration Period?.....	67
RQ 2: How Do Latino Male Students Experience Learning in their Teacher’s Classroom Before and After the Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching?.....	78
RQ 3: How Does this Experience with Culturally Responsive Teaching Affect Latino Male Students’ Cultural Self-identity, Engagement, and Assessment of their Teachers’ Practice?.....	89

CHAPTER	Page
5 DISCUSSION.....	99
RQ 1: How Do Teachers Modify their Classroom Instruction as a Result of a Culturally Responsive Teaching Training and Collaboration Period?.....	99
RQ 2: How Do Latino Male Students Experience Learning in their Teacher’s Classroom Before and After the Implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching?.....	103
RQ 3: How Does this Experience with Culturally Responsive Teaching Affect Latino Male Students’ Cultural Self-identity, Engagement, and Assessment of their Teachers’ Practice?.....	104
Implications for Practice.....	108
Limitations and Future Research.....	114
Conclusion.....	116
REFERENCES.....	118
APPENDIX	
A CRIOP.....	132
B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS.....	145
C STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	147
D MIEM-R.....	150
E STUDENT ENGAGEMENT CLASS OBSERVATION GUIDE.....	152
F SMCRT ASSESSMENT.....	154
G. IRB APPROVAL.....	156

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Study Dates, Time Frame and Tasks.....	44
2. Research Questions and Data Collection Tools.....	56
3. Pre-CRT Implementation CRIOP Characterization of How Often Teachers Featured Culturally Responsive Practices.....	67
4. Post-CRT Implementation CRIOP Characterization of How Often Teachers Featured Culturally Responsive Practices.....	73
5. Pre and Post-CRT Implementation MEIM-R Student Averages.....	92
6. Pre and Post-CRT Implementation SMCRT Student Averages.....	94

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to statistics, I probably should not be writing this. I am a young, minority male who comes from a low-income family and attended schools in a district with the lowest per-pupil spending in the nation (U.S. Census, 2013). In early elementary school, I was pulled out from my regular classroom almost every day because I was behind in reading. I resorted to sitting in the back of the classroom where I would be less noticed and not as likely to be called on. I was a boy in the back. Later, in almost every secondary class I ever attended, I selected a desk in the back row and disappeared for the semester. The only acknowledgment that I ever existed was when my teacher called out something like, “Would the boys in the back please stay on task!” But my public-school experience also included a team of rescuers. These were teachers and mentors who saw my struggles and reached out to help. They refocused my educational trajectory and helped me graduate with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education. As I begin writing this paper, I am in my eighth year as a social studies teacher in the state of Utah.

Unfortunately, in our education system, not all students who have needs and struggles get rescued. From the beginning of my teaching career, I only worked in high-minority, high-poverty schools, and I realized that many of those students were “in the back” in a more figurative sense. They came to school with missed opportunities that may have set them back from the day they entered kindergarten. When I taught, I saw myself in many of my Latino students, especially the boys, and I remained in the profession to be a positive influence in their lives. Although educators like myself have

limited capacity to change larger socio-economic issues, we are central in providing the most important school-based factor for student success: an effective teacher (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). In part, being an effective teacher means having a positive relationship with students so that lessons are connected to the lives of students, which results in students being more engaged and experiencing meaningful learning. Because the cultural background of students has become dramatically more diverse, they can be a challenge for teachers, who are still primarily Caucasian. This study explores how to establish “connectedness” between teachers and students, particularly within our diversity, to ultimately positively influence the schooling experience of our Latino boys.

### **Larger Context**

In 2014 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that, for the first time, students of color in public K-12 schools surpassed the number of Caucasian students. Among the minority groups, Latinos comprised the largest group and their growth was especially visible in the western United States. In California, for example, Latinos represented the majority of students in public schools (Maxwell, 2014).

Despite their rapid numerical growth, Latino students’ school-based performances remained substantially lower than that of their Caucasian peers. The evidence of this “achievement gap” is clear. Latinos trail their peers in standardized reading and mathematics tests by 25%, and this gap exists from elementary school through high school. The 2013 scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated a 39-point difference between ELLs and their non-ELL counterparts in reading scores for fourth grade, a 45-point difference in eighth grade, and a 53-point difference in



twelfth grade. For mathematics, NAEP scores reported a 25-point difference between ELLs and non-ELLs in fourth grade, a 41-point difference in eighth grade, and a 46-point difference in 12th grade (National Assessment, 2013). In letter grades, Latinos were far less likely to earn an “A” as compared to Caucasian students (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011). In addition, high school dropout rates for Latinos have historically been much higher than for other groups. For most of the 2000’s the Latino dropout rate averaged 22%, compared to African Americans at 10% and Caucasians at 5% (Fry, 2013). Today, Latinos continue to have the lowest graduation rates of any minority group (Statement, 2015). Latino students are more likely to have discipline issues and be suspended than any other group (Fry, 2013; Skiba, Noguera, & Gregory, 2010). Additionally, within the population of Latino students, performance differences between boys and girls have been well documented. In comparison to girls, Latino boys exhibit lower GPA performance at every grade level in K-12 education (Bryant, 2013). On the NAEP girls performed 9% higher on reading scores compared to boys (National Assessment, 2013).

Researchers have identified a number of factors that contribute to this achievement gap. These factors include high poverty rates, poorly equipped schools, higher likelihood of having untrained or unqualified teachers, and struggles with English language acquisition (Carter & Welner, 2013). Evidence also indicates that even when these factors are equal, Latino students who enter 10<sup>th</sup> grade functioning at the same level as their Caucasian peers still fall behind by graduation time (Bromberg 2014). In fact, studies indicated Latino students are more likely to experience negative academic and personal effects the longer they have been in the United States (Torres, 2010). This has

become known as the Hispanic Paradox and the results suggest students progressively lose their cultural identity which consequently affects their performance.

Although changing larger socio-economic issues are not within their reach, educators can still be caring mentors who develop strong relationship with students. Having this positive relationship allows teachers to connect lessons to the lives of their students, making the lessons more engaging and meaningful. This teaching philosophy has come to be known as Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Gay, 2010; Ladsen-Billings, 1995). Studies show CRT has positive effects on Latino students' academic achievement, attitude, and teacher/student relationships (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Cohen, 2009; Klump & McNeir, 2005; Sleeter, 2011). Less studied is how CRT affects how students understand or feel about themselves. A review of the literature suggests no studies have specifically connected CRT to increasing a student's racial identity and/or resiliency (Noblit, 2009). Yet, as past research has shown, minority students perform better when they identify themselves as part of a culture or group and feel empowered and validated by teaching practices in the school (Noblit, 2009). The present study therefore aims to fill this research gap by examining how CRT influences Latino students' cultural self-identity.

### **School Context**

This study takes place at a middle school in Utah. The school itself is old, with the main building completed in 1931 during the Great Depression. Many of its classrooms still have vaulted ceilings and pieces of its original wood floor. Although many upgrades and renovations have changed the look of the school, it still exhibits a unique charm, not

the least of which is the impressive original stone arch with the school's name and completion date engraved over the front entrance.

The school serves 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students and is one of two middle schools in its school district. In comparison to other schools in the county, this school is unique because of its diverse student population, which grew at a rapid pace around the turn of the century. Currently, in a total school population of 869 students, 47% of students come from minority backgrounds. In comparison to other schools around the nation, this percentage might seem too small to be considered a “diverse” school, but it is by far the most diverse secondary school in our county. In contrast, only 10% of this school's teachers are from minority backgrounds. In addition to ethnic backgrounds, the number of students on free or reduced lunch, which fluctuates between 60% and 70%, separates this school from other schools in the area (Utah State Board, 2017).

Together, these factors have led the surrounding community to have a somewhat negative perception of the school, especially over the last two decades. Recently, the school has made strong efforts to change that image. In 2012, the school received a grant to purchase iPads for every student in the school. Every classroom has been equipped with Apple TVs, projectors, and upgraded internet. The school's administration has initiated a number of changes including unique summer school opportunities, relocating gifted and talented programs back to the school and enhancing STEM, honors, and enhanced elective course offerings.

Although the demographics and structure of the school have remained constant, the performance and perception of the school has shown improvements. For the first time

in many years, this school matched or outperformed its fellow middle school in the district in standardized reading, mathematics, and science test scores. This is important because the other middle school serves the other half of the city with a population that has substantially fewer numbers of minority students and an overall higher socio-economic stature. These accomplishments have been well recognized. Recently, the school's principal was honored as the state's Principal of the Year.

Despite these successes, the effects and signs of the achievement gap are still prevalent in the school. The school's district has the highest teacher turnover of any district in the state (Utah Education, 2015). Contributing factors may be that the city is seen as a college city where newly graduated teachers tend to move in and out more often. Alternatively, teachers may have decided to pursue jobs in schools that did not present the unique challenges associated with large numbers of minority students and students in poverty. Regardless of the reason, the constant influx of new and inexperienced teachers has likely influenced student performance. With respect to students, by almost any measure, the school's students of color, which are primarily Latino, have been struggling. As a group, they received lower grades, scored lower on standardized tests, and have been referred for more discipline issues than their Caucasian counterparts.

When I started teaching at this school in 2010, I noticed the gap in performance immediately and was frustrated that it received little attention. I also felt students were performing low, not because of their abilities, but because other factors were affecting their success. I worked to find ways to close the gap at our school. As I initiated those

efforts, I have recently come to another realization—even among Latino students there are measurable differences, especially between boys’ and girls’ performances.

In a faculty meeting several years ago, my principal posted the names and photos of 30 critically at-risk students he wanted teachers to know. Of those students, 27 were male and most were from minority backgrounds. This confirmed what I had observed while working at the school. Further evidence was apparent when visiting the detention room, remediation classes, and office lobby, which showed a disproportionate number of minority male students in these areas. This has been referred to as the “boy crisis” (Tyre, 2006). In fact, performance differences between boys and girls have been well documented, with boys struggling in nearly every category, at every level, in comparison to girls (Bryant, 2013).

In an early cycle of research, I explored the Latino male experience at this school. I interviewed six teachers using a questionnaire with five open-ended questions that examined how teachers perceive and work with the Latino males in their classroom. For example, one question asked, “Describe the overall engagement level of Latino boys in your class.” Another asked, “What observations do you have on factors that impact their engagement in your class?” Results from the interview responses yielded both expected and unexpected findings. In relation to attitudes among Latino males at the school, I found that many teachers perceived them as unmotivated and not caring. Teachers pointed to classroom behavior, grades, test scores, and issues with completing assignments as evidence. Interestingly, none of the teachers answered the questions introspectively, but instead focused only on perceived problems within the students.

A second finding was that teachers indirectly demonstrated a “disconnect” with these students through their descriptions of how they approached diversity and relationships in the classroom. In general, their responses were that fairness for Latino students was that they be treated as any other student. One response read, “I constantly tell my students that I am willing to help if they ask, but only my ‘A’ students do. It is never the students who actually need it.” Even though one question specifically asked about Latino culture, the teacher responses demonstrated limited knowledge by referencing very little about culture or Latinos. One teacher wrote, “I think all students have their individual challenges, but I don’t know if they are related to culture.” As a whole, the responses indicated little specific strategies or knowledge of working with minority students in the classroom, which highlights the assumption in my research that, in general, our teachers are unprepared or unequipped for the diversity of the school.

Taken together, Latino boys face substantial challenges in our schools. Their struggles remind me of my own, which led me to focus my problem of practice on just them. I want to help these boys have an experience similar to what I experienced, including graduating from high school, participating in some form of higher education, and being important contributors to our society. Not that long ago, I was the boy in the sitting back of class, but thanks to some special people and experiences along the way, I became the one standing in front.

### **Cultural Context**

Outside of the participating middle school is a complex cultural complex which influenced this study in two ways: the level to which schools and teachers are prepared to

work within diversity, and the level to which students of color feel a valued member of the community.

To begin, approximately 90% of the county's population is White, with the majority of the remaining percentage filled by Latinos. Although their overall percentage remains somewhat low, the Latino's growth in the county has risen quickly over the last two decades. Contrast these numbers to the participating school, where the Latino and students of color population is nearly 50%. Coupled with higher rates of poverty and student transitions, this school is a demographically unique pocket in the county, which creates a different set of challenges for school and district administrators. Process and procedures that may be effective for almost all other areas surrounding the school may also not transition as easily to this distinctive context. For example, the limited focus on diversity and culture in teacher professional development and mentoring may go unnoticed except for educators at this school who work with a relatively high percentage of students of color.

A second important cultural characteristic is the political background of this county. Approximately 75% of voters are conservative and some of its cities have been labeled the "reddest" city in the country. In the most recent presidential election, then candidate Donald Trump enjoyed widespread support in Utah, which could be a challenging situation for Latinos in particular who have been the subject of his much-publicized criticism and scrutiny. The messages heard deliberately or innocently, either in picture or word, by adults or youth, likely have some impact on students who feel at the opposite end of those messages.

There is also a strong religious cultural context that stems from the pioneer movement and widespread settlement of the Utah area by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Most of Utah's counties have a majority of its population as members of the Church, and some counties including the one related to this study have a large majority. Church members form tight-knit communities, which even with the best of intentions can still leave non-members feeling left out. This applies to both adults and youth, who meet together each Sunday for services, weekly for activities and occasionally for other church-related events or milestones. The divide may have developed as immigrants or out-of-area transplants have been a significant factor in Utah's overall population growth, many of whom are not members of the dominant religion. This is especially true for Latino people, who primarily identify as Catholics. To what extent these differences impact youth or educators in Utah is beyond the scope of this study, however, it would be reasonable to assume some disconnectedness with youth feeling a part of the community or teachers being able to understand the cultural background of those youth.

With this cultural context in mind, the approach to cultural responsiveness presents opportunities and challenges. The growth in both numbers and diversity creates openings for wonderful transactions of perspectives and understanding. It allows teachers and students to learn how to operate inter-culturally, which is a reflection of our globalized society we currently live in. At the same time, cultural differences can clash and teachers in particular have to be willing to adapt, which may include confronting long-held beliefs. It's under this context that this study was developed.



## **Researcher Personality**

It is also from this context that I emerged as both a public school student and teacher. I was born and raised in the same county in Utah to Latina mother and Caucasian father. This bi-cultural marriage also defined my upbringing. English and Spanish were used throughout my childhood from what was spoken at home to songs, rhymes, stories, and traditions that my parents passed along. It was also present in school where I was involved in Spanish Immersion classes in elementary school to Spanish AP courses in high school.

While growing up with these two cultures may have had benefits, I eventually began experience confusion and insecurities as I tried to straddled being a part of both. As that time, there were very few Latino families in the area, but the numbers were starting to grow quickly. My friends would make comments about being “invaded” by Mexicans and my teachers would talk about being suspicious of students who spoke Spanish in front of them. These comments were often made to me as if I would surely agree and go along with them. The problem was that I was not just with one group- I was with both. I didn’t know how to respond to these types of comments and felt bad that I was not defending the other side, which was my other side as well.

In junior high and high school, our school groups were segregated between the Caucasian students and Latino students, and I didn’t know where I belonged. Culturally, I was neither “completely” Caucasian or “completely” Latino and never felt entirely comfortable among either group. Eventually, some of my best friends were Latino and high school is where I felt the most prejudice or profiled behavior toward our group or

myself. Some of these interactions involved teachers at school and others involved adults and authority figures outside the classroom.

After graduating high school, spending some time living in South America, and finishing my bachelor's degree, I began to shift my mindset about race, poverty, privilege, and so on, which up to that point had been defined by the politically conservative nature of our state. The most significant leaps or learning and understanding came in my first years of teaching where my students provided valuable insights.

First, I began to see that many of my struggling students were students of color, yet, it wasn't from lack of ability. They were just as capable as other students, but in the end weren't making it for reasons beyond their control. Unlike many of my colleagues would say, I didn't think there was anything "wrong" with them.

The second lesson they taught me was that I had value. When I began to see myself in my students, I shared many of my experiences and stories with them and a certain deeper connection was established. During this time, I learned that my "bicultural-ness" was not a disadvantage, but a critical piece to how our teacher-student relationships could be so strong. I had value because of who I was, not in spite of it. Only in the last few years have my fellow teachers and administrators began trying to ask and understand what is it that I do to establish these relationships in my classrooms. Even though I had come to a new level of awareness, I was never able to articulate it very well, let alone package it in a way that other teachers could put it into their own practice. It was at this point I saw the need to pursue my graduate work. I needed a framework to my style of

teaching and then develop it into something that I could share with others, and this study is a partial realization of that goal.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand how the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching influenced teachers' classroom instruction, and their Latino male students' experiences in the classroom and their connectedness with the teacher. The study will involve two innovation components: an initial Culturally Responsive Teaching training and a semester long, bi-weekly collaboration period. The purpose of these innovations will be framed around the following research questions.

RQ 1: How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?

RQ 2: How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher's classroom before and after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?

RQ 3: How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students' cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers' practice?

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Overview

This review will begin by exploring the unique factors that may contribute to negative identity formations for Latino boys. Many of these factors suggest that their identity development is strongly related to social and environmental dynamics that eventually permeate the school setting. The review delves deeper into how schools and teachers are not typically equipped or prepared to understand and address the needs of their Latino students. In many cases, the traditional school experience may be causing further harm and negativity. In the concluding sections, this review introduces and discusses *Culturally Responsive Teaching* as teaching philosophy to engage and connect with students of color. Examples of its success so far leads to the critical question of whether Culturally Responsive Teaching can be used as a positive influence for teacher relationships, classroom engagement, and positive self-identity development for Latino boys.

#### **The Gender Gap and Latino Boys' Identity Formation**

In the last decade, a growing movement began to highlight the gender performance differences in American schools with titles such as, *The Trouble with Boys* (Tyre, 2009), “The War Against Boys” (Sommers, 2015), and, most prominently, the “Boy Crisis” (Tyre, 2006). While these pieces ignited a debate about the existence of any crisis with boys as a whole, most concede that Latino boys exemplify the phenomenon and the statistical evidence makes this clear (Warner, 2006). In comparison to Latina girls, Latino boys are more likely to drop out of high school, be suspended or expelled,

and skip classes because of safety concerns (Bryant, 2013). Latino boys are also more likely to be placed in special education, be overlooked for gifted programs, have lower grade point averages and underperform on standardized tests (Noguera, 2012). In relation to higher education, Latino boys have significantly lower enrollment rates and earn fewer degrees than Latina girls (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014).

Research indicates that Latino boys have unique challenges compared to girls in the public education system and those challenges start in early elementary school (Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2008). Studies indicate that teachers are more likely to perceive Latina girls as helpful, optimistic, innocent, and motivated (Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Teachers perceive girls as being “invested” in their education, which results in more attention and help (Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). In contrast, teachers are more likely to perceive boys as disengaged and unmotivated, which decreases their likelihood of receiving extra support and increases their referrals to special education and visits to the principal for misbehavior (Gurian & Stevens, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Sommers (2015) attributes changes in our early education classrooms for why boys become so disinterested in their early schooling experience. She argues that recess and physical education are being replaced with sit-down schoolwork time, and freedom to explore topics may be limited for boys who tend to be interested in topics like fighting, action, and war (Sommers, 2015).

Latino boys can also have a distinctive experience in schools because of Latino cultural practice of *machismo* or an exaggerated sense of manliness. *Machismo* influences how boys perceive themselves, how they are perceived by others, and

ultimately their behavior at school. Lu and Wong (2013) captured this phenomenon in their Minority Masculinity Stress Theory which argued

First, as minority men, Latino Americans receive stereotypical reflected appraisals that contradict potentially positive self-concepts. Second, Latino American men strongly underscore duty beyond typical hegemonic masculine norms. Third, men whose role-identities conflict with hegemonic masculinity are predisposed towards stress because they are likely to encounter stereotypical reflected appraisals. (p.116)

The embedded messages within the portrayal of masculinity throughout society affects all males. These include concepts such as the need for males to dominate economically, educationally, physically, emotionally and politically. To “be a man” means to be strong, authoritative and decisive. Conversely, expressing emotion and asking for help are perceived as signs of weakness. Priorities are placed on toughness, sports, and money. For decades these messages have permeated through media, home, church, and school settings (Lu & Wong, 2013; Myers, 2016).

Latino males, however, must combine both societal and unique cultural messages, which further complicate their construction of self-identity. For them, *machismo* is the prevailing cultural stereotype. Defined, *machismo* includes behaviors such as bravado, violence, sexism, selfishness, disrespect, irresponsibility, aggression and criminality. Culturally, Latino males are often encouraged to be independent, tough and aggressive. *Machismo* also involves a belief that school achievement and studiousness are associated with femininity (Covarubbias & Stone, 2014).

In a broader sense, Latinos in America must navigate a difficult balance of identity development. Anzaldua's Borderlands Theory (1987) describes an area in the United States that is neither fully American or Mexican- an invisible boarder. Youth who are a part of this boarderlands population must learn a hybrid identity as they are never fully a part of either culture. Instead of a clear divide, Anzaldua illustrates this place as dynamic with things such as symbols, restrictions, power, and language being in an ever-changing state. At the same time, she depicts the boarderlands as a figurative place to die, lamenting the loss of culture and identity at the power of the few in control. Borderlands Theory is also about salvaging identity through self-construction which for Latino males involves navigating the messages created around them. Unfortunately, in today's world those messages can reach Latinos everywhere.

### **Latinos and Media**

Negative cultural stereotypes are often perpetuated through portrayals of Latinos in the media. Besides being woefully underrepresented in primetime television or leading roles in movies, Latinos are more likely to be depicted as having low-status occupations and low authority and being temperamental and unintelligent compared to Caucasians. They are also more likely to be associated with roles involving crime, violence, aggression, low work-ethic or the so-called "Latin Lover" image, which portrays Latino males as sexually obsessed and domineering (Cerejido & Echavarri, 2016; Rivadeneyra, Ward & Gordan, 2007).

Stereotypes may be especially significant for Latinos because of significant tv and media exposure, which is higher than for other groups. Studies show that, on average,

Latino youth watch more television than other ethnic groups and they are more likely to watch without supervision or controls (McDade-Montez, 2015; Rivadeneyra et al., 2007). Additionally, research indicates those habits have a negative impact on their identity construction. Latinos have higher tendencies of “perceived viewing” or taking the images on the screen as a portrayal of real life (McDade-Montez, 2015; Rivadeneyra et al., 2007). Latinos also reported using television to learn about themselves or new things more so than Caucasian children. These articles further indicate that high levels of television or other forms of visual media consumption is associated with lower levels of self-esteem, negative emotions, and poorer mental health. Together, these factors demonstrate significant impacts on Latinos, as the absence of Latinos in prominent roles suggest to young viewers that their people are not valued or important.

In an interesting twist, research also shows that Latino boys struggle to connect with media characters even when the characters are intentionally meant to be more relatable. Calvert, Strong, Jacobs and Conger (2007) found that Latino boys, while watching a television show with a female Hispanic protagonist, related less to her than did Caucasian boys and girls and Latinas. As a result, the boys were less engaged in the show and had lower comprehension levels compared to other groups. The researchers did not draw any conclusions about whether the protagonist being female played a role in the boys having less engagement. Instead, they argued it demonstrated that role models for Latino boys are unique from what might be successful for others.

There are two theories that help explain these findings. First, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986) holds that the frequent exposure to images



leads to cultivating beliefs that those images represent the real world. Thought patterns and behaviors might activate more frequently and be more accessible over time making it more likely that reality is viewed through them. If those images reflect a predominately negative perspective, as is often the case with Latino males, this could be problematic for those frequently exposed to those images (Gerbner et al., 1986, 1994). Second, Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory can explain the negative association between media exposure and mental well-being through the concept that learning can happen through observing others, even through mass media. Viewers construct messages and make personal connections to what they see. Thus, when the "reality" presented in media is taken as real-world reality, this can lead to issues like Latino boys adopting the over-masculinity image as their own identity (Rivadeneira et al., 2007).

### **An Institutional Issue**

In the focused discussions about gender, culture, and media, the significant and staggering picture of how males of color experience prejudice, racism, and inequality in our society cannot be overlooked. Throughout the United States, males of color are more likely to be pulled over and have their cars searched, be subject to "stop and frisk" encounters compared to Whites. Despite these high interactions with law enforcement, the rates of arrests or criminal charges remain low. Complaints about such practices may not be helpful (Baumgartner, Epp, & Shoub, 2018). From 2012-2014 the Los Angeles Police Department received over 1,300 complaints about racial profiling and none of them were upheld (Mather, 2015).

Numerous studies show that males of color are arrested, cited, and charged at much higher rates than their counterparts, especially for misdemeanor and petty crimes (Balko, 2018). For more serious crimes, males of color are more likely to receive harsher sentences, including the death penalty. Overall, Blacks and Hispanics are five times more likely to be sentenced to prison than Whites. At the same time, they are 12 times more likely to be wrongly convicted in drug cases (Gross, Possley, & Stephens, 2017).

When there is an option for a plea bargain, a 2017 study showed that that whites were more likely to get plea deals that resulted in no jail time for drug offenses. Together this has resulted in a massive racial disparity within our current prison population, with over 90% of all prisoners being males (Berdejo, 2017).

Even in schools, the inequity is still in full effect. In 2016, a United States Department of Education study that students of color are four times more likely to be suspended than White students (Toppo, 2016). Youth of color who do end up in trouble at school are far more likely to end up being transferred to the juvenile justice system compared to White students. Males students of color are particularly vulnerable to profiling and punishments in gang prevention initiatives (Thomas & Wilson, 2018).

Saenz and Ponjuan (2008) have demonstrated the serious outcomes of these troubling statistics, by pointing out the declining rates of Latino males in higher education. Instead of post-secondary education, Latino males instead opt for more blue-collar work and the military. These can have long-term effects on these males and their family. Economic (quality of life in health, employment, and wages), social (males of color represented in leadership and skilled professions), and family (roles models and

fatherhood capabilities) (p. 26-28). This a sobering picture of the Latino male experience within our society and plays a significant role in their identity formation. However, as educators, these issues are not within reach to change, or even fully understood to begin with. In the next section, the focus on identity formation is brought closer to home- in schools and the classroom.

### **Latino Identity and Schools**

So far, this review has discussed many factors take their toll on Latinos, however, they are further complicated by research that indicates their identity is also negatively impacted by school itself. Valenzuela (1999) studied Latino youth in Houston and her findings point to a loss or confusion of cultural self-identity as a contributing factor to lower school performance. She concluded that the loss of cultural identity was not just taking place *at* school, but *because* of school. This phenomenon was termed “subtractive schooling” and the study explained that, “Schooling is a subtractive process. It divests these youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure” (p. 3). Valenzuela argued that this culture clash leads to confusion and misunderstanding and may cause teachers to perceive Mexican students being uncaring, lost, or even defiant. She also found that first generation Mexicans performed better at school than generations that came later because they still have strong connections to their culture and identity.

Consequently, for second and third generation Mexicans, the subtractive trend continues as their language is suppressed in schools, their culture deemed irrelevant, and their people negatively associated with a myriad of stereotypical images from “illegal aliens” to gang members. Teachers tended to view Latinos as problems, while Latino

students viewed teachers as judgmental and uncaring. Comparisons between school performance shows these later generations demonstrated progressively lower outcomes as feelings of disillusion and discouragement set in (Mariscal, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Valenzuela (1999) concludes, “Rather than building on students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge and heritage to create bicultural and bilingual competent youth, schools subtracted this identification from them to their social and academic detriment” (p. 25).

Valenzuela’s description refers to a deficit-based thinking toward students of color, which captures the very essence of negative stereotyping and low teacher expectations. Societies and its people tend to view cultures outside of their own with skepticism and potentially outright hostility. The inability to communicate seamlessly for English language learners is met with frustration and a perception of ignorance by “natives.” This is problematic particularly in the United States where race is considered one’s primary identity characteristic, yet it is inseparably linked to political and cultural philosophies (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004).

Effects from these essentially nativist, monolingual, and racist ideologies permeate into education. Within education research, Latino youth are vastly underrepresented. When they are the focal point of a study, the studies are overwhelmingly deficit oriented (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). The presence deficit thinking also extends beyond studies into classroom. Caucasian students, for example, tend to think that students of color do not work hard enough to improve their situation (Lombardi, 2016). Similarly, surveys

demonstrate that teachers are much less likely to believe their students of color will graduate compared to their peers (Lombardi, 2016).

It is important to note that teacher expectations have more impact for student success than the student's own beliefs (Boser, 2014). Currently, the majority of Latinos in the education system are not first-generation immigrants and the combination of negative perceptions in schools, influence of media, and effects of school assimilation have a particularly harmful effect on young Latino boys and their self-identity constructions. For example, research demonstrates that youth associated with negative ethnic identities often self-internalize negative stereotypes which can ultimately impact their school performance (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004; Steele, 1999).

Furthermore, the attention to middle school should not be lost. Middle school is a critical period in which students begin to form their identity, group associations, and participation in extra-curricular activities. It is also a period where students may begin to fall away and become disengaged from school (Dawes, Modecki, Gonzales, Dumka & Millsap, 2015). Studies indicate that seventh grade performance is a strong indicator of eighth and ninth grade performance, which are critical points at which students may continue with school or drop-out (Ryan & Fitzpatrick, 2001). It is clear then, that to increase school performance outcomes for Latino boys, there must be a serious focus on these critical factors and time periods that impact their identity construction.

### **Teacher Preparedness**

With teachers being one of the most important school-based factors for student success, understanding their relationship with students of color is imperative. Research

indicates that teachers are not prepared to manage the more diverse classes of today in which demographic changes have brought about unprecedented diversity. This is partly associated to the fact that the ethnic background of classroom teachers in U.S. schools has not changed nearly as much as the student population has changed. Roughly 83% of teachers are Caucasian, whereas minority students make up almost half of all students in the United States (Boser, 2014). The implications of this ethnic makeup were discussed by Siwatu (2011) and Fehr and Agnello (2012) in relation to preservice teacher preparedness for connecting with growing populations of culturally diverse students. The most important finding of these researchers was that preservice teachers were not prepared for teaching cultures outside of their own.

In Siwatu (2011), preservice teachers self-rated their most effective and confident teaching practices, with results demonstrating they had low confidence for practices related to cross-cultural teaching strategies. Results from Fehr and Agnello (2012) were comparable, showing that only two percent of their participating preservice teachers scored at levels indicating they were capable of integrating cross-cultural teaching in the classroom. A finding of both studies, through comparing the questionnaire responses with teaching observations, was that participants felt they were more confident about being culturally responsive teachers than they actually were. In addition, the teachers indicated resistance to social equality within their classroom practices. The conclusions from both studies also noted that many preservice teachers felt their education courses did little to provide practical training in teaching other cultures. Most of their instruction in these ideas was accomplished through brief discussion through one

multicultural education course, which is the typical requirement of many teacher education programs.

Another important finding is that both studies identify a correlation of high multicultural awareness and teaching scores with previous interactions with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Their study shows that preservice teachers of color often come into the program with higher multicultural competence levels, likely because of their life experiences, which often puts them in situations where cross-cultural interaction is necessary. Yet, Gladwell (2007) notes the leading indicator of a culturally responsive teacher is not automatically ethnicity, but whether the teacher has a caring and nurturing attitude toward students. Gladwell (2007) and others have argued the most effective way to reach this multicultural competence is to have actual personal experience within other cultures (Van Dyne & Ang, 2006).

### **Latinos in the Classroom**

These factors of cultural differences and preparedness contribute to other effects on Latino boys within classroom contexts. Research indicates that teachers and administrators misjudge and misperceive their Latino students more than Caucasian students. Low performance in school is often attributed to poor attitude about academics and caring more about topics outside of school (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon 2012; Lopez 2002). Adults in schools may enable racial or cultural stereotypes and may also have a skewed disciplinary process where Latino students are punished for minor offenses and police officers or staff are allowed to hassle students on campus (Rios, 2011). Statistics show that students of color, especially boys, are far more likely to have disciplinary action taken against them and be suspended from school. Related research indicates that

teachers and administrators are more likely to view minority boys as older than their actual age and less innocent than their Caucasian peers. As a result, they are more likely to be held responsible for their actions, be targets for law enforcement, and overall be “dehumanized” (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014).

Katz (1999) argues that students are “pushed out” from school because of the strained relationship they have with their teachers and the discrimination they feel at school. Although many of these students desire to succeed academically, the school environment causes them to disengage. Teachers report that they felt they could only focus on those students who “cared,” which often left out Latinos. Furthermore, Latinos feel it necessary to unite to protect and distinguish their Latino identity, but these efforts are often negatively misperceived as gang affiliation and further disengagement. This perpetuates stereotypes and further develops negative associations related to Latino culture, which consequently impacts their academic performance.

Disconnected teachers are also unable to serve as strong role models, and this is a critical void for Latino boys that is present in their schools, and as previously noted, in their media and entertainment experiences. In addition, many Latino boys may not have a positive role model even in their own home. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), 28% of Hispanic children live in single-parent homes, and in 93% of those cases, the father is the absent parent. Only 20% of adult Latino males have earned at least an associate degree which is far lower than Asian, Caucasian, and African American men. The importance of positive male role models, mentors, and peer tutors was underscored in 2014 when former United States Education Secretary, John King, under the direction



of the White House, launched the “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative, a program meant to help young minority males through positive mentorship (Ayala, 2016).

The encouraging results from role models can come from either adults or peers (Torres & Hernandez, 2010). Chapin (2014) identified the factors that influenced positive outcomes and reliance in Latino high school boys. They indicated that direct support, someone to talk to, and role models from teachers and/or friends plays a significant role in their successes. Peer tutoring or mentorships provides students with opportunities to learn and interact with high achieving peers who have had similar life experiences.

These relationships reflect the principle of co-regulated learning where the learner and a “capable other” focus on a problem or task and is worked through together. They also provide forums to affirm, validate and strengthen cultural relevance and identity formation (Hadwin & Oshige, 2011). Schwartz, Lowe, and Rhodes (2012) discussed how both the mentor and mentee benefit through this interaction because working together validates and builds cultural self-esteem, which in turn positively impacts identity construction. Within her Critical Race Theory, Yosso (2005) argued that this is especially relevant for students of color who, in comparison to white middle-class classmates, have acquired a wealth of skills, abilities, contacts, and knowledge through struggles to survive their unique challenges. As role models themselves, or providing opportunities for students to work together, teachers play a critical role in supporting Latino students through mentoring interactions.

## **The Importance of Teachers**

The case has been made that Latino boys exhibit a unique and sometimes difficult education experience. We know that teachers who develop positive and strong relationships with students can mitigate these negatives, but we also know that teachers, overall, are not prepared to do this. The critical news for educators is that research in the last two decades about how teachers can connect to minority students may provide a pathway toward improvement.

There are many approaches that could help close the achievement gap that often center around socio-economic factors. Poverty puts many minority students in less than ideal situations to excel in schools. Ladson-Billings coined the term “Opportunity Gap” to underscore the idea that as a result of poverty, students of color are often deprived of many essential learning opportunities, resources, and skills that put them behind their peers. These deprivations begin as early as kindergarten (Carter & Welner, 2013). Once in schools, these students may be attending while hungry, going home to take care of siblings, or have parents who are working and unable to provide academic support. Living in a low-income neighborhood means that students are more likely to attend schools that are not equipped with up-to-date technology and resources. In addition, they are also more likely to have teachers that are untrained, unqualified, and/or not sufficiently experienced to effectively manage a diverse classroom (Carter & Welner, 2013). Even though these social conditions play a significant role in school success for Latino students, classroom teachers are not asked or equipped to address them. More

relevant to their work is understanding what school-based factors will help Latino students succeed academically and behaviorally at school.

The research indicates they do not need to look far. Haring (2003) demonstrates that a caring and capable teacher can lift a student out of the achievement gap, even with many other socio-economic factors at play (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997; Honey, 2015). Paramount for positive outcomes, both academically and behaviorally, is the quality of relationship between the student and teacher (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Positive relationships have characteristics of support, care, trust, high expectations and low negativity, which are associated in building a student's self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-perception. Teachers who spend more time interacting with students will, in turn, receive more engagement from those students and less disruptive behavior (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, 2005; Hughes & Kwok, 2005).

For Latino students, positive student-teacher relationships function as safeguards between the many negative factors that might be influencing them both outside and within schools (Woolley & Bowen 2007). These positive relationships translate to better academic outcomes for students; conversely when relationships are negative, student performance in school also declines. In fact, studies have shown a direction connection and predictive power between positive teacher relationships and success at school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Murdock 1999, Wentzel, 1997, 2002; Woolley, Kol, Bowen 2009;).

Characteristics of positive student-teacher relationships include trust, care, respect, and listening. Latinos in secondary schools specifically point to academic

support, being available, encouragement, and scaffolding as important evidence of caring teachers (Chapin, 2014; Garcia 2009). Many students also report needing to have someone to whom they can talk and in whom they can confide. While there may be other adults in their lives capable of fulfilling those roles, students report teachers as a critical source of that role (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz & Watson, 2014).

Ferguson (2002) studied 95 ethnically diverse schools to understand the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. He concluded that black and Latino students tend to be more dependent on their teachers and more likely to perform poorly when that relationship was not strong, but, importantly, are also more likely to feel that their teachers do not care about them (Ferguson, 2002). A similar study in 2009 reaffirmed the importance of these relationships by identifying the impact positive teacher-student relationships combined with high expectations have on learning. The researchers found that Latino students graduated at a higher rate when they experienced strong relationships in school (Cammarota & Romero, 2009).

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Ladson-Billings (1995) developed Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), a new way of working with minorities, as a path toward closing the achievement gap in education. Historically in American classrooms, students from other cultures were thought to struggle because of language barriers and misplaced values (Schmeichel, 2012). This resulted in higher placements into special education and second language programs, further separating students of color from mainstream students (Artiles & Harry, 2006). These are some of the outcomes of a long-held belief that diversity was not

acceptable in education (Allen, 2006). For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many programs were set in place throughout the United States to force Native Americans to attend “Indian Schools,” which were designed for students to forget their cultural identities and adopt American values (Blakemore, 2017). In other words, students were expected to change, not the schools or teachers.

Ladson-Billings’ work challenged this practice and she, instead, presented three foundational points of a culturally responsive teacher: 1) conception of self and others, 2) social relations, and 3) conceptions of knowledge. Through CRT, she argued, students experience academic success, build up cultural competence and develop a critical consciousness (Cummings, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009). She wrote that teachers should “empower students to maintain cultural integrity, while succeeding academically” (p. 465).

Gay’s (2000) groundbreaking book, “Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Practice and Research” vaulted CRT into mainstream education research by constructing a more thorough framework. In her 2010 edition, Gay identified six characteristics of CRT:

1. Culturally relevant teaching is validating and affirming because it acknowledges the strengths of students’ diverse heritages.
2. Culturally relevant teaching is comprehensive because it uses cultural resources to teach knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes.

3. Culturally relevant teaching is multidimensional, as it encompasses many areas and applies multicultural theory to the classroom environment, teaching methods, and evaluation.
4. Culturally relevant teachers liberate students.
5. Culturally relevant teaching empowers students, giving them opportunities to excel in the classroom and beyond. Empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act.
6. Culturally relevant teaching is transformative because educators and their students must often defy educational traditions and the status quo. (p. 10-12)

In terms of how these characteristics influence teaching practice, teachers first acknowledge, legitimize and praise different cultural backgrounds. They create meaning in school by bridging content and learning with home and cultural experiences. Teaching and learning are also achieved through a variety of strategies to accommodate different learning styles. Finally, there is an emphasis on infusing relevant and diverse multicultural content into lesson plans of all subject areas (Cummings, 2009).

For a teacher, CRT means developing distinct attitudes, beliefs and practices. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), is it of primary importance for the teacher to recognize that there are multiple ways of perceiving reality and that these perceptions are influenced by one's social situation. This means teachers need to exercise serious identity development and understanding their own cultures. Teachers should also have affirming views of students and be capable of promoting learners' knowledge construction. They need to understand appropriateness as they interact with students of different cultures and

they should have a strong sense of equity and expectations of excellence in the classroom. Finally, a culturally responsive teacher learns about the lives of his or her students to design instruction that connects to what the students already know, and then extends their thinking and learning to the unfamiliar. This trait promotes “teaching the whole child” and requires knowing how to manage student emotions as they come to realizations and questions about new cultural perspectives and challenges to their own viewpoints (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Although its popularity has only recently started to grow, CRT originates from the work of Banks (1989) who pioneered the concept of Multicultural Education starting in the 1980s. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, and ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics should have an equal opportunity to learn in school about other cultures, exposing them to different viewpoints. According to Banks (1994), the five goals of multicultural education are: 1) To help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspective of other cultures; 2) to provide students with cultural and ethnic alternatives; 3) to provide all students with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to function within their ethnic culture, within the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures; 4) to reduce the pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial groups experience because of their unique racial, physical, and cultural characteristics; 5) to help students to master essential reading, writing, and math skills (p. 6).

CRT also shares principles from constructivist teaching pedagogy. This theory emphasizes building upon students' prior knowledge to keep them actively engaged and participating in the learning process. Dewey (1997) and Piaget (1972) suggested that this type of active learning is what motivates students and creates independent learners. Their work stresses the importance of incorporating different viewpoints, developing personal understanding of concepts, and engaging students in thoughtful reflection (Matsuoka, 2004).

Another critical foundational component of CRT stems from the work of Luis Moll and his concept of "Funds of Knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Moll's initial research found that students bring with them to school a cache of experiences that they have accumulated through their homes, families, friends and communities. Moll termed this cache, "Funds of Knowledge," and he noted that students draw upon these funds during their play and learning at school. Moll also suggests that teachers should identify what experiences and backgrounds their students have and use these to form connections with their classroom instruction. His work demonstrates that creating familiar and interesting contexts for students to learn leads to enhanced student learning (Semington & Amaro-Jimenez, 2011)

### **Impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

From its inception, the positive academic effect that CRT has on students has been well- documented. In 1981, Hawaii introduced its Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP), an early elementary language arts program that used CRT elements in its curriculum. Its main focus was to incorporate students' speaking skills, values, beliefs,



and activities from their home lives into their school instruction. Researchers compared the academic achievement of these students to that of others who were not part of the program, and the results indicated that KEEP students performed significantly better than their peers. This was the first major study that affirmed the value of CRT and is perhaps the most often cited in today's research (Au & Mason, 1981).

Since then, many additional studies have produced similar results. Geoffrey Cohen (2009) led a group that studied the effects of using culturally-centered instruction on writing assignments for African American students. These assignments addressed experiences, friends, family, and even dance. Cohen's results demonstrated that the students' GPAs improved and that less remediation time was required. Another important finding was that the performance of Caucasian students was not negatively affected. Christine Sleeter conducted a comparable study for the National Education Association. She concluded that, without question, students who were exposed to a well-taught, ethnic-infused curriculum, made greater gains in writing and on standardized writing tests (Sleeter, 2011). Similar results have been produced by other researchers in other subjects such as math, English, and science (Hanley & Noblit, 2011).

Ferguson (2002) studied 95 ethnically diverse schools to understand the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. She found that African American and Latino students tend to be more dependent on their teachers, tend to perform poorly when that relationship is not strong, and often feel that their teachers do not care about them. She also concluded the most critical component of CRT is for teachers to develop a caring, respectful, in-depth understanding of their students. A similar study in 2009

reaffirmed the importance of these relationships by identifying the impact positive teacher-student relationships, combined with high expectations, have on learning. The researchers found that Latino students graduated at a higher rate when they experienced these relationships in school (Cammarota & Romero, 2009).

CRT has been successfully implemented in academic areas other than instruction. Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003) discussed the problems of standardized testing in predominantly African American schools. They noted that standardized testing itself has always created a racial and/or socioeconomic divide. As a result, these tests are often misunderstood by African American students, in part, because of their content. Their research demonstrated that when tests were modified using CRT principles to change or remove the negative stereotype threats, the achievement gap virtually disappeared. They emphasize the need for educators to address larger issues related to school culture and bias:

When schools try to decide how important Black-White test score gaps are in determining the fate of Black students on their campuses, they should keep something in mind: For a great portion of Black students, the degree of racial trust they feel in their campus life, rather than in a few tricks on a standardized test, may be the key to their success. (p. 130)

Trying to measure the success of CRT can be challenging because achievement includes many factors not directly related to academics. For example, students might also be impacted by resiliency or their ability to face challenges and overcome obstacles. Corneille, Ashcraft, and Belgrave (2003) conducted a series of studies examining how

CRT influenced African American middle and high school girls. They approached the curriculum through an Afro-centric lens and measured non-academic changes over a three-year period. The results for the entire group showed a dramatically higher drug refusal rate and a significant decrease in aggressive behavior in their relationships. Even the most at-risk girls showed a reduction in risky and negative health choices.

Hall (2007) obtained the same results for adolescent boys, both African American and Latino. In an after-school setting, the students were asked share experiences from their lives and the challenges they have faced using different forms of expression from poetry to hip-hop. Hall observed that the boys' work reflected a deep understanding of race, discrimination, and resistance. He concluded that because of an increased sense of cultural pride and awareness, the boys developed strategies to help them overcome negative psychological forces that are so often present in the lives of minorities.

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching- Identity, Connectedness, and Engagement**

The unexplored areas in the literature rest at the crossroads of the main subjects addressed above: CRT, teachers, and Latino boys. While researchers have correlated improvements in academics and resiliency to the use of CRT practices by teachers, a void exists regarding studies that demonstrate improvements in the critical area of these students' cultural self-identity and how they connect to teachers and their classes.

In 2007, Heinz Endowments, one of the largest philanthropic organizations in the country, conducted a comprehensive review of literature focused on how CRT impacts certain cultural factors in students (Noblit & Hanley, 2012). Among these factors were academics, resiliency and cultural self-identity. The review, taking three years to

complete, focused on 2,808 sources. They concluded, “While there is a considerable body of literature on cultural responsive approaches, there is surprisingly little that connects such approaches to fostering positive racial identities” (p.43). In fact, the only studies the authors could cite were those that connected poor teaching with lowering cultural identities (Valenzuela, 1999). They found no research that shows the opposite to be true; that CRT positively impacts cultural identity.

My study seeks to understand how, and to what extent, this subtractive process could be reversed. CRT has been shown to effectively engage students of color through strong teacher-student relationships and providing culturally relevant content. The unique and challenging circumstances our Latino boys face in schools has also been established. These challenges will only continue to grow, not simply because of the influx of Latino immigrants, but because the majority of Latinos in this country are, or will soon be, second and third generation when the problems appear to increase (Lopez & Krogstad, 2014). This creates a crossroad full of potential. Could CRT be used to positively influence teacher-student connectedness, classroom engagement, and the cultural self-identity of these students? The answer to this question is the focus of this study and represents a small piece of a larger opportunity to explore a significant test currently facing our society.

## Chapter 3

### METHODS

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand how the implementation of Culturally Responsive Teaching influences teachers' classroom instruction, and their Latino male students' connectedness with the teacher, the content, and their cultural self-identity.

#### **Setting and Participants**

This study took place at a middle school in Utah. The study participants included two groups: teachers and students. Using a convenience sampling method, the teachers were recruited because of their proximity to the researcher (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2014). The teachers were three first-year social studies teachers. One teacher was male and two were female. All three were Caucasian. The participating teachers were all born and raised in Utah County and graduated from local universities. I had the opportunity to talk with each teacher months before the study began as they were hired in the Spring before the start of the school year in August. During this time, I did not formally collect data related to their cultural backgrounds and perspectives as this study's focus was not to address how or to what extent those areas changed as a result of the innovation. Instead the research questions concentrate on understanding changes to teacher's classroom practice and student's learning experiences.

Even without that data or not having participated in my earlier cycles of research where teachers were interviewed, I did informally ask the teachers the same questions in our conversations during the recruitment period. Through their responses, I observed two

traits common among all three. First, their answers were limited and lacked depth. When asked about approaching diversity in the classroom, any experiences they had with Latino male students, and how well they understood their cultural backgrounds, the teachers generally responded that they didn't know/weren't sure or were only able to cite brief interactions. Considering they had only had short teaching opportunities up to this point, these answers are not unexpected, but they did indicate that none of them had any particularly strong culturally responsive understanding.

My second observation was that each teacher felt they wanted to participate in this study because they desired to become better teachers. During our conversations, I received the impression that the teachers realized their cultural responsiveness may be limited, which could be a challenge for teaching in such a diverse school. Each teacher quickly committed to the study and expressed wanting to learn how to be a better teacher for their students of color. I believe the enthusiasm and nervousness for their first teaching job may have contributed to having such a willingness to participate. Although I eventually learned that their struggles with learning the basics of classroom management and lesson planning probably challenged their being able to dedicate substantial time and thought to CRT, I also consider their understanding of their limitations and their commitment to learn as the most important characteristics in the recruitment process.

The department already collaborated formally on a weekly basis and informally almost daily as their classrooms were adjacent to each other. I have planned and taught the same subjects as these teachers, which meant I was well-versed in the objectives of

each lesson and the intent of activities. This context was helpful as an observer too, for example, to not confuse a certain assessment method or activity because of unfamiliarity.

The participating students for this study were all seventh and eighth-grade Latino boys from the participating teachers' classes. Even though all students in the classes were be exposed to the intervention, i.e. CRT-infused instruction, data will only be analyzed from the participating students who were Latino boys. The selection of these students came from school demographic registration data where they or their parents identified as Hispanic/Latino. Those Latino boys who completed the consent and assent forms, represented the student participants in this study. There were 21 participating students between three class periods, one class period per teacher.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher in this study, my primary role was to facilitate the CRT trainings and follow-up collaboration meetings throughout the study period. This action was part of a broader effort to shape how new teachers are integrated into the school by interrupting the usual practice of no additional training for the unique demographics of the school (Herr & Anderson 2005). The researcher organized the pre- and post-intervention quantitative and qualitative measures during the school's intervention time for all participating students. Student interviews and observations were also conducted by the researcher. All gathered responses from either data source were only available to and stored with the researcher.

I acknowledge that my subjectivity was, on one hand, influenced by the desire to eventually find evidence of strong results from my innovations. On the other hand, there

was a strong impetus for the study to improve my innovations for future research. A significant purpose of this dissertation was not to confirm that I have found the right innovation, but to understand the most appropriate steps for further progress.

Having researched and written about CRT in the years leading up to this study, I had perception about how CRT should look in the classroom, but I selected a tool called the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) (Powell & Rightmyer, 2011) to guide my observations and feedback. This helped keep my philosophy focused on the fundamental concepts. The participating teachers also had access to this tool beforehand, so they were aware of what CRT approach we are striving to implement. Even though I was previously the department chair in this school, I was careful to articulate that my observations were strictly related to this study and that what I observed in their classroom would not be shared with administrators or fellow teachers.

### **Innovation**

This study began January 2019 with an initial CRT training by the researcher, conducted over two days, approximately two hours each day. The training was divided into two modules: Module 1 was titled: *Introduction and the Mindset of Culturally Responsive Teaching*. It introduced CRT and discussed the mindset educators should develop before modifying their teaching practice. Module 2 was titled *Culturally Response Teaching in Practice* and explored different ways to implement CRT in the one's teaching practice.

In the classroom CRT implementation can take a variety of forms and the specific collection of changes or adaptations depended on each individual class and teacher. To



guide and support this process, the researcher and participating teachers met bi-weekly for the duration of the study period to discuss challenges, successes, questions, and ideas. The ultimate goals of using CRT was to improve the connectedness between teachers and students, strengthen students' cultural self-identity, and develop stronger student engagement in class. In addition to this brief overview, Chapter 3.5 details further the development and guiding principles of the CRT training.

## **Data Collection**

### **Timeline Overview**

During the first week of the study period, all students in the participating classes were introduced to the research project and given assent and consent forms to be completed and returned. Pre-implementation data was collected during a week's period, after which teachers participated in the CRT training. The teacher each taught for 16 weeks using CRT principles. The researcher and the teachers met bi-weekly to discuss the teachers' progress in implementing CRT strategies. This included discussing successes, challenges, asking questions, discussing ideas, and planning upcoming lessons. In the final two weeks of the CRT implementation period, I conducted the post assessments, observations, interviews, and reflections. At this point, all data was collected and ready for analysis. Table 1 below summarizes the important dates, duration and tasks completed for this study.

Table 1

*Study dates, time frame and tasks*

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Date	Time Frame	Task
Dec 2018	Five Days	Distribute consent and assent forms and gather returned forms
Jan 2019	One Day	Pre-CRT teacher observations, conduct focus groups, and administer pre-assessments: MIEM and SMCRT
Jan 2019	Two Days	Culturally Responsive Teaching training
Jan - Apr 2019	One Semester	Culturally Responsive Teaching integration, bi-weekly teacher meeting, and extension course meets three times a week
May 2019	Two Weeks	Post-CRT teacher observations, conduct focus groups, and administer pre-assessments: MIEM and SMCRT
June 2019		Data analysis and reporting

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### **Data Sources**

This was a concurrent mixed methods study where quantitative and qualitative data sources were collected simultaneously and had equal priority. I merged the data to triangulate and add depth to the research questions (Ivankova, 2015). The data sources are aligned directly to the research questions (See Table 2 on page 42).

The first research question asks: *How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?* To collect data from this question, I used the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) (Powell & Rightmyer, 2011). The purpose of using the CRIOP was to understand how and to what extent CRT was implemented by a specific teacher, which helped insure a valid experiment of implementation. This tool was originally framed around eight “pillars” of CRT. The focus of my CRT training, and what was examined in this study, included the following six pillars: Classroom Caring and Teacher Dispositions, Classroom Climate and Physical Environment, Curriculum/Planned Experiences, Discourse/Instructional Conversation, Pedagogy/Instructional Practices, and Sociopolitical Consciousness/Multiple Perspectives. Within each pillar were sub-components that detailed specific characteristics or behaviors to observe. The tool allowed space to indicate specific examples of demonstrating or not demonstrating those components, but ultimately the observer gives a “holistic” score between 0-4 for each pillar (See Appendix A)

These observations took place in the week before the CRT training, where the researcher visited five class periods for each participating teacher. The class periods were chosen to be as consecutive as possible, with exceptions made for alternative schedules or events and class periods where teaching observation were not ideal, such as a test day. The researcher reviewed the notes and determined the holistic score in a scoring period immediately after each observation.

In addition, I asked each teacher to write a journal response on the days the observations were made. This took place through email. After my visits, I sent an email asking teachers to reply with a response to the prompt: *When thinking about the six pillars of Culturally Responsive Teaching, what were areas of strengths or weaknesses in today's lesson? Reflect on those and how you feel your lesson went overall today* (See Appendix B). I asked the teachers to respond before they left school that day so their recollection and reaction to that day's experiences was still clear.

I also measured changes to teacher practice using a portion of a student engagement tracking sheet described in further detail below. While tracking students, I classified the specific student behavior within a certain category. For example, on task behaviors includes the following: listening/watching, writing, speaking, reading, or hands-on activity. By tracking these behaviors, I learned what modification teachers made in their teaching styles and types of activities they provided for their students.

The second research question asked: *How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher's classroom before and during/after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?*

All of the participating Latino boys in the classes were interviewed before and after the CRT implementation in focus groups of approximately 5-10 students. As interviewing adolescents can provide its own challenges, the researcher specifically chose to use a focus group. Interviewing in groups can provide a natural setting for youth who tend to construct meanings in a shared and social process (Eder & Fingerson, 2001). In this particular setting, with the researcher being a recent teacher within the school, there

was also the potential for a power imbalance to impede the interview process. Eder and Fingerson (2001) note, "...these aspects can be minimized to some degree when interviewing takes place in group settings, as children are more relaxed in the company of their peers and are more comfortable knowing that they outnumber the adults in the setting" (p. 185). Eder and Fingerson (2001) also write that flexibility in interviewing youth is key. "Although the researcher will have certain questions in mind to start, he or she must be willing to let the interview develop by allowing opportunities for new questions to emerge based on what is shared during the interview" (p. 187). The interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Focus groups took place during the school's intervention time where the entire student body is released for 30 minutes to go wherever they would like in the school to receive enrichment or remediation activities. During this time, teachers can request specific students to be assigned to go to a specific area in the school for individualized work. The interviews were semi-structured, beginning with a general, open-ended guiding question. The researcher asked follow-up questions as the interview progresses. The focus of each question was student connectedness to different aspects of their class experience that coincide with research questions 2-4. These interview questions can be found Appendix C.

The third research question asked: RQ 3: *How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students' cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers' practice?*

To measure these outcomes, I used three quantitative data collection tools. For cultural self-identity, students completed a Multicultural Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R) inventory before the CRT teacher training and then after the CRT instruction period. The MEIM-R is a condensed version of the original, 12-item, MEIM (Phinney, 1992) which is a widely used and accepted measure of a student's awareness of racial and cultural self-identity.

The MEIM-R is a four-point Likert-style inventory that asks students to respond to 6 statements related to their awareness of racial and cultural identity. Within the 12 items are two constructs: (a) exploration or seeking information and experience relevant to one's own ethnicity, and (b) commitment, or a strong attachment and personal investment in a group. Examples of items in the inventory include statements such as, "I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me," and "I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group." Responses from both categories can be calculated separately or added together to produce an overall score. A higher score represents a strong racial or cultural self-awareness (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The complete survey is provided in Appendix D.

To measure engagement, all participating students were observed using a simple engagement tracking sheet (See Appendix E). This data was collected during ten class/teaching observations- five class periods pre-CRT training and five classes at the end of CRT implementation study period in May. At the end of the ten observation periods, it is anticipated that all participating students will have been tracked through ten class periods.

A timer was used to notify the researcher at five-minute intervals to record the engagement marks. I classified the specific behavior within each category. For example, on task includes the following: listening/watching, writing, speaking, reading, or hands-on activity. These subcategories gave indications of types of engagement that might be present during different class periods by the participating students. Data from these sheets was analyzed according to how often the students were on task and understanding what types of tasks they were engaged with during class. These observations were also constructed as a pre- and post-measurements.

To measure connectedness, I used a tool called the Student Measure of Culturally Responsive Teaching (SMCRT). The SMCRT was developed from a well-known scale created by Siwatu (2011) called the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Beliefs (CRTSE) (See Appendix F). Dixon, Chun, and Fernandez (2016) used the CRTSE and modified the items to a student's perspective instead of the teacher's perspective. The language was slightly modified to be student friendly (the target audience were middle schoolers) and some of the items were removed altogether because they were not easily observable by students. The final product was the SMCRT and demonstrated good reliability and internal consistency in Dixon, Chun, and Fernandez (2016) who suggested it is a "promising measure for assessing students' perception of Culturally Responsive Teaching practices" (p. 151).

The SMCRT is a 21-item inventory that measures Culturally Responsive Teaching practices that students observe with a specific teacher. For this study, the researcher modified the five-point Likert-scale that included a "No Opinion" option to a

six-point scale with the following scores: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Somewhat Agree (4), Agree (5) and Strongly Agree (6). The SMCRT is also divided in three constructs. Items 1-11 are associated with *Diverse Teaching Practices*. Items 12-18 are associated with *Cultural Engagement*, and items 19-20 are associated with *Diverse Language Affirmation*. For this study, only simple formatting changes were made to the original SMCRT design (See Appendix F).

## **Data Analysis**

### **The MEIM-R**

The MEIM-R surveys were calculated into a scaled score using the procedures outlined in the original survey itself: “The preferred scoring method is using the mean of the item scores; that is the mean of the 6 items for an overall score... Thus, the range of scores is from 1 to 4” (Phinney, 1992). A higher score in the post MEIM-R results should indicate that a positive impact of cultural identity awareness took place during the trial period. The overall mean pre- and post-MEIM scores for each student were compared to note any changes over the implementation period. This comparison included a paired sample T-test to identify and understand any statistically significant differences. (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, Phinney notes the mean scores can be calculated separately for the two categories of questions to track changes within those specific areas. In this case, the results could identify certain areas of cultural self-identity awareness that CRT affected more than others.



## **The CRIOP**

I utilized two data sources to document the teachers' implementation of CRT after the initial training. The CRIOP was the first sources and consisted of at least ten class period observations: five before the implementation and five after 16 weeks of teaching. The CRIOP allows space to indicate specific examples of demonstrating or not demonstrating those components within the six pillars I was using. While some examples included teacher's choice of activities or lesson structure, I also included conversations or comments made by the teacher. Specifically, they were observations where comments are noted by the observer that relate to the indicators within the tool's pillars. Although not a literal conversation with me, the teachers' dialogue with their students gave meaning to their experiences. Together I reviewed these noted examples between the six pillars for patterns and indications of strong or weak areas of their CRT experience.

## **Focus Groups**

The recordings from the focus groups were transcribed and coded selectively to my research questions. These interviews provided a deeper student perspective in a more open-ended and informal setting, which made it unique from the other data sources. Significant statements from these interviews gave voice and support to developing patterns within each research question. The transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher to identify significant statements and patterns related to the research questions (Plano, Clark & Creswell, 2010).

## **Teacher Reflections**

The written responses from teachers represented a portion the qualitative data collection of this mixed methods study. With those responses I applied techniques based on phenomenological theory to help understand the lived viewpoints of the participants (Lee & Koro-Ljunberg, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The goal of these tools was to understand how teachers put into practice my CRT training. Their viewpoint was critical to understand the impact of the implementation as well as identifying how I might improve in the CRT training.

Rossman and Rallis (2017) wrote "Those who engage in phenomenological research focus in depth on the meaning of a particular aspect of experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience will be revealed" (p. 85-86). Following this definition, and after compiling the teachers' reflective email responses, I used a focused coding method and read them once to get an idea of the teacher's overall perception of that day's CRT implementation (Charmaz, 2014).

I also applied a secondary analysis to the teacher journal responses. In this approach I diverged from focusing on the lived experiences of teachers to identifying researcher-generated themes. I began this process by reading the responses again, but this time looking for statements tied to the CRIOP pillars, which represented my overall coding themes. If a statement related to one of the pillars, I placed it as a meaning unit within the code. I piloted this approach in a previous cycle of research and as an example. When one teacher wrote about a particularly successful lesson he said, "*I created two*

*different assignments and let the students choose which one they wanted to do by the end of class. I think it worked because they were kind of excited that they actually had options!"* I saw it first as a key insight into the teachers' actions and reasonings within their CRT implementation process. I placed this statement under the CRIOP pillar Pedagogy and Instructional Practices which specifically addressed giving students choices on assignments.

### **The SMCRT**

As a quantitative tool, the SMCRT data was analyzed in two ways. First, the overall mean of student scores was obtained as group, which resulted in a number between 1 and 5. Together these scores were compared to each other in the pre- and post-SMCRT assessments. Differences would indicate whether or not students observed any components of Culturally Responsive Teaching implementation. The distinction between group and individual scores would indicate how many specific students noted observations as opposed to a single group score.

Finally, the scores will also be analyzed in reference with which type of Culturally Responsive Teaching practices were observed. The SMCRT items are divided into three categories: (1) Diverse Teaching Practice, (2) Cultural Engagement and (3) Diverse Language Affirmation. Evidence of strengths and weaknesses in these areas will be applicable not only to the individual teacher, but to the potential areas of improvement in the Culturally Responsive Training itself.

## **Engagement Observations**

The basic function of the engagement tracking sheets was to identify whether a student is on or off task. A comparison between lesson pre- and post-tracking information and the number of on/off task marks helped determine if there are any differences. The form allowed me to identify the type of on- or off-task behavior observed. I identified patterns of these behavior types which were used to support and supplement findings about the students' experiences and engagement during the CRT lesson. For example, when the students focus group interviews mentioned a particularly strong lesson, it was helpful to see that the majority of students were observed to be on task and note the type of activity being used.

## **Triangulation**

**Engagement Tracking Sheet, SMCRT and CRIOP.** The scores from the Engagement Tracking Sheets, SMCRT and observation notes from the CRIOP were compared to each other to highlight and correlate any changes to teacher practices during CRT implementation (Ivankova, 2015). I triangulated the data by using the results from the SMCRT to support observations I noted in the classroom. Indicators of similar results through different perspectives strengthened the conclusion that teaching changes took place. This data also helped me understand what components of CRT were most prevalent in the teachers' implementation and which needed a greater focus in future teacher development opportunities.

An example of this design comes from an earlier cycle of research with two teachers, where I noted a significant improvement in the area of Curriculum and Planned

Experiences. I observed changes in the ways content was presented as a lesson. In fact, the teachers began the year with every intention to strictly use the textbook (and its included quizzes and tests) as a way to cut down on lesson planning time. This meant that, in a given class period, the only visuals came from what is printed on the pages of textbook rather than using the class projector or Chromebooks to display additional images or videos. However, after a few weeks the teachers had each dropped it in favor of a less scripted approach. The student surveys showed this same observation. Their post scores indicated that when asked about teachers using visual examples in their lesson, 87% of students responded they either strongly agreed or agreed. When asked whether teachers used videos, pictures or guests in their lessons, just over 95% of student responded they either strongly agreed or agreed. These percentages represent 30% and 23% increases from the pre-scores respectively.

In another example, I observed more attention to incorporating current and real-life events into the lessons. There were also deliberate conversations about perspectives, stereotypes and valuing different groups. In one example, the teacher featured a viral video clip of a Hungarian journalist caught tripping immigrants. The class engaged in a lengthy and thoughtful discussion about immigrants, the plight of poor people and the role of journalists. On the student survey, when asked about teachers promoting respect among different groups, 86% of students either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked about teachers using real-life examples in their lessons, 88% of students either agreed or strongly agreed. These were improvements of 30% and 14% from the pre-scores.

**Observations, Reflections and Interviews.** The other set of triangulated data included the student engagement observations, student focus groups, and teacher reflections, which focused on how the CRT implementation may affected students' experiences. These data sources came from the 10 observations I conducted for each teacher. In this case, they represented three different perspectives related to the cultural responsiveness of each lesson. Teachers had an opportunity to reflect on their CRT implementation within their lesson, while students gave feedback on what parts of the lesson were interesting or engaging. The researcher compared the significant statements and themes in their responses to his student engagement observations to correlate and support each other.

The following table summarizes the relationship between the research questions and data collection tools:

Table 2

*Research questions and data collection tools*

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Data collected to answer each question</b>	<b>Type of analysis for each data source</b>
RQ 1: How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?	1) CRIOP	1) Focused coding applying observations to the six CRIOP pillars and identify patterns
	2) Teacher Reflections	2) Open coding to identify themes related to instructional adaptations within the implementation experience
	3)Engagement Observations	3) Comparison of pre and post teaching delivery methods

RQ 2: How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher's classroom before and during/after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?	1) Student Focus Groups	1) Focused for student statements involving their perception of self
RQ 3: How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students' cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers' practice?	1)Engagement Observations 2)MEIM-R 3)SMCRT	1) Comparison of pre and post student engagement behaviors 2) Comparison of pre and post scores (paired T test) 3) Comparison of individual and cumulative scores (paired T-test)

Through the collection of this quantitative and qualitative data, I aimed to understand how teachers interpreted and applied my culturally responsive teaching workshop. Future iterations of this workshop will be improved as a result of this study. In addition, a significant portion of the qualitative data explored to what extent a teacher's focus on being more culturally responsive with influence the "connectedness" of the Latino male students in their class. Primarily through their own words, the researcher aimed to measure these students' connection to their teacher, the class content, and themselves. Positive findings began to shed light on a pathway to ultimately improving the behavioral and academic outcomes of this underperforming subgroup.

## Chapter 3.5

### INNOVATION

*In this intermediary chapter, I pause from the traditional presentation of research to share the background and my personal recollections about my innovation. I did not collect data about its development or implementation, but I believe this brief overview will add helpful context to the chapters that follow.*

*The innovation for this study is a CRT training that I developed for educators. Here I will outline the history of its development and highlight its carefully crafted features that make it unique. This will include the research, teaching experiences, and cultural contextual factors that influenced the content and structure of this training. I will conclude with my general impressions of how the participating teachers received this training during this study.*

#### **Innovation Development**

*At its earliest roots, I quickly learned while beginning my teaching career that professional developments about strategies to work with the diversity our classrooms weren't a part of my school's standard practice. As my career progressed, I experienced a handful of diversity sensitivity trainings that were always mandated from the district level with short notice, with no follow-up, and involved trainers outside of our school/district/state. My experience with these trainings was disappointing and many of my colleagues felt the same. It came to the point that we teachers dreaded such training and "diversity" was associated with frustration. After coming to the conclusion that the opportunity to help our students of color be successful in schools rests heavily on teacher*



*quality, I realized we couldn't ignore issues of diversity. They just had to be presented in a different way.*

*With that goal in mind, I started to outline a different kind of training that needed to have a particular set of features. These included being intentionally engaging, relevant to the local context, useful for teachers, research based, and avoiding the pitfalls of those previous presentations that left such negative feelings. During this process, I found my childhood and teaching experiences played a critical role in how I developed the messages in this training. In chapter 3, I shared my experiences growing up in a bicultural family and navigating the cultural context growing up in Utah. This allowed me to share my perspective from being a student and youth in our culture and frame it through sensible and sensitive ideas. Being a junior high school teacher, I learned that students at that age need to be kept constantly engaged because bored junior high students is a recipe for problems. Years of lesson planning and teaching with that mindset also drove me to make my CRT presentation that was relevant, interesting, and fast paced.*

*At this point I was involved with my early graduate courses where I studied CRT through Geneva Gay's and Gloria Ladsen-Billing's work. I branched out further, learning from researchers, writers, and educators who shared their perspectives on what CRT looks like in practical application. Through this process I pieced together what I thought the critical themes and their appropriate sequence would be in a CRT presentation, much I like would do with a typical history unit plan. Those first themes were reflected in the first module of my training titled: Introduction and the Mindset of*

*Culturally Responsive Teaching. It introduced CRT and discussed the mindset educators should develop before modifying their teaching practice. This emphasized seeing differences as opportunities and building strong, positive relationships with students. I based the module around the following guiding questions:*

- 1. Do you notice the cultures of your students when they walk into the classroom?*
- 2. If you do acknowledge them, do you perceive them as obstacles or opportunities?*

*This module demonstrates that it was important for me to establish a thought-provoking, mental shift in understanding before talking about practical application, which is what educators often crave. However, I felt that cultural responsiveness was first about how we think about our students and their culture, before jumping immediately into actionable steps.*

*Another significant goal of this first module was to alleviate the frustration and anxiousness that many teachers already had when it came to talking about diversity and teaching. In fact, I felt such feelings were potentially so strong that they could render the entire presentation ineffective, and this is the central reasons that I open the presentation by addressing what CRT is not. These include a guilt trap, cultural hypersensitivity, multicultural education, and tied to any specific politics/group/movement. This was not to suggest those issues are not important, but they did not have place in these initial trainings about what cultural responsiveness is and looks like. I found that this initial conversation seemed to open the teachers' minds, and I believe it also established a sense of trust and understanding between us. I knew what they had experienced so far in their*

*teaching professional development and was sensitive to the fact that they needed something different.*

*After the mindset module, I then created Module 2 which was titled Culturally Response Teaching in Practice and it explored different ways to implement CRT in the one's teaching practice. During this module, teachers examined their first units of the second semester and began modifying their activities, procedures, assignments and discussions to follow CRT principles and strategies. The guiding questions for this module were:*

- 1. Do you do anything in your teaching to accommodate or adjust for students with different cultures?*
- 2. Do your adjustments empower your students?*

*In both modules I prioritized presenting content that teachers could adapt and use right away. I shared examples of pictures, videos, activities and stories from my own teaching experiences and presented them in such a way that teachers could use the very same ideas through their own perspective in their teaching. Additionally, I gathered a small compilation of my most thought-provoking and useful articles about CRT and used them to break up my direction instruction and allow teachers to read, discuss, and brainstorm in small groups. For this second module in particular, there is great power in letting the teachers' bright spots and best practices eventually drive the discussion. I believed that the application of cultural responsiveness will be unique for each teacher and that the organic exploration of ideas was more powerful than presenting a list of action items.*

*In the later stages of my research, I added two front and back-end components to these modules to increase their effectiveness and follow-through. Just as Utah and its districts have cultural contexts that influence how CRT might be discussed and implemented in their schools, I have presented CRT in different areas and found that each has its own unique culture and needs. As a result, I added processes to pre-assess the area before presenting. This is reflected in the pre-interviews and pre-CRT implementation measures and observations that I conducted in this study. Just as with students, being responsive to the local culture should also be critically important for teaching teachers.*

*The second component I added was continuous collaboration activity with the teachers after the CRT training. This initially stemmed from a frustration I experienced in most professional developments I have ever been a part of and was a common complaint from my colleagues. Professional developments were one-time deals and with no follow through. From a purely practical sense, it was clear to me that meaningful change would only come through continuous support, collaboration and practice. This is the same process most people experience when they try to develop a new skill like playing a sport or a new instrument. More importantly there is strong research to indicate that the most effective professional development should follow this long-term implementation model and this will be detailed further in chapter 5.*

*The purpose of this section was to outline the development of my CRT training to show the different factors that influenced its unique feel. These factors were a combination of my teaching experiences, childhood experiences, and a cultural context*

*that required adaptations. The result was an approach to CRT that was more than outlining and defining key concepts, but instead walked participants through culture, diversity, and teaching in a more positive, eye-opening, and engaging experience. This was the stage of my innovation when it used for the participating teachers in this study.*

### **Innovation Reception**

*Although I did not systematically collect data about the teachers' experience with my CRT training, I will conclude this chapter with some of my perceptions and recollections about our interactions during that time.*

*The CRT training took place in mid-January right after a semester had begun. I sensed the teachers were ready for this short break in the routine and genuinely curious about what this training would look like. Up to this point, they had only heard a brief description of what it was months earlier and had only seen me as I observed their classrooms during the two week pre-CRT implementation period. We met in the conference room of the school and enjoyed exclusive time to complete this training.*

*The first day of training was used to cover Module 1 and because we were allotted a generous amount of time for this presentation, we were able to discuss and engage in more activities than I would have typically planned. My perception of their experience was that material was unexpected and almost revelatory. They talked about not having thought about culture, diversity and developing relationship in this way before. I remember they asked if they could use the presentation for their own students because they thought it would be helpful to explain things they had tried to teach before. I noted a lot head-nodding and statements of affirmation during our discussion, with the*

*teachers signaling that these were things they had noticed, but had never quite been able to articulate concretely. From their expressions and comments throughout the first module, I felt the teachers experienced a larger mindset shift and mental exercise than anything else. They confirmed this toward the end when I started getting questions about suggestions and ideas for CRT strategies. We adjourned that day with a goal to let the ideas sink in and think about what things they were already doing that could be related to CRT, and what their ideas might be as they looked toward modifying their practice further.*

*On the second day we covered Module 2 that focused on putting CRT into practice. Ideas for practice came from sharing my own experiences, resources from others who have written about CRT, and consulting various CRT measurement and observation tools. Our last activity was for teachers to look at their next teaching unit and to start idea sharing about how they might to make their lessons, message and behaviors more culturally responsive. My perceptions about this second module was that teachers were enthusiastic and excited to plan their next units with a different lens. During this time, I felt it was important to let the teachers innovate and their department chair to help guide the discussions as I took a more advisory role.*

*I remember three specific occasions where I took time to add clarity or direction during their discussions. The first was to remind teachers that the point of this planning was not to come to an agreement on a uniform implementation idea or plan. It was to enhance and critique each other's ideas. Since this school's typical collaboration process includes uniformity in a department, I found this point to be particularly new and even a*

*struggle for the teachers. The second intervention came when I felt the teachers were innovating for procedural or classroom management issues, rather than content and connecting. At times, I can see how these two concepts can be related, but in listening to teachers discussions, the signal came as they focused more on student behavior and lost sight of content and their own practice. Finally, I sensed the teachers were trying to do too much and plan too quickly. I reminded them that this is a methodical and developing process. They did not need to have all the answers completed by the end of the training and their initial list of adaptations should be small and focused.*

*These minor course corrections highlighted for me two key components about this training that were critical for its success. First, it was helpful to have sufficient time and a small group because it allowed us to discuss and innovate without feeling pressure of needing to get done or feeling like your voice was not being heard. Second, it was critical to know that this was only the beginning of the implementation process. Unlike many other professional development experiences where the presentation ends on that day, the teachers understood that we would be innovating for the next 16 weeks and that this reflected a true growth and development process. The pressure to make quick changes was replaced with thoughtful collaboration of individualized targeted areas for improvement.*

*My overall assessment of the CRT training for this study was that it went as I planned and that it was well received by teachers. In addition to their immediate comments and reactions, which were all positive, I have been contacted by administrators to repeat this training at different schools through their referrals.*

*However, what made this training successful in my perception was the attitude and eagerness of the teachers. To their credit, they were able to step away from their stressful first year of teaching and be willing to learn and modify their practice in the midst of it all. Chapter 4 will next feature the data I collected as a result of this training and collaboration period.*



Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The following chapters are the results and data analysis for the quantitative and qualitative data sources. They are organized using the sequence found above in Table 2, which are grouped within this study’s three research questions. The data is analyzed and presented as a total score or finding of the three teachers combined, and when appropriate, the analysis within an individual teacher’s results is also noted.

**RQ 1: How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?**

**Finding: Content and Control Shift to Building Relationships and Modifying Practice for Engagement**

Before the intervention, I found that the three participating teachers either rarely or occasionally demonstrated culturally responsive features. Table 3 shows the overall pre-CRT implementation characterization of culturally responsiveness for each teacher.

Table 3

*Pre-CRT implementation CRIOP characterization of how often teachers featured culturally responsive practices*

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Pillar 1: Classroom Caring and Teacher Dispositions	2	2	2
Pillar 2: Classroom Climate and Physical Environment	2	2	2
Pillar 3: Curriculum and Planned Experiences	2	3	2

Pillar 4: Discourse and Instructional Conversation	1	2	3
Pillar 5: Pedagogy and Instructional Practices	2	1	2
Pillar 6: Sociopolitical Consciousness and Multiple Perspectives	1	1	2
Average	1.6	1.8	2.1

*Note:* 4 = classroom was *consistently* characterized by culturally responsive features  
3 = classroom was *often* characterized by culturally responsive features  
2 = classroom was *occasionally* characterized by culturally responsive features  
1 = classroom was *rarely* characterized by culturally responsive features  
0 = classroom was *never* characterized by culturally responsive features

Through the pre-CRT implementation CRIOP, I noted the participating teachers had similar practices and similar struggles with flexibility, classroom management, and missed opportunities. I observed the teachers were generally prepared with a robust schedule and lesson plan each day. This planning was also accompanied by strong desire to see the lesson through without deviation. I observed this in practice and word. Each teacher had the day’s objective, learning targets, and success criteria written on the board. Textbooks, worksheets, and note-taking were used amongst all teachers, with page numbers and printouts prepared before-hand. Each teacher began the day outlining the learning targets and what was going to happen during the class period. The teachers often used direct instruction, which allowed for more control of the pacing and direction of the lesson.

The topics and questions during the lesson were heavily influenced by the teacher. For example, I observed Teacher A begin class by asking students if they had heard about an event that happened the day before involving a potential hate crime against a Latino father and son in a nearby community. After a brief summary, one student asked, “I don’t know what a hate crime is. What’s a hate crime?” The Teacher A responded that this event was more about hate crime legislation in the state and but there wasn’t time to discuss it further because she wanted to “stay on track” (Observation notes, January 7, 2019). On another occasion, the Teacher B interrupted a student conversation about a horrific gasoline explosion in Mexico to say that the class needed to move on so as not to get behind in the lesson.

Teacher C demonstrated a willingness to deviate from the lesson plan at times, but it also seemed to cause a disruption in his ability to keep the flow of the class going. For example, during a ten-minute span of a class period Teacher C seemed to prioritize answering student questions or comments that were being called out, many of them off topic, that he lost the attention, focus, and trajectory of his lesson plan. Once he stepped away from conversing, he picked up a stack of papers that he was going to hand out but looked at the clock and commented to the students closest to him that he didn’t think they were going to have time to finish this assignment. It was only after a few more minutes of reorganizing his thoughts and materials that he finally announced they would answer only a few questions from his papers as a class. However, he never gained full control of the students for the remaining last 15 minutes of class (Observation notes, January 9, 2019).

This points to another pattern that emerged that is related to classroom management. Each teacher struggled with how to manage his or her students. Teacher A had a noticeable focus on keep her students under control. I observed quickly that her class at any given moment was silent and she quickly address any comments or behaviors that were out of line. When the class was working on a short assignment that began as soon as the bell rang to begin class, I watched two participating students sitting next to each other writing on their papers. One student turned a whispered something to the other and immediately looked at the teacher to see if she had seen. The same student said something again and the Teacher A addressed the student by name and reminded him to focus on his work.

Teachers B and C struggled with management in a different way in that they had less control of their students. In contrast to Teacher A, their classes were humming with voices that sometimes escalated to a dull roar. Often, they had students that were off task. I noted clusters of students appearing to be completely removed from what the teacher was doing, by talking with each other, being distracted, or what looked like outright boredom. These students did not maintain eye contact with the teacher, were not writing or following along with the lesson, and sometimes had their backs completely facing the teacher while in conversation. Teachers B and C often did not address these issues or even appear to notice it was happening. In either case, the CRIOP indicators were negatively influenced as a result of the teachers' management skills, which made it difficult to observe the types of collaborative interactions that are key to culturally responsive teaching

Lastly, all three teachers demonstrated a pattern of missed opportunities. These opportunities took many forms but consistently occurred when a student posed a question or comment and then had it dismissed by the teacher. Back to the example involving Teacher A and the hate crime that involved a Latino family: besides the student who asked a question, there were several students who had their hands raised, but Teacher A did not take advantage of that interest and instead chose to move on. In another instance, Teacher B was teaching a lesson about the United States involvement in foreign affairs and a student asked her if they could talk about what was going on in Syria. Teacher B responded “No- it’s not in what I’m supposed to teach” (Observation notes, January 11, 2019).

While these examples were clear because of the teachers’ comments, there were other subtle missed opportunities throughout their lessons. The missed opportunities came in the form of the teachers not prompting for prior knowledge or soliciting multiple or diverse perspectives. During my observations the general topics revolved around how our government works and understanding the Constitution including the Bill of Rights and three branches of government. I did not observe the teachers attempting to prompt for prior knowledge during any other their lessons. While I noted they sometimes posed questions like, “Did you know you have the right to protest?” there was not a designed strategy to learn about and incorporate the students prior knowledge on the lesson topics.

The same could also be said about incorporating diverse perspectives. I noted that while the teachers did most of the talking, the majority of comments from students came from those who raised their hands, and those were a select few. In one case, the Teacher

C was talking about the fourth amendment and airport security. After explaining something about body scanners and pat downs, he asked if everyone was ok with those in relation to the words in the amendment. One student commented that she was fine with the extra security measures and the teacher made no attempt to incorporate in other perspectives or counterarguments, despite the fact I could hear students disagreeing with his reasoning (Observation notes, January 7, 2019).

A pattern of focusing on the objective rather than the student and an unawareness of student needs were also evident in the teachers' reflections after the observation days. Consistent among the teachers' reflections was their belief the lesson went great. They often discussed what they taught and how they progressed through their lesson plan. Examples from their reflection included comments like "Great day, I made it through the lesson!" and "I didn't have to make any adjustments to my plan and I thought it went smooth" (Teacher reflections, January 7-8, 2019) Teachers also characterized the behavior of their students through the lens of their management approach. I observed that Teachers A and B often associated a quiet class with a class that was paying attention and "into" the lesson. In a similar vein, Teacher C often associated a very talkative (and potentially off-task) class with being very "into" the lesson as well.

While the teachers often recounted what they did during the lessons and what they liked, they almost never reflected on specific weaknesses or areas they wanted to improve. Teacher A reflected in this way only once when she wrote she would have changed a particular activity to get students up and moving more. Teacher B did not

include any areas of weakness or improvement, while Teacher C noted several times that he was not sure how the lesson went but did not identify any specific examples.

The teachers’ struggles with flexibility was also demonstrated throughout the teachers’ pre-CRT implementation responses in their use of the objectives or learning targets were the measuring stick of their lesson’s success. In fact, teachers mentioned lesson plans and objectives/targets in 32 of the 62 coded statements from their responses. This was more than student learning/engagement, assessment, content and teaching methods codes combined. There was no response that included a thought about to what extent the students learned the target, only if the teacher reached the target. In one reflection, Teacher B wrote “I know today’s lesson was rushed because I needed to keep the class up with my others...I’m not sure what the students got out of the lesson.” (Teacher reflections, January 11, 2019) In other words, the teachers’ planning appeared to emphasize the destination of getting to the target rather than the journey and the learning that took place along the way.

In the five post-CRT implementation CRIOP observations, I noted many examples of teacher practices that were culturally responsive and used with more frequency. Table 4 below shows the teachers’ post-CRT implementation CRIOP levels:

Table 4

*Post-CRT implementation CRIOP characterization of how often teachers featured culturally responsive practices*

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Pillar 1: Classroom Caring and Teacher Dispositions	3	2	2
	2	4	4

Pillar 2: Classroom Climate and Physical Environment			
Pillar 3: Curriculum and Planned Experiences	4	4	3
Pillar 4: Discourse and Instructional Conversation	3	4	3
Pillar 5: Pedagogy and Instructional Practices	3	3	2
Pillar 6: Sociopolitical Consciousness and Multiple Perspectives	3	3	3
Average	3.0	3.3	2.8
Effect Size ( <i>d</i> )	.52	.71	.54

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*Note:* 4 = classroom was *consistently* characterized by culturally responsive features  
3 = classroom was *often* characterized by culturally responsive features  
2 = classroom was *occasionally* characterized by culturally responsive features  
1 = classroom was *rarely* characterized by culturally responsive features  
0 = classroom was *never* characterized by culturally responsive features

Table 4 demonstrates the improvement in overall frequency of how often I observed culturally responsive practices in their teaching, which for most pillars I noted as “often.” The average score improved for all teachers and I also calculated the Cohens (*d*) score for each teacher to determine the effect size between the pre and post scores. The effect size of was medium for all three teachers and with the strongest scored from Teacher B at .71.



On four of my five observations, Teacher A incorporated dialogue into her lessons and made a specific practice of calling on students to speak from different corners of the classroom and even those who were not raising their hands. Teacher A also incorporated a weekly current event activity where students started the day by using their computers to browse, write, discuss, and report on a news story of their choice. Teacher B used a similar practice and deliberately highlighted current events that involved people of color or issues on diversity and equity. She also made these highlights during her actual lesson. For example, I observed one lesson about the Transcontinental Railroad where Teacher B specifically focused on the contributions of immigrant laborers. She continued the lesson by showing a montage of iconic American construction projects (Empire State Building, Hoover Dam, etc.) and noted the significant immigrant work in building this country. In another observation, students were preparing in teams for a class debate. During that class period, I noted that students were engaged in cooperative learning, reading, writing, research, and presenting. This diversity in activities represented a significant shift in her practice.

Teacher C also demonstrated changes. He, in addition to Teachers A and B, had used an activity called the “invisible backpack” to get to know students better early in the implementation period. In this activity, students identify and draw significant people experiences, symbols, objects, and places that have shaped their identity and are things they “carry” with them constantly. By the time I observed Teacher C in the Spring, he was still incorporating this activity by asking a student to share and explain his or her backpack drawing with the class. The students’ backpack drawings were hung up around

the walls of his classroom. I also observed that Teacher C had stopped using the textbook entirely, and when prompted in a collaboration session, I noted he said he made the change because he recognized his students “hated” the textbooks and he wanted to do something they might actually like. In his case, he focused on project-based learning, which had been discussed during our collaboration and brainstorming sessions.

During my observations, the students were engaged in a large research project where they had to advocate for a cause that was personally important to them. Students had to research, write, develop an action plan, and present a pitch to the class. The wide range of topics students were choosing clearly indicated they were taking advantage of an opportunity to take charge of their own learning. One student’s topic was the improving the safety of blinds because her cousin had died in an accident involving a cord. Another student’s topic was about the rise in E-sports, which was important to him because he said he wasn’t athletic, but it didn’t mean he couldn’t be competitive or involved in sports. Even though Teacher C’s classroom maintained its dull roar environment, the shift to more student-centered learning was clear during my observations.

The post-CRT teacher reflections also demonstrated this shift away from objections and towards a student-focused teaching practice. This was apparent from the responses as all three participating teachers often reflected on specific planning, activities, or behavior related to their students. Teachers used their reflections to comment about trying something new or changing their plan in order to move toward their students’ needs. In reflecting about her new current events/news activity, Teacher A wrote, “I know the students are interested in some of the news going on today and this

feels like a good way of letting them feel like they have a say about what we talk about” (Teacher reflections, May 10, 2019). Teacher B also commented:

My goal today was to get students to understand the difference between opinion and argumentative, which they need to know before they can build an outline for their debate points... The students got right into it, which is surprising because they hate reading and writing, but I think since this was so different from what I normally do, they actually enjoyed it! (Teacher reflections, May 6, 2019)

In the same way the participating teachers were so focused on being objective in the pre-CRT reflections, their comments showed they were more interested in their lessons applied to students. Teacher B wrote that she chose to highlight the immigrants in America topics because she felt her students “needed to hear it” because it would be good for Latino students to see their people in a good light and for other students to see a different viewpoint about immigrants in America” (Teacher reflections, May 8, 2019). Teacher C reflected that he wanted the project he was assigning to be “something they personally know or experienced so their hearts are in it and not just for the grade” (Email responses, May 8, 2019).

In other examples, the teacher prioritized what the students experienced in class over what the teacher could cover content-wise.

Teacher A wrote:

I chose the Harriet Tubman story because it was short, and I thought the students would find it interesting. They were quiet and into it and I know they got

something out of it because it fueled one side in our ‘mini’ debate on Tubman vs Jackson for the \$20 bill. (Teacher reflections, May 9, 2019)

Teacher C wrote, “I know the kids were buying into the project because for the first time I had time to breath during class. I could actually walk around, listen, and give real feedback! (Teacher reflections, May 10, 2019). These types of comments were common throughout the teacher reflections and they indicate not only a focus on the students’ classroom experience, but more examples of engaged students.

The coded data from these reflections highlight this move. Of the 75 coded, 58 referred to student learning/engagement, assessment, content or teaching methods codes. This represents an improvement from the pre-reflections where teachers mentioned lesson plans and objectives/targets in just over half (32) of the 62 coded statements. This was more than student learning/engagement, assessment, content and teaching methods codes combined. Together these point to a teacher practice that is focused on being responsive to students by putting their interests and engagement as a priority in planning.

**RQ 2: How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher’s classroom before and after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?**

**Finding: Teachers’ Changes in Practice Help Students Feel Valued and Understood**

The student focus groups gave insight into how their initial negative classroom experiences changed as their teachers modified their practice. As I prompted students to talk about how they think about themselves, especially as it relates to their culture, many of their comments drew upon how other people view Latino males. For example, one

student said, “Like with Trump and the news and stuff, being Latino is seen as a negative” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019). Another student commented, “I don’t think we are trusted or seen with the positives that we bring” (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019). It was clear that the students were attuned to how other people shaped their identity, which they believed was also manifested in their classroom experiences.

The participating students believed these negative perceptions led to unfair treatment and poor relationships with their teachers. They recounted several instances both inside and outside of school where they felt mistreated because of who they were. In one example a student said, “My teacher treats girls better than boys. When we ask a question in math, the teacher gets mad and says it’s because I wasn’t paying attention, but if a girl asks, they don’t say anything” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019)

Another student said:

I feel like we get in trouble more. We are always told to be quiet or stop talking or messing around, but it’s only our group- even if other kids in the class are doing the same thing, the teacher only gets on us (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019).

These comments show perceived distrust and unfair treatment between the students and teacher, which mirrored the comments teachers had about these students in earlier cycles of research. Without deciding whose actions were more appropriate or well-founded, their perceptions alone suggest a weak and negative relationship.

In the post-CRT student focus groups, the students indicated changes in their teachers' practice of how they tried to understand them better. The students uniformly acknowledged the activities each teacher had done to get them know them better toward the beginning of the semester. One student said, "I could tell she was doing things to get to know me better... It was cool cause most teachers don't that" (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019). Another student said, "I felt like it was more than what my teachers normally do like on the first days of school... because it went deeper- more than just like what's your favorite color, but like more about who you are. I felt important... valued" (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019).

Beyond these initial activities, students reflected on how their teachers continued the relationship-building and connecting processes throughout the implementation, each in their own way. Students from Teacher A noticed changes in how they were specifically called on in class to share their opinions. "She had never called on me before," one student said, "Only those who raised their hands, but she calls on me or him [pointing] all the time" (Focus group transcripts, May 14, 2019). This teacher's practice in-turn influenced these students' self-worth. A second student commented:

It did make me feel different- like that she cared what I had to say even though I don't really like raising my hand. I think it's good to be able to tell my side because sometimes I actually don't agree what others [students] think. (Focus group transcripts, May 14, 2019)

Students in Teacher B's class were similarly moved by her practice. One student said, "I noticed she definitely started talking about Hispanics and things having to do

with immigrants and stuff more” (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019). When questioned further the student responded, “The thing is that they were always like positive things, which is different because mostly people say negative things about us and immigrants, but hers were more positive and pointing out good things” (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019). Another student recounted a time when Teacher B showed pictures of a Mayan pyramid in Mexico and as she talked about how sophisticated and interesting it was. Teacher B then asked who in the class is from Mexico and told them they needed to know how smart and impressive their ancestors were. “I actually felt proud about being from Mexico,” the student said (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019).

Several students from Teacher C commented about his continuously developing a stronger relationship with them by learning more about home life and their interests. Teacher C carried his initial get-to-know you activity throughout the semester, taking the time to eventually highlight every students’ paper in front of the class. Two students said that Teacher C came into the lunchroom a few times and actually sat with them and “just talked about whatever” (Focus group transcripts, May 16, 2019). When asked if this approach made in difference, one student responded, “Yes because it showed that like he really wanted to get to me- more than just my name... I’ve never had a teacher do that before- coming and sitting with us” (Focus group transcripts, May 16, 2019). Another student added:

Cause then he starts asking about like how things are going with my family or my soccer and stuff. Like he’s always asking what’s new with those. It made me feel

like someone cared about things not just in school. And that I could talk to someone at school. (Focus group transcripts, May 16, 2019)

These comments demonstrate that the students had an improved classroom experience because the teachers' actions helped students feel valued and in a more positive light.

### **Finding: Initial “Disconnectedness” Changes as Teachers Focus on Relationships and Relevancy**

**Relationships.** As noted above, the pre-implementation teacher reflections were largely absent of student-related comments, which strengthens the evidence for a disconnected teacher-student relationship. Other than noting when a class “liked” a lesson, the teachers did not share any reflections about how any particular lesson connected with the class. The teachers also did not reflect on any comments, questions, verbal/non-verbal cues, or any other indicator of a relationship between their students. The absence of these types of observations also suggests a “disconnectedness” between the teachers and students.

The student focus groups triangulated this finding of disconnecting teacher practices and a highlighting a gap in personal relationship building. The student responses reflected few comments about the relationship they had with their teacher, even when prompted in different ways. One student from Teacher A commented, “She does try to get and know us- but only a little” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019)

A student from Teacher B said, “She doesn't try to really get to know us. We did some stuff- filled out a paper about us- but she didn't follow through with them. And she doesn't remember my name” (Focus group transcripts, January 15, 2019) A student from



Teacher C said, “He’s never tried to get to know me” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019). Within the student responses, at no point did any student comment about a strong or positive relationship with teacher.

It was, however, evident that the students felt their teachers wanted them to learn, but the connection between the two was not strong enough for meaningful learning to take place. Students from Teacher A commented, “...She cares because she’s always motivating us and keeping on task, but she doesn’t let us talk or say anything during class. We think she cares about our learning but it’s just not that fun.” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019)

A student in Teacher B’s class said, “She thinks we should like it, but we don’t care. We can make jokes right to her and she doesn’t even know it” (Focus group transcripts, January 15, 2019) Another student from the class said:

She is always figuring out stuff at the beginning of class and she doesn’t even know what we are doing half the time and the class is just messing around but then she said it is our fault if we don’t learn. (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019)

Teacher C had a number of students note him as being “fun” or “funny”, but with a caveat. One student said, “He is scattered. We get away with anything. The class is loud, and we actually don’t learn that much” (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019)

Like Teacher C, the responses between all teachers included small chunks of positives and praise, yet when speaking directly about the teacher, the students’ comments showed resentment and even a lack of respect toward their relationship.

A student from Teacher A said, “I could tell she was letting us talk a little more or like calling on us, which made it not as long of a class” (Focus group transcripts, May 14, 2019). Students from Teacher B’s class noticed her focus on Latino or Immigrant highlights. “I definitely noticed she was talking more about stuff that we would be interested in. It was cool because there were things I didn’t know or hadn’t heard about and I would like go home and tell my parents and they would ask me what else we were learning because they hadn’t heard it and wanted to know more” (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019).

In another question, the students were asked, “How do you know your he/she cares about you?” Students often responded by saying they felt their teachers had to tried to get to know them better. When prompted directly, “What did your teacher do to get to know you better?” Many students cited the initial “invisible backpack” activity and other individual examples, many of them informal, where their teacher had asked about their interests or things outside of school. This represented a shift in practice and relationship-building, as the students’ could not respond with a positive example when asked the same question in the pre-CRT implementation focus groups.

**Relevancy.** In addition to relationships, the student focus groups and indicated an issue of relevancy with their teachers’ practice. Before the CRT implementation, common practices between the participating teachers was made clear in the student focus groups and those were note-taking and textbooks. Since the teachers routinely planned together, this was not unexpected, although the student feedback was clear and uniform. One student said, “We take a lot of notes and we always ask why and she says because

we will remember it better for the test” (Focus group transcripts, January 15, 2019). Another student said, “We take a lot of notes! One page every day!” This was followed up by another exclamation “I hate the notes!” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019). The comments related to textbooks were similar. “We use the textbooks too much; we just copy the worksheet answers from each other,” two students said (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019). Another student said, “I don’t like the textbook. I don’t like reading” (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019). A student from Teacher A’s class insightfully concluded this discussion by saying, “We think she cares about our learning but just not the way we like to learn it” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019).

Even though the majority of student responses focused on these negative aspects, there were some comments about other, and sometimes more positive, teaching practices as well. From Teacher A, there were comments about learning targets, working in groups, and having to think because of her constant questioning. From Teacher B, several students noted she talked a lot (and very loud), but once in a while had an activity that broke the routine and made the lesson fun. Teacher C received the most positive comments as his students talked about him using the projector to show lots of video clips, telling stories, and being funny. The students also noted him being “scattered” and sometimes not prepared (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019).

Besides teaching styles, the students also felt like the content in their classes were not relevant to their lives. When asked, “Is there a time when your culture has been a part

of the lesson? and, “Is there a time when Latino topics were specifically a part of the lesson?” students were not able to provide examples.

When asked to elaborate, one student from Teacher A’s class said. “Sometimes the stuff is interesting, but most of the time it’s just boring. And I actually do like history, but she doesn’t make it exciting” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019). From the same class another student said, “I don’t really get it what we are talking about most of time- or like I forget it fast. We read [primary] documents, but I wish we would talk more about stuff going on today” (Focus group transcripts, January 14, 2019).

These types of comments were consistent with each teacher. A student from Teacher B said:

She does current events sometimes and those are the things that can be interesting but it’s always fast. Honestly, I don’t know what really applies to me-like I don’t know how it going to help me down the line. I don’t even remember what we learned in the first semester. When we talk about wars and stuff its interesting, but most of the time we always ask when are we ever going to use this and she doesn’t answer or says like “trust me you will.” (Focus group transcripts, January 15, 2019)

One student from Teacher C commented:

I am really not sure what we are learning on most days, sometimes when we watch stuff like news clips or funny videos and I would like to learn more about some of the topics. ... but it feels like he uses those when he’s run out of ideas for what to do. (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019)

A second student said, “Sometimes he talks about how like what we are learning might apply for our future, but I don’t even know what he’s talking about because we haven’t even learned anything, most of the time” (Focus group transcripts, January 16, 2019).

These statements reflect two problematic observations from students. First, some students believed what was being taught in class had no relevancy for them. Second, some students weren’t sure anything was being taught to begin with. Just as connectedness is important between the student and teacher relationship, it is also critical that it exist between the students and the content. This evidence indicates that teachers were not connecting the content and the students, leading to disengagement during class.

In the post-CRT implementation focus groups, the students’ responses showed direct evidence of a change toward relevancy and engagement. When asked specifically, “Do you have any examples of a lesson or topic you thought was very relevant?” One student from Teacher B responded:

Anytime we talk about things about today. Sometimes the history stuff is not as exciting, but it can be- it just has to do with the way she presents it. It doesn’t seem interesting until I see how it’s still around today and then I get more into it.  
(Focus group transcripts, May 14, 2019)

When prompted further the student said:

We were talking about the kids working in the factories and how they had to work all day and they would get sick and hurt and stuff, but then she showed us a news thing that showed how kids working, like as slaves, still happens a lot. These kids were looking for gold in the mud all day and they got paid like 25 cents for one

day... so yeah now that I see how it happens today, I've been thinking more about it and it's interesting to me. (Focus group transcripts, May 14, 2019)

Another student said:

I liked what we did. The debate was fun. We really go into it and it's like we were doing work, but it didn't feel like work because before we only did notes and because we started not doing as much and doing things like debates. (Focus group transcripts, May 15, 2019)

A student from Teacher C's class exclaimed, "We stopped using the textbook! It was so boring!" (Focus group transcripts, May 16, 2019)

During these interviews, I noticed the students were more thoughtful in their responses, and it took considerable prodding and waiting for students to think about and articulate answers. My theory is that whereas the initial focus groups only asked for their opinion and experiences, the post-CRT implementation focus groups asked more specific questions about examples and compare and contrasting between semesters. I found it helpful to remind them about what they had said about their first semester experiences and focused on identifying the current common practices of their teacher now so they could compare the two. This suggests the changes were subtle and not always initially apparent to students. Nevertheless, the students who recognized changes uniformly thought their classroom experience was better for their engagement and interest levels than before. I will note that while not every student gave specific examples, I made sure that each student was given an opportunity to share his thoughts and there were no students who expressed disagreement about seeing a positive shift in practice.

Taken together, these statements coincide with the findings from post results from RQ 1, which showed that teachers did make changes to their practice such as allowing students to be heard more, highlighting topics that would interest different groups of students, incorporating technology, and allowing students choice in their projects. In turn, the “connectedness” between participating students and teacher demonstrated considerable growth through developing a stronger, positive, relationship and strengthening the relevancy of the lesson content to the students’ lives. Thus, the qualitative analysis of the students’ responses mirrored those from the teachers’ and showed that by focusing on students’ culture, the teacher’s practice improved both in their relationships with students and content relevancy.

**RQ 3: How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students’ cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers’ practice?**

**Finding: Student Engagement and Teachers Diversity in Lesson Activities Show Improvement**

Before the CRT implementation, I found student engagement to be low and similar in type, within teaching styles that were consistently repetitive. In my student engagement observations, I used descriptive statistics to find patterns among the participating teachers, as a group and individually. Because each participating teacher had different styles and skill level in classroom management, this data is best viewed individually. For Teacher A, I recorded participating students engaged almost 88% of the time and during the lesson they were most often listening/watching or writing. It was

difficult to judge engagement because the class was so often quiet and still, but to the extent a student had his eyes on the teacher and focused on her discussion I noted him as engaged. Like the other teachers, Teacher A's students recorded almost identical engagement scores throughout the different observations, although she was unique because she had the most engagement scores that were something different than listening/watching. Even though they were limited in number, Teacher A had activities in her lessons where I noted on-task behavior that was reading, hands-on, and speaking.

In contrast, Teachers B's student engagement scores were 61% on-task and 39% off task. Her scores were similarly consistent throughout the observation periods and her students' on-task behavior was almost exclusively listening/watching or writing. In fact, she recorded no on-task behavior in reading or hands-on activities. The students' off task behavior showed no significant trend.

Teacher C's student engagement scores indicated that his students were off task 70% of the time and similarly there was no specific pattern. His class also was difficult at times to determine engagement as the number of students' talking in class was often so large and robust, it was not always clear if their conversations were related to the lesson. Even though Teacher C used more technology in his lesson, it was not reflected in the students' on task behavior which was most often listening/watching. He too had no student engagement scores that were on-task in reading or hands-on. Together the participating teachers showed a pattern of having consistent teaching styles that most often used direct instruction where students were listening and taking notes.



As noted in RQ 1, the pre-implementation teacher reflections demonstrated a rigid and content-focused delivery. The reflections showed teachers were almost uniformly focused on their own performance and perception of how the lesson went. Any mention of the student's engagement was limited to "They liked the lesson" type phrases. Teacher A made the only specific comment related to student engagement when she reflected on wanting to modify the lesson's activity so that students would be able to move around the class instead of staying in their seats. Among the 15 reflections, this stood out as the only specific student-focused reflection.

In the engagement tracking sheets, the overall engagement scores remained nearly the same for Teacher A (86%) and rose for Teacher B (78%) and Teacher C (52%). While the overall engagement scores showed improvement for Teachers B and C, the data also demonstrated a difference in the type of engagement activities students experienced. In the pre-CRT implementation observations, 89% of all on-task observations were either listening/watching. The post-CRT implementation scored saw that number drop to 55%, with nearly even splits between speaking, writing, reading, and hands-activities. During some of these times it was difficult to distinguish what activity students were engaged with because they doing multiple simultaneously. However, that challenge alone suggests a positive change in overall engagement.

### **Finding: Students' Exploration and Commitment in Cultural Self-Identity**

#### **Demonstrate Little Quantitative Change**

While students experienced learning very differently before and after the intervention and this is reflected in quantitative changes in measures of engagement,

quantitative measurements of student’s cultural self-identity do not reflect experiential changes in the same way. I used the MEIM-R to quantitatively assess changes in students’ cultural self-identity, and I found that before the intervention, the participating students felt a stronger feeling of pride or belonging to their cultural group- more so than having an initiative to learn more about their cultural group. Table 5 shows the students averages in the pre and post CRT-implementation scores. shows the students averages in the pre and post CRT-implementation scores:

Table 5

*Pre and Post-CRT Implementation MEIM-R Student Averages (n=21)*

Item	Pre-CRT Implementation Average	Post-CRT Implementation Average
I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group(s), such as its history, traditions, and customs.	3.19	3.47
I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group(s). I understand pretty well what my ethnic group(s) membership means to me.	4.33	4.19
I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.	3.19	3.28
I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.	3.09	3.23
	4.47	4.19

I feel a strong attachment  
towards my own ethnic  
group.

3.57

3.61

Overall

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In the pre-implementation MEIM-R, the average score among participating students of Teachers A, B and C was 3.57 and that averages between the students from individual teachers were similar. By construct, the scores averages were 3.15 for “exploration” and 3.99 for “commitment.”

Within the measure, the highest scoring items were *I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group* (4.47) and *I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group(s)* (4.33). The lowest scoring items were *I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better* (3.09) and *I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group(s), such as its story, traditions, and customs, I understand pretty well what my ethnic group(s) membership means to me, and I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group*, which all had the same score of 3.19.

The quantitative data collected from the post-CRT interventions did not demonstrate a significant shift in the students’ cultural self-identity. The post-CRT MEIM-R averages rose slightly for “exploration” and remained almost unchanged for “commitment.” Combined the average score for participating students from the three teachers was 3.61. I conducted a paired sample t-test between the overall pre and post-CRT averages and found the difference to be not significant at a 95% confidence level ( $p=.008$ ).

In addition to the issue of significance, the MEIM-R did not corroborate the qualitative findings related to students and their cultural self-identity. In the focus groups, the students indicated changes in how their teachers' viewed and treated them, which may reflect positive cultural self-identity changes. However, these concepts are not corroborated between quantitative and qualitative data sources.

**Finding: Disconnected Practice Improves by Focusing on Culture**

In terms of participating students assessing culturally responsive teacher practice, the SMCRT results also reflected progress. SMCRT scores showed statistically significant improvement particularly on items relating to teachers getting to know their student better and incorporating culture in their lessons. The following table shows the average student scores for each item in the SMCRT:

Table 6

*Pre and Post-CRT Implementation SMCRT Student Averages (n=21)*

Item	Pre-CRT Implementation Average	Post-CRT Implementation Average
Explains what we are learning in different ways to help me learn	3.95	4.00
Wants my parents to be involved in my learning	2.28	2.71*
Provides visual examples when explaining things	3.33	3.66*
Uses things such as videos, pictures, and guests to help me learn	2.90	3.76*

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Wants students from different cultures to respect one another	3.28	3.90*
Uses what I already know to help me understand new ideas	3.14	3.57*
Tries to communicate with my parents about my grades and what I am learning	2.57	3.38*
Treats me like I am an important member of the class	3.61	3.85*
Tries to find out what interests me	3.09	4.19*
Uses real-life examples to help explain things	3.33	4.09*
Uses examples that are interesting to help me learn	3.42	4.04*
Uses examples from my culture when teaching	2.38	4.14*
Asks about my home life	2.90	4.04*
Is interested in my culture	2.95	3.90*
Asks about ways that my culture may be different from others	2.57	3.57*
Talks about contributions that my culture has made	2.61	4.09*
Helps me learn about other students and their cultures	2.76	4.28*

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Has talked about the ways that people from different cultures are not understood	3.33	4.14*
Has spoken in Spanish to me or to other students	2.76	2.80
Allows me to speak Spanish in class	3.85	4.19*
Overall	3.05	3.81

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Note: \* Indicates difference was significant at a 95% confidence level.

The overall average SMCRT score among the three participating teachers was 3.05 or indicating that students “Somewhat Disagree” with the culturally responsive practice being demonstrated by their teachers. Individually, the overall teacher results were similar. Teacher C demonstrated the highest overall average among his students at 3.1 and Teacher B was the lowest at 2.9.

The SMCRT was also divided in three constructs. Items 1-11 were associated with Diverse Teaching Practices. Items 12-18 were associated with Cultural Engagement, and items 19-20 were associated with Diverse Language Affirmation. Among the constructs, the participating teachers scored a 3.3 on Diverse Language Affirmation, and 3.1 on Diverse Teaching Practices. Their lowest score was 2.7 in Cultural Engagement. Participating teachers demonstrated stark differences between constructs. For example, Teacher C scored a 3.5 in Diverse Teaching Practices, but a 2.7 in Cultural Engagement. Between aggregate scores per item, construct, or complete survey, there was no score at 4.0 or above.

Among the items in the SMCRT, the highest scoring were *My teacher explains what we are learning in different ways to help me learn* (3.95) and *My teacher allows me to speak Spanish in class* (3.85). The lowest scoring items were *My teacher wants my parents to be involved in my learning* and *My teacher asks about ways that my culture may be different from others* (2.57).

In the post-CRT implementation SMCRT, the overall average score was 3.81. I conducted a paired sample t-test between the overall pre and post-CRT averages and found the difference to be significant at a 95% confidence level ( $p=.0.01$ ). The highest scoring items were *My teacher helps me learn about other students and their cultures* (4.20) and *My Teacher tries to find out what interests me* (4.19). The items that showed the largest increase were *My teacher uses examples from my culture when teaching* (increased by 1.76 points), *My teacher helps me learn about other students and their cultures* (increased by 1.56 points) *My teacher talks about contributions that my culture has made* (increased by 1.47 points). The difference of each item was statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

These SMCRT scores showed statistically significant improvement on items relating to teachers getting to know their student better and on items related to teachers and culture. These were both items that were also corroborated by students in their focus groups and strengthen the finding that teachers' CRT practices demonstrated increased frequency at the end of the CRT implementation period.

The purpose of this study was to understand how and to what extent a CRT training and collaboration period influenced teacher practices and their Latino male

students learning experiences. I found that teachers innovated and adapted their practice and increased their overall frequency of CRT behaviors in the classroom. In turn, students showed improved feelings of value, engagement, and connectedness to their teachers. They also indicated quantitative increases in CRT practices with their teachers after the CRT implementation period.



## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to understand how the implementation of CRT influenced teachers' classroom instruction and their Latino male students' connectedness with the teacher, the content, and their cultural self-identity. The study involved two innovation components: an initial CRT training for three participating teacher and a semester long, bi-weekly collaboration period. The study was guided by following research questions:

RQ 1: How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?

RQ 2: How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher's classroom before and after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?

RQ 3: How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students' cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers' practice?

**RQ 1: How do teachers modify their classroom instruction as a result of a culturally responsive teaching training and collaboration period?**

The results from this study demonstrated teacher's practices making a significant shift toward cultural responsiveness by the end of the CRT implementation period. In the beginning each teacher showed struggles with cultural responsiveness in two common areas: prioritizing the demands of their lesson plan over their students and emphasizing student control over true engagement. In both cases, the focus of the class turned to

something besides students, which had the potential to create a disconnected relationship between those students and their teachers. Interestingly, one driver for such practices may be the messages these teachers receive from their school administrators, district leadership, and teacher education mentors. During our collaboration sessions we spent considerable time discussing where these tendencies come from and the participating teachers often noted pressure from those groups.

Regardless of the root causes, the evidence of these teaching practices was overwhelmingly clear. The early discussions in the collaboration meetings, class observations and teacher reflective emails, all showed hyper awareness to creating a lesson plan and seeing it through. I noticed quickly during our discussion that the teachers maximized content coverage but did not address whether it was what their student needed or wanted. In addition, the teachers relied on the school's far outdated textbook as their guide. At one point during our discussions a teacher commented that she couldn't cover a topic because it wasn't in the textbook. These observations provided two important insights. First, some teacher practices can be deeply engrained and change may only be successful by starting with a mental shift in thinking and then moving toward shifts in actual practice. Second, some of these practices may be the result of school and district policies or conditions, which can be problematic for creating change. In some cases, the best approach may need start from the top down.

As for actual teaching practices that changed, the results showed numerous examples that were themed particularly around relationship-building, diversifying classroom activities, and including culturally relevant content. The later teacher

reflections and my observations showed a significant move toward focusing on the students. Whereas initial reflections included almost no reference to student needs or engagement, the post CRT-implementation data showed the students as the primary driver and indicator of the lesson quality. The content of the lesson was often supplemented with topics specifically brought in by the teacher and the new priority was what the students were *doing* during the lesson as opposed to what the teacher had *covered* by the end.

Many of these modifications originated from the initial training, our collaboration meetings, and the teacher's personal research, but it is important to note that each teacher chose his or her own pathway toward cultural responsiveness. They differed according to their teacher preferences, available resources, class culture and more, but it was important that each teacher had the freedom to adapt as he or she saw fit. During our collaborations the discussion was healthy because teachers had license to implement independently and used the time to enhance each other's ideas. I believe it would have looked different had there been a prescribed pathway of changes either from me or even as a collective group. The result was teachers demonstrating more frequent occurrences of culturally responsive practices even though they used different approaches to get there.

This teacher CRT development process shares foundational ideas from Ladson-Billings' (2014) work where she reflected on 20 years of her own seminal CRT pieces and offered an updated CRT "2.0" framework. In her reflection, Ladson-Billings lamented the ways her theory has been misused over time, particularly by well-meaning educators who entrap their cultural responsiveness to stagnancy and stereotypes. Instead

she argues for a model that accounts for the “fluidity” of CRT scholarship and what today’s youth need. The design of my innovation was to accommodate for this concept and not prescribe CRT to teachers, but to allow them opportunities to build and adapt according to their needs and the needs of their students. The continuous collaboration where we established a culture of creativity and supporting ideas with the underlying goal of reaching students was also a central theme of Ladson-Billings’ work. She wrote:

Death in the classroom refers to teachers who stop trying to reach each and every student. Instead of teaching, these people become mere functionaries of a system, that has no intent on preparing students- particularly urban students of color- for meaningful work and dynamic participation in democracy. (2014, p.77)

Ladson-Billings captured the two central themes of this finding. First, that reaching students is an on-going process for teachers, and second, that students need to be the focus of their preparation, not a system.

Taken together, the data and processes within RQ 1 demonstrated that a CRT training, which prioritized a mind-set shift initially and then explored changes to practices impacted the teachers’ desire and capability to become more culturally responsive. Since the mind-set and teaching changes reflected the objectives of the two CRT training modules, I found the training to be an effective tool in the CRT implementation process. The collaboration meetings were also critical because it allowed us time and a safe space to work through overcoming those deeply rooted beliefs and practices that needed to change, and to collectively explore ideas and future planning.

Both components were important to the significant changes teachers were able to make throughout the implementation period.

**RQ 2: How do Latino male students experience learning in their teacher's classroom before and after the implementation of culturally responsive teaching?**

Students' learning experiences positively changed in two areas after the CRT implementation. First, the results from this study demonstrated an increase the connectedness these students felt toward their teachers. This connectedness was evident in two forms: relationships and relevance. The students had initially reported a limited relationship with their teachers, suggesting the teachers had done little to get to know them and not feeling like the content of the class was not particularly interesting or applicable. Strong relationship building was the primary focus the CRT training and early implementation planning, with each teacher committing to a long-term plan to get to know his/her students.

The students did report a change in how they thought their teachers' viewed and treated them. Many students noted the class-wide activities and individual behaviors of their teachers that showed a vested interest in getting to know and valuing them as more than just a student. This relationship building was robust, even to the point of one student feeling like he finally had an adult he could talk to at school. These are important factors to a students' success and connection their teacher and school, and perhaps data tool that measured school connectedness or perhaps student self-worth/self-confidence would have been more applicable to this circumstance.

A similar shift also took place with how students felt connected to the content of the class. This was largely represented in the teachers' focus on "calling out" culture during their lessons, whether in a current event or making a specific and positive reference during their direct instruction time. In their focus groups, students identified specific examples where they noticed and appreciated that their culture was connected to the lesson. In comparison to the early cycles of research where I found teachers to misinterpret these students' attitudes and being unfamiliar with their cultural backgrounds, this progress in relationships and relevance is a critical finding in the discussion on how teachers can better connect to their students of color.

In the post-CRT implementation interviews the students shared many examples of lesson activities or teacher practices that were noticeable and positive changes from before the CRT implementation started. These examples included having a say in what they learn, purposeful planning for relevancy, and intentionally being inclusive. The changes in the teachers' reflections from the pre to post CRT implementation emails indicated a shift toward student-focused lesson planning. This appeared to be the driving force behind the increased engagement.

**RQ 3: How does this experience with culturally responsive teaching affect Latino male students' cultural self-identity, engagement, and assessment of their teachers' practice?**

### **Cultural Self-Identity**

Quantitatively this study indicated that cultural self-identity is perhaps a more complex issue to impact and measure. The data did not demonstrate a significant shift in

the students' cultural self-identity. One explanation may be that the actions and thoughts measured in the MEIM-R are not easily influenced over a short period of time. Items such as exploring one's culture or developing a sense of belonging perhaps require deeper experiences and longer exposure. This is not an unreasonable hypothesis when considering that these students' cultural self-identities have been formed over their lifetimes (12-13 years) and perhaps not has prone to change quickly. On the other hand, in their "loving critique" of CRT, Paris and Alim (2014) suggest that youth's culture is dynamic and in a constant state of change. Problems with CRT come when teachers modifying their practice becomes a static event believing that one adaptation will suffice over time. In either case, CRT implementation must be considered a cycle and continuous process to either reach deep enough or adapt quickly enough to positively influence students' self-identity.

This study also demonstrated qualitative evidence that showed some positive changes in the students' self-perception. In the pre-CRT implementation focus groups, students were unable to articulate their own cultural self-identity, instead referring to how others thought about them. This overall lack of deeper student insight into cultural self-identity might possibly be due to participating students not having basic foundational knowledge about what culture is, making it difficult to describe. However, during the post-CRT implementation focus groups, students discussed experiences where their teacher had talked positively about their culture, which seemed to uplift something about who they were.

In the case of Teacher B, her students related classroom experiences where they felt a sense of pride or positivity about who they were culturally. Interestingly, these cultural insights during the lesson were a focus in Teacher B's implementation strategy. She purposefully integrated topics and discussions that related to positive culture. The importance of this concept cannot be understated. Usborne and Taylor (2010) argued that cultural identity is inextricably connected to self-clarity and self-esteem. In fact, they suggest it may be the most influential identity factor related to positive self-outcomes.

What this study revealed is that students, in part, construct their identity by what others say about them. It also showed that students noticed their teachers made positive changes in that area. On the other hand, self-identity issues especially related to culture are deeply rooted and perhaps require a more deliberate focus, a stronger foundational knowledge base, and a longer time frame.

### **Engagement**

The quantitative results from this study indicated significant increases in participating student engagement. As noted previously, measuring engagement can be a challenge because there is no one clear indicator to measure. My approach was to gather evidence from three different perspectives and triangulate the results to try and capture the different ways engagement might be present.

In addition to the students' comments in RQ 2, the engagement observations showed more subtle changes that occurred in the teachers' practice. For example, not only did teachers modify the content to be more relevant, the teachers also modified the type of activities the student would be doing during the lesson. Initially, the teachers'



practice was essentially the same and was dominated by having the students sit and listen to a lesson. By the end of the CRT implementation period, that practice was used only about half of the time and replaced with writing, speaking, reading, and other hands-on activities. Even though each teacher struck a different balance between these alternate ways of delivering material, they each saw an increase in engagement according to the diversity in their lesson activities. Teacher B demonstrated the largest changes in different on-task lesson activities, which resulted in larger increases in engagement. On the other hand, Teacher C showed the least amount of changes and consequently had the smallest engagement score increase. This suggests then that content, praise, positive relationships and other CRT practices need to be accompanied by strategic activity planning in the classroom. When those activities were more frequently diversified, there was a positive association with stronger student engagement experiences.

### **Assessing Teacher Practice**

The post-CRT implementation data clearly reflected progress through these efforts. SMCRT scores showed statistically significant improvement on items relating to teachers getting to know their student better and during focus group interviews, students were able to identify key activities and behaviors teachers had used to learn more about them. The SMCRT scores also indicated shifts on items related to teachers and culture, which students also noted in their focus groups. This was largely represented in the teachers' focus on "calling out" culture during their lessons, whether in a current event or making a specific and positive reference during their direct instruction time.

## **Implications for Practice**

Based on the findings above, I present in this section a short list of general lessons learned through this study and the cycles of research leading up to it. These lessons connect this study back to a broader perspective related to equity, diversity, and CRT implementation in schools.

### **Prioritize Teacher Quality**

Quality of teaching should matter first (Darling Hammond, 2000; Podolsky, Darling-Hammond, Ross & Reardon, 2019). There are many initiatives that school engage in to try and strengthen the connectedness between students. They range from increasing the diversity of the faculty, to student behavior control systems, to diversity sensitivity training. In and of themselves these initiatives may have their place, but this study adds to the body of research that teacher qualities matter most. Anecdotally, the students themselves have always reported to me their favorite teachers are the ones that care, make learning fun, and take time to explain things again, and care about their lives outside of the classroom. Schools that focus first on interventions that don't directly develop teacher cultural competency and prioritize relationship between the teacher and students may not see the school climate shift they are looking for.

### **New Teachers are not Always Ideal Candidates for CRT Implementation**

Entering this program, my early thinking was that veteran teachers might be too “jaded” or set in their ways to try and implement CRT with them, but through my cycles of research I found something different. New teachers often struggled too much with lesson planning, workload, and classroom management to have the time and knowledge

to effectively adapt their teaching. Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana and Klaas van Veen (2018) similarly found that news teachers often struggle with intense stress and negative emotions. They concluded that these struggle results in negative teaching behaviors. This suggests that where possible, intense teaching modification and reflection may be best suited for more experienced teachers who may not be under such high levels of stress.

### **Teacher Self-Ratings Can Be Problematic**

This was discussed earlier in the literature review and I have found it true in my own experience, especially in relation to equity and inclusion in the classroom. Teachers who tend to rate themselves high, demonstrated low performance in actual practice (Debnam, Pas, Bottiani, Cash, & Bradshaw, 2015). On the other hand, a teacher most informed on issues such as bias may actually rate themselves low, because they understand the reality, but their classroom practice may be quite strong. This coincides with Pezzetti (2017) who found that some less-informed teachers "...voiced abstract commitments to diversity in order to position themselves as good, non-racist people; however, these positive endorsements of diversity did not extend to appreciation of the potential racial diversity of their future students" (p.131). This indicates that we should be cautious about assessing equitable teaching practices using self-ratings alone, rather than through a combination of sources involving students and outside observers.

### **CRT, Especially in the Collaborative Setting, Must Be Individualized for Teachers**

Teachers and their classes are so different in many ways that no specific practice works in all situations. Teachers have different personalities and find interesting ways to

connect with students- some can be loud, gentle, sarcastic, funny, friendly, or strict. Teachers also come equipped with background knowledge, experiences, skills and interests that can play an integral role in their teaching practices. Like the students they teach, teachers should be allowed to build upon that uniqueness in a way that reflects this invisible suitcase they carry with them into the classroom.

This is particularly applicable to CRT collaboration, which was a significant component of this study's CRT implementation process. I wanted to ensure that our collaboration time was used effectively and did not fail according to current PLC research. According to Sims and Penny (2015), PLC's fail when they are too narrow and focus on metrics. One insightful reflection from their study was a participating teacher who said:

"I feel I don't have a choice to be creative or do things out of structure or out of line with any other member. If it is not identical, say what this person says, do this lesson on this day in this way, and give these assignments then it's not part of the structure, and so I would I feel like it totally takes away from the motivation to even want to try something different."

The lesson here is that the approach to CRT implementation and evaluation needs to be highly innovative and individualized, where teachers are afforded opportunities to develop their practice in a safe and supportive environment.

## **The More Standards and Scripted Curriculum, the Less Culturally Responsive a Teacher Can Be**

This lesson was evident throughout this study and earlier cycles. When teachers focused on the destination rather than the journey, their focus shifted away from students. When the standard or set curriculum took precedence, teachers lost the ability to establish a student-centered classroom. Teachers also began to fixate on the products of their lesson instead of the process, wherein the actual learning takes place. Kohn (2001) has been a loud critic of obsessing over standards. He wrote:

On the one hand, thinking is messy, and deep thinking is very messy. On the other hand, standards documents are nothing if not orderly. Considerable research has demonstrated the importance of making sure students are actively involved in designing their own learning, invited to play a role in formulating questions, creating projects, and so on. But the more comprehensive and detailed a list of standards, the more students (and even teachers) are excluded from this process. (2001, p. 2)

In the case of this study, the pre-CRT implementation data showed it was easy for teachers to say a lesson was taught, but much harder to reflect on what their students learned. Learning cannot be easily captured; it involves exploration, mistakes, ideas, and questions that may not have a clear answer. Kohn (2001) also wrote, “If the goal is to cover material (rather than, say, to *discover* ideas), that unavoidably informs the methods that will be used” (p.2). In this sense, the process should drive the teachers’ planning just as much as the products.

Balancing process and products items with teacher's professional development time cannot be understated. During this study, I realized that the innovation and planning during our collaboration provided critical moments of CRT innovation. In one such case, I helped Teachers A and B create a survey for their students early in the semester. The survey functioned as additional process developed by the teachers to plan lessons to understand the preferences of a specific class. It was anonymous and asked students about their preferences in content, delivery, activities, and assessment. Both teachers shared the results with me and explained what they learned from their students' feedback. In some cases, the responses were unexpected. For example, one class period indicated a strong preference for individual work, while the subsequent class period indicated an opposite strong preference for working in groups. Throughout all classes, the teachers reported students liked it best when their teachers told them stories and liked reading the least out of any activity. This example demonstrated the power of letting teachers innovate and create a true student-centered classroom where their classroom journey was valued over teacher preferences.

### **CRT Implementation Should Go Beyond Traditional Professional Development Models and Actually Evaluate Student Outcomes**

The evidence is clear that traditional and typical professional development processes are not useful or well-liked by teachers. According to a large study about professional development by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014), professional development in education falters is because lack of time, funding, and administrator training. This coincides with my experience is that CRT or related practices are treated as

one-time professional development experiences for teachers. There's an incentive for administrators to want to fill their professional development time with something that is packaged and somewhat engaging for their teachers, but also to get a sense they have addressed issues of minority underachievement at their schools.

The professional development structure I employed for this study incorporated the recommendations the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation study (2014) that professional development should be relevant, interactive, sustained over time, and delivered by someone who understands teachers' experiences. The study further recommends two broad professional development formats, which were a central focus of my study: coaching and collaboration. These closely resemble the work from Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2017), who not only specialize in CRT, but also professional development. They recommended professional development that is content focused, provides coaching and expert support, offers opportunities for feedback and reflection and is of sustained duration.

In addition, I will add that student outcomes, whatever those are determined to be, should be the bottom line of professional development efforts. I continually find that administrators are not motivated to invest in longer-term, more in depth-implementation and evaluation that considers both teachers and students data. These information process should be cyclical and on-going, or the promise and purpose of CRT is unclear and unattainable.

## **Diversity and Equity Must be Adapted for Different Audiences**

Just as we ask teachers to be responsive to their student's prior experience, cultural background, perspectives, the same should be done with teachers. Words like Bias, Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism, and Privilege can matter depending on the context. Starting a presentation with guilt and white privilege may shut doors and quickly put up barriers between the presenters and teacher. While such terms and topics may be important for a teacher's progression to become culturally competent, they should be appropriate introduced only when teachers are prepared for it. In addition, current published materials are not always the most helpful. Most published work about CRT is related to teaching African American students, not Latinos. Furthermore, practical CRT implementation models are not readily available for educators, even as researchers try to make progress (Griner & Stewart, 2012). My hope for the future is that this work, as well as the researchers ahead of me continue to make progress in this area.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The results from this study should also be considered within its limitations. Perhaps the most evident limitation is the study's focus on Latino males, meaning the data and results only reflected that specific sub-group. There is research to indicate that the teaching practices implemented by the participating teachers has positive effects for all students, but this study did not gather data on other student groups (Banks, 1994). In addition, the participating 21 students, particularly for the quantitative data, was not large sample size.



A second limitation relates the long-term effects of the CRT training and implementation. The study demonstrated that all three teachers modified their instructional practices over the 16-week implementation period, but the study did not capture whether these changes were long-lasting and/or how they evolved over time. Even though this study captured in detail the students' positive perspectives on cultural responsiveness of their teachers' practices, the study did not examine how this impacted their performance at school. While this study's literature review noted examples of how strong cultural practices, high levels of engagement, and strong teacher-student relationships can improve critical school performance such as grades and test scores, this project did not examine those outcomes.

The final limitation of this study again emphasizes the uniqueness of teachers' CRT implementation. Even though my innovation provided a somewhat packaged CRT training module and procedures, it was intended to highlight the need for a systematic investment of CRT. However, it does stop short of prescribing a manual of detailed practices that will be sure to elicit high levels of cultural responsiveness. The examples of teacher practices noted in this study may or may not work for another teacher because cultural responsiveness is impacted by many factors that are not the same for any teacher and his or her context. Our goal should be to mandate processes, not practices. It should also not be lost that the collaboration time was a critical component of this study's innovation. Those planning conversations and discussion were not captured in this study but remain essential to the teacher's implementation.

Because of these limitations and sheer scope of this topic, future research should include identify specific practices, professional development, data for Latino students. The body of published works related to Culturally Responsive Teaching and Latino students needs to be stronger, especially considering the growing size of their student population. In addition, that research needs to be asset-based, focusing on the positives their diversity brings to the classroom and education system, which is currently not the case (Rodriguez & Morrobel, 2004). In that vein, future research should also examine policies and procedures from a systemic and education leadership level. From teacher education programs, field experiences, first years of teaching, to experienced educators, we should examine what the barriers and facilitators are for culturally responsive development. With the changing demographics of our students and mantras that all students will succeed, does our teacher preparation and professional development experiences reflect a commitment to see through such positive change?

### **Conclusion**

Trying to understand how we can better connect with our young men of color and helping them succeed at school could not come at a more critical time. Their plight in our society has taken center stage over the last two years from controversial police shootings to taking a knee during our national anthem. At this time, culture, tolerance, and inclusion are hot-button political issues, and this is in combination with a discussion about Latin America immigrants- those currently coming and those who have long been here. Our education system remains under an ever-thickening microscope with pressure to raise test scores, close gaps, and improve equity. Districts around the country are trying to address

these issues by spending millions of dollars for diversity trainings, at times in response to lawsuits or audits (Farrell, 2015). The effectiveness these trainings are also beyond scope of this study, but the mere nature of their existence suggests that educators are still unprepared to cope with the diversity they find in their classrooms (Harrington, 2015).

The purpose of this study was oriented at the intersection of these issues: how can educators connect and engage with their students of color? Using a CRT training and focused collaboration period, I found teachers were able to increase their connectedness with their male students of color. They were able to adapt their instruction to the needs of these students and who then demonstrated improved relationships with their teachers, increased classroom engagement. This direct and invested approach should stand as a model for trying to bridge the cultural gap between teachers and the growing diversity in their classrooms.

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APPENDIX A

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL  
(CRIOP)

School (use assigned number): \_\_\_\_\_  
 number): \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher (assigned

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in  
 Classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time of  
 Obs: \_\_\_\_\_

### DIRECTIONS

After the classroom observation, review the field notes for evidence of each “pillar” of Culturally Responsive Instruction. If an example of the following descriptors was observed, place the field notes line number on which that example is found. If a “non-example” of the descriptors was observed, place the line number on which that non-example is found. Then, make an overall/holistic judgment of the implementation of the concept, according to the following rating scale:

- 4** = The classroom was **CONSISTENTLY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
- 3** = The classroom was **OFTEN CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
- 2** = The classroom was **OCCASIONALLY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
- 1** = The classroom was **RARELY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
- 0** = The classroom was **NEVER CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features

Transfer the holistic scores from pp. 2 through 9 to the table below.

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
II. CARE	
III. CLIM	
IV. CURR	

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
V. DISC	
VII. INSTR	
VIII. PERSP	

### II. CARE CLASSROOM CARING AND TEACHER DISPOSITIONS

Holistic score 4 3 2 1 0

CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non-example	Field notes: No example (✓)
1. The teacher demonstrates an <b>ethic of care</b> (e.g., equitable relationships,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher differentiates management techniques (e.g., using a more direct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher makes sarcastic comments</li> <li>• Teacher promotes negativity in the classroom; frequent</li> </ul>			

bonding)	<p>interactive style with students who require it)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher refers to students by name, uses personalized language with students</li> <li>• Teacher consistently models respectful interaction with students in the classroom</li> <li>• Teacher consistently demonstrates high expectations for student social interactions</li> </ul>	<p>criticisms, negative comments, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher uses the same management techniques and interactive style with all students when it is clear that they do not work for some</li> <li>• Teacher demonstrates low expectations for student social interactions</li> </ul>			
2. The teacher communicates <b>high expectations</b> for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher differentiates instruction, recognizing students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, etc.</li> <li>• Teacher advocates for all students</li> <li>• Teacher consistently demonstrates high expectations for all students academic achievement through insisting that they complete assignments, by providing challenging work, etc. (not letting them "get by" even when their home life is difficult)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher criticizes the student (the person), not the work (the product)</li> <li>• Teacher has low expectations (consistently gives work that is not challenging)</li> <li>• Teacher doesn't balance student participation</li> <li>• Teacher does not call on all students consistently</li> <li>• Teacher ignores some students; e.g., never asks them to respond to questions, allows them to sleep, places them in the "corners" of the room and does not bring them into the instructional conversation, etc.</li> <li>• Teacher tends to blame parents/home for lack of student achievement</li> </ul>			
3. The teacher creates a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers <b>feel respect</b> and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students do not hesitate to ask questions that further their learning</li> <li>• Students know the class routines and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher dominates the decision-making</li> <li>• Teacher stays behind desk or across table from students; s/he does</li> </ul>			

<p><b>connect to one another</b></p>	<p>are supported by them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are encouraged to provide peer support and assistance</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to respond to one another positively</li> <li>• Students are invested in their and others' learning</li> </ul>	<p>not get "on their level"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are never encouraged to assist their peers</li> <li>• Teacher does not address negative comments of one student towards another</li> </ul>			
<p>4. The teacher <b>actively confronts</b> instances of <b>discrimination</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher confronts students' biases and acts of discrimination in the classroom actively</li> <li>• Teacher encourages a diversity of perspectives</li> <li>• Teacher uses a variety of multicultural literature to expose students to a variety of individual experiences and perspectives of people from diverse populations</li> <li>• Teacher engages students in critical examination of curriculum content and personal experiences that contribute to equity or inequity among individuals or groups in society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher appears to have "favorite" students</li> <li>• Teacher allows students' open expression of prejudicial acts and statements toward others in the classroom community</li> <li>• Teacher squelches diversity of opinion</li> <li>• Teacher primarily presents content, curriculum, and ideas that are representative of a mainstream middle/upper class perspective(s)</li> <li>• Teacher consistently uses literature that only provides positive images of mainstream populations</li> </ul>			

**III. CLIM CLASSROOM CLIMATE/ PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT Holistic score 4 3 2 1 0**

<b>CRI Indicator</b>	<b>For example, in a responsive classroom:</b>	<b>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</b>	<b>Field notes: time of example</b>	<b>Field notes: time of non-example</b>	<b>Field notes: No example (✓)</b>
<p>1. The physical materials and furnishings <b>invite students to use literacy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials are located so that all students can choose them</li> <li>• Classroom library includes many books (of all different reading levels) that reflect diversity;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books and materials are locked away or cannot be accessed by students without teacher permission</li> <li>• Teacher controls most minutes of the</li> </ul>			

	<p>books are available and organized so students can find what they need/want</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers are readily available and students use them for inquiry (e.g., to respond to questions they have in a particular content area; to work on self-selected projects)</li> <li>• Computer programs are clearly motivating to students and encourage a love of reading/writing</li> </ul>	<p>day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom contains few books that students want to read; students show lack of interest in reading outside of the requirements</li> <li>• Computer programs/ computer use generally involves “worksheets on a screen” and does not promote student inquiry or creativity</li> </ul>			
2. The physical materials and furnishings promote <b>shared ownership</b> of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules are co-authored by school, students and teachers</li> <li>• Students help make decisions about materials and the environment</li> <li>• Everyone has access to materials and groups</li> <li>• Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining order in the physical environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher dominates; students do not have choice; an autocratic environment</li> <li>• Teacher controls student access to materials</li> <li>• Classroom is devoid of student influence</li> </ul>			
3. The physical materials establish an environment that demonstrates an <b>appreciation for diversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters, bulletin boards, other images reflect human diversity</li> <li>• Classroom library and curriculum materials contain multicultural content that reflect the perspectives and experiences of diverse groups</li> <li>• Curriculum materials call for real-life examples from students’ experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posters, bulletin boards, other images do not reflect human diversity</li> <li>• Classroom library contains all or nearly all books written by white authors, with white protagonists; very few books reflect human diversity</li> <li>• Classroom library and curriculum materials promote ethnocentric positions or ignore human diversity</li> </ul>			
4. The furnishings allow students to be <b>seated with a partner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairs/desks are arranged to facilitate group work</li> <li>• Students can move to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom is arranged for quiet, solitary work only</li> <li>• Teacher</li> </ul>			

<b>or group</b> and collaborate or assist each other	areas of the room conducive to their instructional activities (e.g., learning centers, carpet area, classroom library)	discourages student interaction			
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**IV. CURR CURRICULUM/ PLANNED EXPERIENCES Holistic score 4 3 2 1 0**

<b>CRI Indicator</b>	<b>For example, in a responsive classroom:</b>	<b>For example, in a non-responsive classroom:</b>	<b>Field notes: time of example</b>	<b>Field notes: time of non-example</b>	<b>Field notes: No example (✓)</b>
1. The curriculum and planned learning experiences <b>use the knowledge and experience of students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are involved in setting goals for their learning; e.g., KWL, developing self-assessment instruments,</li> <li>Real-world examples that connect to students' lives are included in the curriculum</li> <li>Learning experiences build on prior student learning and invite students to make connections</li> <li>Examples of mainstream and non-mainstream beliefs, attitudes, and activities are included.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No attempt is made to link students' realities to what is being studied</li> <li>Learning experiences are disconnected from students' knowledge and experiences</li> <li>Students' and families' particular "funds of knowledge" are never called upon during learning experiences</li> <li>Teacher follows the script of the adopted program even when it conflicts with her own or the students' lived experiences.</li> </ul>			
2. The curriculum and planned learning experiences involve students in <b>literacy for real purposes for real audiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum experiences include inquiry-based reading, writing, and learning</li> <li>Authentic, purposeful reading and writing tasks (e.g., letters or other texts written for real purposes; literacy performances; oral reading to an audience with the intent of informing or entertaining) are integral to the curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Worksheets and/or workbook assignments predominate</li> <li>Students read from textbooks exclusively and responses to reading are prefabricated end-of-chapter questions, etc.</li> </ul>			

<p>3. The curriculum and planned learning experiences integrate and provide opportunities for the <b>expression of diverse perspectives</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texts with protagonists from diverse cultural, linguistic and/or socioeconomic backgrounds, and promotes understanding of a character’s perspective are regularly used</li> <li>• Texts are examined from multiple perspectives</li> <li>• Opportunities are plentiful for students to present diverse perspectives through class discussions</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to challenge the ideas in a text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biased units of study that show only the conventional point of view (e.g., Columbus discovered America) are presented</li> <li>• No or very few texts are available with protagonists from diverse cultural, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds</li> <li>• No opportunities is provided for students to present diverse views</li> </ul>			
<p>4. The curriculum and planned learning experiences <b>integrate skills and information</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills and strategies are taught in meaningful contexts</li> <li>• Children’s own texts are used to demonstrate skills and concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills are presented in isolation (never in application to authentic contexts)</li> <li>• The adopted reading program is characterized by non-contextual texts (skills in isolation rather than skills within authentic literature)</li> </ul>			
<p>5. The curriculum and planned learning experiences includes <b>issues important to the classroom, school and larger community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Morning message” is used to build community – to teach, inspire, congratulate, communicate, etc.</li> <li>• Community-based projects are included in the planned program</li> <li>• Students write texts that relate to community issues</li> <li>• Students are engaged in learning experiences that develop awareness of and value for individual differences (e.g., within the classroom, school and community)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning experiences are derived almost exclusively from published textbooks and other materials that do not relate to the classroom community or the larger community being served</li> <li>• Curriculum presents the belief that there is one best/right way to view issues and individuals</li> </ul>			



V. DISCOURSE/

Holistic score 4 3 2 1 0

INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION

CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non-example	Field notes: No example (✓)
1. The teacher encourages and responds positively to children’s use of <b>home/native language/dialect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher encourages peer conversation in home language during free time and academic time</li> <li>• Teacher allows family stories in home language/dialect</li> <li>• Teacher encourages ELL students to communicate with family members in their native language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher discourages students’ use of home language, even when its use is appropriate to the situational context</li> <li>• Discourages ELL students’ use of their native language outside of school</li> </ul>			
2. The teacher builds upon and <b>expands upon student talk</b> in an authentic way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher promotes discussion (genuine conversations versus “guess what’s in the teacher’s head”)</li> <li>• Teacher elicits student talk, e.g., open-ended questions</li> <li>• Teacher listens carefully by demonstrating active listening behaviors and responding appropriately to student comments</li> <li>• Teacher allows opportunities to share personal experiences of teacher, students – familiar, interesting topics</li> <li>• Teacher promotes extended talk – elaborated inquiry and discussion – not just providing an answer or a fact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-student exchanges are typified by IRE discourse pattern (the traditional pattern of teacher-led classroom communication: teacher-initiation, students search for correct answer, teacher evaluates students’ responses)</li> <li>• Single answer questions are typical (“guess what’s in the teacher’s head”)</li> <li>• Teacher asks mostly closed-ended questions</li> </ul>			
3. The teacher <b>shares control of classroom discourse</b> with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher/students produce discourse together; collaborative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No opportunities for extended student talk; talk is dominated by the</li> </ul>			

students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom discourse is not dominated by “teacher talk;” teacher “air time” generally no greater than 60%</li> <li>Teacher arranges and supports equitable participation, e.g., wait time, feedback, turn-taking, scaffolding of ideas</li> <li>Students are encouraged to comment on and expand upon ideas of their peers</li> </ul>	teacher			
4. The teacher provides structures that promote <b>student collaborative talk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher has structures in place that promote student talk, e.g., think/pair/share, small group work, partner work</li> <li>Teacher institutes collaborative learning to allow collaborative discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No structures in place that would promote student talk (such as working in pairs, groups)</li> <li>Students “get in trouble” for talking about instructional material</li> </ul>			

VII. PEDAGOGY/ **Holistic score 4 3 2 1 0**  
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non-example	Field notes: No example (✓)
1. The teacher <b>learns with students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher learns about diverse perspectives along with students</li> <li>Teacher models active listening</li> <li>Students take the role of teacher</li> <li>Teacher uses the inquiry process and learns from students’ investigation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher is the authority; students listen passively</li> <li>Students not encouraged to challenge or question ideas presented or to engage in further inquiry</li> </ul>			
2. The teacher <b>allows students to collaborate</b> with other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher involves students in collaborative groups,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most student work in the form of isolated</li> </ul>			

students	<p>“think/pair/share,” students actively involved in thinking about ideas (student collaboration and response can be embedded throughout explicit instruction)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students discuss books in literature circles where students are given increasing autonomy in the discussions based upon their level of development</li> <li>• includes student-controlled learning groups</li> </ul>	<p>seatwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are reprimanded for helping each other</li> </ul>			
3. The teacher uses <b>active, hands-on learning</b> that promotes student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher uses an investigative (“let’s find out”) process</li> <li>• Teacher arranges shared literacy experiences that build a sense of community (e.g. choral reading, partner reading)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-dominated lectures with no or very little student interaction throughout</li> <li>• Prefabricated worksheets or workbooks</li> <li>• Round robin reading</li> <li>• Exclusive use of textbooks with no “exploratory” learning</li> </ul>			
4. The teacher <b>balances instruction</b> using both explicit skill instruction and reading/writing for meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher models and demonstrates expected skills and behaviors and applies new skills to learning context</li> <li>• Teacher focuses on meaning; students dialogue about text in order to construct shared meaning</li> <li>• Teacher includes learning experiences that allow students to be physically active and involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill and drill focus</li> <li>• Isolated school tasks, disconnected from each other, as well as repetitive and routine</li> </ul>			
5. The teacher <b>gives students choices in content and assessment methods</b> based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher permits students some choice in assignments, reading materials, etc.</li> <li>• Teacher provides students with multiple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominance of teacher-initiated assignments</li> <li>• No variation in assessments (e.g., ELLs are</li> </ul>			

on their experiences, values, needs and strengths	pathways for demonstrating competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher allows students some choice in the topic of study and ownership in what they are learning</li> </ul>	evaluated based upon their writing ability regardless of language proficiency level)			
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**VIII. PERSP SOCIOPOLITICAL**          **Holistic score**    **4**        **3**        **2**        **1**        **0**  
**CONSCIOUSNESS/MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES**

CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non-example	Field notes: No example (✓)
1. The teacher encourages students to think about and <b>question the way things are</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher encourages students to question the hegemonic social structure (the “way things are”)</li> <li>• Teacher uses critical thinking techniques such as requesting evidence, accepting multiple points of view, respecting divergent ideas</li> <li>• Teacher helps students think in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives (“Are there other ways to think about it?”)</li> <li>• Teacher explains and/or models that there could be multiple answers to a problem/task and multiple ways to find the answers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher reduces complex content to lists, facts</li> <li>• Teacher engages in mystification in which students are not given the “whole story” in order to avoid controversy</li> <li>• Teacher never engages students in dialogue about the issues being raised in a text</li> </ul>			
2. The teacher encourages students to investigate and take action on <b>real world problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher addresses real life problems and issues within the students’ communities and respects their “funds of knowledge”</li> <li>• Teacher allows students to write about topics that really matter to them and helps students identify those topics</li> <li>• Teacher encourages students to investigate real-world issues related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher does not encourage application to real-world issues; accepts or endorses the status quo by ignoring or dismissing real life problems related to the topic being studied</li> </ul>			

	<p>to a topic being studied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher encourages students to become actively involved in solving problems at the local, state, national, and global levels</li> <li>• Teacher uses literature, learning activities that encourage students to reflect on discrimination and bias</li> <li>• Teacher engages students in identifying and developing solutions that address social injustice(s)</li> </ul>				
<p>3. The teacher <b>actively deconstructs negative stereotypes</b> in instructional materials and other texts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher discusses biases in popular culture that students encounter in their daily lives (e.g., TV shows, advertising, popular songs, toys)</li> <li>• Teacher helps students to think about biases in texts (e.g., “Who has the power in this book?” Whose perspectives are represented in the text? Discussion and consideration of who benefits from specific beliefs and practices represented in texts.)</li> <li>• Teacher challenges students to deconstruct their own cultural assumptions and biases</li> <li>• Teacher engages students in using literate skills and behaviors to bring about needed changes that benefit underserved and/or marginalized populations (e.g., engage in discourse, activities, and/or acts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher follows the script of the adopted program even when it conflicts with her own or the students’ lived experiences</li> <li>• Teacher accepts information in written texts as factual</li> <li>• Teacher makes prejudicial statements to students (e.g., girls are emotional; immigrants don’t belong here; etc.)</li> </ul>			

	of social justice)				
4. The teacher instructs students to use <b>different discourse patterns</b> to fit the social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher helps students focus on an audience in order to learn about “how language works” in various social contexts (How would I tell this to grandma? To the mayor?)</li> <li>• Teacher uses diverse texts that model and represent a variety of discourse patterns, dialects, writing styles (e.g., topic centered narratives, episodic narratives, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher requires students to use the same discourse (standard English) in all social contexts (e.g., lunchroom, playground)</li> </ul>			

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTION FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

Instructions: Thank you for letting me observe your\_\_\_\_\_ period class today. Please take a moment to reflect on today's lesson by responding to the prompt in a reply email (approximately one paragraph). Responses will be separated from any personal identifiers for the remainder of the study and any future use. Thank you for your participation.

Prompt: *When thinking about the six pillars of Culturally Responsive Teaching, did you notice any areas of strengths or weaknesses in today's lesson? Reflect on those and how you feel your lesson went overall today.*



APPENDIX C

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

***This set of questions is trying to find out how well “connected” Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ is to you. Think about the last three months:***

1. *How well does your teacher know you?*
  - \*Tries to find out what interests me
  - \*Asks about my home life
  - How often does he/she talk to you?*
  - How often are you called on in class?*
  - Does he/she do anything to get to know you better?*
2. *Does your teacher care about you?*
  - How does your teacher treat you?*
  - How do you know your he/she cares about you?*
  - \*Treats me like I am an important member of the class
3. *What is Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ teaching style like?*
  - What about his/her teaching style is good or bad for you?*
  - What teaching habits or routines do you like or dislike?*
  - Does Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ work with the way you like to learn?*
  - \*Explains what we are learning in different ways to help me learn
  - \*Uses things such as videos, pictures, and guests to help me learn
  - \*Has spoken in Spanish to me or to other students
  - \*Allows me to speak Spanish in class

***This next set of questions looks at what you learn and how you are learning in Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ class. Think about the last three months:***

4. *How is Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ class engaging or not engaging?*
  - What does the teacher do? What are the topics like?*
  - What types of lessons or activities have made it engaging?*
  - How often do you feel like you are “into” what is being taught?*
  - When do you get bored in class?*
  - Did you ever feel like your teacher was trying something new or different?*
  - \*Uses what I already know to help me understand new ideas
  - \*Uses real-life examples to help explain things
  - \*Uses examples that are interesting to help me learn
5. *How often do feel like class is relevant or important for you to know?*
  - When do you consider something relevant or important for you to know?*
  - Do you have any examples of a lesson you thought was very relevant?*
  - What makes class interesting?*
6. *In what ways has Mr/Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ made the lesson about you or putting you in the lesson?*
  - \*Is interested in my culture
  - \*Wants students from different cultures to respect one another

- \*Uses examples from my culture when teaching
- \*Asks about ways that my culture may be different from others
- \*Talks about contributions that my culture has made
- \*Helps me learn about other students and their cultures
- \*Has talked about the ways that people from different cultures are not understood

*Is there a time when your culture has been a part of the lesson?*

*Is there a time when Latino topics were specifically a part of the lesson?*

*Has have there been lessons where you left feeling better about who you are?*

APPENDIX D

MEIM-R

*In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Mexican-American, Hispanic, Black, Asian-American, American Indian, Anglo-American, and White. Every person is born into an ethnic group, or sometimes two groups, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behaviors is affected by it. These questions are about your ethnicity group and how you feel about it or react to it.*

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.
- 2- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
- 3- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
- 4- I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.
- 5- I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.
- 6- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Response scale:

(1) Strong disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree

APPENDIX E

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT CLASS OBSERVATION GUIDE



APPENDIX F  
SMCRT ASSESSMENT



1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Somewhat Disagree, 4-Somewhat Agree, 5-Agree, 6-Strongly Agree

For each statement, circle the number that best defines your teacher using the scale above:

**My teacher...**

1. Explains what we are learning in different ways to help me learn.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
2. Wants my parents to be involved in my learning.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
3. Provides visual examples when explaining things.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
4. Uses things such as videos, pictures, and guests to help me learn.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
5. Wants students from different cultures to respect one another.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
6. Uses what I already know to help me understand new ideas.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
7. Tries to communicate with my parents about my grades and what I am learning.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
8. Treats me like I am an important member of the class.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
9. Tries to find out what interests me.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
10. Uses real-life examples to help explain things.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
11. Uses examples that are interesting to help me learn.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
12. Uses examples from my culture when teaching.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
13. Asks about my home life.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
14. Is interested in my culture.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
15. Asks about ways that my culture may be different from others.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
16. Talks about contributions that my culture has made.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
17. Helps me learn about other students and their cultures.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
18. Has talked about the ways that people from different cultures are not understood.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
19. Has spoken in Spanish to me or to other students.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6
20. Allows me to speak Spanish in class.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6

APPENDIX G  
IRB APPROVAL

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Boys in the Back: Using Culturally Responsive Teaching to connect with Latino Male Students In Middle School
Investigator:	Katherine Bernstein
IRB ID:	STUDY00009350
Category of review:	(7)(b) Social science methods, (7)(a) Behavioral research
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Focus Group Interview Questions.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• Teacher Consent Form 3.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Student Exit Card Prompt.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• Dixon Letter of Approval.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc);</li> <li>• Reflection Prompt for Participating Teachers.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• SMCRT.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• Thomas Social Behavioral Protocol 5.pdf, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> <li>• Parent Permission Form 4.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Student Assent Form 4.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Culturally Responsive Teaching Workshop Description.pdf, Category: Recruitment materials/advertisements /verbal scripts/phone scripts;</li> <li>• CRIOP.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> <li>• MEIM.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li> </ul>

The IRB approved the protocol from 1/8/2019 to 1/7/2020 inclusive. Three weeks before 1/7/2020 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 1/7/2020 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the “Documents” tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Richard Thomas