

Hispanic and White Teachers Teaching Hispanic Youth:

Are we Culturally Responsive to our Students?

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implications of a cultural and language match/mismatch between teachers and their Hispanic students. The study is particularly relevant given the disproportionate percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in Arizona schools who speak Spanish compared to a majority of teachers who are white and speak English. The purpose of the study was to learn how the experiences of matched/mismatched teachers differed in their efforts to connect with Hispanic students and families. The framework for this study relies on culturally responsive practice which suggests that maintaining both cultural and academic excellence for our Hispanic students and families promotes positive learning outcomes in schools. The research is based on case studies of eight teachers at an elementary school with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population. The data included surveys, interviews and lesson observations to assess culturally responsive practices. The results of this study indicated that teachers who share common cultural and language characteristics exhibit significantly more behaviors associated with culturally responsive practice than their mismatched counterparts. Mismatched teachers, however, were able to draw on specific school wide and pedagogical resources associated with culturally responsive practice to help support their students' learning.

DEDICATION:

This work is dedicated to my wife, Heather.

“On a day when the wind is perfect, the sail just needs to open and the world is full of
beauty. Today is such a day.” *-Rumi*

Thank you my love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Teacher Myth

Individuals choose to enter the teaching profession based on a combination of personal and professional values, ideas and career goals. Often these early career motivations are rooted in the desire to provide society with actual and sustainable support and change, an idea that is so prevalent that it has become a recurring theme in the entertainment industry: a dedicated young teacher is able to turn around the lives of her misfit students, making real and valued good in their lives- the inspiring symbol of teacher as savior from otherwise insurmountable odds.

This myth of the bright dedicated teacher saving otherwise marginalized children is so pervasive that it is a common plotline in Hollywood movies and television. The pervasive features of this myth center on the student's community. The students are in an underperforming, urban school and/or live in a marginalized community and often speak a home language other than English. In short, their educational and home settings stand in drastic counterpoint to the middle class agenda that is upheld in American schools today. It is also an important aspect of the myth that the teacher is identified as other, whether that is as an individual from an outside cultural scenario, or an individual that shares the same culture as their students, but has managed to overcome the perceived barriers of the shared culture.

The teacher in this scenario is seen as one who reaches out from her/his own cultural setting to make a viable connection with these students in their cultural setting.

The dedicated teacher is willing to go outside the parameters of normal teacher/student interactions to become personally involved in the students' lives and find value in the students themselves, if not in specific academic capabilities. The teacher is able to tap into the potential of the marginalized child where others cannot. It is a real reason why young professionals choose to teach, this belief that they can make a difference in the worlds of their students, and specifically why they choose to teach in otherwise low performing urban schools (Olsen & Anderson, 2007).

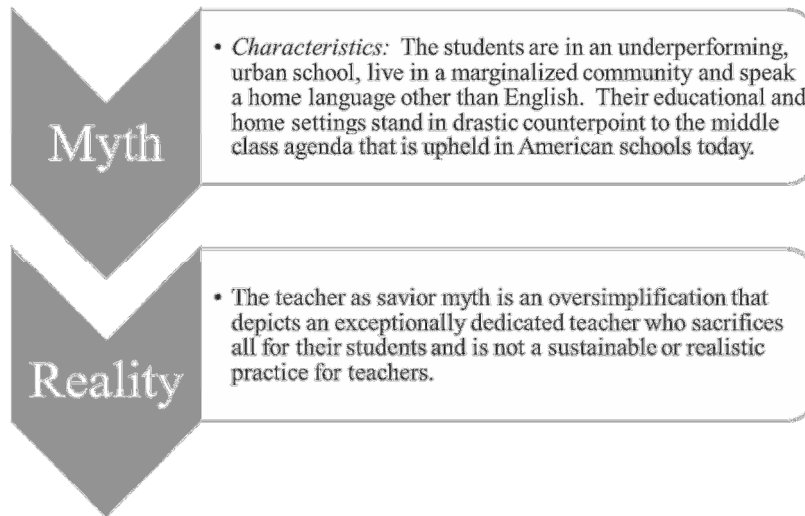
The teacher as savior myth, however, is an oversimplification that depicts an exceptionally dedicated teacher who sacrifices all for their students and is not a sustainable or realistic practice except for a few exceptional teachers. And sadly, the majority of low performing or marginalized urban schools do not retain these teachers for the long haul (Wykoff, Loeb & Lankford, 2002). In addition to the heavy work load, time, effort and resiliency of these teachers, salary is one of the leading factors that causes schools to losing this seemingly idealistic work force (Ingersoll, 2002; Milanowski et al., 2009). Many teachers who wish to stay and thrive in what could be described as a challenging and complex environment cannot or will not because the means to an otherwise successful end are multifarious and demand too much of the teacher themselves. When this myth comes crashing into the reality too often teachers leave the classroom, feeling underprepared and unsupported (Elfers, 2006).

A teacher who is able to embrace and succeed despite the complexities of these educational settings is often one who has a special talent for celebrating both academic and cultural success in their learners, their families and the school and itself. This teacher

recognizes that the home culture of a student brings value to the school by nurturing an academic and personal relationship amongst the teacher, school, student and family.

Many researchers have documented that it is the ability to draw on prior cultural and socio-historical experiences in a classroom setting which can provide a teacher with the tools to bridge gaps in student-teacher or teacher-community relationships (Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Lee, 2007; McCarty, 2002; Mitchie, 2005; Suarez Orozco et al., 2008; Valdes, 1996).

There is a real success story in those teachers who are willing and able to go beyond the four walls of their classrooms and understand that the students sitting in their classrooms are as much a product of their home culture as their school culture. There is no doubt that it takes a truly mindful and responsive teacher to create success in the classroom, and in order to realize their students' full potentials they must utilize all the tools available to them at one time or another. Isolating successful practices by the teacher to a single factor is impossible and pointless. However, exploring ways that teachers connect with students in these complex settings is a real and valuable endeavor, in essence it is the analysis of the tools used and then seeking to sharpen the ones best suited for the job.



The Purpose of this Study

This study targets specific features identified in the teacher myth, those of language and culture as they relate to both the student and the teacher. By specifically examining the interplay of language and culture as a way of better understanding how teachers make connections with their students, this study serves to better understand the potential value in these individual tools.

The student who speaks two or more languages, in which the home language is something other than English, remains a recognizable characteristic attribute of public urban schools as they exist today. There is no doubt that it is a reality of many urban schools that the teachers are teaching in a language that is secondary to many of their students, an often unsupported challenge for the student population. This study explores potential advantages and disadvantages for students surrounding the Spanish language and more specifically how language can affect how teachers view and respond to Hispanic students. By using a culturally responsive framework to explore these

concepts, this study examines how teachers from various vantage points of culture, connect with their Hispanic, Spanish speaking students as a way of better understanding the teacher-student relationships in schools with higher percentages of Hispanic, Spanish speaking students.

More specifically, this study looks at how connections are made (or not made) between teachers and students when they share (and do not share) common language and culture characteristics with their students. By exploring how teachers navigate matters of language and culture both with regards to themselves and their students, this study characterizes these insights as part of what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher working with Hispanic, Spanish speaking students.

Through exploring patterns of connection or identifiable disconnection between the language and culture of teachers and their students, in addition to the social distance or inclusion this scenario creates, this study's purpose is to better understand how both Hispanic and White teachers connect with Hispanic and Spanish speaking students. Teachers who develop environments that are responsive to the language and culture of their students may experience unforeseen changes, some which attribute to their own understanding of what it means to work with Hispanic students and families. These questions will be explored as part of this study as a means to evaluating cultural responsive practice in settings where teachers share and do not share common ethnic and language characteristics with predominately Hispanic students.

Research Question

How do teachers who share common ethnic and language characteristics with their students (and those who do not) connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population?

Latino Demographics v Teacher Demographics

Latino immigration in the United States today continues to be a significant social force, compelling schools to face the challenges and opportunities of integrating a large number of Latino immigrants into the nation's historical trajectory (Suarez-Orozco 2008). As of 2005, over thirty million immigrants populated the United States which equated to almost thirteen percent of the entire U.S. population (U.S Census, 2006). This evidence suggests that immigrant-origin children are entering the United States in record numbers, making immigrant students the fastest growing segment of the youth population. According to Rong and Preissle (1998) twenty percent of young people growing up in the U.S. have immigrant parents, and it is projected that by 2040 one in three children will be raised in an immigrant household. This, according to Gandara and Contreras (2009) inextricably links the future of Latino youth with the future of the United States. Furthermore, schools serve as an entry point to the community at large and to Hispanic youth. This changing landscape creates areas from which we adapt and learn as educators about the schooling context for Hispanic youth and recognize and evaluate this reality for the opportunity it is.

The Hispanic population in Arizona in particular is a significant portion of the state's total population. Evidence from Gonzalez and Szecsy's *The Condition of*

Hispanic Education in Arizona (2002) shows Latino's are most concentrated in Arizona's southern Santa Cruz county, however Latinos live in greatest numbers in Arizona's Maricopa County where Phoenix ranks sixth of all U.S. cities in Latino population. On average, the Latino population in Arizona is younger than the general population. As a result, thirty-eight percent of all Latinos are under the age of 18. This is a sizeable number compared to their non-Hispanics counterparts who comprise only twenty three percent of the total non-Hispanic population (Gonzalez & Szecsy, 2002). It should be noted that most Latino youth in Arizona originate from Mexico and come from either first, second or third generation families with varying educational backgrounds.

This study focuses on language because of recent demographic data collected by the state of Arizona and the federal government which points to the undeniable fact that an increasing percentage of students speak a first language other than English at home (Census, 2007).

Over the last decade, Arizona schools have experienced a sharp increase in the number of students who are not proficient in English and cannot fully access academic content in all of their classes. The following table ranks Arizona fourth to New Mexico, California and Texas regarding Spanish speaking populations in the United States.

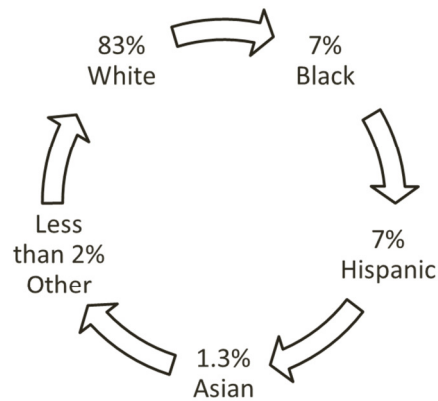
State/Territory	Spanish-speaking population	Percentage of population
New Mexico	823,352	43.3%
California	12,442,626	34.7%
Texas	7,781,211	34.6%
Arizona	1,608,698	28%

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/acs-12.pdf>

English language learners (ELLs) tend to be economically disadvantaged, perform less well on standardized tests, and drop out of high school at rates higher than their English speaking peers (Garcia, 2002). More teachers of mainstream general education classes, who normally do not have special training with ELL populations, continue to be faced with the challenge of responding to and supporting ELL students in their classrooms. Even the most committed teachers cannot provide high quality education without appropriate professional support and knowledge. This provides a rationale and background for the present study as a means of exploring the potential language issues which teachers undoubtedly face in their classrooms.

The recent increase in ELLs in U.S. classrooms has been rapid, and teacher demographics have not caught up with the student demographic shift. According to the U.S. Department of Education Institute for Educational Sciences statistics (2008) 83.5% of all teachers in the U.S. grades 9-12 were white, 6.9% black, 6.6% Hispanic, 1.3%

Asian and less than 1% were Asian/Pacific Islander, Native-American or two or more races.



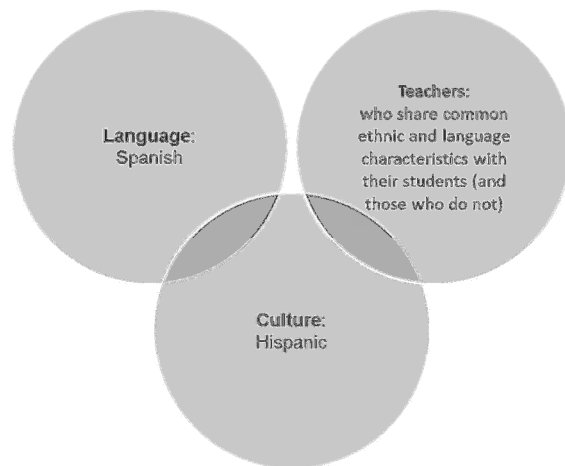
Looking at similar data from 2003 along with state data from Texas and North Carolina, white teachers comprise of 80% of all teachers in the field with Hispanic and Black teachers having less than 10% of total teachers accounted for in the same field. Given this “mismatch” Murnane and Steele (2007) note that the changing demographics of American students suggest an increasing demand for effective teachers of color in particular, and in general, for teachers who are effective at raising the achievement of students from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds.

The increasing portion of the population coming into the classroom with English as a second language validates this study as it attempts to understand how teachers connect with Spanish-speaking students. American classrooms on a whole are experiencing one of the larger, if not the largest, influx of immigrant students since the beginning of the twentieth century. Nearly twenty percent of school age youth live in homes in which English is not the first language (Census, 2010). As a result of recent trends, most teachers in the classroom and in teacher education programs are likely to

encounter students from diverse ethnic, racial and language groups in their classrooms during their careers. This data suggests that our current model for education is outdated and that to assume all students can fit into a standard mold is unrealistic. Instead, students are arriving in our classrooms with varied cultural traits, the most easily identifiable of which is language. In order to account for these trends, this study suggests we face this change in student population by examining how teachers negotiate diversity in their classrooms.

Summary

This study investigates how teachers connect with Hispanic students. What strategies are they using to make connections with Hispanic students? Are these strategies linked to culturally responsive practice? What are the implications of matched/mismatched language and culture in a culturally responsive context? This study explores these various implications of a cultural and language match/mismatch between teachers who share or do not share common ethnic and language characteristics with predominately Hispanic students.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework upon which this study is built. The following sections conduct a thorough review of the empirical research on culturally responsive practice.

Theoretical Framework

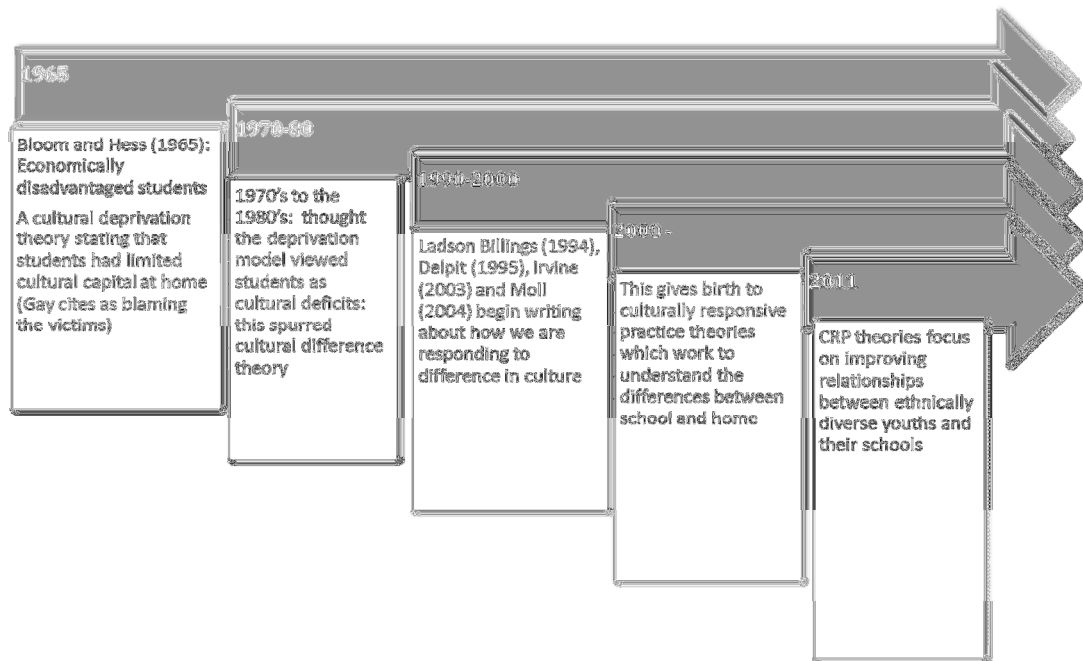
Culturally responsive practices are relevant in schools that service students from cultural backgrounds that differ from white middle-class and English-dominant students. The ways in which schools support success within highly diverse populations, with diverse needs and backgrounds that result in marked linguistic and academic differences are myriad. While these innumerable approaches will not be examined as part of this study, the research overwhelmingly does assert that schools which have a culturally diverse student body must find ways to respond to culturally diverse students through various methods as a way of promoting student success.

Even as schools experience an ever greater and accelerating variation in students' races, cultures and linguistic backgrounds, Kozol (2005) reminds us that the methods schools employ to respond to student diversity are at present dated and arguably not successful in reaching the diverse populations schools service. Given this widely documented increase in diversity, schools must begin to implement responses that facilitate learning for diverse school settings. Though nuanced and site specific, these responses must all contain elements that engender the formalization of socio-culturally

aware, linguistically sensitive and cognitively meaningful educational experiences as part of a comprehensive school wide approach.

Creating culturally responsive schools begins with creating a safe school climate which balances the values of the students themselves with the values of the school (Klump, J. & McNeir, G. 2005; Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). Providing relevancy, context and high standards for diverse populations are all common themes in the review of culturally responsive practices and provide a context for understanding how schools operationalize culturally responsive practices.

Origins of Culturally Responsive Practice



The evolution of culturally responsive pedagogy was led primarily by African American scholars who spurred a much larger multicultural movement in the context of education. This movement reinforced the need to integrate racial/ethnic context into the

curriculum during the 1960's and 1970's (Banks 2004). The model for multicultural education is rooted in President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty (1964) which stemmed the work from Bloom and Hess (1965) which focused on understanding economically disadvantaged students in the contexts of their schools. While a genetic explanation was embedded in much of the literature at that time, Bloom and Hess discussed a different model focusing on 'cultural deprivation'. This theory proposed that limited cultural capital at home combined with low income environments lead to a situation in which minority students themselves, in general, were the factors in low academic achievement. This model was widely viewed, writes Gay (2004), as 'blaming the victims' for their lower educational status and broader exclusions. Flawed or not, this model had a major impact in educational approaches throughout the 1960s and 70s and is still with us today, as noted by Gay. In the 1970s and 80s a pedagogical movement began to critique this model and provide alternatives to this theory. Indeed, Castaneda (1974), Edmonds (1986) and Boykin (1986) were prominent research voices that decried this theory for embodying a model focused more on cultural deficits while ignoring the strengths and advantages to be found in the cultural diversity of families and students from varied backgrounds.

This theory has come to be known as the cultural difference theory. Many researchers discussed and explored this theory in their works, including Ladson-Billings (1994), Delpit (1995) Irvine (2003), Moll (2004) and Nieto (2004). Culturally responsive practice theory arises from this body of work. This theory provides approaches and background to better understand the discontinuities between school culture and

home/community cultures- in particular for low income minority students. By providing a powerful lens through which to view low academic achievement for students in a broader context, this theory creates a way for schools and teachers to better understand the roots of the perceived inconsistencies. By allowing teachers to reflect on both cultural and language strengths for all students, it also provides a framework in which increased achievements for culturally diverse students can be obtained in a broader context. Over time, multicultural education began to be less of a curriculum movement and more of an overall systemic change to a greater emphasis on increased racial/ethnic equality in education. An important facet to this movement then (and to multicultural education today) is the emphasis on improving relationships between ethnically diverse youths and their schools (Banks 2004). Research has shown that improving this relationship has an overall effect on not just the student's knowledge, skills and attitudes, but further works to support cross cultural interactions and both social and civic action. All of these are integral to making and keeping our nation more democratic and just (Banks, 2000).

Definitions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Practice

Research tells us that culturally responsive learning in general is based on two connected levels, an *institutional* level and a *personal* level (Gay 2000). Gay and Little (2009) suggest that planning on an *institutional* level occurs in three areas: organization of the school, school policies & procedures and community involvement. Though varied in implementation and specifics, all three areas are concerned with not only the problem of creating deeper connections to the school within diverse students populations but

extending meaningful modes of inclusion to families and the greater community for planning, involvement and implementation of culturally responsive practices.

On a *personal* level, culturally diverse schools must additionally allow teachers to be self-reflective practitioners and to explore and evaluate ways in which they service diverse populations. Teachers ultimately serve as the school's front line. They must be given the capacity for self-determination in their classroom as much as possible and treated as the professional (Haberman, 1995; Mitchie, 2005; Little, 2009). Teachers must be encouraged to examine their personal attitudes and beliefs in relation to the school in which they work and the student population they service. With this reflection, teachers are better armed to understand the biases in their personal perceptions. This better understanding serves as the foundation for culturally responsive teaching practices. In addition to the teacher being a self-reflective practitioner, he or she must also be given the latitude to implement elements gleaned from this self-reflection. This means ensuring their ability to plan and prepare individualized instruction which adequately reflect the cultural differences and needs of their students (Obidah 2001).

Over the past three decades many researchers and scholars have discussed culturally responsive practice. Most notably these academics include Sonia Nieto, Luis Moll, Lisa Delpit, Geneva Gay, Jacqueline Irvine and Gloria Ladson-Billings. While ever endeavoring to better understand culturally responsive practices, all have sought to use their research in the development and implementation of approaches that support schools and teachers in the ongoing academic improvement of low income and racially and ethnically diverse students.

Ladson-Billings and Gay are the main architects of culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy/practice theory in its current form. Their theories suggest that there is a discontinuity between schools and their low income, ethnically and racially diverse students. Further, they argue that this gap is a main factor to be considered when understanding low academic achievement seen in ethnically and racially diverse students. This theory suggests that meaningful academic change can be achieved by changing how schools view these students. Rather than looking at ethnically diverse students through a deficit lens, Gay and Ladson-Billings draw on the student's cultural and linguistic strengths as a primary tool in the effort to "stop the vicious cycle of academic failure" in schools (Gay, 2000, p. xviii).

Though often using different terminology to support their research and theory, many researchers have tackled this same issue. Culturally sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective and responsive, when applied in this context, all have generally the same meaning. Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) use the term culturally responsive pedagogy while Ladson-Billings (2001) uses culturally relevant pedagogy. These terms, although slightly varied in nuance, encompass the same core concepts. Additionally, Howard (2006), Cochran-Smith (1991, 2004), Nieto (2004) and Irvine (2003) have all drawn on these theories to argue for the importance of culturally responsive practice and viewing education through a multicultural education lens.

Serving Hispanic Youth in a Culturally Responsive Context

For the purpose of this study, I have narrowed the field of discussion to focus on Hispanic student populations in Arizona. The literature that best supports this area of

study is found in the concepts of Funds of Knowledge as presented by Luis Moll and Norma Gonzales. This study has been greatly informed by these researchers who have themselves spent a considerable amount of time documenting and exploring the educational ideologies of Arizona Hispanic students, their communities and their schools. In particular, their work covering the Funds of Knowledge framework has provided considerable context and background for this study and culturally responsive practice at large.

The greater Funds of Knowledge framework relies on various theories including the work of Bourdieu (1977), Williams (1977) and the writings of Foucault (1970), all of which underscore the importance not only of what people actually do but what they say about what they do as well. In adopting a more anthropological perspective, this theory finds the households of low income and minority students to be repositories of diverse and rich knowledge bases. As the student population moves from the home to the school, these knowledge repositories transcend the home to inform the school environment. It naturally follows that to be successful in the culturally diverse classroom teachers must tap into the home based knowledge set and respond to the culture of their students. In accordance with their core belief that classroom cultural and linguistic patterns should be congruent with cultural and linguistic community patterns, Funds of Knowledge researchers and practitioners seek to bridge what is generally regarded as the discontinuity or “mismatch gap” (Gonzalez et al., 2001).

Funds of Knowledge frameworks have undergone several iterations to reach the perspective as discussed in the 2005 study of Moll and Gonzales. Relying on the

anthropological work of Wolf (1966), Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg coined the term “Funds of Knowledge” in 1992. Wolf, having worked similarly in a household paradigm, sought to identify the series of funds households must manage for daily survival. These funds were primarily attributed to household caloric funds, funds of rent, replacement funds, ceremonial funds and social funds. The theories suggested by Wolf greatly informed Velez Ibanez’s interpretation of other funds of knowledge being comprised of historically accumulated bodies of knowledge and skills essential for one’s survival. Moll (2005) adapts this theory to his discussion of strategies for survival- specifically in his discussions of household sciences (ranching and farming), construction (repair), economics (small business), medicine, religion and household management centered on childcare and cooking. Moll’s observation that these theories transcend from the house into the school suggests that classroom learning can be greatly enhanced when teachers learn more about these existent funds and so thrive within the home context of their students.

Teachers must, therefore, be prepared to venture beyond their professional comfort zone (as learners), seeking to understand the ways their students (and students’ families and communities) make sense of their everyday lives. This clearly anticipates that teachers themselves must draw from varied ethnographic approaches and qualitative techniques to “tap into” the funds of knowledge for survival that these households possess. This theory also posits that a fuller understanding of the student’s larger community setting may serve as a useful way of exploring the immediate, physical and historical community in which the school community is housed. According to Moll,

issues of reciprocity and the reciprocal nature of social networks within the student's community provide much of the context in which learning occurs. This research necessarily assumes students have opportunities to participate in educational activities within their communities and, in doing so, form reciprocal relationships with people they trust.

Continuing under the culturally responsive framework, Moll further explores ways in which schools can create environments whereby teachers and students thrive in the classroom by implementing practices that allow for and encourage the use of student's cultural backgrounds and histories, known to this theory as student funds.

Through an informed utilization of their personal or "household" knowledge fund to guide academic responses in the school environment, the cultural fund can serve as a valuable tool towards enrichment of students' academic settings. If valued and implemented in the school as a matter of policy, this 'fund' aids in reinforcing and expounding upon the educational goals as defined in the curriculum. Moll et al suggest responding to a student's cultural funds can be a powerful means of drawing an individual into the school culture, a practice that is acknowledged as a way to increase participation and long term investment.

The research suggests that when faced with the existing 'traditional' classroom structure, Latino students are not able to accurately portray their intellectual capacity as learners. Thus, teachers must evolve into learners themselves by responding to and learning from the funds offered by Latino students. As it requires a transfer of funds both from teacher to student and student to teacher, this model breaks radically from the

traditional classroom where funds are transferred in a single direction from teacher to student. As teachers tap into this form of culture capital and gain a better understanding of it, and in understanding are able to assign a value to it, they will be able to better respond to the students they service. The theories and concepts that underlie this research clearly focus on understanding the whole child (their family, their community and their language) in order to better support their education.

The researchers Moll and Gonzales rely on the work of Velez-Ibanez (1983) to explore *confianza* (trust) or *confianza en confianza*, trust in mutual trust as the “cultural intersection” for Mexican origin populations (p.136). Velez-Ibanez began his research in an ethnographic study titled “The Tucson Project” which focused on middle and working class Latino families living in Tucson, Arizona. This research primarily focused on relationships within Latino family structures, giving special emphasis to their class background and cultural assimilation to the United States. This study, as Gonzalez states, “set the groundwork for the methodological and theoretical bases of the Funds of Knowledge project.”

Using Velez-Ibanez and previous culturally responsive practice pioneers as models, Moll structures his 2005 study with three objectives:

(1) A focus on *community*, primarily in a working class community in Tucson, Arizona. Here Moll reveals how funds of knowledge amongst households represent a basis of knowledge which can be utilized in the school setting. (2) A focus on professional *collaboration* between teachers and researchers as necessary to discuss and

support responsive teaching. Finally, (3) a focus on *culturally responsive curriculum and instruction* must be evident.

Through the teacher narratives in the study, the pedagogical significance and transformative power of this type of work for teachers working with marginalized or under served youth becomes clear. One teacher participant, Martha Floyd Tenery (a female Anglo teacher who arranged to conduct an interview with parents), completed a series of three visits with the first family. Many issues of race and identity were explored as she held “meet and greets” with these families. In this matter, the research is loaded with details which illustrate the drastic difference between the social capital of the teacher and the homes which she is visiting. One of the main themes resulting from Tenery’s work is a greater focus on what Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg classify as “the strategizing household” (p.123). Many facets of this household are characterized by daily survival mechanisms such as pooling household resources, sharing chores and shopping in various stores to meet the family budget. Even upon a casual reading, it is abundantly clear that the characteristics of the families described in this work blatantly contradict many deficit model perceptions existent between teachers and students in schools. Further, Moll illustrates how strategizing households are rich in resources for learning. The authors suggest that the more difficult the family’s life, the more able to cope and skilled in survival they must become to succeed.

Most notably the authors reflect on the fact that securing trust between the teacher and the family can be a major investment into the success of the child in the classroom because of the resultant ability of the teacher to draw on the aforementioned coping and

surviving skills. They continue to posit that token multicultural standards and “moments” in the school context which address multicultural issues do not embody the actual lived experiences of the children that schools service. Likewise, Moll finds that many approaches employed in schools today, particularly low performing schools, rely heavily on old and outdated practices. Many of these practices are directly tied to issues of both power and race in the U.S and are often created, defined and reinforced by class structures which exist in and around the school setting. Moll’s framework continues to push the reader to understand that these forms of social stratification are systemic and neither occasional nor accidental.

Theoretical Assumptions of Funds of Knowledge

The Funds of Knowledge framework explores issues of language as a shared experience amongst teachers, students and the community. Moll notes that schools primarily view Spanish as a second language through a deficit lens. Further, as most students are able to communicate in both English and Spanish, Moll suggests that English only language instruction fails to capitalize on children’s ability to speak Spanish. While Moll’s researchers themselves were bilingual, the teachers (in order to service the realities of dual language students) were paired up with Spanish speaking researchers to perform this work. Moll fully discloses that this research design could not be conducted monolingually as most families and students spoke Spanish.

Moll defines language as “social practice involving talk, interaction, values and beliefs” and as having the ability to forge connections between the social structures of schools and families. This definition also suggests that practices of language construct

knowledge and this knowledge can be internalized into policy and procedures by both the school and the teacher to better serve the students. Language, therefore, is viewed throughout the research as a cultural resource from which schools can leverage more meaningful responses which focus on a much broader view of the intellectual capacity of the child being served. Moll asserts that bilingualism is part of the texture of this research and integral to the process in every aspect from the interviews, to the teacher student interaction to the teacher's interactions with the households. This is made evident by the way in which the case studies pay respect to issues of voice as representative of the child and his/her home culture.

Moll notes that language creates a sense of *confianza* between teachers and students and can serve as an entry point to the mutual growth of both teacher and student. These interactions reinforce relationships which can, in their own right, have a positive impact on teacher and student development. He attributes this interaction to giving schools and the students they service the ability to "act on the world" (p.246).

Assumptions for Teachers

Funds of Knowledge work assumes that teachers must build teacher knowledge based on student context. This context is brought by the child into the classroom in several ways, all of which assume a teacher's nuanced and informed response to various cultural dimensions and predetermined behaviors. Moll posits that responding to the cultural intricacies of students is truly meant to be a reflective process and one that assumes a professional commitment by the teacher.

As they alone have the fortitude to access and respond to the culturally diverse student in an ongoing and meaningful way.. The teacher, however, enters this professional realm with a series of assumed characteristics which are essential to performing this kind of work. While Moll does not state them explicitly, he argues that knowing the predominant *language* of the household, in this case Spanish, in addition to having a teacher who is willing to take professional risks by venturing beyond the four walls of their classroom remains critical to the success of this approach. Teachers who flourished within this type of work environment by and large were either cultural insiders themselves (sharing common language and cultural characteristics as their students) or were cultural outsiders who had prior exposure to other backgrounds, cultures, countries and customs. These concepts and understandings lead to the questions fueling this study regarding those teacher and student pairs that are culturally matched versus those which are not.

Assumptions of the Match and Mismatched Teacher Student Pair

The literature supports that those teachers who embody the concepts within culturally responsive practice demonstrate best teaching practices for culturally diverse students. It is further recognized that through implementation of these practices the culturally responsive teacher demonstrates awareness for the students and the teacher's social and cultural background. Culturally responsive practice therefore offers the possibility that the culturally responsive teacher, through this reflection on student and self, is able to create a classroom adapted to critical thinking and social justice. These teachers allow culture and historical experiences to enter the classroom and influence

instruction. The pedagogy is further focused on educational and social inequities in society at large. Through this, teachers create opportunities for students to critically examine knowledge and normalized beliefs and allow students to connect with the community beyond the classroom.

Given the increasing diversity of public schools and the relatively unchanging demographics of our teaching force, teaching for social justice is what Mercado (2001) suggests is the critical pedagogy needed to empower students and work for social change. What do we know, then about how teachers respond to student culture when they are a cultural match with their students?

The Cultural Match Scenario

It is significant, but obvious, to note that teachers enter the teaching profession from various cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Similar to an understanding of how cultural and historical background can be leveraged in the educational development of our students, it is reasonable to assume that similar supports could prove to benefit our teachers as they themselves evolve into high quality teachers. While many culturally responsive studies focus on white teachers servicing culturally diverse youth, best practices, as a result, have primarily focused on white teachers. Irvine (2003) and Villegas and Davis (2008) assert that assumed cultural experience cannot be a given, race and cultural experiences must be taken into account when describing teachers beliefs and practices, regardless of the race of the teacher. What then are the implications for the pedagogical practices of teachers who form a cultural match with their students?

The work of Tellez (1999) suggests that fostering critical dialogue and nurturing safe learning communities in general highlights the value of tapping the insider knowledge of teachers which prompts them to share their experiences as minority individuals and professional educators. This approach of drawing on the culturally diverse teacher's cultural and social capital, Bustos et al. (2002) note, can be affirming to minority teachers in general as this group of teachers are more often exposed to racial or cultural discourse which reduces the value of diversity (Bustos, Flores, Keehn, & Peres, 2002). Clark and Flores (2001) found that providing approaches which support reflection and personal development with Latino teachers in particular reinforced feelings of efficacy in the teacher's ability to engage in culturally responsive practice; the individuals were able to see their culture as a benefit, not a deficit. Salinas and Castro (2010) argue that minority teachers can use their personal and cultural backgrounds to develop a deeper understanding and context of dominant curriculum and are able to express counter narratives addressing marginalized and oppressed perspectives within the dominant curriculum. Teachers in this context, according to Salinas and Castro, are able to share their personal (historical) narratives as they relate to the dominant curriculum taught in schools. This research further supports the significance of language and in particular the need to incorporate linguistic and cultural capital into teaching and learning to support students. As a result, the research put forth by Salinas and Castro suggests that recognizing and cultivating the cultural and linguistic strengths of both our teachers and student and providing scenarios in which the teacher and student share common culture and language are beneficial to the goal of engaging in culturally responsive practice.

Achinstein and Aguirre (2008), however, suggest teachers who share common cultural and linguistic traits with their students may not be as likely to connect with their students as one may think. This research notes that many ‘matched’ teachers may not feel equipped or prepared to use their cultural capital. Achinstein and Aguirre’s study suggests that new teachers who share common language and culture have difficulty in negotiating culture as the teachers and students themselves identify differently to their ‘same’ culture. The study findings suggest in general distrust the teacher’s cultural background leading to the students themselves to be culturally suspect of their ‘matched’ teachers. The teachers in this study further revealed the lack of support that many teachers receive negotiating sociocultural issues in the classroom even when entering the classroom as a cultural match with their students. These findings suggest that the cultural resources that culturally matched teachers have must be developed rather than assumed and are therefore not a given benefit for a culturally matched teacher student pair.

Themes Found in Culturally Responsive Practice

Gay (2000), Ladson-Billings (1994, 2001), Moll and Gonzalez and Villegas and Lucas (2002) have all produced major publications on culturally responsive practice. Based on a synthesis of these scholars work, culturally responsive practice is defined herein as learner centered teaching whereby the strengths students bring to schools are identified, nurtured and utilized to promote effective teaching and learning. Six themes have been found to be salient across the literature when discussing culturally responsive practice. Able to support teachers and schools alike, these six pillars are cultivated in schools with varied ethnicities as well as high percentages of specifically Hispanic youth.

These six themes are summarized as follows: 1) liberation 2) validation 3) empowerment 4) multidimensional 5) comprehensive and 6) transformative. For the purpose of this study, the following six themes embedded in the literature will be discussed herein as a framework for understanding how teachers connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population.

Liberation

Liberating students involves a sociocultural awareness on behalf of the teacher which first begins with teachers coming to understand that one's position in the world is mediated by how one culturally identifies (race, ethnicity, gender and social class, etc.) and the individual's way of seeing the world is inherently shaped by this position as opposed to being a universal way in which everyone sees the real world. (Banks, 2004; Bennett, 1995; Howard, 2006; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). This awareness of self (and all its biases) in teachers is crucial to working with ethnically and culturally diverse students and is in exact opposition to the dated logic of the deficit model approach which views students as having inherent faults or shortcomings as a direct result of family or cultural deficiency.

Therefore, for teachers to engage in liberating practice they must be fully aware of the many world perspectives which are shaped by each individual's position in life. In liberating students, the teacher therefore is present to "authenticate knowledge" about different racial and ethnic groups (Gay, 2000). Teachers must be led to examine the ways in which student disposition is influenced by many factors, to include an understanding of how the dominance of some cultures over others exists through school

structures & policy and to understand that often these power struggles limit the progression of students from particular backgrounds (Giroux, 2006; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Gay and Ladson Billings further assert that teachers and students evolve together in this context, leaving students empowered to be themselves. Thus empowered, they become advocates for their own truth and excellence (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Liberation Definition: The teacher comes to understand that their world view is shaped by their race, gender and social class. This is opposed to a universal way that everyone sees the world. This critical understanding of self allows the teacher to understand the power struggle and dominance of some groups over others. The teacher and student evolve together in this context.

Validation

The teacher's own internalized understanding of how culture and language influences the ways in which students participate in school naturally gives rise to the validation of students' ethnic and racial diversity. Validation of the students' prior experiences and personal dispositions requires an understanding and empowerment of not only a student's cultural background but also personal histories and the way students make connections between their home life and school life according to Gay. Further, the work of Moll (2005) purports that validation of home and family background (family economics, employment and consumer habits) in particular need to be taken into account when endeavoring to best teach and serve Hispanic youth. Using these backgrounds to better comprehend the personal learning styles of Hispanic students greatly aids teachers with understanding and addressing how students learn in their classrooms.

Further, Gay (2000) argues that validating the communication styles of our learners to include their native languages and communication styles in their second language in general allows teachers to design and implement activities that draw on the linguistic and communication pattern strengths of their students rather than causing students to shut down or disengage from learning. “Languages and communication styles are systems of cultural notations and the means through which thoughts and ideas are expressively embodied. Embedded within them are cultural values and ways of knowing that are strongly influenced by how students engage with learning” (p 81). Additionally, validating language and culture prevents some behavior of a culturally diverse student from being construed as disruptive or inconsiderate, notes Gay. While understanding how students of different cultures communicate can help the teacher, it is also the teacher’s role to make explicit the rules of classroom discourse so they can better “negotiate mainstream educational structures” (Gay, 2000, p. 95). Using the cultural and linguistic traits that students bring to school not only validates their cultural identities it further engages them in their learning (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings; 1994, 2001; Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

Validation Definition: The teacher validates student/parent prior experience and personal disposition which aids the teacher with understanding and addressing how kids learn. Knowing the historical backgrounds of students supports teachers to engage students in learning.

Empowerment

Many researchers suggest that the active empowerment of ethnically diverse students in the pursuit of their needs and interest allows these students to take ownership and pride in their learning and school. This positive change in schools and students begins with the cultivation of student attitudes and values through empowering the student themselves to become change agents in their own lives. In order to do this, teachers must rely on the decision-making abilities of the students themselves along with their social action skills and leadership capabilities. Additionally, teachers must strive to build a broader sense of students' understanding as to the full extent of their own capabilities. Traditionally, ethnically diverse groups have become victimized and excluded and marginalized as participants in all levels of society (Gay 2000). The purpose of culturally responsive practice, as one of the pillars, is to help students develop the skills necessary to become leaders themselves within an ethnically diverse world. Building personal empowerment in students engenders relevance between school and society for ethnically diverse youth. It also provides the opportunities for students to become more involved and direct their own lives, resulting in a demonstration of how their own power of knowledge? can positively affect how they perceive themselves as members of the school (Gay, 2004; Moll, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2004). In this manner students learn to succeed for themselves and become self-regulated learners. Teachers can provide these opportunities for empowerment by allowing for and implementing a classroom built on student initiative and driven by student facilitation. The learning process therefore becomes negotiated; leadership is shared between the

teacher and the student and the student becomes responsible for their learning. This allows for a balance of teaching and learning by the student in the classroom (Gay, 2000).

Empowerment Definition: Teachers negotiate a shared leadership role with students.

Teachers come to understand student competencies and work towards student leadership at school and students becoming agents of change in their own lives.

Multidimensional

In as much as many traditional materials, textbooks and assessments are in general Eurocentric and further marginalize, omit or distort all together the histories and views of culturally diverse groups, incorporating culturally responsive resources and materials into all areas of curriculum to include cross-curriculum development, lesson plans, performance assessments and classroom literature is noted as a pillar to culturally responsive practice (Gay, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2002; Loewen, 2009). Further, teachers and schools must also consider the multiple instructional strategies and forms of assessment in their general practice in order to support multi-dimensionalism. Villegas and Lucas (2002) note that traditional education and curriculum is entrenched in a transmission view of education. Many practitioners in the field call this method of delivery 'sit and get'. Students differ, according to Gay, in the way they problem solve. Students of color, she asserts, often engage in preparation behaviors before performing as they wish to get things just right before they start an activity (Gay, 2000). While classrooms use various approaches to problem solving (many of which involve deductive reasoning) she asserts, many student are more inductive and prefer interaction and collaboration with one another to come to a final answer. Gay cites examples of this as

seen among various ethnic groups, including Hispanic youth. Different styles of learning that involve the cultural customs of our learners she argues must therefore be considered when implementing activities for diverse students.

Similarly, performance assessments used to measure student learning must reflect the multiple ways in which students learn and communicate. Authentic assessments like projects, portfolios, oral presentations and debates give culturally diverse students, not to mention all students, a variety of ways to demonstrate and apply knowledge. Varied assessment strategies not only legitimize this knowledge but also make learning more meaningful, effective and student centered (Gay, 2000). Additionally, teachers who engage in multidimensional practice in general make academic success a non-negotiable mandate which promotes high expectations for all students.

Irvine (2003) suggests that demanding the best in a student is a must in raising the achievement for ethnically and culturally diverse students. Goals for learning must be high, argues Ladson-Billings (2001), however, the teacher must provide the scaffolding for student to those goals. Cochran-Smith (2004) calls building these skills significant work as they allow students to learn and be challenged through multiple and varied strategies. Irvine (2003) argues that the culturally responsive teacher utilizes a variety of challenging and creative teaching and assessment techniques with their students and is at the same time more persistent with their failing students. The culturally responsive teacher, then, makes learning relevant, meaningful and challenging while also creating a community where risks can be taken without fear of failure.

Multidimensional Definition: Teachers make learning relevant and applicable through curriculum and assessment. Teachers differentiate for the learning styles of culturally diverse groups.

Comprehensive

Culturally responsive practice requires a comprehensive piece which focuses on both academic and cultural excellence for students. Comprehensive approaches are associated with the interpersonal relations in the classroom amongst students and the teacher's efforts to ensure a classroom culture based on respect and mutual trust (Gay, 2000). Part of the approach also relies on student teacher relationships with both teachers and students viewing the classroom setting as an extended family whereby every individual contributes to the whole (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Gay, 2000; Hollins, 1996). Comprehensive efforts integrate the attitudes, values, content and actions associated with how students learn and succeed in general. Culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy alone cannot support reversing achievement trends among Hispanic student. Both Moll and Gay argue for a holistic and comprehensive approach that supports both academic and cultural excellence in students.

Comprehensive Definition: Teachers strive for both cultural and academic excellence and build classrooms based on respect and mutual trust.

Transformative

The final pillar of culturally responsive practice has to do with making learning transformative for all students. The goal is to provide a systems wide approach to school policy, parental involvement, community involvement and school administration in order

to improve educational opportunities and achievement for ethnically diverse students. Culturally responsive practice, therefore, offers a transformation of culture that occurs school wide and ultimately can change existing patterns of student failure for culturally diverse students. Further, transformational development in schools is found to improve the sociocultural consciousness for students and staff alike. As part of the transformation towards becoming more culturally responsive on an institutional level, a commitment to social justice must be modeled for students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Many researchers note that developing culturally responsive practice is an important step in transforming society at large. Schools must become the places for equitable opportunity for all students and not just the dominant cultures. This, notes Villegas and Lucas (2002) takes time, experience and meaningful reflection on self and society.

Transformative Definition: Teachers and schools commit to social justice by responding systemically to culturally diverse learners on an institutional level through school policy, parent and community involvement.

Summary

The aforementioned six themes: 1) liberation 2) validation 3) empowerment 4) multidimensional 5) comprehensive and 6) transformative which emerged from a review to include subthemes from the literature review will serve as a framework for understanding how both teachers who share common ethnic and language characteristics with their students and those who do not can connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population. The themes and subthemes appear in the following table:

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Sub theme
Liberating	Freeing students as individuals
	No truth is permanent
	Non mainstream ways of teaching and learning
	Making authentic cultural knowledge accessible
Validating	Student prior experience
	Student personal disposition
	Family/home connections
	Classroom literature
	Everyday life concepts
	Economics, employment, consumer habits of Hispanic students
	Empowerment
	Self-regulatory learners
	Student initiative
	Student led activities
	Teacher as facilitator
Multidimensional	Curriculum
	Lesson plans
	Performance Assessments
	Student centered instruction

	Cross curriculum development
Comprehensive	Academic excellence
	Cultural excellence
	High Expectations
	Student-teacher relationships
	Classroom as an extended family
	Every individual contributes to the whole
Transformative	School wide systems
	School Policy
	Parent Involvement
	Community Involvement
	School Administration

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The methods for this study were qualitative and examined how teachers connect with predominately Hispanic students. Rossman and Rallis (2003) note the importance of the research landscape for qualitative study, which was in this case a school with a larger Hispanic student population and predominately white teachers. They further suggest that using a qualitative approach fosters rich discussions that allow for the documentation of voices and perspectives of teachers working in the field. This process allows both the teacher and researcher to develop the rapport needed so that the latter will come away a clear understanding of the issues that teachers encounter in these settings from their perspectives. This study therefore is a case study design which is phenomenological in nature. The research question is: How do teachers who share common ethnic and language characteristics with their students (and those who do not) connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population?

The intent of this study was to explore how teachers who share common ethnic and language characteristics with predominately Hispanic students (and those who do not) connect with a predominately Hispanic student population and further endeavor to isolate student teacher connections as they associate with culturally responsive practice.

The educational community for this study was Ranger, a Title I school. Ranger is presented first in this chapter with a full discussion as to both the characteristics of the student population and characteristics of the teacher, parent and community populations.

Secondly, the method by which the collected data was coded and analyzed is discussed. Method for data collection included a brief survey to assess teacher language ability, interviews, lesson observations and other observations in the field.

Third, a full discussion of the study's sample of teachers (descriptions of the participants) as well as the relationship between the theoretical framework and the data recorded through the study provides the final piece of the study's methods.

Context of Ranger

Ranger Elementary is in the Grayhawk Unified School District and represents an excelling learning environment for Hispanic students in grades pre-K through 5th grade in a large urban District in the southwest United States. The Grayhawk Unified School District enrolls 25,000 students in total. Hosting approximately 900 of those students, Ranger is the largest Elementary School in the District. Of these approximately 900 students, 20% of Ranger students are white, 10% African-American, American Indian or Asian and 70% are Hispanic. Of the approximately 50 teachers on site at the time this study was conducted one teacher was self-identified race as Asian, six as Hispanic and 43 as white. Five teachers were male and the remainder female.

Ranger is a Title I School. A school with a Title I Program (which is mainly addressed in section 1114 of Title I, Part A) is defined as one that receives funds "to upgrade the entire educational program of a school that serves an eligible school attendance area in which not less than 40 percent of the children are from low-income families, or not less than 40 percent of the children enrolled in the school are from such families" (<http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/title1/schoolwide>). The emphasis of Title I funding

is to assist all students and in particular those considered most academically at-risk to attain academic proficiency based upon state academic standards.

This initial assessment and plan further provides eligibility for federal funding for the purpose of improving student achievement- providing additional services for students to meet academic standards primarily in the areas of math and reading. Ranger's designation as a school wide Title I program means that it has accepted the designated federal funding and that school wide programs have been designed to support additional academic achievement.

Ranger is an open enrollment school whereby any student outside of the school boundary can attend. This policy means students who live outside District boundaries can seek to enroll at Ranger, which has resulted in approximately 15% of Ranger students coming from open enrollment.

Languages other than English spoken at Ranger include Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian, Farsi and varied African languages. In terms of language services, approximately 52% of the student population is identified as English Language Learners. In a 2008 report from the Arizona Department of Education there was approximately 150,000 students classified as ELLs- a number equating to 13% of Arizona's K-12 students. Of this 13% identified in 2008, 46% of all ELL students in the state were in grades K-2, 24% were in grades 3-5, 16% were in grades 6-8 and 14% were in grades 9-12. Starting in 2010, parents indicated a language other than English on the one language question on the "Primary Home Language Other Than English (PHLOTE) Home language Survey: What is the primary language of the student?" Based on this

data point, the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment is administered to measure the student's ability in listening, speaking, and comprehension in listening and reading. Students are then categorized as having pre-emergent, emergent, basic, intermediate or performing language ability and discrete skills are taught to include supporting elements of phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon and semantics for proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Further, specific time allocations for Elementary schools such as Ranger are organized to support ELL students during the school day.

(<http://www.azed.gov/english-language-learners>)

At the time this study was conducted, 74% of the students identified as qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Students who receive free or reduced lunch only qualify for the program when a family income is less than \$40,000; this is a significant and telling indicator of the students' economic home-lives and the broader community from which they are drawn.

As documented as part of Ranger's vision statement, Ranger fosters a welcoming environment for children and adults which promotes academics, citizenship and social consciousness. All members of the Ranger learning community do whatever it takes to provide exceptional education opportunities for all. Given the aforementioned statistics related to Ranger, it should be noted that Ranger was awarded an "A" letter grade by the state at the time this study was conducted. The letter grade system was signed into law in 2010 and was created to provide clear and easy to understand information for parents about the overall academic performance of the school. The A-F letter grade system uses a combination of composite AIMS scores (50% of the formula) and the academic growth

scores of students from one year to the next (50% of the formula). Schools like Ranger which earned an “A” letter grade resulted from 90 percent of their students passing AIMS and further achieved “greater academic growth within its population than most schools” (<http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/a-f-accountability/>). Ranger was one of 383 schools in the state awarded an “A” letter grade out of 1, 573 schools which earned a letter grade in 2012. This ranks Ranger in the top 25% of all Arizona schools in 2012. It is also noteworthy that both Ranger’s principal and assistant principal at the time this study was conducted were Hispanic and spoke Spanish. Also noteworthy, at the conclusion of this study the Ranger principal was named semifinalist for a highly recognized state award for school leadership. This award is based on exemplary principal initiative, proven leadership and an excellent record of high academic achievement, potentially naming the principal as one of the best educational leaders in the state. With regards to the academic achievement of the school, it is evident that Ranger provides a safe and effective learning environment for Ranger students.

Sample Population

The two main criteria for the sample are language and culture. When reflected upon as a potential tool in a given classroom, the language of the teacher can be a very important variable and gives rise to a series of questions. What impact can this tool bring to a teacher’s instruction? Are there benefits to student or teacher success to be gleaned by a Spanish speaking teacher in a majority Spanish speaking classroom and, if so, are these outweighed by potential drawbacks to the same teacher in a majority non-Spanish speaking classroom? What advantages/disadvantages emerge upon observation?

This study involved a total of ten participants; the current principal, assistant principal and eight teachers from Ranger Elementary School. The sample was determined based on teacher language (identified by bilingual certification status) and self-identified race (white or Hispanic). Individual teachers were then chosen from this sample based on the professional judgment of the principal and assistant principal.

Sampling Frame

	Spanish Speaker	Non Spanish Speaker
Hispanic Teacher	Maria and David	Laura and Kate
Non-Hispanic Teacher	Lisa and Carolina	Nancy and Abby

In the sample, Spanish speakers were identified based on their bilingual certification. Of the four Spanish speaking teachers, three of them were initially selected based on their certification status. The fourth Spanish speaker, David, did not have his certification however was recommended based on the professional judgment of the principal. Hispanic non-Spanish speakers and non-Hispanic non-Spanish speakers were all selected based on the professional judgment of the principal and assistant principal.

Participants in the Study

The following table provides an overview of the participants’ teaching assignments, gender, race/ethnicity, language, years of experience in Grayhawk and total years of experience.

Participant Information

Name	Teaching Assignment/ Role	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Language other than English?	Language	Years Experience in District	Total Years Experience
Maria	Teacher SLP ELD	Female	Hispanic	Yes	Spanish	18	23
David	Teacher 03 ELD	Male	Hispanic	Yes	Spanish	7	7
Laura	Teacher 04 ELD	Female	Hispanic	No	n/a	18	18
Kate	Teacher K PK	Female	Hispanic	No	n/a	15	15
Lisa	Teacher SLP ELD	Female	White	Yes	Spanish	3	5
Carolina	Teacher 04 ELD	Female	White	Yes	Spanish	17	20
Nancy	Teacher 05	Female	White	No	n/a	3	6
Abby	Teacher 01	Female	White	No	n/a	1	6

The teachers selected for the study represented an acceptable cross-section of the larger population of teachers at Ranger. Two bilingual speech teachers, one third grade ELD teacher, one pre-kindergarten teacher, one first grade teacher, one fifth grade teacher, one fourth grade ELD teacher and one second grade ELD teacher were chosen as the final sample for this study. The sample did not include kindergarten or special area teachers.

Upon selecting teachers for the study all teachers in table 1 completed a brief language survey. The language survey was created as a self-reported assessment of the participant’s level of language proficiency. The survey was given to the eight teacher participants prior to conducting interviews. Results from the survey appear following table.

Language Survey

Participant Pseudonym	Growing up, was English your primary language? Y/N	If no, what was your home language? e?	Do you speak a language other than English? Y/N	What language?	Describe your current language ability.	Do you utilize the language above to communicate with students, staff or parents? Y/N
Maria	No	Spanish	Yes	Spanish	Fluent speaking, reading and writing	Yes
David	No	Spanish	Yes	Spanish	Fluent speaking, very good reading and writing	Yes
Laura	No	Spanish	Yes	Spanish	Beginning level, took a few courses	No

Kate	No	Spanish	Yes	Spanish	in college but have forgotten most of it Basic words, conversation	No
Lisa	Yes	n/a	Yes	Spanish	Proficient speaking, reading and writing	Yes
Carolina	Yes	n/a	Yes	Spanish	Spanish proficient, speaking	Yes
Nancy	Yes	n/a	No	n/a	3 years of High School Spanish, one year of college	No
Abby	Yes	n/a	No	n/a	French Have taken Spanish classes, understand a limited amount	No

After completing the language survey, teachers were then interviewed and observed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and observations were described with field notes and through collection of artifacts.

The Teacher Interview

The in-depth, session interviews consisted of a three part interview structure, a method suggested by Seidman (2006), which builds a relationship with the participant and gathers the most useful data for qualitative investigation. Three interviews per

participant were conducted as recommended by Seidman with a total length of ninety minutes for the three interviews. The first interview includes gathering information on the life history of the participant. By design the participant will respond to a series of questions focused on the background and previous professional and personal experiences of the participant. The second interview focuses on eliciting the details of the lived experiences. Here, participants are asked about what they do in their classrooms as a method to reconstruct their lived experience, practice and actions in the field.

The final interview provides a reflection on the meaning the participant attaches to the experiences. Seidman suggests the third interview be the point wherein the participant makes both intellectual and emotional connections to their practice and meaning of their lived experience in the field.

Lesson Observations

Upon completing the first interview, participants were observed for one lesson which lasted approximately one hour. During this time field notes and observations were used to document the classroom observation. The observation was purposively placed after the first interview as the relationship between me and the participant was previously established and served as an adequate method of observing the teacher's experience in the field prior to the teacher sharing her/his lived experience in the field. During this observations on the general classroom environment to include the physical makeup of the classroom (student work and news posted on walls, seating charts, sections of the classroom which supported the general organization and procedures) and the method of

instruction delivered by the teacher (via lesson plan, objectives, assessment and questioning) were observed. The lesson observation proved valuable as it served as a link between the first interview wherein the participant shared her/his teaching philosophy, professional and personal background to the second interview where she/he shared her/his actual experience in the classroom.

Potential Advantages and Limitations of this Approach

All of the data collected in this study is qualitative in nature. The potential drawback inherent to any such data collection is the possibility that the data may prove too varied, the researcher being left unable to draw conclusive thematic evidence from interviews. The interview tool was created so as to avoid this potential issue as much as possible, allowing for participants to directly express their experiences and personal findings while directing the questions to the theoretical framework for the study.

Role of the Researcher and its Limitations

Conceivably, my position as a staff member of the District may have produced some limitations to the data set. It is possible that the individuals I interviewed may not have been entirely comfortable providing their actual thoughts and opinions. They may not have wanted to appear under qualified or perceived as having low support for the school when answering questions from the interviews. Some individuals may also have provided answers or responses that they believed aligned with what the researcher wanted to hear, trying to please the interviewer and appear helpful. While all interview questions were crafted to best minimize most of these issues, they remain real world factors which must be kept in mind while conducting such research.

Further, it is also understood that there is the ubiquitous potential for the interviewing relationship to be unbalanced, even if just initially, based on the perception of preconceived social groupings by either party to the interview. Seidman notes in his work on interviews that the simple fact of my being male and my status as an administrator may incite pressure for proposed interviewees. Aware of these potential pitfalls, the study was structured to incorporate Seidman's three interview approach to interviewing subjects, to mitigate these hazards as much as possible. As Seidman notes, the time commitment shown by the researcher in returning to interview the participant three separate times creates an environment in which "an interviewer has the opportunity to demonstrate respect, thoughtfulness, and interest in that individual, all of which can work toward ameliorating skepticism" (2006: 100).

Data Analysis

The findings and results are presented by defining the six themes of culturally responsive pedagogy, these six themes subsequently being further divided into sub themes. Data was then coded to the subthemes as identified in the teacher interviews. The results are further analyzed as they relate to the research questions for the study.

The data from the interviews and surveys was analyzed in accordance with Seidman's approach to interviews as a three part structure (2006). Interpretation follows several types of questions (as listed by Seidman) with an emphasis on identifying patterns and connections. Additionally, themes that were not specifically identified in the literature review but emerged from the data at Ranger are also identified. Further discussion of the sampled individuals in the study includes teacher's language and self-

identified race as well as the individual teacher’s role at Ranger. Through the findings and results, I explore the findings as they relate to the identified themes in Chapter 2 under the main theme CRP categories:

- 1) Liberation
- 2) Validation
- 3) Empowerment
- 4) Multidimensional
- 5) Comprehensive
- 6) Transformative

Systematic methods and coding schemes were utilized to categorize and interpret the data. Finally, there is an accounting of themes that, though not aligned with specific categories from the literature review, I identified through cross categorization of data and observations as they emerged through data collection and analysis.

Keywords were identified and positioned into theme and subtheme categories which aligned with the six main themes from the literature review. The following table illustrates which key words were linked most with a single theme based on context and meaning.

Keyword Table

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Sub theme</i>	<i>Coding</i>	<i>Keywords</i>
Liberating	Freeing students as	1	control, chance, power,

	individuals		survival, exposure,
	No truth is permanent	2	tradition, history,
	Non mainstream ways	3	connection, comfort,
	of teaching and learning		pride, assumption
	Making authentic	4	
	cultural knowledge		
	accessible		
Validating	Student prior	5	prior knowledge, value,
	experience		ability, sensitivity,
	Student personal	6	survival, urban, world,
	disposition		population, connection,
	Family/home	7	respect, family,
	connections		empathy, whole new
	Classroom literature	8	world, share
	Everyday life concepts	9	
	Economics,	10	
	employment, consumer		
	habits of Hispanic		
	students		
Empowerment	Student to succeed for	11	responsibility, transfer,
	self		student facilitation,
	Self-regulatory learners	12	engagement,

Multidimensional	Student initiative	13	connection, pride,
	Student led activities	14	difference, real life
	Teacher as facilitator	15	application, motivation, buy-in, participation,
	Curriculum	16	application,
	Lesson plans	17	observation, frequent
	Performance	18	assessment,
	Assessments		modification,
	Student centered instruction	19	adjustment, differentiation,
	Cross curriculum development	20	resources, cross curricular, student data, curriculum, reflective, connection, instructional strategies, constructivism, collaboration,
	Comprehensive	Academic excellence	21
Cultural excellence		22	working together,
High Expectations		23	involvement, Ranger 5,
Student-teacher		24	student data, reflective,

Transformative	relationships		celebration, ceremony,
	Classroom as an	25	connection,
	extended family		relationships, pride,
	Every individual	26	balance, expectation,
	contributes to the whole		
	School wide systems	27	community,
	School Policy	28	involvement, parent
	Parent Involvement	29	education, systems,
	Community	30	training, proactive,
Involvement		reactive, support,	
School Administration	31	purpose, community	
		school, reflective,	
		connection,	
		communication,	
		partnership,	

Individual teacher interviews were first analyzed by completing a thorough read of transcriptions and highlighting keywords associated with the six themes and sub themes of culturally responsive practice. Keywords were chosen from the interviews and applied to each theme based on relevance and frequency. These keywords served as the coding mechanism from which to apply larger portions of text to each theme. Teachers were then analyzed in groups according to their cell and all data were configured and

linked to the themes and subthemes derived from the six main themes of the theoretical framework for CRP: Liberation, Validation, Empowerment, Multidimensional, Comprehensive and Transformative.

CHAPTER 4:
FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This section follows the dimensions of the sampling diagram (language and culture) to organize and present the findings.

First, I present the results for groups within the sampling frame, to illuminate the similarities and differences among teachers with similar language and cultural characteristics.

Sampling Frame

	Spanish Speaker	Non Spanish Speaker
Hispanic Teacher	Maria and David	Laura and Kate
NON-Hispanic Teacher	Lisa and Carolina	Nancy and Abby

Second, I present the results of an analysis across cell dyads to illustrate similarities and differences among teachers with different language and cultural characteristics. Finally, I discuss the macro themes, defined as those themes that occurred in three or more cells.

Each pair of teachers possessing similar cultural and language characteristics were purposively grouped and studied together. The groups of two were then systematically analyzed and distilled to form generalizations, examples and exceptions as they associated with culturally responsive practices. Following this, the groups were cross analyzed as dyadic patterns emerged within the sample. At this point, generalizations,

examples and exceptions were further analyzed when themes cut across more than one cell.

Finally, some themes cut across more than two groups. I note these as macro themes. A progression of generalizations, examples and exceptions are further analyzed based on these recurrent themes.

Non-Hispanic/ Non Spanish Speaker: Nancy's Story

Nancy, a third year teacher, teaches fifth grade at Ranger ES. Nancy earned her undergraduate degree in political science and English from Vanderbilt University. She originally wanted to become a lawyer after college but remarked, "I was not going to be Perry Mason".

Inspired by her own fourth grade teacher whom she admired greatly, Nancy decided to enter the field of education. She enrolled into a master's program for her elementary education degree, however, during this time, she moved to Tennessee with her husband who was a minister. Her family subsequently moved several times to support their work in ministry. Still driven to teach, however, she began teaching classes in the church in 1985. Additionally, Nancy is also an accomplished musician and played in the church as well as teaching religious education classes.

Nancy first became certified to substitute teach in Indiana. She taught in a number of content areas across the spectrum of grades K-12 and experienced the school system through the lens of a parent as well with children of her own that attended public schools. To continue ministry with her husband, she then moved from Indiana to

Arizona. After five years helping establish the family ministry, she wanted to make a change and pursue teaching full time.

Nancy enrolled with a local community college and earned her post-bachelors certificate in 2008. At this time Ranger had a position open for fifth grade. She applied and taught for one year. Given the reduction of school budgets at this time (across the state of Arizona) many schools, Ranger included, were forced into giving reduction in force (RIF) paperwork to teachers, effectively scaling back on staffing. Nancy received reduction in force paperwork after the first year. The principal then called her back one week into the school year to offer her a position; Ranger simply had too many students in the third grade. Subsequently, Nancy taught third grade her second year. Her third year found her assigned back to the fifth grade where she originally started. She noted that she anticipates that she will be moved to fourth grade the next year.

Nancy's teaching philosophy derives directly from her desire to become a teacher from early on. She noted that the substitute teaching she did early on simply was not enough to satisfy her drive towards teaching. Nancy believes that 'you can't build a relationship with the kids in the same way' as a substitute teacher the way that a classroom teacher can. Nancy noted the pictures of her kids and their names on her classroom door as an example. Part of Nancy's teaching philosophy also stems from her extensive work with children of varied socioeconomic background and noted that she "aches for kids in this [Ranger] demographic". She states she has a strong desire to "capitalize on the potential" that exists at schools like Ranger and sees a great deal of potential that is not being realized nor recognized in a broader context. She wants every

student to learn the joy of learning as she has through the efforts of teachers in her own life.

Non-Hispanic/ Non Spanish Speaker: Abby's Story

Abby is a sixth year teacher currently teaching first grade at Ranger. This was Abby's first year at Ranger. Native to Arizona, she completed her K-12 education in the state public educational system. Upon entering college, she enrolled as an education major. She completed her four year undergraduate degree in education at Arizona State University.

In her younger years, Abby spent a great deal of time working as a babysitter. For some time she believed that nursing was going to be her career path. She began a psychology degree before then turning to nursing before finally finding her way to a major in education. Abby graduated from Arizona State University six years ago after completing a year and a half teacher apprentice program through ASU.

Abby completed her apprenticeship and student teaching in a neighboring school District. She subsequently left her mentor District to take a job as a 2nd grade ELD teacher in a new District. She taught for five years in her previous school District wherein she was recognized by a state philanthropic organization as an outstanding teacher and won a high profile award. The awarding of this status not only honors extraordinary teachers in the state, but also enjoins the recipients to endeavor to mentor high potential student teachers. Teachers are selected for the merits of their outstanding student achievement in high need schools and their ability to mentor new teachers. Receipt of this commendation also comes with the recommendation that the recipient work as a part

of the school's observation team. Since 2004, only 132 exemplary teachers, including Abby, have won this award in the state of Arizona.

(<http://www.rodela.org/initiatives/teacher-initiative>)

As a student teacher Abby noted that she experienced both celebrations and opportunities. She was provided with numerous chances during this time to step up and run the class on her own as a student teacher. Due to her apprentice teacher frequently being absent, Abby remarked that she was given a great deal of ownership over the classroom. She felt very fortunate to have secured her first teaching post and for the opportunity to remain in the field for five years. Abby's mentor school was similar to Ranger. The schools were both Title I schools and were comprised of a large percentage of ELL and Hispanic students. Indeed, she noted that she worked with an even higher population of ELL students during her first apprenticeship than at Ranger. Abby is planning on returning to Ranger next year to teach first grade.

Liberation Practices

Nancy's pedagogical philosophy is greatly informed by the various demographics of students and children that she has served over her time in ministry education and as a public school teacher. After many years in the field, Nancy noted "I ache for kids in this demographic". Nancy has utilized this empathy as a way to connect with the kids, allowing her to recognize and encourage their personal potential in the context of their cultural experience. Nancy noted that she believes in the institution of the school itself as "a primary vehicle in the efforts to promote and advance Hispanic students. I want to capitalize on this potential," she notes. "I see a lot of potential that is not being realized

and not being recognized with kids in this demographic,” this reported as core to her experience and teaching philosophy. This was Nancy’s call to duty throughout her discussions on her teaching philosophy; her own rally cry that kept her engaged and motivated. In discussing one of her students, Francisco, she noted that he was exemplary of many students she served in that “he is very bright and has all the potential in the world I just hope he gets the right chances in life - I want to give him the chance.” Though important in its own right, this prospective of liberation compelled Nancy strongly towards the implementation of comprehensive and multidimensional practices.

Abby and Nancy are similar in terms of how they connected with their students in that they both, though not Spanish speakers, provided activities to get to know the language and culture of their students. In general, they were able to make authentic cultural knowledge accessible by structuring activities (such as weekend report updates) wherein students share their personal narratives of birthdays, celebrations and cultural festivities in the home. “This helps me get to know my students do outside of school” states Abby. They both reported that in making this knowledge “accessible” to all of their students, they provided an important avenue for students to learn about one another as individuals and to gain an appreciation for each other’s cultures. This, Nancy and Abby both reported, gave their students a sense of pride in who they were and in their culture and, in general, allowed students to feel like they could be themselves in their classroom. Abby finds that by making this knowledge accessible for everyone in her class, including herself as the teacher, she “makes kids feel like they are free to be themselves in [my] room.” Neither Nancy nor Abby addressed how the linguistic and

cultural mismatch between themselves and their students impacted their ability to engage behaviors associated with liberation practices for their students.

Validating Practices

Given that their students speak Spanish and are predominately Hispanic, Nancy and Abby both got to know the prior experiences of their students to provide a context for teaching and learning. For example, Nancy reported that when she taught third grade, many of the students would “leave the room and immediately begin speaking in Spanish.” As exemplified by her fifth graders over the course of their studies at Ranger, this year she notes they were able to speak more English in general as their fluency increased with time. She reported that, “their English is pretty good for the most part however I need to be cognizant that many of my kids are bilingual and that many still struggle with the English language.” Abby relies on the language background of her students, as exemplified by her discussion of a recent activity that she incorporated in her classroom for Mother’s Day. As the students’ moms spoke only Spanish, many of her students wanted to write Mother’s Day cards to their moms in Spanish. Knowing the linguistic context for her families, she reported “it is important to understanding my children, their needs and their interests.” Abby further discusses that as part of getting to know her students and families she learns about various cultural festivities celebrated in the home and encourages students to share in class the narrative of those cultural activities that are relevant to who they are. In discussing cultural activities Abby reports “students will discuss birthdays and parties like cinco de mayo they have at home” She continues, “recognizing where my students come from, their home life and what they do

with their family allow them to make connections to one another and with me” Abby notes.

Nancy and Abby also report that getting to know certain family dispositions (and how they in turn relate to school are important and inform classroom instruction. Despite this, however, they both reported themselves limited in this area as “parent’s expectations of school really have more to do with their [child’s] behavior – [parents] when we sit down for conferences really want to know if their children are being good.” Given the language and cultural divides between parents and teacher, it can be noted that the parent may not feel entirely comfortable or knowledgeable in the navigation of conversations having to do with grades and academic performance at school. For both Nancy and Abby, not being able to make this more nuanced and deeper connection with their parents (a direct result of not being able to speak with their parents in a common language) resulted in a lack of depth when discussing behaviors associated with validation. For example, when asked if it would be helpful to speak Spanish to make these deeper connections, Abby notes “it would be extremely helpful because then I think we might get to know each other even more and they would feel more comfortable with me as their teacher.” Abby reports that she has her newsletters translated and when she hosts parent teacher conferences she always utilizes Rosanna, the school’s community specialist and parent liaison, because as she states “I want them to know that I respect them and their language.” It is important to note the role of Rosanna for teachers like Nancy and Abby at Ranger. Rosanna is a full time specialist at Ranger and coordinates all Spanish

communication to parents (both written and oral). In this instance Abby remarked on her newsletters being translated by Rosanna, a common practice among Ranger teachers.

Nancy also noted that with a number of ELL students and families that she services translations are available. “Rosanna, our community specialist, works to translate everything that goes home for our parents and she is an amazing resource for Ranger.” Nancy however continues, “getting the number of translations needed sent home, can be a challenge.” Abby also noted her dependency on Rosanna as a “resource” to make the family/home connection and support the home language through parent conferences.

Nancy and Abby both expressed a high degree of understanding and empathy for the home lives of their students when discussing the employment scenarios many families are faced with. Abby and Nancy both report on “single moms” and other members of student’s families who work “multiple jobs” to support the household. By way of example, this statement is supported with the following quotes. “Parents are very busy, but many still do participate at school events” stated Abby, “I have one mom who works at Burger King and I think another job full time and is not always home to support their child.” Nancy notes similar family circumstances. Having recently structured an activity wherein her students wrote letters to their parents about how they performed on a recent assessment, Nancy learned of a new divorce situation in her classroom as Ava, her fifth grade student, was only writing to her dad. “You learn a lot when you do stuff like this” notes Nancy. Given the structure of the family unit for many Ranger students, both Nancy and Abby remark how many of their Hispanic students are quite responsible and

take on “mama bear” roles for other students in their class. Abby notes that one student named Jessica, a first grader in her class “is very eager to help and really makes my class feel like a family—everyone is nice to Jessica and everyone respects her – she always wants to help me and the other students.” Nancy discusses a similar child, Ana, who is the oldest of six children in her family. “She has a lot of responsibility at home but at school she struggles with her homework and grades” stated Nancy.

It is evident that making these connections to home in general supported both Nancy and Abby in their efforts to better understand their Hispanic learners. Further, having become learners themselves through their interactions with students and parents at parent teacher conferences, classroom discussions with their students and implementation of various team building activities helped them to learn the varied backgrounds of their families and further supports their connection with Hispanic students. Abby notes that her classroom “promotes respect for all of my kids” by providing a place where students “have the opportunity to talk about their culture.” She reports “I notice at outings or family nights whatever it might be that our Hispanic families and students often stick together, speaking Spanish together and they have that culture and they have found within Ranger.” Abby further states “it is difficult for me to establish that relationship with the families and students due to not being able to directly communicate with the parent.” Abby and Nancy were learners themselves as they navigated their interactions with parents and students. This helped them learn the varied backgrounds of their families and further supported them to make deeper connections with their Hispanic students over time.

Empowerment

“I want every one of my kids to discover the joy of learning and continue to grow on their own.” Nancy’s teaching philosophy relied on enabling students to succeed. Both Nancy and Abby were consistent in their overall goals for their students which was evident in their desire to teach their students how to become self-regulatory learners. Both shared, as a core aspect of their philosophy that building this within their students was paramount to their students’ success in this year and beyond.

In discussing student facilitation, whereby students are more responsible for their learning, Nancy notes “my goal is to pass off more to my students in terms of what they are doing –I know that when I do it sticks with them for the long term, I really want to do more hands on stuff too where they are learning and discovering on their own.” She remarked, “When I see other teachers do it it’s powerful.” She also notes, however, feeling hampered in her implementation of student facilitation by the language and cultural divide with her students. Noting “over half of the students speak Spanish”, Nancy reported worrying that her students were not fully accessing the content due to their language ability. “Sometimes I look out there and many of my kids are quiet, I think --are they getting it?” Taking these pedagogical risks to empower students may come over time for Nancy and her students as they navigate varied levels of English language ability. In the classroom observation conducted with Abby, it was evident that her level of student facilitation is similar to Nancy’s in that their lessons are both more geared towards direct instruction and teacher-led (versus facilitated) activities. “You basically saw a typical daily routine” she remarked. In a discussion on student

facilitation she reported “kids will come up and do daily calendar, or read poems and they always want to be the pointer instead of me.” In general, the reports and observations suggest a primarily teacher led learning environment finding the non-Hispanic, non-Spanish speaking teacher limited to the depth they are able to create culturally relevant, student initiated and empowered learning environments.

Multidimensional

At the time that this study was completed, Ranger was concluding the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards test and, as noted by Nancy, many teachers found themselves with more time to focus on science and social studies. In discussions on multidimensional practice with Nancy and Abby, it should be noted that the curriculum, methods of teaching and general classroom activities are highly informed by the state standards for English language arts and mathematics. This leaves a lack of presence for teacher behaviors associated with ‘non-mainstream ways of teaching’ in general as discussed in the literature on CRP engagement. Further, the current state standards which address culture fall primarily under social studies, a content area not assessed by the standardized testing and therefore given little time in the instructional day prior to the administration of the test. Conversations related to multidimensional practice, curriculum and lesson plans assessment were often centered around the AIMS test (and various benchmark assessment data), even when discussing teaching and learning in general. This does not suggest that the teaching practices themselves were not effective, rather it suggests that more teachers behaviors reported in general aligned with standards, assessment and accountability.

An exception to the generalization on standardized practices comes from a compelling piece of multidimensional curriculum recently designed by Nancy on the book Esperanza Rising by Joe Barriaga. This being the first year of implementation, Nancy was overjoyed with the results. “I will teach this every year from now on,” she states. “This was very powerful, there was a great deal of Spanish in the book as well, I would try to read it and the students would help me – I love this give and take!” Additionally, while reading the book to and with her students, she utilized a bilingual reading volunteer. The volunteer mentioned here was coordinated with District and broader community support and was a member of the community who came in and read to students during school time. While Nancy’s volunteer was in the classroom one day, turned out that, through lucky coincidence, she happened to be the wife of author Joe Barriaga. Mr. Barriaga is a prolific Hispanic author and with the help of her volunteer and Rosanna, Nancy was able to coordinate a classroom visit by Mr. Barriaga. It was reported a very successful visit wherein the author shared his own narrative and signed copies of work for all of Nancy’s students.

This use of classroom literature to initiate a personal conversation about Hispanic culture with her students clearly forged a connection between Nancy and her students. Moreover, Nancy’s ownership of her curriculum allowed for a mid-course adjustment to facilitate this utilization of the unexpected and rich resource of the community connection she stumbled upon.

During observations of Abby in the classroom, it was found that the students, being in first grade, needed far more guidance from the teacher to ensure general class

management, learning and instruction. Given the age level of her students, Abby notes that she utilized student language and cultural themes whenever she could in those activities having more to do with classroom duties and procedures. For example, the presence of having students act as the name caller during certain morning routines or having students guide smart board activities, she reported allowed for students being “more comfortable because it’s coming from the students” which could be generalized into the penetration of comfortable linguistic (and, at time, cultural) tones into the classroom environment that Abby, herself, could not provide given that her own students were predominately Hispanic. This in general, Abby notes, is important as her students begin to learn the structure and routine of school in “familiar tones”. That said, Abby does not report to draw upon the students’ language and cultures in content-oriented activities.

Comprehensive

Gay (2002) asserts that culturally responsive teachers are comprehensive in their approach, meaning that they strive for both academic excellence and cultural excellence in their students. Comprehensive teachers, in addition, build strong relationships with their learners that go beyond the content they teach; they often view their classrooms as extended families, wherein every individual contributes to the whole. While Nancy and Abby both encouraged academic excellence (as is evident in their practices associated with using student data to increase academic achievement and their standards based curriculum and instruction—practices that are greatly valued systemically at Ranger), both teachers reported, however, they must constantly employ the broader school

resources in their efforts to incorporate culture and language in the curriculum. As a result, both teachers find they are much stronger at creating a comprehensive learning environment through the constructs of student/teacher relationships and school wide resources such as Rosanna. This was noted on observation of their classrooms that for both Nancy and Abby the bonds they have created with their Hispanic learners are very important to them and their students. These bonds, once again, are not explicitly crafted through instructional material per say, but rather through the singular efforts of these teachers to use the instructional interaction as an avenue to knowing each of their students on a personal level. Nancy reports “subbing was not enough; I couldn’t build relationships with the kids the same way – or the way that I wanted to”. She exhibits, with no small amount of pride, pictures of her students on her classroom door which were positioned such that they are the first and last things one sees upon entering or exiting her classroom and that serve as metaphorical “bookends” for the entire classroom experience. Her room was also adorned throughout with other pictures of her students, which served as an omnipresent and continuous theme of connection both amongst the students themselves and with her as the teacher. Abby’s classroom environment is similarly rich with pictures of current students decorating the walls. This ubiquitous visual recognition of the importance of the student/teacher relationship assisted to further strengthen these key relationships.

Nancy and Abby also both reported that building a comprehensive relationship with their students through discovering and encouraging their interests outside of school (such as sports activities or cultural celebrations) is “respectful and important to building

a classroom community,” as Nancy observes. “If my kids play soccer, dance, like to color or have siblings, I want to know--building these relationships with my kids outside of the regular school day is important,” Abby offers in a similar vein.

At the time that this study was conducted, Nancy was working on a science unit having to do with energy efficiency. Because of her relationship with a particular student and the understanding of his home life, Nancy bemusedly observed that she was able to witness “a light bulb moment” (literally) for one of her students named Carlos. Given the incredible economic pressure this student felt at home and the resultant importance of conservation of resources (financial and otherwise) with which he was imbued, Nancy found she was truly able to create a meaningful connection for Carlos and promote academic excellence within his home. “He was so excited to take the energy efficient light bulb home to make his home more energy efficient,” she told. She remarked that students saw “more of a connection” when they were able to apply school to concepts in the home and that she was more readily able to facilitate student teacher relationships in teaching and learning moments such as this.

Transformative

Nancy and Abby related examples of the ways in which Ranger’s policy, systems, parents, the community as well as the school administration’s guidance played a role in their teaching. These school wide approaches also provided context for the culturally responsive practice that occurred at the school in which both teachers participated. All participants discussed the school wide teacher appreciation lunch at which the members of the school PTO, many of whom are Hispanic, made a Mexican food lunch for all of

the teachers during the week. Further examples from Nancy and Abby are the school's community specialist, Rosanna, the Ranger 5 behavior system, the school safety committee, the Ranger parent teacher organization, Ranger as an open enrollment school (creating what Nancy notes as a "community school") and in general the support from the principal and assistant principal with both Nancy and Abby reported was very strong. It is important to note, however, that Nancy and Abby did not provide a single example of transformative practices originating with themselves, but rather all examples cited by them arise directly from a systemic, school wide level.

Non-Hispanic/ Spanish Speaker: Lisa's Story

Lisa is a fifth year teacher and has served as a speech teacher for three years at Ranger. Lisa grew up in Seattle, Washington and completed her K-16 education in Seattle as well. For her graduate work, she then moved to Arizona and completed her degree in speech and language pathology through Arizona State University. Lisa went into speech pathology after speaking with her advisor in college. She completed a career interest survey and was identified as being a strong candidate in the field of speech and hearing. She enrolled into an undergraduate class for speech and hearing and remarks, "I fell in love with it". For her masters work at Arizona State she specialized in bilingual education. She relates that she had spoken Spanish and thought that it would be a useful certificate to have in particular working in Arizona schools.

Lisa learned Spanish through a Spanish immersion program through the Seattle public schools. Her elementary school had a full Spanish immersion program that

continued into middle school. She effectively learned Spanish through this experience and continued with the language into high school and college.

She is very positive about Ranger and Ranger students stating they are “awesome to work with” and also notes, “I have learned a lot about that they don’t teach you in university at Ranger”.

Non-Hispanic/ Spanish Speaker: Carolina’s Story

Carolina has been a teacher for 20 years and Carolina currently teaches 2nd Grade ELD. Carolina started her year at Ranger, however was recently transferred to a nearby elementary school in the District. Through the interview Carolina shared information on her time at Ranger, some of which overlapped into her new role at her transfer school.

Carolina is originally from San Francisco, California. Growing up, Carolina was a camp counselor and performed in shows and taught music previous to beginning her professional career in real estate development and sales. She moved to the valley in 1984 for a leasing opportunity. While she loved the business world, she had an even stronger passion that drove her to work with students. The business world brought her to a colleague in the District where she first began to teach. Carolina went for her post baccalaureate degree and earned her master’s in education. She completed her student teaching in a nearby District and was hired in the District shortly thereafter. Carolina has been with the District for 17 years in 11 schools and her career began at the school to which she has just returned. Carolina summarizes with, “It’s been a wild ride”. She notes that she is still using her easel from twenty years ago in her room today.

She discusses her time when she first began as a teacher. “These were before the days of prescribed curriculum --I had my kids building submarines, full size submarines in science class-- we did a lot of cool things.”

Liberation Practices

Though from different cultural backgrounds, Carolina and Lisa both share a common language with the primarily Hispanic, Spanish speaking students they service. Both teachers, non-Hispanic, speak Spanish fluently and report their frequent use of the Spanish language with their students to quickly overcome cultural differences and build relationships with both students and families. Lisa and Carolina both separately identified their use of Spanish as an entry point to “getting to know students” and their student’s cultures. “Knowing the language helps build relationships quickly” says Carolina. “When my students know that I speak Spanish, it builds a connection that some teachers cannot get to” echoed Lisa. Having the language readily accessible, although they did not share the ethnic background of the majority of students they serviced, allowed them to “work with students and families more in depth”. These connections, in their turn, proved to be liberating to Ranger students and families.

Validating Practices

In sharing the language, both Carolina and Lisa were able to tap into student prior experiences and student/family personal dispositions. This was evident in that they both share detailed and compassionate knowledge of the experiences both parents and students related at school. During this study’s discussions, Carolina enumerated the many hardships parents faced (in particular Hispanic parents) with regards to employment and

home life. Carolina believes that many teachers error in mistakenly “assuming a higher degree of background knowledge” in their students and that skills are developed and/or present that are not necessarily there. Teachers, she reports, “don’t often, or aren’t able to, learn what happens outside of the school day – this is a big part of their life”. Active and ongoing recognition of these circumstances, in both their positive and negative aspects, allows Carolina to validate the cultural experiences of her Hispanic students.

Lisa demonstrated her understanding of this situation in much the same way. Lisa reported that getting to know her Hispanic students on a non-academic level and getting to know their families in depth was integral to understanding their performance at school. She also found that her fluency in Spanish gave her ready access to these narratives that she could then employ to her students’ benefit through validating them as learners. In a discussion on this, Lisa reports a story of a boy, Manuel, who came just this year from Mexico and received speech services at the school. Lisa reported that over the course of this year, she has learned quite a bit about Manuel’s family through phone calls and parent meetings conducted in Spanish. “Manuel’s family came to Arizona to earn an education” she says. As Lisa got to know Manuel’s family she reports “I get to know how they arrived to Arizona, how many brothers and sisters they have and how his family understands school and what the family expects of the school and of Manuel. Lisa works one on one with Manuel to support him with the phonetics and structure of English. Carolina and Lisa both reported the power of the parental support that they are able to garner through their ready use of their Spanish skills, the implementation of which is an ongoing act of linguistic validation to the families they serve.

Empowerment

Carolina and Lisa employed similar strategies designed to guide students towards becoming self-regulated learners, and used varied approaches to student facilitation to forge these connections. This is evident in a discussion with Carolina on student facilitation wherein she identified the physical environment of her room as being an important vehicle for driving student empowerment and ownership. “Getting students up and moving and leading is what this is all about”. The importance of honoring student’s ideas and getting feedback from students on their learning is evident throughout these observations of Carolina’s work in the classroom. For instance, the school was conducting a fundraiser at the time of my observation. Recognizing how excited her students were about this fundraiser and how it keyed into a broader excitement around entrepreneurship, Carolina’s lesson was structured so as to turn this excitement into a math activity with her kids. While answering questions themed around the fundraiser item, she had them come to the board and work in teams, employing a bilingual, collaborative structure to do so. This resulted in a successful, student guided and initiated mini-math lesson built around the broader school activity of the fundraiser which occurred in a still broader language framework as all of her students were ELL students. In the classroom observation it was readily evident that Carolina was comfortable with modifying lessons quickly to support the interests of her students by making them linguistically and culturally relevant.

Lisa approached the problem of student ownership with similar strategies, allowing her students to become the leader-facilitators of their own learning. In general, I observed students who felt comfortable and safe when working with Lisa because of her shared language skills; this comfort, in turn, allowed students a safe environment in which to explore the themes of self-empowerment. This was abundantly evident in direct observations of Lisa's interactions with her kids as she endeavors to support their speech needs and empower them in their own linguistic futures. In her classroom, students are surrounded by other students with varying degrees of speech proficiency and needs. She turns this to an asset, however, as she built individual ownership for learning through allowing and encouraging students to learn with and from each other during various group activities. Lisa reports this approach allows her learners to "become self-paced – self guided over time." Lisa often found that as students became self-regulated and in charge of their own learning, they were empowered to become their own best advocates. She gives the example of a family who refused additional services for first reading and writing, and then speech, for their daughter. Despite the lack of support in seeking additional help, Lisa reports that "the daughter acted as her own advocate and sought additional services." She continued to report, "she comes from a family who emigrated from Mexico. And the family has four girls and they all know that their parents brought them here so that they could learn. And all four girls all have various disabilities in terms of learning or language, the student recognizes her disability but doesn't let it hold her back and she just received a scholarship for summer school that she applied for. She isn't afraid to ask for help despite the difficulty she has asking for it. I think she's an

ideal example of the student that we seek.” It is also an ideal example of a student who has become empowered given Lisa’s efforts to incorporate and capitalize on her strength in turn allowing the student to be her own best advocate.

Multidimensional

Gay posits that CRP teachers are able to make connections with students’ cultures through curriculum and, more specifically, through mindful lesson planning. This can also be found as a theme throughout a study of performance assessments and classroom literature which support learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. To this end, Lisa reported at length on the “Dreams” career education unit that she has been working on with her students. The students began by brainstorming different jobs and careers that they wanted to do when they became adults. Students came up with their list of dream jobs. These jobs ranged widely reported Lisa, including “work in the fields of zoo keeping, the grocery store, TV and Radio broadcasting, farming, police and fire.” Conversations with Lisa echoed of Moll’s work, in as much as those career histories and career interests identified in the self-directed portion of this exercise to become a central focal point to better understanding Hispanic youth as learners. In recognition of this, Lisa and her team developed speech units built around her Hispanic student identified career paths. The exciting culmination of this unit for her Hispanic students was a special end of year field trip to a few of the job locations in which they had expressed interest. Lisa reported with pride that the students were very excited by this in general and could not wait to visit the farm, in particular, as many students had strong cultural and familial ties to agriculture in their recent histories.

Additionally, another of this year's units strongly associated with celebration of culture and diversity was built around a book called Throw your tooth on the Roof. "It talks about what kids all around the world do with their teeth when they lose them. They share stories about what they do in their own culture and read about other cultures that they had no idea about." Lisa reported that students were very engaged with this book and unit, finding the opportunity to express their own cultural modes very engaging.

Carolina shared a related example of culturally responsive curriculum she employed during her time at the middle school level. She co-taught a class on character education to middle school students, grades 7-8. Focusing on a continuous theme of cultural relevancy to her Hispanic student population, she reported the overall effect was very successful. "During this time we wrote a lot of amazing curriculum having to do with child slavery – community service learning projects, building gardens – it was really powerful what we were able to do" Carolina remarked. "These were before the days of prescribed curriculum," she further notes, citing the continued evolution of the curriculum towards an ever more standards based one that does not allow for as much on the ground culturally relevant adaptation of the material. She reported this development "troubling" and shared that, as she has worked in many schools in the District over her tenure, "curriculum, the standards and the level of personal accountability have changed significantly" during her time in the classroom.

Comprehensive

Both teachers noted being at an advantage to communicate with students in English and Spanish regarding academic and non-academic related issues. Further, the

teachers reported the Spanish language to form a bridge which created strong teacher-student relationships that allowed them to go past content-related conversations to more fully serve their students.

Many of the interview reports are sprinkled with intimate details such as “his mom works at...” or “her mom works at...” details that inevitably lead to a longer conversation about ways in which to facilitate the families’ fuller participation in their children’s education. Lisa and Carolina independently noted the importance of literature being sent home in both languages to support this important partnership between home and school.

Lisa is further able to make in depth connections to family and home by serving as the interpreter for her families during conferences or IEP meetings. She further makes a point of building on this line of communication by reporting “I call them to invite them in for field trips or special events.” Arguing for the incredible importance of fuller parental involvement in the school, she reported that school is often “more structured” than any other life areas for many of her students and there is a significant “gap” between the level of structure provided at home and that more stringent structure the students find at school. With fuller parental participation, a two way dialogue is established that allowed not only the family life to inform the school environment but (and in this case, of the utmost importance) for the school environment to influence the structure of the home as well. It is interesting to note that while this theme was also prevalent and recurrent in discussions with Nancy and Abby, Lisa and Carolina find that, being Spanish speakers, they were better able to create and negotiate this partnership with families.

Transformative

Both Carolina and Lisa reported positively on school wide systems that supported Hispanic students and families in general. They cited translation services (Rosanna), the PTO and PBIS as examples. Lisa remarked, “On this campus I think different cultures are very much respected and over the past years they’ve really made an effort to include parents who don’t speak English into the parent teacher organization and all the activities that they have here.” It was apparent through discussions on the PTO that Ranger valued all the different cultures and just like the students learned from other students - the teachers learned from the parents in order to, in their turn; provide better instruction to their students.

Both Carolina and Lisa’s expectations on behavior and classroom management were derived directly from the school wide standards and procedures. In recognition of this, similar behavior charts, whereon students could visually see and monitor how they were doing by moving a clothespin up and down the chart ranging from good behavior to bad behavior, were evident in both environments. Expectations for student behavior in both settings were high, but, more importantly, they were consistent with those already established on the school wide level. This was noted during my lesson observations in both rooms as students were instructed to go up to the chart to adjust their clothespin to reflect their level of behavior at that given time.

Additionally, as almost all of her families come directly to her when they need something, Lisa recognized that it was very important that the school had structures in place that facilitated bilingual communication with the students’ families. On a personal

note, she reported how lucky she felt to be a nexus of bilingual communication. “It’s nice, most teachers need the language support to support – I’m the support!” she remarked. She noted that, in her role as the communicator between her parents and other teachers, even more opportunities were created to work with other teachers in the broader school setting as they serviced the same students. Lisa reports “it feels good being able to communicate for teachers to home” noting that she felt real fulfillment in this role of supporting teachers and making systemic connections for parents and the school.

Hispanic/ Non-Spanish Speaker: Laura’s Story

Laura currently teaches fourth grade at Ranger. She has been a teacher for 18 years, all of which have been spent within the District. Laura was born in Madrid, Spain and lived there for six years before her family left Spain to move to the United States. When Laura moved to Arizona, she started as a first grade student in Phoenix elementary. She can remember thinking it was going to be so great to take Spanish classes in the USA. She soon came to realize, with some disappointment, that her school at that time did not offer additional language classes. In Spain, she had attended a school where she learned English and had the option to learn numerous foreign languages. In sharp contrast, in the US she was only offered the opportunity to learn English. “That was a really strong memory for me.” She discusses how with her own daughters, she strongly encourages them to learn second languages.

Laura graduated from high school in the District and went to the local Community College. Subsequently, she transferred to Arizona State University and completed her degree in education. While at ASU, she completed her student teaching in the District as

a participant in a rotating student teaching program wherein every semester teachers were placed in different schools. During this time, Laura earned her ESL endorsement. She graduated from ASU in December and found it was difficult to find a position mid-year. She then enrolled and earned her master's degree.

The following fall, Laura obtained her first post in the District, where she has remained at her school teaching third grade for 12 years with the exception of one year during which she worked at the District level with the Read 180 program.

Currently, Laura serves as a reading specialist tasked with implementing reading intervention strategies for beginning and intermediate 3rd and 4th graders. Her work day consists of teaching 3rd and 4th graders using Read 180 and System 44 software among other language intervention strategies. Additionally, she also supports second grade students and teachers with general reading needs. Laura has served for an total of 18 years in education, in which time she has earned her national board certification- a process she reports to have very much enjoyed going through. "It was reaffirming to me that I made a good career choice".

Hispanic/ Non-Spanish Speaker: Kate's Story

A pre-kindergarten teacher at Ranger, Kate has 15 total years of experience as a teacher, all of which have been served with the District at Ranger. Kate is originally from Arizona and has been living in Arizona her whole life. As a child, family played a major role in her life. She grew up next to her aunts, uncles and grandmother and had dinner almost every day with her immediate and extended family. As a family, they attended church every Sunday. Her parents placed her in Catholic school at a very young

age. She subsequently moved in order to attend a Catholic middle school and then a Catholic high school. She attended junior college for two years before completing her degree in education in 1997. As her first position, she took a job as a teacher assistant in the District, a position she held for two years. “This inspired me to become a teacher”. As a result, she began her work at Ranger as a teacher in her own classroom and this year celebrated her 15th year at Ranger.

Kate identified her student teaching as an experience that was formative to her teaching philosophy. She notes that she is inherently constructivist in her approach to pedagogy. “If a child has an interest in ladybugs, I want to bring this interest out in the child”. Her mentor teacher was very good at this, Kate notes, and would create a unit themed on whatever the kids were interested in. “The kids were very involved. They would complete literature studies and the kids could pick the book that they wanted to read and we would develop entire units around that book. It was a very different time”.

Liberation Practices

Kate and Laura are both Hispanic teachers who know only limited Spanish. In terms of linguistic philosophy as it pertained to the classroom, both Kate and Laura were open to their students speaking Spanish and encourage them to maintain their Spanish language skills. Laura further adds the additional emphasis by noting that in the case of her own children she strived to help them grow up bilingual, just as the students she teaches. In sharing this fact about her parenting with her students, she exhibits behaviors associated with liberation. For her part, Kate noted that over half of her students spoke Spanish, a fact she attempted to address and utilize to an advantage in her classroom

structure. “I allow them to use the language with each other; it helps them feel more comfortable”. Being from Spain, Laura also endeavored to make her own cultural background accessible and relevant to her students by sharing stories on her transition from Spain to the United States. Hispanic teacher reports on their personal narrative served as a gateway for students to reflect on their own transitions to the United States and as a result the students found themselves liberated in the process of taking ownership of their personal narrative.

Validating Practices

In general, Kate and Laura both made great efforts to learn about their students’ prior experiences & families and, as a result, had a good idea regarding what their students were experiencing in terms of their home situations. This year, Kate had a total of 18 out of 32 students who spoke Spanish. Many students were bilingual, but many arrive “Spanish only”. Regardless of performance level, Kate noted “students do not receive any pull out services for language in my room.” Given this, she reported on the importance of her aid (Marcella’s) fluency in Spanish and in direct student-to-student mentoring in overcoming the language divide. Through observation, both the bilingual instruction from Marcella and collaborative, bilingual work of the students amongst themselves fostered an environment in which the home language and culture was validated.

Kate, for her part, found that when students arrived to her class on the first day they were scared and nervous. In recognition and validation of this natural hesitancy in the face of new linguistic and cultural themes, on the first day she puts out paper and

crayons while providing gentle music for the classroom in an attempt to provide familiar and reassuring resources that cross cultural modes. “I really try to take my time and know where my students are coming from – no pressure – I show them the bathroom, the sink, where to wash hands – I read them a story – baby steps.” Like many teachers at Ranger, Kate also services students from Africa. In expressing the importance of validating a student’s cultural heritage, she offered the example of one particular African boy, Rafi, whom she grew to know well over the course of the year. With time, she got to know both him and his family and learned basic phrases like “please” and “thank you” in his native language. Like with many of Kate’s Hispanic students, she reports “we learn to communicate with each other over a short time,” further noting she found this process to be supported by Marcella and mutually validating for her and her students.

Laura and Kate both report that their student’s home lives face various challenges, arriving at these conclusions either through an interpreter (Rosanna) or Marcella proved to facilitate the relationship for Hispanic families between the home and school. “Having these language supports for teachers and families is crucial to making sure our kids succeed” notes Laura. Validating the home language and culture is important for Kate and Laura. Laura found that her students’ parents simply did not have much time to support their child’s efforts at school. “Some schools have parents that will sit in the classrooms and everything about what the teacher does is in question.” She remarks that many parents are involved when they “have the time”, but in general reports parents are limited by “the hours and jobs they are working.” She has found recognition and

validation of this in conversations with her students' families to be a very powerful tool in fostering a stronger school community in general.

Towards a similar end, Kate participated in many of her students' festivities in their homes. She tells the story of a child in her afternoon class, Josefina, "a very bright little girl that I became very close to the family." As an example of a mutual exchange of cultural learning, Kate shared that one time she attended a party at Josefina's house at which there were "two dress changes" for the girl. In discussing with the family how different this was from Kate's previous experiences, she found the family striving to assure her of the validity of her own cultural perspective just as vigorously as she was endeavoring to validate theirs. Kate believed that it was very important to attend student activities outside of school as it only strengthened the theme that they "are all part of the same community", notes Kate and validated those activities' inherent worth.

Empowerment

Laura and Kate are similar in that they both, as part of the philosophy, want their children to understand how to be successful in their classrooms and the world. To this end, both teachers wanted to empower their students to be responsible for their own learning. This is abundantly clear when speaking with Laura as she reflected on visiting with former students and having them share the things they loved best about her class. "Kids remember what they did with me after quite a few years -they remember liking my class and having fun – they remember the stories I read them, the songs – stuff that's not in textbooks" says Laura. Laura understands that creating positive memories for her

learners in which they are active and engaged makes students want to succeed for themselves and only fosters a greater sense of empowerment.

Similarly, Kate also reported on using student interests to guide practice. She notes that using interest to guide instruction “creates ownership for her students” and that her students were “more engaged when they are facilitating their own learning.” By way of example, she shared stories derived from her time spent working with her kindergarten teacher mentor when she found herself inspired and impacted by how her teacher mentor would “build on student interests” to create buy in and ownership. This emphasis on lasting empowerment is evidenced in Kate’s classroom approach when she reports “if a child has an interest – I want to bring this interest out in the child – I want my kids to be involved with their learning.”

Multidimensional

In Laura’s classroom, the primary curriculum emphasis was centered on increased student language ability. She noted that, as a matter of procedure, every child that came to her classroom completed a pre-assessment prior to entering her classroom. Based on this data, students were then differentiated for more relevant instruction. Laura employed lexile levels, AR books, Read 180 and System 44 (alone or in conjunction) as strategies to increase language fluency in her students. Regardless of the particular strategy employed, however, she reported that she must always work in a matrix of language and culture given that the majority of her students were Hispanic, Spanish speakers.

By larger systemic design, students in Laura’s room are identified as lower ability students in the areas of reading and writing. Students, she reported, “are used to doing

centers which involve the computers, the reading corner or individual tasks at their desk or with me.” This rotation of centers was evident in the lesson observed in the classroom over the course of this study. She further implemented such strategies as choral reading, whole group reading and pair share/group activities, noting that such activities helped provide a comfortable framework wherein her diverse language students could work collectively. In a discussion of how her many curricula are linked to her students’ real world experiences, she shared that certain workshops in Read 180 were “linked with jobs and careers identified by the students.” She found that typically students liked these particular workshops and responded well to the units. Indeed, Laura reports they evidenced a marked increase in motivation as the program grows to include discussions of jobs the students could identify from their own experiences- these often being associated with the fire and police departments or medicine. As the program further elaborated on how much money specific professions make and/or what education is required, she reported it a powerful tool to target certain jobs to certain individuals when she knows they align with personal interest of the student. “The kids enjoy the work more when they can relate it to what they know outside of my classroom” she reports.

In general, Kate’s curriculum was clearly adapted for pre-K students and took a more hands on approach to learning. “I introduce a letter of the week, stories, puppets, hands on crafts and all sorts of stuff that builds fine motor skills,” she explained. She further adds, “I see a lot of preschools where it’s a lot of sit and get – kids should be having fun, exploring and learning and getting a feel for school.” Along these lines, Kate had her students draw pictures of themselves and their families as a tool to focus on

making them feel comfortable with the new, at times overwhelming, prospect of coming to school and making friends. These pictures are then displayed in the classroom. She shares that one Hispanic student on the first day of school stated to her mom, “look everything is here!” Kate also implements projects with her garden that was built right outside her classroom door. “We do all sorts of neat stuff in the garden” she shares. Various science and math-related activities are completed in the garden. “The kids plant and grow and care for the garden – they count the tomatoes and learn where they come from – they get to pick the tomatoes and basil and take them home,” she states. It is evident in observation of Kate in the classroom that she has clear expectations for learning and that students’ interest and comfort levels guide Kate’s practices, making them personally relevant to the students she teaches.

Comprehensive

It is evident in both Kate and Laura’s room that student teacher relationships were strong and there was a comprehensive approach to learning. Given the sometimes daunting nature of what Laura’s primarily Hispanic students are there to learn, one wonders how students feel about coming to her class. “At the start of the year they do not want to be here – they know why they are here –I quickly need to find a way to get them on board on not an academic level” she shares. To this end, she reported that every Monday she had students write a weekend report, an activity that often gives her access to the non-school worlds of her students. She told of one student who, at the beginning of the year, immediately gravitated to writing about skateboarding. As a responsive and inclusive practice, Laura writes her students back in an ongoing exchange that occurs

weekly. She notes that in this instance, she started her reply letter with “Where do you skate?” With this small question, she started a relationship with this student that has flourished over the year- subsequently moving onto other topics such as music and movies. When the boy’s mother came to the first parent teacher conference and learned that Laura had been the teacher talking to him about skateboarding the mom said “so you’re Mrs. Campos!” in excitement at meeting the teacher who had built such a strong, inclusive bond with her son. Laura notes that when she commits to activities that revolve around getting to know her students, and letting them get to know her, “they really start paying attention.” “I tell them about my own kids and all of a sudden I have all eyes on me,” she explains. Obviously, she has found the exchange of culturally relevant themes very fruitful in the structuring of her classroom.

Kate notes that when students leave her room, it is her goal that they be not only ready for, but excited about, going to kindergarten. She continues to discuss that developing a real love for school in her students at this young age is not only vital but only obtainable through utilizing the available shared cultural themes that she readily employs in her classroom. “Sharing where I come from lets the students know where I am what I have done – where I went to school and my own experiences.” Being of the Hispanic culture with her students Kate demonstrates her own Hispanic excellence and achievement as part of her personal narrative which in turn allows her Hispanic students to reflect on their aspirations being Hispanic themselves.

Transformative

Both Kate and Laura cited their dependency on various school wide systems which support students, families and teachers in their efforts to make linguistically valid and culturally relevant connections within the school. Kate shares that Ranger was very different years ago; the school has become a lot more structured in general. She reports a different perspective from the other teachers noting this evolution as being a positive occurrence that has allowed for a shift in academic culture in the broader school context which can be seen in the various assessments that have been implemented to measure student growth. Additionally, she notes that linking teaching to standards and learning outcomes to assessments has become more prevalent. In further discussion, she noted the positive impact this systemic approach had on kindergarten in particular. As does Laura, Kate also shared that having a Spanish speaking assistant and other Spanish language resources on a school wide level has proven a valuable component in the efforts to engender better, richer lines of communication and mutual influence between both the school and the students' families. Kate further states that having a strong PTO as fostered by the efforts of the community specialist, Rosanna, supports the systemic involvement of Hispanic families in general at Ranger.

Hispanic/ Spanish Speaker: Maria's Story

Maria has been teaching for 23 years and has been a bilingual speech teacher for 18 years in the District. Maria is originally from Mexico City. She arrived in Arizona when she was ten years old and was enrolled in school in Phoenix. After completing

High School, she moved to Oregon to earn both her undergraduate and graduate work in speech pathology.

Upon earning her graduate degree she moved to south Texas and began working in schools. She notes that all of the speech pathologists that she worked with in Texas were bilingual. As a result she learned how to do speech testing in Spanish and English. Soon after, she moved to Arizona and earned her bilingual certificate. During her time, she had her own daughters enrolled in the District and, in 1994, began as a teacher with the District.

Maria has served as K-12 coordinator for speech and language pathology at both the site and District level. Over her time in the District it is evident that she has come to know many families in the Ranger community and is extremely well respected at Ranger for her work. Maria's work in the District ranges from facilitating site and District level professional development opportunities for speech teachers to working closely with the Ranger's PTO and Rosanna, Ranger's community specialist to support Ranger students and families. Maria is very enthusiastic about her work and loves serving in her role as a bilingual speech teacher for Ranger.

Hispanic/ Spanish Speaker: David's Story

David has been teaching for 7 years total, all of which have been spent teaching at Ranger. Originally from Colombia, David moved to New York City when he was 8 years old. David went to public school in NYC through high school. After high school, David began working in various book stores around the city. In 1999 David moved to Arizona. David remarks he had a self-described notion of Arizona and the desert as a

place of solitude and beauty. He began working in a bookstore when he first arrived to Phoenix and earned his teaching certificate through a local Community College. David knew that he wanted to teach preschool or kindergarten. He spent one year earning his early developmental certification. He reports that having a child of his own inspired him to enter the teaching field and teach pre-kindergarten/ kindergarten so that he could have “more influence on the formative years in a young child’s life.” He relates that he has always loved explaining things to people and, in discussing his philosophy; he remarks that his focus is on a team effort and making connections with this students.

David is very passionate about his role as a teacher and mentor to Ranger students. His philosophy is greatly influenced by this balanced approach between teaching both academics and life skills to his students. When David completed his student teaching at Ranger it reinforced for him that he was meant to be a teacher and serve youth. Ranger’s principal echoed his compassion for students during a campus walk through stating that she brings her broken birds to David and he teaches them how to fly.

Liberation Practices

Maria and David both share common ethnic and language characteristics with their predominately Hispanic students. As part of their personal stories, both illustrate the various ways that their individual experiences growing up are very similar in theme to those of many of the children that they service. “They get kicked out of other classes and they come here,” David remarks about the connection this shared narrative creates between him and the students. “These kids are born and they have so much to give I hate

to see other kids bully them, talk down to them – this person has never been given the chance. I will give them the chance.” It is evident through discussions with David that he provided an environment that enables students to be themselves, stand up for themselves and break out of certain detrimental conditions (whether economic or social) that informed their lives outside of school.

The strength of this liberation approach is so pervasive, that David finds himself even able to cross cultural divides through engendering mutual respect and making varied cultural knowledge accessible. By way of example, David shares a story of a student which occurred towards the beginning of the year. As part of the new school year, a policeman had stopped in the classroom to introduce himself. David reports that the child became very frightened by this experience of a uniformed man in the classroom. In fact, the boy began crying. David discusses the process of discovering through conversation with the student that the policemen conjured up “a frightening past for the student.” He further observed that, while many kids came to Ranger with an entirely different perspective on life from that of the mainstream (or even his predominantly Hispanic students), through mindful application of approaches which supported the culture of the student even these cultural divides could be overcome. David and Maria enjoy getting to know their students and giving them the tools to find fulfillment and purpose in life. David does not bring any preconceived notions of who his students are or who they are going to be; rather, he “works with the students in the condition that they are in” and believes he can “turn all of his students into high flyers.”

Maria reports a similar experience, in that she comes to the United States as an immigrant

and also has an insider's understanding of where her students are coming from culturally. Maria finds that Ranger students and families feel comfortable around her, and she credits their shared language and culture for providing the framework of these more comfortable interactions. As a token of this comfort, she observes of her students that they feel free to speak Spanish to her inside and outside of her class. Maria states, "usually with other teachers, students will only speak Spanish among themselves, on the playground, or on the bus." As many of their students speak different languages and come from different backgrounds, both teachers view Ranger and their classrooms as a "microcosm" of the community at large. This is evident in observations of both of their classrooms which strive to provide a safe zone of cultural expression for all her students, a varied group comprised of a diverse population drawn primarily from Africa and Mexico. Further, both teachers noted that the connections between content and real life for their students must be honored as many of their students "have so much to give to their own learning" as Maria reported.

Validating Practices

Maria reported the various negative implications found in assuming too much about the child without completely getting to know the child as an individual, thereby gaining a genuine reverence for their homes and personal backgrounds. In discussing student ability in particular, Maria reported that many assumptions are made regarding what students do and do not know. She offers the example of a recent test she administered to second graders wherein a student did not know the meaning of the word "shirt". Respecting this student's personal linguistic disposition, Maria found an

opportunity for validation of the student. As speech teachers, she remarks, “That is where we come in!” Maria partners with classroom teachers to support them with meeting the language goals of particular students. Being both bilingual and “of the culture” of Ranger’s parents, she is able to facilitate better connections between teachers and parents as expectations for high student achievement ever increase. By way of example, Maria notes that she speaks with many Ranger parents in Spanish daily. She states “I talk to them about grades, tests they having coming up – what they will have for dinner – all different things.” Maria feels that in having these conversations she is able to bridge the gap between home life and school life for her students.

David and Maria both speak about how Ranger is a very “new world” for many of Ranger students. “A lot of my kids must think it is very different here,” David notes. He tells the story of various students he has to “backtrack” with in order to fully appreciate the previous culturally embedded experiences many children have prior to attending Ranger. Taking advantage of this opportunity to validate the student’s prior experience, David works to create a bridge to the new classroom environment which proved a key in better understanding and serving many Hispanic students. This is by way of example of sharing his own narrative with many of his Hispanic students. “I need to start at the basics with many of my kids and sharing my own story is a good way to start.” Maria echoes this by stating that many of her students are new this year. In deference to their situations, she took special pains to work slowly with them as they make their transition into Ranger. David and Maria both share their personal background and histories with their students as a way in which to validate the experiences of the students and further

connect these students with themes of success from their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds. David noted earnestly, “it just seems like the natural thing to do.”

In discussing a conference that Maria took part in, she shares her surprise in finding one teacher on the team was upset when her student spoke Spanish in the classroom. The teacher continued to complain that this child (whose academic progress was being reviewed) was speaking Spanish with a new boy from Mexico. The teacher, Maria states, was quite distraught by this. Maria argued that “it was not only acceptable for the kids to help each other in the home language, but preferable” as it would not only ease the new students cultural transition into the classroom (setting him that much sooner on the path of academic success) but also strengthen the student rendering the aid by providing validation for his shared linguistic context.

Both teachers recognize the immense importance of forming meaningful connections with homes and families in validating the roles of their students. Maria often finds that she serves as a very strong connection between the home and the school. This is evident as, time and time again, she provides resources for families ranging from additional communications about school work or PTO meetings to the distribution of loaned books on shapes, colors and numbers for many of her student’s younger siblings who she knows need an extra boost on the home front. Maria discusses the importance of working with her families with young children at length. She discusses how important it is to start working with Ranger’s Hispanic population while their students are still at a very young age. Maria cites this as a big step in getting Hispanic kids ready for school – “start young” she says. She further addresses parents being able to contact her on her cell

phone for support. She notes that her cell phone is great way for “parents to access the school.” She reports a conversation the other day wherein a parent was asking her what language is best to use at home. “What language you know really well”, she stated. “Talk, talk, talk to your kids, chopping carrots, watching novellas – talk to them,” she implores them in further validation of their cultural and linguistic background.

Maria and David have gotten to know a great deal of Ranger’s families over their time as teachers at Ranger. It is evident that knowing the language and having this authentic cultural knowledge allows them to connect on multiple levels with students and families. “Speaking Spanish and being an insider – it makes them feel like I am one of them, it allows me to be able to push them a little bit – our community our culture our kids – that helps them feel like they can be involved,” says Maria.

David notes that when he works with parents, “I speak very slowly and I talk to them – it’s a general respect thing – like we can do this together.” He further validates the cultural disposition and shows sensitivity to the subject by remarking that, in conferences where he may not know the language, he recognizes that “it’s kind of like going to the doctor for us – we really don’t know the language and we’re kind of scared.” With this recognition, he is better armed to facilitate an interaction that leaves the parents feeling validated and empowered.

Empowerment

There are myriad ways in which Maria and David both empower students and families at Ranger. Providing resources to families and personally inviting family members into the school are examples of how Maria continuously makes connections to

empower her students and families in their school environment. Maria is also a driving force in encouraging Hispanic parents to participate in Ranger's Parent Teacher Organization. She states with pride that there are "a very high percentage of Hispanic moms who have joined this year" as a result of school wide efforts to empower the families in the school community through greater involvement.

In a discussion on teaching students to succeed on their own, David reported that equal to his focus on academics is his desire to show students that they are valued and that they have the power to effect positive change in their own lives and community. "I want to make my kids feel important and valued and show them that they can go to do great things." In order to do this, David feels part of his teaching must be focused on helping them learn that "the only thing they can control is themselves and their choices, first they need to control what they do and the choices that they make and then they can control themselves as part of their community," he states. He finds, with pride, that students thus empowered become much stronger in academic performance and in their roles as citizens of the classroom. He elaborates that teaching students how to succeed and how to advocate for themselves is a valuable tool in helping children find control of themselves and their actions. "You can't open a locked door, find another solution, students have the control and the choice- they need to be enabled to use their power."

In a conversation in which she discussed the power of home visits, Maria shared an instance that provided for self-empowerment of not only the student but the student's family as well as regarded the student's academic success. "This boy was one of seven children in the family, so they invite me to every celebration at their home," she says,

noting that his has allowed for a very high level of mutual comfort. Visiting the family in order to help the mother with some paperwork one day, Maria found herself sitting on the couch with the mom when suddenly a roach headed right down the floor in their direction. Though the mother and Maria were sitting together and both noticed the insect, only Maria became distracted. Indeed, in the middle of the mother's sentence and without missing a beat, she looked down and squashed it with her bare foot. Though thoroughly distracted, Maria continued working on a job application with the mom.

Maria reminds me that this family has seven kids and the house was in a constant boil of children. There was an 18 month year old that was running in and out of the house for some time before one of the sisters yelled "she went out the street." As if a matter of routine, the mom went and grabbed the baby from the street, came back into the house, deposited the 18 month old on the floor once again and sat down to resume work on the application with Maria. This proved an important experience for Maria. She understood this student's inability to complete homework. "The homework – having a place to work, the TV is on all the time very loud, they do not eat dinner together...I was there late one time and tried to excuse myself to go home for dinner—seven kids, how do you know if there eating, when? ...and homework? The school thinks these kids go home and do their homework and eat Oreos and milk. It's a completely different scenario," states Maria. She was struck by the realization that a large part of her students study troubles arose from their parents not knowing they needed to provide a good place for them to work. "His mom had very important papers in a little plastic bag on top of the TV. If she doesn't have those skills herself how does she pass those off to the kid?"

The boy stands and does his homework so that the little ones don't take his pencils – it's hard.” Armed with an appreciation for the home environment of the student and with the high degree of comfort she had been able to establish in the relationship with the family through drawing on shared culture, Maria was able to work with the family and help empower them in creating a sounder study environment for their children. Though never perfect, Maria felt confident it had been a great improvement.

Multidimensional

David and Maria both share strategies on varied performance assessments to drive decisions they make on servicing their students. Maria discusses learning plans for her speech students wherein each student has speech goals they work to attain over a given period of time. Being bilingual certified she is further able to facilitate these goal through both the child and families Spanish language. Additionally, Maria reports that it is very important that the tools of intervention are coordinated between classrooms, speech teachers and families. This is evident in her work with one of her student's named Alejandra. She is working with Alejandra's third grade teacher to support helping her develop coping mechanisms for successfully dealing with her lisp. Using content vocabulary lists from her third grade teacher, Maria works to provide various speech intervention strategies targeting Alejandra's lisp. She reports that her ability to do this work bilingually has proven a great aid in making this process of therapy and goal attainment (interwoven as it is with curriculum) much more accessible to Alejandra.

According to David, his lessons “require constant modification and adjustment” in response to the feedback he receives from his students. David plans with fellow ELD

teachers through curriculum maps and standards but notes that often times he finds himself scaffolding lessons starting with even more basic concepts than he originally planned to accommodate for student prior knowledge. In doing so, he often finds success by structuring these accommodations of the material in culturally relevant and accessible ways for his students. For example, David reports that working one on one with students is “time well spent” as it can clue the teacher into far more than a written assessment can. David, however, notes that “it’s hard to take this time though with so many individual student needs.”

Both David and Maria believe students “really get it” when they are able to apply what they learn and it is important to structure curriculum in culturally relevant ways to foster this application. Multiple meetings with Maria and David have made it abundantly clear that they both think outside of the box on instruction and support in general, exhibiting behaviors more strongly tied back to multidimensional as they incorporate students facilitation and working together as opposed to direct instruction. By way of example, Maria shares one activity she does with her students to build vocabulary. In this activity she relies heavily on items purchased by Maria at Home Depot and presented in novel or “outside of the box” ways to her students so as to engage them in new and fresh ways. One such activity involves having the students work together to build flashcards on painters sticks in a phonetic game she plays with the kids where the students pass the stick back and forth. David’s and Maria’s classrooms expectations are adaptive in nature. Student behavior is, in general, good and students appear to be positive and engaged in their classrooms. This is evident in the propensity of students

towards giving Maria hugs when they leave and David high fives as they walk in the door. It is apparent that both classroom environments are based on mutual respect between the teacher and the student.

Comprehensive

In order to maintain both the academic and cultural excellence for Ranger students, David and Maria describe the myriad of different approaches they employ to achieve these goals. David discusses a cultural celebration that the school takes part in called the “We are the World” Celebration. During this time, students go home and learn their family histories and bring them back to share with his class. “This is a very powerful activity and helps students truly learn about where they and their friends are from” he summarizes. After histories are collected, shared and discussed, students then congregate as a student body in the cafeteria to recognize and celebrate the numerous nationalities at Ranger.

David notes this as an incredible opportunity to make the many cultures of Ranger known and honor the excellence that comes with each culture. It was evident throughout the scope of the study that both David and Maria that they have built rich and sustaining relationships that go well beyond their four walls and school’s calendar. David notes that the key to building these meaningful relationships is “to always follow through – never have empty promises with kids”. He learned this from his mentor. It has held true throughout his time at Ranger and proven a powerful tool in creating a comprehensive learning environment.

Both David and Maria know their students as well as their siblings and families. They share stories on who is where now, what their former students are doing and how they are faring. In both classrooms, it is evident that there is a strong extended family that has been built over years of mutual respect and trust. Maria cites that school (her class in particular) is like home for many of her students. By reiterating his focus on team effort and working together as a class, David echoes this sentiment. He teaches with the understanding that students have the responsibility and the ability to work with others. “My students have the power and responsibility to look out for each other” he says. “My kids are a great group of people – you noticed this in the lesson, I gave them as much time as possible to participate because they deserve it. They are not just passive listeners; they are here to share ideas” he continues. “You may have witnessed that they get a bit carried away at time, but it seems to be to their benefit.” This is, after all, the power of a comprehensive learning environment.

Transformative

David and Maria are highly aware of the networks of support for Hispanic youth made available at a school and district level. They discuss transformative processes and systems at Ranger that have to do with school wide structures and policy, parental and community involvement and the school administration. They cite the main school wide theme at Ranger for the year as “Dreams.” In support of this theme, they both created lessons centered on jobs and careers with cultural relevance to their students. Further, they discuss the school PTO, Rosanna (Community Specialist), PBIS, cultural and language sensitivity in general and collaboration with the Paiute Neighborhood Learning

Center (a center which focuses on early childhood, teen, senior and community services which primarily accommodates to Hispanic youth and adult community members in and around Grayhawk). Additionally, David discusses the partnership with state agencies as they host citizenship ceremonies at Ranger, ceremonies that celebrate students and which are open to parents in the Ranger Community.

Both further cite instances in which the support networks of the broader school community are brought to bear on the real life economic and employment situations of many of the students' families. In discussing her parents, Maria shares, "the mentality of our families that send their kids to school don't really understand how they can help their kids". She notes that the institution-wide facilitation of parents with multiple kids and multiple jobs towards participating and collaborating with the school is an important area of growth in general for Hispanic students and families. She notes, further, that as students grow up it becomes even more "difficult for parents to have access to the school system." "Many teachers here work with our student's families, our teachers know their kids come to school hungry their parents work three jobs --when they are young like this we know, it gets lost even further when they get into high school" states Maria.

David reports that he too understands where his families are coming from and how his students are primarily taught boundaries in school. He further tries to impress upon his students the need to model correct attitudes and behavior in the greater community. In a sense, David is preparing his students during their time at Ranger for a scenario, as discussed by Maria, whereby many of these students do not have the overwhelming support made available to them at Ranger once they reach high school.

Given that as they advance in school the academic stakes become higher and students will have to be ever more accountable for themselves, both Maria and David strive to employ all the resources of their school community to teach both the kids (now while they are young) and the families strategies for addressing the real life situations that will affect them down the road. In conjunction with the broader theme of “Dreams”, David often forecasts fabricated scenarios in plausible real life situations, setting these mental exercises within the framework of a McDonald’s or Circle K. He believes making these real life connections with students across the entire school environment is important. He finds that this ubiquitous application of these realistic scenarios throughout the school “gets students to buy in” and teaches skills that can be easily transferred to their broader community.

Dyads

Next I will discuss specific themes that emerged across two groups. These themes were identified when like data were collated across two distinct groups of teachers. The criteria that I used hinged on the frequency whereby all teachers made reference to the same subtheme.

Liberating: Making Authentic Knowledge Accessible

Dyad Sampling Frame

	Spanish Speaker	Non Spanish Speaker
Hispanic Teacher	Maria and David	Laura and Kate
NON-Hispanic Teacher	Lisa and Carolina	Nancy and Abby

One theme that cut across to two cells to form a dyadic theme came from the liberating category. Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Spanish speaking participants to include Maria, David, Lisa and Carolina all discussed how they were able to get to know their students and families on a deeper level given their shared Spanish language. Authentic knowledge was characterized by all Spanish speakers in the study as the ability to discuss and address personal and academic items with both students and parents in Spanish.

Language in this context served as a gatekeeper allowing Maria, David, Lisa and Carolina the access to deeper knowledge through the use of the Spanish language. This was evident for all Spanish speaking participants in that they were able to host conversations with students and families through parent teacher conferences, conversations with students during or outside of class in addition to learning about families at various family events hosted at Ranger. Lisa states, “parents feel comfortable with me and calling me – they are able to communicate directly with me if they have a need or concern.” David echoes this as he too is able to make deeper connections with parents during parent teacher conferences in stating, “I am able to discuss the whole child, the behavior, the grades, I can also get a good sense for what is happening at home.” Maria clearly expresses this connection when discussing her recruitment of parents for the school parent teacher organization. “I am able to get moms into the school – being able to speak to my moms and teach them how to become involved at the school is important for them and their kids.” Carolina understands the importance of her shared language with parents and students in the fact that she able to understand, having learned the Spanish language as a second language to and support her kids evolve within

two languages Spanish to English. Knowing the grammatical and syntax structures as well as the phonetic differences helps bridge the gap for her Spanish speaking students coming to speak and write in English. Carolina summarizes, “I want to make comprehension accessible to my Hispanic language learners.”

It is evident throughout my discussions with these four Spanish speaking participants that they are able to bridge gaps between the home and school with both parents and students. This finding comes as a result of the various ways they are able to tap into a deeper understanding of both the personal and academic knowledge of their students and families, in turn making this knowledge accessible to themselves as teachers to inform their practice, but also how students come to understand Ranger. These relationships have an impact on how they view themselves and their roles in school. It is noteworthy that when parents and students are able to communicate in a common language with the teacher in Spanish this leads to higher participation and involvement for students and parents at school in general. In Maria’s story, she discussed this role and purpose for herself by supporting parents who speak Spanish outside of the school context. Her story of helping the mother with the job application at her students home, or the delivery of books to siblings of students indicate that Maria utilizes her shared language to promote the wellbeing of Ranger families on various levels. The role of Maria in this instance is similar to Rosanna, in that she is able to quickly access and identify the needs of Ranger families to provide systems of personal support and connection to Ranger through common language (and culture). Speaking Spanish, for all participants, allows them to access varied degrees of who Ranger students and families

are, what they need, and how they can come to be supported. The ability to authenticate knowledge through language allows for the legitimization of both student and parent knowledge.

Macro Themes

Macro Theme Sampling Frame

	Spanish Speaker	Non Spanish Speaker
Hispanic Teacher	Maria and David	Laura and Kate
NON-Hispanic Teacher	Lisa and Carolina	Nancy and Abby

Validating: Family/Home Connections

Each group reported on home and family as it related back to validating both students and their families. All participants acknowledged that Ranger serves a range of parents coming from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. Conversations, however, primarily revolved around those working parents who experience challenges financially, socially and personally. Laura summarized this when speaking about one of her parents working multiple jobs and the child having a network of family members responsible for her student. She stated that numerous family structures employ various family members to participate at school in order to support the child. In these structures, many members of the family speak Spanish. All groups reported a similar understanding of language and culture and their influence on the ways that students and parents participate in school. While it is evident that all participants validate difficult home situations, it is more apparent that David and Maria, as Hispanic Spanish speaking teachers, are able to

commit to the next step as envisioned by Gay and Moll- application. In simplest terms, that means making the schooling context more appropriate for Hispanic youth.

During my time with Maria, there was one instance where she was writing notes home to her student's mothers in Spanish regarding the need for the students to bring a lunch for the field trip the following day. I took particular notice that Maria was writing the note in the mother's home language and further learned that Maria had a relationship with the mother that had developed over time. On the note Maria put together a list of healthy food options that the boy should bring the following day. This exchange between home and school is marked with a level of parent education that, in general, occurred with shared language as the parent and teacher were able to go beyond classroom content to support and promote the best interest of the child.

Further, there was an identifiable theme of all the participating teachers having high expectation for their Hispanic families regardless of home dispositions. With participants who were able to communicate with students' homes in Spanish, there was a faster and more in depth response time than for those teachers scheduling meetings with translators. This, as a rule, supported more connections between home and school with teachers who spoke the home language versus those who did not.

It was also noted with all groups that teachers understood there to be viable entry points for Hispanic, Spanish speaking parents to fully participate in the school. Whether enough/any/all parents were able to take advantage of these entry points is a discussion more fitting to the previous theme as regards the effect of the home lives of individual students and families. Regardless of the individual circumstances, however, Ranger has

experienced a large influx of Hispanic parents working to support their PTO and broader school efforts. It would seem that teachers such as Lisa, Maria, Carolina and David have again proven capable of making these vital connections to home that allow them to engage in deeper conversations, which only support the work they do with their students on an academic level. Participation by parents (or, as importantly, just having the opportunity to participate) at Ranger was noted by all.

Whereas Maria and Lisa both mentioned their involvement in recruiting Hispanic, Spanish speaking parents, English speaking participants all spoke to the systems existing and testified that parents report feeling open to the idea that they could participate. They also note the administrators being Hispanic and Spanish speaking at the school has proven a great tool in the efforts to increase Hispanic parent involvement at Ranger. In looking back to the CRP literature, Gay reminds us that there are many CR elements specific to teaching learning and what occurs in the student's community and home as relating to how students can better achieve in the school setting. To reach its full potential, this effort by teachers must further be supported by systems and school wide support efforts. This collaborative, across the board approach permits the transformative work of CRP – changing how all stakeholders view and engage in their school.

Again, the school administrators were lauded by each participant for placing high value on Hispanic parent involvement at Ranger. Further, all participants discussed the changing academic landscape that has become so common- language and practice in language centering on student data and increased academic achievement. It was further evident that Spanish-speaking participants all reported involvement and connection with

their students' parents whereas non Spanish-speaking teachers were supported externally through school wide resources such as Rosanna and the school administrators. It was evident during one of my walk through visits at Ranger that a strong academic culture was present. During one of my visits, the school was hosting a kindergarten 'graduation' ceremony. Parent turnout was so full; I could barely get on campus. When I came through the office, the school secretary greeted me and stated that they had never had that many parents attend this event. It is evidence that the concerted effort to improve the academic culture of Ranger by increasing parental involvement at the school is present.

All participants who shared descriptions of their students also knew their students' families. Topics such as parent teacher conferences, open house nights, drop off and pick up, phone calls home and written communication with families were all presented as part of the general discussion.

In summary, each participant shared that they knew their families not only through traditional academic channels but through various school-related activities and personal relationships built with their families throughout the course of the year. The connections to families represented not only evidence of the deep connections made amongst the teachers and parents themselves, but also served as further evidence of how parents are involved at Ranger in broadening context.

Comprehensive: Classroom as an Extended Family

One theme that additionally cut across all groups centered on the ways teachers create a positive classroom cultures that transcends normal teacher – student interactions. In various discussions with these teachers it became increasingly clear that their extensive

knowledge of their students' families, siblings, histories and backgrounds positively influences the student-teacher relationships in each of their classrooms. All participants who identified with this theme truly have a sense that, in aggregate, their classroom, the school and the community form an extended family.. Further, the less than ideal home situations which were described during the teacher interviews are counter-balanced by the family like situations they have created in their classrooms. They understand beyond their four walls, their children truly are in need of support, care and trust.

Part of what allows Maria, David, Lisa and Carolina the depth in understanding the home conditions and socio-economic dispositions of their students comes from their ability to speak Spanish and access this information. While this theme resonated most deeply with the four Spanish speaking participants, the theme was noted by all participants. According to the literature, treating the classroom as an extended family has to do with pulling a culturally diverse group of individuals into a family unit whereby values such as respect, active listening, participation and control are acknowledged by all members of the classroom. All participants reported on this subtheme as part of their core philosophies or a measure put in place through beginning of the year ice-breakers and team builders. As the participants themselves share and do not share common language and culture, there is a high premium put on this subtheme for all teachers. Maria states, "teachers are like the parents" for Ranger students. David further remarks the "team effort" and "building a classroom based on respect and trust" lends itself to safe environment for his students, one in which he projects is potentially safer than the home environment. Carolina, Nancy, Lisa and Kate engage this subtheme of family by

reiterating their understanding of home conditions and the safety and security they desire for their own classrooms. This was evident in my early morning sessions with Nancy whereby students came to visit her before school to check in and get help with homework. This was also evident in my time with Laura and Abby when they described how certain students taking on “mama bear” roles in the classroom. I believe there was a general disposition for all of teachers regarding their desire for their classrooms to be that child’s extended family.

Comprehensive: Student Teacher Relationships

All participants reported their desire to promote good student teacher relationships in their classroom. In addition, they all demonstrated real internalization of the principle that an active willingness to learn from a student engenders positive relationships in the classroom. Most teachers discussed this aspect of their practice as it related to their teaching philosophy in general. For example, all teachers cited relationships as having to do with their beliefs as a teacher. Kate and Abby most directly mention building relationships with students as being the foundation of their teaching philosophies. “Building relationships with my kids is what it’s all about” states Abby. Further, she notes getting to know student’s interests and on a non-academic level as being one such strategy to building relationships. David, Maria, and Kate also discuss various team building and get to know you activities that allow them to access relationships on a non-academic level. Instances such as Kate attending birthdays for her students on weekends, Carolina and Maria having completed home visits and David sharing his personal narrative with students to support them with navigating their own relationships at Ranger

all conclude that relationships help create meaningful bridges that connect Ranger students to their teachers and their school.

Further, teachers described building relationships outside of their classroom and outside of their content area as being essential to increase relationships and “buy in” to their class. Predictably, the levels of individual relationships reported ranged amongst participants. All teachers reported having an open door policy wherein their Hispanic students come in their rooms before and after school. This was further evidenced during my site visits wherein I often found teachers classrooms open to multiple students before or after school- both providing support with academic related topics or simply creating a safe space for ‘just to hang out’. Relationships were also built through various get to know you exercises illuminating the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their learners which included the weekend reports, letters home, and letters to their teachers at the end of the year.

Findings

The conclusions drawn from this research are as follows. All Hispanic teachers in this study exhibited characteristics associated with all of the six themes of culturally responsive practice. The non-Hispanic, non-Spanish speaking teachers were more likely to most strongly exhibit strengths in multidimensional and comprehensive themes as they pertain to culturally responsive practice. Finally, the white, Spanish speaking teachers and Hispanic, non-Spanish speakers were also more likely to exhibit employment of strategies informed by all six themes.

The Role of Language

Though Nancy and Abby do not speak Spanish, they are, however, able to connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population through various activities in their lessons and on a school-wide level with the support of Rosanna. This is consistent with the CRP literature as it demonstrates that the use of broader resources (Rosanna in this instance) can be employed to help bridge the linguistic gaps between teacher and student and foster environments conducive to the strengthening of the multidimensional (such as Nancy's lesson plans incorporating Esperanza Rising) and comprehensive (such as Abby's structuring of the classroom environment to include Spanish language material and foster a sense of family) themes. The connections they are able to make with their Hispanic students and parents are consistent with the CRP literature as they are demonstrative of the success that individual teachers can find through the use of school wide resources to bridge the Spanish language and bring both students and their families into a richer role of ownership and responsibility in the school environment.

Maria and David apply their Spanish language to connect with the predominately Hispanic students and parents through home visits, written and verbal communications in Spanish and fostering a Spanish friendly environment in the classroom. This form of engagement is consistent with liberation, validation and empowering as defined in the CRP literature in as much as it creates a school environment in which the home language

of the student is given a high standing and an emphasis on social justice is a uniting theme between the teachers, administrators, students and parents.

Lisa and Carolina also apply their Spanish language to engage with predominately Hispanic students and parents through home visits, written & verbal communications in Spanish and fostering a Spanish friendly environment in the classroom. Again, using this convergence of language, they are able to make authentic cultural knowledge accessible both to and from their students and their students' families. This, of course, is illustrative of the successful implementation strategies arising from the principals of validation, liberation and empowering as outlined in the CRP literature.

While Laura and Kate do not speak Spanish, they are nonetheless able to engage with a predominately Hispanic population by utilizing the language resources provided by the administration in the broader school context. In employing these resources to provide both written and verbal communication in Spanish to their students' families, as well as engendering a sense of linguistic empowerment in the classroom, they demonstrate the strength of liberation, validation and empowerment as outlined by the CRP literature.

The Role of Culture

Equally telling is the discussion of those areas (Liberation, Validation, Empowerment and Transformative) in which Nancy and Abby are less successful at accessing perhaps due to non-shared culture, despite the great gains they make in the areas of Multidimensional and Comprehensive strategies. This in by no means questions

their success as teachers, but rather illustrates the difficulty non-Hispanic, non-Spanish speaking teachers face in employing all aspects of the CRP rubric. It also, and more importantly, illustrates the value of employing the CRP rubric- their success in the classroom with only two of the six legs of CRP being remarkable.

Being Hispanic themselves, Maria and David are also able to connect with predominately Hispanic students and parents through shared cultural experiences and narrative. This is consistent with the CRP literature as it both directly impacts the teacher's implementation of curriculum and lesson plans and the student's receptivity to the same as valid because of shared cultural points of reference. Not without merit, this study of Maria and David is also very illustrative of the classroom success teachers can experience when pedagogical philosophy and real world implementation align.

Though Lisa and Carolina are non-Hispanic, they are, however, able to engage with a predominately Hispanic population through a strategy of open cultural communication, individual student advocacy and a well designed and implemented curriculum centered on purposeful inclusion of the student population. This is all informed by and in adherence to the CRP principals of emphasis on comprehensive, multidimensional and transformative pedagogy.

Being Hispanic themselves, Laura and Kate are also able to connect with predominately Hispanic students and parents through an ongoing focus on shared cultural, historical and personal narratives. By way of example, Kate's participation in

festivities at her students' homes engenders the successful implementation of multidimensional, comprehensive and transformative approaches in her classroom.

In summary, how do teachers who share common ethnic and language characteristics with their students (and those who do not) connect with a predominately Hispanic student and parent population? All teachers who shared common language and culture with their students in this study connected with their predominately Hispanic students by exhibiting behaviors associated with all of the six themes of culturally responsive practice. The non-Hispanic, non-Spanish speaking teachers were more likely to connect with a predominately Hispanic student population by exhibiting strengths in the multidimensional and comprehensive themes in addition to relying on the systemic, school wide implementation of behaviors associated with CRP.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study began with a discussion of the teacher as savior myth that pervades the hearts and minds of Hollywood and many aspiring teachers; that golden ideal that one rugged individual, without any other help, can change the life circumstances of struggling, urban students held down by the inequities of society's inherent imbalance. While this remains a naïve and oversimplified view of reality, it can nevertheless prove a useful vantage point from which to explore what does and does not work in urban schools with ethnically and linguistically diverse learners. It is worth note that Ranger teachers, like most of the teaching force, will enter, stay and thrive in urban schools like Ranger when it represents the most attractive activity to pursue among all activities available to them (Guarino, 2006). In an investigation on how teachers who share common culture and language with their students (and those who do not) connect with a predominately Hispanic student population, and, in exploring how these patterns were associated with a culturally responsive framework, it is evident that Ranger offers a supportive context for teachers and Hispanic students, and therefore has a number of implications for policy and practice.

Schools which develop systems and strategies in response to the needs of Hispanic learners can provide a meaningful school experience for Hispanic and Spanish speaking students. In developing a school wide framework which is culturally responsive in nature, this study suggests a systemic network of resources that support the culturally responsive teacher should be readily available for all teachers regardless of

teacher culture and linguistic background in order to fully create a successful environment. The extended network of support for teachers, such as those reported in this study, included Rosanna, Marcella, the principal, the assistant principal, the district reading volunteers, the neighborhood learning center which caters to a largely Hispanic parent and student population, the Parent Teacher Organization, the “Dreams” theme supported by the school, and the teachers themselves whom shared common language and culture. All of these individual parts have roles which directly tie to the school wide vision for teaching and learning. It is also evident that with the greater school wide community (to include parents, teachers, students, and community members) that collaboration to identify the needs of Hispanic and Spanish speaking communities on a systemic site based level is imperative, and further providing resources and systems to support these needs is required.

Given the greater academic success found at Ranger, would one expect to witness the same teacher behaviors in another school with similar demographics? In other words is this your typical urban myth? In a discussion on the high administrative support reported by all teachers in this study it is evident that given the 70% Hispanic student population and 74% free and reduced lunch data in the context of Ranger’s A letter grade, there remains a strong case that effective teaching and learning exists at Ranger. What items in this study then qualify as CRP, and what items are just good teaching regardless of student ethnicity or language? Ladson Billings (1995) suggests that good teaching is good teaching, regardless of student ethnicity. In other words, successful and effective teachers are just that, successful and effective teachers. The needs of students

differ based on gender, age, class, race are contributing factors impacting a student's success in the schooling context. This is where language and culture almost work independent of one another in the schooling context. Ladson Billing's work relies primarily on servicing African American student who speak English. The schooling context for our Hispanic learners, however involves both culture and language.

First using the lens of culture and looking at how Nancy is able to take the broader supports of the school, such as the reading volunteer to connect with the community member, or having chosen *Esperana Rising* as a starting point for her Hispanic learners. These are active choices that Nancy has made in the context of her predominately Hispanic learners; specifically tied to their Hispanic culture. While these activities may seem trivial or token, the importance of Nancy seeking a way of including the Hispanic culture into her teaching in any form is evidence of CRP in her classroom; it is a beginning. Further, her discussion on the Spanish language in the book and her learning "with" her students is evidence that Nancy herself has come to bridge both the language and culture of her students through this Hispanic, Spanish language relevant resource. Evidence of intentional CRP by the teachers in this study can be seen in the home visits made by Maria and Kate or the 'We Are the World' celebration as reported by David, Ranger as a site whereby citizenship ceremonies take place, the Hispanic parent involvement through PTO, the Dreams units, Rosanna, Marcella and the importance placed on translating newsletters and frequent communication home in the Spanish language, all of these activities represent teachers and Ranger as the schooling context actively seeking to use CRP in their teaching and the underlying supports that

Ranger has chosen to put in place as a school priority. The school itself, through the direction of the principal and assistant principal, both of whom share common language and ethnicity with their Hispanic student population, inherently utilize the six pillars to drive the vision and wider networks of support that have created an environment of student success and earned Ranger the A distinction the administration has embraced the notion that class, race and gender imbalances are often key factors in shaping school culture. Further, the administration has created a support for those items that in the literature on CRP are identified as themes of liberation, they validate the personal dispositions and prior experiences of Ranger families, they understand the importance of Hispanic student initiatives and parent led activities as a way of empowering the students and greater community. Their roles as instructional leaders involve leadership with curriculum and cross curriculum development, encouraging and promoting both the academic and cultural excellence of their Hispanic learners. Finally, the site administrators have made direct and intentional choices to ensure that systems of support are available to teachers, students and parents. All of these activities and support systems lead to building relationships with families and stakeholders of the greater Hispanic community, supporting a framework as identified in CRP.

It is evident in my short time with the principal and assistant principal that Ranger perhaps defies the urban myth. One may not expect to witness the same teacher behaviors associated with CRP in another school. Ranger is an excelling school where the general demographic information of the school and teacher population would statistically fall below this goal. This success has been built within the context of Ranger

by the administration which have in essence turned their mission and values into a living document, a campus culture, whereby children and adults promote academics, citizenship and social consciousness. This takes a commitment from the entire school to carry out this vision and mission.

As schools like Ranger across America continue to service ethnically and linguistically diverse youth, they must be certain that the characteristics, traits, values and beliefs of our learners evolve with them and that they positively influence decision making at all levels. We know, according to many studies, that teacher, student and parent satisfaction for their school is broadly defined to include a more nuanced definition that relies on an aggregate of working conditions, teacher's perceptions, and school and community perceptions. . Taken together, these are the leading factors which influence and inform Nancy, Abby, David, Maria, Lisa, Carolina, Kate and Laura in their practice and implementation of successful learning outcomes for Hispanic students at Ranger.

Regarding their efficacy and knowledge, the research findings presented in this study hold that those teachers who share common cultural and language characteristics with their students are more likely to engage in culturally responsive practices than their mismatched counterparts. These practices, in turn, provide the teacher with a feeling of personal efficacy and value within the context of Ranger. However, the mismatched teachers (with the aid of school wide resources) were also able to draw on practices associated with culturally responsive teaching to help support their student's learning;

they were able to learn and also draw from the culturally responsive practices. In their turn, they too found a sense of meaningful connection to the student body they served.

In conclusion, therefore, while those teachers who are fortunate enough to have a preexisting cultural and linguistic match with their students may have an advantage in their ability to engage in culturally responsive practices, they are not exclusively entitled to the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. In other words, culturally responsive teaching is a tool that must be professionally developed within our teachers and schools. When employed, regardless of personal cultural or linguistic background, it should be seen as a powerful support matrix in the pursuit of both student and teacher success. Further, an implication stemming from this study which may influence both policy and practice is to thoughtfully engage the cultural knowledge and linguistic background of our Hispanic teachers and staff to support ongoing professional development for teachers working with Hispanic youth in predominately Hispanic schooling contexts. Utilizing the talents of those teachers who share common language and culture with our Hispanic students and families (and the cultural funds of knowledge they possess) to enhance the teaching and learning contexts for teachers who do not share common language and culture with their students may prove valuable as a resource in a school wide professional development model to promote culturally responsive practices.

The tools found in this professional development model as garnered through those teachers who share common language and culture with the student population should be seen as a valuable way to support those teachers faced with the unique challenges of teaching in urban schools with greater Hispanic youth populations in their pursuit of

professional development and satisfaction. Utilizing these tools to better equip our teachers in these settings would not only allow for greater student success, a laudable goal in and of itself, but would also foster a greater rate of teacher success which, in turn, may lead to a higher rate of positive teacher retention.

A recommendation stemming from the outcome of this study would be to look at school district policy; specifically an initiative launched at the district level could be designed to implement culturally responsive policies, procedures, and practices on a systemic level. One place to begin this work is to identify what are successful practices schools are engaging in when they are servicing increased percentages of Hispanic students over time and at the same time have reached or maintained a higher standard of academic success. The Ranger study captures specific teacher practice and relates these practices to the framework for a culturally responsive framework established from the review of the literature. Schools like Ranger, however, may serve as a starting point to inform policy on a district level. To begin this work, the initiative would require multiple components, including a site needs assessment to account for certain school/teacher behaviors relating to CRP, leadership trainings and professional development on culturally responsive classroom practices. Within the framework of a needs assessment it may be valuable to look at needs data from a site such as Ranger to truly capture on a school wide level all supports for specifically Hispanic students and families. Nieto (1999) reminds us that culturally responsive schools are caring communities, ones in which leaders, teachers and students care and support each other, and schools which activity participate and contribute to activities and decisions that affect the school

community. These practices create belonging and a shared sense of purpose and common value. Looking at the trends amongst schools through this data collection may illuminate common themes and norms as identified as good practice in schools servicing higher percentages of Hispanic youth. Culturally responsive practices gathered from schools who have also reached a high rate of academic achievement may serve as the initial criteria to inform policy and practice on a district level. The opportunity to include teachers, parents and administrators who share common language and/or ethnicity with our student bodies would, based on the finding of this study, clearly prove beneficial to this process.

Given Arizona as the context of the study, I also recommend which factor, language or culture, I would like to see take priority to expand the use of CRP practices in education. I believe that culture would at first take priority given the high percentage of mismatch in culture between students and teachers in the workforce, based on demographic information available from census data and school records. Having non-Hispanic teachers learn about their Hispanic students' culture would undoubtedly be a faster process than teaching non-Spanish speaking teachers the Spanish language. Additionally, I believe this professional development would be immediately beneficial to at least identifying issues of class, gender and race amongst teachers and students. Professional development is needed in order for our teachers to begin to know the students who are sitting in front of them. As is evident from CRP literature and this study as well, teachers need to be able to understand where students are from, what they believe in and most importantly how all this serves to inform instruction and celebrate the

cultural (and often linguistic) excellence that comes with our Hispanic students and families.

As a second step in policy, I believe systems of language support needs to be implemented in the wider schooling context to allow for a more immediate communication between school and home for all students. We must remember, however, that our Hispanic students and families survive outside of the schooling context with their Spanish language and abilities within the English language dominant society. As educators, we must note the responsibility of the school and the responsibility of the parent and family and how these schools and students meet and support one another. As school leaders, we are tasked to work with our students, help them to succeed, using the tools they bring to school from their community. To this end, we need to better understand the conditions our students come from as they relate to class and race, which in the case of urban schools can often stand in drastic counterpoint to the teachers who are providing the education.

Parents and communities will find resources to support themselves to communicate with the school, but it is not enough for the school to passively assume this is the responsibility of the family. The student's success hinges on home-school communication, and their success is equally shared in both realms. Therefore, I believe a level of parent education in this context is necessary in order to support Hispanic parents in learning how to navigate the school district and is equally as valuable when looking at student success. Teaching teachers about the kids and the families they serve and teaching the families about the teachers and systems that are servicing their kids creates a

two way street for communication and support for a student. While I believe we will always have lines of communication to access both the home and the school, leaders must find balanced approaches to learning about the culture of our Hispanic students and families, and having our families learn about the culture of the school. Professional development for both parents and teachers given this conclusion is necessary.

My research suggests that teachers who share common culture and language with their students and parents in this context of servicing Hispanic youth and families is obviously beneficial. Growing our own Hispanic teachers and leaders to provide for the both cultural and linguistic insight is clearly one such strategy to addressing this priority. Also teaching teachers and school leaders Spanish through coursework or full immersion studies would strengthen the access and depth of understanding of our Hispanic families as reported in this study. However, our educational response to our Hispanic youth nonetheless must be measured and strategic, and above all achievable and the goals of teaching the Spanish language to an entire workforce or changing hiring practices based on culture or language are not realities in the short term. Instead, we need to look at schools that are excelling and understand that they benefit from strong parent involvement and engagement, the connection between home and school is crucial to completing the whole loop of educating our students. Having bridge builders at the school level who can navigate this gap through language to invite and encourage Hispanic participation in schools is further crucial. Finally, and arguably most important, having teachers understand the need to fully engage our Hispanic youth and families to provide cultural and academic excellence in the schooling context, creating this

understanding and buy in from our predominately white, female workforce in contexts with predominately Hispanic students is the key to supporting student success among a largely Hispanic youth population.

This is not to say that if we simply supply those teachers who share and do not share common language and culture with Hispanic students with critically responsive practices training, that they will spontaneously connect to Hispanic youth, nor will all Hispanic families automatically connect to the schooling context after attending an information session on school culture. A high quality of leadership by administration, a safe and productive school environment, and the empowerment of teachers through opportunities for input on culturally sensitive instruction at their school site remain common themes which are known to be opportunities for promoting positive retention and success of teachers in urban schools (Stotko, Ingram & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007).

There is no denying that how effective and successful a teacher feels within their school community directly impacts their efficacy as teachers. The school community is only the sum totals of the relationships of colleagues and school leaders, teacher collaboration, the students and larger community that teacher's service. Given this definition, the student represents one of the most important members of the community. Being successful with students often results in higher levels of teacher satisfaction and self-efficacy overall. Successful relationships with students, specifically students coming from diverse backgrounds, remains an important factor in predicting teacher success in urban schools which remains essential to observing the more likely affects that teachers will stay and achieve with their students (Darling-Hammond 2002). While the findings

herein could be oversimplified (shared linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds improve teacher student interaction and thereby improve teacher and student achievement) doing so fails to account for a very important and powerful nuance to the observations in this study. The real potential of these observations lies in the nexus of reported achievement and connection to the student population as crafted through the lens of CRP literature. The key here is not how easy it is for David and Maria, but rather how successful Nancy and Abby prove (despite their inherent disadvantages) through the successful implementation of even two of the six pillars of CRP. This leaves us with the real sense that the systemic, school wide and classroom implementation of CRP practices can prove a valuable means by which to engender the critical interpersonal satisfaction that has proven so important in the success of students.

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APPENDIX A INTERVIEWS

Interview 1: Focused Life History

1. First, tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - a) Where are you from?
 - b) How long have you lived in Arizona?
2. Tell me about your work before teaching.
3. Tell me about your professional experiences prior to your work at Ranger.
4. Why did you want to become a teacher?
5. Describe your philosophy of teaching.
6. What experiences shaped your philosophy?
7. Tell me a little about your student teaching experiences.
8. What are some of the most important things you learned when student teaching?
9. Tell me about your experiences working with students at Ranger.
10. How do you prepare for a typical teaching day?
 - a) Do you have meetings or duty in the morning?
 - b) How many preps do you have?
 - c) How many types of classes do you prepare for?
 - d) Do you usually prep before the school day or after the school day?
 - e) Do you see kids before or after school?
 - f) What are your duties after school?
11. How do you know when students understand the material you are teaching?
12. What do you do when some students do not understand the material you are teaching?
13. Do you have students that are ahead of the class? What do you do for those students?
14. Do you have students who struggle socially? What do you do in those situations?

Teacher lesson observation to follow first interview

Interview 2: The Details of Experience

1. Was the day [class period/lesson] I observed a typical day? Why or why not?
2. Are there other types of activities that you frequently use in your classroom that I didn't get to see?
3. Are there some instructional activities that you don't use that you would like to use more? If so, why don't you use them as much as you would like?
4. Do students get to choose or facilitate activities?
 - a) Tell me about these activities.
 - b) (follow up) How often would you like to use these activities in class?
5. Think about two students in your class who are different from each other in terms of their language and culture. Describe these students:
 - a) Where would you place them in terms of ability?
 - b) What are these students' strengths?
 - c) What are these students' challenges?
 - d) How did you come to understand these students' strengths and challenges?
 - e) Do you know much about these [the two students described] students' families? (If so, how, or if not ask to explain why not.)
6. Now, I would like to change topics and talk about families.
 - a) How well do you know your students' families?
 - b) Have you had the opportunity to engage with your students and their families outside your classroom?
7. Do your students' families participate in any of your classroom activities? If so, in what ways do they participate?
8. Do students talk about their home lives in your class? If so, what do they talk about?
9. In what ways do you try and connect your teaching to students' real-world experiences?
10. Do you tell the students about your own family?
 - a) If yes, how do you present it?
 - b) If no, why not?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Hispanic/Spanish Speaker:

1. Do your students speak Spanish at school?
 - a. (If yes, when and where do you find your students speaking Spanish?)
 - b. (If teachers do not describe a classroom experience). Do your students speak Spanish in the classroom?
2. Some say that it is helpful for teachers to speak Spanish in order to connect with students. What do you think?
3. As a Spanish speaker, do you think it helps you connect with students? In what ways?
4. How about your students' families, do family members speak primarily Spanish or English?
5. Do you talk to your parents in Spanish? If so, in what ways do you think speaking Spanish helps you connect with parents?
6. As you are aware, this campus serves students from various self-reported ethnicities. 30% of Ranger students identify themselves as white, 10% as African-American, American Indian or Asian and 60% as Hispanic. Hispanic culture can vary greatly based on origin, income, employment and education to name a few. Given that over half of Ranger students are Hispanic, how would you describe Hispanic culture at this school?
7. In what ways do you think the culture of Hispanic students is expressed on campus?
8. In what ways are students able to express their culture in your classroom?
 - a. What do you think your role is in facilitating this process?
 - b. How might your students guide this process?
9. How do you think that your culture influences the relationships you build with students?
 - a. Can you give an example/instance?
10. How do you think that your culture influences your interaction with families?
 - a. Can you give an example/instance?
11. Some say that culture – in other words—attitudes, values and beliefs associated with one's ethnicity are shaped from their first teacher – a parent or guardian. -When Hispanic students arrive at Ranger, some attitudes, values and beliefs may fit in with the norms of the school—and some might not.
 - a. Please share an experience as a teacher where you had to address this.
 - b. How about with a parent?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Hispanic/ Non-Spanish Speaker:

1. Do your students speak Spanish at school? If so, when and where?
 - a. (If teachers do not describe a classroom experience). Do your students speak Spanish in the classroom?
2. Some say that it is helpful for teachers to speak Spanish in order to connect with students. What do you think?
3. If you were to speak Spanish, how do you think it might help you connect with students?
4. How about your students' families, do family members speak primarily Spanish or English?
5. (If parents speak Spanish) Do you think a lack of Spanish speaking skills is a barrier to connecting with parents? How?
6. (If parents speak Spanish) If you could speak Spanish, how do you think it might help you connect with parents?
7. As you are aware, this campus serves students from various self-reported ethnicities. 30% of Ranger students identify themselves as white, 10% as African-American, American Indian or Asian and 60% as Hispanic. Hispanic culture can vary greatly based on origin, income, employment and education to name a few. Given that over half of Ranger students are Hispanic, how would you describe Hispanic culture at this school?
8. In what ways do you think the culture of Hispanic students is expressed on campus?
9. In what ways are students able to express their culture in your classroom?
 - a. What do you think your role is in facilitating this process?
 - b. How might your students guide this process?
10. How do you think that your culture influences the relationships you build with students?
 - a. Can you give an example/instance?
11. How do you think that your culture influences your interaction with families?
 - a. Can you give an example/instance?
12. Some say that culture – in other words—attitudes, values and beliefs associated with one's ethnicity are shaped from their first teacher – a parent or guardian. -When Hispanic students arrive at Ranger, some attitudes, values and beliefs may fit in with the norms of the school—and some might not.
 - a) Please share an experience as a teacher where you had to address this.
 - b) How about with a parent?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Non-Hispanic/Spanish Speaker:

1. Do your students speak Spanish at school?
 - a. (If yes, when and where do you find your students speaking Spanish?)
 - b. (If teachers do not describe a classroom experience). Do your students speak Spanish in the classroom?
2. Some say that it is helpful for teachers to speak Spanish in order to connect with students. What do you think?
3. As a Spanish speaker, do you think it helps you connect with students? In what ways?
4. How about your students' families, do family members speak primarily Spanish or English?
5. Do you talk to your parents in Spanish? If so, in what ways do you think speaking Spanish helps you connect with parents?
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 - a. What do you think your role is in facilitating this process?
 - b. How might your students guide this process?
9. How do you think that your culture influences the relationships you build with students?
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10. How do you think that your culture influences your interaction with families?
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 - a) Please share an experience as a teacher where you had to address this.
 - b) How about with a parent?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

Non-Hispanic/Non-Spanish Speaker:

1. Do your students speak Spanish at school? If so, when and where?
 - a. (If teachers do not describe a classroom experience). Do your students speak Spanish in the classroom?
2. Some say that it is helpful for teachers to speak Spanish in order to connect with students. What do you think?
3. If you were to speak Spanish, how do you think it might help you connect with students?
4. How about your students' families, do family members speak primarily Spanish or English?
5. (If parents speak Spanish) Do you think a lack of Spanish speaking skills is a barrier to connecting with parents? How?
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 - a) Please share an experience as a teacher where you had to address this.
 - b) How about with a parent?