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"Kids Can Change the World": An Action Research of Latinx English Language Learners Students' Experiences With Culturally Relevant Morning Meetings

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, "KIDS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD": AN ACTION RESEARCH OF LATINX ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT MORNING MEETINGS, by DARLINE DOUANGVILAY, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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“KIDS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD”: AN ACTION RESEARCH OF LATINX ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT MORNING MEETINGS

by

DARLINE DOUANGVILAY

Under the Direction of Dr. G. Sue Kasun

ABSTRACT

With a rising number of English Language Learners (ELL) in schools today, educators struggle with excellent ways of providing equitable learning opportunities that value and include the diverse backgrounds, languages, and experiences that students bring into the classroom. In multicultural classrooms, the schooling experiences of ELLs often reflect assimilationist and subtractive schooling practices that support the dominant discourses of schools in the United States. Although classroom morning meetings are used in elementary schools to build community and develop positive relationships among young students, there is limited research using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) during classroom morning meetings. The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to explore and capture the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students as participants of culturally relevant morning meetings. This study examined how one fifth grade classroom used morning meetings to foster student agency, "the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths" (Muhammad, 2014, p. 450) among Latinx ELL students.

This action research study is grounded in Latinx Critical Theory (Valdes, 1998; Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2000) to understand the experiences of Latinx students. The findings suggest that by implementing culturally relevant morning meetings, Latinx ELLs students formed a stronger classroom community, created a safe space for sharing personal stories that revealed personal and societal challenges, and experienced a stronger sense of agency to take action. Additionally, included are discussions and implications for teachers of all grade levels, teacher education programs, and future researchers. By centering the voices and experiences of Latinx students during morning meetings, this study offers insight to help transform the current educational practices of educating Latinx ELL students. By building a classroom culture that

provides an intentional space and time for students to form a connection to others and their learning, students have the agency to use their voices to share their perspectives, experiences, and ideas.

INDEX: morning meeting, culturally relevant pedagogy, English Language Learners, Latinx Critical Theory, action research, student agency

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DEDICATION

To my mom, Att

You are my hero. This dissertation was inspired by all of the stories you have shared with me. As I reflect on those stories that you've recounted, I realize how much I have learned from those moments we've shared together. I have become a better person because of those stories- your childhood, your life in the refugee camps, beginning your new life in the united states, and so many more. The stories not only tell about the hardships you've overcome, but it tells about your courage, persistence, and compassion. You have taught me about unconditional love and seeing the beauty in others. You have taught me about valuing relationships and surrounding myself with people who can help sharpen and nourish me. You are the strongest and most beautiful person I know both inside and out. Thank you for always being the person I could call on when times were hard and when I wanted to give up. You have always encouraged me, believed in me, and pushed me to keep dreaming big. For all of your love and support, I am eternally grateful.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Listening to my mom tell her life story has always captivated me. As a 17-year-old girl, she arrived in the United States as a refugee from the war-torn country of Laos with her parents and her six younger siblings. With nothing but the clothes on their backs, the family finally settled in the southern part of the United States after spending a few years in refugee camps in Thailand and then moving to the Philippines where they were taught basic English and life skills that were meant to prepare them for life in their new home. Immediately upon arrival, my mother was enrolled in one of the only high schools in the city that had an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. With no more than five utterances of English, she was placed in the ninth grade. Being completely immersed in her new life, culture, and language, she recalled feeling lost and confused walking the halls of her new school. Despite the hardships she endured throughout her life, teachers did not acknowledge the cultural or linguistic differences she was experiencing. Even lunch was a unique undertaking because of the unfamiliar food and how students congregated at large tables to eat their individual lunches. In her home culture, food was eaten as communal dining, where everyone at the table shared meals together. The teachers failed to include students' experiences and backgrounds into learning, and school became extremely difficult and disconnected from her life. Even with the high expectations from the family to learn English and graduate from high school, and after only attending school for one year, she dropped out. She often retells these vivid memories with shame and regret while blaming herself and her intelligence for not completing school. Instead, she was in an educational system that did not build upon her agency as a student by failing to acknowledge her invaluable experiences, cultural tools, and language. Even though some aspects of ESL programs and policies have changed in the past few decades, the issues of educational inequality, the

opportunity gap, and social justice continue to be at the forefront for English Language Learners (ELLs) in America. Her story highlights how the education system failed to acknowledge, value, and include the personal background and uniqueness each person brings into the classroom to enhance learning and the need for supporting student agency in the lives of ELL students.

Years later, when I entered school as an ELL student, I quickly learned that to be successful in school, I needed to learn to adapt and adopt the dominant, middle-class culture and linguistic norms. The beliefs that non-dominant groups (such as immigrants) should conform to the linguistic and cultural norms of a particular society are called assimilationist discourses (de Jong, 2011). Early in school, I do not recall any instances of teachers acknowledging the culture, language, or traditions of my home life. Instead, I was praised for learning English so quickly and how instantaneously I "fit right in" to my native-speaking peers. My ability to speak my home language became weaker and I often felt conflicted by my culture at home and how it differed with the culture at school. One source of conflict was how I was expected to speak at home and school. At home, my actions were more reserved by speaking calmly and quietly to others. Loud expressions of feelings were a sign of disrespect and dishonor. Contrastingly, the expectations at school included projecting my voice loudly to speak and contributing ideas and thoughts freely in the classroom. From elementary school through high school, I remember being called on to answer questions and read aloud and feeling embarrassed, not because I could not read, instead it was the pressure of speaking loudly to the entire class. Body language with personal space and eye contact was also inconsistent with the expectation of the diversion of direct eye contact, especially with authority figures at home.

Because of the conflict I experienced in my schooling, as a teacher, I did not want my students to feel interference between their multiple cultures and languages. When I became a

teacher to students from diverse backgrounds and countries, I used my family's story as well as my own experiences to relate to my ELL students. I reflected on ways I could make school relevant to all students by connecting school to students' various cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and ways of knowing. I have a desire for students to share openly about their life at school, at home, and even in the community. Moreover, I want to engage students in issues of equity and justice.

When I think about important moments in teaching, the morning of November 9, 2016, will always stand out in my mind. That day was significant because it was the morning after President Donald Trump was elected. There were so many emotions that morning. Leading up to the date of election, Trump's slogan "Make America Great Again" echoed alongside his chants to "build a wall" along the border of Mexico and the United States as a way to address the "very big" problem of illegal immigration. Many teachers in my hall decided that they would not bring up the election due to the various emotions and opinions students might bring up in the classroom. I knew we needed to talk about what happened the night before. Students arrived at school that morning sad, angry, and even afraid. How could I just ignore what was happening? I could not just start teaching math or reading standards that morning because my students had something weighing heavily on their hearts and minds. I knew just what we needed to do. I gathered all of the students on the rug, and we started that day with a classroom morning meeting. We talked about how we felt- the good, the bad, and the ugly. Tears were shed that morning as students began to share with one another how they felt. Students talked about the fear of coming to school, deportation, and what it meant to have so many people elect someone who felt so strongly about deporting undocumented immigrants. That was the day that I realized how important it was to have morning meetings in my classroom.

Through this study, my aim was to give my students the space and time to share and learn about multiple diversities and ultimately to critique the education system that supports the dominant discourses of the United States- through storytelling and participating in culturally relevant morning meetings and to be able to assert their own stories and ideas that tell a counter-narrative. The social justice education framework that I utilized was Ladson-Billings (1994) *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP). This study focused on capturing the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students by observing and capturing their voices and reflections through their participation during culturally relevant morning meetings.

Statement of the Problem

The United States of America is historically known as the "land of opportunity" where millions of immigrants have fled their homes for the chance of freedom. At the root of this reputation is the American dream, which is an idea that every person who exhibits good work ethics, grit, and determination will have equal opportunities for happiness and success. A closer examination shows that the reality of the American dream is not equally accessible to everyone. Similarly, Horace Mann (1846), the "Father of American Education," had a vision for public schooling to be available and equal for all and believed that it would be "the great equalizer of the conditions of men". Despite that belief, the education system fosters inequalities in society which creates educational experiences for students that vary significantly between different communities of people.

Ultimately, there is still an immense amount of work that is needed in schools to change, challenge, and disrupt dominant discourses. Richard Shaull wrote in the foreword of Paulo Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

> There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creativity with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 34)

The current school system in the U.S. acts to carry on the inequalities that exist in society, but educators can confront those challenges head-on through questioning those oppressive beliefs and practices. Gloria Anzaldua (1999) wrote, "Awareness of our situation must come from inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society" (p. 109). Transformation begins with critical reflection and action.

Throughout the history of the United States, different policies and events have created an illusion of educational reformation and access to education as fair and equal for everyone. One assumption that prevails is that the outlawing of segregation provided the same opportunities in education were available for all children (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Since desegregation, many people believe that America has moved to a "postracial" society where race is no longer relevant (Alim, Rickford, & Ball, 2016). Those assumptions have reinforced the deficit idea that low achievement is not the result of unequal resources and support but stems from underlying causes from individuals and communities of color. Darling-Hammond (2014) elaborated, "Educational outcomes for students of color are, however, at least as much a function of their unequal access to key educational resources, both inside and outside of school, as they are a function of race, class, or culture" (p. 79). In recent years, the news reports continue to show that race, ethnicity, and even immigration "status" continue to be significant in the country. More specifically, since being elected as the 45th President of United States, Trump has made several controversial

statements particularly about immigrants and refugees, which contribute to the hegemonic discourses that are prevalent in the country. He called for a wall to be built along the U.S-Mexico border, the large-scale deportation of undocumented immigrants, and the ban of Muslim immigrants from particular countries from traveling to the United States. In 2018, Trump also announced that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA), an immigration policy that protects the deportation of individuals that were brought to the U.S. illegally as children, would be repealed. These hegemonic discourses perpetuate a deficit mindset of ELL students that Ruiz (1984) called the "language-as-problem" orientation. Teachers should be aware that students encounter and are exposed to these messages through the media and society and should prepare students to discuss these controversial topics in class. The factors that contribute to the educational disparity consists of unequal access to relevant and identity-affirming learning opportunities for English Language Learners (ELLs) that are built within institutions that only support the success of the dominant culture- the White, middle-class students.

Rather than creating a school environment that supports subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) and subtractive bilingualism (de Jong, 2011), which I have personally experienced, teachers should support pluralist discourses by creating a classroom that values and sustains students' linguistic and cultural diversities and experiences. de Jong highlights the *Principle of Affirming Identities*, which "examines how school policies and practices reflect respect for and affirm students' and teachers' diversity of linguistic and cultural experiences and beliefs" (p.175). Through legitimization and representation, this principle considers that when students sense validation and when learning is built upon their prior knowledge, motivation and engagement catalyzes learning. Some educators have also adopted the discourses of

colorblindness, where people believe that “race is not seen” (Alim, et. al., 2016). Although teachers are usually saying that they treat all of their students the same, “race and ethnicity often play important roles in children’s identities and contribute to their culture, their behavior, and their beliefs” (Teaching Tolerance, 2018). As seen in Heath’s (1983) study of various literacy practices in African American and White families, the norms of school reflected the dominant, White middle-class culture and language, which supported the learning of the White community and failed to recognize and increase the learning of students who did not fall into that particular group. Today, similar norms of school remain. By ignoring race and ethnicity, teachers may miss opportunities for bridging students’ experiences to the content.

At my school, there was an emerging problem with a subgroup of students identified as English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Even though almost half of the school population were ESOL students, this subgroup of students performed lower academically than their general education counterparts. Most teachers, whether they are ESOL certified or not, will have bilingual students and must act to support them (Samson & Collins, 2012). To address this problem, I believe it is vital that teachers utilize various practices to connect students’ backgrounds, knowledge, or experiences to the learning. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) defined culturally relevant teaching as, “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17-18). There is a need for teachers to implement culturally relevant practices to build a classroom community and environment that empowers all students, especially ESOL students. By intentionally making ESOL students cultural and linguistic discourses part of the daily practices and routines in the classroom, students can find that their experiences have value and can contribute to support learning in school.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore and capture the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students through participation in culturally relevant morning meetings. In this study, I specifically looked at fifth-grade elementary students. Most of the research in the area of ELLs is based on one particular framework that has been effective in multicultural classrooms, known as Geneva Gay's (2010) *culturally responsive teaching* (CRT). Gay defined it as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 106). There is an indication that when connections between students' lived experiences and academic knowledge take place, the information becomes more meaningful, which improves the educational outcomes. Much of the research for ELL students is based on culturally responsive teaching (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Santamaria, 2009; Torres-Velasquez & Lobo, 2005), because educators see the value of connecting students' home cultures with school culture. The focus of Gay's (2010) CRT is on the teaching methods that an educator uses to link students' background, interests, and needs to increase levels of engagement and to improve educational performances (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). However, Ladson-Billings targets pedagogy, which according to Aronson and Laughter (2016), "seeks to influence attitudes, dispositions, describing a posture a teacher might adopt that, when fully embodied, would determine planning, instruction, and assessment (p. 166-167). Many times, the two frameworks are used interchangeably, but the difference lies in the call for sociopolitical consciousness and action in culturally relevant pedagogy.

The theoretical underpinnings of CRP consist of three tenets: promote academic success, nurture and support cultural competence, and develop sociopolitical consciousness. Even though

Ladson-Billings (1995) identified these propositions from a study she conducted with African American students, they represent a "good teaching" philosophy that focuses on culture as the link to academic success (Lee, 2010). My focus will be on ELL students, more specifically, Latinx students. I have centered the study around Latinx students because of the long historical and ongoing discrimination and oppression that the Latinx population encounter on a daily basis. In her book, *The Dreamkeepers,* Ladson-Billings (1994) elaborates on issues around power structures in society. She stated, "Culturally relevant teaching is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exists in society" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 128). The gaps in achievement, which Ladson-Billings (2006) called the "education debt" lie deeper than how the teacher chooses to disseminate information to students. A closer examination of "education debt" revealed the systemic issues, also called the "opportunity gap" (Carter & Welner, 2013), cause disparities in access and resources needed for racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities to be academically successful.

Although culturally responsive teaching is a good start for teachers, culturally relevant pedagogy involves awareness and action needed to delegitimize power structures inside and outside of the school system. Little research has focused on sociopolitical consciousness and experiences of elementary ELL students' student agency. Along with the recent social movements of groups such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the Dreamers, teachers should direct students to "recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476) that exist not only in institutions like schools but also in society. Anzaldua (1999) stated, "Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the same person I was before" (p. 70). The discussions around immigration and border

control increase the vocal expression of damaging and hurtful narratives about particular multicultural and multi-lingual groups of people, mostly directed towards the deportation of the Latinx population. Therefore, researchers and teachers recognize the need for students to build upon their agency, "the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths" (Muhammad, 2014, p. 98) in schools.

In my research, I examined student perspectives and experiences in culturally relevant morning meetings to see if there is a change in their outlooks on school and the potential implications for agency. I provided the definitions for the key terms in the study in Appendix A. The aim of the study was to add to the existing literature for teaching ELL students through the lens of social justice education framed by culturally relevant pedagogy as there is a lack of research in the area of practices that elementary education teachers use to teach employ culturally relevant pedagogy during morning meetings with ELL students. With the growing number of ELL students that attend public school each year, I present additional insight on the needs of ELL students and how teachers utilize classroom meetings to meet the cultural, academic, and sociopolitical needs of these students.

Research Question

This study is guided by the following research question: What are the agentic experiences of 5th Grade Latinx ELL students as participants in culturally relevant morning meetings?

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Across the United States, there is steady growth in the diversity of students, especially with English Language Learners (ELL) and immigrants, in the public school system since the enacting of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act (Banks, 2004). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2017), in 2013-2014, there were an estimated 4.5 million students who were English Language Learners (ELLs) that made up 9.3 percent of the K-12 public school enrollment compared to the 4.2 million, or 8.8 percent, a decade before. The percentage is even higher in more urbanized areas. The United States Census Bureau (2015) reported that in metro areas such as Atlanta, there are at least 146 different languages spoken with 17% of students over five-years-old who speak a language other than English at home. In 2018, the Georgia Department of Education reported that more than 275,000 Hispanic students enrolled in schools compared to about 160,000 students a decade before, making this group the largest group of ELL students in Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, 2018). Although the make-up of the student population is changing, most of the teacher population remains mostly white and female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Teachers will find that

> many of their students will come to their classrooms with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds that are different from their own. When faced with the heterogeneous mixture of students in their classrooms, teachers must be prepared to teach all students (Coffey, 2008, para. 2),

which continues to be a complex challenge for educators. Regardless of the differences, public school teachers must provide an education that is equitable, just, and relevant for all students that enter the classroom. Educators must commit to making connections between learning and students' cultures and backgrounds. A social justice education framework that has grown in the

last few decades is *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP). In this chapter, I survey the emerging literature of social emotional learning (SEL) and student agency. I use the theoretical underpinnings of Latinx Critical Theory and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP) as a lens for understanding the historical and current education of ELLs, particularly Latinx children, who comprise the majority of the immigrant and second-generation youth in U.S. schools.

Culture and Language

To begin, it is important to acknowledge the intersectionality of culture and language. It is difficult to separate the two because they are often connected and intertwined. Culture consists of knowledge, beliefs, values, behaviors, and languages that groups of people share, usually through various methods of communication. The term culture alludes to what has been grown and groomed from the Latin word *colere* meaning "to cultivate" (Kramsch, 1998). More specifically, James A. Banks and Cherry Banks McGee (2009) explained that people within a shared culture usually interpret and place the same or similar meanings to symbols, artifacts, and behaviors. Multicultural students may share cultures with people in school, in their homes, in the community, and even through social media networks. The way that students behave, speak, and interact with others can shift depending on a physical location or if they are communicating with a certain group of people. Cultural norms also typically change the language that is used in certain social situations, which can affect Language learners when they are communicating with others. For example, thankfulness can be communicated in different ways. Growing up in the Lao culture, it was typical to accept birthday gifts and wait to open the gifts after guests went home. Whereas, in the American culture, I found that it was common to open gifts in the presence of the giver to show appreciation and thankfulness. This example is one way how one's culture can shape the interpretation of language.

Language is one method used to express ideas, facts, or events that are communicable because it is usually knowledge about a shared world between people (Kramsch, 1998). It is a system of signs that convey messages, which can include spoken, written, movement, visual arts, and symbols. Not only does the language people speak identify a particular culture a person belongs to, but the way language is used can also convey cultural value. Kramsch (1998) stated, "Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. Thus, language symbolizes cultural reality" (p. 3). It is difficult to use a language effectively if there is a lack of cultural understanding due to culture shaping people's use of language. One can be fluent in a language, but without an understanding of the culture, the wrong message could be conveyed, even if it is perfectly translated. For instance, Spanish is a language that is spoken in many countries. Each country has a unique culture with different traditions and expressions. Some of my students that speak Spanish grew up in a different country and moved to the United States. Others were born and raised in the United States but learned Spanish in their household. Not only is each individual understanding of the Spanish language different, but there is a variance in cultural backgrounds. The cultural and linguistic experiences of these students may be different, but there can also be a shared understanding of cultural values and beliefs. Language is constantly shifting and can shape culture as new experiences and understandings emerge from language. Therefore, language and culture share a strong link. Without culture, language can be misunderstood out of context. In the same manner, without language, culture can be misinterpreted. James A. Banks described that "Language is an integral part of culture and that students learn best when their culture as well as their language is respected, affirmed, and used in instruction when they are learning a second language" (Garcia, 2005, p. *x*) Many multi-lingual students may shift or compartmentalize

particular language when they are at home or school. Instead, by bridging the gap between home and school, learning opportunities increase. Educators need to understand the diversity among ELL students and honor the "funds of knowledge" (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) or the experiences and expertise that students bring with them to school, both cultural and linguistic understandings and backgrounds. In the next section, I explain the historical background and policies for educating ELLs in the United States.

English Language Learners

An English Language Learner is "any student who is in the process of attaining proficiency in English as a new, additional language" (Wright, 2015, p. 1). In 2015, the ELL student population was the fastest growing with an estimated 4.8 million enrolled in public schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018; Breiseth, 2015). It is important to note that although there is a single classification for students learning English, ELLs include a heterogeneous group of people, including immigrants, refugees, indigenous, and native U.S.-born students who may not be fully proficient in English. Furthermore, proficiency in languages, levels of schooling, and parents' educational backgrounds can vary greatly among ELL students. These diversities, along with the growing number of cross-cultural factors (i.e., culture, race, ethnicity, and linguistics) encompassed by students, challenge the traditional education system and question the most effective curriculum and instruction used to educate children. In one monumental court case, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) faced a class action suit because only about 1,000 Chinese-speaking students out of the 2,856 students were provided with supplemental English language courses, leaving 1,800 students with English-only instruction. The students believed that the SFUSD did not afford them equal education opportunities and violated their Fourteenth Amendment rights. Ultimately,

the U.S. Supreme Court ruled a decision to provide a more equitable school experience for multilinguals, which required school districts to implement education programs and additional support for students who were not fully proficient in English. As a result, public school teachers have the responsibility to educate all children who enter schools and provide students with an equitable education. M. J. Adler (2013) said, "To give the same quality of schooling to all requires a program of study that is both liberal and general, and that is, in several, crucial, overarching respects, one and the same for every child" (p. 185). Because the quality of education should be the same for each child, teachers should inquire about students' home languages and cultures, prior schooling experiences, and literacy practices, not to be used as additional labels, but to have a better understanding of various factors that affect students' learning and address the issues of identity and power (Wright, 2015). Although many believe that the topic of educating ELLs is a new phenomenon, it is crucial for educators who work with ELLs to understand the historical and current policies that affect students and classroom practices.

A History of Assimilation for ELLs

At the beginning of the school system in the United States, education was not designed with all people in mind. Most of the students were wealthy and white. Because curriculum and instruction were designed with that particular population at the core of education, obstacles arose with the onset of compulsory public schools and the encounters with a more diverse student population. In the early 1900s, immigrants mostly arrived from European countries. The Cardinal Principles (National Education Association of the United States, 1918) addressed the need for reorganization of secondary schools due to the increased number of students entering high school with "individual differences in capacities and aptitudes" (p. 8). During this time, the

goal of education and democracy was “to organize society that each member may develop his personality primarily through activities designed for the well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole” (p. 9). Although there was differentiation regarding vocational paths, the educational leaders believed that there needed to be more plans for unification. The Cardinal Principles pointed out that the United States was not like other countries which had “social solidarity” since there was a commonality amongst the people, whether through heredity or religious beliefs (p. 22). This statement implied a lack of unification in the United States because of the diversity within the nation. The presence of linguistic and cultural diversity was never denied, but multilingualism and multiculturalism were recognized as potential problems that could lead to a divided and conflicted society that interfered with the desired aim of national unity. The educators during that time believed that “the school is one agency that may be controlled definitely and consciously by our democracy for the purpose of unifying its people” (p. 22). The way to unite people was through the institution of education to ensure every student shared “common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought, feeling, and action” (p. 32). In other words, students were encouraged to be alike by suppressing differences to be unified. Being a uniform nation became synonymous with a united nation. Educational policies and programs began to reflect assimilationist discourses through socializing students from various backgrounds to the cultural norms of the mainstream. One of the responses of the assimilationist discourse was the Americanization movement. Within the movement, Americanization laws passed in more than 30 states required immigrants unable to speak or read English to attend evening schools (de Jong, 2011; Pavlenko, 2005). During this time, the debate around immigration focused on language (speaking English) as a quality needed to be considered a good (real) American (de Jong, 2011). As a result, rapid linguistic assimilation to English took

place in the United States. Documentation revealed that the language shift typically transpired within three generations, where the grandchildren of new immigrants can hardly speak the same language as their ancestors (Nieto, 2009; Schmidt, 2000). According to J. A. Banks (2004/2008), "Unity without diversity results in cultural repression and hegemony" (p. 300). One effect of assimilation is the feelings of frustration and conflict that many immigrant students faced when forced to abandon a language or culture. Another significant consequence of linguistic assimilation for immigrants was higher dropout rates and lower grades (Crawford, 2004). Sonia Nieto (1992) observed that instead of using students' experiences as a foundation for learning, curriculum, and pedagogy ignored and silenced the rich lived experiences of millions of students. The linguistic policies and restrictions throughout history by the dominant group in society were used to have social control over particular (minority) groups of people. Instead, to be a truly united nation in the United States, individuals with multiple language repertoires and diverse cultures should be accepted, included, and reflected in the classroom.

Federal Policy for ELLs in the U.S.

To ensure the consideration of students' needs when making decisions about curriculum and instruction, Dewey (1902) stated, "The child is the starting point, the center, and the end" (p. 9). Once teachers understand the background of the child, then she or he can find the starting point for learning and decide how to make the curriculum relevant to the lives of students. Many times, the curriculum is the starting point without considering the children's prior experiences. Jane Addams (1908/2013) emphasized the importance of making connections between schools and (immigrant) students' past so that students can understand the value of, not only the American way of life, but also their parents' language, history, and traditions. One of the reasons schools fail is due to a cultural difference where there is a conflict between school and culture

(Ladson-Billings, 1995). This cultural conflict was evident during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. In the time of desegregation, there was a demand for schools to provide curriculum and textbooks that reflected the community of both people of color and for students with non-English language backgrounds (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005/2013). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 led the way for federal responsibility for the success of language minority students. Petrzela (2010) stated, "It [ESEA of 1965] signaled a shift from the notion that students should be afforded equal educational opportunity to the idea that educational policy should work to equalize academic outcomes, even if such equity demanded providing different learning environments" (p. 408). Following that legislation, the Bilingual Educational Act of 1968 focused on providing opportunities for equal education for language minorities, which was the first federal education language policy for ELLs. Additionally, the Supreme Court case, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), resulted in a significant decision that revealed that the lack of supplemental language instruction infringed upon the civil rights of English language learners. Therefore, in the 1980s, curriculum in multicultural and bilingual education was formed.

In the early 1980s, there was an emphasis on research and development on effective instructional models for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Sleeter & Stillman, 2005/2013). Researchers agreed that the most valuable practices included contextualized instruction along with making connections among thinking, values, culture, language, and identity (Center for Research on Education, 2002). Soon after educators recognized the importance of including culture in curriculum and instruction, things shifted. Change came when *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was published, stating, "The world is indeed one global village. We live among determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors. America's position in the world may once have been reasonably

secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer" (p. 14). Concern rushed over the United States that students needed more math and science education to be as advanced as other nations, which brought in the standards movement. Critics (Bloom, 1989; Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1992) began blaming the multicultural and bilingual curriculum for failure to meet those high expectations. Sleeter and Stillman (2005/2013) wrote, "They [critics] charged that multiculturalism was damaging education and social cohesion, and that multicultural and bilingual curricula were intellectually weak, addressing minority student achievement in damaging ways by appealing mainly to self-esteem rather than hard work and intellectual challenge" (p. 256). To address the need for the same standards in a multicultural society, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was passed, which required each state to form high standards and measurable goals in basic skills for all students. However, with that standardization also came high-stakes testing, which placed emphasis on quantitative measures of learning. Oftentimes, the blame is placed on bilingual education as the source of low academic skills and learning. Instead, the policies, structure, and beliefs about schools in the United States need to be examined for multilingual students. The decisions surrounding curriculum and instruction were taken out of the hands of teachers and local school districts, those who work directly with the school community, and placed into the hands of the state boards of education and other state government leaders.

Furthermore, educators have the duty to teach students both how to function in the United States as citizens, as well as, how to work with other people, regardless of the differences in beliefs and cultures. Banks (2004/2008) said, "Citizenship education should help students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in their nation-states as well as in a diverse world society" (p. 301). Schooling is not all about the information learned from the

curriculum; certainly, other invaluable skills are needed. Based on a survey of middle-level teachers, a list was compiled that prioritized qualities students needed prior to receiving employment, and it included critical-thinking skills, problem-solving strategies, effective interpersonal skills, acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures (Brown, 2006/2008). John Dewey (1929/2013) said, "The school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home" (p. 35). Making connections in this sense "is the only way of securing continuity in the child's growth, the only way of giving a background of past experience to the new ideas given in school" (p. 35). Connections can be difficult to make when there is a lack of understanding or knowledge about different cultures. Howard (1999) stated in his book title, "We can't teach what we don't know." However, just like educators have an obligation to study and plan the curriculum, the same amount of consideration should be placed on building cultural understanding. If teachers fail to recognize the impact of a student's cultural background, the student could feel alienated or rejected within the classroom. Jane Addams (1908/2013) wrote, concerning the immigrant child,

> The children long that the school teacher should know something about the lives their parents lead. The immigrant child cannot make this demand upon the school because he does not know how to formulate it; it is for the teacher both to perceive it and to fulfill it. (p. 43)

I agree that educators must find a way to use diversity in the classroom to affirm that students' identities matter. Even with federal and state policies in place for ELLs, the local school and its educators have a significant role and responsibility to ensure programs for ELLs and the teaching of ELLs are consistent with equitable pluralistic discourses and practices.

Latinx Education in the United States

One particular group that makes up the majority of the ELL population and who have faced historical political and educational obstacles is the Latinx population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), the Latinx population in the United States continues to be on the rise. The Latinx population includes "anybody who self identifies as Hispanic or Latinx and traces their descent from a country or people who identify themselves as Hispanic or Latinx, generally from Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America, Portugal, Brazil, or Spain" (Passel & Taylor, 2009, p. 3). Although the U.S. Census Bureau labeled this group as Hispanics or Latina/o, I will use the gender-neutral term *Latinx*. For the purpose of this study, I will generalize my findings to the Latinx population but also recognize that even within one particular cultural group, diversity is great. In 2016, 57.5 million people of the Latinx origin comprised 17.9% of the entire U.S. population, which made Latinx the largest ethnic or racial minority group. A diverse mix of countries comprises the Latinx group with 35.8 million from Mexico, 5.4 million from Puerto Rico, 2.2 million from El Salvador, and 2.1 million from Cuba (Flores, 2017). With the growth of the Latinx population comes an increase in the number of students enrolled in school each year. An estimated 17.9 million Latinx students were enrolled in schools making up 22.7% of all students enrolled in schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Throughout the history of the United States, the educational experiences of Latinx students are of accumulated disadvantages. Therefore, it is crucial to critically examine and understand the history of the treatment of Latinx students in the United States.

The Americanization of Latinx Children

Beginning in the 19th-century, "Manifest Destiny" drove the U.S. to expand the territory across the continent, which eventually led to the Mexican-American War over the status of

Texas. The Manifest Destiny ideals also led to an increase in the dislocation and mistreatment of Native Americans and Hispanics. By 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war, but not without severe consequences for those of Mexican-origin. One result was that those who stayed in the territory were now considered Mexican-American, and although they were given U.S. citizens' rights, the dominant Anglo-Americans did not recognize and honor those rights. Discrimination of color and race was prevalent during this time in U.S. history, and many Mexicans were considered inferior, especially those who had a darker skin tone. Ultimately, the war designated the status of Mexicans as a conquered people (Verdugo, 2006). The narrative of Mexican Americans encompasses numerous challenges of an educational system that has been historically oppressive and inequitable.

San Miguel and Valencia (1998) examined the plight and struggle for Mexican Americans in public schools that were stimulated by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). Before the conquest of the U.S., Mexican children attended schools that were established by religious institutions, including the Catholic and Protestant churches. After the treaty, the U.S. officials began providing Mexican-origin children the chance to attend public schools, although they were mostly segregated schools, since they were mostly committed to educating White children (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). This period of varying educational access reflected the systemic discrimination Mexican-origin children faced and showed how schools played a significant role in enforcing the new social ranking in the U.S.

In the late nineteenth century, the purpose of schooling changed from literary and religious education to "Americanizing" cultural identities of "foreigners" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). In the beginning, additive Americanization teaching practices took place in Catholic schools that encouraged and maintained the cultural and linguistic practices of Mexican

children. These practices were culturally relevant and affirmed students' identity because schools were organized and run by the local Mexican American community as well as Catholic Church leaders. Originally, public schools also adopted additive Americanization practices, but soon felt that "the public school needed to be transformed into an essentially American institution before it could successfully embark on its historic task of transforming the ethnic identities of those perceived to be foreigners" (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998, p. 360). The public school quickly converted to a subtractive Americanization establishment and began stripping away cultural and linguistic diversities in exchange for more (Anglo) American forms of culture, including adopting English-only policies (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). During this time, Americanization educational practices continued to spread throughout Puerto Rico and stressed the "American way of life," including policies and English language mandates (Verdugo, 2006, p. 17). Since the push for Anglo-American-centered education, the instructional courses and textbooks contained only the point of view of the white, hegemonic narrative. Consequently, the curriculum and account of history, especially in the Southwest, is only told through the dominant Anglo-American perspective, which tends to minimalize and misrepresent the role that people of Mexican-origin played in U.S. history (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Public schooling, in terms of educational material and historical accounts in America, has not changed much since that time.

Evidence of subtractive schooling practices is still visible in schools today. Angela Valenzuela (1999/2013) wrote, "Schooling involves either adding on a second culture and language or subtracting one's original culture and language" (p. 292). The addition of a second culture would result in multiculturalism or bilingualism, which should be a goal of education. Instead, some educators ask students to take away culture and language in school because of the

fear that it hinders the student from learning. Valenzuela gives an example of the "No Spanish" rules that took place in the 1970s, which led students' cultural identities to diminish (p. 293). Assimilationist citizenship education results in the loss of students' original cultures, languages, ethnic identities, feelings of alienation within their own family or community, and even social and political alienation (Banks, 2004/2008). Contrastingly, teachers should differentiate the curriculum and instruction to embrace the students' culture and bridge the learning experience so that students can find worth in their unique cultural identities. Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasized a way for students to preserve their cultural integrity while achieving academic success is through teachers' development of cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach children with various diversities in ethnicities, races, and social classes.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Framework

The pedagogical framework embedded within this research design is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that culturally relevant teaching involves students utilizing their culture to both maintain it and overcome the adverse effects of the dominant culture. This description of CRP aligns with the critical pedagogy theorists, Giroux and Simon (1988), who believed that practicing pedagogy is both a political and practical activity to intentionally generate experiences that address and critique issues of knowledge and power in the curriculum. For ELL teachers and students, the critiques also involve language education. Critical pedagogy in ELL-focused classrooms emphasizes that "language is not simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future" (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1). Ladson-Billings conducted her study with African American students but found that it represented a "good teaching" philosophy

that focuses on culture as the link to academic success (Lee, 2010). Through this critical lens, using CRP can support both language learning and content learning for ELL students. The three criteria of a culturally relevant classroom include (a) developing and maintaining cultural competence, (b) achieving academic success, and (c) developing of critical consciousness to challenge the status quo. The goal is for students to attain academic success without eliminating their cultural integrity.

Overall, culturally relevant pedagogy is an effective framework for English Language Learners to affirm both language learning and core skills. Supporting ELL students include utilizing their various cultures and linguistic abilities to bridge prior knowledge to new knowledge. By using CRP, teachers act as change agents for commonly marginalized students.

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence refers to one's ability to have cultural self-awareness, value diversity, and understand the social and historical dynamics of societies to address the need for academic improvement (The Historic Journey, 2010). The aim of one study (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010) with 12 newcomer ELL students in Grades 3-5 was to increase the reading and writing skills of Iraqi refugee students using CRP. At first, the teachers failed to see that the cultural conflict was causing distress in content learning. In one instance, a Kurdish girl, named Nigar, refused to finish reading an easy children's book about a family and their pet. The teacher assumed she was too embarrassed to read the book but later discovered that the story included a part that went against the cultural norms of the student's religious belief. Because of the cultural conflict, Nigar was not able to be successful in the learning content. The teacher began infusing the curriculum with students' former and current experiences to confirm the significance of their culture within the academic realm. Results showed that by encouraging students to use their oral

tradition of telling personal stories, students were able to use their backgrounds "as a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 161). Through experiential narrative writing, students improved their writing and conventional skills. The students realized that written expression, which they considered a Western tradition, could enhance the Iraqi tradition of telling stories about significant events in their lives. The teacher supported and increased their content knowledge of the English language, both oral and written, by utilizing their cultural strengths and identities.

Academic Success

The second aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy is that students experience academic success. Ladson-Billings' (1995b) key message is that culturally relevant pedagogy is not just about improving the self-esteem of students, but the bottom line is that they exhibit academic excellence. CRP "requires that teachers attend to students' academic needs, not merely make them 'feel good.' The trick...is to get students to 'choose' academic excellence" (p. 160). Several studies (Choi, 2013; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010; Souryasack & Lee, 2007) found positive correlations between the implementation of CRP and achieving success in content and skills. This aspect of CRP has been a challenge for researchers to capture and to prove CRP's effectiveness because policy-makers desire outcomes-based data, such as test scores, although educators might consider academic success as students pursuing life-long learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). With that in mind, other domains reported under the category of life-long learning showed increases in student achievement (Hill, 2012), student interest in content (Choi, 2013), student ability to be involved in discourses about content (Civil & Khan, 2001), and confidence when taking standardized tests (Hubert, 2013). The ideas of student achievement must be broadened from only using standardized test scores to incorporating more qualitative measures that

constitute validation (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Overall, the purpose of using culturally relevant pedagogy for ELL students is to promote language and content learning through classroom instruction that focuses on utilizing students' cultures and linguistic abilities to achieve academic success and critique social justice issues that exist in their lives.

Sociopolitical Consciousness

The last criterion within the CRP framework is the development of sociopolitical consciousness. Teachers must direct students to "recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476) that exist not only in institutions like schools but also in society. Before helping children to do this, teachers must first develop their own cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach children with various diversities in ethnicities, races, and social classes (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In one particular case study, Choi (2013) explored the practices of social studies teachers that enacted CRP with immigrant ELL students. The teacher, Mr. Moon, who was an immigrant himself, had a difficult time connecting to the school and the curriculum when he was a student. In college, he read Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and said the book changed his life. He made it a goal to be a critical educator. As a history teacher, Mr. Moon believed that the curriculum was "too Eurocentric" and marginalized the "so called Third World" countries from which his students migrated. Instead of following the sequential order to teach World History, he placed religion at the center of the curriculum and involved students' beliefs and perspectives to lead discussions about how religion influenced events in the world. Students actively participated in discussions and asked questions that were sometimes controversial and led to conflict. However, Mr. Moon helped students develop a cross-cultural understanding of equity and social justice. Through the teacher's recognition of the dominant culture in the curriculum, he developed different

instructional practices that built students' knowledge about World History. Students engaged in discourse about dealing with conflict, which promoted tolerance for critical perspectives that arise with diversity.

By participating in culturally relevant activities in the classroom, ELLs can gain the experience and knowledge to be engaged citizens of a pluralistic society.

CRP and Elementary ELL Classrooms

More recently, culturally relevant pedagogy is expanding from the traditional ESL classrooms to dual language (DL) programs and the emergence of translanguaging classrooms. Alanis and Rodriguez (2008) found that one elementary DL program was successful for over a decade due to several factors. Teachers reflected and shifted their beliefs about the curriculum and instruction that would best meet the needs of their students. The school also valued students' various cultural and linguistic backgrounds by supporting the notion of equal status of languages, not placing one above another. Another trend in language education is translanguaging (Yip & Garcia, 2015), which is a more fluid type of bilingual education, where multilingual students choose when and what to do with their language. Palmer, Martinez, Mateus, and Henderson (2014) stated that in elementary translanguaging classrooms, students feel more empowered to engage in sensitive topics (e.g., immigration, identity) and were more likely to take risks to express themselves. In our growing pluralistic society, educators must embrace that students who enter our classroom might have multicultural backgrounds and even speak more than one language. Although my focus is not on dual language programs and translanguaging, I wanted to recognize and honor the critical work that is currently being researched in these spaces. By implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, elementary teachers bridge the gap early for ESOL students and provide an equitable education for those who are systematically underserved.

Learning opportunities for students who are marginalized, which include Latinx English Language Learners (ELLs), should be culturally relevant and educators should provide students with the tools and opportunities to include their agency and to challenge oppressive and social inequities in schools and society.

LatCrit Theory

One theoretical framework that supports culturally relevant pedagogy is critical race theory. The father of critical race theory, Derrick Bell, analyzed and critiqued the intersection of race, law, and power, and pointed out that experiences of Whites were embedded into structures of education and law unknowingly as the normative standard (Lynn, 1999; Bell, 1995; Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013). These ideas laid the groundwork in the educational domain for critical race pedagogy, a term first coined by Marvin Lynn, who explored the commitment of African Americans to social justice education. Lynn (1999) defined critical race pedagogy as

> an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences, and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color. This approach necessarily leads to an articular and broad interpretation of emancipatory pedagogical strategies and techniques that proved to be successful with racially and culturally subordinated students. (p. 615)

Even though the work of Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995) does not focus solely on the work of exemplary African American teachers, the pedagogy of the culturally relevant teachers utilized the students' African American culture to promote competence to operate in a White society (Lynn, 1999). Ladson-Billings (2000) stated, "The 'gift' of CRT is that it unapologetically challenges the scholarship that would dehumanize and depersonalize us" (p. 272). Critical Race Pedagogy looks at identities as multidimensional but keeps race as the primary aspect of

critically analyzing schooling in the United States. Tatum (1999) wrote about how White privilege is oftentimes invisible and embedded into societal institutions and structures as the norm. More distinctively, in the field of education, the norm is set as the standards for success. Therefore, anything outside of those educational standards are devalued and inferior and contribute to the educational inequities that exist in the United States.

Latinx Critical Theory (LatCrit) is an extension of Critical Race Theory and shifts the racial discourse from Black and White to one that includes the multiple faces, voices, and experiences specific to the Latinx population. Additionally, both frameworks challenge ideas of colorblindness and meritocracy and how those ideas further marginalize people of color while advancing Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 1994). LatCrit highlights and centers the experiences of Latinx in the United States, which includes immigration, diversity within the Latinx communities and languages, and others, to better understand the experiences of those who have a long history of oppression and being silenced (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). More specifically, Francisco Valdes (1998) described that LatCrit has four functions: (1) the production of knowledge, (2) the advancement of transformation, (3) the expansion and connection of struggles, and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition. The school system in the United States tends to focus on what Latinx students lack when considering academic achievement and success. Instead, by using the lens of a Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and mostly the LatCrit framework (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), I (the researcher) have a better understanding and a more focused examination of unique modes of oppression that marginalized students may encounter as teachers and curriculum interact with students and their families.

The LatCrit theoretical framework values the knowledge that the Latinx students bring into the classroom, acknowledge the social injustices within the educational and societal structures, and seeks to push against the dominant discourses through social transformation and action. I believe LatCrit helped bring to light those challenges and experiences from students of color in research and practices in education. The key is to investigate the failures of schools to educate students of color and identify ways to build a classroom environment that fosters student agency by recognizing and integrating the identities, abilities, and knowledge of diverse groups of people. One argument against LatCrit theorists viewed alternative ways of knowing and understanding as subjective and only represent personal stories and narratives of a few people. Simon (1999) stated, "Instead of scientifically investigating whether rewarding individuals according to merit has any objective basis, [they] insist on telling stories about their personal struggles" (p. 3). However, those critics do not acknowledge that White privilege heavily influences the education system in the United States that many believe the system is meritocratic, unbiased, and fair. However, those stories, beliefs, and perspectives of people of color are so often ignored that they are not honored as reliable practices of research. Delgado Bernal (2002) wrote explicitly about what LatCrit achieves for research,

> It does mean that one acknowledges and respects other ways of knowing and understanding, particularly the stories and narratives of those who have experienced and responded to different forms of oppression. This has not been the case in education , where for too long, family cultural narratives have not been considered a legitimate part of research or practice. (p. 3)

Therefore, my research is designed to infuse culturally relevant pedagogy into classroom morning meetings and capture the agentic experiences of ELL students. By highlighting the

Latinx students' stories and experiences, I intend to support their ways of knowing as credible and meaningful. The LatCrit theoretical framework laid the groundwork for the important components of morning meetings and the analysis of data. The next section is a synthesis of the literature I examined of researchers' definitions of agency in their studies.

Research on Student Agency

I highlight literature that incorporated various ways that teachers created curriculum and instruction to develop agency in K-12 students through centering voice, creating a space for choice, and the cultivation of problem-solving skills. By understanding student agency and how it has been developed and conceptualized in the elementary, middle, or high school classrooms, elementary ELL students can have the opportunity and autonomy to center their voices and experiences in the educational setting. This work has the capacity to change the ways teachers and scholars interact, support, and teach English Language Learners, which can boost students' engagement and motivation to be successful academically, socially, and emotionally.

Why agency?

When examining the studies on the establishment of student agency, I also inquired the reasons researchers and educators focused on agency as an essential component to teaching. Lewis, Enciso, and Moje (2007) explained that agency is "the strategic making and remaking of ourselves, identities, activities, relationships, cultural tools and resources, and histories, as embedded within relations of power" (p.18). The social, cultural, and historical backgrounds of students are accounted for, and when those variables are invited into the classroom, opportunities arise for relevant and authentic teaching and learning. I discovered that scholars believed when students act upon their sense of agency, students take more ownership of their learning, there is an increase in learning engagement, and students are inclined to situate themselves more as

active learners and not simply passive learners (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Vaughn (2014) emphasized that student agency is a vital part of classroom instruction "when learning is viewed as a complex site where students engage in learning, question the world at hand, and make meaning of the learning situation as a way to inform their world, school, and learning" (p. 5). Therefore, educators should have an understanding of the way agency can be defined and the diverse methods agency can be practiced. Teachers have a distinct role in promoting agency in the school setting so that students feel success and ownership in learning.

Defining Student Agency

After a closer look, I discovered that there were three significant interpretations of student agency I found through my survey of 15 pieces of literature. I described how each interpretation used the term agency in the studies. The articles in this review along with the definition or explanation of student agency and the themes that I coded as themes from the literature are listed in chronological order in Table 1.

Table 1

Types of Agency

Author(s)	**How agency was defined/explained**	**Type of Agency**
Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, and Cain (1998)	"Agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations, mediated by these senses and sensitivities. They opportunistically use whatever is at hand to affect their position in the cultural game in the experience of which they have formed these sets of dispositions" (p. 279).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Miron and Lauria (1998)	"Human agency (the intentional capacity to identify and implement alternatives) is most readily evidenced by the presence of student resistance" (p. 189-190).	Voice Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Arias (2006)	"Rather than have students write to prove an already agreed-on idea, we discussed creating assignments that reinforced agency in the student writer" (p. 93). "I have seen students find their voice in writing ethnography because they embrace the process of discovery" (p. 93).	Choice Voice

Reyes III (2009)	"The student then builds upon that understanding as a point of departure for learning and uses those words of encouragement, wisdom, and such as fuel for his or her agency and potential in accomplishing a particular goal" (p. 116).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Goodman and Eren (2013)	"An abstract agreement on giving children agency, however, still leaves much unresolved, for decisions have to be made regarding how much voice, under what circumstances, and with what degree of independence from adults" (p. 124).	Voice
Muhammad (2014)	"the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths" (p. 450).	Voice
Vaughn (2014)	"the ability for students to act upon and modify their world" (p. 5).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio (2016)	"Stories can be a tool for creating a workable identity, for growing agency and for bridging into the curriculum" (p. 491).	Voice
Muhammad and Gonzalez (2016)	"given space to project their voice and given a platform to share the ideas, values, and beliefs they negotiate, which provides a sense of control in their struggle for identity" (p. 450)	Voice
Shapiro, Cox, and Simnit (2016)	"by building options for students and by working to increase awareness so those students can make informed decisions about those options" (p. 48).	Choice Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Williams (2017)	"A sense of personal integrity implies a respect and appreciation for the unique attributes of the individual" (p. 10) "Students have efficacy when they are empowered to take strategic steps to accomplish their goals" (p. 10).	Voice Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Philips and Griffith (2017)	"Building a strong sense of agency is important because it leads to becoming a strategic writer, with the writer empowered by his/her knowledge of how to plan, draft, revise, and edit writing" (p. 28).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Tishman and Clapp (2017)	"a sense that it's possible to reshape the way things are by directing one's actions purposefully" (p. 58). "problem solving starts with having a sense of agency and seeing the world as malleable"	Problem Solving/ Taking Action
Johnson (2018)	"refers to an individual's ability to take action and ultimately achieve his or her goals" (p. 4).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action Voice
Vaughn (2018)	"refers to students' ability to define and act on their own goals" (p. 63).	Problem Solving/ Taking Action

Centering voice. Six studies described and enacted one distinguishing type of agency which placed voice at the center of each study. In particular, student agency was linked to "the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths" (Muhammad, 2014, p. 98). Scholars discussed centering voice with secondary students through the avenue of expressive literacies to develop student agency. Furthermore, the researchers examined how students' voices were used to develop critical/Critical thinkers and viewers of texts, curriculum, schools, and community.

Muhammad and Gonzalez (2016) presented how the expression and participation in writing and performing slam poetry is an artistic resistance to the current political and social issues that need attention. By using slam poetry as the platform to project one's voice, youth can "share the ideas, values, and beliefs they negotiate, which provides a sense of control in their struggle for identity" (p. 450). Slam provides youth with a unique opportunity to verbally express themselves to an enthralled audience, which boosts students' confidence and agency to represent and redefine their lives as they live it in a changing world. Similarly, Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio (2016) also investigated the use of word-slam, a similar form of personal story-telling, as an instrument to develop agency with high schoolers. The authors explained that young people from marginalized and oppressed groups are usually not aware that their voice needs to be part of the social narrative, which historically has been neglected, overlooked, or ignored (Ben-Yosef & Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016). However, it became apparent that "by standing up and telling our stories of struggles, challenges, strengths, dream—we pronounce to the world: 'Count me in! My life matters'" (p. 487). Both of these articles affirmed that slam poetry is one method that educators can utilize to acknowledge the multiple identities of youth and provide students with the

opportunity to not only explore their place in the world but also to critique the world in which they live.

Arias (2008) also used voice to affirm and provide a space for students, specifically secondary English Language Learners, to insert their viewpoints and voice through the expression of writing ethnographies. The author stated, "They [students] are encouraged to hypothesize, question, discover new knowledge, and become the authority of that discovery in the classroom" (p. 97), which gives students the agency to embed their perspectives and experiences into their writing. Educators feel empowered when students' voices were strengthened and become more powerful (Johnson, 2018). Not only can a student's voice impact her/his academic life, but it also can increase agency in the social and emotional lives with others in the classroom and throughout the community.

Miron and Lauria (1998), one of the early articles that had a spotlight on agency, explored student voice through a different avenue, which was semi-structured interviews in two inner-city high schools. Voice in this study referred to students' verbal expressions and responses to questions about their beliefs and attitudes towards teachers, school work, and social relationships with classmates and the community in a comparative case study. Additionally, Miron and Lauria used the lens of identity politics to examine how students at the two distinctive schools used the awareness of their identities and voice to resist or accommodate the formal and hidden curriculums that existed within their schools. In the same manner, Goodman and Eren's (2013) study focused on students in an urban high school and their distribution of voice through encouraging students to be co-constructors of the curriculum through student agency projects that intentionally addressed issues of social injustice within their school and community, such as metal detectors and the planning of a food drive. Both of these articles observed how students

inserted their voices and ideas into the curriculum and schooling and aimed to understand how much openly expressing their views and thoughts of their schooling experiences and the power structure that comes with that reality.

The last article from Williams (2017), which used voice as the focal point of the study, was the only article that was written from the lens of school librarians. I believe that this article shares an important message for educators, that is, student agency is an ongoing pedagogical practice that requires teachers to tune into students' voices and create an intentional and purposeful space for their voices to lead to action. The message requires a shift for teachers to analyze their own teaching practices and challenge the structures and guidelines that are currently in place. All six articles in this section noted the need for students and teachers to challenge and resist the hegemonic structures that have historically affected and currently still oppress students from marginalized groups. By listening and acknowledging individual student voices in the classroom, learning can become culturally relevant and responsive to the youth that enter our rooms on a daily basis.

Creating space for choice. In this section, I survey the literature around establishing choice as another form of student agency. Although I found limited research in this area, I believe that it is significant to analyze how the following study created a space for choice for students (Shapiro, Cox, Shuck, & Simnit, 2016; Arias, 2008). Continuing on the previous trend of using literacy (writing) to teach for agency, Shapiro et. al. (2016) articulated that one of the main elements includes, "building options for students and working to increase awareness so those students can make informed decisions about those options" (p. 48). In this article, the authors developed a discussion around agency specifically for students with linguistic diversities. It is vital that educators help students recognize that options are available for students to make

informed decisions on the different ways to incorporate authentic parts of self into writing. This article recognized that students from diverse backgrounds come with valuable experiences and knowledge about the world that may not be accepted, honored, or respected in educational spaces, especially when it comes to languages other than English. Teachers should expand the understanding and acceptance of various linguistic abilities and allow for student choice when expressing themselves not only through writing but also verbally. Importantly, the authors stated that promoting student agency places trust in the hands of students and leaves space for students to both thrive and sometimes stumble in the process. Nonetheless, by giving students the opportunity to make their own choices, teaching for agency can be rewarding when students learn from mistakes, establish resiliency, and have the opportunity to be their authentic selves.

Cultivating problem solving skills. The third type of agency takes on the form of setting goals and taking the necessary action to reach those goals. Through textual analysis, researchers identified that agency "refers to an individual's ability to take action and ultimately achieve his or her goals" (Johnson, 2018, p.4). I found ten articles and books that described the central aspect of enacted agency as students' abilities to problem-solve, persevere, and redirect one's action purposefully through imagining new scenarios (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Miron and Lauria, 1998; Reyes III, 1009; Vaughn, 2014; Shapiro et al., 2016; Williams, 2017; Philips & Griffith, 2017; Tishman & Clapp, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Vaughn, 2018). Personal integrity, an appreciation and respect of an individual's character and unique experiences, and efficacy, the strategic ability to accomplish a goal, are important to understanding this type of student agency (Williams, 2017). Therefore, agency in this manner brings together centering one's voice, recognizing the different choices we have in each situation, and following through with the action even when faced with obstacles. Through the harmonic integration of both

personal integrity and efficacy, students develop the understanding that they are the fundamental agents of their learning.

Philips and Griffith (2017) considered the role that decision making has on actions during writing conferences in a fourth-grade classroom. In this article, agency is defined as "the belief that there is a connection between what one does and what happens as a result" (p. 29). The teacher, Sara, used self-evaluations to encourage the assertion of student agency by helping students recognize what they already know and what they need help with as a writer. This self-evaluation provided a roadmap for students to identify their problems and be strategic in their methods to address their weaknesses. The hope is that students who have a strong sense of agency will feel capable and empowered to be successful writers. In another primary school setting, Johnson (2018) suggested using read-alouds with students to build student agency. The author recalled a situation from her own childhood when her mother committed suicide and how she buried herself in the stories she read to cope with the trauma she experienced. Although students are in control of how much personal information they will share in class, Johnson believed that read-alouds provides a way for students to hear and possibly make connections to others and the choices they make. Opening the dialogue for students to take an active role in a student-focused learning environment encourages students to confront the challenges they face and actively find and consider (alternative) responses to situations and circumstances which can change based on their actions.

In an article, Tishman and Clapp (2017) provided a different way to examine agency as "a sense that it's possible to reshape the way things are by directing one's actions purposefully" (p. 59) through a designer and maker-lens. At the center of making is problem-solving because one of the main purposes of making is to develop a new way to think about solutions to

problems. One particular type of a thinking routine highlighted in this article is called The Design of Systems: Parts, People, and Interactions. Students were invited to consider different inventions or systems and ask questions while examining the systems. By starting with an object, such as a stool, teachers can help students investigate the parts and purpose of the object. Digging a little deeper, another example included a unit on the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Questions included: What are the parts of the system? Who are the people connected to the system? How do the people in the system interact with each other and with the parts of the system? How does a change in one element of the system affect the various parts and people connected to the system? This thinking framework provides students the tools to view human-designed objects and systems in reimagined ways that are malleable and changeable. Most importantly, by developing students' problem-solving abilities, teachers prepare and cultivate students' sense of agency through a "I can do that" position to believe that they have the potential and confidence to change the world.

Three Types of Agency

Despite teachers' beliefs about teaching and what they want students to be able to take away from their classrooms, findings from studies showed that classrooms often reflect disconnected and disengaged instruction from the students. With a strong emphasis on standardized assessments and structured instruction, the focus of classrooms is usually on the skills and standards students need to learn instead of capitalizing on students' interests, inquires, and connections to the learning. Questions emerged about how instruction and agency can intersect, providing students with opportunities to critique, challenge, and negotiate the curriculum and explained that teachers faced a lack of practical strategies that build upon student agency. I found that when agency is defined in other scholars' work, agency overlaps into the

same categories. Based on the literature I reviewed, researchers describe agency as centering students' voices, creating a space for choice, and cultivating problem-solving skills for action. Vaughn (2018) found similar categories and labeled the three types of agency as positional, motivational, and dispositional. The first view is positional which is when a person has an awareness of the cultural, historical, and social contexts within an environment to act appropriately. The second type of agency is motivational, which is when the learner establishes control over their feelings and beliefs to complete tasks. Lastly, she describes a dispositional view is when the learner is deliberate and willing to take action. Teaching for agency requires educators to be intentional, taking a new position toward instruction that allows for student-centered and student-guided learning.

Overall, I found that research on student agency were conducted using qualitative methods of research. Student agency is a construct that typically requires teachers to question and critique the current practices of education and instruction to include critical/Critical thinking that includes student voice, choice, and problem-solving. These elements can be difficult to capture using quantitative methods, which was evident through the survey of the qualitative literature. In addition, most of the studies focused on literacy as the content area and instrument to affirm student agency. This outcome was not intentional in my search for scholarship, but nearly all of the studies that emerged came from the discipline literacy either through writing or reading. Researchers should examine how student to build upon student agency through the integration or practices of other subject areas. This gap opens the pathway to interrogate our current understanding of developing student agency as well as discover new practices and understanding of agency in classrooms, such as morning meetings.

Furthermore, in my synthesis of the literature, I found that most of the literature on student agency concentrated on secondary students. There is a need for research that focuses on supporting agency in the classroom at a young age, which should start when students begin school. My research offers insight into the agentic experiences of 5th graders. By promoting agency early on, educators can work collaboratively with students to critique, challenge, and dismantle the oppressive structures of schooling and education to be more inclusive and equitable for all students.

The call for student agency in schools is essential for equitable educational experiences that are sensitive and incorporate the identities of the students that walk into the classroom every day. Most often, schools and classrooms focus on the cognitive and academic development of students. However, there is evidence that students of all ages benefit from deliberate and intentional instruction in social and emotional learning. Instead of ignoring and neglecting students' multiple identities and experiences in a one-size-fits-all curriculum, educators should consciously create a space for those narratives and value the knowledge that students bring with them, which I discuss in the following sections.

Social Emotional Learning

According to CASEL (2018), social and emotional learning (SEL) is the ongoing process for both adults and children in gaining and utilizing the knowledge, attitude, and skills to effectively understand and manage emotions, set and reach positive goals, feel and demonstrate empathy for others, establish and sustain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL also encourages teachers and students to build relationships with others and work together to solve challenging problems. Little research with SEL and ELL students has been conducted. One study conducted by Niehaus and Adelson (2013) focused on Hispanic and Asian ELL

students' self-concept, which was defined as "an individual's perception of himself or herself based on interactions with the environment and personal interpretation of experiences" (p. 228). The study found that when concerns of ELL students increased, the level of academic achievement decreased. Another study (Zin & Elias, 2007) identified positive outcomes (self-efficacy, building community, commitment to democratic values, and trust and respect for teachers) that increased from implementing SEL practices. Although SEL is enacted in many ways, the key part of this study is on using SEL to build a stronger classroom community through classroom meetings.

Morning Meeting

Starting the day with a morning meeting is one method that teachers can use to address cultural conflicts and develop a sense of cultural competence and community within the classroom (Katz & McClellan, 1991). Many elementary schools have a specific time for teachers and students to build community and social skills within a typical school day (Kriete, 2003). Although these practices are most commonly used in early childhood programs as "Circle Time," Lillian Katz (1998), an influential early childhood educator, posits that these structured interactions are highly beneficial to students beyond these early years. *The Morning Meeting Book* (Kriete and Bechtel, 2002), which is part of the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning, details the purpose and importance of starting every school day with morning meeting.

> The way we begin each day in our classroom sets the tone for learning and speaks volumes about what and whom we value, about our expectations for the way we will treat each other, and about the way we believe learning occurs. (p. 10)

The book provides a structure that guides participants for an engaging and successful beginning to the school day.

Morning meeting is only one component of the larger framework of Responsive Classroom, which is an approach that links social emotional learning (SEL) to academic success in schools. The four domains of a Responsive Classroom include engaging in academics, building a positive community, teachers using effective management, and teachers' understanding of developmental awareness of students, which also aligns with culturally relevant pedagogy. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conducted a meta-analysis that found those students who participated in SEL programs made an 11% gain in achievement in social and emotional skills, as well as academics (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). One of the practices recommended for elementary students (Kindergarten through sixth grade) is morning meetings, which aims at creating the best environment for student learning. First, teachers and students gather in a circle for about 30 minutes each day and participate in meaningful interactions. Responsive Classroom describes the four components of morning meeting: (1) **Greeting**: Students and teachers greet one another by name, (2) **Sharing**: This is a time when students share information about themselves or events in their lives, (3) **Group Activity**: Everyone participates in a short activity that builds community and helps students practice social and academic skills, and (4) **Morning Message**: The teacher provides a short message that students read and with which they interact. The order of the four components is flexible, and a variety of activities and ideas can be used during this time.

Based on a study conducted by Grant and Davis (2012), morning meeting helped increase positive interactions between students and improve strategies for conflict resolutions. The teachers in the first-grade classroom noticed that the students in their class did not get along and

did not have appropriate interactions with each other. Through the implementation of daily classroom meetings, Grant and Davis noticed a favorable effect on behaviors and the classroom community climate. Classroom meetings can also be beneficial for ELL students because students have an opportunity to speak and require others or all students to listen to their peers. Students speak one at a time, so sharing time allows students to create connections with others through storytelling and ideas, listening to one another, and building community (Zins & Elias, 2007). Kasun (2013) observed a first-grade classroom during a time referred to as the "rose ceremony" as students passed around a yellow felt rose sharing how they felt or what they were thinking. The rose ceremony allowed students to engage in conversations that were unscripted expressions, where the students had the opportunity to explore new feelings of thought and emotion. Once a safe and open classroom community is established, the next step is to build upon students' sense of agency, where they can insert their perspectives, ideas, and views about problems or challenges that they face in school or in their communities.

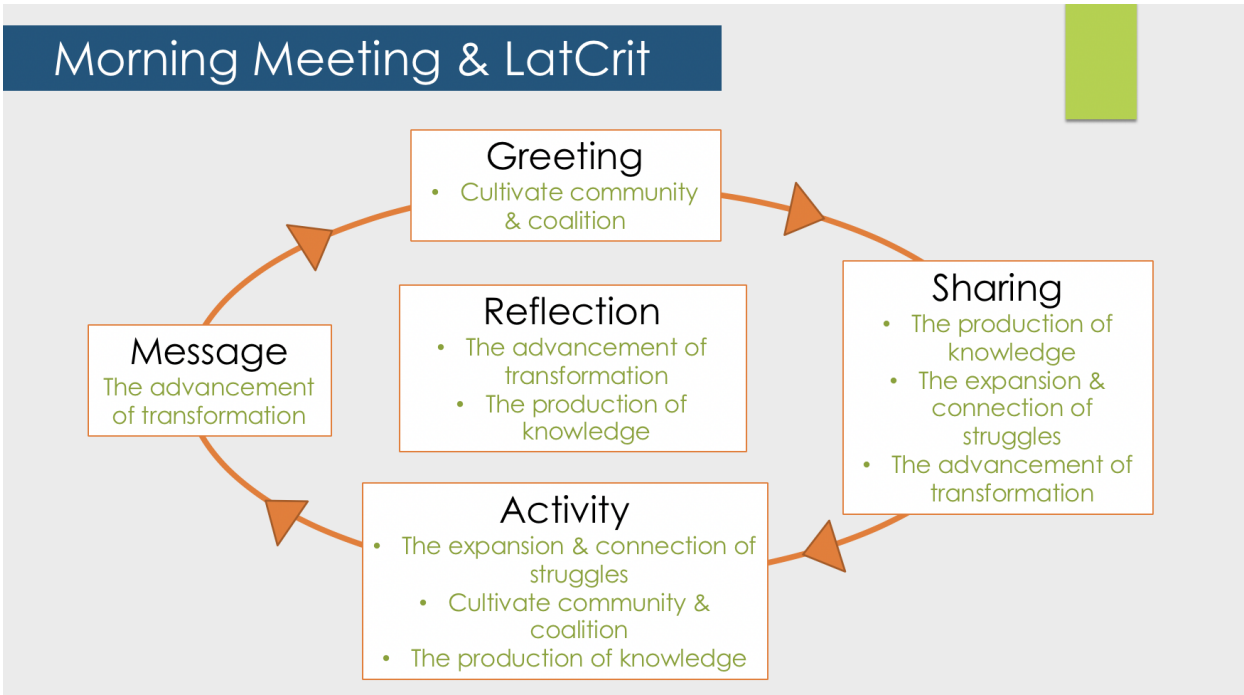
Morning Meetings and LatCrit Theory

In this action research, I utilized the theoretical underpinnings of LatCrit to support the structure of using culturally relevant morning meetings with Latinx ELL students (see Figure 1: Morning meeting & LatCrit theoretical framework). LatCrit uses the experiences of Latinx (students) in the US, including immigration, language diversities, and border stories, to understand the realities they confront. I aimed to capture and focus on the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students when given the space (morning meetings) to examine and share those moments. I leaned on the work of Valdes (1998) to interpret this work. The first way that LatCrit functioned throughout the morning meetings was in the production of knowledge. Sharing times, activities, and reflections allowed the students' voices, once silenced in the past, to highlight and

echo stories that have often been left unheard. Secondly, LatCrit operated in the advancement of transformation. The morning messages and sharing provided an opportunity for students to share their stories and push against the dominant ideologies and practices. Additionally, the sharing time and activities created an expansion and connection of struggles from the neglected or uncomfortable topics that are connected to the current political climate with immigration. Often ignored topics in school, students formed a connection from the shared knowledge of personal and collective challenges. And throughout the various greetings and activities, students developed a community and coalition among themselves that brought them together, connected them, and shaped into an alliance to push against society's dominant discourses about culture, language, and the Latinx narrative. I used the LatCrit theoretical framework to place value on the forms of knowledge created in morning meetings among Latinx ELL students and build upon my students' agency in the classroom.

Figure 1

Morning Meeting Components and Theoretical Framework



I considered that my fifth-grade classroom included both English Language Learners integrated with Native English speakers. When conflicts discussed and materialized from the different observations around languages and cultures, I viewed those conflicts as opportunities to utilize the students' cultural background to enhance learning. I created morning meetings fused with culturally relevant pedagogy to create a classroom climate of respect, belonging, appreciation, and openness about oneself. Overall, culturally relevant pedagogy is an effective framework for English Language Learners to affirm both language learning and academic skills. By creating classroom environments, such as culturally relevant morning meetings, students have opportunities for equitable and meaningful learning experiences that can help them feel empowered to critique and challenge the social inequities prevalent in schools and society.

In my research, I examined the narratives and experiences of Latinx students as they participated in culturally relevant morning meetings to understand their outlook on school and the implication on their lives. Additionally, I recorded how I used culturally relevant pedagogy in planning classroom morning meetings and how it impacted my lessons. My research question inquired, "What are the agentic experiences of 5th Grade Latinx ELL students as participants in a culturally relevant morning meeting?" Based on this research question, using an action research method was the best way to gain understanding and perspectives from students who take part in the phenomenon during culturally relevant morning meetings. I expected that an action research study would answer my research question and inquiry because it captured the authentic interactions and dialogue that took place during the class morning meeting, as well as the detailed experiences from both the teacher and students.

3 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the rationale and data collection tools that I used in my action research framework. The purpose of this study was to explore and capture the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students as participants of culturally relevant morning meetings in a 5th grade classroom. I analyzed the observed experiences and responses of the ELL participants of culturally relevant morning meetings through the LatCrit theoretical framework. This study is designed as a qualitative action research study to answer the following question: What are the agentic experiences of 5th Grade Latinx ELL students as participants in culturally relevant morning meetings?

This study took place in my 5th grade classroom with ELL students and general education students. However, the focus aimed to capture the observed experiences and responses of specifically ELL students because of the lack of current literature that centers the perspectives of Latinx ELLs and the agentic experiences of students in elementary grade levels. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) stated, "Critical race researchers acknowledge that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower" (p. 4). Therefore, it is vital that I, as a critical teacher researcher, offer a space for ELL students to foster student agency in an educational setting that typically has oppressive practices and curriculum. I served both as the teacher to the research participants as well as the facilitator during the classroom morning meetings.

Portrait of the Researcher

I have always had a passion for teaching and education. My school experience was positive in the sense that I felt successful in my academics. However, I always felt like my school life and my home life were separate from one another. Since I grew up only speaking Lao

at home, I was placed in an ESL program starting in Kindergarten. I distinctly recall being picked up on a special bus that drove across town to a small elementary school with an ESL program. I did not speak Lao at school, resulting in a loss of fluently speaking Lao and did not get any opportunities to share about my experiences as a Lao-American student. My ESL teacher pulled me out of class daily to provide me with English language instruction, and I loved learning. My mom told me how quickly I learned English, and I began teaching my brother, who is three years younger than I am, how to count and recite the alphabet. When my cousins came over to my house, we often played school. I pretended I was a teacher named "Miss Phillips" and would create tests and homework for my students. Playing school drifted us into a different place, and we took on different identities. Life at school consisted of English and a more "Americanized" way of life. Life at home consisted of Lao customs, music, stories, and traditions. At school, I remember not understanding references to Disney movies or American "classics". School and home were disconnected- the language, the culture, and the ways of knowing.

As I grew up, I took on different responsibilities. I often helped my family read over bills and important documents. I attended doctor appointments and parent-teacher conferences to help translate if necessary. Even college applications and scholarships were new since I was the first person in my family to attend college. I feel like these types of responsibilities were unique to me as an ELL student. Although some of my teachers were kind and caring, I felt like no one understood the dichotomy I experienced between home and school. I felt like I needed to leave my home life at the doors of the school and become someone different. I did not want an accent in fear that others would laugh at me. I did not want others to think that my upbringing was

different from theirs. It felt safe to assimilate, and that's what I did in elementary, middle, and high school.

Things began to change when I attended college. I began to see the value in not only in telling others my story but importantly, my family's narrative. I began to share with my roommates, classmates, and professors about the historical background of Laos and why my family came to the United States as refugees. I remember an assignment I submitted that was a story written from my mom's point of view about the very day the family snuck away and escaped from Laos. It felt free and empowering to be in a space where I was accepted for sharing an authentic piece of my life. My schoolwork and my "home" life began to merge. It just felt right.

While pursuing an education degree, all of these experiences reinforced my desire to provide a classroom space where the youth of various cultures and languages could experience authenticity and agency. I wanted to be different. I wanted the schooling realities of children to be relatable, inclusive, and honor the background and stories that students bring into the classroom with them. I realize that although teaching practices need to change, more importantly, I understand that the school system in the U.S. is flawed and there is a need for reform. Through this research, I purposefully captured students' voices and highlight their realities through this action research. Although my experiences provide me with some insight and understanding of being an ELL student, I recognized that my narrative is narrow and limited and does not encompass all experiences of ELL students. Every student has a unique story to tell, we (as teachers and researchers) just need to listen. In the next part, I describe how I designed this research study to capture these experiences and stories.

Research Design

Qualitative research includes many forms of research practices and methods. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) presented a simple definition for qualitative research as "understanding the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p.15). The authors discuss that the definition only begins to describe the complexities involved in qualitative studies. The four characteristics of qualitative research include: a focus on meaning and understanding, the researchers as the primary instrument for both data collection as well as data analysis, an induction process based on the data and understanding from the study, and rich descriptions of the participants and context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One type of qualitative study that teachers often conduct is action research, which is an appropriate design because it is "oriented toward some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation" (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 4). This design helps teachers feel empowered to make decisions about curriculum and instruction that will help them improve their pedagogical practices (Myers & Dillard, 2013). In this particular case, action research involved identifying an issue within the classroom or society and using an intervention to improve the instructional practices of educators for students and repeating the iterative process. Since the nature of the study was based on challenging structures of power relations that exists, the pedagogical framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and theoretical framework of Latinx Critical Theory helped inform this action research study.

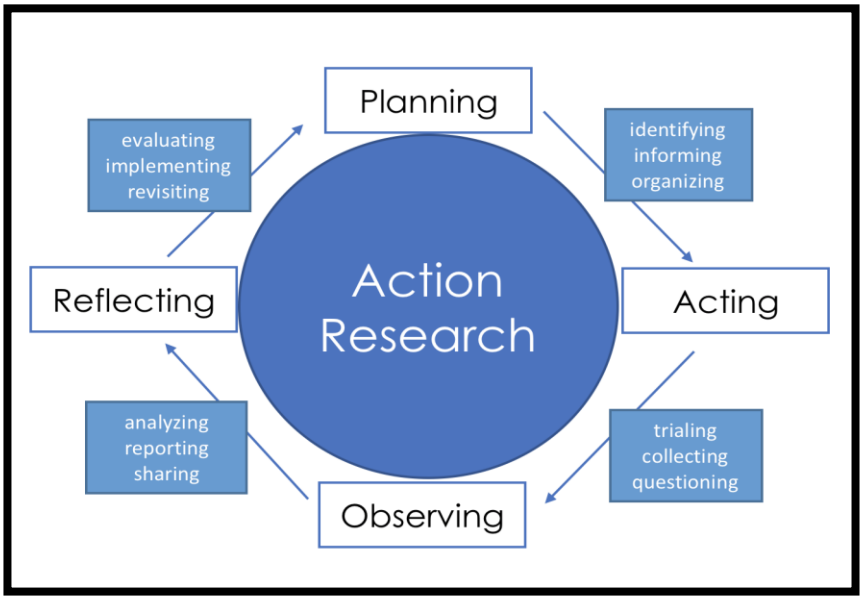
Action Research

Action research involves educators examining teacher practice, implementing changes to improve praxis, or bring about social change (Herr & Anderson, 2015). "The idea is that changes

occur within the setting or within the participants and researchers themselves" (p. 4). This qualitative research method can be used to bridge the connection between academic core skills, critical thinking skills, and solving complex real-world problems (Kornbluh, Ozer, Allen, & Kirshner, 2015). By asking students to go through the process of problem identification, students are asked to take a critical lens to the school structure and environment. Although students may not yet make connections to systemic inequities, they will have reflected and named problems surrounding inequity (Freire, 1990; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999) This youth-centered action research emphasizes the sharing of power between the participants and the researcher. Throughout the research, I kept my research question in mind by considering the voices of participants (students), how I planned and acted to implement the plan, and reflected on how I improved my teacher praxis through reflection. I relied on the spiral of action cycle (Figure 2: Iterative action cycle) which includes (1) developing a plan of action for improvement, (2) acting on the plan, (3) observing the effects of the action within the context in which it occurs, and (4) reflecting on the effects to further plan and decide next actions. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1987)

Figure 2

Iterative Action Research Cycle



Kemmis and McTaggart emphasize that the various stages of action research often overlap and are often co-constructed in collaboration with others. As in this research, I created an initial plan, and based on students' responses, the morning meetings become co-constructed with students.

An action research methodology not only seeks to understand the participants but also seeks to solve a problem. Through the iterative process of inquiry and action, the realities and voices of traditionally marginalized groups are placed at the center of the study as they seek to improve the schools and communities in which they live. Particularly, I am intentionally centering my study around Latinx ELL students to amplify the narratives and affirm that Latinx students bring with them the tools they need to be successful learners. Although action research projects are diverse in its nature and examples, most are focused on fostering Critical thinking through discussions of social issues. Kornbluh et. al. (2015) found that benefits of one youth participatory action research include Critical thinking and academic achievement, sociopolitical development, social networks and social capital, and enhancing youth "voice" in decision-making. Because of these benefits, action research supports the theoretical grounding of LatCrit as a method to develop agency in Latinx ELL students through culturally relevant practices and pedagogy.

Participants

The participants in the study were part of my class of 24 fifth-grade students attending Rockview Elementary School (pseudonym) in a large school district in the southeastern of the United States. It is a Title I school and is one of the largest schools within its district, with an average of 1,300 students ranging from second grade to fifth grade. The student population consists of about 49% Black students, 48% Hispanic students, and about 3% Multi-racial or White students. Within the school, 45% of the students were ELL. My classroom is one out of 11

fifth grade classrooms. Although there were 24 students on my class roster, 12 students were identified as ELL. These 12 ELL students have various backgrounds, whether they were born in the U.S. or just recently moved to the U.S, but all students were Latinx. According to the Title IX of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2011 (NCLB, Public Law No. 107-110), the phrase "limited English proficiency" describes a student that is not born in the United States or whose native language is one other than English, one who comes from an outlying environment (such as native Americans and Alaskan American) that has an impact on his/her English language proficiency, migrants where the dominant language is other than English, and one whose difficulties with writing, reading, speaking, or understanding English significantly impacts their performance in the classroom, state assessments, or to be full participants in society (Sec. 9101). Kindler (2002) reports that most states operationalize the federal definition when identifying ELL students and use various methods including language proficiency tests, home language surveys, parent information, and observations from teachers. The focus of the study was on the capturing the agentic experiences of the ELL Latinx students. This particular group of students were chosen for specific reasons. ELL students have historically been marginalized in the United States because multilingualism and multiculturalism were viewed as potential problems within a "united" country, which resulted in subtractive education.

Furthermore, the focus of the study narrowed to Latinx students. Through my expressed focus on Latinx students, I do not intend to undermine the significance of addressing agency for all students in my classroom. Instead, I aim to center the voices and perspectives that Latinx ELL students bring to the classroom. Historically, Latinx students encountered opportunity gaps such as socioeconomic, acculturation, language development, and discrimination, which have led to inequitable educational outcomes (Alvarez de Davila, Michaels, Hurtado, Roldan, & Duran-

Graybow, 2016). The Latinx ELL students at Rockview Elementary School have endured similar opportunity gaps. Because the experiences of Latinx students in education been of accumulated disadvantages, it is important to critically examine and highlight the voices of Latinx students in the study.

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), an action research methodology does not include a specific number of recommended participants. However, the authors suggested that the researcher should carefully determine the number of participants based on how many participants it will take to answer the research question(s). This action research study consisted of one teacher and 12 ELL students. With a transient rate of 27%, I wanted to ensure that there were enough students included in the study to get sufficient information to answer the research questions. All 12 students had signed parental permission and student assent (verbal) to participate in the study and remained in the study throughout the entire data collection period. At the beginning of the school year, all students were either 10 or 11 years old. Of the 12 students, 8 were male students and 4 were female students. The students in my class were assigned by the assistant principal and placed on my class roster by the school secretary at the beginning of the school year. My class included both general education students along with students who were active ELL students in the ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) program. Students that are in the ESOL program receive services and instruction that emphasizes academic and social language development. Teachers are given students' English language proficiency levels and strategies from World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) to support teaching and learning for individual students. Every student in the classroom received a permission slip to be part of the study and for permission to be audio recorded even though this study is designed specifically for students who were active ELL students.

Researcher Roles and Positionality

In action research, it is vital to address the roles and positionality of the researcher. Based on Herr and Anderson's (2015) continuum and implications of positionality, I considered myself an insider in collaboration with other insiders, the students. I was the teacher to the participants and also had a role in posing questions and facilitating discussions during the morning meetings with students. In addition to being a teacher and researcher in the study, I also related to ELL students in some aspects as an insider because I was an ELL student as a child in elementary school. Growing up in a household where English was not my first language helped me empathize with students that encounter language barriers and face cultural differences in school and home. It is important to note that not all ELL experiences are similar. My family were refugees from a war-torn country and may have different experiences than ELLs who may have experienced border crossing or who were migrant workers. Because of the critical approach to this study, I had to make sure that questions and topics of discussions did not further marginalize the participants in the study, but instead found a balance with the potential feelings of emancipation and empowerment (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009). In addition, I had an obligation to report and represent the findings in a way that accurately represents the participants and context.

Data Collection

The research period started in September 2019 with the distribution of parental permission forms and ended in November 2019 with the last student reflection. During the research, observations, student reflections, and teacher reflections took place during a four-week period alongside a unit of study on immigration and border-crossing as well as a novel study of *Esperanza Rising*. In the middle of the data collection period, there was a lag time of one week to accommodate the

district schedule for parent-teacher conferences. The general timeline for data collection can be found in Table 2*:* Data Collection Timeline.

Table 2

Data Collection Timeline

Date	Research Activity	Data Collection
September 19, 2019	Distribution of Parental Permission Forms	
September 30, 2019	Student Assent Script	
Week 1 October 1-4, 2019	Morning Meetings-Identity	Tuesday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Wednesday-Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Friday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection
Week 2 October 7-11, 2019	Morning Meetings-Diversity	Monday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Wednesday-Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Friday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection
Week 3 October 14-18, 2019	Morning Meetings-Problems or Challenges	Monday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Wednesday-Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Friday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection
Week 4 October 28- November 1, 2019	Morning Meetings-Taking Action	Monday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Wednesday-Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection Friday- Observation, Student Reflection, Teacher Reflection

Procedures

On September 17, 2019, I made a classroom announcement that I would discuss a study that the students in the classroom will be invited to join. I gathered all students on the rug and explained to all students that they were invited to take part in a study that is about morning meeting and how they include their ideas, view, and feelings about different topics. I read the parent permission forms to my class of 24 students and asked the students were interested in participating to come get a permission form from my table to take home in their folders and to go over with their families (see Appendix B for parental permission form (English) and Appendix C for parental permission form (Spanish). The students were given the permission forms in both English and Spanish. For this study, I obtained signed parental permission and oral assent from all students. I provided two copies of the parent permission forms for students to take home in their backpack. The first copy was for parents to keep for their own records. The other copy of the parental permission form was for parents to sign and for students to return to school if they allowed their child to participate in the study.

Upon receiving the parental permission and to prevent perceived coercion, I had a Spanish translator with me when obtaining student assent to reduce the possibility of coercion. I used a script to make sure that I stated the information students needed to know about how their participation and work in the study was voluntary (see Appendix D for student assent script (English) and Appendix E for student assent script (Spanish). I informed participants that they could refuse or stop participating at any time without penalty. I explained to students that any data used in the study would not have an impact on their grades. Also, I clarified that they did not have to participate in morning meetings. Our classroom morning meetings were optional for students, and they can choose to leave the circle and go to their seats at any time. All aspects of

morning meetings (including the journal entries) were optional. Students could choose to skip or not participate in any of the activities in the morning meeting as part of the regular daily routine. To protect the identity and welfare of the children in this study, any data obtained contain no identifying information that could be associated with the child or with the child's participation in the study. Names were blacked out on student journals. Moreover, pseudonyms were used in all transcripts and observation field notes. Once I received all parent permission forms and received all verbal student assents, I began to record and collect data during classroom morning meetings. At the start of each day, students took part in a morning meeting that last for approximately 30 minutes. Each day, I collected data that included observations with audio recordings of what students shared during morning meetings, student reflections, and teacher reflections.

Instrumentation

In qualitative studies, data sources can come in a variety of forms. The four types of instruments I used for this study included participant observations with audio recordings, student reflection journals, and teacher reflection journals. For data management, I used Dedoose, which is a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), to help manage, store, and code the audio and digital versions of the documents (see Appendix F for a screenshot of the database). The data collected from these sources is designed to address the research question. (Table 3 shows the relationship)

Table 3

Research Questions and Data Collection

Research Question	Method(s) of Data Collection
What are the agentic experiences of 5th Grade Latinx ELL students as participants during culturally relevant morning meetings?	• Participant Observation • Audio Recording • Teacher Reflections • Student Reflections Journals

The main goal of the study was to understand the experiences of Latinx ELL students. The morning meetings were designed to be culturally relevant to the students in my classroom. I wanted first to understand more about students' self- and familial identities. Then, I challenged students to think about the inequities and the power structures that are oppressive for Latinx students and who are learning the English language critically. To take it a step further, I was interested to know if those understandings would spark a further response to take action against those inequalities. As part of action research, students determined a problem, discussed the problem with the class, and talked about an action plan to solve the problem

Each morning meeting took place in a large open area in the classroom of Room 205. I chimed a bell, which signaled to students that it is time to transition to the rug in the front of the classroom (see Appendix G for a picture of the morning meeting space). For morning meetings, the meeting space must be open enough so that students can stand or sit in a circle. The students in my class sat on the floor in a large circle on the rug. I also joined students on the rug within the same circle. This was important that I sat *with* the students to show that I was also part of class morning meetings as a participant so that I was not in a higher power position by sitting in a chair. The positions of the participants should be parallel, meaning all should be sitting on the rug, sitting in chairs, or standing. The voice recorders were set up in the middle of the rug so that it could pick up the voices of all participants equally. Our meeting space also had a screen in the front of the room where I displayed the morning message daily and any videos, images, or quotes. In addition, the class chose an object from a crate with different objects that represented our talking piece. The objects varied from a little stuffed animal to a squishy globe. I picked a different student to choose the talking piece for the day. Every day, I created a PowerPoint slide

with a morning meeting, planned a greeting, sharing, and activity (Appendix H: Exemplar Morning Meeting PowerPoints). These components remained flexible and changed based on what students shared that morning.

Although data collection began in October, we had morning meetings from the very start of the school year beginning on the first day of school. We met together every morning and practiced how to transition to the morning meetings and how to choose a spot so that we could ensure every person in the room was part of our circle. One of the very first activities and greetings we participated in was a ball toss name game. We all stood in a large circle, and the first person with the ball would say the person's name they wanted to toss the ball to and then tossed it to that person. The person with the ball had to make sure that they tossed it to a person who did not have a turn yet. This activity was intended to make sure every student learned the correct pronunciations of each person's name as well as establish a community of inclusion and belonging. We also practiced sharing while using a talking piece and answering questions about their favorite hobbies, games, and foods. These light, fun, and silly activities and sharing times became vital in the establishment of a safe classroom environment that was non-threatening and a place to share openly and listen carefully. Without first feeling comfortable voicing their opinions about surface-level topics, it may have been difficult to share about more in-depth experiences. Therefore, I felt it was necessary to invest the time early in the process to create a supportive space that valued participation, honesty, friendship, and open-mindedness as a starting point before exploring heavily rooted topics around individual and collective oppressive experiences and narratives.

During the first morning of data collection, I began the meeting by asking students about identity and the multidimensions of their identity. This information allowed me to have a starting

place for discussions with students. Using students' dialogue helped me to socially and culturally construct morning meetings that enhanced student agency that aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy by promoting their knowledge and increase the reciprocity of teaching and learning. After the first week, I reflected on the responses from students, and for the second week, I planned to discuss diversity with the class. The conversations about diversity led to students sharing about the benefits and challenges of living in a diverse community. In the third week, I asked students questions about the challenges and obstacles they have encountered or experienced both in and out of school. From there, the students responded and even asked questions they had about the situation at hand. In the final week of data collection, students shared how they would solve the problem or challenge they identified and wrote their final reflections about their experiences with culturally relevant morning meetings. This methodology allowed me, as the researcher, to gain access to the investigations, questioning, and inquiry of the educator and students as it was happening in real-time.

Participant observation. One source of the data collection came from participant observations where I captured the phenomenon (i.e., morning meetings) firsthand and within the context where it occurs naturally (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Field notes were the written recordings to help the observer note important details during and after the period of observation. The authors suggested that researchers can observe different elements within a setting that includes: the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and your own behavior. During the observations, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board to audio record the morning meetings to capture the voices of the students. I believed that this strengthened my ability to give a clear picture of what occurred during each morning meeting. It was important to be specific when describing my observations

in written notes. With all of this in mind, I decided beforehand what element to concentrate although there was flexibility to change during the observation. A total of twelve observations and audio recordings were recorded and analyzed. I uploaded the audio recordings to Trint and edited the transcriptions. Then, I uploaded the transcriptions to Dedoose to help with data analysis.

Student reflection journals. Another source of the data collection came from student reflection journals. At Rockview Elementary School, every student received a reflection journal at the beginning of the year. The expectation was for all students to take time during the day to reflect on the school day. During the study, I provided students with a new reflection journal (see Appendix I for a picture of the student reflection journals) with open-ended questions during reflection time about the activities and/or topics during the four-week period. One open-ended question asked, "What did you learn about today in morning meeting?" Through personal documents, the researcher can "uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.189). For some reflections, I co-created questions with students based on the morning meeting discussions and activities for students to reflect on their thoughts, ideas, or feelings. I collected 12 reflection journals from students with up to 12 entries per student. Since some students were tardy and missed morning meetings or were absent, I collected 126 student reflections. All reflections were typed into a Word document and uploaded onto Dedoose for ease in coding the data.

Teacher reflection journal. Along with observational field notes, I also maintained a different journal for my reflections (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The reflection was a space where I could record my own feelings, ideas for the next action, emerging themes, things to discuss and/or clarify from morning meetings. This journal was where I wrote my personal experiences

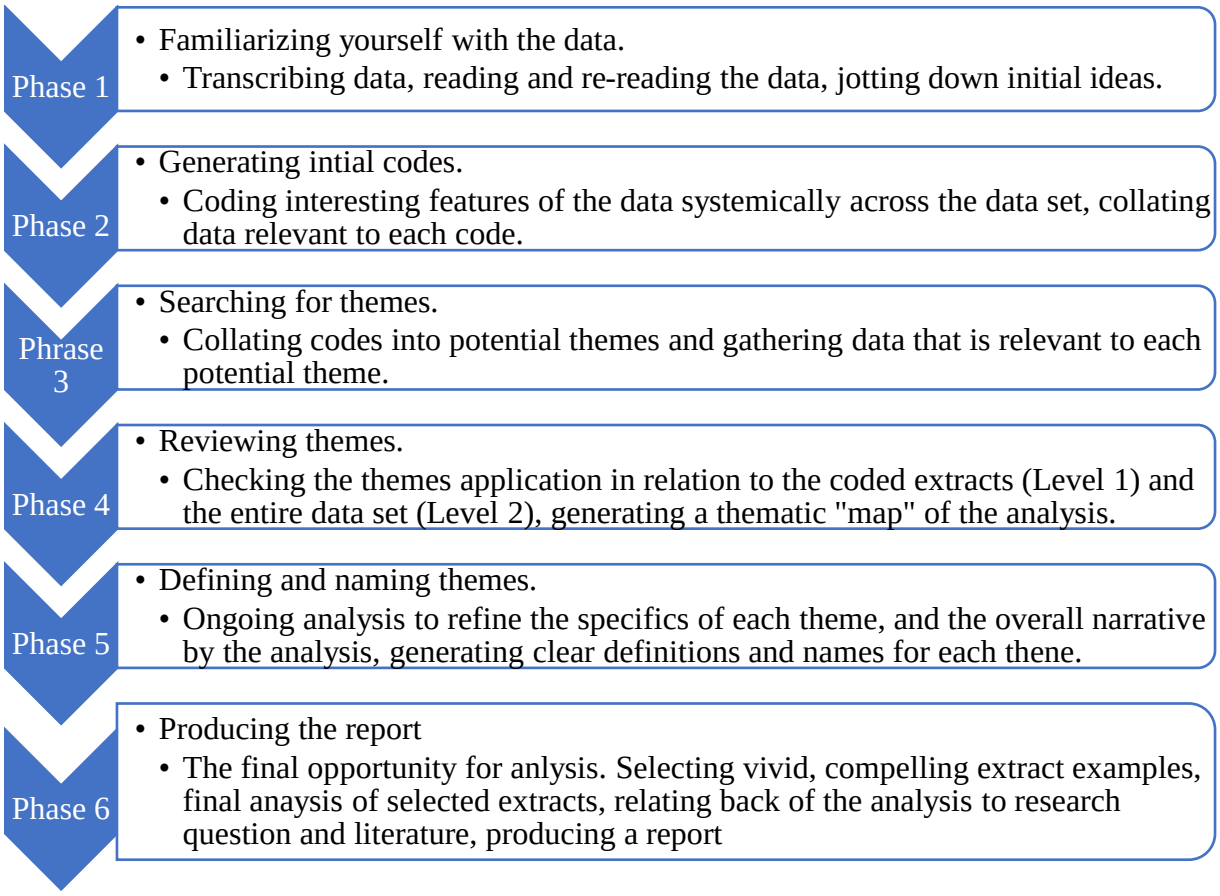
and thoughts throughout the duration of the research. The nature of action research is different than other types of qualitative research with the iterative cycle, so the reflection journal becomes a crucial part in planning the next steps for action.

Data Analysis

Once data was collected and transcribed, I conducted an inductive thematic analysis within a LatCrit theory framework for the participant observations, audio recording transcripts, student reflection journals, and teacher reflection journal. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analy[z]ing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 6). I used Braun and Clarke (2006)'s six phases of data analysis as guide.

Figure 3

Braun & Clarke's Six Phases of Data Analysis



The process includes (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. I used Figure 3 above to show and understand the phases which is represented in a linear form even though it is typically a recursive process where the researcher can move back and forth throughout the various phases. I used the observation notes, audio recording, reflection journals of students, and the teacher's reflection journal to examine students' agentic experiences in culturally relevant morning meetings.

This analytic approach gave the opportunity to focus on the underlying meanings from the data and ultimately create a narrative that represented the data comprehensively. When generating initial codes, I used descriptive coding and in-vivo coding as it presented itself, which involve direct words or phrases from participants. By using participants' actual words, it helped center the voices of the students instead of putting my words, which is a form of silencing the students. This data analysis method is an appropriate for this study because Riessman (2008) acknowledged that thematic analysis is appropriate for "creating possibilities for social identities, group belonging, and collective action" (p. 54).

Possible threats to trustworthiness. To minimize the threats to the validity and trustworthiness of my design, I planned for the interventions in the spiral of action cycles. The action research spiral according to Herr and Anderson (2015) includes (1) developing an action plan to improve what is currently happening, (2) to act to implement the plan, (3) to observe the effects of action within the context, and 4) to reflect on these effects for further planning and action through a repeated cycle. I revisited my plan after every week of data collection to decide what direction to move to next. According to Dick, Passfield, and Wildman (1995), "Action research requires a flexibility which some research methods cannot provide. To develop

adequate rigor, it proceeds through a number of cycles in which the early cycles are used to help decide how to conduct the later cycles" (p. 3). It is also important to gather data from several sources. Data can include participant observations, reflection journals, student articles, and interviews.

Trustworthiness. In action research, the study is embedded and built around the values and perceptions of the researcher and participants. Therefore, it is important to develop rigor and trustworthiness in a qualitative research. By developing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the trustworthiness of the research will increase. Using multiple sources of data strengthened the findings and interpretations of participants to develop credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability can include the researcher providing thick, rich descriptions that give enough information on what is happening within a particular context. The establishment of dependability can occur when the findings are consistent and repeatable. To ensure confirmability, the researcher has to make sure the findings and interpretations derived from the data, including how the researcher came to conclusions. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) created a table to help establish trustworthiness in each phase of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, and I used that table to boost trustworthiness in my study through each phase of data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

One of the ethical concerns I have for this research study is that the participants will be misrepresented. Due to the historical and even current treatment of the Latinx population, I do not want to further the oppressive narrative through this study. Along with in vivo coding, I include quotations and stories to ensure that the participants' voices are at the center of the study and not my own. However, I had to find a balance between telling their stories and protecting

their identities. I concealed the identities of the students by using pseudonyms and strategically reporting the information to limit the discovery of my participants' identities (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Another ethical dilemma was my role as a teacher in the classroom. I reiterated to students that their participation or lack of participation in the study was non-punitive. The purpose of my research was shared with the entire group and participants were informed that they could choose not to participate in the study at any time. I hoped that since the study was based on morning meetings, which is not part of students' grades, students responded and participated openly and honestly. As I entered the research field, I was conscious about acting respectfully and responsibly towards the participants as I sought to understand and explore the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students in culturally relevant morning meetings.

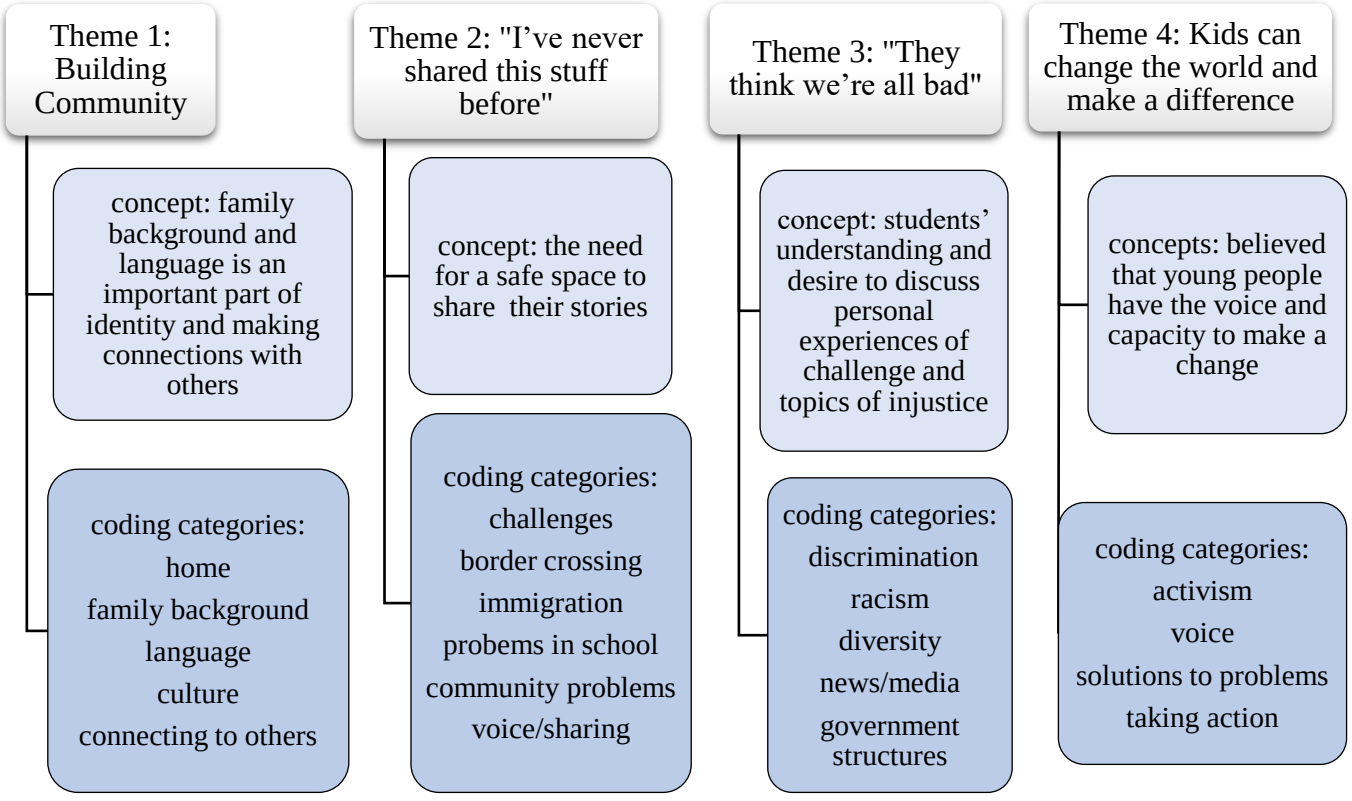
Thematic Analysis Process

The data analysis process began by familiarizing myself with the data by listening to audio recordings, transcribing the recordings, and reading the data transcriptions line by line. Once all transcripts were read, descriptive codes were assigned to relevant data. Codes were then placed into main categories, and after grouping and regrouping the categories from the data, I identified a total of four major themes that emerged from concepts through the lens of LatCrit Theory. The first graph *Figure 4* shows how the coding categories were grouped into general concepts and then emerged one common theme. For example, the coding categories for the first theme were home, family background, language, culture, and connecting to others. The general notions from those categories were that family background and language was an important part of one's identity and making connections to others. Initially, I arranged the categories together and thought the theme centralized around the ideas of identity and representation. After a closer analysis, I found that those concepts were key to developing a deeper connection to the other

students in the class so I renamed the theme to building community. The other concepts I identified related to the Latinx ELL students' experiences were the need for a safe space to share their stories, students' understanding and desire to discuss personal experiences of challenge or injustice, and that students believed young people have the capacity and voice to make a change (agency). As stated previously in my first example, the categories were grouped and regrouped, made into general concepts, and then named as a theme.

Figure 4

Themes Coding Process



The four themes that emerged from the data were: (1) building community, (2) "I've never shared this stuff before", (3) "They think we're all bad", and (4) "Kids can change the world and make a difference". In Table 4, I provided the themes along with a short description.

Table 4

Description of Themes

Themes		Description
Theme 1	**Building community**	Students describe and include home language, family background, and culture as an important part of her/his identity and making authentic connections to others.
Theme 2	**"I've never shared this stuff before"**	Students desire to have a safe space to share about oneself regarding celebrations, achievements, and challenges they have faced.
Theme 3	**"They think we're all bad"**	Students are aware of the sociopolitical climate and narrative of Latinx students and have the desire to discuss challenging topics of immigration, discrimination, and stereotypes.
Theme 4	**"Kids can change the world and make a difference"**	Students believe that they have a voice and can use it to make a difference in the school and community regardless of age, ethnicity, language, or cultural background.

Summary

This action research methodology was designed to answer the following research question: (1) What are the agentic experiences of 5th Grade Latinx ELL students as participants in culturally relevant morning meetings?

This research intends to fill the gaps that were noted in the review of literature. My goal in designing a research study using culturally relevant pedagogy in morning meetings was capture the agentic experiences of Latinx ELL students. Additionally, this action research study was designed to spotlight and center the voices and experiences of Latinx ELL students as participants in these classroom meetings. The following chapter provides a brief recap of the

theoretical framework, and then I present how the four themes appeared in the data through student voices and teacher observations for the duration of the study.

4 FINDINGS

Within this chapter, I offer the findings as a result of the research conducted over a time period of four weeks. In this study, I sought to answer the following research question: What are the experiences of Latinx ELL students as participants of culturally relevant morning meetings? This chapter provides the observations, narration, reflections, and experiences captured of 12 Latinx English Language Learners participants in one fifth-grade classroom during morning meetings as well as the teacher researcher's field notes and observations. In Chapter 3, I detailed the components of the morning meeting and how I intentionally utilized that time in the school day to build a classroom community that was open to sharing about themselves and learning from others' experiences and perspectives. Ultimately, those moments created a foundation that supported students in critically examining the world around them. The observations and audio recordings took approximately 30 minutes at the start of each day, where students gathered on the rug and greeted one another, read a morning message together, participated in various activities (i.e., reading a book, watching a video, etc.), and shared their thoughts and feelings. Additionally, throughout the time period of the research, following each morning meeting, students wrote an excerpt in a journal reflecting on their personal thoughts and accounts of what occurred. This chapter highlights the experiences and voices of those Latinx students who participated in the culturally relevant morning meetings.

Alongside the morning meetings, I also note that the standards I taught the rest of the school day followed the progressions provided by the state standards and the district pacing guides. In fifth-grade, the first unit of Social Studies concentrated on understanding the topics of human rights and immigration (i.e., Ellis Island) and more specifically placed a focus on why many people historically migrated to the United States, places they emigrated from and where

they settled. The standard spotlights the historical accounts of the immigration processes and practices. Still nonetheless, students connected those perspectives to the current system and processes of immigration in the United States today. Additionally, the fifth-grade English Language Arts standards were covered throughout the first quarter through the novel study of *Esperanza Rising*, written by Pam Muñoz Ryan. In my school district, I have the flexibility to choose the resources I use to teach the ELA standards, so I chose that particular novel due to its historical context set in Mexico and California during the Great Depression. The story follows the life of a young girl named Esperanza Ortega as she moved with her family to a new place to live and work. The book is mostly written in English and has Spanish embedded throughout the story. The book developed the themes of hope and justice. Over the course of the study, students were enthusiastic about participating in the morning meetings and became passionate about sharing their experiences of their life at home and in the community. Students also made connections on how those influences (outside of school) linked to learning in school. The following sections in this chapter aim to capture the strong voices and stories provided by Latinx students and provide a glimpse into what occurred during morning meetings in Room 205.

Theoretical Overview

As described in greater detail in Chapter 2, this research is grounded in LatCrit Theory (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), which places the experience of Latinx people in the United States at the core of the research. By closely analyzing the narratives, participation, and reflections of these fifth grade Latinx ELL students, I offer a better understanding of the oppressive practices and structures in the U.S. society. As I examined those experiences, I also discussed the ways that I used culturally relevant pedagogy throughout the study to build a greater sense of cultural competency, how I created lessons that made academia relevant and

engaging, and guided students to recognize and critique the challenges and injustices that exist within schools and other societal institutions. Morning meeting did not only function as a method to enact CRP in the classroom but also as a way to promote student agency by creating a space for students to intentionally engage with the teacher and other students through open dialogue. In this study, I relied on LatCrit to (1) produce critical and interdisciplinary knowledge, (2) promote social transformation, (3) expand and connect through struggles, and (4) cultivate a sense of community and coalition (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Next, I provide a more in-depth look into each theme and features the voices of the fifth-graders within the research study.

Theme 1: Building Community

In the beginning of the study, students were first asked to discuss the meaning of the word identity and share what comprised her/his own identity. Students started by sharing her/his favorite things and likes as this was a common practice among elementary school teachers when getting to know her/his students during circle time. I noticed early on, within the students' responses, that students inserted more detailed background information about themselves into sharing time. All twelve Latinx students articulated to the class that they spoke more than one language and included information about her/his families' background and countries of origin when sharing about identity. The following excerpts are examples of what students shared:

Alberto I'm Alberto. My favorite subject is Science. My family is from Mexico, I was born [here in the South], I can speak Spanish and English and I'm the middle child.

Axel My name is Axel. My favorite animals are cats and dogs. I come from Honduras and I can speak Spanish. And the Independence Day in Honduras is September 15th and also my mom's birthday. I'm a big brother. I have 14 cousins.

Juliette I'm Juliette. I love playing with my friends. I'm kind, nice, helpful. I'm shy. My family is from Mexico. I speak two languages, English and Spanish. I'm a hard-working student. I love spending time with family. I'm a sister. Oh, and there's seven people in my family.

Some students used that opportunity to conduct further research of symbols and objects that represented their family background and culture. The next day, Juliette comes to the rug with a folded piece of paper. She anxiously waited for the talking piece to be passed to her and proceeded to share with the class that she went home and searched on the computer for something to share with everyone. The class looked on excitedly, anticipating the information she was going to say. While pointing to a piece of paper (See Image 1: Drawing by Juliette), Juliette said, "That's Mexico. I was trying to draw this. This is a map of Mexico. And um, this is the Mexico flag. I drew it because most of my family is from Mexico. This represents me!"

Image 1

Drawing by Juliette

Other students began to murmur about the picture Juliette drew and ask me if they could also make drawings at home and bring them the next day to share. Carlos and Benjamin were among the seven students who brought in drawings (See Image 2: Drawings by Carlos and Benjamin) to show the class what they worked on the night before. Carlos and Benjamin both explained that the flag also represented their Mexican culture even though they were both born in the United States.

Image 2

Drawings by Carlos and Benjamin

Because some of the Latinx students shared about their family background, I wanted all of the students to have an opportunity to interview family members about their family background. Together as a class, we brainstormed interview questions to gain more knowledge about where families and students came from. The class compiled a list of questions to guide the interview including, (1) where are your relatives are from, (2) where her/his parents were born, (3) where the student was born, (4) when did your relatives come to this community, and (5) any other facts about your family history. Students returned to school, ready to share what they discovered about their family heritage and places their families came from. Jacob reflected,

I learned that a lot of my family is still in Mexico. I was born here in the United States, but most of my family was born in Mexico. Like most of them. Only me and my brother were born here.

I enlarged a world map (See Image 3: Map of Where We are From), and for the activity that day, students told the class about what they learned about their own historical background and mapped out the various locations from their country of origin to where they are now.

Image 3

Map of Where We are From

One by one, students took turns drawing a line of where their families came from. Some were recent moves while others were many generations ago. Students began to notice that people in the classroom were from different places in the world. However, this also acted as a way to connect students to one another. They all had one thing in common, that although they may have

come from different places, they all ended up in the same classroom. Many students began to ask each other questions about when and why families arrived in this community. When I shared about my own family background, students asked why my family moved so far away from our home country. This dialogue opened up the opportunity for me to share about my mom's experiences escaping from war from Laos and moving to the United States. Others started to share how they were not aware that they had family that came from the other side of the world. Some students connected to one another because they had family from the same place, and others began to learn more about the experiences and cultures of their peers in the classroom. These conversations and activities built a classroom connection that was created among the students. The foundation of community in the classroom was based on commonalities yet celebrated diversity. Benjamin wrote in his reflection journal, "I learned that the kids in here, their parents are from all from all over the world. They all came here to the same place, and now we are here together." Eduardo also made a similar observation, "People all over the world can come to the same place to make a community of different people." The examples above show how Latinx students functioned as cultivators of community and coalition by representing and building her/his home countries and culture into morning meetings. Building a strong community during the morning meetings was fundamental to the development of the other themes that arose from the study.

Early on, through these activities and discussions, not only did students begin to form a connection between their own experiences or the experiences of their classmates, but they also connected to the standards in both Social Studies and English Language Arts. The concepts about immigration and why people emigrated to the United States became more relevant as students started to share about their identities and family backgrounds. The students grew more

interested in the story of *Esperanza Rising* when they learned that Esperanza also moves from Mexico to California to begin a new life. I felt it was important that the students in my classroom felt connected to a book and characters that represented them not only culturally but also linguistically. The novel's background and context of the story also aligned with the topics taught in Social Studies. As we continued to dive deeper into the book, the Latinx students could relate to Esperanza when she moved to California and had to make an adjustment to her new life in America. In my teacher researcher reflection journal, I wrote,

> The students are making great connections to their identities and how it relates to diversity. They are bringing up Esperanza Rising and how when Esperanza moves to California, one of the girls is mean to her. One Black student said, "But aren't they from the same place?" So, I had to explain that their families may be from Mexico, but their experiences were different. Esperanza was a wealthy girl who moved from Mexico to the U.S., but Martha was raised in California, and because of their different life experiences, Martha didn't treat Esperanza with kindness. They are starting to question some of the characters' traits and motives in the story. The morning meeting discussion is making them think a little more deeply about the story we are reading.
>
> (teacher reflection journal, October 9, 2019)

When the part in the book was brought up when Esperanza first arrived in the United States, Marco recalls his own experience as a newcomer in school as an English Language Learner who only spoke Spanish.

Marco When I was in another school and I didn't talk English. I used to talk only in Spanish, right? Other kids used to talk English to me. The teacher used to talk English to me, too. When I had to do some stuff, I didn't understand what they

> told me to do. Then I met this little boy that talks Spanish and English, and he mostly talks Spanish to me and he started being my friend. Whenever someone else would talk to me in English, he told me in Spanish and that's when I started to learn a little more English.

The excerpt above supports the acquisition of allies and community to support his language development and schooling experience as a new student in school in the United States. Throughout the study, there were many occasions where students began code-switching (going back and forth between two languages) between English and Spanish in conversations. The Spanish-speaking students in the classroom translated Spanish words into English words, and the conversation flowed naturally. As time progressed, morning meetings became a time that the Latinx ELL students cultivated a connection with one another and linked their culture and language to their learning by identifying relevant topics to the novel we read during class time. From the very first week of the study, the community that was developed and built among all peers created a space that was safe and open for new discoveries about oneself and other people.

Theme 2: "I've Never Shared This Stuff Before"

Latinx students expressed how morning meeting felt like a safe space to disclose personal and sensitive information among their classmates and teacher. This theme emerged from students sharing about topics for the first-time regarding challenges they have faced in school and in the community. LatCrit Theory adds in a new layer to recognize the distinct struggle of marginalized people that Critical Race Theory does not necessarily pinpoint. More specifically, LatCrit Theory acknowledges and centers experiences that Latinx people may have with oppression and injustice, which include immigration. The accounts below signify how morning meeting functioned as a time of expansion and connection of struggles for the Latinx students (Valdes,

1998). The morning message asked students to think and share about a time when they have faced a difficult or challenging situation in their lives. As hands shot up in the air, I vividly recall the moment that Benjamin and Jacob opened up about their family's personal experiences with immigration.

Benjamin Last year my dad was detained for not having his papers. One of the officers took my dad. I went to visit my dad in jail. My sister went first and then I went the second time with this lady from church. But when we went to visit my dad, there was a glass you could see through. But you can't touch him or anything. There were no holes. I thought it would be like the movie and that he would be in black and white [clothes]. But then he was wearing orange with a number and then we talked on a phone. Then I was like sad. I was crying and then we left and we came back home. I thought they were going to deport him. It was sad because the house was really empty without him. Cause every Saturday night, me and dad would watch soccer games, And the night that he came back, it was like around 1:00. My sister and my grandma were sleeping. Out of nowhere, I felt like someone came and hugged and kissed me. And I woke up and I started crying. I feel like crying right now.

At that moment, Benjamin, the tallest boy in our class, with his jet-black hair combed over and styled with gel, grabbed the neck of his green long sleeve uniform shirt and wiped the tears that welled up in his eyes. When Benjamin shared that time of struggle and sadness in his life, Jacob, who sat next to Benjamin, began to cry as well. Jacob ran over to where I sat and hugged me and just sobbed. After a moment of comforting Jacob, he returned to his spot and I asked him why he felt so emotional and if wanted to share his thoughts and feelings with the class. Jacob said,

“Yes, I feel sad too because of my sister. My sister got deported. I miss her.” Jacob proceeded to explain how his mom is still here in the United States but lives in fear of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), “My mom is an illegal immigrant. She doesn't have her papers. Every time she drives, she gets scared the police might pull her over.” The fear that Latinx students face on a daily basis of going home to an empty house is real and prevalent in the Latinx community. Other students shared openly about the relatives that are in similar situations and conveyed their empathy with those two boys. Juliette chimed in and told the class about her 25-year-old cousin, who was deported and had to leave behind a little baby that her aunt is currently raising. She mentioned how sad she was about it and added that she did not know too much about the situation, only overhearing her parents talking about it one night. Given the tense political climate, there seemed to be a sense of silence and confidentiality around the topic of immigration due to the fears of deportation among undocumented immigrants. Juliette continued on and said, “I don’t usually talk about my culture and this stuff. But when we started talking about diversity, I felt safe and started sharing and then other people started sharing.” Others in the class continued sharing around the circle, and then Ava, known as a quiet student and a role model to her peers, raised her hand and said,

Ava Can I say something? Sometimes we never think about the challenges that people are facing. My family has been through challenges like that too. Also, I’ve never shared this stuff before. I never shared this stuff before because I never had a connection with the teachers or my class. That's why I never felt comfortable sharing this stuff.

Teacher Sometimes, when we see issues on the news, it feels like it is not a problem that we can relate to. It’s not just a bunch of strangers that have to deal with the

> problem. But as you can see, these things effect the people right here in our class. Or maybe you have felt like you and your family are the only ones who are going through it. But now you can see you are not alone.

Students had an invitation to share about the challenges they have encountered in their lives, and the Latinx students used that opportunity to voice their untold stories and found that other students faced similar struggles. At the end of this specific morning meeting, I thanked all students for sharing. I indicated that the information shared can be emotionally heavy to talk about due to the sensitive nature of the matter. At the very end of the meeting, I emphasized the importance of maintaining a safe space for our classmates to share openly about each experience so that we can understand one another better and, if given the opportunity, become advocates for one another. Other topics that were discussed throughout the week included facing discrimination and racism in the community. I will discuss this topic in greater detail in the next part of this chapter.

Theme 3: "They All Think We're All Bad"

As students began unraveling the stories of the challenging situations they faced living in a diverse society, many of the Latinx students brought up the dominant, negative stereotypes that they have heard about Latinx people. On the morning of Thursday, October 24, 2019, students eagerly came to the morning meeting that day. I rang the chime to signal the transition to our morning meeting time, and students nearly came running towards the rug and found a spot next to a friend. After the greeting and morning message, students asked me if they could go straight to the sharing because they were ready to tell about the problems they witnessed or been a part of in society. This morning meeting became an outpouring of recollections and experiences of discrimination from most of the young people in the room. Up until this point, Madeline, a timid

young girl with long, black hair down to her waist neatly parted down the middle of her head, covering part of her face, spoke up for the first time. With her quiet and gentle voice, she shared about the time when President Donald Trump was elected as president. Madeline pointed out the words the president used to talk about Mexican immigrants and said, “On the news, Trump called Mexicans gang members and bad people and that Mexican people were taking all of the jobs and that’s why he wanted everyone to go back to where they came from”. Madeline questioned the societal system that she was part of, "So when I saw the election and Donald Trump was picked. At first, I didn't know. But when I really saw his character. I asked, ‘Why would you pick him?’” Just at the mention of his name, audible sounds of grumbling and sighs came from around the room. These fifth-grade students were only second graders when President Trump’s election took place, but for the last three years of these students’ lives, they watched the president, the leader of the country they lived in, speak oppressively and harshly about Latinx people. After Madeline voiced her thoughts about the political situation, a few more students articulated their own understandings about the political climate in the conversation below.

Jacob Some people think that we're bad because of culture.

Benjamin Just like the government right now. I was watching the news but it said that Trump, he's building the wall. And he said that only white people could do this and do that. And then he said that building a wall would be better. Some people don't even know you and they just treat you bad.

Kenneth Yeah, he’s just trying to build that wall. He's been saying stuff about like Hondurans, Mexicans and other Hispanics and Spanish countries. They're just trying to come over here to the United States to start a new life but Trump is not letting them.

Ava You know how Donald Trump keeps talking about negative things. He thinks people are all in gangs and criminals. That's probably why people feel like they can say bad things. They think that's it's okay to talk about people. But, it's really not. He used stereotypes to group people together. They don't know your background.

Juliette Yeah, some people think that we are bad because of where we are coming from. They all think we are all bad.

Ava What they don't know is that we are all different... But we all have something in common. We all are human beings.

The excerpt above demonstrated how students used the oppressive narratives in society to produce critical knowledge of the systematic injustices that Latinx people experienced. Madeline's statement sparked an entire production of critical knowledge and discussion among other Latinx students about the president's negative comments about a marginalized group of people. The morning meeting became a space for students to not only acknowledge the discrimination and injustices in the community, but morning meeting also provided a way for students to connect with other Latinx students' stories and cultivate a sense of community among one another.

As a teacher, what I heard students say through that conversation is that they wanted people to get to know them as individuals with distinct abilities and traits. I had to ensure that I was not doing the same type of oppressive practices in the educational setting. I had to be mindful and careful of my own assumptions about the Latinx students' experiences. I wanted every student to understand that they were individuals with her/his own story and that she/he was the only one who could tell that story. Therefore, I had the responsibility to recognize and

integrate time into the school day for each student to have an opportunity to share her/his experiences and build upon that knowledge within the school day. The Latinx students in my class all had different life experiences and family backgrounds. Some of the families owned business, some worked in companies, some were migrant workers, some attended high school and college in the United States, and some crossed the border to seek a better life. When I planned lessons around the novel, I was careful not to make assumptions that all students could relate to Esperanza and her family's story with immigration. For one assignment, I asked students to share how they connected the story of Esperanza Rising to their own lives. Eduardo brought up the story of his dad crossing the border and how dangerous it was for his family on their journey to the United States. Eduardo write in his reading response journal,

> I connect mostly to the story of Esperanza Rising because my dad had to walk across the border like the family of Esperanza. He told me that they used to walk in the night. He said they were scared because they didn't know where to step. They used to hear wolves and snakes, like rattlesnakes. They could only walk in the night so people could not see them.
>
> (student reflection journal, October 30, 2019)

Another student, Martina, talked about how she felt more connected to Marta because she was a Mexican-American girl, and her family moved from Mexico to California. "I connect to the story because my family moved to [the South] from California, too," wrote Martina. And other students simply wrote that they felt connected to the book because it was the first book they read in school that had Spanish in it. As we read the novel, the Latinx students pronounced and explained Spanish words or concepts to the class as they arose. For instance, the character of Abuelita symbolized strength, courage, and hope, and students explained how in their own

family structure, Abuelita/Abuela was a person that the family looked to for wisdom and advice. There was a sense of understanding among the Latinx students about language, culture, and family background, despite the diverse groups within the Latinx community. I was no longer just the teacher in the room, I was also the student learning from the knowledge of Latinx students as the experts. There was also an understanding among those students that the school acted as a system that was meant to silence them. One morning, the following conversation transpired,

Marco My teachers used to tell me not to talk Spanish in class because people think I'm saying bad words or talking about them.

Benjamin That happened to me too. Sometimes we were just talking and then we got in trouble.

Juliette And now we get to speak Spanish a lot. Like in class when we read *Esperanza Rising*.

Benjamin But I get why teachers say that because last time me and my dad went to the gas station and we were speaking Spanish and this white dude asked him "Your Mexican? You need to learn English." He cursed him out. And then my dad felt bad.

Juliette It's like Esperanza, when they said, they don't think that Mexicans had an education.

Teacher Yeah, my family have been through similar circumstances, too. My grandpa was a government official, kind of like an FBI agent, before he escaped from Laos. When he came to the United States, he had to get a job as a janitor and people thought that he was uneducated because he had an accent. That's an assumption that a lot of people have, is that if you are speaking another language other than

> English, that you are uneducated or less than them. What people don't realize is that there is value in other people's culture, languages, or experiences other than their own. Just because many people come to the United States and had to start a new life, doesn't mean that the life they lived before was of no value. This is just one challenge that we face when living in a diverse society like in our country. We should continue to share and expose those experiences so we can talk about ways to overcome those challenges.

The dominant discourse around multilingualism showed in the conversation above an example of an unjust assumption made about people speaking other languages out in the community. The discussions between the Latinx students showed that those systematic structures send a message to them that only one culture, the white-American experience, is the only one that matters. In one reflection, a student wrote about the historical connection with this concept of subtractive schooling practices and assimilation of cultural identity through her grandma's stories. She wrote an excerpt which noted,

> I've been going home and telling my grandma what I am learning in school. Then, she gives me more information about U.S. history. My great, great grandma told her that they used to take little kids, snatch them, and they teach them that they're European. So, then they was ashamed of their own family. One girl, her family was actually Mexican, but she thought she was European. She was ashamed. But once she got older, she noticed that that wasn't really her culture, and found out she was actually Mexican. This is why it is important to share about your culture and language.
>
> (student reflection journal, October 22, 2019)

The example above reflected the understanding of the experiences that Latinx children had with the Americanization period of history through the stripping away of any cultural or linguistic diversities, as I previously discussed in the literature review. The same inequities also existed in schools with similar beliefs around subtractive schooling that the only way to be successful academically and socially in school was through only speaking English. I found and uncovered that those subtractive, assimilation practices still exist in schools today through the students' sharing. For this reason, I felt it was imperative to create an intentional space for students to feel valued and build upon those differences in culture and languages. I wanted to build upon the multicultural experience and knowledge as a benefit to their learning. By reading the novel of *Esperanza Rising*, Latinx ELL students expressed they made meaningful connections to the story and felt that their culture and language promoted not only academic success but a means to assert their agency through the centering of their narratives and experiences. Once the novel was completed, students still referred to Esperanza's story when topics of immigration, human rights, and activism were brought up in class. When students feel a connection between the learning that occurs in the classroom to their cultural and linguistic identities, students have a meaningful association with their schoolwork.

Theme 4: "Kids Can Change the World and Make a Difference"

At the end of the study, once students stated the various challenges they faced, I asked students to discuss ways to address those problems and injustices. Some of the problems they identified were systemic issues, and students had a difficult time wrapping their heads around finding a solution. I led the class to compile a list of ways that people have responded to the challenges they have faced in society. Some responses included protesting, boycotting, and speeches. I connected students to the story of *Esperanza Rising* when the community of migrant

workers began to strike as a way to demand improvement of working conditions, which students recognized that as a type of protest. We examined why some of the workers joined the strike and why others, including Esperanza, hesitated to join the resistance. I wrote about my thoughts and feelings in my teacher reflection journal on October 30, 2019,

> We discussed different ways that people make and demand change in the community. Most of the kids referred to the Civil Rights Movement as a time that responded to the Jim Crow Laws. That is when they saw people come together who wanted to make change. They talked about Martin Luther King, Jr. and mentioned how he fought for the rights of African American people. Often times in school, this is the only reference to protesting that students are exposed to. When I asked if they knew any other civil rights activist, no other names came up. I think I want to read the book about Sylvia Mendez and how her story changed schools for Mexican-Americans in California and acted as a catalyst for Brown vs. Board of Education. I want to make activism relevant to their lives today. I think I want to also introduce Marley Dias to them, who was a young girl who saw a problem in her school and took it to social media to bring about change. They are in the beginning stages of finding solutions to the problems that they listed as a group.

So, the following day, I returned to school ready for students to be introduced to Sylvia Mendez. We read the book *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*, written by Duncan Tonatiuh. When I showed the front cover of the book to the students and read the title, students began to recognize her name from classroom door decorations in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month at our school, but this was the first time learning why she was an important figure to study. After reading the book and having a brief discussion about what Sylvia Mendez encountered and how her family fought for equal rights, I

asked students to think about the current issues that are in society, the community, or in the school and ways to solve those problems. Ava told me that afternoon during dismissal that every evening, she had been going home and thinking about solutions to the problems and challenges that our class identified in the school and within the community. She expressed that she had been thinking deeply about the problems we talked about in class and ways to overcome those problems we face. So, I asked Ava to write her reflections in her journal, and she wrote (student reflection journal, November 1, 2019),

> Last year I didn't really notice this stuff like in this world. When we started this, we started talking about diversity and inclusion and about people not getting equality like other people, and now I always go home and think about it. Now, I think differently about the people around me. I'm starting to wonder how we make changes.

I asked Ava if she could lead the next morning meeting, which highlighted the reciprocity of teaching and learning in culturally relevant pedagogy. To start, she shared with the class what she had been thinking about and shared her reflection. I provided below a snippet of how she began the conversation about the difference a young person can make in the community.

Ava So last week, we started talking about the changes and solutions to a problem. So, I was thinking about that. You know, that's really hard answer because you don't ever think about that. People think that kids can't do a lot of things. But we actually can. Not just adults, kids can change the world and make a difference in other people's lives.

Juliette And like Kid President, he was young and he already changed something.

Ava Yes, because kids sometimes they won't want to share their voice. Not just adults can make changes, kids can make speeches and tell everybody. It could be small, but as you grow up, you might be bigger.

I guided the conversation for students to choose one current issue that they found meaningful and important in their lives today. Topics chosen ranged from bullying, judging others based on race, social media, and immigration. I focused on Ava's charge to the class about being young but still making a difference by taking action. As I was finishing my statement to the class, Benjamin interjected,

Benjamin Like DREAMERS!

Teacher Yeah DREAMERS, can you tell the class more about DREAMERS?

Benjamin That they come from. They're not from here but their parents come here. They're born like in another place. And they come over here and they call them dreamers because they're trying to fight for justice so they could get the papers. Also, if you don't have papers, then you can't go to college and that's what DREAMERS are fighting for.

Kenneth Oh, I saw something like that on the news, like it was in El Paso, Texas. People were doing like a march, protesting. Yeah, they were protesting.

Benjamin El Paso is where the border is...Mexico and the United States.

Kenneth They were protesting because they wanted Trump to do something. Like I was thinking in my head, is he going to do something or not? But then few days went by, and he didn't do anything. And then I heard on the news that they're trying to impeach Trump.

Teacher Protesting is one way that people can take a stand against injustice or if they feel like change needs to happen. It is to bring attention or awareness to a situation that needs immediate action. Those people are called activists.

Benjamin Only if I was 18 years old, then maybe I could change something. I could vote!

Teacher You aren't old enough to vote, but you can still take action. Think about how you want to bring awareness or change to the issue you identified. Some of these are big issues that probably cannot be fixed in one day, but we should start somewhere.

Ava Yeah, it's like a process. It's a lot. It's one of those things like now that you are aware of [the problem]. Sometimes, like for me, when I see stuff, I'm like... right now that I'm thinking about, I know I'm like, that's not OK. Like you finally notice.

In this morning meeting, Ava is referring to her consciousness and new awareness to the injustices and inequities that exist in society. Latinx students desired and hoped for social transformation to bring about justice, but some still felt that they were too young to make a difference. After this conversation, we watched a short video that introduced them to a young activist named Marley Dias, who wanted to see more books in school with characters that looked like her. She was set on changing that and launched a campaign called #1000BlackGirlBooks. Marley ended up with more than 9,000 books and even wrote a book herself at the young age of 10. As a class, we began to discuss that there are new approaches to activism. Students began to talk about different young people they have seen in YouTube videos or other social media platforms that have started various movements. We ended that morning meeting with conversations about ways they could be a change agent in school, the community, or in society.

The example above shows how an intentional and responsive activity with students promoted agency and socio-political advocacy during one morning meeting. The following excerpts gathered from students' reflection journals from November 2, 2019, reflected the desire for social transformations for a particular topic as well as how each student would engage in activism. First, I found that students concentrated on local school dilemmas:

Ava A problem in this school is that people are judging me for my religion and culture. It's important to me because I don't want people to be judged by other people. Sometimes you have to take risks in your life if you want to make a huge change. I want to give a speech to the school about not judging others.

(student reflection, November 2, 2019)

Alberto Since I'm part of the Student Council, my action to change this issue of arguing and fighting is to make a plan by working together. Like Monday through Friday, if there is a problem, after school, you can talk about anything you need help with or to speak to someone.

(student reflection, November 2, 2019)

Other students expressed their concerns in the community and wanted to find ways to work with community leaders to support their voices. Evidence of students who desired to see a community change are in the following student reflection excerpts:

Kenneth An important issue to me is that people bully others and then they commit suicide thinking that they don't matter to this world anymore. I can take action by opening a website for our community that people can come together in a meeting to tell other people about what they get bullied about. Then we can talk about how we can take action and how to stand up to the bullies and then teach them how

they can become better and how they can do something better than bullying other people.

(student reflection, November 2, 2019)

Juliette I think that one problem in the community is that people don't know about other people or cultures. One solution is that we could make more events to represent other cultures. Our county should do this.

(student reflection, November 2, 2019)

Furthermore, students recognized that there were issues that we have as a country and composed a reflection about one way he would communicate his activism as indicated in next selection:

Jacob I would write [a letter] to President Trump, instead of using the money for the wall, use the money for people that don't have jobs and that need help, like for homeless people. You could use the money for food instead of the wall. I saw the news and they said that Trump said that he told the president from Mexico that he that they are gonna pay for the wall. And some of the money could go to the fires in California.

(student reflection, November 2, 2019)

The range of action and activism varied among the 12 Latinx ELL students. As the study reached its climax, I noticed that some students felt more comfortable with voicing their opinions and feelings while other students were ready to take their action to the next step. Students believed that young people (their age) have the capacity to use their voice to make a difference in the school, community, and in the country.

As the research study reached a conclusion, I wanted students to share their overall experience with the culturally relevant morning meetings. In regards to their overall thoughts on

morning meetings, Latinx students shared the following statements with the entire class regarding their experiences:

Eduardo I love morning meeting. We get to spend time with each other. We can know each other. We talked about other things. I love doing things. It is fun doing morning meeting. I love myself. I learned that people are from different countries or states that don't know English.

Carlos What I think about morning meeting is to speak and not to be scared because people are going to not judge you and your identity. I learned that in school I should not let people be bullies and we can help them. Some people can have different feelings so you can help them to speak up like you do.

Madeline Yes, kids sometimes they won't want to share their voice. It's important to tell the teachers stuff like make connections with your kids, see if you guys have something in common during morning meeting.

Martina Yeah I agree, I connected to morning meeting by getting to know more things that I didn't know about other people. I got to know a little bit more about where I was born and where I grew up in. I can relate to reading more because *Esperanza Rising* is a book that we are reading and she had to escape from her home country to go to the United States.

Ava Things that I have learned from the class and from morning meeting is I learned more about identity, diversity, justice, and how to take action.

Through these culturally relevant morning meetings, I intended to create a space that promoted and fostered an environment that encouraged students to exercise their agency to share their stories, connect to learning, and advocate for themselves in the classroom. As the teacher and

researcher, I wanted to understand and support their experiences and center their stories as Latinx ELL students. Overall, throughout the course of the study, students expressed that they learned more about themselves, their classmates, and the world around them through the greetings, activities, morning messages, and sharing time throughout morning meetings. In the final part of this chapter, I explain how the morning meetings supported students in building upon their agency in the classroom, in school, and in the community.

Agentic Experiences of Students

Throughout the study, I found that students experienced a greater sense of agency, "the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths" (Muhammad, 2014, p. 98), in which they articulated in different ways. As described in my literature review, agency can be expressed through students centering their voice, creating a space for choice, and taking action to improve the current conditions in society. By creating a safe place for students to share about their experiences, both benefits and challenges they have faced, they felt a strong sense of agency to share about their truths and perspectives with the class. I connected this idea of Latinx students' agency in schools to one poem of Langston Hughes. In his poem "Impasse", he wrote, "I could tell you, / If I wanted to, / What makes me / What I am. // But I don't / Really want to- / And you don't / Give a damn." As educators, it may feel overwhelming to create a curriculum that is student-centered when we have so many students with different backgrounds and experiences. However, it should start with asking students to tell about themselves.

Morning meetings provided a space for students to tell their peers and teachers what makes them who they are. My students have the voice to assert their agency, but they may not have had the space or opportunity previously to use their voices to tell about their authentic

selves. Ava was one student who stood out to me throughout this research. She started at the beginning of the study more reserved, but as the study went on further, she began to feel comfortable sharing her experiences with diversity and (in)justice both in the school as well as in the community. “And this is why morning meeting is important, because you learn new stuff and you get to realize that this is what's happening in our country.” (student reflection journal, October 25, 2019). She goes on to explain how there has never been a time at school for her to talk about rights related to her (and her family) identity and make those connections between home and school. During the morning meeting on October 25, 2019, Ava and Carlos recalled a brief conversation they had about morning meetings in their class last year.

Carlos I remember what Ava said last year about stopping morning meeting. You remember last year? You said with Jessica and Liliana that you wish we could talk about it.

Ava Oh yeah, I said I wanted equality for people

Carlos Yeah, she said I wish one of these classes are going to talk about when to stop like talking about random stuff during morning meeting.

Ava Yeah, like what's your favorite color? And what's your favorite animal? I was waiting for some more discussion about like other things like rights and cultures and traditions.

In one article, Muhammad and Gonzalez (2016) explained “youth agency involves participating in the political discourse, critically reading the social context of society, and developing social action and self-expression” (p 443). Ava and Carlos acted upon their agency when they expressed the need for discourse around justice and equality. Once students recognized that by expressing their positional agency through the centering of their voice and

perspectives about her life, other students began to echo the same sentiments about including their stories throughout morning meetings. Carlos agreed when he mentioned, “I never shared that kind of stuff like last year because I didn't feel comfortable and stuff and like I never made like connection with people like that. So that’s why I never shared my life background and family.” (student reflection, November 1, 2019). Several students made it clear that their teachers in the past did not ask them about their family or individual cultural or linguistic backgrounds. When students openly shared their personal narratives in our class meetings, I gained more knowledge about how students understood and viewed their implied position not only in the school system but also in society. For LatCrit and Critical Race Theory scholars, Fernandez (2002) discussed the importance of storytelling or narratives to reflect on participants’ lived experiences, speak her or his story and provides a counterstory to dominate reality constructed by Whites. Moreover, “by looking at the marginal (and often misunderstood) sociocultural practices of Latina/Latino youth, we get a deeper understand of how they are oppressed but, at the same time, use their personal agency to resist their social conditions” (Fernández, 2002, p. 48). I learned that Latinx students felt that their culture and language was ignored both in society and in school. Students shared information about themselves that revealed cultural experiences, languages, and knowledge that I could use to connect them to the curriculum. These moments provided more opportunities to cultivate a curriculum that was built around the students’ backgrounds and linking them to the learning. Through our novel study, I used what I learned from students’ sharing in morning meetings to strengthen their academic success and involvement.

Another expression of agency is through making a space for students to make choices regarding various circumstances in their lives. In this study, students had multiple opportunities

to assert student choice both in what was shared during morning meetings as well as what was part of the school curriculum. Students felt a sense that was possible to reshape the outcome of a situation by directing one's actions purposefully (Tishman & Clapp, 2017). The morning meetings were flexible and responsive to students because they chose when and what they shared and the activities in which they participated. When students chose to share with the class about the frightening and challenging situations they have faced, especially about their family's immigration status and border crossing narrative, students demonstrated a strong sense of agency. The morning meeting topic of challenges in diversity created a space for students to choose what they felt comfortable sharing and what mattered to each individual varied. Benjamin and Jacob made an intentional choice to share about their family's struggles with being undocumented immigrants to help the other students understand the realities of living in a society with a negative narrative about the Latinx population. I realized that the stories my students shared were not part of the traditional school curriculum, but when given a space for students to choose topics that were meaningful to them brought about discussions concerning border crossing, immigration, and discrimination. More importantly, these stories were a part of the lived experiences of the Latinx ELL students. Gonzalez and Morrison (2016) described that the LatCrit framework questions the disconnection of students of color from their race, ethnicity, and culture in educational institutions. Instead, it focuses on the importance of diverse knowledge and cultural contexts and views it as an asset to an individual and the group collectively (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When students are presented the time and space to choose topics that they care about, students feel affirmed in their agency in making those lived experiences and counterstories part of their school curriculum.

Towards the end of the study, students conveyed their agency by communicating their actions as solutions to the problems they identified. “Problem solving starts with having a sense of agency and seeing the world as malleable” (Tishman & Clapp, 2017. p. 62). Students began to understand that they had the capacity and tools to make a change in places around them. Some of those problems included bullying, diversity, and immigration. Students also used their agency to choose how they would respond to challenging situations. One activity asked students to think of a scenario that could arise regarding the challenges they shared and how they would respond. One group of students chose to discuss the scenario about a new student who came to our school who could not speak English. They came up with a few ways to try to solve that problem. Students shared that they could find a translation application on a tablet to try to communicate. Another solution was to create a welcome packet with keywords to help them learn English words. In this study, students also discussed ways that they could take action against larger issues in society. Juliette desired to create a community event that celebrated diversity while Benjamin discussed writing a letter to a political leader about his concerns with building a wall along the Mexico and U.S. border. Nigel Coutts (2020) wrote

> as our young people challenge the truth of claims made by those in power, it becomes inevitable that schools become the point of origin for their collective voice. If we are genuine in our desire to promote critical thinking, curiosity and student agency, we should not stand in the way of this (p. 21).

By shifting my role as a facilitator during morning meetings, it helped students to be open to think critically about the world they live in, identify problems they have encountered, and discuss how to take action to make it a better place to live in. LatCrit helped me see that students’ narratives and stories revealed that both school and society was not serving them

equitably and adequately, which prompted a desire to take action against those challenges through their agency. “Indeed, this is the space in critical race research that allows for transformation. Telling one’s narrative or counter-story can have a liberating or emancipatory element to it” (Fernandez, 2002, p. 59). Instead of continuing to silence the stories of Latinx students, morning meetings supported and boosted students’ agency by centering the voices and experiences to transform the current institutional systems in the United States.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the major findings that emerged from the analysis of data from morning meeting observations and audio recordings, student reflections, and teacher reflections. I explained how each theme responded to the research question: What are the experiences of Latinx ELL students as participants of culturally relevant morning meetings? The data showed that Latinx ELL students experienced community building and connections, a safe space for sharing, a desire to share their personal experiences in challenging situations, and a greater sense of student agency. In the next chapter, I discuss the implications of this study and recommendations for future research.

5 DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Using the methodology of action research allowed me to be the researcher in this study while guiding the morning meetings as the facilitator and teacher. I used this approach to plan, act, observe, and reflect on an iterative cycle each week to create morning meetings that cultivated a safe space for connecting with students through sharing about one's identity, family background, and personal experiences (see Appendix J morning meeting resources used in this study). Data collection started at the beginning of October 2019, which allowed me, as the teacher, to have two months of establishing a routine for morning meetings. During the first two months, students learned how to sit in a circle so that everyone could be part of the class meeting and so that students could see each other's faces. I taught the basic routines of how to listen attentively and how to use a talking piece to share. The students practiced passing around the talking piece and only talking while holding it. This helped establish a culture of respect and consideration for the speaker. Students could simply say "pass" if they chose not to share or participate during that time. Initially, we kept the morning meetings simple and low-risk to encourage participation from everyone. It was important that essential routines were established, modeled, and practiced before adding any complexity to the morning meetings. Greetings started with a simple "Good morning" and handshake around the circle. One of the share questions early in the year was "What's your favorite hobby?" and a class-favorite activity was four corners where students moved to the designated corner based on their answer to a series of questions. Introducing each school day with a class morning meeting helped me get a sense of how students were feeling, provided students with the information they needed about the school day, and started the day with positive interactions and communication with classmates. By the time data collection started in October, students were familiar with the routine, and the get-to-know-you

process had already begun. Together, the students and I co-created a space designed to share about ourselves with the group and examine the challenges or problems that we have faced in the school and the community. The social justice issues that surfaced did not happen immediately. It took some time for students to feel comfortable sharing those topics. We first acknowledged that our identities were multi-layered and the role that our families' background and history played in those multi-faceted identities. As an active participant and facilitator in the morning meetings, I felt that I made a stronger connection to my students by sharing my own stories of being a language learner, growing up in an immigrant family, and experiences with oppressive practices. My stories were embedded throughout the morning meetings as the opportunities opened up to share in those moments. I want to emphasize that the work that is required for this critical inquiry requires vulnerability both personally and professionally.

I first begin this chapter by discussing my role as the teacher in supporting students in this process and how their openness and stories changed me, not only as a teacher from an instructional perspective but also as a personal ally. The morning meetings provided a collective and collaborative space where the students' voices and experiences contributed to deepening my understanding of their individual ways of knowing and their experiences with injustices in the community and in society. I hope that my work echoes the messages of the students and acknowledges these young 5th grade Latinx students as knowledgeable, conscious, and critical of the world around them. In Chapter 4, the themes presented allowed me to answer my research question by discussing the findings and explanations of these experiences and now I explain the implications of this work for my fellow elementary school teachers, teacher educators, and future researchers.

My Role as the Teacher

This experience with my students during the research study gave me the opportunity to carefully examine my praxis and the role I played in supporting my students throughout this entire process. As a teacher and critical theorist, I realized that students have the capacity to understand the injustices in their lives and society. However, it was necessary to find ways to build upon their agency and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) to make learning both equitable and relevant to their lives. In the introduction, I shared my own experience with the morning meeting that changed the way I viewed these moments with my students. This study affirmed the need for morning meetings that provide more in-depth insight into students' identities and the oppressive and silencing experiences that students from marginalized groups have encountered in their lives. Specifically, when Latinx students shared their fears and worries of deportation or being mistreated in schools and public spaces took an emotional toll on me that I did not expect. There were times during the morning meetings where tears were shed, and I had difficulty finding the right words to say to comfort students who expressed hurt or sadness. Other times, I sat in my car in silence trying to digest the stories my students shared with me that morning.

I began to see these fifth graders as more than students in my class. I saw them as young people who lived in a society that did not always accept them. It was painful to hear about the hidden or not-so-hidden messages that they received about not feeling accepted in the community because they spoke a different language or because their families were from a different country. Those same messages were echoed in schools when teachers, curriculum, and the system ignored their funds of knowledge. I wanted to listen to what these students had to say about those challenges that they faced. When Ava mentioned that she never had a "connection

with teachers" as she reflected on her experiences in school, she referred to teachers just viewing her as a student and not getting to know her as a person. Ava desired to form a relationship with her teachers, where they knew her on a deeper level. At first glance, Ava seemed like a quiet kid who did not have much to say. However, what I discovered was that Ava had a lot to say. She understood the historical and current practices that did not acknowledge her culture and ways of knowing. And not only did she have that knowledge, but she also wanted to talk about it. I wanted students like Ava to feel heard, supported, and experience achievement by creating a classroom environment that involved students maintaining their authentic self at school. Designing these culturally relevant morning meetings allowed me to approach these matters in an intentional, sensitive manner.

One significant discovery I made is that some of the Latinx students in my classroom experienced different forms of trauma in their lives, whether it was in school or society. While there are mental health professionals such as counselors and therapists who can help students cope and heal from trauma, educators can also be informed and engage in the process of restoration. Waters and Brunzell (2018) describe five ways to support students affected by trauma, which were forming positive relationships, providing a positive physical space, fostering positive emotions, opportunities to recognize and use their character strengths (kindness, bravery, creativity, etc.) and building resilience through verbalizing feelings and setting boundaries. By participating in culturally relevant morning meetings, teachers have a chance to encourage and support students with those elements of a trauma-informed classroom. Furthermore, with limited research on Social Emotional Learning and ELL students, this study contributes to the existing body of work by fostering student agency in support of the trauma that my Latinx ELL students experienced. This study presents an opportunity to engage in trauma-

informed SEL, which is “an approach to fostering youths’ social-emotional development with practices that support all students, but is particularly inclusive and responsive to the needs of children and youth who have experienced trauma” (Transforming Education, 2020, p. 1). By integrating SEL through culturally relevant morning meetings, educators develop supportive learning environments where ELL students who have experienced adversities and trauma feel connected and supported, establish a strong community of positive relationships among their peers and adults, and engage in practices that are built upon students’ individual and collective knowledge, strengths, and realities.

Another revelation was that I needed to be flexible and open to change during this process. Even though I planned each morning meeting, students may have steered the conversation in a new direction than I had expected. In one example, Juliette guided the class in the excitement by sharing the Mexican flag she drew, which was where her family was from. She led the entire class in wanting to know more about their families, which led to individual students interviewing their families about their backgrounds. When students feel comfortable sharing their experiences, ideas, and reflections, others can begin to gain a greater sense of agency to voice their stories during morning meetings. By adjusting and being open to changes in my plans, I encouraged students to build upon their agency that led to other students to present agentive behaviors. Through close examination, I found that when one student employed her/his agency to voice their truths and opinions, engage in conversation about tough topics, such as discrimination and immigration, and felt a desire to take action against those injustices, they supported and inspired other students to utilize their own agency.

Lastly, by using more culturally relevant morning meetings in my classroom, I made better connections with the families of the students in my class. Not only did the morning

meetings strengthen my relationships with my students, but also with their parents. I did not expect this particular outcome since I was not examining that aspect of the experience. However, considering the role of family relationships with students and understanding that it is a vital part of culturally relevant pedagogy, it makes sense. Right in the middle of my data collection period, I had a week scheduled with parent-teacher conferences. During these conferences, parents spoke to me about the experiences that their child had during morning meeting. One parent expressed how happy she was that her child was going home and telling her about the topics we talked about in class. She said that she talks to her son about the news all the time, and this was the first time that she recalled that her son discussed those political and societal issues at school. Another parent said I like that she like that her daughter was getting a chance to share their culture, language, and traditions at school. She said she would love to come and be part of morning meetings, especially the way that her daughter talked about them. I told her she could come anytime and join us for the first part of the day. That parent's desire to join and be part of the classroom spoke volumes to me about the impact of this research in my classroom and the potential partnership I could build between my students, their families, and even in the community.

Implications

Next, I will go into the suggested implications, which are rooted in my reflections from my research study from the experiences of 12 Latinx ELL students. With that in mind, these suggestions are not meant to generalize that all Latinx and ELLs from different backgrounds have the same experiences. Both the Latinx and English Language Learner umbrella encompasses a diverse population of people with various life experiences, languages, and cultures. Nonetheless, by including the stories of these twelve students, I highlighted that young

individuals have an understanding of what oppression is and looks like, and they have a desire to articulate those experiences with their peers and teachers. Respectively, through the examination of the experiences of the students as well as my own personal and professional practices, I believe it is the responsibility of key stakeholders to understand their role in supporting or dismantling those oppressive systems.

Elementary School Teachers

Findings from this research encourage teachers to engage in activities, lessons, and discussions of social justice in their elementary school classrooms. Those topics may vary, but for Latinx ELL students, those topics should include immigration, border crossing, discrimination, and collective activism. These topics may summon feelings of uneasiness and distress, but the rewards outweigh those moments of discomfort. Morning meetings provide a designated time to get to know students on a deeper level. The insight teachers get from the morning meetings can create a strong connection between the students in the class and provides a safe space to ask questions respectfully and openly. Conversations about identity, diversity, justice, and taking action should begin at an early age. The American Psychological Association found in one study (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010), with 8- to 11-year-olds where researchers read children books that either used the "color blind" approach or talked about the value of diversity, that students who learned about diversity were better at recognizing discrimination. Some educators may feel that talking about those topics may bring (negative) attention to them, but instead, avoiding those topics can make it feel uncomfortable, taboo, and challenging. With more access to technology, students have more exposure to (social) media at early ages that may publish stories of discrimination. One of my students saw on the internet the story about one woman in Georgia who harassed a Black man who was babysitting two White

children and stopped to ask if the children were all right (NPR, 2018). She continued on and eventually called the police on the man. Without the space to discuss these stories and how to take action against those stereotypes about people of color, children may not be prepared to deal with those situations. Plus, students from marginalized groups may encounter these hurtful and harmful experiences at an early age themselves or with their families, and teachers should create a safe space to acknowledge that those injustices exist and that change needs to happen. Educators should use these opportunities to challenge and break down the barriers and systems that condone those oppressive experiences.

With that being said, teachers must first challenge and analyze their own biases and assumptions. Before engaging with students in conversations of social injustice, it is imperative to research and be informed about diverse narratives and perspectives other than one's own. Also, understanding the historical context of different groups of people afford meaningful connections to understanding systemic issues that may emerge. When starting this research, I had to research the historical events (The Mexican Revolution) that led to the discrimination of the Mexican population. The information I found helped me gain a better understanding of how our country has marginalized one group of people. Therefore, this process must start with the teacher before it can extend in the classroom. However, the ignorance of a teacher is not a "pass" to not engage these conversations. Rather, the teacher must find a way to imagine equity literacy, which allows educators to create and sustain learning environments that are just and equitable for all students and their families (Gorski, 2014). In the Teaching Tolerance magazine, Gorski (2014) describes how teachers can practice the four core principles of equity literacy by, (1) recognizing inequities in schools, policies, and curriculum, (2) responding to inequity when it arises through discussions, (3) redressing inequity by being an advocate, and (4) creating and

sustaining an equitable learning environments. Sleeter (2018) also suggested that educators set community agreements and facilitate dialogue with students that explore similarities and differences in identities and experiences and preparing for complicated issues that focus on listening to understand a different perspective than one's own point of view. She stated that, "Although many people approach multicultural education as cultural celebration, with little attention to racism, that approach avoids the core issues of equity and justice" (p. 20). Teachers should explore and examine their own biases and the oppressive structures that exist in schools today and invite students to be part of the process of learning and to form an alliance for action to fight for a just and equitable classroom for students of many backgrounds and identities.

The culturally relevant morning meetings allow teachers to make connections between students' home lives and their learning. I used the information I learned in the morning meetings about my students and linked it to the curriculum and standards during that time. Employing culturally relevant pedagogy helped me choose a curriculum that made the context and themes relevant and more contextualize in my students' lives. Because I knew that my Latinx students spoke Spanish, and many were from Mexico, the story of *Esperanza Rising* felt familiar and meaningful to students. For example, Marco explained to the class that he related to how Esperanza felt when she first moved to California from Mexico because of his own experiences. Another student recalled their parents' stories of border crossing to Esperanza's family's journey. Even months after finishing the novel, my students continued to make references to Esperanza and the themes of activism (protesting) and beginning a new life in a new place.

Additionally, my students' grades increased once students started reading the story and were more motivated to read independently. Each day we transitioned to our reading block, students would express excitement by voicing, "Yes!" while they rushed to the rug with their

novels for a good reading spot. This study demonstrated how morning meetings grounded on the three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy- cultural competence, sociopolitical consciousness, and academic success, contribute greatly to a classroom environment that cultivated academic, social, and emotional growth.

Middle and Secondary Teachers

Although many believe that middle schoolers and high schoolers have the maturity to explore social justice topics, teachers disagree about who should teach it. Naturally, it may seem that history or social studies teachers should be responsible since those standards involve civic ideals and practices. However, teachers may find that implementing morning meetings is one way to build upon students' knowledge and experiences and encourage students to be active participants in society and be change agents. Although morning meetings are typically found in an elementary school setting, middle and secondary schools can also benefit from a classroom culture of community, respect, cooperation, and understanding. With numerous class periods, teachers may feel like there is not enough time in the instructional block to have a class meeting. Those few minutes each day can transform the classroom environment, and teachers can show that they care about their students. Lumpkin (2007) reported that students exert a greater effort when they know that their teachers care about them. A way teachers create a climate of care is by greeting students by name and making sure they know each other's names, too. In conjunction with greetings, all members of the classroom get to share their experiences, thoughts, ideas, feedback, or opinions. Having this time at the start of each class will provide middle and high school teachers insight on student backgrounds and allow connecting with students and linking their reality to the topics being taught. Watching videos, reading a quote, or role-playing would be a simple way to begin each period with adolescents. This research supports that teachers that

implement culturally relevant morning meetings encourage academic achievement and agency of young students and have the capacity to do the same in both middle schools and high schools.

Teacher Education Programs

Educational institutions that have teacher education programs must prepare pre-service teachers for teaching in schools and classroom with diverse populations. With the growing number of English Language Learners, teachers should be knowledgeable about working with students from various backgrounds and cultures. Programs should equip future teachers to become instructional leaders that are able to address issues of diversity, equity, and justice to educate the next generation of students. By teaching through this critical theory framework, future educators attempt to understand the oppressive elements of the society in the United States to recognize the need for both individual and societal transformations (Tierney, 1993). The courses and practicums should provide pre-service teachers with on-going opportunities to problematize how the educational institutions that students attend perpetuate the dominant, White narratives of society and can be detrimental to students from marginalized groups and develop pedagogy that is culturally relevant. By preparing the teachers to be culturally relevant, they will have the background and training to create classroom environments that foster agency and center the voices and experiences of students in diversified classrooms.

Additionally, with the lack of diversity among the teaching population in schools, teacher education programs should recruit teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds and experiences. There is a need for teacher education programs aimed toward bringing in diverse secondary education students but also provides support to help them not only enter, but also succeed throughout the program. Sleeter and Milner (2016) found that programs designed to bring candidates of color into their programs shared the same features, which included building

interests of students of color in a career of teaching, purposefully link students' racial and ethnic backgrounds with instruction, and offering projects that were culturally relevant. The Learning Policy Institute (Darling-Hammond, Bae, Cook-Harvey, Lam, Mercer, Podolsky, & Stosich, 2019) found that when programs are "intentional about making their commitment to social justice and equity a critical criterion in their recruitment and selection practices" (p.11), they are also preparing teachers for deeper learning. When teacher education programs help candidates understand the value of being culturally relevant not only in the future schools they will be working in but also within the practices of their own programs, pre-service teachers are better prepared to prioritize and engage in equitable teaching practices and pedagogies.

Future Researchers

Researchers interested in understanding more about the experiences of Latinx ELL students during culturally relevant morning meetings could benefit from a longitudinal study design. The findings in this study accounted for a period of four weeks and conducting an on-going research study for an entire school year would strengthen the desired outcome. Long-term results of the conversations from students would provide researchers more information to investigate if students further employ their agency by implementing the prospective plan they discussed.

Furthermore, the iterative-process of action research could also improve the culturally relevant practices and pedagogy of educators for other interethnic groups. Although this research highlighted the voices of Latinx English Language Learners, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggested that there is a need for additional research with classrooms that have different ethnicities, languages, and cultural backgrounds. Examining the captured experiences of interethnic groups gives teachers and researchers further knowledge concerning equitable

educational practices for students of marginalized groups in U.S. schools. Since students from marginalized groups have been traditionally silenced or ignored in research, centering the voices of more students can provide more understanding and responsiveness to make schooling more equitable for all students.

My Final Thoughts

I began this research as a way to respond to the stories that were being ignored and silenced in schools. As the number of students in our school systems grows in diversity, ethnicities, cultures, languages, and experiences, teachers have an obligation to bring those unique perspectives into the classroom. We cannot continue to use the same educational practices that ignore the life experiences and ways of knowing of students that walk into our classrooms every single day. We have to do something different. I envision a school system that is community-based and student-centered. In culturally and linguistically diverse schools, teachers should be open to acknowledging and understanding students' personal narratives and how to support those experiences in the classroom on a daily basis. The school system should reflect the diverse society and teach students based on the cultural knowledge and linguistic skills they bring into the classroom every day. More specifically, for English Language Learners, students should be able to use their home language to support their learning in U.S. schools. These students bring an intellectual and social asset to the learning environment.

I imagine classrooms where students are speaking multiple languages throughout the school day and are working collaboratively on projects that are meaningful in their lives and bring about change. There should be space for them to explore, learn, and share about their perspectives and life experiences. As a young girl, I visualize that I would have shared my family's immigrant story openly to my teachers and my peers. Ideally, I would have been able to

speak Lao at school and read books about girls that looked like me and experienced life that was similar to mine. That would have helped me and my family feel a connection to what I was learning in school. I would have more opportunities to share my ideas about community and friendship through my own cultural lens, and families should be invited to be part of the schooling experience. I picture schools where students feel empowered to be their authentic selves and build upon students' sense of agency to regard diversities as an asset and resource to their learning. The text and curriculum students encounter in the schools should have relevance in their lives.

Furthermore, the curriculum should help students understand not only themselves but also the world around them. The school systems in the United States need to be reformed to respond to students from diverse backgrounds. Schools should prepare teachers to educate children with strong culturally relevant pedagogy and engage in critical conversations to advocate for students who have historically been marginalized. Instead of schools maintaining the inequities that currently exist in the U.S. institutions, schools should be the change agents that create more equitable schooling experiences and success for all students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A List of Definitions

Agency- “the capacity, independence, and authority to assert their own voice, ideals, perspectives, and truths” (Muhammad, 2014, p. 98).

Culture-referred to as the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, usually includes language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and art

"Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways." (Banks & McGee Banks, 1989)

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)- “an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical consciousness” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483).

English as a Second Language (ESL)- An academic subject, course, or program designed to teach English to students who are not yet proficient in the language.

English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (Wright, 2015)

English Language Learners (ELL)- Defined as “a student who is in the process of attaining proficiency in English as a new, additional language” (Wright, 2015, p.1) Sometimes shortened to English Learner (EL) ELLs can include a diverse group of people that may be in the category for a variety of reasons:

- Immigrant
- Refugee
- U.S. born with immigrant family
- Other examples may not be included on list

LatCrit- An acronym for Latino Critical Theory. A theory that highlights the Latinx multidimensional identities and address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Bernal, 2002)

Latinx- Term that refers to someone from the Latin American origin or descent who live in the United States. Utilized as a gender-neutral alternative for the collective terms for Latinas/Latinos. I use this term throughout the entire paper.

Sociopolitical consciousness- Sociopolitical consciousness refers to an individual's ability to critically analyze the political, economic, and social forces shaping society and one's status in it. (Seider, Graves, El-Amin, Soutter, Tamerat, Jennett, Clark, Malhotra, & Johannsen, 2017)

Appendix B Parent Permission Form (English)

Georgia State University
College of Education and Human Development
Parental Permission Form

Title: Students' Experiences in Culturally Relevant Morning Meetings
Principal Investigator: Gail S. Kasun, Ph.D.
Student Principal Investigator: Darline Douangvilay, M.Ed.

Introduction and Key Information
Your child is invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study. The purpose of the research is to see if morning meetings that build on students' background, culture, language, or identity will help students make independent choices and stand up for themselves (agency). Your child's role in the study will last 6-8 hours total over a period of up to 4 weeks. Your child will be a participant in the classroom morning meeting which involves a variety of greetings, activities, and sharing. Additionally, your child will also write about their experiences with morning meetings in a reflection journal. Participating in this study will not expose your child to any more risks than he/she would experience in a typical day. The main goal is to gain information about student agency and morning meetings.

Purpose
The purpose of the study is to see if morning meetings that build on students' background, culture, language, or identity will help students make independent choices and stand up for themselves (agency). Your child is invited to take part in this research study because he/she is an English Language Learner. A total of up to 12 people will be invited to take part in this study.

Procedures
If you decide for your child to take part, he/she will interact with the classroom teacher and other students assigned to the class. All research will be done during the course of the school day. The activities align with the Social Studies and English Language Arts curriculum. Your child will discuss real-world issues and topics in the classroom, school, or community. Your child will participate in activities and research to propose solutions to the problems she/he identified. Your child will write a reflection in a journal about morning meetings. Your child will be audio recorded by the researcher and all recordings will be kept on a password protected electronic device. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and they will be destroyed by May 31, 2020. No video recordings or photographs of your child will be used in the study. A total of eight (8) sessions have been planned for morning meeting and for reflections. Your child will be asked to participate in audio-recorded morning meetings with other students for 15-30 minutes twice a week for up to 4 weeks. She/He will participate in journal writing for 15 minutes twice a week for up to 4 weeks. If you and your child agree, your child's responses during the morning meetings and journal reflections will be used as research data. The study will begin around September 16, 2019. The study will end by December 6 , 2019.

Future Research
Researchers will remove information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If we do this, we will not ask for any additional consent from you.

Risks
In this study, your child will not have any more risks than would happen in a normal day of life. No injury is expected from this study, but if you believe you have been harmed, contact the research team as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any injury.

Benefits
This study is not designed to personally benefit your child. Overall, we hope to gain information about student agency and morning meetings. The researcher also wants to be a better teacher.

Alternatives
The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Each student will participate in morning meetings, write their reflections in a journal, and complete a problem-based project as part of normal classwork. Your child's responses during morning meeting and their reflections do not have to be used in this study. If you decide that your child's work will be in the study and change your mind, you can request that the teacher not use your child's work in the study. Your child has the right to request that their work not be used at any time during the study. Your child will not lose any grade points if you decide not to allow your child's work to be used in study. Your child will not earn extra grade points for being in the study. Your child does not have to be in this study. If you decide for your child to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right for your child to drop out at any time. You may refuse for your child to take part in the study or stop at any time. This will not cause your child to lose any benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality
We will keep your child's records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. Gail S. Kasun and Darline Douangvilay will have access to the information your child provides. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP). We will use a fictitious name rather than your child's name on study records. The information your child provides will be stored in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher has a key. The key code sheet used to identify your child will be kept in a separate document with a password. This will protect your child's privacy. Only the researcher has a key to this cabinet. The key code sheet will be destroyed at the time of publication. The reflections will be returned to your child. Since the research will take place in the classroom, we ask that your child not reveal what is discussed by other children in the group. This will help keep the confidentiality of others. The researcher does not have complete control of the research data because much of the research data is in the form of discussions that take place as a class. Your child's name and other facts that might point to your child will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. Your child will not be identified personally.

Contact Persons
Contact Gail S. Kasun at 404-413-8080or skasun@gsu.edu or Darline Douangvilay at

470-242-4479 or ddouangvilay@student.gsu.edu if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu.

Copy of Permission Form to Parent

We will give you a copy of this permission form to keep.

You may choose to allow or not allow your child or children to participate in this study. The signatures of the principal and classroom teacher indicate they have agreed to participate in this research project. When you sign below, you are saying that you have read the information above and are willing for your child to participate and be audio recorded. If you decide to that you do not want your child to participate, please tell the researcher. Your child can stop at any moment.

_____

Child's Name

Signature_____ _____

Parent Date

Signature _____ _____

Principal Date

Signature _____ _____

Classroom Teacher/Researcher Date

Appendix C Parent Permission Form (Spanish)

Universidad Estatal de Georgia
Colegio de Educación y Desarrollo Humano
Formulario de permiso de los padres

Título: Experiencias de los estudiantes en reuniones matinales de relevancia cultural.
Investigador principal: Gail S. Kasun, Ph.D.
Investigador principal del estudiante: Darline Douangvilay, M.Ed.

Introducción e información clave
Su hijo está invitado a participar en un estudio de investigación. Depende de usted decidir si desea participar en el estudio. El propósito de la investigación es ver si las reuniones matutinas que se basan en los antecedentes, la cultura, el idioma o la identidad de los estudiantes ayudarán a los estudiantes a tomar decisiones independientes y a defenderse (agencia). El rol de su hijo en el estudio durará de 6 a 8 horas en total durante un período de hasta 4 semanas. Su hijo participará en la reunión de la mañana en el aula, que incluye una variedad de saludos, actividades y compartir. Además, su hijo también escribirá sobre sus experiencias con las reuniones matutinas en un diario de reflexión. Participar en este estudio no expondrá a su hijo a más riesgos de los que experimentaría en un día normal. El objetivo principal es obtener información sobre la agencia estudiantil y las reuniones matutinas.

Propósito
El propósito del estudio es ver si las reuniones matutinas que se basan en los antecedentes, la cultura, el idioma o la identidad de los estudiantes ayudarán a los estudiantes a tomar decisiones independientes y a defenderse (agencia). Se invita a su hijo a participar en este estudio de investigación porque él / ella es un Aprendiz del Idioma Inglés. Un total de hasta 12 personas serán invitadas a participar en este estudio.

Procedimientos
Si decide que su hijo participe, él / ella interactuará con el maestro del aula y con otros estudiantes asignados a la clase. Toda la investigación se llevará a cabo durante el transcurso del día escolar. Las actividades se alinean con el currículo de estudios sociales y artes lingüísticas en inglés. Su hijo hablará sobre temas y temas del mundo real en el aula, la escuela o la comunidad. Su hijo participará en actividades e investigaciones para proponer soluciones a los problemas que él / ella identificó. Su hijo escribirá una reflexión en un diario sobre las reuniones matutinas. El investigador grabará el audio de su hijo y todas las grabaciones se guardarán en un dispositivo electrónico protegido por contraseña. Solo el investigador tendrá acceso a estas grabaciones y serán destruidos antes del 31 de mayo de 2020. Las grabaciones o fotografías de su hijo vídeo No serán utilizados en el estudio. Se han programado un total de ocho (8) sesiones para la reunión de la mañana y para las reflexiones. Se le pedirá a su hijo que participe en reuniones matutinas grabadas en audio con otros estudiantes durante 15-30 minutos dos veces por semana durante hasta 4 semanas. Ella / El participará en la escritura de un diario por 15 minutos dos veces por semana por hasta 4 semanas. Si usted y su hijo están de acuerdo, las respuestas de su hijo durante las reuniones de la mañana y las reflexiones del diario se utilizarán como datos de investigación.

El estudio comenzará alrededor del 16 de septiembre de 2019. El estudio finalizará el 6 de diciembre de 2019.

Investigación futura
Los investigadores eliminarán la información que pueda identificarlo y pueden usar sus datos para futuras investigaciones. Si hacemos esto, no solicitaremos su consentimiento adicional.

Los riesgos
En este estudio, su hijo no tendrá más riesgos de los que ocurriría en un día normal de la vida. No se espera ninguna lesión de este estudio, pero si cree que ha sufrido algún daño, comuníquese con el equipo de investigación lo antes posible. La Universidad del Estado de Georgia y el equipo de investigación no han reservado fondos para compensar cualquier lesión.

Beneficios
Este estudio no está diseñado para beneficiar personalmente a su hijo. En general, esperamos obtener información sobre la agencia estudiantil y las reuniones matutinas. El investigador también quiere ser un mejor maestro.

Alternativas
La alternativa a participar en este estudio es no participar en el estudio.

Participación voluntaria y retiro
Cada estudiante participará en las reuniones matutinas, escribirá sus reflexiones en un diario y completará un proyecto basado en problemas como parte de un trabajo de clase normal. Las respuestas de su hijo durante la reunión de la mañana y sus reflexiones no tienen que usarse en este estudio. Si decide que el trabajo de su hijo estará en el estudio y cambia de opinión, puede solicitar que el maestro no use el trabajo de su hijo en el estudio. Su hijo tiene el derecho de solicitar que su trabajo no se utilice en ningún momento durante el estudio. Su hijo no perderá ningún punto de calificación si decide no permitir que el trabajo de su hijo se utilice en el estudio. Su hijo no obtendrá puntos de calificación adicionales por participar en el estudio. Su hijo no tiene que estar en este estudio. Si decide que su hijo participe en el estudio y cambie de opinión, tiene derecho a que su hijo se retire en cualquier momento. Puede negarse a que su hijo participe en el estudio o detenerse en cualquier momento. Esto no hará que su hijo pierda los beneficios a los que tiene derecho.

Confidencialidad
Mantendremos la confidencialidad de los registros de su hijo en la medida en que lo permita la ley. La Dra. Gail S. Kasun y Darline Douangvilay tendrán acceso a la información que su hijo proporciona. Información También se puede compartir con quienes se aseguran de que el estudio se realice correctamente (GSU Institutional Review Board, la Oficina para la Protección de la Investigación Humana (OHRP). Usaremos un nombre ficticio en lugar del nombre de su hijo en los registros del estudio. La información que proporciona su hijo se guardará en un gabinete cerrado. Solo el investigador tiene una clave. La hoja de código de clave utilizada para identificar a su hijo se guardará en un documento separado con una contraseña. Esto protegerá la privacidad de su hijo. Solo el investigador tiene una clave para esto. gabinete. La hoja de código clave se destruirá en el momento de la publicación. Las reflexiones se devolverán a su hijo. Dado

que la investigación se llevará a cabo en el aula, le pedimos que no revele lo que otros niños discuten en el grupo. Esto ayudará a mantener la confidencialidad de los demás. El investigador no tiene un control completo de los datos de la investigación porque gran parte de los datos de la investigación son en forma de discusiones que tienen lugar como clase. El nombre de su hijo y otros datos que podrían señalar a su hijo no aparecerán cuando presentemos este estudio o publiquemos sus resultados. Los hallazgos serán resumidos y reportados en forma grupal. Su hijo no será identificado personalmente.

Personas de contacto
Comuníquese con Gail S. Kasun al 404-413-8080 o skasun@gsu.edu o con Darline Douangvilay al 470-242-4479 o ddouangvilay@student.gsu.edu si tiene preguntas, inquietudes o quejas sobre este estudio. También puede llamar si cree que el estudio lo ha dañado. El IRB en la Universidad Estatal de Georgia revisa todas las investigaciones que involucran a participantes humanos. Puede comunicarse con el IRB si desea hablar con alguien que no esté directamente involucrado en el estudio. Puede ponerse en contacto con el IRB si tiene preguntas, inquietudes, problemas, información, comentarios o preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en una investigación.Comuníquese con el IRB al 404-413-3500 o irb@gsu.edu.

Copia del formulario de permiso a los padres
Le daremos una copia de este formulario de permiso para que la conserve.
Puede optar por permitir o no permitir que su hijo o hijos participen en este estudio. La firma del director y el maestro de la clase indican que han aceptado participar en este proyecto de investigación. Cuando firma a continuación, dice que ha leído la información anterior y está dispuesto a que su hijo participe y se grabe en audio. Si decide que no desea que su hijo participe, infórmeselo al investigador. Tu hijo puede detenerse en cualquier momento.

_____
El nombre del niño

Firma_____ _____
Padre Fecha

Firma_____ _____
Director de escuela Fecha

Firma_____ _____
Profesor de aula / investigador Fecha

Appendix D Student Assent (English)

Georgia State University
College of Education and Human Development
Student Assent

Verbal Assent Script

Your parent has said that it is okay for you to work on a project with me. The project is about sharing and acting on your ideas. You will take part in morning meeting. You can still be in the morning meeting, even if you decide not to be in the study. You will answer questions about how you feel. You will write what you think and how you feel. Your work will be used in a report. Your voice will be recorded. You will not be harmed. You may not gain anything. You do not have to let me use your work. Your grade will not change if I use your work. Your grade will not change if I do not use your work. You do not have to be in the study. Your mom and dad cannot force you to take part. No one will be mad if you say yes or no to take part in the study. You can change your mind. You can stop at any time. Do you want to be in this study? [If yes]: Is it okay for me to use your school work in the study? Do you have any questions?

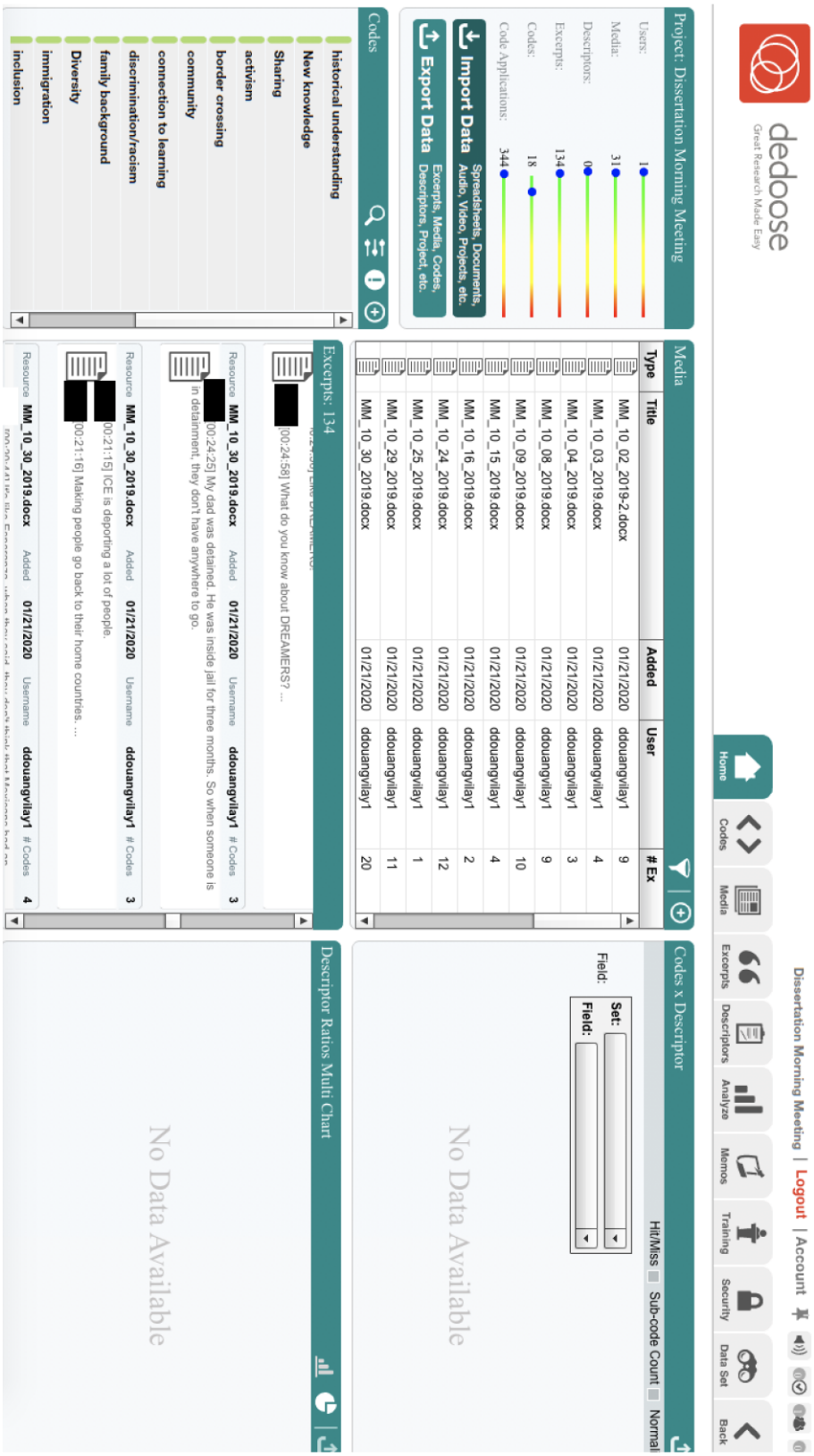
Appendix E Student Assent (Spanish)

Universidad Estatal de Georgia
Colegio de Educación y Desarrollo Humano
Consentimiento del estudiante

Guión de asentimiento verbal

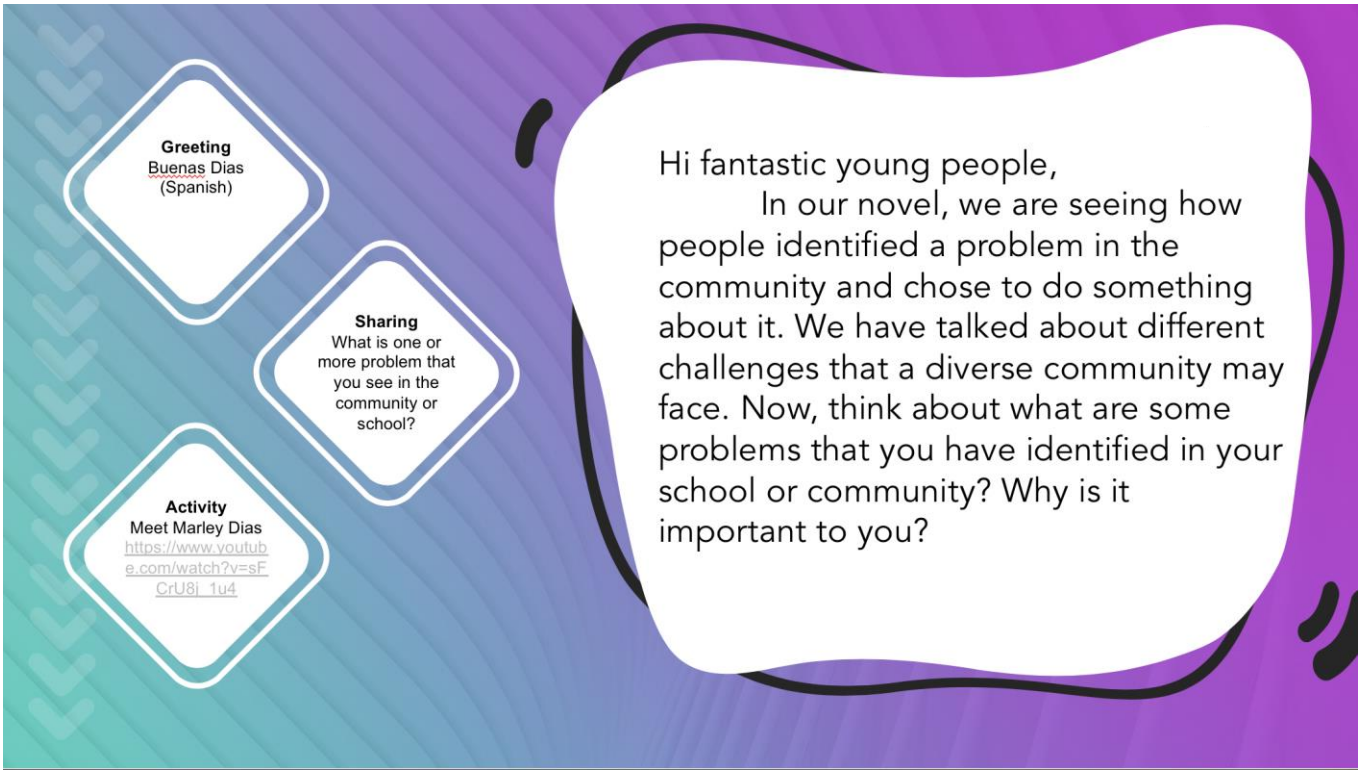
Tu padre ha dicho que está bien que trabajes conmigo en un proyecto. El proyecto consiste en compartir y actuar sobre tus ideas. Usted participará en la reunión de la mañana. Aún puede estar en la reunión de la mañana, incluso si decide no participar en el estudio. Responderás preguntas sobre cómo te sientes. Escribirás lo que piensas y cómo te sientes. Su trabajo será utilizado en un informe. Tu voz será grabada. No serás lastimado. Usted no puede ganar nada. No tienes que dejarme usar tu trabajo. Tu calificación no cambiará si uso tu trabajo. Tu calificación no cambiará si no uso tu trabajo. No tienes que estar en el estudio. Tu mamá y tu papá no pueden obligarte a participar. Nadie se enojará si dices sí o no para participar en el estudio. Puedes cambiar de opinión. Puedes parar en cualquier momento. ¿Quieres estar en este estudio? [Si la respuesta es sí]: ¿Puedo usar su trabajo escolar en el estudio? ¿Tiene usted alguna pregunta?

Appendix F Screenshot of Database



Appendix G Morning Meeting Space

Appendix H Exemplar Morning Meeting PowerPoint Slides



Appendix I Picture of Student Reflection Journals

Appendix J Morning Meeting Resources

Greetings

- My name is (correct pronunciation of name) and I like to (verb).

  Students chant back: Your name is (correct pronunciation of name) and you like to (verb)

- Greetings in other languages
  - Spanish- Hola/Buenos Dias
  - Lao- Sabaidee
  - French- Bonjour
  - Japanese- Konichiwa
  - Swahili- Hujambo

Picture Books Read During Morning Meetings

- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (author & illustrator)
- *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull (author) and Yuyi Morales (illustrator)
- *Mali Under the Night Sky: A Lao Story of Home* by Youme Landowne (author & illustrator)
- *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales (author & illustrator)
- *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (author)
- *A is for Activist* by Innosanto Nagara (author & illustrator)
- *All are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold (author) and Suzanne Kaufman (illustrator)
- *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Méndez (author) and Jaime Kim (illustrator)
- *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh (author & illustrator)

- *The Water Princess* by Susan Verde and Georgia Badiel (authors) and Peter H. Reynolds (illustrator)
- *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson (author) and Rafael López (illustrator)
- *Malala's Magic Pencil* by Malala Yousafzai (author) and Kerascoët (illustrator)

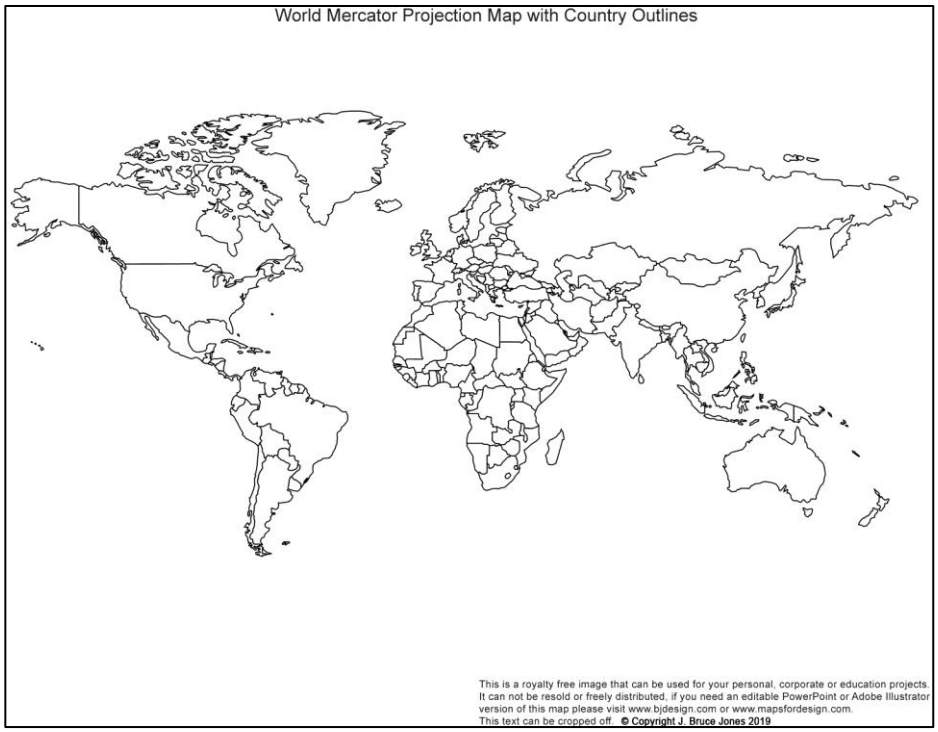
Other Resources

- Marley Dias talks about her book and #1000 Black Girl Books

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2nN01Pwv_E
- What is Diversity?

  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd5Cm3xzMS4
- World Map with Country Borders, Printable, Blank Map

  https://www.freeusandworldmaps.com/html/World_Projections/WorldPrint.html



- Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources

  https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources

Family Questionnaire

1. Student name

   _____

2. Who did you interview?

   _____

3. Where are your relatives are from?

   _____

4. Where her/his parents were born?

   _____

5. Where the student was born?

   _____

6. When did your relatives come to this community?

   _____

7. Other facts about your family history.

   _____

   _____