Becoming more Effective Culturally Responsive Educators

Convirtiéndonos en educadores culturalmente más eficaces y receptivos

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Resumen

Este artículo conceptual responde a la pregunta: ¿cuáles son algunos programas y prácticas que ayudan o apoyan a los educadores para ser culturalmente sensibles en sus salones de clase? Se presentarán varias prácticas o actividades culturalmente sensibles y un programa en esa misma línea, a saber: autobiografías culturales, poemas estilo "Soy de…", bolsas culturales y el programa Generando Expectativas para el Éxito Estudiantil (Generating Expectations for Student Achievement, GESA).

Palabras clave: educación culturalmente receptiva, actividades culturalmente receptivas, programas culturalmente receptivos

Abstract

This conceptual paper responds to the question: What are some programs and practices that help or support educators in becoming more culturally responsive in their classrooms? Several culturally responsive practices and activities, and one culturally responsive program will be discussed: cultural autobiographies, "I am from..." poems, "Cultural Bags," and Generating Expectations for Student Achievement program (GESA).

Keywords: culturally responsive education, culturally responsive activities, culturally responsive programs

Introduction

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to support educators in employing more culturally responsive programs, practices and activities in their classrooms. The three authors are long-time multicultural educators, employing culturally responsive practices and activities for over 20 years. It is our opinion that preparing culturally responsive teachers is a must for the academic success of diverse students, especially Latina/o[1] students. "...Academic achievement of these students will increase if schools and teachers reflect and draw on [students'] cultural strengths" (Banks, as cited in Gay, 2018).

The paper will discuss several culturally responsive practices/activities —Cultural Autobiographies, "I am From... Poems," and "Cultural Bags,"— and one culturally responsive program —Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA). These are among the authors' favorites because they engage their students; allow for their cultural identities to be cultivated; and strengthen, honor and create a sense of community in their classrooms.

In what follows, demographics and statistics will be shared regarding the challenges that educators face when it comes to the academic achievement of Latina/o students.

Latino Academic Achievement

Latina/o students have historically, persistently and consistently achieved at lower levels than their Anglo counterparts. According to Gándara (2009):

> Today, the most urgent problem for the American education system
> has a Latino face. Latinos are the largest and most rapidly growing

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[1] For the purposes of this paper, Hispanic and Latinos will be used synonymously. These are students who share a similar ethnic background, and some have Spanish as their first language.

ethnic minority in the country, but, academically, they are lagging dangerously far behind their non-Hispanic peers. For example, upon entering kindergarten 42% of Latino children are found in the lowest quartile of performance on reading readiness compared to just 18% of White children. By 4th grade, 16% of Latino students are proficient in reading according to the 2005 NAEP, compared to 41% of White students. A similar pattern is notable at the 8th grade, where only 15% of Latinos are proficient in reading compared to 39% of Whites. (par. 2)

As of September 18, 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau released population estimates indicating that there are roughly 58.9 million Hispanics in the United States. This number represents about 18% of the U.S. total population, which makes people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic minority. By 2020, Hispanics are projected to be 19% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Further, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) projects that the Hispanic student population will grow to 29% of the total population by the year 2027, while White students will decline from 49% to 45% of the projected school population (NCES, 2019). Obviously, this demographic shift will have a huge impact on all our social institutions, especially our schools.

With regard to the education attainment of our Latina/o students, this has been characterized by high dropout and low college completion rates. Latinos have the highest dropout rates among the three major race and ethnic groups—Latinos, whites, and blacks. NCES defines "a status dropout rate" for students ages 16-24, as students not having earned a high school credential, or GED. They reported: "In each year from 2006 to 2017, the status dropout rate for Hispanic youth was higher than the rate for Black youth, and the status dropout rates for both groups were higher than the rate for White youth" (NCES, 2019, Indicator 17: High School Status Dropout Rates). Overall, the dropout rate is 23.8 percent for Hispanics in comparison to 6.8 percent for White students (NCES, 2019).

The achievement gap between Hispanic students and non-Hispanic Whites has also remained persistent and consistent. The statistics reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provide evidence that the achievement gap between Hispanic and White students has not changed significantly between 2015 and 2017. The 18 point 4th grade mathematics gap in 2015 was not significantly different from the 19 point 4th grade mathematics gap in 2017 (p = .238, n.s.). The 24 point 4th grade reading gap in 2015 was not statistically different from the 23 point 4th grade reading gap in 2017 (p = .449, n.s.). The 22 point 8th grade mathematics gap in 2015 was not statistically different from the 24 point 8th grade mathematics gap in 2017 (p = .059, n.s.). And last,

the 21 point 8th grade reading gap in 2015 was not statistically different from the 20 point 8th grade reading gap in 2017 (p = .051, n.s.) (NCES, 2017).

We also know from research by Gándara and Contreras (2010), Maxwell (2014), Fuller et al. (2019), and Pals and Boylin (2019), that the segregation of Latina/o students in public schools has also increased.

As per the statistics above, our public schools are failing our Latina/o students. If we want them to be successful academically, we need to train future and current teachers in becoming culturally responsive towards the needs of Latinos and other minority students. Differences in experiences, language, culture, and forms of socialization of our Latina/o students makes it imperative to have a stronger emphasis on culturally responsive teaching in the preparation and professional development of our teachers, school administrators and staff, in order to help these students navigate the new worlds before them. In addition, in many schools, due to higher incidences of segregation, Latina/o students may also experience a higher sense of isolation; therefore, we need to have schools that have a welcoming and accepting school climate.

> School personnel are responsible for developing and creating a valuable, respectful, and healthy climate where learning and growth occurs for students, while simultaneously respecting diversity. When students feel a sense of trust and care in their environment and believe the adults around them feel a sense of responsibility for their well-being, including trying to help and understand them, they will become motivated to rise to the academic pursuits before them. (Marrero, 2016, p. 182)

The theme of caring relationships in the classroom between Latina/o students and teachers has been identified as critically important in other research by Valenzuela (1999), and Wentzel (1997). To achieve this in our schools, we need programs, practices and activities that are consistent and continuous in terms of helping educators have the tools to work with Latino/a students and other minorities. Teachers and school administrators need to be constantly learning about the cultures of their students and infusing culturally responsive practices/activities throughout the curriculum and the school.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The best teaching practices are those that consider all learners in a classroom setting and pay close attention to differences such as cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity (Santamaria, 2009). Statistics estimate that by 2020, students of color will represent nearly half of the elementary and secondary population. However, 84% of

teachers are white and 75% of all teachers are female (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Basically, our student population is heterogeneous, while our teacher population is homogeneous (Ovando & Combs, 2012). According to Santamaria (2009), "Cultural difference is the single most pervasive difference in U.S. schools and until the early 1970s, by multicultural education, the most neglected" (p. 1). We would argue that culture is still the most neglected today.

Culture is defined by Ovando and Combs (2012) as socially transmitted ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and acting within a group. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) further define culture as a dynamic system that consists of multiple components, those being: behavioral standards, worldviews, social values, and beliefs that give order to meaning to one's own life. "Even without our being consciously aware of it, culture strongly influences how we think, believe, communicate and behave, and these, in turn, *effect how we teach and learn*" (Gay, 2018, p. 8, emphasis added). The importance of acknowledging culture in the classroom is further discussed by George and Louise Spindler (1994) in this way:

> Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of who are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other students, and the school itself. Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviors, of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal. (p. xii)

When thinking about how educators can acknowledge the importance of culture for more effective teaching and learning, culturally responsive teaching can be a remedy for this cultural acknowledgment absence in the classroom. Gay (2018) defines culturally responsive teaching as instructional strategies and practices, based on the theory that when curriculum and skills are situated within students' lived experiences and frames of references, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal and are learned more easily and thoroughly. Nieto (2000) defines it as "...recognizes, respects, and uses students' identities and backgrounds as meaningful sources for creating optimal learning environments" (p. 46). And the Northwest Regional Laboratory (2005) further specifies that educators not only need to learn about their students' culture, but also their own:

> Becoming culturally responsive is an ongoing process that evolves as we learn more about ourselves, our world and other cultures. ...first

> look at your own culture —especially if it is part of our country's dominant culture— from the worldview of others; have an open mind to what you don't understand; and be ready to learn new ways of looking at and doing things. (p. 6)

These unexamined cultural influences can interfere with the quality of educators' teaching and students' learning. Therefore, we argue that educators who do know their own culture and that of their students, and acknowledge and value that culture through culturally responsive teaching, will be more effective teachers of Latina/o students.

In what follows, we will share some culturally responsive practices or activities that we have utilized over the years. They are: 1) cultural autobiographies; 2) "Where I'm from..." poems and 3) "Cultural Bags." All of them are culturally responsive because they are situated in the lived experiences of the students. Further, all three of these activities put culture at the forefront, which as explained above, is important for diverse students to succeed in the classroom.

Cultural Autobiography

It is important to infuse our teaching and curriculum with culturally responsive teaching activities and practices. Educators need to become aware of their own culture, values, prejudices and biases in order to become aware and more accepting of the cultural backgrounds of their students. Teachers may have ingrained stereotypes about their Hispanic students, which could be prejudicial and could impair their ability to connect and teach them. Campos (2013) says that the most important thing you can do to build strong trusting relationships with Latino boys in particular is to convey that you care. He goes on to say how valuable it is when you, as a teacher, invite them to share about their lives, and the cultural autobiography is one way to do this.

A cultural autobiography is a paper we assign in our multicultural courses. Students are given a variety of questions, writing prompts or suggested areas they should include in their autobiographies. They are also asked to include a discussion of the questions or prompts listed below (See Appendix A for the complete assignment):

- What (cultural) groups do you identify with?
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion
  - Ability/disability
  - Language(s)
  - Geography
  - Sexuality
  - Social class
- Describe family (history, culture, values, beliefs, life success/failure and lessons learned).

- Describe a cultural memory, one that is either positive or negative, and what you learned.

- How has your cultural background influenced your present beliefs about yourself and others?

- How will your culture help or hinder you in school and teaching?

Gloria Park (2011) used a Cultural and Linguistic Autobiography (CLA) writing project with her English Language Learners (ELLs). Some of the major themes that emerged from the writings reflected the contributions of language, gender, race, and social class on students' identities. Through the writing process, students were able to reflect on their own histories of where they came from and their new emerging identities within the social and political complexities of the United States.

Learning to be a culturally responsive teacher also involves self-reflection, or reflective practice. It allows educators to develop the skills of critical analysis, which enables them to examine their own cultural perspectives and personal assumptions underlying their expectations, beliefs and behaviors when interacting with ELL students (Marquez-Chisholm, 1994). Hollins (1996) further discusses that through reflection, teachers can first understand themselves and their own culture, and then develop a deeper understanding about their students' identity.

The power of reflection that can emerge from writing autobiographies is supported by the curriculum work of Li (2007) with pre-service teacher candidates. Li's work showed the growth students experienced in more deeply understanding how their identities are related to race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and disability, from writing their own autobiography and reading the biographies of the students they worked with in a school. The pre-service teacher candidates also grew from their own reflection of these identifiers in being able to discern their own identity and stereotypic perspectives.

The reflection of preconceived stereotypes was heightened even more when the pre-service teacher candidates were asked to develop a lesson to teach their students how to write their autobiography (Li, 2007). It was also noticed the changes in their thinking about race, gender, socioeconomics, and so forth from when pre-service students wrote their autobiography at the beginning of the semester, worked on developing a biography of one of their students during the semester —while participating in a field placement—, and then revising their own autobiography towards the end of the semester.

Li (2007) also studied the use of pre-service teachers writing their own autobiography and the biography of a high school student with whom they worked with in their school placement. Again, it was reaffirmed that the benefit of writing autobiographies and

teaching students to write their own cultural biographies allowed teacher candidates to reflect on who they are, how they see themselves as teachers and in relationships to others in society based on identifiers such as race, gender, language, socioeconomics, religion, and ability/disability.

Sonia Nieto (2010) also addresses the importance of writing autobiographies to understand who the students are from a sociocultural and sociopolitical context. Like Li (2007), she sees and notes the importance of the learning that emerges from the interactions between student and teacher within a social, cultural and political space. It is through the sharing of these autobiographies that students learn about themselves, other students and the teacher, that fosters a more culturally responsive and accepting classroom environment. Brisk (1998) found that when ELLs write about critical experiences in their life, this can be a motivator for students to read, write and learn. Further, this assignment helps ELLs understand that problems associated with living in a new place and culture can be the result of social factors rather than personal shortcomings (Brisk, 1998).

Harris (2005) also discusses the value of the autobiography, and states:

> The use of autobiography in multicultural education is a concept that is rapidly taking hold in teacher education. ...it helps...teachers and students to identify where they can improve their interactions with people who are different from them. The autobiography is a way of introducing students to different cultures when the students are required to write about themselves and to share those writings with their teachers and classmates. (p. 47)

In our multicultural classes, we also allow the students to discuss parts of their autobiographies when different cultural features or topics are examined, after the assignment has been completed. However, they do not share their entire autobiography in one or two class periods. Firstly, it would be difficult due to time constraints, and secondly, we hypothesize that some students would not feel entirely comfortable sharing all of the details in the beginning. For example, some might feel uncomfortable sharing their socioeconomic status or their gender identity.

On the other hand, one of the goals of sharing the autobiographies would be to develop a strong sense of trust/building community in the class; thus, by the end of the semester, students would be willing to share most of their cultural background and experiences with the other members of the class. This is an activity that can also be done as a professional development unit with teachers and school staff. It has the

potential to help them become aware of their own backgrounds, biases and prejudices; hopefully, this awareness will be a step towards positive change.

How does thinking and telling our own stories help us become better educators? We agree with Li (2007), that when pre-service teachers write their cultural autobiographies, the exercise helps them learn about and perhaps confront their own negative attitudes about race, gender, sexual preferences and even religious differences, just to name a few. In order to begin to know who their students are, and let them know who their teachers are, educators should share their autobiographies with their students and allow them to share their autobiographies with each other. As a multiculturalist once said, "…you can't teach who you do not know" (Howard, 2016). With all the current dialog about this topic, we forget that an effective teacher is one who can reach her/his students and help them reach their academic potential and to acquire a love of learning. This can only happen if the teacher knows her/his pupils and acknowledges them as cultural beings. As Gay (2018) asserts, culture counts!

In order to become effective culturally responsive teachers, we need to understand how our students think and also what their perceptions are regarding the world around them. As mentioned above, these are makers of culture. That is why teachers need to know and understand the different worlds their students come from. By sharing our cultural experiences, we will enhance the possibilities of becoming a community of learners.

"Where I'm From" Poems

How do we develop cultural sensitivity in our pre-service teachers and other educators? How do we support them in becoming more aware and inclusive of the cultures represented in their classrooms? One exercise/assignment that is quite effective is having educators and their students learn about those cultures through the "Where I'm from…" poems. In an article written by Christensen (1998), "Inviting student lives into the classroom," this author mentions how two previous teachers had allowed her to write about her life and her family while she was in school. Remembering these two teachers she says:

> Mrs. Martin and Ms. Carr made me feel significant and cared about because they invited my home into the classroom. When I wrote and included details about my family, they listened. They made space for me and my people in the curriculum. (Christensen, 1998, p. 1)

Christensen discusses how to use the template in order to write the poem - "Where I'm from…" so students can feel the same way she did when teachers included her life, home life and experiences in their curriculum. It is available online with an example written by George Ella Lyon. This detailed template will help guide students in writing their own

poems (consult the following source for an example: https://www.sausd.us/cms/lib/CA01000471/Centricity/Domain/3043/I%20Am%20From%20Poem.pdf).

Cultural Bags

The Education Alliance (in a web page originally published around 2010, and which is no longer available) defined identity as:

> …who one is, including one's beliefs and values; it entails a conscious or unconscious sense of affiliation with one or more groups, including ethnic, racial, gender, language, religious, national, regional, and those associated with particular activities —sports, education, the arts, etc. (p. 49).

The Cultural Bag is another activity to approach cultural identity. A brief description of this assignment, as described to students, is as follows:

> Cultural bags are a way to explore your cultural identity more deeply. Reflect on the process of your own identity development as you gather six or more objects (or images) that represent your cultural identity. You will place these objects and/or images in some kind of "container" (bag, basket, etc.). The container itself may represent your cultural identity in some way. With regard to your objects and/or images, think about why are they significant to you and why you included them? And, last, reflect upon how your culture has influenced who you are and how you view the world? As you think about the bag you have put together - why is reflecting on your own identity important?

See Appendix B for a more detailed description of this assignment.

Research has documented that a strong cultural identity correlates to a strong academic identity, meaning success in school (Valenzuela, 1999). Teachers and teacher educators can support their own students' exploration of their cultural identity, as they share their own. Cultural bags can be one way to address this exchange.

As mentioned above, the purpose of this paper is to share some specific activities or practices to support educators in becoming more culturally responsive in the classroom. The cultural autobiography, the "Where I am From…" poems and the Cultural Bag assignments are specific practices that can support educators in becoming more culturally responsive in their classrooms. Next, a culturally responsive program, Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA), will be detailed.

Slavin and Calderon's (2001) work with Latino students encourages teachers who have high expectations for all students to also consider challenging stereotypes about their Hispanic pupils and show that they believe in them. We know that when teachers incorporate their students' culture into their curriculum, they show them they care and believe in them. When one thinks of culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching, considering the works of Gay (2018), Banks (2012), Nieto and Bode (2012), and Ladson-Billings (2009) is a must in providing educators with ways of teaching that bring together cultural, ethnic, social, political and emotional learning by using students' cultural resources to teach skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Gay (2018) says that culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional as it brings together curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessment areas. All of these multidimensional components are part of the Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA) program.

Generating Expectations for Student Achievement (GESA)

GESA is a program that provides an inclusive approach for increasing the academic achievement of all students regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, national origin/language, special needs, and socioeconomic status. According to Grayson and Martin (2012), GESA is especially effective with students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds; those in poverty; those with perceived developmental or physical challenges; those on nontraditional career paths; and science, technology, engineering and math students (STEM). The program is based on years of research, observations and interviews of the interactions teachers have with the students they expect the most of.

Whether we are conscious or not of our behavior, our actions may say more about our beliefs and the expectations we have of students than our words claiming that we have *high expectations for all*. Knowing the power of expectations as identified by the Pygmalion theory, Good and Brophy (2007), as well as Grayson and Martin (2012), discuss that students succeed or fail based on *teachers' expectations*, regardless of the different aspects previously mentioned. Grayson and Martin's (2012) research has provided a wealth of strategies through the GESA program that have consistently proven to increase student academic achievement. This success has been documented from teacher designed and administered assessments to state assessments based on standards.

GESA was first piloted over three decades ago in Los Angeles County, California, which in and of itself is a microcosm of the United States. The county is comprised of 95 school districts ranging from Los Angeles Unified School District, with over 700 schools, to

Gorman School District, with one school. Even as far back as 1986, Hispanic students were the largest ethnic group, making up 44% of the population; 31.1% were White, 14.8% were African American, and 8.0% were Asian. There were 87 different languages spoken by the students in the county. Hence, GESA was developed, piloted and field-tested to address the needs of a *very* culturally diverse population.

The GESA framework comprises of five identified areas of disparity that, over several decades, have proven to be equity issues of great concern, especially for Latino and minority students. Those are: 1) instructional contact; 2) grouping and organization; 3) classroom management and discipline; 4) support of student's self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy; and 5) achievement data by race. These areas are often where access, opportunity and treatment have been differentiated based on race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability/disability and religion.

One of the five areas explored in GESA training is instructional contact. The research of Good and Brophy (2007), as well as Grayson and Martin (2012), has shown it to be different for students based on the teacher's conscious or unconscious expectations. Instructional contact is any opportunity the teacher provides the students to demonstrate what they know. This can be answering questions, providing additional information during a discussion, doing a demonstration or performance, to name a few. In being able to record the interaction during instruction, observers can discern a pattern of which students are selected to participate in the lesson. In reflecting upon the sequences, teachers are asked to go deeper and see if patterns emerge based on race/ethnicity, gender, national origin/language, special needs, and socioeconomic status. Then, they can detect, for example, if these students are called on at a lesser rate.

The second area, grouping and organization at the classroom level, looks as how students are seated in the classroom. Jones (2000), in his book *Tools for Teaching*, has a chapter describing what arrangement is conducive for group work. We also want to consider when to use cooperative learning groups and how students are arranged for these activities. As Slavin (2014) points out, we need to be deliberate in how we group the students for instruction, and it is not just putting bodies together and hoping for the best. Student's in working groups need tasks and assigned roles to complete them. And there needs to be accountability for the whole group. This can also be looked at from the school building and district levels. Teachers and administrators would also want to explore how students are selected for gifted and talented programs, advance placement, and special education. This larger form of grouping or tracking can have long term effects for students. It is also important to determine if there are patterns of disproportionality. These elements of segregation can still be operating systematically, and we may be failing to recognize them.

We also want to see what patterns still exist for classroom management and discipline, the third area of disparity GESA critically looks at. Thinking about the school to prison pipeline, we wonder if that has its beginnings at the classroom level in the form of discipline? We need to ask who is disciplined, and if there is a pattern based on race, gender, language, disability or protected class. If so, what are the patterns of discipline, suspension and expulsion of students?

The fourth area of disparity, that may or may not be observed, is how we are enhancing and supporting student's self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy. In using the GESA strategies, we know from classroom observations that these are enhanced when students know what is expected of them. For example, they are expected to participate and will not be let off the hook when they do not know an answer; because the teacher believes in them, she/he will come back to the student for additional input. Another way of enhancement is knowing their participation in a group is valued and essential. And last, students may also see that the teacher is equitable and fair in correcting misbehaviors of all students.

The fifth area of disparity concerns teachers need to look at the achievement data for their class, school and district. How do they, as teachers, evaluate student performance? When is higher level questioning and analytical feedback used and with whom?

There are also ten interaction strategies that correspond to the areas of disparity. To begin with, there are response opportunity (who gets to show what they know) and acknowledgement/feedback (indicators that the teacher acknowledges the student — e.g., saying OK). Along with providing students opportunities to show what they know, the teacher would want to capture information on what kind of feedback they provide. For example, are students given a head nod to indicate the answer was acceptable, or an "ah huh", or "OK"? Kohn (2001), as well as Sadker and Sadker (1985), question the kind of information about the students' work these types of brief comments provide. At this first look at teacher-student interactions, questioning and feedback were more concerned with what opportunities are provided for students to participate in the instruction occurring in the classroom and what kind of acknowledgement —if any— the teacher provide.

Wait time or think time (how long a teacher waits for a student to respond) and physical closeness (how close and how often the teacher gets to students) are two strategies often observed together. Research indicates that teachers get close to the students they expect the most of and distance themselves from the ones they do not expect to participate or know the answer.

Another strategy regards touch (does the teacher ever touch the student?), though paired with reproof (re-direction and correction in a positive way of a misbehavior); touch is to be used in a positive way rather than a negative one to redirect a behavior. Listening (how does the student know that the teacher heard him/her) pertains to the way teacher responds to let the student know she/he was indeed listening. Probing questions are associated with listening because, certainly, you have to listen to the person in order to ask a question.

During the GESA trainings, teachers practice writing and role-playing higher level questioning using Bloom's taxonomy (refer to Kelly, 2019, for examples of this sort of questions). Hess et al. (2009), however, provide a way of using this taxonomy along with Webb's Depth of Knowledge model. The later has teachers examine the depth of content understanding and skills needed to complete a learning activity, whereas the former has an emphasis on the cognitive skills required when facing and completing a new task. During the workshops, teachers also use Bloom's taxonomy to determine which questions are higher-level questions, paired with the strategy of analytical feedback (what are the good points or parts of the answer and what part of the answer needs improvement).

Oftentimes, we think because we interact with a student that instruction is occurring, but when teachers have the opportunity to be observed on these interactions, they can assess which students they are really including in the process. That is to say, when we critically review and analyze the patterns and the use of the strategies mentioned above during instruction, we can actually see who is receiving it and who is not.

Reflection is an essential part of improving teacher practice. Thus, when we clearly see how interactions are aligned with identifiable strategies, we can assess our own high expectations of students. This is part of culturally responsive education. Teachers' ability to analyze these patterns of interaction based on race/ethnicity, gender, national origin/language, special needs, and socioeconomic status, can discern if certain groups of students, such as Latinos, are being included in instruction, every day and in every way.

The methodology employed to validate the GESA program was a combination of pre/post classroom observations (of the areas of disparity and strategies), pre/post teacher attitude surveys, pre/post student attitude surveys and pre/post achievement test data. The pre/post measures were used to assess the amount of growth in teacher interactions with students, changes in attitudes of both teacher and students, and student achievement gains. Test data analysis of individual scale scores on the following subsets have been used over the years, which are: vocabulary, reading comprehension,

total reading, mathematics computation, mathematics concepts and applications, total mathematics, as well as state and local standards-based assessments.

In the time period since the GESA validation study (1985-1986 school year), numerous districts have tracked the achievement results for students in GESA classes. Reportedly, in instances where the program has been implemented in the classroom, as designed in the original model, personal mean gains are experienced by students across grade levels and subject areas. These gains included increase in grades in classrooms and on standardized assessments, to an increase in students being willing to participate and engage in instruction. This includes a five-year data collection comparison compiled by Saltrick in Prince George's County, Maryland (Grayson & Martin, 2012). The data revealed that students identified in greatest need (like ELLs) gained at a more rapid pace than others; they also narrowed the achievement gap that existed prior to GESA. This finding has been repeated in many settings since this initial evaluation (Grayson & Martin, 2012).

Results over the last thirty years have continued to indicate that teachers feel strongly that GESA improves their teaching abilities, classroom climates and students' abilities to learn and relate well to others. Repeatedly, teachers, other practitioners and graduate students indicate that the GESA materials, research and strategies provide them with strong tools for self-evaluation of their teaching effectiveness and behaviors for all students. Additionally, participants are pleased by the increased engagement, participation, quality of learning responses, and changes in the behavior of their students. GESA researchers have found these positive results to be magnified when the strategies and research findings are applied with students in ELL, ESL and Special Education settings (Grayson & Martin, 2012).

The two most exciting and consistent findings related to achievement have continued to be as follows: 1) all students gain academically, and 2) the students identified in greatest need are the ones who gain the most. Consequently, the learning gap narrows between specific populations, including ELLs and Latino students (Grayson & Martin, 2012).

Additional findings and follow-up to the present

One concern addressed in the GESA program has been the inclusion of related issues such as the under representation of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in teacher-student interactions with students for whom English is not their native language. As part of the GESA program, participating educators are encouraged to increase their interactions with all of these students. A portion of data collected during the formal validation study (Grayson & Martin, 2012) indicated a major increase, especially for minority males. Majority females, nevertheless, were underrepresented in all interactions, which supported prior GESA studies. The populations which appeared

to benefit and gain the most in the original areas of study and implementation were Latina Americans and African American males (Grayson & Martin, 2012).

In 2008, Dr. Grayson moved GESA to an electronic platform and began providing a series of instructional webinars for the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) and the Intercultural Development Research Alliance (IDRA). From 2010 to the summer of 2019, Dr. Grayson has taught GESA to graduate student cohorts of the Student University of New York (SUNY), Oswego. With Dr. Grayson and the student's permission, here are some anecdotal comments from graduate students who participated in GESA during the 2018-2019 school year.

> "This course has taught me a lot about myself as a person and as a teacher."

> "It has given me different ways to look at myself and at my students. I have learned many new strategies that have helped make my classroom a positive learning environment, such as wait time, physical closeness and analytical feedback."

> "I have really enjoyed the topics we as a group have discussed and I have taken many of those discussions and used the information in them to better my classroom."

> "I observed… a predominantly English language learner (ELL) class from my student teaching placement… There were16 students present on the day that I completed this observation—only four of which were female. Six… were non-ELL students while the remaining ten were ELL students. During this lesson, the teacher was lecturing the students using a slideshow. There was a total of nine student responses to teacher prompts. Six of the responses were from the same male student (male student #1). One response was from a different male student (male student #2). Two responses were from a female student. These students were native English-speaking students. I noticed that no ELLs participated or seemed engaged during this lesson."

> "When looking at the distribution of participation frequency, I noticed that there were equity concerns evident. The participation distribution was skewed heavily towards native English-speaking students."

> "Every different aspect of teaching explored through these modules allowed me to experiment and improve my teaching throughout the semester. The effectiveness of my teaching has tremendously

improved because of the modifications that I was able to make. The observation assignments gave me something to look for when observing my host teacher and I would not have been able to pick up on certain aspects of her teaching if I were not given the directive. I also was able to discuss the different strategies... with my teacher. ... (GESA) not only helped my teaching, but a twenty-plus year veteran as well."

"The second unit showed me how little minority groups are heard in their classes. I had a student in elementary school from India but we never learned anything about India. The things that we could have learned would have been amazing. Giving students the chance to present on where they are from... It gives that student a chance to (be heard) and the other students are exposed to new ideas and places."

As we see from participants' comments, the program is culturally responsive because it calls attention to enhancing the opportunities for minority students to fully participate in the classroom.

Dr. Grayson has not only developed GESA, an action research-based program for teachers, but has also developed *GESA for Parents* and *GESA for Administrators*. Therefore, when teachers and parents are both consistent in implementing the effective teaching strategies in the classroom and at home, student academic achievement increases. The data on the effectiveness of GESA has shown to be most impressive for students who are not native English language learners. Evidently, Latino students in suburban and urban schools would benefit from having teachers trained in the GESA program.

Conclusion

One of the best ways to help Latino students succeed in their academic journeys is for educators to be accepting of their culture and of who they are, be understanding of their life circumstances, and help provide them with the necessary educational tools that they need to be successful. Thus, as educators we need to continue learning more about our Latino students and their academic, social and emotional needs. Also, teachers must continue studying, developing and acquiring the necessary skills to become culturally responsive educators that know how to work with students from all cultural backgrounds.

In this paper, we have provided several culturally responsive practices and activities, and a program that have been successful in supporting Latino students. They address different ways of becoming culturally responsive educators who can provide what our

Latino students need in order to achieve their dreams of academic excellence. Language, literacy, and culture are now understood to be linked in numerous ways, and all teachers need to become knowledgeable in how they affect students' schooling (Nieto, 2010). We need to humanize our educational system and society. "To transform the world is to humanize it" (Freire, 1985, as cited in Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005). Our own transformation as educators is necessary in order to achieve this.

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Appendix A

Cultural Autobiography

You will turn in a 5-10 page paper in which you identify your cultural heritage followed by a discussion of your culture. In the paper, explore questions such as:

Your Family (begin with some background basics)

- Who is your family?
- Talk about the cultural history of your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.
- Where are they from?
- What is the primary language, race, religion, culture of your origin?
- Discuss your family culture in terms of values, beliefs and goals about life success/failure that you have learned. How has your cultural background affected your present belief about yourself and becoming a teacher?
- What ethnic groups did you group up with? Was there a predominant group? What do you recall about your neighborhood and the schools you went to from K-12?
- Talk about how your cultural background and upbringing have shaped your views about race, class, gender, ability and sexuality. What message did you receive about these topics growing up? How has your upbringing helped or hindered you in becoming a multicultural educator?


Autobiography and Yourself Now

Describe yourself now. Discuss your attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about different cultural groups. Discuss how these influence who you are as a teacher candidate, and where you need to direct and expand your own learning. Indicate how the material in this class has assisted you (cite specific articles, text chapters, and activities) in seeing how aspects of the sources of cultural identity have shaped who you are, what you believe, and what you must do to grow beyond where you are now in becoming a culturally relevant educator. For Howe and Lisi (2013), one of the dimensions they list as a characteristic of a multicultural educator is someone that "...has explored his or her own personal ethnic, racial, gender and other identities. Knows how own culture compares with those of their students. Understands the strengths and struggles of

various identities". Describe how you measure up to this dimension of the definition of a multicultural educator.

Sources of cultural identity that influences teaching and learning

The labeled circles are sources of cultural identity that influence teaching and learning.
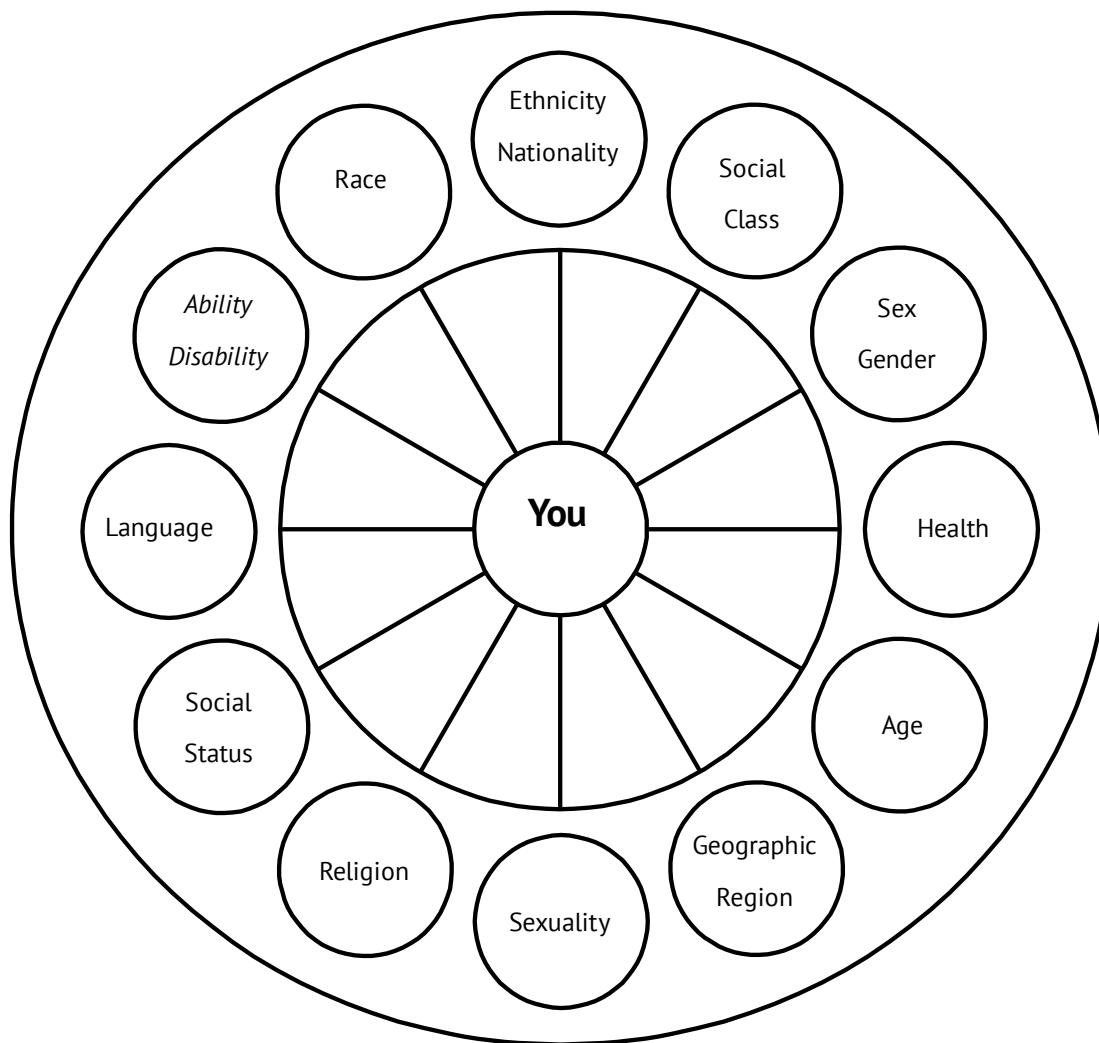
The inner spokes of the wheel are socializing agents that transmit culture: family, school, religion, community, neighborhood, peer group, electronic media, sports, the arts, print media, workplace, technology.

Cushner, K., McClelland, A., & Safford, P. (2012). *Human diversity in education an intercultural approach* (7th ed.) Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Cultural Autobiography Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Partially Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations
Your Identity	Clearly details & explicitly explains how the (12) components of the cultural identity model is descriptive of yourself. 30 29 28	Explains how some of the components of the cultural identity model is descriptive of yourself. 27 26 25	Explains how less than 8 components of the cultural identity model is descriptive of yourself. 24 23 22	Explains how 4 or less of the components of the cultural identity model is descriptive of yourself. 21 20
Your Family	Describes in rich detail and understanding of your family's cultural and ethnic background. 25 24 23	Describes in limited detail and understanding of your family's cultural and ethnic background. 23 22 22	Describes in a mechanical way without much detail or understanding of your family's cultural and ethnic background. 22 22 21	Does not describe or show an understanding of your family's cultural and ethnic background. 20 19
Upbringing	Describes in rich detail and understanding of your upbringing, neighborhood(s), attitudes and talk about people who were different. 25 24 23	Describes in limited detail and understanding of your upbringing, neighborhood(s), attitudes and talk about people who were different. 23 23 22	Describes in a mechanical way without much detail or understanding of your upbringing, neighborhood(s), attitudes and talk about people who were different. 22 21 20	Does not describe or show an understanding of your upbringing, neighborhood(s), attitudes and talk about people who were different. 19 18
Autobiography and Yourself Now	Autobiography vividly represents your cultural identity clearly connecting it to	Autobiography describes cultural identity in a detailed narrative that depicts your	Autobiography tells a story but doesn't link to the 12 identifiers. Questions are	Autobiography does not provide a clear account of your cultural identity, does not

	historical context and 12 identifiers, how your cultural heritage influences who you are and how it will influence your teaching, reflects growth.	background & makes some connections to the 12 identifiers and implications for teaching, answers most question & shows growth.	answered in a mechanical way without reflective connections to course content.	connect the 12 identifiers to your cultural heritage, or how your culture has implications for your teaching.
	29 18 16	16 14 11	11 9 7	5 3

100   95   90   89   85   80   79   75   70   65   60

Points _____

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Cultural Bags

Take a moment to explore your cultural identity more deeply. What do you "carry" with you as part of your "cultural bag"? From whom or where did you get the items in your "bag"? What do they mean to you? Reflect on the process of your own identity development. Then complete the following:

1. Find six to eight objects (or images of objects, hand or computer drawings, etc.) that represent your cultural identity.

2. Create a collage/collection/display/image of your "cultural bag". Title your image, "*Your name*: Cultural Bag". Or if enrolled in a face to face course, place items in a "container" such as bag or basket, etc., and bring to class. The container itself, may represent your cultural identity in some way. As you put together your bag, think about:

   In this lesson, you will explore the role of culture in identity formation and learning. Further, see "Learning Activities," below.

What will we learn in this lesson?

Learning Outcomes

In this lesson you will:

1. Explore your cultural identity.
2. Understand how your cultural identity shapes your identity as a language teacher.
3. Examine what it means to be a learner of culture in your classroom.
4. Understand the role of identity in language education.

Learning Activities

In this lesson you will:

1. Create an image of your "cultural bag" and upload it to VoiceThread, or if in a face to face course, create your bag and bring to class.

2. In a 1-2 page paper, answer the following prompts or questions:

    •   With regard to your objects and/or images, think about why are they significant to you and why you included them?

    •   Reflect upon how your culture has influenced who you are and how you view the world?

    •   As you think about the bag you have put together, why is reflecting on your own identity important?

    •   As you read the definitions of Identity, Ethnicity, Race, and Stereotype, below, clearly and carefully define the complex term: culture. In your opinion, how well do these definitions properly capture the essence of each term?

    •   Explain how characteristics of culture influence or mediate language learning.

    •   Reflect on how your cultural identity informs your perception of language learning and the language learner, in your classroom.

What are the reading assignments for this lesson?

Prior to beginning the activities in this lesson, read:

o   Florio-Ruane, S. (2001). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation, and narrative*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Chapter 2)

o   Kumaravadivelu, B. (2008). *Cultural globalization and language education*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Chapter 2)

o   Menard-Warwick, J. (2008). The cultural and intercultural identities of transnational English teachers: Two case studies from the Americas. *TESOL Quarterly, 42*(4), 617-640.

Cultural Identity

Identity development is a dialogic process in which we are shaped from within (self-given) by our own agency and shaped from without (other ascribed). According to Kumaravadivelu (2008), the development of identity can be described as a "U-shaped cultural phenomenon" (p. 4). In our pre-teen years, depicted as the top of the 'U', we are not quite aware of or able to articulate a cultural identity. At this stage, we accept, with little question, the culture into which we are born.

The teenage years, however, present a very different story. Kumaravadivelu locates them at the bottom or the dip in the 'U'. In adolescence, we become cognizant of cultural differences and the notion of choice, and it can become a time of discontentment, leading to the conscious decision to reject our inherited culture. During this time, schools often become the place of identity deconstruction and reconstruction mediated by the convergence of multiple cultures. Ironically, it is during this stormy, vulnerable period of adolescence that identity formation begins to solidify.

As we move from the period of adolescence into young adulthood, we generally begin to accept, knowingly this time, our inherited culture and develop a deeply rooted respect for it as we mature in our understanding of ourselves. We continue to create and recreate our identity throughout the life course based on our social, emotional, and cognitive experiences.

Identity is a complex cultural phenomenon made even more complicated if we add the experience of living in another culture. "Crossing borders" adds another dimension to identity development which affects individuals very differently.

Defining Identity

Identity, ethnicity, race, and stereotype are terms that are certain to surface in a discussion of culture and identity (Education Alliance, 2010, p. 49). When used to describe individuals, these words can isolate, join, separate, create oneness, or create "strangeness."

As you read each definition, clearly and carefully define the complex term: culture. How well do these definitions properly capture the essence of each term?

1. **Identity**
   The basic sense of who one is, including one's beliefs and values; it entails a conscious or unconscious sense of affiliation with one or more groups, including ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, language, religious, national, regional, and those associated with particular activities (sports, education, the arts, and so forth).

2. **Ethnicity**
   Identity formed with a group on the basis of common culture and some combination of ancestry, geography, history, language, religion, and physical characteristics.

3. **Race**
   Identity formed with a group on the basis of perceived physical characteristics, such as skin color and facial features; race is a socially constructed category, and

recent genomic research finds "no scientific support for the concept that human populations are discrete, non-overlapping entities" (Jorde & Wooding, 2004).

4. **Stereotype**

A fixed notion of the characteristics of members of a particular group without regard for individual differences. We try to explain away cultural "strangeness" with overgeneralizations and stereotypes.

The Education Alliance at Brown University. *Culturally Responsive Teaching (2010)* Retrieved on October 16, 2010 from https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/home/strategies