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# The Impact of Implementing a Culturally Responsive Latino Poetry Unit to Examine Language, Identity, and Culture in a Middle School Language Arts Classroom

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THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LATINO  
POETRY UNIT TO EXAMINE LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE IN A  
MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

by

Kari Loecker

A THESIS

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THE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LATINO  
POETRY UNIT TO EXAMINE LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE IN A  
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University of Nebraska, 2016

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The purpose of this practitioner research study was to examine the implementation of a culturally responsive poetry unit in a majority Latino middle school in Nebraska. The experiences of Latino and non-Latino eighth-grade language arts students were documented in an effort to understand the level of engagement and conclusions drawn from the poetry. This study also explores the effectiveness of using a multicultural poetry unit to address state standards. Data sources include student written work, whole-class and individual discussions, pre and post surveys, and daily entries in a teacher research journal. Latino students found the poetry to be representative of their experiences as bicultural and bilingual citizens. Non-Latino students acquired an increased cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, while there did appear to be an increased understanding of poetry and the standards among students, it did not translate to an increased appreciation of poetry.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As of July 2014, the U.S. Census Bureau determined that the Hispanic population of the United States reached 55 million, making Hispanics approximately 17% of the total population and the largest minority group. Millennials, those born between 1982 and 2000, are far more diverse than previous generations (U.S. Census Bureau News, 2015). The year 2014 marked the first time that minority students became the majority in public classrooms, with the overall number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students surpassing the number of non-Hispanic White students (Maxwell, 2014). The Census Bureau predicts that the Hispanic immigrant populations will continue to grow by 57% between 2015 and 2050 (Krogstad, 2014). This demographic shift results in more students who are either immigrants themselves or the children of immigrants.

Warikoo (2014) states that “Immigrant youth are best supported when schools foster bicultural identities, enabling them to navigate multiple cultural worlds effectively” (para. 5). However, many schools do not have these strategies in place, and educators in these school settings are still predominantly White. For example, 82% of teachers were non-Hispanic White, while only 8% were Hispanic in 2011 (Maxwell, 2014). According to Lee (2005), “The problems that many children of color face in school are due to cultural differences/mismatches between the students’ home culture and the school culture” (p. 41).

Erickson (1987) discusses how legitimacy, trust, and assent are factors in the school success of minority students. He describes how cultural differences may lead to

miscommunication in the early grades which results in distrust and resistance later in their education. According to Erickson (1987), learning involves risk since it involves “moving just past the level of competence” to what has not yet been mastered (p. 344). Vygotsky (1978) refers to this concept as the “zone of proximal development”-the level at which students develop through guidance with more skilled peers. As students master a particular skill in their zone of proximal development and can perform it without guidance, their zone of proximal development moves upward. If a teacher is not viewed as trustworthy, students may resist and not take the risks necessary to learn (Erickson, 1987).

In order to accommodate the shift taking place demographically, one option our educational institutions, which are generally based on White mainstream culture, can take is to adopt culturally responsive pedagogy. There is also a need for teachers to become culturally competent educators who are willing to learn more about the cultures that students bring with them. Le Roux (2002) states that cross cultural communication can be improved by making attempts to understand the world from another’s point of view and seeing differences as learning opportunities. When cultural groups are ignored in the instructional process, it becomes more likely that negative attitudes and fears will manifest (Gay, 2000). Educators must begin to make these adjustments in their classrooms if they are to honor the unique individuality of students and build understanding among different cultural groups.

Literature is one way that teachers can incorporate multiple viewpoints and help students learn about the world. Wilhelm (2008) claims that literature provides a way to explore the human condition. Providing literature that reflects the cultures of our

demographically changing classrooms helps students receive affirmation of themselves and celebrate the contributions of their culture (Barry, 1998).

Poetry is often considered one of the oldest forms of literature. Most of the literature in the United States prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century is poetic in its use of language and form (Dressman, 2010). In today's classrooms many teachers shy away from using poetry because they themselves feel uncomfortable or unknowledgeable with the genre. Students find it boring and hard to decipher because they are not allowed the time to uncover the artistic appeal of poetry. Poetry, however, has the ability to create the multicultural dialogue needed in our diverse classrooms because poets often focus on "issues of justice, discrimination, and reconciliation in their work" (Vardell, 2014, p.16). According to Christie and Gonzalez (2006), Latino poets frequently use their writing to reveal the "misguided and damaging stereotypes" reflected in U.S. society (p. 2).

In the current high stakes accountability and testing movement, the narrowing of curriculum has influenced the way poetry is taught. A shift in expectations has encouraged a focus on less expressive forms of writing that are more concerned with technical skills. While these forms are important in the corporate world, students are losing the joy associated with the more creative forms of writing that are used to articulate their ideas and dreams and question the conditions of society (O'Quinn, 2006). Poetry is often the "least emphasized and least taught in English language arts classrooms" of all forms of literature (Dressman, 2010, p. 6). Ironically, Dressman (2010) states that there is no better form of text for teaching "how to make inferences, find the main idea, support a claim with details, and distinguish between the literal and the

figurative” (p.6). If poetry is to be saved, educators must find a way to teach it using both the standards and an appreciation for its aesthetic form.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of a culturally responsive poetry unit with middle school students in a majority-minority school within Nebraska where approximately 54% of the students are Latino. The study focused on using Latino poetry to create an environment where students were given the opportunity to express their bicultural and bilingual identities. It documents the effectiveness of the unit to help students with the rigorous demands of the state standards while affirming the cultures represented in the community and building an appreciation for poetry. It is also done in an effort to build the cultural knowledge of non-Latino students so that they may effectively cross cultural boundaries and work in a globalized society. Furthermore, the use of Latino poetry as a means for building critical consciousness was explored. Understanding the use of culturally responsive pedagogy could potentially lead to its increased use. This study also allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching philosophy as these curricular changes were made. The following questions were examined in the study:

- How do students experience Latino poetry? What conclusions do they draw from the poetry?



- What are the reactions of monolingual students? What are the reactions of bilingual/bicultural students? Does it appear to validate and empower Latino students?
- Do students change their beliefs and/or attitudes regarding poetry after reading contemporary Latino poetry?
- Are students able to effectively demonstrate the state standards?

### **Significance of Study**

There is a relatively small amount of research available to educators regarding the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, especially poetry, with minority students in Midwestern states to reach high rigorous standards. The existing research concentrates mainly on the use of multicultural literature (predominantly short stories and novels) in regards to primarily White students. The research covering the use of multicultural literature with minority students typically takes place in urban settings or areas that have had longstanding minority populations.

Murillo and Villenas (as cited in Hamann & Harklau, 2010) define the term new Latino diaspora, which was first introduced in the late 1990s, as the settlement of increasing numbers of Latinos into areas of the United States that have not traditionally been home to Latinos. The new Latino diaspora can partially be attributed to employment opportunities in industries such as manufacturing, agriculture, and meatpacking within these rural areas. In the new Latino diaspora, newcomer Latinos are often faced with challenges concerning their sense of identity when their linguistic and ethnic

distinctiveness is given an outsider status in these communities (Hamann & Harklau, 2010). It is important to explore how schools in these communities can cultivate student achievement.

This research is my attempt to uncover how I can facilitate lessons that can affirm and empower minority students while building critical consciousness and cross cultural communication with all students. It also allows teachers to think about the possibility of including more poetry in their classrooms in an authentic way that adheres to state and district standards. This unit was my journey in discovering how teaching does not have to be stifled by standardization, but rather each classroom can work within the standards to help their students in the ways that are most effective.

### **Rationale**

For the past five years, I have taught the eighth-grade language arts courses where this study takes place. In the eighth grade, Nebraska requires students to take a language arts state assessment. Over the years I have realized that these tests often create a formulaic way of learning. Students and teachers feel a certain amount of pressure to teach skills emphasized on these tests. As a result, poetry often gets very little inclusion in the curriculum. I recognized that my own students had very little exposure to poetry prior to the eighth grade, and most were somewhat resistant to reading and writing it. Prior to this study, my own poetry unit was relatively short. It covered authors such as Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Emily Dickinson, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Students would find very little to relate with and therefore lose interest or find it confusing.

Our nation has had a longstanding tradition of the aims of education being focused on creating citizens that can carry on democratic ideals. According to Proefriedt (2008), John Dewey worked to create a notion of American individualism that incorporated a greater concern for the community as a whole. Dewey pursued the idea that education's responsibility was to produce "a thoughtful, reflective individual" (Proefriedt, 2008, p. 99). In order for this to be accomplished, he believed students would need to see the relationship between the content encountered in school and their life experiences.

Many in the field of education continue to pursue Dewey's belief that schools should contribute to a democratic society. Wilhelm (2008) discusses the role of schooling "to help create empowered and attentive citizens who can both pursue fulfilling and fruitful individual lives and who can contribute in transformative ways to the life of a democracy" (p. 52). Nieto (2010), however, realizes that "at a time when accountability, standardization, and privatization are the common discourse" that democratic education can seem to be a topic from the past (p. 27). She also argues that curriculum must help students "become critical and productive members of our democratic society" (Nieto, 2010, p. 30).

Perhaps it is time then to review the purpose of our educational system and the role of the teacher in that purpose in an effort to maintain the democratic aspects of education. When students are given opportunities to "make sense of their immediate experience in a culturally literate manner and in relation to broader social realities, teachers help to democratize the world" (Mayer, p. 11, 2012). Nussbaum (2010) states,

“Young people must gradually come to understand both the differences that make understanding difficult between groups and nations, and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential if common problems are to be solved” (p. 81). My study, therefore, was implemented in the hopes that I could create a unit using Latino poetry that would help students feel as though their schooling reflected their cultures and lives outside of school while enabling them to think critically about their world.

Working in my particular assignment has granted me the opportunity to work with kids from diverse backgrounds. My students were irrevocably the motivation behind this study. It is my desire to help them acknowledge and understand their cultural differences while working collaboratively together in class. I have also been fortunate enough to work in an environment where my colleagues and administrators have been supportive of my projects. I recognize that this freedom of curricular design is not permissible in all educational settings.

Realizing that very little Latino literature was currently in my curriculum, I wanted to incorporate it within my poetry unit in a way that could produce a more authentic approach to learning and bring us closer to the democratic notion of education where all students have a voice and feel empowered. By teaching a few pieces of multicultural literature in previous years, I had noticed that students were generally motivated to read literature with Latino protagonists. It was my hopes then that this project would not only increase the rigor of the academic demands within my classroom, but do so in a way that was engaging for all students. Through this project, students without ties to the Latino culture would be challenged to think as a member of that

culture and hopefully gain awareness and understanding of their bilingual and bicultural classmates.

For the purpose of this study, I chose to use the term Latino to describe those of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture of origin. I realize though to classify people under a certain label is complicated. While some may use the terms Hispanic and Latino interchangeably, Christie and Gonzalez (2006) prefer to use the term Latino because they feel it “is more deeply rooted in the Spanish language” (p. 3). For the purpose of this study, I use the terms bilingual and bicultural to express the Latino participants. It is important to note that not all bicultural students in the community are bilingual.

Wilhelm (2008) discusses the need for practitioner research to study “human complexity in human contexts” (p. 55). Using practitioner research allows us to understand how our approach works best in the classroom for the exact population of students taught. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) discuss the role of practitioner research in creating a democratic society: “Teachers who work from an inquiry stance that involves continual and critical questioning foster the development of students who do the same” (p. 147). As teachers question the traditional knowledge base, it promotes students to challenge and critique that knowledge.

In an era of teacher accountability and blame, it is important for practitioners to establish themselves as professionals. Through practitioner research, I am able to uncover my own assumptions about teaching and learning and work to revise the current

curriculum to better serve all students. Practitioner research acknowledges and respects the diversity of teachers and their students. Practitioner research studies relate well with topics of culturally responsive pedagogy since reflexivity is fundamental. Teachers continually work to examine how their instruction fits with their goals (Webster, 2002). What follows is the descriptive review of the literature concerning the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as the methods, results, and discussion of this study on the subject of implementing a culturally responsive poetry unit in an eighth-grade classroom.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Pressure to adhere to a top-down approach to education has many school districts implementing a one-size-fits-all curriculum while classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically. This study seeks to find how teachers who value the diversity of their classrooms can work within the standards and test-driven culture to increase the engagement and academic achievement of all students while building critical thinking skills to help students challenge the societal norms that perpetuate inequity and prejudice. Several educators and researchers have recognized the need for a culturally responsive pedagogy and sought to incorporate it in an authentic manner.

### **Culturally Competent Educators**

Due to the growing number of immigrant youth, the need for culturally competent educators is substantial. Warikoo (2014) claims that research has shown that educators' biases can greatly affect student learning. She argues that an important responsibility of cultural competency is for educators to view themselves as lifelong learners because they will undoubtedly experience changes throughout their careers. Cultural competency is defined as "the ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build on ethnic, [socio-] cultural, and linguistic diversity" (Lynch, 2004, p. 50). Cultural competence is also defined by the National Education Association as "having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to

learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families” (National Education Association [NEA], n.d., para. 3).

Gaining cultural competence occurs through developing cultural understanding of other cultural perspectives. Lynch (2004) mentions four effective ways to learn about other cultural perspectives: “1) learning through books, the arts, and technology; 2) talking, socializing, and working with individuals from the culture who can act as cultural guides or mediators; 3) participating in the daily life of another culture; and 4) learning the language of the other culture” (p. 48).

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Cultural competence allows teachers to use their knowledge and awareness in order to become culturally responsive educators in part by using culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as a method of teaching where a student’s culture is acknowledged and used so that academic achievement can be obtainable to all students (Gay, 2000). Teachers build on students’ prior knowledge and cultural experiences to engage them in the lesson and create a cooperative learning environment- an essential component in a globalized economy. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant pedagogy, a term used interchangeably with culturally responsive, involves three conditions: “(a) Students must experience academic success: (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence: and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the



current social order” (p. 160). Under the philosophy of a culturally relevant pedagogy, academic outcomes are not detached from culture, ethnicity, and prior experiences.

Academic success is a vital component of a culturally responsive pedagogy. Supporters of scripted curriculum may argue that it is not enough to simply make students feel validated since their academic needs must be met in order for them to obtain equity in regards to education. With dedication, this is attainable for culturally responsive educators. Studies have found that those who are allowed to remain close to their cultural backgrounds are both more academically and emotionally secure (Nieto, 2010). Drawing from students’ backgrounds and cultural histories can empower them, naturally leading to enhanced literacy skills (Ramirez & Jimenez-Silvia, 2015).

### **Using Multicultural Literature as part of a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

One potential element of a culturally responsive pedagogy is multicultural literature. When implemented properly, it is a useful tool for giving students both validation of their culture and an opportunity for students to view the world through another’s experiences. Webster (2002) defines multicultural literature as the literature created by or about marginalized groups in society. Glazier and Seo (2005) similarly describe it as the voices generally ignored in the traditional canon.

Literacy can help people define their inner self, imagine the perspectives of others, and critically read the world (Wilhelm, 2008). Therefore, multicultural literature is a natural resource for any teacher wanting to expand their thinking beyond the school walls. Ramirez and Jimenez-Silva (2015) used poetry from diverse authors to validate the

experiences of Latino ninth grade freshmen in San Carlos, California, where approximately 80% of the student population comes from Mexican immigrant parents. Similar to my own study, many of the families in the study came from bilingual and multilingual families. They found that poetry enabled students to develop analytical and interpretive skills in reading, as well as discussions regarding equality and social justice. Ramirez and Jimenez-Silva realized that issues of equality and social justice often get overlooked when schools focus on high-stakes testing.

Multicultural literature may meet some resistance by majority students, who cite that the content is difficult to understand. Some students may view it as a challenge to their current privileged status, leading them to avoid thoughtful discussions about cultural issues. In order to counter this, Glazier and Seo (2005) suggest that teachers help majority students realize that they too have culture and can also make cultural connections to the text. Naidoo (2002) advocates for teachers to be co-learners in their classrooms, building a trusting environment so students are less likely to be defensive. It is possible that students will change their perceptions of multicultural literature after being given the cultural background knowledge necessary to understand the content.

While affirming students can help them become academically successful, unless issues related to language and culture are viewed through a critical lens, it is unlikely that real change will occur (Nieto & Bode, 2010). With guidance, multicultural literature can help students develop the critical consciousness that Ladson-Billings (1995) advocates for in a culturally relevant pedagogy where inequality is confronted. As Freire (2000) suggests, an authentic education is not simply imposing knowledge upon students, but

rather working with them to question their historical and social situation in order to shape their own lives. Freire (1985) states: “The act of reading cannot simply be explained as merely reading words since every act of reading implies a previous reading of the world and a subsequent rereading of the world” (p. 18). Through literature, students can learn to examine the historical, political, economic, and social effects on different groups (Webster, 2002). For example, many Latino writers work to challenge the stereotypes placed upon them and use their writing to address issues faced by those marginalized by society relating to labor, wages, prejudices, and stigmas (Christie & Gonzalez, 2006). Although controversial topics can be at times difficult to discuss as educators, without approaching these texts with a critical perspective, the realization of the work these authors are trying to accomplish may go unnoticed.

MacPhee (1997) analyzed the responses of first grade students, all of European American heritage, to multicultural literature and found that students displayed empathy for groups with which they had very little interaction. Dressel (2005) also analyzed the writing of primarily White eighth-grade students in response to multicultural novels. She found that many students enjoyed reading multicultural literature, but they did not increase in their understanding of different cultural groups. Students were able to create thoughtful written reflections of their understanding of the characters, that the characters “operated with a unique worldview...that affected their decisions, actions, and reactions” (Dressel, 2005, pp. 756-757). However, outside of the multicultural unit during a post-unit survey, students were unable to recognize that non-dominant groups operate under different cultural assumptions from their own. This supports the argument that teachers

must help facilitate conversations that connect literature to society. It also may help dominant group members to view texts from a different perspective if they are able to view and interact with the written reflections of those from other cultural backgrounds.

While it is necessary to have research literature available that focuses on the impact of multicultural literature in classrooms where students share a common heritage and belief system, this is not reflective of many classrooms today where diverse groups of students must work collaboratively. Therefore, I believe it is also imperative to examine how students in these classrooms respond to multicultural literature in ways that build critical consciousness to promote democratic principles.

### **The Use of Latino Literature**

Latino literature, which did not become a common term until the late 1980s, can be defined as literature that is written primarily in English and within the United States by authors who have cultural ties to Spanish Latin America (Christie & Gonzalez, 2006). Latino literature, which has a strong role in the study, has served various purposes in classrooms. Vasquez (2005) studied the impact of Chicano literature on Latino and non-Latino students. Using literature that covered topics such as immigration and acculturation, she found that the Latino students identified with the literature and found a sense of “ethnic validation” (Vasquez, 2005, p. 909). Students were comfortable code-switching and expressed that bilingualism is a common trait of a bicultural identity. Vasquez found that students were empowered by being given an equal representation in the classroom. Non-Latino students were able to make connections to the text despite not

being able to identify based on ethnicity. She found that the literature raised the critical consciousness of the non-Latinos so they were able to reevaluate preexisting perceptions of Latinos. Ultimately, Vasquez found that multicultural literature can be a means to promote social justice. It is important to note, however, that the texts chosen were mostly novels, unlike the poetry chosen for this study. The participants chosen were also college-age students in a Chicano literature seminar. It is possible that younger students, in a required course, would have different reactions.

DiLeo (2011) wrote about his experience teaching diverse middle school students in Buffalo, New York. He narrates his experience teaching one ESL class having no training in teaching second-language learners. Covering authors such as Twain and Steinbeck, he found that after failed lessons and bored students he needed a change. Using the work of Sandra Cisneros and Gary Soto, he was able to build lessons that allowed for discussions about the “American Dream,” race, and stereotyping. In the end, he felt as though he was able to build a connection with his students that hadn’t been there prior to the use of Latino literature.

### **Building a Critical Consciousness of Linguistic Ideology**

As the concern for American public education increases, so does the linguistic ideology of monolingualism. In the rise of standardized high-stakes assessments, language minority students have unfairly been made the “scapegoat for the institutional failure of public schools” (Santa Ana, 2004, p. 6). This comes at a time when the population of students arriving at our schools not speaking English has increased 60% in

the last decade (García, 2005). This backlash has been played out in decisions such as Proposition 227 in California, which restricted bilingual education statewide in public schools. In 2008, the Arizona Board of Education made a policy that required all English language learners to take four hours of English language instruction daily, leaving almost no time to study other subjects (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). However, the linguistic ideology of monolingualism does not stop with recent immigrants and can be found throughout the history of the United States.

The federal boarding school system created in the late 19th century sought to eradicate Native cultures and languages. Students were not permitted to speak their Native languages and doing so resulted in a variety of punishments (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). These measures resulted in “a nearly irredeemable decline” of Native languages (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006, p. 168). Lomawaima & McCarty (2006) discuss the importance of language in a community:

Language is the means through which parents and grandparents socialize their children and grandchildren, imparting all that a community and a people believe their children ought to learn and become. When that bond is broken, intergenerational ties and community relationships also are ruptured. (p. 136)

It wasn't until the Native American Languages Act (NALA) in 1990 that schools were encouraged to develop and preserve Native American languages. However, despite this reversal of the prior strict English-only policies held by boarding schools, Native

American languages are still in a drastic decline (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). The history of abuse that has affected Native languages has not been easy to overcome.

Latino literature has the potential to bring about critical consciousness directed towards the treatment of language and break down the xenophobic justifications behind the language ideologies currently in society. The idea that English-only policies are tied to patriotism and unity can be critically assessed. Language is undeniably linked with identity, and Latinos have often sought to preserve their identity, in an American culture that has often rejected them, by upholding their language (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

According to Cahnmann (2006), “Poetry remains a vital form of witness to negotiations of language, culture, and power” (p. 351). She used interviews with bilingual Latino youth as the inspiration behind her own poetry, finding that bilingual youth reported both pride and shame regarding their language abilities and use. The shame was an effect of the negative views towards multilingualism in society.

The idea that bilingual students have two separate linguistic systems has been socially constructed. As a result, classrooms often have a monolingual approach to teaching and learning (Orellana & García, 2014). Translanguaging is defined as the way in which bilinguals draw from one linguistic repertoire “in order to process information, make meaning, and convey it to others” (Orellana & García, 2014, p. 386). Orellana and García (2014) suggest that teachers should learn how to help their students expand their abilities to use their full linguistic repertoire with learning environments that treat bilingualism as valuable rather than as a deficit. With this framework of thinking, they

believe Spanish could actually be used to expand English. By integrating literature that portrays the full linguistic repertoires of the authors, students can recognize their own expertise in their use of language.

While non-Latinos may not always understand the language, they can appreciate the beauty of Spanish and overcome the bias that exists in our English-only era. Intergroup relationships can be positively affected when first and second languages are given equal consideration in the classroom (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The inclusion of language within a culturally responsive pedagogy is also beneficial in helping students prepare for a world that is not monolingual. Through Latino literature a reader “might even begin to question living a monolingual life” (Christie & Gonzalez, 2006, p.2). By using Latino poetry, which at times is bilingual, it is possible to show that the complex history and cultures of our students do not need to be silenced. It also shows the value of other languages in writing.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

### **The Participants**

After approval from the school administration for the project, a proposal was submitted and approved by the University of Nebraska's Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A). Approximately 120 eighth graders were then presented with the opportunity to partake in the study. It was open to any student currently in my language arts class. Out of these students, 54 students were initially interested in the study, while 23 completed and returned the parental consent forms. Youth assent forms were also signed by the 23 participants. These youth were volunteers and recruited by other teachers in the building. While all of my students took part in the activities, only those who gave consent/assent were included in the data collection and analyzation. Out of those who participated, 52% were Latino and 48% were non-Latino White. There were 10 boys and 13 girls. Therefore, the participants were generally representative of the overall population of the school.

### **Data Sources**

In order to understand the effectiveness of the poetry unit, I relied on a variety of data sources including (1) the students' written work regarding the poetry, (2) whole-class and individual discussions, (3) pre and post surveys and (4) daily entries in a teacher research journal. These data sources would allow me to understand the perspectives of the class, my own perspective as the teacher, and the in-depth perspectives of individuals.

In order to fulfill the goals of the unit, I needed to establish authentic discussion that would promote critical thinking. Too often in a high-stakes environment, discussion is replaced with reciting from memory where students are expected to know definitive answers. Langer (2001) found that meaningful discussion in language arts classes can create a significant difference in student achievement. Therefore, if I was going to learn more about the lives of my students and have them examine the poems in a meaningful way I had to be committed to fostering authentic discussion.

I have found that providing an opportunity for students to prepare themselves by responding first on an individual level through writing can help them to participate in authentic discussion. Therefore, the written work took many forms throughout the unit in an effort to give the students multiple ways to respond to the poetry that aligned with the state standards. Students reflected on questions regarding the poems and their themes, wrote poems in response, and wrote their general reactions and connections to the poems. The written reflections of students concerning the literature were used to determine what conclusions students gathered from the poetry. As a final project, the students were required to write a poem analysis paper that would show what they had learned both regarding textual analysis and the Latino perspective in terms of the relationship between language, culture, and identity.

Students shared their ideas with the class in multiple small-group and whole class discussions. According to Lynch (2004), students learn about cultures through discussion and sharing with members of another culture: "From their own experiences of living bi- or transculturally, they can describe the world in a way that allows monocultural people

to reframe their perceptions” (p. 49). Therefore, while individual writing responses would allow me to reference their understanding of the poems, the class discussions would allow students the opportunity to share their experiences and build community in their pursuit to connect their world to the literature.

Before starting the unit, students were given pre-surveys in order to gauge their current understanding and connection to poetry (See Appendix B). The purpose of the survey was to learn of any previous exposure to Latino poetry, how they defined poetry, and their overall feelings associated with poetry. The post-survey would then determine if students’ definitions and feelings regarding poetry changed throughout the unit and what students learned from the Latino perspective (See Appendix C).

The teacher journal was an avenue that allowed me to document my inquiry over its course and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the new curriculum as the students experienced it. It was a place to reflect on the daily observations and practices of my classroom and record what seemed to be engaging or empowering for students as well as document their growth in understanding the form and structure of poetry. Not only did I want to collect data on the experiences of my students, but I also wanted to reflect on my own developing beliefs as an educator in light of the changes in my classroom practices.

### **The Literature Selection**

Alanis (2007) suggests that teachers “attend to the native country, language proficiency, socioeconomics, and immigrant status of their students and students’

families” when choosing culturally relevant texts and implementing them in the classroom (p. 32). Since my students’ families come from various Latin American countries, rather than one specific location, I wanted to focus on a theme that most students could connect with and relate to. To address the linguistic ideology present in our society, I chose to focus on the relationship between language, culture, and identity. I have observed many students be “language brokers” (Orellana, 2009), translating for their parents during parent-teacher conferences, and knew this topic would also activate the prior knowledge and experiences brought with them to school. Gay (2000) highlights the importance of connecting knowledge to our students’ experiences in culturally responsive pedagogy:

The fundamental aim of culturally responsive pedagogy is to empower ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy. Knowledge in the form of curriculum content is central to this empowerment. To be effective, this knowledge must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside of school. (p. 111)

The Spanish language was an important aspect when choosing the poems because this allowed for students of various Latino backgrounds to make connections. According to Christie and Gonzalez (2006), “A word in Spanish...points to the hybrid state ‘between worlds’ where people straddle two cultures and search for a comfortable position in that sometimes precarious state” (p. 4). The inclusion of the Spanish language would allow for discussions on the topic of when an author chooses to translate compared to writing

content in Spanish and what this possibly means in terms of the author's emotions and conditions. These discussions have the potential of helping students, particularly monolingual, understand the relationship between language and identity.

An authentic cultural perspective is more likely to occur when it is written from an in-group member of that culture (Landt, 2006). These perspectives are less likely to portray inaccurate characters and situations that can further perpetuate stereotypes. The authors chosen for this study, therefore, all have ties to the Latino culture. Some being born in the United States, while others immigrated. Due to the increasing population of second-generation immigrants in the community, it was important to include this perspective in the unit from authors such as Pat Mora. When choosing literature, it is crucial to understand that due to the complexity of the Latino population, simply choosing a protagonist that has grown up in Mexico or a piece written in Spanish may not be relevant to students who have grown up in the United States (Alanis, 2007). Since my students have ties to countries such as Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, and Guatemala it was important to me to choose authors that could portray the rich diversity of my students. There is diligence that is required when selecting multicultural literature in order to ensure that it is the appropriate fit for the goals of the unit.

While there are many works that deal with the theme of language, identity, and culture, I felt that those chosen were the most appropriate in terms of the use of Spanish, the validity of the author, the time allotted for this project, the relatability of the poem, and the capability of the poem to be used for critical analysis due to its inclusion of literary devices such as metaphors and symbolism (See Appendix D). Since I am not

from the Latino culture myself, I realize that one option to increase the amount that these poems could affirm and validate my students was to include their opinions in the selection, which I did not do because of time constraints. This is where it is important to have a good understanding of your student population and work to build relationships. I do not believe this is a project I could have completed my first year of teaching because I did not yet have a clear understanding of the community and the complex lives of my students. However, I was still not certain how my students would react, especially when they would be presented the poems by a nonmember of the Latino culture.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### **Student Perceptions Regarding Poetry**

Most students wrote on their pre-surveys that they never read poetry outside of school. Most of them also could only remember learning about poetry in the classroom once or twice before the eighth grade. They cited that none of the poetry chosen was Latino, although it is possible that Latino poetry was read, and perhaps this was not revealed to the students. Students had mixed feelings about poetry. A majority found it boring, useless, or hard to understand, while others used words such as inspiring and complex. A majority of the students defined poetry as something that rhymes and is written in stanzas to express feelings. It was evident that most students had a negative perception of poetry and had little exposure to poetry.

The post-surveys asked students how the unit influenced or changed how they viewed poetry. Many students commented that it became less childish for them. They hadn't realized how much symbolism and meaning could be in a poem. One student commented on how they were now more motivated to pick up a poetry book. While there wasn't strong evidence to suggest that the unit changed students' perceptions regarding poetry, those who did not express any more interest in poetry did write that they could now better interpret poetry.

### **Validation: The Power of Personal Connection**

Perhaps the strongest theme to emerge from the data is the amount of personal validation that bicultural students felt as a result of the Latino poetry selection. In

particular, students found Pat Mora's (2006) "Legal Alien" to be a strong representation of their lives. The speaker of the poem discusses how she feels as though she is a part of two worlds being bilingual and bicultural and that neither side is fully accepting. She is viewed as an American to Mexicans and vice versa. One student shared that from reading this poem they realized that more people than what they thought felt like them. In my journal I wrote about the discussions we had that day:

One student mentioned today how she was surprised by the poem because she feels as though she could have wrote it, as though it were her words. There was appreciation for the poem from the class that I don't often see when I introduce literature to them. This poem led to a discussion about what the author meant by being a legal alien. Many students could connect to the idea of being a true American citizen yet being labeled as an outcast because of their ethnicity. In an election year where immigration has become a hot-button issue, particularly the relations between the U.S. and Mexico, it is noticeable that this climate affects them and this poem spoke to their experiences. (February 2016)

Students often made personal connections in their writing and responded in ways beyond what I had expected or required. Students wrote of their own experiences with discrimination in their responses to the poems even when it was unrelated to the topic of the poem. One student highlighted how their accent is seen as a sign of weakness and stereotypes to others outside the Latino culture. In the literary analysis papers, students accurately made connections between the themes of different poems as requested, but



also included their own evidence and experience of the relationship between language, culture, and identity.

In Pat Mora's (2004) "Elena," a mother (Elena) portrays the divide and embarrassment that can at times be created with language when she is unable to speak English as fluently as her children. Many students again felt a personal connection with this poem, and many claimed that this poem made them think about the positions of their own parents and how they must feel. From my observation, it was the most emotional poem for them. Students reflected on their own struggles to learn English, or how their own parents were trying to learn the language. While it was unintended, this poem brought up the topic of translation among the students which was documented in my journal:

At the beginning of the unit there was a bit of uneasiness when it came to discussing ideas out loud in class, but today there seems to be a shift because they are deeply resonating with this poem. Some students expressed frustrations regarding the necessity of translating for their parents. What I hadn't realized is the complexity that this entails in their lives. They discussed the need to take phone calls, help with bills, and order food at restaurants. While they expressed the difficult situations that they encounter during translating, many students also took pride in being able to help their parents and relatives. One student commented on how they had a better understanding of how their mom must feel when she tries to talk to her friends. (February 2016)

Students were assigned to write a poem in response to “Elena” from the perspective of one of Elena’s children. This was meant to be a portrayal of their understanding of point-of-view, but also encourage them to write and express themselves. Many students, members and nonmembers of the Latino community, incorporated components of our class discussion earlier. It was apparent that students were able to see the connection between their classmates’ lived experiences and the content of the poem. Some Latino students chose to emphasize on the lines that describe the father as he frowns when the mother is learning English. Some students took this to represent the patriarchal role of the father in Latino culture. I believe these responses and discussions led to a deeper understanding of the poem and its societal implications.

### **The Spanish Language as Empowerment**

Since the beginning of the unit, there seemed to be a certain ownership of the Spanish language by the Spanish-speaking students. Since I had discovered they had little exposure to poetry before the eighth grade, students started off the unit with choral reading to help them look closely at every word and understand the relationship between the rhythm and structure of a poem. In groups, students were given Luis Alberto Ambroggio’s (1994) “Learning English” in Spanish and English. Even before reading the poems, students were engaged when they found out that the author used Spanish. Students could choose to perform the poem in either language or select lines from each. In my journal I highlighted their first interactions with the Latino poetry:

Doing the choral reading today in groups ended up being an excellent way to introduce poetry. I allowed them to perform the English and Spanish translations either alone or as a combination using lines from both. All of the groups chose to use a combination of the poems. The power of this activity lies in the fact that students had to interpret and decide for themselves which words and phrases were the most powerful. Some students commented on how the poem seemed to flow easier in Spanish. Many monolingual students were trying out the Spanish lines while their bilingual peers would help them with the correct pronunciation or praise them for their correct attempts. A lot of students took pride in being able to speak the Spanish lines while others were admittedly frustrated they didn't know Spanish. After a long month of getting ready for a state writing test, today was a breath of fresh air for everyone. (February 2016)

When reading their responses and literary analysis papers, it was common to find parts written in Spanish, as though students were modeling what they had seen from the Latino authors. Students chose to include lines of Spanish in their poetry and literary analysis papers with their own translations for the reader. I felt as though this was a sign that students felt comfortable diving into their full linguistic repertoires in the classroom. They were also grasping the idea that authors have purpose behind their inclusion of the Spanish language.

In Michele Serros' (2004) "Mi Problema," the Latina character feels ashamed that she does not know how to speak Spanish. After reading, students agreed that not knowing

Spanish can be difficult for their cultural identity, especially if they have family in Spanish-speaking countries because those family members often tease them for their accents and say they are too American. Some mentioned the fear that their grandparents have that they or their children will lose the language. The speaker of the poem feels as though White people get praised for their attempts at learning a new language, but this is not the case for minorities. This started a conversation where Latino students felt that even though someone may speak Spanish, they do not know what it is like to be Spanish. I documented my reaction to this discussion in my teacher journal:

As an educator, this comment made me think about what might cause them to feel this way. Perhaps they had encountered people in their lives that spoke Spanish, but did not appear to understand their lives. This gives insight into the fact that maybe more needs to be done in order to reach our students and make connections. I wonder if opportunities to get to know our students are missed with the false belief that simply knowing the language is enough. (February 2016)

In another journal entry I documented my own fears of being seen as an imposter by teaching this unit and not having ties to Latino culture:

A part of me does feel like an imposter, because I am trying to discuss and share poetry that is not part of my culture. Sometimes it is easier as a teacher to tell our students what interpretations and ideas should come from a text rather than working together to collectively form beliefs.

However, I think that is what a democratic education entails- a community of learners where the teacher is a part of the learning process themselves. My own sense of discomfort is part of why I chose to do this unit. I wanted my students to know that their ideas matter when it comes to our classroom community. It is my hope that I can create lessons that are truly reflective of their interests and backgrounds. (February 2016)

Sometimes as educators, it can be intimidating to put ourselves in vulnerable positions, where we have to take risks in front of our students. Pursuing an idea of education that appeals to the humanistic aspects of teaching and learning can have the greatest overall effect on relationships we build in the classroom and understanding the human experience on a larger scale.

### **Building Classroom Community and Understanding of Others**

While a central focus to this unit was to empower and validate Latino students in my class and build engagement with poetry, I also wanted it to be an opportunity to develop a critical consciousness to open the door to discussions around social justice and cultural differences. Throughout the unit, non-Latinos consistently showed their new understanding of the themes presented in the poems. In their post-surveys, many claimed to have a better understanding of the difficulties encountered by bicultural individuals. One student explained how it opened their eyes to the judgement that occurs for many immigrants and how they had acquired empathy for people who feel isolated like the mother in “Elena.” Others mentioned that they now realized that while language plays an

important part in a culture, there is more to understanding a culture. Students also realized that learning a new language and transitioning into a new culture like many immigrants do is not an easy task. Latino students recognized that some of those who struggle with bicultural identities could be members of their own families.

Many students expressed the benefits of being bilingual and their desire to learn multiple languages as we read the different poems. Their literary analysis papers recognized that characters in the poems were exposed to feelings of isolation and judgement, but that being bilingual and bicultural is overall a positive identity. One student described herself as a magician because she can speak two different languages. Another student made the comment that they now wanted to learn how to write Spanish since they could only currently speak the language. I believe these desires stem from the fact that students wrote on their post-surveys that they were now thinking about topics they hadn't previously thought about. One Latino student questioned if others have the right to determine who we are. Their belief was that the poems were to teach us to be united.

### **The Standards and Culturally Responsive Teaching**

As we progressed throughout the unit, I consistently wrote in my journal about the effectiveness of the unit in terms of its ability to adhere to the state standards for language arts:

What I have realized about using poetry to teach standards is that you can teach many concepts in a short amount of time and keep students engaged

because of the length of most poems. With “Elena” for example, students were able to determine how the tone shifts as the setting changes from Mexico to the United States. This shows their ability to analyze the relationships between different elements of the text. Then students were able to discuss word choice and connotations with “Legal Alien” since Mora uses several powerful words and phrases that evoke different emotions. Through learning about connotations and examining the use of language, it is my hope that students will become more aware of their own conversations, especially when discussing those from different cultural backgrounds. (March 2016)

In order to help scaffold the final paper, with every poem we discussed the intertextual connections it shared with previous poems. These intertextual connections were made even stronger by their personal connections to the themes presented by the poems. For example, students made connections between “Mi Problem” and “Elena” because both characters are trying to learn a new language, but are motivated for different reasons. Additionally, one student described her own mother’s journey and motivation to become bilingual. Overall, students were able to successfully support their interpretations of how the poems revealed the relationships between language, culture, and identity using explicit evidence from the text which will be heavily tested by the state starting next year.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Developing Cross-Cultural Competence

As the demographics of our schools progressively become more diverse there is a growing need for all students and faculty to develop cross-cultural competence. Cultural differences must be “acknowledged, discussed, and valued” (Lynch, 2004, p. 67).

Multicultural literature can be a means for teachers to openly discuss cultural differences rather than ignore them, for when there is ignorance of differences, often fear or anxiety towards other cultures results (Gay, 2000).

According to Lynch (2004), “Effective cross-cultural communication includes the willingness to engage in discussions that explore differences openly and respectfully, interactions that dispel myths and open doors to understanding” (p. 67). In the study, students had multiple opportunities to acknowledge and discuss differences. The poems allowed for discussions centered on issues of justice and discrimination, and often in ways beyond what I had expected. Non-Latino students could understand the motivation behind learning a new language, but also know the difficulty of learning that new language through poems such as Michele Serros’ (2004) “Mi Problema” and Pat Mora’s (2004) “Elena.” They could appreciate what it means to be prejudged by both Americans and Mexicans when you are Mexican-American in poems such as Pat Mora’s (2006) “Legal Alien.” The difficulties of adjusting to life in a new country was uncovered in Julia Alvarez’s (1995) “Mi Papi Working.” Ultimately, these poems helped nonmembers of the Latino culture understand those of the Latino culture better, including their



classmates. This was evident in their empathy for the characters and their literary analysis papers where many students elaborated on the difficulties that immigrants encounter and the need for others to judge less.

In an educational system that continues to exhibit a linguistic hierarchy by pushing children to acquire English skills as quickly as possible, with little regard to preserving their native language, it was important that the poems were also used to examine language from the perspective of Latino writers. Most students, regardless of cultural background, realized the importance of the Spanish language to the authors. As Lynch (2004) suggests, interactions with individuals from other cultures is one method to gain understanding of other cultural perspectives. Having the ability to discuss with members of that culture, non-Latinos could understand the importance of a language to students who regularly use it to communicate with family members.

It could be argued that without the interaction with members of the non-dominant group students would not have been able to view the literature outside of their dominant-group perspective as well as they did. They understood how language barriers can affect family relationships, the role of translation among families, and how Spanish is a part of their “blood.” By expressing their desire to learn a new language, students were noticing the value of being able to speak multiple languages. Students were able to learn through the poetry and their classmates in order to increase their cultural competence. Similar to DiLeo (2011), I feel as though my own connection with the students was strengthened along with my level of cultural competence as we discussed the poetry. There were many

times I found myself learning about the lives of all my students as they progressively felt more comfortable to engage in conversation.

### **Empowerment and Validation through Culturally Responsive Poetry**

The empowering aspect of the unit was seen by the willingness of students to volunteer to read when they normally would not have, their ability to write well-organized literary analysis papers, and their enthusiasm to show their classmates how to pronounce the Spanish words in the poems. It was also validating in the fact that many students felt as though the topics bridged into their home experiences. They used their literary analysis papers and class discussions to praise their cultural backgrounds. When asked what they learned about others on the post-survey, Latino students overwhelmingly answered that they realized that there were more people out there that felt like them than they knew in regards to being bilingual and bicultural.

Having the students feel so connected to the experiences of the authors reassured me that the text choices for the unit were culturally responsive and could bring an authentic experience to those from outside the culture. I realize that there are multiple ways in which an authentic perspective can be incorporated into the classroom, and while I do plan to examine those options for the future, I also found through this study that Latino poetry has a profound way of touching certain students because of the topics examined and the powerful tone and word choice.

### **Critical Literacy to Build a Democratic Education**

By stating that they were thinking about issues previously unexposed, students were beginning to confront inequality much like Freire (2000) suggests is the purpose of a meaningful education. One student discussed having an identity imposed upon them, while another student mentioned that they believed for some people that American culture was taking over, resulting in the loss of language and customs. For many students, this awareness and ability to read literature through a critical lens takes guidance from the teacher. It was not a quick process to get students to stimulate discussion concerning the literature, and teachers do play a vital role in fostering this environment. It is important to note that developing a critical lens through which to consider alternative perspectives is a crucial component of bringing out the full potential of multicultural literature. This, however, does not always happen naturally for students and is a skill that requires multiple guided opportunities to practice.

A culturally responsive pedagogy benefits every student. Similar to Vasquez (2005), I found that students raised their critical consciousness and improved their skills in critical literacy, while Latino students in particular were empowered by having more representation in class. Unlike Vasquez, however, my students were not in a Chicano literature seminar. This may suggest that a culturally responsive education can be beneficial and engaging for all students at multiple grade levels. In my particular group of students, who were in a mandatory language arts class, non-Latino students were able to build their cultural competence and understand the experiences of those from the non-

dominant group, while Latino students felt validated and began to question certain societal inequities.

A scripted curriculum that emphasizes preparation for standardized tests may fail in terms of helping students engage in analysis and self-reflection as well as explore issues that cross disciplinary lines (Noddings, 2013). If our goal is to generate critical thinking, then scripted curriculums may need to be evaluated for their appropriateness in current educational settings. Choosing a theme that matters in the lives of students can aid them in seeing “literature as a contribution to their search for meaning in their own lives (Noddings, 2013, p. 402).

Culturally responsive pedagogy has the ability to help students reflect on their place in the world while keeping the curriculum rigorous. It is known that good readers make connections between their current reading selection and past reading experiences (Sarroub, Pernicek, & Sweeney, 2007). The ability of my students to make intertextual connections and inferences throughout the unit reiterates what Ramirez and Jimenez-Silvia (2015) found concerning building empowerment and enhanced literacy skills. Time constraints are a common obstacle that teachers encounter when trying to adequately teach the standards. It was a concern of mine when I started to plan this unit that I was going to feel pressure to sacrifice the democratic aspects of this unit in order to prepare for the state exams. Fortunately, as the unit progressed I felt confident that this method of teaching would be more beneficial to them than my prior teaching of poetry, even if it were longer and occupied more class time, because many of them were making deeper inferences and were more engaged than previous years.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

### **Implications for Future Research**

As standardized tests have narrowed the curriculum and textbook options of schools, it is important to question how these testing and curriculum decisions best serve the various communities throughout the United States. My classroom is only one story of many. Educators need to be given the authority to make classrooms empowering spaces for all learners. While multicultural literature can be a means for culturally responsive teaching in language arts, it is not the only avenue for promoting the type of discourse necessary for students to develop their own voice. All subject areas must begin to think of how their classrooms can give equal representation to all learners. This is one area practitioner researchers may want to explore in their own spaces.

Future research may also want to examine how teachers in predominately European American communities can find ways to interact with those from other cultural backgrounds in an effort to increase the effectiveness of multicultural literature. It was apparent from my experience that the interactions between different cultures enabled students to view the literature from a different perspective, rather than through a dominant perspective lens, based on those conversations with their classmates. When this is not an option because of the makeup of the class, teachers may want to explore ways to incorporate those perspectives in order to help develop cultural competence.

While this study chose to focus on one poetry unit of a language arts class, it is important to highlight that culturally responsive teaching should not take place at a

certain time of the year, but rather encompass our teaching throughout the year. In an effort to help educators design classrooms where culturally responsive pedagogy and democratic principles are incorporated throughout the course of an academic year, another avenue to consider may be to document the implementation of this type of discourse in a more long-term study that takes place over the year.

### **Conclusions**

When deliberate in our goals of creating a more democratic education, it is possible to both challenge our students academically and welcome their diverse backgrounds into the classroom. With the abundance of multicultural literature available, it is possible to explore the human condition and create opportunities where students can understand multiple perspectives outside that of the dominant group. While this unit chose to focus on the relationship between language, culture, and identity, students found ways to incorporate other issues with which they were passionate. Multiple themes and concepts can be covered with texts, including poetry, that uphold rigorous standards and help students appreciate how experiences can shape diverse perspectives. As curriculum becomes increasingly standardized to accommodate our nation's testing culture, it is important for educators to be supported as they create meaningful and culturally responsive educational opportunities to interact in authentic discussion that guide their classrooms in finding their own voices.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Official Approval Letter for IRB project #15860 - New Project Form  
January 29, 2016

Karl Loecker  
Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

Edmund Hamann  
Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education  
44B HENZ, LIN., 68588-0355

IRB Number: 20160115860EX  
Project ID: 15860

Project Title: Implementing culturally relevant poetry to teach rigorous standards while engaging and building voice and empowerment among students

Dear Karl:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Exemption: 1/29/2016

- o Review conducted using exempt category I at 45 CFR 46.101
- o Date of Exemption: 1/29/2016
- o Funding: N/A

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,

*Becky R. Freeman*

Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



## APPENDIX B: PRE-SURVEY

Poetry Pre-Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is your definition of poetry?
  
2. Why do you think people write poetry?
  
3. How often do you write poetry not assigned in school?
  
4. How often do you read poetry?
  
5. What past experiences have you had with poetry outside of school?
  
6. Can you name some of the ways you have learned about poetry in the past? What were some of the things you did when reading and writing poetry? Was Latino poetry included?
  
7. What three words would you use to describe your thoughts or feelings about poetry?

## APPENDIX C: POST-SURVEY

Poetry Post-Survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is your definition of poetry?
2. How have the past few weeks influenced or changed how you view poetry?
3. Why do you think people write poetry?
4. How has your understanding of others or yourself increased?
5. What three words would you use to describe your thoughts or feelings about poetry?

## APPENDIX D: LIST OF LITERATURE

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