The Engagement of Latino English Learner Sophomore Undergraduate Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education
Doctorate of Education Program

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The Engagement of Latino English Learner Sophomore Undergraduate Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the perspectives of nine bilingual Latino English Learner (EL) sophomore undergraduate students on their engagement in the higher education classroom. Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) as a theoretical framework, this study focused on how participants describe their classroom engagement, the factors that influence their engagement, and the significance of culture in teaching and learning for this population. To examine the perspectives of the EL participants on their engagement, data was collected to explore the lived experiences of this group using a demographic survey, two in-depth interviews, and reflective journaling. The study revealed the emergence of six main themes that influence Latino ELs’ classroom engagement: (a) recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, (c) having a voice in the classroom, (d) support for understanding the course content, (e) interacting with other students, and (f) use of primary language. In addition, there are also 29 subthemes that support the themes. The findings of the study offer considerable insight into how the role of CRP influences Latino ELs’ perspectives on their classroom experiences that include the aspects of recognition, respect, and support.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy; engagement; recognition of culture; cultural identity
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, who loves, inspires, and equips me to do educational work, and to my loving family who supports me through every venture in life.
Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge God for the grace he offers through every challenge in life, and for providing faithful supporters through every step of this dissertation journey. I want to thank my husband, Steve, and my entire family, who, through my grueling schedule, also had to sacrifice to allow me the countless hours to explore the underserved students’ perspectives. I am deeply grateful to my faculty advisor and Chair, Dr. Floralba Marrero, and the dissertation committee, each of whom spent countless hours encouraging me, praying for me, and providing me insight into producing scholarly work. Special acknowledgment also goes to Dr. Katherine for her encouragement and advice and to Dr. Kim, my editor, who, through reviewing my writing, helped me to articulate how Latino ELs describe their engagement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Minority students are enrolling in 4-year American higher education institutions at increasing rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Many are first-generation college students who work and juggle other responsibilities to enhance opportunities for their future (Campa, 2013). Though student enrollment is accelerating, cultural factors that have led to struggles in achievement have alerted higher education institutions to the significance of student engagement (Bunner, 2017; Wang, 2016). Among the growing numbers of minority applicants to higher education institutions are English Learners (ELs) who bring an increasing need for support and engagement in the classroom (Beal & Rudolph, 2015). Engaging minority students with linguistic and cultural differences in higher education classrooms has become a challenge for educators (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Though awareness of this problem exists, the necessary steps to address teaching a broad array of students with diverse languages and to promote cultural contributions and differing perspectives on various issues remains in question (Han et al., 2014).

Past research demonstrates that minority students do not relate to the pedagogies employed in post-secondary education, such as, “traditional hierarchical models of expertise” due to a lack of cultural relevance or significance (Banks, 1997; Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felton, 2011, p. 133). This problem affects post-secondary institutions in that minority student engagement influences academic achievement and college completion (Han et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011). Many possible factors that contribute to this problem include the lack of acknowledgment of the minority students’ culture, as well as their insight on topics, and cultural contributions to the historical contexts in the classroom (Patton, 2016). Though there have been
numerous studies defining Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP), as well as its significance for implementation in K–12 education (Gay, 2002), there remains limited research on CRP in higher education relative to ELs (Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2012; Han et al., 2014; Moll & González, 2004; Thomas & Vanderhaar, 2008). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy supports student achievement through culturally rich classroom environments that includes EL students’ prior experiences to equip them for learning. A learner-centered approach to teaching and learning that culturally develops them intellectually, socially, and emotionally, inclusive of the contributions of their backgrounds, fortifies the strengths that students bring to the classroom (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994).

**Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

Multicultural education research in higher education has identified a need for increased institutional awareness of engagement for minority students (Quaye & Harper, 2015). One solution to addressing minority student engagement is CRP, which enables educators to foster the development of minority students’ cultural identities and leads to academic empowerment through the pride in their heritage. Educators acquire knowledge about diversity and then use it to form authentic relationships with culturally diverse students (Jett, Curry, & Vernon-Jackson, 2016). Inequities in education prompted researchers to explore practices successful in increasing cultural awareness among educators and culturally significant learning for minority students. The CRP theory developer, Ladson-Billings (1995), explored the premise that all students can learn if they were in educational environments that promoted an understanding of diversity so that all students can reach their potential. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy includes exploring teaching strategies to engage students through culture, life experiences, and backgrounds (Gay, 2000). Educators that use these approaches help students to identify their cultural strengths that
support academic achievement (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Moll & González, 2004; Nieto, 2010). An example includes the connection between the cultural strength of collaboration at home for Latino students and the use of collaborative groups in the classroom to generate curricular outcomes (Campa, 2013). The students’ identification with the practice in their own culture and community promotes engagement in the classroom (Jett, et al., 2016).

Multicultural education evolved as an approach to creating equal academic opportunities for minority students (Banks, 1995). Banks (2013) described the role of multicultural education as contributing ethnic studies in curricular content, including diverse perspectives from the histories of minority students. Implementation problems include ethnic studies that remain separate from the mainstream curriculum, while also excluding the contributions of ethnically diverse individuals that challenge the status quo of historical content. As a result, there is a division that continues to plague educational opportunities to provide inclusiveness of minority perspectives. Inclusivity allows students of color to identify with people of color that contribute to diverse disciplines. There is still a need to develop the steps to provide inclusive education that enhances minority student engagement.

Over recent years, engagement emerged as an issue for minority students in undergraduate higher education classrooms (Hall & Martin, 2013). Engagement describes the feelings that Latino ELs have when there is a representation of their culture that is inclusive of an invitation to participate and to share perspectives (Moll & González, 2004). Engagement also involves the experience that the ELs encounter through the respect for differing dialects, expressions, and contributions of native languages in the higher education classroom (Kahu, 2013; Moll & González, 2004). Deliberate efforts toward promoting engagement of EL
university students have recently emerged from educators as essential for research expansion (Cole, David, & Jiménez, 2016; Gay, 2013; Han et al., 2014).

Developing strategies that address the engagement of the EL population rests upon several factors. Students whose first language is not English has become the fastest growing population of learners in American schools that call for an adaptation and reorientation of classroom instruction at all levels (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2008; Krogstad & Fry, 2014; Phung, 2017). Banks (2013) shared several fundamental factors that make multicultural education an efficient entity to influence achievement for ELs. For example, some factors considered were student culture, the use of multiple languages to share perspectives of students in the institution, the course of study, curricula, instructional materials, and teaching strategies, in addition to how faculty perceptions influenced their actions and attitudes in the classroom.

A concern exists that language-related preparations for teaching bilingual ELs are often not inclusive in teacher preparation programs that leave educators without culturally-engaging pedagogies to engage bilingual ELs in learning (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). One example was training that demonstrated the use of visual representations and further explanations for concepts and terms that required additional clarification for students whose primary language was not English. In this study, the researcher identified bilingual Latino ELs as students who had previously taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL provides the measurement of English proficiency for non-English speakers. The criterion score for the ELs included a minimum Internet score of 80, or a paper-based score of 550, to assure that a possible lack of engagement was not primarily due to not understanding the language. Previous studies demonstrate how to generate engagement for ELs in elementary and secondary schools that
involved CRP as a means of addressing the language issue. The need for conscious efforts to increase engagement of EL college students continue to come to the attention of educators as a significant area for research development (Cole et al., 2016; Gay, 2013; Han et al., 2014; Quaye & Harper, 2015).

The theory of CRP provided the conceptual framework for this study. Introduced by Ladson-Billings (1994) with support by Gay (1995), CRP fosters the significance of culture in the academic, emotional, social, and political lives of students. Gay (1995, 2010) emphasized how the prior experiences of students along with their cultural knowledge provided the relevancy in students’ learning, and Ladson-Billings (1994) contributed the relevancy of culture in the teaching and learning constructs to produce intellectual empowerment for students.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, as identified in the K–12 classroom, includes the mutual understanding of the value of culture for students, the faculty’s cultural literacy, and cultural curricula and targeted strategies to empower students individually and collectively (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This study on the engagement of bilingual Latino undergraduate ELs explored areas of CRP in higher education classrooms to uncover what practices they described as influencing their engagement. The elements of CRP connect to the participants’ culture.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs regarding their engagement in the higher education classroom. Specifically, this study explored their perceptions regarding the factors that influence their engagement in the classroom, as well as how they describe their engagement. Additionally, this study explored how CRP played a role in Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom.
Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study.

RQ1: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement?

RQ2: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement?

RQ3: How does Culturally Responsive Pedagogy play a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

The increase of ELs in the higher education environment demonstrated a rise in the significance of higher education institutions prioritizing the provision of equity for students (Han et al., 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). This study focused attention on the perspectives of bilingual Latino ELs regarding their engagement in the classroom (Cole et al., 2016). Due to limited research on CRP in higher education regarding Latino ELs, the study warranted the exploration into the perspective of classroom engagement for Latino ELs.

The experiences of the students contributed to the knowledge base of engagement for ELs. Analysis of student responses led this researcher to discover the role that CRP plays in bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of classroom experiences (Cole et al., 2016). Higher education institutions may benefit from learning from the ELs’ perspectives on what factors contribute to their engagement. The influence may result in an increase in faculty awareness and a deeper understanding of CRP for EL undergraduates.

Phenomenology was used in this study to understand the lived experiences of bilingual ELs in the college classroom. The specific perspectives of those who are Latino EL college
students offered validity into participant insight on the phenomenon of engagement. van Manen (1990) confirmed that a phenomenological study provided the perspective of the common experiences of several individuals through a shared phenomenon.

**Definitions of Terms**

The related literature provided the specific terminology used to describe the key constructs of this study, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), engagement in the classroom, English Learners (ELs), lived experiences, multicultural education, the theory of CRP, and the strategies of CRP as they related to the engagement in the higher education classroom of EL undergraduates. Specific to this study, this researcher interpreted the terms as listed below:

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.** Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is an approach to instruction where educators culturally develop students intellectually by giving a voice to the EL undergraduate student in the classroom to express perspectives that represent contributions from their backgrounds and cultural histories in the context of the teaching. Teachers using the approach develop EL students socially in a setting that offers diverse students’ interactions to gain an appreciation and understanding of one another’s culture, and emotionally by the EL student feeling respected and appreciated for what cultural differences they bring to the classroom (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

**Engagement in the classroom.** Engagement in the classroom refers to the phenomenon that was explored, specifically, the engagement of Latino ELs in the higher education classroom. Their engagement is the feeling they have that there is the representation of their culture in the classroom and that there is an invitation to participate and share perspectives. There is also a respect for different dialects, expressions, and contributions of students’ native languages in the higher education classroom. Engagement includes how much passion the ELs
have toward the motivation to learn that results in their attention and interest (Jett et al., 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Moll & González, 2004).

**Latino English Learner undergraduates.** Latino English Learner (EL) undergraduates particular to this study are the individual college students attending one private university, age 19 to 21, whose native language is Spanish. Latino EL undergraduate perspectives helped to fill in the gap in the literature on engagement for this traditional age group and ethnicity.

**Lived experiences.** Lived experiences in this study is the exploration of and the understanding of the experiences that concern the phenomenon of engagement of Latino EL undergraduates in the university classroom (Moustakas, 1994).

**Multicultural education.** Multicultural education involves contributions for educational reform that include plans that encompass equal opportunities for people from all backgrounds to achieve academically (Banks, 2013). In this study, it is related to cultural perspectives in the content delivery in higher education.

**Strategies of CRP.** The strategies of CRP that this study explored includes giving legitimacy to ELs’ lived experiences, linking students’ background and histories, and providing a voice for the student in the higher education classroom to express cultural values (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

**Theory of CRP.** The theory of CRP furthers the significance of culture in the academic, emotional, social, and political lives of students, and describes an understanding of diversity and appreciation of culture by teachers so that all students can reach their potential. In this study, the theory applied to ELs receiving the empowerment to learn in a culturally inclusive environment that made a connection to their lived experiences to help produce the phenomenon of engagement (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions. The following are assumptions made in the study. One of the assumptions was that all of the participants have a collective meaning from their lived experiences. Another assumption included all study participants responding genuinely to questions concerning actual experiences occurring in the classroom. Included was the assumption that all the participants provide answers to each question in the allotted time frame outlined in the study. Additionally, the assumption was that all of the participants review their responses for accuracy during the designated window of time for member checking.

Delimitations. The following delimitations pertain to the study. One of the study’s delimitations was having participants whose primary language is Spanish. Another delimitation included sophomore undergraduates who are 19 to 21 years of age. Additionally, a delimitation was to participants with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Internet score of 80, or a paper-based score of 550 in compliance with the college’s criterion for language proficiency. Lastly, there was the delimitation of the study occurred with students who participated for at least one semester in the Academic Success Center (ASC) at one university located in Texas.

Limitations. The transferability of this study was limited to similar populations of ELs who experience issues with engagement in the classroom. I had witnessed students not experiencing engagement in the classroom due to the lack of representation of their culture in the learning environment. I was aware of the potential for bias. To limit any bias, I represented the voices and experiences of the students who had experienced engagement issues through their responses in the interviews and journals. The use of purposeful sampling specified a small group of Latino EL participants who could share their perspectives on what influences their
engagement in the class setting. Therefore, there were no limitations of hearing the voice of the student.

**Chapter 1 Summary**

With the increase of EL undergraduates in higher education, the limitations of the use of cultural factors in teaching strategies led to struggles in achievement which focused the attention on the significance of engagement (Bunner, 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Wang, 2016). Undergraduate ELs amid a unique set of linguistic and cultural differences in the classroom required ongoing attention (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Researchers also identified that there was an issue of engagement for minority students in undergraduate higher education classrooms (Hall & Martin, 2013; Kahu, 2013; Quaye & Harper, 2015). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy theory developer, Ladson-Billings (1994), examined the principle that all students could learn within culturally diverse environments that promoted cultural identities for students to reach their potential. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was one approach to engaging ELs.

The basis of the conceptual framework of this study was the theory of CRP that included areas such as classroom practices relative to stimulating engagement through the use of primary language amongst peers to clarify an understanding of course concepts. Another example included relating family traditions and cultural values in the classroom setting relative to the subjects taught (Gay, 2013; Rychly & Graves, 2012). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasized the significance of culture for students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Engagement strategies for ELs included factors that addressed adaptations in classroom instruction specifically culturally inclusive teaching strategies (Banks, 2013; Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2008). The engagement of ELs was the focus of the current research, which involved Latino EL study participants in sharing factors that influenced their engagement
in the higher education classroom at one university. Therefore, there was a need to look at the issue of engagement for Latino ELs in higher education, specifically as it related to CRP as an approach to addressing the needs of undergraduates in the classroom. To provide a background for this study, further explored in Chapter 2, is the literature on engagement, ELs, Latino ELs, and CRP. The remaining chapters consist of Chapter 3, which includes the conducting of the study in detail. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings of this study. The final chapter, Chapter 5, offers a summary and discussion of the results as well as provides recommendations for further research on ELs and CRP.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Literature Review

English Learners entering higher education arrive on campuses each year bringing a variety of cultural perspectives and contributions to share. However, the opportunity to experience variances to traditionally accepted viewpoints in the classroom has been limited for students, leading to restraints in engagement for ELs (Moll & González, 2004). Patton (2016) shared that for centuries higher education has allowed for the sole teaching of the dominant culture’s perspective. At institutions across the United States, lecturing remains the predominant method of instruction while students may require different approaches to relate to the content. “The voice of the voiceless” cries out for pedagogical delivery to include respect for minorities’ historical stories (Chang, 2013, p. 348). Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) emphasized that minority student perspectives in higher education are essential to creating the transition to the inclusive classroom.

The use of pedagogical practices, such as CRP as a means to develop cultural awareness, was a critical factor in advancing minority student engagement to lead to academic and social goals (Han et al., 2014). Minority student participation in the pedagogical process created an impact on the focus to what was useful and worthwhile to the minority student community (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The use of CRP supports professors in developing instructional methods that promote cultural pride and emphasizes minority contributions to society, as well as foster participation in the classroom (Han et al., 2014). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is reviewed as substantial in leading the emergence of culturally significant curricula to build a learning community of cultural appreciation and representation (Fitchett, Starker, & Salyers, 2012). The opportunity for Latino ELs to describe influencing factors of classroom engagement
relative to CRP is an element to consider as a contribution toward an all-inclusive learning environment.

The study topic encompasses viewpoints of sophomore undergraduate Latino ELs regarding factors that influence their engagement in the higher education classroom. Multicultural education research in higher education has acknowledged the necessity of increasing institutional awareness of the engagement for minority students (Quaye & Harper, 2015). One approach that addresses this engagement of minority students is CRP, which guides educators’ support of the development of minority students’ pride in their heritage to achieve educational empowerment. Educators following CRP seek to build relationships with culturally diverse students (Jett et al., 2016). A description of CRP includes a student-centered method of instruction that provides ELs the opportunity to express perspectives concerning contributions from their backgrounds in the classroom (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992). CRP explains the phenomenon of engagement for ELs and provides the basis to extend the research to explore further the research problem of Latino ELs’ engagement in the higher education classroom.

A significant relationship exists between pedagogical practices in higher education and the influence on minority student engagement (Hall & Martin, 2013). The Culturally Responsive Theory (CRT) emphasizes that some professors are unfamiliar with how to transform culturally responsive teaching strategies into inclusive modes of instruction and collaboration, thus identifying a need for faculty training in these practices (Jackson, 2015). The importance of knowing how to engage ELs in the classroom is a primary factor in influencing pedagogy change. Providing the opportunity for ELs to have a voice in the learning environment is a critical element that affects engagement. Cook-Sather et al. (2014) stressed that the unique student perspectives regarding engagement and learning warranted a demonstration of
responsiveness of professors to undergraduates’ insights for inclusion in the revision of teaching approaches.

ELs necessitate the ability to relate to the educational environment to understand and apply the academic content in their pursuit of academic and life goals. CRP offers a classroom setting inclusive of culture and knowledge where students self-identify within the academic context (Cole, David, & Jiménez, 2016). Students’ life experiences influence a deeper understanding of the educational content (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 1994). This is the basis of the creation of ELs’ engagement.

Advancing strategies to address the engagement of those whose first language is not English requires a revision of classroom instruction at all levels (Phung, 2017). Multicultural education, which endorses an environment that influences achievement for ELs, includes a variety of facets. The use of multiple languages to share the perspectives of students in the institution, coupled with the components of culture, and inclusive teaching strategies, allows for the course of study, curricula, and instructional materials to create the building blocks for classroom engagement (Banks, 2013). Preparation of instructors for CRP implementation strengthens the relationship between students and the teacher with cultural appreciation and respect (McDonald, Bowman, & Brayko, 2013). The heightened attention of higher education institutions on minority student achievement focuses on the role that culture plays in the successful delivery of instruction (Chang, 2016). Attention to the voice of the student has risen as a significant factor to consider for uncovering solutions to student achievement (Bunner, 2017). The voice of the student represents considering students’ perspectives on issues according to life experiences and histories (Chang, 2013).
The problem of engagement for Latino ELs in the classroom demonstrates the need to investigate this issue. The perspectives of Latino ELs can provide clarity on the factors that engage them. The potential role of CRP for Latino ELs in the higher education classroom warrants further research in particular to its possible influence on engagement. Support for ELs requires alignment with CRP practices to create engagement in the learning environment (Beal & Rudolph, 2015). Linguistic and cultural differences represent two issues ELs face in their efforts to participate or become involved in the higher education classroom (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). The necessary steps to resolve these issues requires instructors to focus on culturally engaging factors to teach a diverse group of students with a variety of cultural qualities and languages, specific to this study (Han et al., 2014).

Though many studies have focused on CRP as it relates to the engagement of African American undergraduates in the United States (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012; Frye & Vogt, 2010; Hall & Martin, 2013), limited research had been conducted specifically on CRP to engage Latino ELs in higher education. Therefore, this study contributes to the essential information for addressing this issue. Latino EL undergraduates express their perspectives on engagement in the classroom. This study includes the literature review which examined the topics of CRP as the conceptual framework, engagement in the higher education classroom, ELs, and Latino ELs that built an argument for the gap in the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The issue of engagement initially emerged from multicultural education research. The purpose of multicultural education is to provide diverse students an opportunity to experience equality in the educational environment (Banks, 2013). A significant aspect of multicultural education is the basis for the conceptual framework of this study, the theory of CRP. CRP
validates the importance of culture to the academic lives of students (Ladson-Billings, 2011a).

Other components that outline the attributes of CRP include the emotional well-being of students in the classroom, as well as strength in the development of social lives (Gay, 2000, 2010). Prior lived experiences joined with cultural knowledge allows students to streamline the relevancy of learning (Gay, 2000, 2010). The intention is to produce a cultural relevance for intellectual empowerment for students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014). Researchers identified commonalities of CRP as support of cultural identity, support of language that depended on students’ heritage, as well as the identification of students’ cultural strengths (Cole et al., 2016; Gay, 2010; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Nieto, 2010).

The role of CRP is to support the achievement of diverse students through the provision of an environment that accentuates cultural appreciation where students prepare their new learning with culturally significant prior experiences. The learner-centered approach in the classroom strengthens student achievement through the inclusiveness of cultural contributions (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, as identified in the K–12 classroom, combines the shared understanding of the educator and student regarding the value of culture. Other factors include the faculty’s cultural literacy to help guide the relevancy of the classroom environment through the meaningful use of culturally rich curriculum.

**Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

The theory of CRP encompasses engagement through the implementation of instructional practices that allow ELs to experience personal and cultural characteristics in the college setting (McDonald et al., 2013). Institutional settings where the faculty develop an appreciation for diversity and are mindful of students’ needs to practice their cultural traditions, such as language, dress, communication styles, and customs can open doors to an increase to student engagement
in the institutional setting (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The following review of the research and methodological literature describes the importance of emphasizing the cultural values of ELs to promote their engagement. Lastly, the literature outlines both the significance and limitations of current practices offering engagement for minorities, specifically Latino ELs in higher education.

**Engagement.** Engagement in higher education has a variety of meanings to researchers and faculty. Some view engagement through the lens of the students’ socioeconomic status and the influence it has on student attrition rates (Farr-Wharton, Charles, Keast, Woolcott, & Chamberlain, 2018). Others base the student’s achievement around surrounding factors and interpret engagement as a response to cultural respect and identity, associated with the theory of CRP (Han et al., 2014). Another element of the meaning of engagement is through practices that instructors or lecturers enfold in the classroom to build a relationship with students in the learning context (Farr-Wharton et al., 2018). In this study, engagement included an invitation from instructors to students to contribute and share perspectives coinciding with the respect for dialects, expressions, and contributions of their native language (Moll & González, 2004). Engagement demonstrates how much attention, interest, or passion the ELs have had toward the motivation to learn (Jett et al., 2016; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Moll & González, 2004).

Renowned researchers agree that a variety of factors promoted engagement (Banks, 2013; Gay, 2013). Over decades, the development of practices that meet individuals’ needs have attributed to enabling engagement through CRP in the K–12 setting. Examples include the emphasis on student values, language, and traditions (Gay, 2013; Rychly & Graves, 2012). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy produces a path to individual needs and creates an inclusive setting for all learners in the same classroom. Gay (2002) shared the value of CRP by teaching the cultural characteristics of ethnically diverse students. The inclusion of their experiences and
perspectives added to the effectiveness. The use of the students’ culture and experiences represent practical ways to promote higher learning outcomes through practices that aligned student interest and identification with the subject content (Gay, 2002). For example, if biology is the subject area ELs are studying than the contributions from minority scientists can open avenues that engage students in the learning. People from students' cultural group influenced student engagement (Gay, 2002, 2013).

The use of measuring tools to judge effective engagement practices include an example in the study by Gunuc and Kuzu (2015). The researchers developed a scale to measure student engagement quantitatively during classes and also on the campus. The use of six factors was shown to increase the faculty’s ability to employ practices that accentuated the culture and regard of students. The factors included a sense of belonging; peer relationships; faculty relationships; cognitive engagement; behavioral engagement; and valuing (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015).

More studies on language and ELs are typically in K–12 or postgraduate research (Banks, 2013; Cole et al., 2016; Jett et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011a). Specifically, regarding research on ELs, there is a concentration at the K–12 levels to determine what steps are needed to assist students in adapting to the learning environment (Banks, 2013; Gay, 2013). Chang (2013) proposed that one of the solutions to support ELs are instructors who allow students to participate in a learning environment with cultural appreciation and the opportunity to share their viewpoints with others.

In a study involving postgraduate students, Mukminin and McMahon (2013) presented evidence of the necessity of ELs’ receipt of CRP practices to assist language development. Another necessary aspect was the respect toward cultural values as critical to experience engagement to encourage participation in the graduate level classroom. The purpose of the study
was to explore the academic experiences of a group of Indonesian doctoral students during their enrollment in an American graduate program. Data collection included the use of a demographic survey, followed by a semistructured interview. The investigation included a phenomenological approach that focused on understanding the lived experiences of twelve Indonesian students. International students demonstrated struggles similar to diverse language learners who lived in the United States (Mukminin & McMahon, 2013). The researchers discovered that learning problems result from cultural, language and communication difficulties that affect student engagement in the academic environment (Mukminin & McMahon, 2013). Other researchers attribute student engagement to a particular culturally responsive pedagogical practice, active learning, to strengthen learning outcomes (Smith et al., 2015).

In one study, the reform-oriented pedagogy demonstrated how active learning was influencing a college’s diverse student body (Smith et al., 2015). The researchers observed the professor who posed questions to individual groups working together in a postsecondary remedial mathematics classroom. Directly following, the team shared the findings with the entire class. When differing results occurred within the variety of groups, then each side presented arguments outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the solutions to the others. Students worked together to defend their answers, while the professor inserted the applicability to the mathematical principle. Students demonstrated an increase in achievement results due to experiences of improvement in justification skills during their responses. Also, during the sessions, students engaged in active learning enriched their application skills of the concepts (Smith et al., 2015). An example is movement away from lectures about mathematical concepts. The change in the teaching style allowed for student interactions with opportunities to discuss the application of mathematical principles and vocabulary. Instructors recognized the consideration
of active learning and participation as vital to influencing minority student engagement in a subject area with previous limitations of success (Smith et al., 2015).

**English Learners.** The literature makes a case for the significance of engagement of ELs. Johnston and Karafotias (2016) conducted a study with limited English-speaking Asian college students and discovered that while delivering a collection of library management courses that lectures were not successful for transferring knowledge to the ELs. Thus, the researchers explored ways of how to bring superior learning outcomes for diverse students. The exploration process included an investigation of the ways in which students create meaning from learning. During the search, course developers utilized new methods to assist ELs in constructing meaning. The participants’ limited English language proficiency negatively impact the ability to recall information. Therefore, the ELs performed better with smaller amounts of input. As a result, researchers provided students with the opportunity to view short films about how to set up a library and catalog literature. Students reviewed the film and various sections to better understand the content. The ability to hear the content several times allowed the students to increase mastery. Seeing what the words referred to in the film helped to further vocabulary development, as shown by assessment results and students’ abilities to perform library duties efficiently (Johnston & Karafotias, 2016). Meaning for ELs changed over time with the introduction of new experiences that influenced language acquisition.

The flipped classroom strategy produces several positive outcomes for both instructors and students. The ability to view sections of the film multiple times helps students to learn content. Diverse learners benefit from the ability to see and hear course material as many times as necessary. Johnston and Karafotias (2016) stated that the flipped classroom model also produced positive outcomes for the library instructors in that it allowed more time for instructors
to spend with students during face-to-face instruction. The library faculty taught and demonstrated to the EL students how to work with other students throughout the course. The combination of new methods for working with ELs by the instructors allowed the diverse students to successfully progress through the coursework (Johnston & Karafotias, 2016). Modern teaching tools in the study provided the ELs with access and training with the purpose of promoting job skills in future contexts.

Daniels, K. Billingsley, J. Billingsley, Long, and Young (2015) presented the integration of service learning to encourage engagement to transpire in higher education for minority students. The data from the study demonstrated underrepresented students valuing civic responsibility. Service learning aligned with resiliency and college persistence (Daniels et al., 2015). Opportunities to learn outside of the norm of traditional lecture-based classes benefited minority students in significant ways. Non-traditional strategies enable peers with shared cultural traditions and the same primary language to work and learn together (Johnston & Karafotias, 2016). Johnston and Karafotias (2016) determined that ELs increase educational engagement by connecting what they know from the past with what they are currently learning.

**Language acquisition.** In another study, Bamford et al. (2015) shared data revealing the differences concerning the students’ communication with each other and with their professors, due to limits in English language acquisition. The distinctions varied among native English speakers and those who were non-native speakers. The review revealed that overall ELs must improve in resilience to assist in engagement toward achieving goals. In practice, between year one and year three in the university, the ELs’ attention moved toward completion of assignments in place of taking steps toward preparation to acquire curricular knowledge (Bamford et al., 2015). Collaborative work with people from other cultures was more likely to occur with native
English speakers than with non-native speakers (Bamford et al., 2015). Therefore, the encouragement of interactions with others in the college environment is a beneficial factor for ELs to experience.

**Voice in the classroom.** Chang (2013) conducted a nine-year study in Southern California that included students in grades six through twelve. The objective was to help a cohort of inner-city students to make sense of their educational experiences over time. Concepts in the study surrounded the areas of pedagogy, sociocultural learning, and community. The study focused on how community engagement transpired for multi-ethnic ELs in and out of the classroom (Chang, 2013). The discovery of educational empowerment came though the telling of students’ counter-stories that described the experiences that held them back as minorities. Dixson (2004) proposed value in counter-storytelling through revealing and critiquing dialogues by others perpetuating racial stereotypes. The ability to speak out was seen as an approach to counter ideologies taught without the minority perspective in the learning environment. Chang (2013) followed two students, one Asian, and the other multi-racial, Asian and Mexican, in and out of classroom settings and learned about the experiences of the ELs regarding language, cultural, and perception differences when sharing their stories. The study confirmed the use of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) characteristic of students having a voice in the classroom as significant to student engagement (Chang, 2013). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was not a focus of this study.

The result of the use of CRP practices by instructors in classrooms provide ELs with knowledge through reciprocal teaching and learning, which allowed additional perspectives to join the learning environment (Krashen, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Educators’ use of reciprocal teaching assists students in learning from text through collaboration between the teacher and
Students have the opportunity to practice four primary skills including summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting, which teachers use to support the learner in comprehension and academic achievement (Krashen, 1985). Language support from staff significantly assists ELs in developing confidence that leads to academic progress in the classroom.

Cheeseman and Gapp (2012) demonstrated the significance of giving voice to the students for authentic communication through American Indian storytelling. While addressing academic concerns for American Indian students, the qualitative study revealed the importance of giving voice to the students in the classroom. This provides opportunity for engagement and learning in the educational environment relative to the students’ culture. The study entailed Rooted Grounded Theory as a qualitative approach to obtain meaning from the 22 university participants. Interviews from the education class of prospective teachers of American Indian students provided the data in the study. The course helped the students to implement storytelling into the pedagogical practice. The data were from written responses of the participants after each class that provided the two researchers results to code. One of the difficulties that the researchers identified dealt with the data not appearing inferential (Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012). The coding and note-taking allowed for more opportunities for critical analysis to occur in the study to form viable input from storytelling in educational environments (Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012).

Retention of primary language and culture. Supporting instructional practices that focus on engaging immigrant students is a primary concern in encouraging the engagement of ELs. College level students feel apprehension about cultural differences. ELs in the college setting also feel apprehension about how peers and instructors perceive and react to accents.
Staff and students whose classroom practices lack cultural responsiveness potentially limit the effectiveness of collaborative learning. Participants that practice inclusiveness within group settings along with purposeful strategies of respect help the immigrant student feel more comfortable while participating (Allen et al., 2012).

Allen et al. (2012) discussed immigrant students’ struggles with identity relating to both culture and location. Immigrant students desire to identify with their birthplace while working to assimilate into the new culture. When instructors and peers show respect and practice awareness, immigrant students increase engagement and develop cultural pride. In essence, immigrant students learn to embrace the new culture without losing touch with the first one (Allen et al., 2012). Allen et al. (2012) provided valuable insight regarding the importance of the immigrant students’ primary language and its role in the development of the students’ sense of pride. Allowing these students to use their primary language in the new country’s educational setting impacts the frequency and quality of their classroom engagement. The engagement occurred with the faculty exercising CRP practices that provided ELs the retention of their cultural identities, coupled with cultural appreciation and value in the teaching and learning process.

At the University of Hawaii, the teacher preparation program offered candidates CRP training. Pre-service teachers learned to integrate the basic tenets of CRP into the classroom while showing respect for cultural traditions and language differences (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Faculty integrated Hawaiian cultural practices through reciprocal-relational teaching. The dual roles of the instructor as the sage and the guide in Hawaiian tradition equipped both the teacher and the learner with a reciprocal relationship (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). The researchers
determined that the 53 spoken languages in Hawaii support the necessity for cultural integration and language support to endorse the roots of Hawaiian traditions (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016).

Various constituents influenced Medgar Evers, a historically black college, to implement steps toward more inclusive practices. Faculty developed instructional strategies promoting respect for all students, including their diverse languages spoken in the college setting (Göppert & Springirth, 2016). With the increase in multi-ethnic student enrollment, the faculty and administration at Medgar Evers recognized the importance of inclusiveness among all students with variances of cultures and languages entering the institution (Göppert & Springirth, 2016). Therefore, recognition of the significance of this to meet learners’ needs had crossed into new college environments.

**Intercultural competence.** Riley, Bustamante, and Edmonson (2016) introduced the concept of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence signifies a person's capacity to relate to those from diverse cultures through making meaningful connections (Riley et al., 2016). Riley et al. (2016) measured the quantitative phase of the study by employing the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The research team integrated a cross-sectional correlation design for investigating the connections between self-reported levels of student engagement and intercultural competence. The researchers reported how the two coincided through identifying collaboration and service learning as applicable hands-on methods that helped to build student engagement using intercultural competence (Riley et al., 2016). The researchers also acknowledged student responses through the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as significant stages of intercultural competence that related to college experiences. The investigators used selected student samples to demonstrate scores ranging from the highest to the lowest quartiles of the intercultural development continuum. The highest
results signify strengths in the college environment through the willingness of students to engage with culturally different students. Therefore, suggested activities contributed to intercultural competence in the college setting (Riley et al., 2016). Each phase of the study provided support from the investigators for the current research regarding engagement.

**Latino English Learners.** Burgos-Cienfuegos, Vasquez-Salgado, Ruedas-Gracia, and Greenfield (2015) conducted a qualitative study examining degree attainment rates for Latino students. Specifically, the study explored why degree attainment rates were lower for Latino students than students from other ethnic groups. The purpose of the research was to discover if cross-cultural conflicts in the college environment would occur due to the collectivistic values of Latino students with the individualistic values of multiethnic students on campus. Collectivistic values include such aspects as respecting elders, honoring parents, politeness, and maintaining social order (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). Cultural values are significant to the Latino culture and may influence how Latinos perceive interactions in the classroom environment. Using four focus groups of three to seven students along with group interviews and questionnaires, the researchers discovered that there were cultural barriers which affected college transition for Latino students. Part of the investigators’ discoveries was the value system differences between the United States higher education system and Latino families.

Through the results of the study at UCLA, Burgos-Cienfuegos et al. (2015) identified variance in Latino student academic achievements with university social constructs. The Latino students’ prioritization of socialization with peer groups resulted from family influences of social approaches. Students from predominantly European backgrounds preferred individualized socialization. As a result of the differences, Latino student perceptions of the college atmosphere
were foreign to their cultural norms. The definition of the word *engage* in this study was relative to participating in the act of conflict resolution (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015).

In Latino families, collectivistic values also signify close family relationships as the focal point of social life with education occurring primarily informally in the home (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). Whereas, in U.S. educational institutions, the individual value system prevailed (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). Differences in individualistic reactions with group reactions were peer-to-peer value conflicts between Latino individuals and others due to the variances in the value systems. The study included questionnaires that students participated in to share what steps to take in the proposed situations. After the questions, individuals involved in the group discussions helped to identify reactions to the peer value conflicts. The identified reactions assisted the researchers in acknowledging the differences between the Latino students who valued cooperative interactions to the more individualistic non-Latino students. The results of the study showed 57% of the students experiencing value conflicts among peers (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). Another finding was that Latino students’ achievement scores had an adverse effect due to the individualistic indicators of success in U.S. schools. Latino students’ social conflicts were occurring due to cultural differences. The investigators in the study demonstrated the significance of seeking out steps to engage a variety of cultures in the classroom through practices that met the needs of all of the learners in that setting (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015).

*Service learning.* The value of culture extends through the importance of care for the community through service learning. As an extension of the classroom to raise the retention rates of Latinos, methods included the bridging of classroom knowledge with active community service in association with cultural values (Gilroy, 2012). The research study involved the
investigators exploring connections and networking for Latino students for the purpose of improving class attendance. Strong community relationships inspired ELs toward degree attainment as well as career direction after graduation (Gilroy, 2012).

In this study, service learning involved the Latino student reaching out to his or her community to contribute to community programs as change agents, which directly coincided with cultural priorities having value with a connection to social justice (Gilroy, 2012). Contacts through service learning included meeting people in the community in need of tutoring, or elderly care, as well as getting involved in public service issues that dealt with safety, community improvement, and energy resources (Gilroy, 2012). Service learning in the curricula included avenues for students to make a difference in their communities, learn new skills and promote social connections.

The study included service learning with a connection to older students and new careers. The Latino students formed relationships with community leaders to assist the mature students in establishing links to employment opportunities. Assistance to the disadvantaged from the community created a connection with the college by receiving guidance from the volunteers. Duties included helping to fill out college applications and look for financial aid. The variety of involvement through service learning contributed to participants’ successful academic and career outcomes in the new areas of interest (Gilroy, 2012). Engagement stemmed beyond the four walls of the collegiate classroom into the community that the Latino students associated their lives with to plan for renewal in their hometown. Thus, community needs led to finding engagement in the classroom with and without walls.

Resilience and survival. Campa (2013) conducted a study that included interviews, observations, and focus groups of five Mexican-American students attending Camino Real
Community College in the southwest region of the United States. The three females and two male study participants came from difficult life circumstances and made plans to overcome the past and continue with college studies to implement life changes. Attending community college instead of a university was due to financial, educational, and personal setbacks in family life. The location of the community college proximity to the home also influenced the decision.

The focus was on survival for Latino students, as a manner in which to evoke change by taking deliberate steps to alter present circumstances and change future outcomes. Survival stemmed from the necessity of overcoming the family’s previous adverse conditions of not having food to feed the family, and the need to use problem-solving and creativity to continue forward (Campa, 2013). Survival also included having family obligations that prevented completing college, with Latinos having low rates of degree attainment (Campa, 2013). The research provided valuable background information about first generation Mexican-American students who came from families with no previous college experiences. Such students require particular attention for engagement in the higher education environment. A focus on classroom engagement promotes degree completion among these diverse students.

Consideration of the culture of the Mexican-American students is necessary to overcome the requirements for learning individual work instead of relying on family support. An analysis of the data led to an understanding that resilience is a motivating factor coming from the family background, wisdom, and pride. The belief and value systems of America, in place of an emphasis on cultural pride and family knowledge, affect Latino students’ assimilation into the college environment (Campa, 2013). Thus, using the lens of CRP could assist in defining a problem to conduct further research to investigate engaging practice for Latino students to consider the pursuit of college completion.
**College experience comparisons.** Kim, Rennick, and Franco (2014) conducted a quantitative study on Latinos in higher education in the social setting of highly selective institutions. The purpose was to discover what affects Latino students in the college environment. The research revealed through surveys feedback on how Latino students engage in college environments where they can express themselves. In addition to the collegiate setting with faculty support helping to foster motivation, Latino students’ backgrounds influenced their college outcomes. Factors explored included academic and civic engagement, as well as student life. The findings showed that Latino students feel they do not have the liberty to voice opinions like their Asian and White counterparts (Kim et al., 2014). The research did not include an exploration of CRP as a possible influence on outcomes, as well as not using a qualitative approach.

**Review of Methodological Issues**

The body of literature disclosed that methodological issues exist concerning the approaches to research for support for engagement of Latino ELs through the lens of CRP in higher education. The extensive literature on CRP primarily reported on the significance of CRP regarding minorities in the K–12 environment (Banks, 2013; Bunner, 2017; Cole et al., 2016; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2011b; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004; Nieto, 2000). Though there were studies on CRP with ELs in higher education, there remained a gap with limited studies in the literature regarding engagement through the lens of CRP (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). There posed a need for further research on the perspectives of the Latino ELs that included their lived experiences (Daniels et al., 2015; Han et al., 2014; Johnston & Karafotias, 2016). Therefore, the significance of a particular study in this area is valid for continued research.
Engagement. An analysis of the studies in the literature review showed the existence of research that included aspects of engagement regarding minorities, ELs, and Latino ELs (Allen et al., 2012; Campa, 2013; Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012; Hall & Martin, 2013; Kim et al., 2014; Riley et al., 2016; Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Though Latino EL studies existed in association with aspects of engagement, a problem existed in the literature in that one study to date utilized a phenomenological approach to examine engagement from the Latino EL undergraduates’ perspective in the higher education classroom (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015).

English Learners. Though research has been conducted on ELs in higher education and included engagement with CRP practices, there are few phenomenological studies found on undergraduate ELs in higher education that examined engagement through CRP from the perspective of the students (Bamford et al., 2015; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013; Riley et al., 2016; Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). There is a need to add depth to the literature of engagement for ELs through student perspectives.

Latino English Learners. One study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to discover the perspectives of Latino ELs regarding engagement, through the lens of CRP, in undergraduate higher education (Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015). Other studies revealed that the engagement discussion was of concern throughout the review (Bamford et al., 2015; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013; Riley et al., 2016; Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Phenomenological studies specifically on the engagement of undergraduate Latino ELs regarding their perspectives needed further research.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Upon investigation, three themes emerged from the body of identified research related to CRP. First, a common theme is the need to support the culture of students in the classroom. Gay
(2013) shared that CRP frames culturally relevant teaching through the support of students’ cultural identity. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes contributions that each diverse student offers. Proposing a respect for culture and promoting cultural awareness and contributions engages minority students in the educational setting. Classroom practices that develop individuals’ requirements for learning inspires engagement through the CRP characteristics of the respect for cultural values, family language, and cultural traditions (Gay, 2013; Rychly & Graves, 2012).

Secondly, the literature supports emphasis on respect for diversity in the classroom. Students have the opportunity to express viewpoints and share culturally relevant aspects of their lives to help cement cultural pride relative to the students’ background, ethnicity, race, and lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2011a). Chang (2013) reiterated how EL engagement develops through the educational empowerment that established through the use of counter-stories in the classroom. Having a voice allows ELs to express the lived experiences that have held minorities back over time. The opportunity occurred to share the minority perspective on historical aspects to shape the classroom engagement experience through inclusion (Chang, 2013).

Cheeseman and Gapp (2012) emphasized the importance of opportunities for participants to have a voice so that they could talk freely and express anything they felt was important about contributing to the education of American Indian students. Having the discussion opportunity allowed students to express concerns about the rules on assessment and classroom pedagogies in K–12 education that may have prevented the educators from meeting the needs of students. The primary strength of the study was in how the researchers were giving the participants a voice in expressing their concerns. In addition, having the opportunity to practice the pedagogy of
storytelling themselves may have influenced more points of view from the minority students to make a difference in the educational environment.

The third predominant theme is the support of student language in the classroom. Diverse students’ cultures consist of languages that express the culture and background of students and required its use to provide cultural relevance for the student to the educational content (Banks, 2013). At the University of Hawaii, teacher preparation program faculty trained teacher candidates on how to integrate CRP practices that emphasized the respect for cultural traditions and language that engaged students in the classroom (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Allen et al. (2012) demonstrated how the integration of student immigrants’ primary language in the educational setting solicited pride to promote engagement in the new environment.

**Engagement.** Two primary themes emerged regarding engagement in the literature. The first theme includes the use of students’ culture and experiences aligned with CRP to promote student identification with the curricular content (Gay, 2002). Historical contributions from minority groups shared in the classroom could lead to student engagement through the connection with their own culture and values (Gay, 2013, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2004).

Secondly, the theme emerged in the research findings that there is a link to engagement with certain culturally responsive pedagogical practices, such as active learning, that provides ELs the opportunity to participate in groups and develop reasoning skills in the classroom setting (Smith et al., 2015). Johnston and Karafotias (2016) revealed that the use of the flipped classroom allows ELs to experience more time to practice skills and develop vocabulary about the content of the course. Also, the third approach was reciprocal teaching and learning employed by Krashen (1985) that aided ELs through learning from text through collaborative
efforts among the student and teacher. Support for comprehension resulted from reciprocal teaching practices in the K–12 setting (Krashen, 1985).

**English Learners.** In the literature on ELs, the researchers presented three themes. The first is the desire for the retention of language and culture that is prevalent with ELs due to living in a new cultural and physical environment. The students do not want to lose the identification they have with their home country including the customs and language (Mukminin & McMahon, 2013). Allen et al. (2012) offered the ELs’ perspectives on the significance of the continued use of one’s primary language to endorse pride in the new country. Immigrant perspectives emphasize the desire not to lose what valuable attributes their culture offers to them by replacing it with another. Inclusion is critical to the immigrants’ new status (Campa, 2013).

The second theme is the effect of language differences on ELs’ willingness to participate with other cultural groups in the learning environment. Native speakers seek out different cultures to work with while ELs remain separate (Bamford et al., 2015). Allen et al. (2012) shared how ELs had the desire to acclimate to the new environment without losing touch with their native culture and language. The consciousness of the differences in their accents, pronunciation of words, and other verbal distinctions motivated the EL students to seclude themselves in the learning environment, making new associations more difficult to initiate in the learning environment (Allen et al., 2012). Resilience is necessary to overcome the feelings of disassociation as a solution, instead of participation. Conscious efforts by the instructor to include ELs to feel safe in the environment are factors to consider moving toward student engagement. The results from the Riley et al. (2016) study included the significance of recognizing areas that related to cultural sensitivity to others in the college setting by
acknowledging the importance of appreciating all cultural contributions to the learning environment, which included language (Riley et al., 2016).

The third theme is the value systems of ELs from the Cheeseman and Gapp (2012) and the Rishel and Zuercher (2016) studies. The emphases were on the significance of culture to student engagement in the classroom. The importance of the educators’ use of CRP practices allowed the students to retain respect relative to their histories. Cheeseman and Gapp (2012) emphasized giving a voice to Indian perspectives using another viewpoint to illuminate the content. The Pacific Islanders in the Rishel and Zuercher (2016) study also required respect for their culture and language, which both evoked cultural pride. The values of the Islanders tied to the language through the use of expressions and vocabulary stemmed from Hawaiian history that provided meaning present-day to the students. Campa (2013) discussed the value of working together in the Latino culture and the resilience needed to overcome obstacles that tried to stop the achievement of goals. An understanding of the Latino culture in the college environment could help CRP practices to emerge that included family support and pride.

**Latino English Learners (ELs).** Two themes outlined the Latino EL research. The first theme emphasizes the analysis of the Latino EL that reveals the connection between both cultural values and traditions of the Latino culture (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015). To aid students in relating to the classroom experience, Campa (2013) reported the importance that educators know the cultural norms of the Latino student to adjust practices to allow the student to become a part of a collaborative learning environment. The researcher demonstrated how families collectively working influences the Latino in the classroom. The need was shown for collaboration to be in place in the college environment, which was an element of CRP. In the Burgos-Cienfuegos et al. (2015) study, cultural values defined the priorities of Latino ELs as differing with the culture of
the institution. Collective values represent the Latino culture, whereas, individualistic practices in the college setting do not align with the Latino ELs, therefore, leading to conflicts. Peer-to-peer negotiations need to develop to merge an understanding of cultural differences (Burgos-Cienfuegos et al., 2015).

The second theme included classroom practices that benefited Latino ELs to produce resiliency to meet their needs. The research by Gilroy (2012) emphasized the significance of service learning in alignment with the cultural values of the ELs to motivate each one to make a difference in the community. The resilience of the Latinos to participate in activities to build learning that equates with the importance of culture brought renewal (Gilroy, 2012). Through survival modes, the Latinos in junior college identify the needs of the Latino community, to use resilience to help one another achieve goals (Campa, 2013). The studies on Latino ELs demonstrate that engagement required specific strategies in place to service the needs of all students in the classroom.

Critique of Previous Research

The literature on the engagement of Latino ELs is limited. One study conducted did not focus on engagement specific to CRP practices in the higher education classroom and was from a quantitative approach (Kim et al., 2014). Another study which was qualitative and included Latino student perspectives in higher education did not cover EL aspects in the research questions (Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015). The study from Han et al. (2014) on CRP did not specifically relate to engagement of Latino ELs in higher education, thus leaving a gap to remain in the literature on that topic. Research on CRP to address classroom engagement practices has been conducted primarily in the K–12 realm (Banks, 2013; Cole et al., 2014; Gay, 2013, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Much of the engagement literature focuses on African-American
students and leaves a gap on research in that area for Latino ELs (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Hall & Martin, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014, 1994). Latino EL perspectives are not present in any of the studies.

Chapter 2 Summary

This review of the literature shows that ELs bring cultural perspectives and contributions to campuses across the country. With the ELs’ growth in enrollment, specific needs regarding challenges to engaging them occurred in the classroom. One approach to addressing those needs is CRP, which initially grew out of the multicultural education research (Banks, 2013; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy provides a theoretical framework for specific strategies for engagement in the classroom. In the CRP literature, researchers show that ELs need to be able to understand and culturally relate to the course content for engagement to occur in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Nieto, 2013). Therefore, the support to addressing those issues for ELs is possible through influence from CRP (Gay, 2013).

A synthesis of the literature emphasizes themes that includes research on engagement through the lens of CRP. Next, a critique informed the reader of gaps and limitations in research, leading individually to Latino ELs. Therefore, based on the gaps in the literature on CRP, engagement, ELs, and specifically Latino ELs there is a need to investigate Latino ELs’ perspectives to understand how they describe the factors that influence engagement for them and how they describe classroom engagement.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction to Chapter 3

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the lived experiences of sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino English Learners (ELs) in their classroom engagement. Specifically, this study explored undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions regarding how they describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement, as well as how they describe classroom engagement. The chapter connected the theoretical framework, research questions, and the selected qualitative research design. This researcher portrayed the data collection and analysis that coincided with the use of methods that provided ethical considerations and reliable measures in the study.

Research Questions

This phenomenological qualitative study was intended to understand ELs’ lived experiences as their experiences related specifically to higher education practices in the classroom associated with CRP. This study was seeking to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement?

RQ2: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe classroom engagement?

RQ3: How does CRP play a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom?

Purpose and Design for the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to describe the lived
experiences of bilingual Latino EL sophomore undergraduates regarding what influences their engagement in the higher education classroom. An acknowledgment of undergraduate ELs having a select set of linguistic and cultural differences required ongoing attention (Rishel & Zuercher, 2016). Researchers also identified that there was an issue of engagement for minority students in undergraduate higher education classrooms (Hall & Martin, 2013; Kahu, 2013; Quaye & Harper, 2015). Therefore, there was a need to look at the concern of engagement for ELs in higher education, specifically as it related to CRP as an approach to addressing the needs of bilingual Latino sophomore undergraduates in the classroom.

The researcher chose to conduct a qualitative study using a transcendental phenomenological approach. The use of the transcendental phenomenological method includes the phenomenon of human experiences for understanding study and awareness through qualitative research (Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological study, the researcher explores the perspective of the common experiences through a shared phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach that stems from Edward Husserl’s concept of epoché (Butler, 2016; Hanna, Wilkinson, & Givens, 2017; van Manen, 2014). Epoché is the ability of one to see phenomena by setting aside preconceptions of ideas. The results include the surfacing of the true meaning of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). It was through epoché that I, as the researcher, was able to receive the information from the study participants without corrupting their intentions (Butler, 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

The use of the transcendental phenomenological method involved setting aside personal experiences that allowed a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon to transpire (Moustakas, 1994). Two other possible research designs were explored to guide the study. Ethnography was under consideration due to its concentration on understanding shared beliefs and an effect on
cultural behaviors (Kempner, 2013). The study concentrated instead on the participants’ experiences as individuals, and the common factors that are relative to the phenomenon. Therefore, phenomenology was chosen. Another consideration for the design of this study was narrative research with the collection of experiences from the individual (Creswell, 2013). Narrative research, like phenomenology, was a qualitative approach and narrated a chronological account of life events or histories of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Transcendental phenomenology collected the experiences of life itself about the phenomenon with generally more data types that contributed to the analysis of the lived experiences. Chronological occurrences to tell a story was not necessary for the exploration. Therefore, there was not the use of the narrative approach in the study.

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the strategic importance of understanding the lived experiences of participants when trying to understand a phenomenon. In this study, it was important to give participants a voice to help elucidate what the influences were that engaged and affirmed sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs in a classroom environment. Interpreting bilingual Latino EL student lived experiences allowed for the contribution of the realities that occurred in their college classes to provide the basis for emphasizing what was necessary to understand how engagement transpired for this group of students. Kempner (2013) explained the identification of contributions through shared perspectives, which signified similar goals among diverse groups, common challenges, and shared theoretical perspectives.

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

Qualitative research collects extensive details about the individuals studied. In phenomenology, Dukes (1984) recommended a small sample. A small sample size entails a few individuals or locations of about five to 25 that accompanied a collection of extensive details.
about them while not using more samples that do not add additional results (Creswell, 2013). The planned research sample size was between eight to 12 undergraduate ELs, with a final sample size that consisted of nine participants. I used a purposeful sample. A purposeful sample, as explained by Patton (2015), is a sample made up of several individuals that were selected due to their common experiences that could elucidate the phenomenon.

The study site was a private liberal arts university, located in Texas with an undergraduate minority student population of approximately 2,100 students. Latino students represented the largest subgroup of that population approximating 850 students. McGlynn (2011) shared that the Latino population warrants “intentionality in institutional policy and practice” at institutions of higher education; they required “more than providing access by enrolling them; retention to degree attainment is critical” (p. 2). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) offered academic achievement through the pairing with cultural identity and heritage to attain the optimal classroom environment for higher education learning (Han et al., 2014). Therefore, the study focused on bilingual Latino ELs at a sophomore status. Sophomore EL participants had at least one year of the opportunity to experience engagement in the University classroom on which to base responses to the interview questions. In the United States, Latinos constituted 73% of 4.3 million ELs in the K–12 environment in the 2014–15 school year, leading to the enrollment of 37% of the high school graduating Latino population into postsecondary education in 2015 (National Center of Education Statistics, 2017). The Latino students’ responses to questions in this study regarding influencing factors that engage them and how they describe classroom engagement guided the researcher’s focus on how CRP played a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom.
The site was referred to as the University throughout this study. At the time of the study, the University had undergraduate divisions in Business, Education, Behavioral Sciences, Fine Arts, Humanities, Science, Mathematics, and others. There were approximately 3,000 undergraduate students, with a faculty to student ratio of one to 20. The Academic Success Center (ASC), a pseudonym, provides services to approximately 2,100 students at least once during a semester and was the chosen location for this study. The ASC had been open for five years, previously being a tutoring center. The center services all students who needed academic assistance, with specialized support for ELs. The program coordinators and academic coaches assisted students in tandem with the recommendations from the Academic Advisors (AA) and Faculty Advisors (FA). ELs primarily received assistance in writing skills, vocabulary development, study skills, and time management (B. Gonzalez, personal communication, November 30, 2017), a pseudonym.

Purposeful sampling was the means for recruiting study participants who were bilingual Latino EL sophomores, between 19 to 21 years of age, have used the ASC in their freshman year and could personally address the issue. Purposeful sampling involved intentionally selecting individuals who best provided the researcher with information regarding the research problem and central phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013). The selection of bilingual Latino ELs was due to the collective experience of learning English as a second language and receiving a higher education at an institution with English as the primary language of instruction. Bilingual students recruited for this study were those that met the study criteria in the ASC database. The ASC director sent an email invitation to prospective sophomore students who completed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) which measures the English proficiency of non-English speakers.
The participants entered the University with a minimum TOEFL Internet score of 80, or a paper-based score of 550, to assure that a possible lack of engagement was not primarily due to not understanding the language. Bilingual students possessed the mutual experience of learning a new language and possibly shared common factors that contributed to classroom engagement. The use of the ASC was due to the shared experiences of the students having a recognized need for assistance in coursework in their freshman year. As a sophomore, the EL participants had experienced at least one academic year of possible engagement in the University classroom that enabled them to respond to the interview probes.

Instrumentation

The study involved the use of four instruments. At each EL participant’s first meeting with the researcher at the ASC, the procedures of the study were explained followed by the receipt of the signed consent form. After the introductions, a paper-based demographic survey supplied information about participants’ enrollment status, age, ethnicity, country of origin, the current number of credits, score on the TOEFL, and first spoken language (see Appendix A). Next, an explanation of how to use Penzi website, a calendar of subsequent meetings along with the establishment of a pseudonym, email, and password. Immediately following was the use of the protocol of open-ended questions for the first of the multiple in-depth interviews (see Appendix B). At the finalization of the first interview, there was a review of the instructions on how to use the Penzi website to input reflective journaling in response to four prompts within the two-week period between the first and second interview (see Appendix C). The prompts solicited responses regarding support for student empowerment, the experience of recognition for cultural strengths, support for cultural identity, and support for language dependent on
participant heritage (Cole et al., 2016). The last interview transpired with the participants providing feedback regarding their perspectives on engagement associated with CRP (see Appendix D). The interview protocol contained questions that guided this researcher in answering the study questions after an analysis of the data.

First interview probes. The first interview probes related to motivational factors for engaging students (Burt, 2015). Based on the literature from Gay (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1992), culture was a significant factor that enfolded students in the learning process. Ladson-Billings (1994) determined that diverse students needed to offer perspectives in the classroom, and even when different ideas came forth from others, a healthy discourse of divergent thinking and expression improved learning outcomes for students. Furthermore, Han et al. (2014) determined that Culturally Responsive Pedagogies provided students the opportunity to express themselves in ways that represented their culture to enrich the educational process.

The next interview question highlighted the significance of respect for culture. Gay (2013) emphasized that the core tenet of CRP was to respect and respond to the cultural diversity inside of the classroom. Respect for diversity was a significant element of the framework that Chickering and Gamson (1987) developed for classroom engagement through the implementation of the pairing of connection between the interactions of professor and student for the differences each one contributed to the learning environment. Collaco (2017) promoted a safe-learning atmosphere that implemented respect for diverse talents and ways of learning.

The framing of the classroom environments to align with diverse, underserved students’ perspectives provided opportunities for professors to use the sharing of different viewpoints to empower or alienate students (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Question three allowed the bilingual Latino EL participants to examine whether opportunities existed to express differing opinions in
the classroom and whether the opportunity permitted engagement to transpire. Nuñez, Ramalho, and Cuero (2010) shared that pedagogical practices to promote equity were in response to the variances in students’ expressions, inclusive of cultural expression.

ELs’ ability to understand the content and explore new ideas in a safe environment constituted the necessity for pedagogies that were inclusive of active learning (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Interview question four, focused on the participants’ feedback about opportunities to work alongside others in the classroom during small group assignments or projects, and the effect on engagement. Valdés, Bunch, Snow, Lee, and Matos (2005) reported that values and norms of cultural groups passed down through the generations via language, and associations with those groups provided an identity for students through the provision of interactions.

**Second interview probes.** In the second interview, questions were asked of Latino ELs regarding their experiences in the higher education classroom. The students were asked questions that related directly to CRP. The first question in this interview focused on opportunities the Latino ELs had in the University classroom to share cultural traditions and values. Lucas and Villegas (2013) emphasized the interconnectedness of language, culture, and one’s identity. Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) suggested that the lack of sociocultural consciousness by educators led to the reliance on one’s values to make sense of students’ lived experiences, which may have led to misinterpretation. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy utilized students’ culture as a passage for learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The second question related to the provision of content vocabulary to assure student understanding in the classroom. Gay (2013) fortified that instruction was involving more than the conveyance of information; information required completeness and accuracy relative to student beliefs and values. Support in the classroom went beyond definitions in the content and
thrive on its applicability to diversity (Gay, 2013). The third question asked for the Latino ELs’ responses regarding visual representations during lessons to offer an understanding of course content. Learning objects in higher education are typically digital, and facilitate learning with a focus on the learning objective, followed by a practice activity, and concluding with an assessment (Metros & Bennett, 2004). Latino ELs shared if the use of objects existed as a tool in the classroom to increase understanding of concepts, and if it did, whether or not such assistance caused engagement.

The use of collaboration efforts from faculty that included partner-work, peer-to-peer learning, or discussions with others in the higher education classroom assisted ELs in discussions of the concepts with a focus on solutions to problems introduced in the lesson (Hei, Strijbos, Sjoer, & Admiraal, 2015). The interview participants shared about partner work, and if it occurred, the relevance to engagement in the classroom. In the last question, the participants shared other factors regarding engagement not addressed previously.

This phenomenological study used a demographic survey, journaling, and two individual in-depth interviews. The survey included the request for specific demographical information on the Latino undergraduate EL participants to provide demographic commonalities and differences for exploration of classroom engagement. Online journaling between the two interviews allowed study participants to provide in-depth perspectives on engagement relative to prompts that aligned with aspects of CRP in the higher education classroom. Multiple individual in-depth interviews were a part of the data collection process for this study. Interviews were used to gather data to examine a phenomenon and its meaning for individuals (Moustakas, 1994). As specified by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), the participant’s interview was a significant
contribution to the research. Multiple in-depth interviews were conducted in person at an approved location in the ASC.

The initial contact was made through the ASC director to recruit participants, conduct the demographic survey, and coordinate the interviews at the center. At the initial meeting with each participant introductions began the process with the student and the researcher that led to the review of and request for informed consent and the confidentiality policy. After the demographic survey, the first interview commenced and arrangements for the subsequent interview occurred. Explanations of the use of the online journaling site took place. Each interview was recorded with a digital recorder and lasted about 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews created by this researcher were semistructured and sequence specific. The application of open-ended questions provided the interviewees the opportunity to expound upon the influences of experiences with the phenomenon in the higher education classroom (Seidman, 2006). The first and subsequent interview of participants followed the semistructured and sequence specific interview protocol.

After signed approval from the participant, each interview was recorded and transcribed. Next, transcription comparisons were made between the two to interpret accuracy. The researcher listened to the recording while reading the document. Member checking occurred with participants reviewing the text via Google Drive and providing feedback to the researcher on the accuracy. There was an analysis of the transcriptions of the significant statements and themes by the researcher. There was a grouping of statements into meaning units to identify the essence of the one theme as the core phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection

The collection of information for this phenomenological study commenced after the
approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Initially, contact was through an email from the researcher dispersed through the ASC personnel inviting possible participants that fit the criteria for the study. The email included a recruitment message with the researcher’s name and personal email to contact regarding their interest in participation, followed by flyers left in the foyer of the ASC on the information table. Arrangements with the ASC Director occurred to schedule a 15-minute presentation to the prospective students that included the purpose of the study, the data collection methods, and the possible research benefits for bilingual Latino ELs. ELs from the Hispanic Club were invited to help recruit other potential participants via snowballing by informing others about the investigation. Snowballing was a sampling strategy used to obtain new study participants through a referral from original participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The availability of the ASC coincided with the coordination of the data collection at the site. Participants contacted me directly to make an initial appointment to review the study protocol. Once a participant was recruited, and the consent form was signed, the participant completed a demographic survey, an in-depth interview, electronic reflective journaling, and a second in-depth interview.

A digital recorder was used to record the two interview sessions with the study participants, and any subsequent meetings that were necessary to provide the clarification of students’ answers after the initial interviews. The information from the two interviews went through the transcription process through a professional agency. The transcription agency owner from Expert Info Services signed a consent form stating an agreement to confidentiality before the transcription process. Upon the completion of the transcription work, this researcher made available a copy of the individual's transcription to verify the accuracy of the information.

To provide further validity to the research, the researcher included member checking to
seek the interview participants’ feedback on the accuracy of the transcribed responses. The purpose was to offer credibility to the findings and the interpretations (Harper & Cole, 2012). A provision of a copy of the individual member’s transcript was through Google Drive for his or her review. All members were requested to return the documents to the researcher within one week with notations regarding accuracy.

The protection of participant privacy was essential to safeguard. The participants’ identities did not appear in any form, written or audio. The Atlas.ti System redacted names and provided codes as a protection for each participant’s identity. The actual identities of participants were not known to the readers of the research. The analysis of the interviews provided the themes that related to the phenomenon and offered the perspectives of Latino ELs on what influences engagement in the higher education classroom.

Table 1

Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence to be Collected for Research Questions</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino English Learners describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement?</td>
<td>Demographic survey, Interview, Online journals</td>
<td>Survey Protocol, Interview Protocol, Journal Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino English Learners describe classroom engagement?</td>
<td>Data transcribed from student interviews and journals</td>
<td>Two interviews per participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews as semistructured and sequence-specific with open-ended questions</td>
<td>Digital recorder</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Demographic survey. A meeting with each of the study participants individually at the ASC provided an opportunity for them to become acquainted with the researcher to establish
rapport. During my initial meeting with participants, they filled out the consent form followed by the demographic survey, and the first interview. The demographic survey was paper-based, and the participants shared their year in college, enrollment status, age, ethnicity, country of origin, the current number of credits, score on the TOEFL, and first spoken language. At the conclusion of the survey, a participant chose the pseudonym to use throughout the data collection to assure confidentiality. At this meeting, we also reviewed the journaling protocol and selected a username and password for Penzi website for electronic reflective journaling. This allowed me to collect the journals once the participants completed them. The use of the data was to help to analyze the responses of individuals and the distinctions they have that may affect their experience of engagement.

**Pilot.** The researcher piloted the demographic survey, interview, and journal questions with two individuals who represented the participant profile who did not form a part of the participant pool. The interviews occurred under real conditions. The feedback offered the researcher insight into how well the study participants understood the questions and if there were any changes that needed to be made to the questions to enhance their understanding (Patton, 2015).

**Interviews.** Each interview lasted about 45 minutes to one hour. Open-ended questions provided the EL participants the opportunity to share lived experiences relating to the phenomenon of engagement in the higher education classroom (Seidman, 2006). The first interview was scripted to share the study specifics on engagement. The subsequent interview of participants followed the semistructured and sequence-specific interview protocol (Rabionet, 2011; Wolcott, 2001).
A recording of all of the interviews occurred along with a professional transcription by Johnson Wayne from the Expert Info Services (2018). After transcription, the interview data was analyzed to identify significant statements made by the participants. The statements were then grouped into meaning units to identify the essence of the themes as the core phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The data was collected using multiple in-depth interviews to substantiate the research with a variety of informational formats to answer the research questions. Previous studies helped to conduct a comparative analysis of engagement through the lens of CRP identified by Latino ELs along with findings analyzed from current study participants. The study included two interviews that provided data on supporting what ELs revealed as the factors that engage them in the higher education learning environment.

The semistructured interview protocol provided the participants the opportunity to express factors that influence engagement by responding to the questions in each of the two interviews. In this study, the goal of the researcher through the open-ended interview questions was to give the participants the opportunity to reconstruct personal experience within the phenomenon engagement for undergraduate Latino ELs (Seidman, 2006). The structure of the interviews included: (a) Focused life history related to the phenomenon, (b) The details of experience, and (c) Reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 2006). In the first interview, the purpose was to understand the background of the EL participant by the individual telling as much as possible about him or herself regarding the topic of the study of ELs’ descriptions of factors that engage them in the higher education classroom. In the second interview, the goal was to obtain the details of the participants’ experiences that contributed to the formation of each one’s personal opinions regarding the phenomenon and their reflections upon the meaning of the
experiences that contributed to the thinking about engagement in the classroom. Seidman (2006) recommended the length of the interviews be no more than 90 minutes. The format in the study included each of the interviews with a length of 45 minutes to one hour according to the person’s needs. Following each of the individual interviews, the researcher wrote notes regarding thoughts about the responses.

**Journaling.** The Latino EL study participants electronically journaled reflections regarding experiences with classroom engagement. The reflective journaling included four prompts provided throughout two weeks between the first and second interviews. Secure storage and protection were provided using double password protection with encryption in Penzu, Inc., a private online journal (Penzu, Inc., 2018). The journal prompts had a focus on aspects of CRP in an attempt for the researcher to investigate the relativity of the theory to Latino ELs’ engagement.

Study participants used the Penzu website to record their journal entries (Penzu, Inc., 2018). After the demographic survey with another review of the online journaling process after the first interview, the researcher demonstrated to the student how to access the site. A provision of mock emails along with separate usernames and passwords transpired for each participant during each one’s initial meeting. The participants had two weeks to complete the electronic journaling after the first interview. The researcher collected the journals from Penzu one week after the completion of the second interview. The establishment of protection for the study participants occurred with a 256-bit AES encryption for the journals that did not permit online retrieval by anyone other than the participant or the researcher; the storage occurred in the Penzi vault (Penzu, Inc., 2018). The coding of the journals in the Atlas.ti data system added further
insight into the factors that influence engagement for the Latino ELs in the classroom (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017).

**Identification of Attributes**

In the investigation of the engagement of Latino ELs in the higher education classroom, one of the attributes that defined the study included collaborative vision. Through data analysis, there was the exploration and interpretation of the ELs’ common lived experiences. The extent of the alignment that perspectives and responses had with CRP was through an individual collection and were grouped to help determine the collaborative vision that ELs shared in light of their shared experiences. Communication defined the study through opening up opportunities for the “voice of the voiceless” to share the factors that engage them that related to experiences the Latino ELs shared. Communication also offered insight into possible dilemmas that might have occurred in higher education that affected engagement and led to the pursuit of achieving the goal of equality in educational practices (Jackson, 2015).

Another attribute that defined the study included perseverance. ELs shared common experiences that required the participants to continue to move forward to tackle unresolved issues of engagement. The students needed to persevere to attain achievement while institutional pursuits of change in methodologies to reach ELs were not all in place.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data analysis procedures constructed the theoretical basis for the coding systems that were in the Atlas.ti data system (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017; Office of Doctoral Studies, 2015). Strauss (1987) recommended using codes and memos to guide the continuous search for new data throughout the research process. The following are methods used for coding.
Initial coding. The first step in the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) included taking the transcription files from the Expert Info Services (2018) to read to obtain a sense of the entire data. Coding occurred through dragging codes onto the selection of data. Scientific Software Development GmbH (2017) stated, “Object managers, the Project Explorer, and the Co-occurrence Explorer let you browse and navigate through your data project” (para. 11). Those tools assisted the linkage of the findings with the use of meaningful semantics to store the data using a digital map (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). There were tools to help to draw out the descriptions. The initial coding included the visualization tool that offered the visualization function along with analysis to provide the data presentation. Theme identification was through the Co-occurrence Explorer that identified similar data and categorized the results.

The transcription and analysis of data early in the study allowed for the advantageous steps of providing adjustments to interview questions while also giving time to ground the study in actual research instead of random Internet searches (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The transcriptions provided documentation for reference for the subsequent interviews in the data collection process. Digitally recording an interview session was essential to practice before working with a participant. Transcribing notes immediately after the process assisted in obtaining information that the recording did not pick up, such as facial expressions, mannerisms, and body movements (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017).

Descriptive coding method. The Atlas.ti instrument underwent a qualitative data analysis to collect data in the study (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The Atlas.ti provided data storage for the research (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The tool offered coding procedures throughout the research process that assisted in the analysis of the participants’ interview questions. The process involved data collection, followed by
coding and memo writing (Strauss, 1987). Descriptive coding involved the use of assigning a symbol, number, word, or phrase to each coding category. Taking these measures provided the backup for the support through CRP for the factors that influence engagement, and how the Latino ELs describe it via the answers that participants shared in the study. Scientific Software Development GmbH (2017) recommended preparation to revise previous knowledge due to the possible effects that the acquisition of data had personally on oneself as the researcher.

Theme analysis. The use of the theory of CRP was to analyze outcomes of the interviews the researcher conducted via the layers of coding entered in the Atlas.ti. The identification of the themes transpired from the professional transcriptions acquired from Expert Info Services (2018). The data from the Atlas.ti helped to determine the theme of engagement through the participants’ perceptions of what provided it in the college setting. An analysis of the themes provided insight into the perspectives of the Latino EL participants on engagement factors through pinpointing the patterns in the data and their association with the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). The results helped to determine the relationship with CRP.

Layers of coding. Coding involved initially reading all of the interview and journaling responses. Next, the determination of a broad layer of coding assisted with the provision of the rich description that included approximately three up to typically no more than 10 major themes. How the responses fit into the framework determined the categories. Comments or responses that appeared to be outliers went into a miscellaneous category to examine later. If categories included participant comments that addressed more than one area, coding occurred in each of the relevant categories. The grouping of the responses allowed for the placement of the details in one report to construct another layer of organization within the group (Denzin, 1978).
Member checking. The researcher also conducted member checking to ensure the interview participants’ endorsements of the accuracy of transcriptions. The purpose was to offer credibility to the findings and their interpretations (Harper & Cole, 2012). A copy of the participant’s transcription was provided individually through email for examination with a request for the return within one week with notations about the accuracy of the document. The researcher employed a descriptive phenomenological inquiry using Giorgi’s (2009) methodological approach and analysis process, using descriptors of how things were established and by the perception of how one grasped the phenomena. As the method of inquiry, the researcher used transcendental phenomenology.

The use of rich, thick description supported the validity measures in the study. Rich, thick description allowed the researcher to capture details from the participants during the interviews and provided the addition of depth to the description of themes of the engagement phenomenon (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The demographic survey, reflective journals, and two interview sessions for each of my participants provided an opportunity for me to collect rich, thick descriptions of each participant’s experiences to allow for the transferability of information to additional settings. Denham and Onwuegbuzie (2013) related how readers of a study were able to determine whether the shared experiences or characteristics in the interviews, in particular, were transferable when observing each of the features related to the themes and their study correlation. Both the verbal and nonverbal cues during the interviews provided further meaning to the participants’ experiences for analysis (Denham & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Examples included such areas as facial expressions, hesitancies, posture, rhythm, and hesitancy that assisted in interpreting the meaning to the participants’ lived experiences as they related to classroom engagement.
Limitations of the Research Design

A phenomenological study describes the lived experiences of the study participants (Moustakas, 1994). The nature of this phenomenological study assumed that the Latino study participants had a common meaning from the lived experiences. There was an assumption that since all of the participants were Latino ELs, they had shared experiences to describe due to their limited English proficiency and cultural diversity.

Transferability of this study should be limited to similar populations of Latino ELs who experience issues with engagement in the classroom. Due to my personal experiences of seeing ELs without engagement in the classroom I was aware of the potential for bias. To limit any bias, I represented the voices and experiences of the Latino ELs who had experienced engagement issues. Through no limitations to having a voice to share perspectives, a purposeful sample that included a group of nine participants described the factors that influence engagement. An analysis of the transcriptions assisted in a determination of the validity of the findings as grounded in support (Moustakas, 1994).

Validation

Validation of this research involved an examination of the credibility and dependability of data through an analysis of students’ shared experiences in the survey, interview, and journaling responses. The researcher conducted member checking to seek the interview participants’ validation for the accuracy of the transcription responses (Harper & Cole, 2012). Through a deeper examination of the data analysis to RQ 1 and RQ 2, research showed through an examination based on the literature how CRP characteristics played a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom.
**Credibility.** The use of digital recordings and notes provided data credibility to verify responses to include in the research. Evidence for the feedback gave validity to the study, which sought to validate Latino EL student engagement in the higher education classroom. The specific sampling of bilingual Latino EL participants were participants at the ASC in their freshman year. The focus of credibility was upon the word-for-word citing of the viewpoints through life experiences. All of the students’ enrollments were as sophomore undergraduates ages 19–21 in a higher education institution. The use of the demographic survey, Latino ELs’ reflective journaling, and the multiple in-depth interviews with open-ended questions had the high internal validity of the instruments to provide the opportunity for the Latino EL to reconstruct personal experience within the phenomenon. The responses solidified what the participants needed to have transpired in higher education and were dependable since having a voice to express what worked for them was necessary to identify engaging factors in the classroom from their shared experiences.

**Dependability.** Providing the same demographic survey, interview questions, and reflective journaling prompts to all Latino EL student participants validated the ability for all of them to give feedback on the same issues. That offered internal validity to the study’s sources of information. The results led to discovering the shared lived experiences of the study participants.

**Expected Findings**

The expectation is to find out what the “voices” of Latino ELs will say about influencing factors for engagement in the classroom, and how they describe classroom engagement resulting from common lived experiences. The research will contribute to the literature due to the previous limitations of exploring how CRP may play a role in undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom. The feedback may inform the collegiate
community about essential practices to engage this group of learners. Results for the higher education community may include an increase in ELs’ achievement and degree completion (Han et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011). The readers may learn to identify the role of culture and values in the classroom and obtain from Latino ELs lived experiences the knowledge of how society can replace educational injustices with respect toward each person’s culture in the learning environment (Chang, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

**Ethical Issues**

The researcher examined ethical issues to safeguard the participants to further the research with the use of appropriate measures for all parties. The Concordia University, Institutional Review Board (CU-IRB) approved the research protocol that outlined the protection of the rights and welfare of the participants. Next, there was a submission to the IRB committee at the site for the study. The contents included the purpose of the research and secure data collection and storage methods. Also, provided was an informed consent form to notify their participants of the protection provided for them throughout the study, and to seek their signed consent. At all times, there was strict confidentiality adhered to in the study, and there was the use of pseudonyms with the reporting of participants’ information. Participation remained completely confidential.

**Conflict of interest assessment.** Others might have determined that there was a conflict of interest with the study without an EL doing the research. Study participants might have questioned the understanding of what the researcher perceived that the EL voices said due to not having the same lived experiences as the homogeneous EL participants. What they shared and understood might have limitations due to demographical differences that influence the shared lived experiences. There were no financial benefits to impede or help the researcher or anyone
affiliated with her, including but not limited to someone personally or professionally close to her or her connections (American Psychological Association, 2017). Furthermore, there was not a conflict of interest with the study due to promises of a benefit of increased positional status.

**Researcher’s position.** The participants were encouraged to feel safe and protected about what they shared regarding their life experiences. The developers of the Scientific Software Development GmbH (2017) expressed the importance of the researcher taking the time to get to know the participants and letting them contribute information in the demographic survey, journaling and interviews with the researcher demonstrating interactive competence. Lewis (1966) reported how to do this during interviews in his book, *La Vida*. Lewis (1966) emphasized the importance of demonstrating respect for the interview participant. The honor given to culture transcended possible barriers.

Participants in the current study gave consent to the research via a written response. The researcher protected the confidentiality of the participants by using pseudonyms for the participants. Using the Atlas.ti system provided the necessary security for the information (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The protection of interview data was through using a coding system, as well as storing the data in the “container” data system. Each one received information about the recording of the interviews with the contents in the research study with the utilization of an alias. The recordings were stored in the Atlas.ti system; these were password protected (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The ELs each had the opportunity to decline to answer any question and could have changed answers with the elimination of any content that they did not wish to have published from the responses. There was a guarantee in writing, as two parties in agreement, for both the researcher and participant.
**Ethical issues in the study.** Ethical issues included the scope of the informed consent form presented to the participants but without the signed copies in the appendix. The positive bias was the desire to receive knowledge about what works from bilingual Latino ELs’ perspective to offer engagement in the educational setting. The negative bias was including answers from participants that did not coincide with personal current thinking and allowed them to shape the study regardless (Office of Doctoral Studies, 2015). To limit bias, I represented the voices of the EL students who had experienced engagement issues. I used purposeful sampling which limited not having the student's voice from illuminating the factors that engage ELs.

**Chapter 3 Summary**

The action steps of the research included a demographic survey, journaling, and multiple in-depth interviews that allowed the researcher to gather data to examine the engagement phenomenon and its meaning to the participants. The steps also included incorporating the interviews as semistructured and sequence-specific with open-ended questions that provided the ELs the opportunity to share experiences with the phenomenon in the higher education classroom (Seidman, 2006). The use of the demographic survey and reflective journaling assisted the data collection focus on supplying Latino ELs a chance to share their perspectives to guide higher education into providing a culturally focused environment conducive to engagement. These steps coincided with making strides toward Latino ELs helping to contribute to solutions for equality in education. The research provided a voice to Latino ELs on what engages them in college that resulted in the feeling of respect and acceptance in higher education while making strides toward degree completion.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The experiences of Latino English Learners (ELs) were documented to support the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative research in exploring the factors that influence undergraduate Latino ELs’ classroom engagement. Additionally, the study investigated how Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), which is an approach to instruction with educators implementing culturally responsive content and strategies for students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1992), contributes to ELs’ perceptions of their classroom experiences. Nine Latino ELs’ perspectives about their classroom experiences were collected and analyzed to evaluate the role of CRP. Data collection instruments included a demographic survey, the first interview of each participant, followed by a two-week journal response period in which the ELs provided in-depth written replies to four online journal prompts related to the theory of CRP and ELs’ engagement. Next, through a second interview, the process provided participants with repeated opportunities to share their lived experiences related to the phenomenon. This resulted in the researcher’s deepened understanding of Latino ELs’ experiences and their impact on classroom engagement.

Three questions guided this research study, the first two seeking the perspectives of Latino ELs.

RQ1: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement?

RQ2: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement?
RQ3: How does CRP play a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom?

The researcher analyzed the data through examination and sorting to find themes for acquiring a description of the phenomenon impacted by CRP. The researcher examined participants’ responses for common statements and ideas in the form of keywords and phrases relating to the theory of CRP, as noted in Figure 1. The Latino participants’ similar descriptions revealed a common meaning of their lived experiences. The participants’ description of the influential factors of classroom engagement emerged through the use of identified themes (see Table 3).

![Figure 1. Keywords and phrases relating to the theory of CRP.](image)

The researcher used the ATLAS.ti system for Mac to identify the codes and themes in each of the participants’ responses in interviews and reflective journal entries (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The researcher identified patterns through the data analysis that captured the influence of CRP on classroom engagement. As a college level
educator, the researcher taught bilingual Latino ELs in the classroom and tutored ELs in their professional English language skills. The interest in this study topic evolved from a career of working with Latino students; experiences working as a student missionary in Guadalajara, Mexico; and a love of Latino culture, language, and customs. These factors influenced the desire to provide Latino ELs with the opportunity to share their perspectives on classroom engagement. More importantly, the researcher endeavored to give participants a voice to inform college faculty on effective classroom engagement of Latino ELs.

This chapter describes the data collection and data analysis process. Included is a demographic description of the participants in this study, a presentation of the data, and the findings. A summary of Chapter 4 leads into Chapter 5, where there is the presentation of the implications of the research, a discussion of the findings, a summary, and conclusion.

**Description of the Sample**

Nine undergraduate sophomore Latino ELs enrolled in a private Texas university served as the participants of this study. Intentional selection of individual participants involved the use of purposeful sampling of sophomore Latino ELs who offered the investigator the necessary information to address the research problem while examining the core phenomenon of engagement central to the study (Moustakas, 1994). The extensive feedback from the small sample size aligned with the research design of phenomenology; I selected individuals with common experiences (Patton, 2015). The demographic make-up of the participants who met the criteria of the study and chose to participate appear in Table 2.
Table 2

Demographic Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Current Enrollment Status</th>
<th>TOEFL Score</th>
<th>Current Credit Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>19 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique</td>
<td>19 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>099</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>098</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo</td>
<td>19 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamón</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose Jr.</td>
<td>21 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liliana</td>
<td>19 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>María</td>
<td>19 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodía</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All nine participants were Latino, with Spanish being their first language. The study sample included four female participants and five male participants. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 21 years old. The range of current credit enrollment was from 13 to 19 credits. Eight participants were born in Mexico and one participant was born in Columbia. At the time of the study, all participants had a sophomore-level enrollment status. The online TOEFL scores of the participants ranged from 98 to 106. The University requirement was a minimum total score of 80 for entrance to the institution, which was exceeded by all EL participants.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The researcher used a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the engagement of Latino ELs in a college classroom. Transcendental phenomenology provides for focused attention on participants’ lived experiences with a particular phenomenon (Butler, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). The researcher collected data through the use of a demographic survey, a first interview, reflective journaling, and a second interview (Hesse-Bibber & Leavy, 2011; Seidman, 2006). An analysis of the data provided a deeper
understanding of the phenomenon of engagement in the classroom, specifically of Latino ELs. The researcher analyzed the data and reviewed the results using a transcendental phenomenological approach. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on deepening understanding of participants’ lived experiences related to the phenomenon. The goal of such an approach is not to interpret meaning of those lived experiences. Through the approach, the researcher provides insight into the phenomenon through deep rich textual descriptions.

**Data Collection**

Prior to data collection, as the researcher, I conducted a pilot of the interview and journal questions. Two undergraduate Latino ELs who fit the participant profile took part in the pilot. I used the pilot student feedback to ensure that actual study participants would have a clear understanding of the questions used in both the interviews and journal questions. One pilot student, a female, suggested the replacement of the term *group activities* to *group assignments* or *group projects* in order to clarify actual meaning. This pilot student viewed the term *activities* as having too broad a meaning making certain questions too difficult to answer. Another pilot student, a male, suggested a change to the first question of the first interview protocol. This student felt that changing the term *the classroom* to *the college classroom* would help to solidify understanding that the focus of the study was specifically about engagement in the college classroom. The male pilot participant also remarked, “I also would change the word in question four from ‘activities’ to ‘group assignments or projects’ because when we think of activities, we think of clubs and things like that.” I changed the wording to include the recommendations from the pilot participants to provide clarity to the questions. The changes included the word *activities* to *group assignments or projects*, and *classroom* to *college classroom*. Both participants
believed that the second interview protocol and the journal prompts were clear and understandable.

**Recruitment.** Once Institutional Review Board approval was granted, I began recruiting participants for this study. It took six weeks to complete the recruitment phase. The goal for participant enrollment was between eight to 12 students. A purposeful sample of nine participants with shared lived experiences was recruited to provide insight into the phenomenon of engagement (Patton, 2015). To acquire participants for the study, I placed flyers in the foyer of the Academic Success Center (ASC) and gave a PowerPoint recruitment presentation to the members of the Hispanic Club on campus. The ASC Director sent an email message to participants who fit the criteria of the research to invite them to participate in the study. This email invitation resulted in the recruitment of seven student volunteers. Additionally, I used snowball sampling to recruit and enroll participants for the study (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). One male student completed the first interview and did not participate in the online journal or the second interview. The student requested to not have his input from the first interview included in the study. Therefore, I invited ELs from the Hispanic club to assist in the recruitment of other potential participants. This is an example of how I used snowball sampling to attract and recruit potential study participants.

All of the Latino EL participants text messaged or emailed me directly to express interest in the study. I informed participants through an email and a text message about their choice as a participant. All participants also signed up for the demographic survey and the first interview using an online calendar. The online calendar did not reveal information regarding any participants in the study.
First interview. Data collection took place during 13 weeks following the completion of the third week of the semester. All of the data collection took place at the ASC, and participants received an informed consent form at the first individual meeting with the researcher, which included an explanation of their rights. Immediately following, the first interview began with the written demographic survey (see Appendix A), which was followed by the first in-depth interview using an interview protocol (see Appendix B). I explained the protocol, including the digital recording of the two interviews. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. In instances when participants used physical gestures or displayed definite facial expressions, I noted them, and later during reflection described these actions in the field notes. In the first interview, I provided open-ended questions to the EL participants, and each one shared their lived experiences relating to the phenomenon of engagement in the college classroom (Seidman, 2006).

After a participant’s interview, a transcription followed. Through email, I provided the transcribed EL member’s personalized transcript for participation in member checking. The email contained the researcher’s requisition for the transcript return inside of one week, including accuracy notations. One male student completed the first interview and did not participate in the online journal or the second interview. The student requested to not have his input from the first interview included in the study. Therefore, I invited ELs from the Hispanic Club to assist in the recruitment of other potential participants. This is an example of how I, as the researcher, used snowball sampling to attract and recruit potential study participants.

Reflective journaling. The researcher provided participants with a two-week time frame for reflective journaling. This two-week time frame took place between the first and second
interviews. The purpose of this data collection phase was to give the Latino ELs in the study an opportunity to offer deeper responses about what affected their experiences of classroom engagement. First, the researcher invited participants to select a pseudonym for the journaling process, and each was assigned a numeric code. Then, the researcher oriented the ELs to the Penzi (2018) platform for journaling and provided each one with an email address and password to use. The participants shared in-depth responses in the online journal that included their feelings about the following aspects of CRP in the classroom: (a) acknowledgment and recognition of culture, (b) cultural strengths, (c) cultural identity, (d) support of first language (see Appendix C).

**Second interview.** The purpose of the second interview was to obtain the ELs’ perspectives which included additional aspects of CRP. The researcher encouraged the ELs through the second interview prompts (see Appendix D) to participate in examining such areas as the support of their culture, including their beliefs and values, and whether those aspects played a role in influencing their classroom engagement (Gay, 2013, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Through the data collection process, as the researcher, I earned the trust of the ELs who welcomed opportunities to share their lived experiences. The researcher conducted nine second interviews. Most of the interviews last approximately an hour. One interview lasted approximately 35 minutes and one interview lasted approximately 65 minutes. All participant responses remained private and confidential. To protect each ELs’ confidentiality, I kept a record of the numeric code and pseudonym associated with each participant’s recording. There were no technical difficulties. As a precaution, a backup system was in place to use another device. Following each EL’s interview, a transcription occurred. I provided through email the transcribed
participant member’s individual transcript for member checking. The email included my request for the return of the document to her within one week, including notes concerning accuracy.

There was minimal risk to the study participants by following the safety procedures and protocol of the study. The recordings were deleted upon the completion of the transcriptions. The prospect of any distress or harm anticipated in the research was not more than any occurrences in day-to-day living, or the performance of general physical or psychological tests.

**Data Analysis**

**Interview analysis.** ATLAS.ti software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017) was used to assist in my evaluation, interpretation, and description of the phenomenon of engagement of ELs in the higher education classroom. The data preparation for the coding process required the transcription of the interviews of all nine participants (Strauss, 1987). The first step before the qualitative data analysis involved listening to the recordings of each of the interviews on the same day I originally conducted the interviews. This was followed with a review of the notes taken during each interview. The data analysis continued with the preliminary reading of the transcripts while listening to the recordings to assure accuracy to become acquainted with the data (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). I highlighted words that included characteristics of CRP that appeared in the interview transcriptions and journals. The following list were the words for the pre-analysis of CRP association: (a) culture, (b) communication, (c) express ideas, (d) interactions, (e) primary language/Spanish, (f) recognition, (g) respect, (h) support, (i) understanding, and (j) values.

Next, I uploaded the transcriptions and reflective journals into the Atlas.ti system. Then I began initial coding with the utilization of the pre-analysis CRP association list to develop themes and patterns based on the theory of CRP. I ran a frequency analysis using Atlas.ti to
determine how often the initial codes identified occurred in the transcriptions and journals. Descriptive coding involved the allocation of a word or phrase to each coding category (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). Initially, I identified six themes related to RQ1. The six themes, which represented factors related to classroom engagement, which included: (a) the recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, (c) having a voice in the classroom, (d) support for understanding the course content, (e) interactions with other students, and (f) use of primary language. The identified themes were used to begin sorting the responses into specific factors related to engagement. The next step was to identify sub-themes under each theme which also related to research question one. Three to six sub-themes emerged under each major theme retrieved through layers of coding that demonstrate how the ELs described classroom engagement. Lastly, I used pattern coding to identify similar data and discovered the patterns in coded data. I analyzed participants’ statements and used pattern coding to identify similar data that aligned with the features of CRP (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). I then aligned the themes with the attributes identified in the literature (Gay, 2013, & Ladson-Billings, 1994). Through theme analysis, I pinpointed the patterns in the data in association with the phenomenon of engagement in the interviews (van Manen, 2014).

Journal analysis. There were four reflective journal prompts that the participants used to write about their experiences and ideas on classroom engagement. The first step in examining these involved the preliminary reading of each ELs’ journal entries in Penzu, the private online journal application (Penzu, Inc., 2018). The data analysis process included the use of descriptive coding in Atlas.ti, where the researcher used four identified themes to organize the specific responses of the ELs to describe classroom engagement (Scientific Software Development
The four themes from ELs’ responses included: (a) acknowledgment and recognition, (b) experience of others identifying personal culture and respect for others’ cultures, (c) support for cultural identity, and (d) support for first language. The researcher used pattern coding to identify similar data from the journals that correlated with the descriptive attributes of CRP (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). Theme alignment was with the CRP literature and the emphasis of culture in alignment with academics (Gay, 2013 & Ladson-Billings, 2011).

**Summary of the Findings**

In this study, data collection employed the use of a demographic survey, an in-depth interview, journaling, and a second in-depth interview to gather data to examine how sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino EL participants describe classroom engagement in the college classroom. I collected data using a data analysis process including the organization of data, the creation of codes, themes, and patterns, leading to my interpretation of the data (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2017). The process allowed the researcher to draw conclusions for this study.

Connections to factors of classroom engagement were identified in the research through analysis of ELs’ lived experiences; this was possible through descriptive coding, and comparisons of transcribed interviews and journal narratives of the data. The data analysis of the interviews and journals to address the research questions revealed the reoccurrence of six main themes which describe factors that influence Latino ELs’ classroom engagement, as noted in Table 3.
### Table 3

**Six Themes with Subthemes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes:</th>
<th>Recognition of Culture in the Classroom</th>
<th>Respect for Diversity</th>
<th>Having a Voice in the Classroom</th>
<th>Support for Understanding the course content</th>
<th>Interacting with Other Students</th>
<th>Use of Primary Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Cultural Identity</td>
<td>Listening to Classmates from Different Cultures</td>
<td>Discussing Different Perspectives in groups</td>
<td>Visual Representations</td>
<td>Working in Small Groups</td>
<td>Translating Unknown Words into Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Cultural Strengths</td>
<td>Sharing Literature with a Variety of Perspectives</td>
<td>Differing Opinions on Written Assignments</td>
<td>Interacting with the Professor</td>
<td>Planning with a partner and presenting to the class</td>
<td>Classmate Explaining a Concept in Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Sharing Cultural Traditions and Values</td>
<td>Guest Speakers Sharing in the Classroom</td>
<td>Differing opinions on classroom discussions</td>
<td>Modeling or Utilizing Vocabulary to Provide Support</td>
<td>Debating issues with other students</td>
<td>Sharing Vocabulary Word Origins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Sharing Differences of their own Culture</td>
<td>Presenting Latino cultural perspectives</td>
<td>Short film clips to further explain a concept</td>
<td>Working on projects together</td>
<td>Speaking Spanish in the Classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Differences do not hinder working together</td>
<td>Respecting students’ opinion</td>
<td>PowerPoints with vocabulary and pictures</td>
<td>Learning from one another</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: Offering opportunities to hear opinions</td>
<td>Acting out a scenario</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eight of the nine respondents indicated that recognition of culture in the classroom was primary to influencing their engagement in the college classroom providing motivation or interest in learning. For example, ELs mentioned how their cultural identity represents who they are and that their cultural identity needs to be significant to the professors who teach them in the classroom. Their professors need to show an interest in what Latino ELs have to say. In addition to the recognition of culture in the classroom as a factor influencing engagement was the significance of the respect they received as diverse students. Eight of the ELs indicated that respect for diversity opened up the doors for learning. When faculty and peers respect the Latino EL students’ diversity, the ELs felt as if they were an integral part of the classroom. Also, important to note, in one class, a female participant experienced difficulty learning because the professor commented negatively several times about another race of students. The lack of respect demonstrated by the professor caused her to disengage in that class even though it was not about her race or culture.

A third theme, which impacted engagement for the participants was the opportunity to have a voice in the classroom. Seven of the nine ELs commented on how debates and discussions with other students provided opportunities to speak about their Latino perspectives and experiences. A male participant shared how he had brought a current article on economics to discuss with the class. The article he brought was on the Mexican cartel. The participant felt cultural pride because he was able to offer another perspective on economics affecting his home country that others may not have had any knowledge about previously.

Another factor affecting engagement was support for understanding the course content. Data analysis revealed that the ELs felt this was significant to their learning in the classroom setting. All nine of the participants spoke about experiences that assisted or hindered their
understanding of the coursework in the classroom. The nine ELs spoke about understanding academic vocabulary affecting their progress in courses. One student commented that she needed to have the word, drawbridge, explained again with an example. She grew up speaking Spanish and did not have any previous experiences with that specific word in English. The professor’s willingness to show pictures and give examples provided this student with an opportunity to gain greater insight by applying the vocabulary to the historical context of the class discussion.

Another example that a female respondent shared was when one of her professors lectured for the entire class period. There was not anything that she could see or experience to understand the concepts. The student commented that neither she nor her Latino classmate could take away anything significant from the class that day. A male respondent shared that the use of short video clips related to the course content helped him to better comprehend what the professor was trying to explain.

The fifth theme, interacting with other students, is one that all of the nine student participants shared as increasing their classroom engagement. The ELs acknowledged that working with a partner or a small group in their courses helped them to develop English language skills. The respondents shared that when they did not know an English word having a professor or classmate who allowed them to say a word in Spanish built their desire to continue to learn new words. The ELs gained confidence in participating in discussions.

All nine of the EL respondents highlighted how the last theme, the use of primary language, benefited them by having the experiences of respect for their native language in the higher education classroom. In one example, Bella shared the advantage for her of meeting with other Spanish speakers after class sessions. Hearing the academic language in Spanish clarified
her understanding. She shared that two professors support her by allowing her to have a partner to reassure her comprehension. She said she learns more in those class sessions. The EL students all shared that they do not require the class in Spanish. They said they want to feel respected if they ask for clarification since that is a valid need that exists for them. The entire group emphasized that they want to understand English and learn to apply it correctly to what they are learning. Jose Jr. shared,

My father taught me that when I am speaking in class, I must not switch back and forth between Spanish and English in a sentence during a conversation with someone. When speaking in English, if I need to ask for an interpretation of an English word, then he says I can ask to hear it in Spanish. After I learn what the word means, then I need to continue to speak in English. At our house, the same is true. We are not allowed to go back and forth between English and Spanish when we are talking to each other. Whichever is the chosen language of a conversation, the family rule is to use it for the entire time. He wants all of us to know how to properly speak, read, and write both Spanish and English. In college, I speak English so much now, that he has to remind me when we speak Spanish together to not fill in English words in the sentence.

**Research question 1:** An analysis of the interview and journal data provided additional depth to address research question one. How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement? Figure 2 presents the six emerging themes and primary subthemes.
Figure 2. Themes and subthemes to address research question 1.

The first theme, the recognition of culture in the classroom, emphasized by eight of the nine students, was crucial to their classroom engagement. Through the analysis, there were three subthemes identified that included cultural identity, cultural strengths, and sharing cultural traditions and values. One participant, Melodía, exemplified the importance of the primary subtheme, cultural identity, when she stated:

The acknowledgment and recognition of my culture in the classroom help me to be more engaged. If I see that a professor accepts me not only as a student but as a person as well,
it gives me a sense of acceptance and belonging. If a student feels as if he or she belongs somewhere, it increases their desire to be in class and learn.

Melodía found her cultural identity to be an integral part of whom she is as a person, motivating her performance in the collegiate setting. In contrast, Enrique commented, “I never regarded myself as a . . . part of a culture.” Enrique’s own culture was not central to his engagement. Instead, Enrique shared, “Although my Hispanic culture is not represented, I am shown something that I value more: how to value every culture as your own.”

Regarding the second theme, the respect for diversity, the participants described the influencing factors of engagement through an emphasis on five subthemes that included: (a) listening to classmates from different cultures, (b) sharing literature with a variety of perspectives, (c) guest speakers sharing in the classroom, (d) sharing differences of their own culture, and (e) differences do not hinder working together. One participant, Jamón, illustrated the significance of listening to classmates from different cultures when he shared,

And here, we have a lot of different people, a lot of different views on religion. We have Catholics, Baptists, Buddhists, and people who are not Christian at all, but really, we are able to come together and speak about a certain topic.

Jamón continued,

this sort of discussion-based classroom that we’ve had that I’m taking currently has really engaged me to not learn just about the content presented from the class but also about each other which is really one of the main things that I believe is necessary for us to do as students in the college undergrad career.

Eight of the nine participants pointed out the value of respecting others and their differences, while also respecting oneself.
The third theme that arose from exploring the factors influencing engagement for the ELs was having a voice in the classroom. Seven of the nine participants saw the significance in sharing their perceptions with others. There were six subthemes associated with this that included: (a) discussing different perspectives in groups, (b) differing opinions on written assignments, (c) differing opinions on classroom discussions, (d) presenting Latino cultural perspectives, (e) respecting students’ opinions, and (f) offering opportunities to hear opinions.

One participant, Liliana, shared how one class was difficult for her because “nobody talks in the class. They just go and then leave. I think that is why it makes it a little harder for me to learn because then I kind of feel like I’m teaching myself” Liliana continued, “I get more out of a class when I hear other students share what they think about things.”

One the other hand, Federico shared the importance of professors giving students a voice in the classroom,

I like it because in the classroom you find out you’re not the only one that thinks that way. So, it kind of makes you feel—not welcome but accepted. You know you’re not the only one that sees things the separate [different] way, or it’s kind of—it’s good to know that there’s people that think just like you.

Support for understanding the course content was the fourth theme. Six subthemes which described the factors of engagement for ELs in the college classroom consisted of: visual representations, interacting with the professor, modeling or utilizing vocabulary to provide support, short film clips to further explain a concept, PowerPoints with vocabulary and pictures, and acting out a scenario. All of the nine participants commented on the positive impact that visual representations of course content or discussions had in the classroom on increasing their understanding of vocabulary. For example, Melodía shared that not having something visual
would make her unable to have a connection with the ideas, while Jamón shared how visuals would give a student an “overall picture before even diving into the specifics.”

All nine participants emphasized the fifth theme, interacting with other students. Five subthemes related to the fifth theme included: working in small groups, planning with a partner and presenting to the class, debating issues with other students, working on projects together, and learning from one another. The respondents spoke of a variety of small group experiences that supported their learning. One factor that Bella described was working in small groups. She struggled with speaking aloud in large groups due to her limited English. In small groups, she was still shy and did not speak up much. Bella stated, “I admire one of the other students. You can kind of hear she has a strong accent and she’s Hispanic and she speaks up so much. Even with the barriers, she has so much to offer.” Bella shared she felt that she was able to say things in that kind of setting because other students supported her. She indicated that she had something to say, but she needed time to figure out how to phrase it in English. The small group exchanges influenced her to speak up and share.

The last theme, the use of primary language, was significant to all of the respondents. Four subthemes under this theme included: translating unknown words into English, a classmate explaining a concept in Spanish, sharing vocabulary word origins, and speaking Spanish in the classroom. Melodía emphasized the significance of translation when she stated,

In one of my classes, I met a student who was Hispanic. It was a great feeling because I knew that there was someone else like me in the classroom. This affected my engagement because if either of us didn’t understand the material, we would try and explain it to each other in Spanish.
Another student, Liliana, spoke about the effects of not having unknown words translated for her when a professor was teaching,

   It made me feel that I didn’t know what he’s talking about . . . if I heard him saying something, I was just like, “What?” And I was thinking about what I did not know. And then I dozed off and started thinking about what he could’ve possibly been trying to say without me being focused on what he kept saying.

Liliana expressed concern about not understanding “the bigger picture” in the class when English words were unknown to her. The EL students received all of their instruction in English, and they reported that having opportunities to discuss things in Spanish assisted in providing them a deeper understanding of concepts.

   In summary for question 1, an analysis of the interview and journal data provided insight to address research question one. The researcher explored six themes with subthemes and identified culture as a prominent factor influencing classroom engagement. The subthemes provided further support to the determination that bilingual students needed emphasis on language and understanding as a platform for learning.

**Research question 2.** Using four themes, as noted in Figure 3, an analysis of the interview responses and reflective journals provided the additional depth to address research question two. How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement?
The interview and journal questions invited the ELs to consider essential aspects of CRP in association with their description of engagement. An overarching theme throughout the journal writings was the recognition of culture in the classroom. The ELs described how it affected their classroom engagement. They shared that being acknowledged and included was critical to them. The students’ composed their stories in their reflective journals about how fortunate they felt to attend a diverse college. In the responses to the interview questions, the participants commented on the significance of sharing their culture with others in the classroom and having other students do the same.
Jose Jr. shared how vital it was to be acknowledged and recognized, and that it made him feel more comfortable in the classroom. In expressing how the classroom experience affected him, Jose Jr. talked about being surrounded by diverse classmates and professors who consider his cultural differences positively. He stressed how central his inclusion was to his classroom experience, it impacted his engagement constructively. Jose Jr. experienced the positive impact of acceptance by others in the classroom and this acceptance was reflected on the alignment it had on his self-confidence as a Latino student. Jose Jr. shared:

I am fortunate to attend a university that is vastly diverse in cultures, including the professors. So, whenever I walk into a classroom, I do not feel excluded since my peers are also from different backgrounds and therefore there is no sense of segregation or preference among the student populous that is allowed to attend the university. This gives me comfort by knowing that my cultural differences will be taken into account and not used against me.

Through his journal narrative, Federico shared another perspective on acknowledgment and recognition about his cultural experiences relative to the impoverished. He felt included and engaged in the class when he had the opportunity to share about poverty and the impact it has had on decision making for his family. When classmates asked questions and learned about experiences unfamiliar to them, there was respect and acknowledgment shown to him by the others. Federico believed his economic circumstances provided another viewpoint to enlighten his non-Latino classmates about unfamiliar aspects of poverty. He shared:

When I share in my economics class about the differences in the area I was born in Mexico, from where I live now, some of the students cannot relate to me while others
can. I know that everyone does not understand what it is like to be poor and to want to move away from the poor way of life. They can learn a lot about how different it is for others in other countries from the United States when I speak up and give another perspective.

Federico wrote about his cultural pride in spite of his circumstances and continued to attribute his engagement in the classroom with the opportunity to present cultural experiences that can bring significant changes to others’ cultural perspectives to broaden their learning. He shared that economics was more than money; it was about the people and the decisions they made relative to their life situations. Federico demonstrated that acknowledgment and recognition was the willingness to discover the different insights of others. Federico wrote:

When others want to listen, that makes me feel better that I can help them to see that I love my culture and where I am from, but that I cannot live without food and other important things in life. My culture is still important and the traditions that we have, make us good people even without having many things. We have each other, and that is the most important thing to have. I want to go to class when the professor gives me an opportunity to contribute things about my culture and how I might view things differently than other students that are not poor. Some students drive cars and have cool clothes. I have some things, and my mom works three jobs to see that I get what I need. When others know that I am proud of who I am, I think they get more out of the class because they understand that economics is not just money, but about the people and the circumstances that influence their decision making in life. I am engaged in the class because I can learn about what has happened in the past and figure out what can change
in the future by the decisions that I make. One thing I will not change is that I am proud to be from the Mexican culture while I am still an American.

To Jamón, acknowledgment and recognition was exemplified by his inclusion in the classroom through a climate of acceptance. The engagement that he experienced was introduced through initial approval of him, which included his culture, primary language, and traditions, without judgment from others. Jamón seemed to be surprised by his experience in the classroom. He accepted the challenge and the risks to engage and become a part of an unfamiliar setting. Jamón wrote:

I suppose the acknowledgment of my culture may not be considerably evident in the classroom. However, the subtle recognition from my classmates and professors has engaged my learning experience as I continue learning. It makes me feel accepted in an environment that may be unusual at first.

The recognition Jamón received from others in his classroom caused him to reflect upon his culture and the pride he had due to his pursuit of higher education. Jamón shared about wanting to be a doctor and how significant he knew it would be for him to become the first from his family to practice medicine one day. He felt compelled to tell other Latino students about how they could also find scholarships and opportunities to advance into a pre-med program. Jamón further shared:

As a Mexican, I want to share with other students how they can also have a positive voice in the community through serving others. In the Mexican culture, people help other people. I want there to be a whole bunch of us doing that together. It is more than the classrooms I am in right now. It is about what I can become and what I can do as a bilingual person to help others understand in Spanish what is physically wrong with
them. Then they can understand what decisions they want to make for their health. I am proud that I will become the first person in my family to graduate from college.

The second theme, the experience of others identifying your culture, included the cultural pride that emerged when others asked the ELs questions. The participants offered their perspectives on the importance of inclusion in discussions and reflections of their experiences. Taking the first step to speak out about his culture was a challenge for Hugo and when others demonstrated an interest in him he felt relief and was willing to continue. Hugo wrote, “Others in the class notice that my culture is important to me when I share, and they act like they care; that makes me feel that I can say things to them when they ask questions.”

One experience that meant a lot to Hugo was when a student from another ethnic group, inside of his mathematics classroom, told him that he noticed the positive way that Hugo and other Latinos worked to help one another. That prompted Hugo to reach out to him when he also needed help. He was willing to put into practice a cultural pattern of thinking and speaking that Latinos acted out by doing good for others (Kaplan, 1966; Pascual y Cabo, Prada, & Pereira, 2017). Hugo shared:

In one club here, we plan all kinds of things that Hispanics know about from our culture to serve others in the school and community. One day we had a booth set up like other groups did. When I went to my math class a . . . student told me he noticed me at the booth and that when he sees me with other Hispanics we all seem to work well together as a group. He said he sees that in our classroom as well. He told me that he sees if I get stuck on a problem that another Hispanic student will make sure that I get the help I need. I let him know that helping each other is a big part of the Hispanic culture. He asked me
if we help others. I said yes. He then asked me to help him with a problem he did not understand.

Liliana emphasized a CRP practice that was essential to her comfort, that of cultural respect both from the professor and the other students. Liliana believed that the professor encouraged engagement of the Latino students when he legitimized their contributions. Others identifying her culture led to her experience of validation in the classroom. Liliana wrote:

Whenever I have someone in the classroom, either professor or students who relate to my culture, it makes me pay more attention, and engagement is more than it would be if I saw that they did not. It makes me feel more comfortable and I feel more important and like my ideas matter.

Another aspect related to the second theme, the experience of others identifying your culture, was the respect for other cultures. Enrique shared his experience when he wrote about the unity of everyone in the University classroom. Enrique felt that learning about others’ perspectives on issues broadened his thinking and helped him to consider other viewpoints as significant in addition to his own. He especially welcomed the opportunities he had to learn about different cultures. Enrique shared:

I became part of the . . . University community. Here, the classroom shows no discrimination against any culture; but, they neither show praise or acknowledgment to one specific culture. The classroom is centered around the unity of all communities. Being part of various cultures, I understand that every community has something special to share. Anytime I’m given an opportunity to learn about any culture, I jump with joy.

On the theme respect for other cultures, María felt that empathy for others was equal to receiving the positive recognition of her own culture. One negative experience that María
witnessed toward another student from a different culture caused her to empathize with other minorities about the plight of disrespect that some experience. María identified the positive aspects of each culture as crucial to providing a balance in historical perspectives taught in the classroom. María shared:

Last semester, during our classroom discussions, a lot of times the professor would talk negatively about . . . people. I felt embarrassed, even though I am not from that culture. It was very uncomfortable to me. It was a history class, but a person can teach history without putting down people. As I had told you in my interview, I could not learn in that class. I write about it today because it bothers me so much. We need to respect everyone, even if we do not agree with them or what they did in the past. In the Mexican culture, we are taught to respect others. That professor needed to learn to do the same thing. I think this year since I am no longer in his class I need to go to him and tell him how I feel. I think everyone should always have something good to say about people that are different than us.

The third theme highlighted from the interviews and journal reflections included another element of CRP, support for cultural identity. Cultural identity refers to the sense of belonging to a social group inclusive of such areas as customs, ways of thinking, traditions, language, and heritage that are reflective of cultural norms (Ladson-Billings, 2009). As a part of the Latino community, Jamón knew many who had not yet experienced success in the pre-med track which motivated him to work hard to achieve his dream of doing so. Jamón took pride in his heritage with high hopes to continue to further the contributions of Latinos to his local community. Others supported him with encouragement to achieve his goals. Jamón wanted to represent his culture positively through his hard work. Jamón wrote:
Generally, I see few Hispanics being able to succeed through the pre-med track, and I believe many that I know in the classroom realize this situation as well. The support I have received to overcome this barrier has aided me substantially in my engagement. They push me forward when times are more difficult.

Other stories told included Melodía’s perspective on the support of cultural identity. In addition to Anglo-American interpretations of historical events, the professors encouraged the Mexican point of view. Melodía felt engaged through her inclusion in the academic content. Melodía stated:

Some professors understand that people of different backgrounds will see and understand things differently. In one of my classes, the professor was explaining a certain historical event from the American perspective, but later explained it from the Mexican perspective so we could see both sides of the story. He understood that in his classroom audience there were students who were not from America, or who had parents from Mexico. As I mentioned before, this gives the student a sense of belonging in the classroom which in turn increases their desire to be in the classroom and learn.

The consensus of the ELs’ perspectives demonstrated the significance of support of their cultural identity through the professors’ and students’ inclusion of their Latino contributions in the past and present. Mutual respect and understanding of themselves and others highlighted engagement occurring in the higher education classroom.

The final theme in the interviews and journal writing was support for one’s first language. The participants acknowledged the advantages of having explanations in Spanish when needing clarification of concepts and vocabulary. In one of the reflective journal entries, María discussed how professors used her to help translate materials for others needing assistance,
and she felt valued. She explained things in Spanish and then helped the ELs learn the words in English. María wrote how this helped all of them to understand more in the class. To María, support for her first language, Spanish, meant the emphasis on the Latino practice of helping others to achieve understanding combed with the recognition of the value of one’s primary language. The assistance María gave supported others and María herself. She pointed out that some professors provided encouragement for students in the classroom by acknowledging the value of language. María shared:

Professors want me to understand what they teach, so they make sure there are pictures or presentations to help explain things to other Spanish speakers and me so that we understand things better. They show me respect when I need to use Spanish in the classroom for myself or someone else. I have seen many students be treated the same when they use their first language in class. I got moved into helping them understand the concept of what is going on in class.

Professors, students, and the ELs themselves provided support for the ELs first language. Liliana wrote about working with another Spanish speaking student that she had in many of her classes and how they assisted each other in obtaining academic achievement. She showed how support through the use of the EL’s first language helped to prepare them for their studies in English adequately. Spanish reinforcement enabled Liliana to experience more confidence in her understanding of concepts in English and encouraged her to make progress in the collegiate classroom. Liliana shared:

There’s a girl that I have in almost all my classes, and she’s Hispanic. We study together, and we make reviews for exams. And when we talk about stuff, obviously, we talk in
Spanish or – and English. But it’s just we are able to understand each other better and understand concepts better when we include our language in it.

Additionally, Melodía pointed out how support for her first language allowed ELs to feel safe. When professors showed care and encouragement to the Spanish speaking students their achievement increased. Melodía stated:

Professors are usually happy when they hear students speaking in their first language. As I mentioned before, when I had the opportunity to do so, I was able to better understand the material being taught. It is an advantage because if students feel like they can freely express themselves in their first language they feel safe.

On the other hand, Bella had another perspective on the use of Spanish in the classroom. She feared that other students would not understand what she said and think that she was talking about them. Therefore, Bella avoided the use of Spanish in class. She had a friend she met with outside of the classroom, and they went over the class material together in their primary language to assist one another. Bella felt they had the advantage of using their first language in a private setting to increase their understanding, while not risking their reputations. Bella stated:

In some classroom settings I would not feel comfortable speaking Spanish because I am afraid people might think I am speaking against them. This causes for me to avoid speaking it in order to avoid any confusion.

Another student, Jose Jr., felt it was a privilege to speak in Spanish in the classroom, and he did so periodically with other Spanish speakers. It made him feel included and it connected him to learning for the long term. Jose Jr.’s experience influenced his engagement positively. He felt supported and accepted for his cultural differences with the assurance of his importance and value in the classroom environment. Jose Jr. shared:
Being a native Spanish speaker enables me to communicate with other Spanish speakers in the classroom setting. At times, a classmate and I will discuss a topic being discussed by the professor in Spanish, even though the material is obviously being delivered to us in English. Engaging in our native tongue allows us to make a different connection in our brain, therefore increasing the probability to remember that set of information. It is a privilege to have the freedom to communicate in another language in the classroom. This helps me feel included and accepted for my cultural differences.

In summary, an analysis of the interviews and reflective journals offered additional depth to address research question two. There were four themes explored that included the acknowledgment and recognition of culture in the classroom, the experiences of others identifying your culture, support for cultural identity, and support for first language. The ELs shared in-depth stories of their experiences that provided the basis for their descriptions of classroom engagement.

**Research question 3.** An analysis of the ELs’ responses to research questions one and two provided a profound theoretical understanding of how the findings fit into the CRP framework to address research question three. How does Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) play a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom? To address this research question, the analysis of participants’ interview and journal responses focused on the elements of CRP. Three primary themes emerged from the analysis which relate to the literature, as noted in Figure 4.
Recognition of culture in the classroom. In the literature, the role of CRP was to support student achievement by providing the diverse students the recognition of their culture (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1992). Latino EL respondents shared being acknowledged and included in the classroom context as critical elements to learning. Their backgrounds, values, and heritage were included in the lessons when they were given the opportunities to share both difficult and positive aspects of their lives, such as experiencing poverty, as well as the support received from family. Through the acknowledgment of their culture, pride was evoked to generate the desire to not only participate in the classroom but become an integral part of the learning experience. One example supporting the recognition of culture in the classroom was

Figure 4. Themes to address research question 3.
Melodia’s experience of a sense of belonging in the classroom. The inclusion of her culture in the classroom by her professors played a vital role in her self-confidence as a Latina student. The need to support the culture of students in the classroom surpassed mere social recognition. Through the eyes of the participants, the recognition of culture in the classroom encouraged ELs to become an integral part of the university.

Enrique described another type of experience regarding the acknowledgment and recognition of culture in the classroom and how it affected his engagement. Enrique’s experiences differed from Melodia’s, yet, ultimately led to similar results. When asked how the recognition of culture made him feel, he responded:

The classroom setting never acknowledges the culture of my ethnicity; instead, they inform us about the current events and ancient cultures to show us how they relate to the subject at hand (i.e. a risk management event being related to Hurricane Harvey). In that example, the teacher acknowledges significant events that the classroom understands and experienced. When it involves an ancient culture, we philosophize their ideals and relate it to the environment we live in. This teaching style makes me question what I should see as my culture. Although my Hispanic culture is not represented, I am shown something that I value more: how to value every culture as your own.

*Respect for diversity.* The second theme, the CRP element of respect for diversity, was exemplified by student responses related to aspects of respect of others’ cultures in the classroom. They offered both positive and negative experiences of this aspect. Overall, student feedback offered examples of empathy expressed by students toward one another from different backgrounds and cultures (Riley et al., 2016). They acknowledged the respect that some professors modeled through inclusion of their own culture and the cultures of others. Examples
of demonstrations of respect for diversity included opportunities to share diverse points of view regarding historical events, as well as, a variety of religious perspectives in the classroom.

The focus on learning was dependent on cultural respect and identity (Han et al., 2014). Respondents suggested that Latino ELs and students from different cultures were provided with opportunities to experience cultural appreciation in their learning environment (McDonald et al., 2013). Enrique’s perspective on respect for diversity centered “around the unity of all communities.” When given the opportunity to integrate their life stories in the classroom, the CRP element of respect for diversity opened up the students to risk sharing their perspectives, minimizing their fear of recourse.

Having a voice in the classroom was another aspect of this CRP element which played a role in Latino perceptions of their classroom experiences (Chang, 2013; Cheeseman & Gapp, 2012). Stories the participants told in the interviews and journals of their personal experiences expressed their desire to inform others about their Latino values and contributions. The experiences they shared included their plights of the past, as well as recent experiences that motivated them to participate in learning. The stories of poverty, the significance of becoming the first to complete a college education and knowing that there is someone else that understands your perspective in the classroom were areas the students wanted to continue to share with others.

An example of the significance of respect for diversity through having a voice in the classroom came from the participant, Liliana. In class, students were giving speeches on their hero. When Liliana stood up, she informed the students that her mother recently finished her degree in education, and she wants to be a bilingual teacher. Liliana and her family are Mexican immigrants and recently came to the United States with limited English skills. Through hard
work and perseverance, Liliana’s mother completed the last year of her college degree in Texas.

Liliana stated:

I am proud of my mamá for finishing a college degree. She is smart and wants to make a difference for other Spanish speaking students so that they can learn English and get a good job. She is now Mexican-American [emphasis added], and she is here to give back.

In our culture, we give to others and I am proud of that.

Liliana informed me that the class stood up clapping. She commented that her “mamá” was not a hero in history and may not appear important to others. But Liliana believed her “mamá” made history in her family and she is so proud of her. The ELs perceived having a voice in the learning environment as significant to their cultural pride. Participants having a voice in the classroom is an example of a learner-centered approach to new learning with culturally significant prior experiences (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Support of primary language. The third principal CRP theme was the support of primary language. In the classroom opportunities were provided for the ELs to speak Spanish with others. The experiences enhanced understanding and augmented cultural relevance to the educational content (Banks, 2013). The role of CRP was to tie all aspects of learning to the ELs’ need to experience their cultural traditions and primary language (Ladson-Billings, 2004). In the literature, Ladson-Billings (2009) held that through the essence of the students’ culture the elements of CRP secured student engagement in the classroom. The ELs shared that having experiences to speak Spanish in the classroom caused them to feel more included there. Hugo shared his story from his freshman year beginning with an apology to me.

I know this isn’t exactly an example of support for speaking Spanish inside of the classroom. It is an example of support for my first language with me standing in the door
of the classroom with my mamá at the door crying. NO parent comes to college to talk to their son in class! When I saw her, I knew there had to be something wrong. Mamá knows no English, and she was desperate for help. She was found wandering around the college trying to find someone who spoke Spanish, so she could find out where I was to talk to me. A Spanish speaking student showed her the way to me. Of course, I needed to speak Spanish to mamá and learned that she needed money to take the bus. She walked over a mile to get to me and had three more miles to go. She explained to me that Ms. D. would be paying her that day for house cleaning and that she would return to give me the money back. She had no money or food in the house. At first, I was so glad the class could not understand her words. Then I thought, poverty is an emergency, and she made sure that I got an education so that I would not have a life full of emergencies too. I proudly handed her the money. The professor asked me if everything was alright. I told him everything since he was cool. He changed the point of the lesson that day on supply and demand. He even used some Spanish words in it! My mamá was the superstar of the class experience. I am so proud of mamá.

The theory of CRP identified the element of language as the basis for the paradox of both pride and struggle for immigrant students. The participants appreciated the opportunity to speak Spanish in the classroom to clarify understanding, and yet sincerely desired to obtain mastery in English. Rishel and Zuercher (2016) promoted the CRP element of cultural integration and language support to emphasize the positive aspects of retaining one’s primary language without the exclusion of English language development. In this study, the enthusiasm that the participants expressed about speaking Spanish revealed their cultural identity was tied to language and customs. When provided opportunities to discuss the learning in Spanish, they felt
more confident in their understanding. The ELs considered this practice as significant. Increasing English skills to communicate with other cultures was also seen as valuable. Enrique’s words summed up the ELs’ desires to add another language without excluding their own. He stated, “We are not alone here. Everyone, and what they have to say makes a difference.”

**Chapter 4 Summary**

In summary, six major themes emerged overall with support from the findings: (a) recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, (c) having a voice in the classroom, (d) support for understanding the course content, (e) interacting with other students, (f) use of primary language. An analysis of the participants’ interview and journal responses offered data to address research questions one and two. Theme exploration supported that recognition of culture in the classroom was a chief influential factor to engagement. Furthermore, additional subthemes reinforced that classroom experiences inclusive of primary language was essential to the bilingual Latino students to fortify their understanding. The reflective journals contributed to the identification of specific themes to address research questions one and two. The ELs articulated experiences that provided the foundation for their explanations of classroom engagement based upon the following: (a) the acknowledgment and recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) the experiences of others identifying your culture, (c) support for cultural identity, and (d) support for first language.

Lastly, to address research question three an analysis of the participants’ interview and journal responses focused on the theoretical understanding of how the data fit into the CRP framework that relates to the literature. Three primary themes provided an understanding of the Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom that included: (a) recognition of
culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, and (c) support of primary language.

The elements of Chapter 5 consist of an introduction, my discussion of the study and the interpretation of the results. It includes the limitations of the study, implications of the results, and recommendations for further research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study’s results and significance.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The increase of minority students in American higher education institutions has created a need to focus on cultural recognition to improve student engagement in the classroom (Bunner, 2017; Han et al., 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2011b; Wang, 2016). During this past decade, with the enrollment of 18- to 24-year old Latino students nearly reaching an 18% increase (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), the need to support the engagement of Latino ELs in the classroom is ever-increasing (Beal & Rudolph, 2015; Hall & Martin, 2013; Hansen-Thomas, & Sourdot, 2015). The engagement issue affects post-secondary institutions through the academic performance results of ELs that influence college completion rates (Han et al., 2014). Therefore, in response to the engagement issue and recognition of the limited research on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) for Latino ELs in higher education, I explored the perspectives of Latino ELs regarding CRP as a solution.

By way of a transcendental phenomenological approach, I documented the experiences of engagement of nine undergraduate Latino ELs. In this chapter, I present and discuss the results through summarization of the findings. The chapter also includes a presentation of the implications and how the findings correlate to the related research. In addition, an exploration of the limitations is presented. The implications of the study relate to practices regarding the engagement of ELs in the higher education classroom, as well as, those for policy and the theory of CRP. I conclude by making recommendations for further research and summarize the significance of the results of this study on ELs’ experiences of engagement.
Summary of the Results

Through a phenomenological investigation, I sought answers to the research questions that involved the use of data collected through responses to a demographic survey, interviews, and reflective journaling. The analysis of the data gathered from nine Latino ELs included their perceptions of their classroom experiences. The results included my evaluation of the role of CRP for Latino ELs in the undergraduate classroom to answer the three research questions that guided the study:

RQ1: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe the factors that influence their classroom engagement?

RQ2: How do sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement?

RQ3: How does CRP play a role in sophomore undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom?

An analysis of the data revealed major themes corresponding to CRP and participants’ perspectives relative to each of the research questions. In Figure 5, there is a summary of the six major themes to address the research questions. The six themes were used to approach research question one regarding factors that influence Latino ELs’ engagement. Four of the themes relating to how Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement address research question two. Then to address research question three, three themes emerged relative to the role of CRP as it related to the engagement of the Latino ELs.
Figure 5. Major themes that emerged.

The six overall significant themes were developed and explored in Chapter 4 to address research question one. The investigation was quite complex, with an exploration of 29 subthemes, as noted in Table 3. Though the multitude of subthemes contributed to my understanding of the themes, the six specific themes included here added particular depth to my analysis. As seen in Figure 2, the subtheme of cultural identity supported the theme of recognition of culture which participants identified as attributing to their sense of acceptance. The Latino ELs wanted to become an integral part of the classroom experience through participation that led to their sense of belonging. Prior research regarding CRP included the integration of culture for minority students in the K–12 classroom (Banks, 2013). In this study, there was evidence of bilingual Latino ELs’ engagement due to the consideration of their culture in the higher education classroom discussions.
The second theme, respect for diversity, included a subtheme regarding participants’ emphasis on listening to classmates from different cultures. Hearing others’ perspectives was integral to their learning. Listening to diverse students deepened the Latino ELs’ understanding of the curriculum content to include actual people and their circumstances.

Next, the third theme of having a voice in the classroom included six subthemes in the data collection. The professors highlighted the subtheme of offering opportunities to hear opinions in response to the participants’ passion for respect shown to all cultures. Some of the professors provided the opportunity for culturally diverse classmates to interact and discuss issues from their viewpoints.

Regarding the theme of support for understanding the course content, I examined in depth the effects of one of the six subthemes, visual representations, on influencing the Latino ELs’ engagement. The participants commented on how professors using visuals to explain the course content clarified the meaning of the vocabulary. Both the confidence that the ELs would gain with the use of visuals and the uncertainty they would experience without them were indicators of their prioritization during instruction.

The fifth significant theme, interacting with other students, had support from the subtheme, working in small groups. During this kind of experience, the Latino ELs built confidence among peers to ask questions and to learn the meaning of English words for subject matter clarity. The small group experience included other students who were willing to provide explanations. The environment was less intimidating, allowing the Latino ELs to ask questions.

The last theme explored to answer research question one was the use of primary language. Through the in-depth exploration of the subtheme, a classmate explaining a concept in Spanish, the Latino ELs’ experiences of exchanges in Spanish among other bilingual classmates,
enabled the participants to understand concepts. On occasion, participants required assurances that the use of their primary language could provide for them. The use of Spanish clarified the meaning of the new words in English, giving the Latino ELs more confidence in their understanding.

Four significant themes were identified to address the second research question. The first theme, displayed in Figure 3, included acknowledgment and recognition of culture in the classroom. Experiences in the classroom when the participants were invited to share their culture positively impacted their self-confidence and pride in being Latino students. In the second theme, they describe their engagement through the importance of inclusion in discussions and reflections of their experiences. The participants’ enthusiasm demonstrated how much mutual respect occurring during those experiences meant to them. Their inclusion was vital for them in the entire classroom community with the same afforded to others.

Through support for cultural identity in the third theme, the participants recognized how critical their inclusion was as Latinos in areas of language, customs, and heritage (Cole et al., 2016; Han et al., 2014). The participants engaged in the classroom when there was an inclusion of past and current Latino contributions. In the fourth theme, support of their first language, the participants recognized how essential explanations are in Spanish when clarification of concepts and vocabulary need to occur. The feeling of safety would take place for them when they understood the content in the lessons. Therefore, in response to the second research question, I found that Latino ELs described their engagement using four themes that directly relate to their culture.

An examination of the Latino ELs’ responses in the data relating to the theoretical
framework of CRP was used to answer research question three. The influence of literature in the investigation involved the identification of three themes. As seen in Figure 4, the first, recognition of culture in the classroom, provided the aspect of the Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences there. The participants' acknowledgment and inclusion were critical components of learning. The second theme, respect for diversity, emphasized the Latino participants viewpoint that the respect for others’ cultures in the classroom was significant to them as well as their own. Results of respect included having a voice in the classroom to provide the learner-centered approach to learning. The last theme, support of primary language, the participant responses included having experiences to speak Spanish in the classroom would give the feeling of inclusion. The component of language was a critical aspect of the ELs’ culture.

An analysis of the overall findings supported the fundamental tenets of CRP. The theory of CRP, which provided the foundation for this study, demonstrated how diverse students relate to the academic content in their educational environment (Gay, 2013). Standard to CRP, is the connection of culture to the commonalities among diverse students’ perceptions of their classroom experiences. The CRP aspects that Latino ELs’ described as factors influencing their engagement were related to recognition, respect, and support for their cultural identity.

The significance of the study was due to limited research on CRP in higher education classrooms regarding Latino ELs’ engagement. The study warranted the exploration into the experiences of these students. Though both Ladson-Billings (2014, 1995, 1992) and Gay (2013, 2002) researched the effects of CRP in K–12 education, their influence upon others, such as Han et al. (2014), pointed out that further research regarding CRP and engagement was significant to explore for diverse college students.
The study was influenced by other studies that included the essential recognition of the cultural identity of diverse students. An example included demonstrations of respect by faculty and students. Additionally, there was the support of cultural attributes in the classroom to increase the understanding of course content (Banks, 2013, 1997; Cole et al., 2016; Gay, 2013; Han et al., 2014). Through the transcendental phenomenological approach, I focused attention on Latino EL participants’ lived experiences with the phenomenon of engagement (Butler, 2016; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014).

The conclusions drawn from the analysis of my findings support the theory of CRP through the bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their lived experiences in the higher education classroom. Related to the CRP aspects were recognition, respect, and support for their cultural identity. A contribution from the study included a deeper understanding of how CRP affects the bilingual EL participants’ perceptions of their classroom experiences. Additionally, the Latino ELs stressed the significance of modeling empathy for other cultures which added depth to the CRP concept of respect for others.

**Discussion of the Results**

The results of the study supported the theory of CRP. The findings supported the CRP related aspects introduced by Ladson-Billings (1995, 1992) as crucial elements that should be offered to Latino ELs to experience classroom engagement. Specific to research question one, certain factors which influenced the participants’ classroom engagement included six main themes, as well as subthemes. The themes included the following CRP factors: (a) recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, (c) having a voice in the classroom, (d) support for understanding the course content, (e) interacting with other students, and (f) use of primary language. The subthemes provided additional support that bilingual Latino ELs
required, the emphasis on language and understanding as scaffolds to elevate them in the learning process (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

**Factors that influence Latino ELs’ classroom engagement.** It was necessary to analyze in what way the Latino EL participants provided a deeper understanding of how CRP affects their perceptions of recognition of culture through acceptance shown to them by others to approach the first research question. Continuous input by eight out of the nine participants concerned the value of respecting others and their differences, while also experiencing the pride of respecting oneself. The passion for mutual support was foundational to the engagement experience. The Latino ELs required having a voice in the classroom, but their viewpoints included everyone having an opportunity to share alternative perspectives on issues according to each one’s own life experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Professors provided Latino viewpoints and cultural perspectives to offer students a sense of pride and satisfaction. Practices including their perspectives resulted in cultural pride emerging. The elimination of such occurrences in certain classrooms interfered with expanding learning; isolation prevailed in those cases.

Critical aspects of engagement included the Latino ELs’ feelings of belonging in the classroom and receiving respect from others through the acceptance shown to them. Support for understanding the course content included the needed interactions with other students through being involved in small groups or with a partner to check their understanding. Some participants were hesitant to speak with fluent English speakers due to their accent, limited fluency, or confusion about the meaning of vocabulary associated with the course content. When the professors allowed the use of primary language to clarify aspects of the lesson there was an increase in confidence that led to classroom engagement. The Latino ELs expressed that such
practices made them more comfortable, and they experienced the feeling that they belonged.

**Latino ELs describe their classroom engagement.** To address research question two, an analysis of the Latino ELs’ in-depth stories of their experiences provided the cornerstone of their accounts of classroom engagement. Based upon these accounts were the following: (a) the acknowledgment and recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) the experiences of others identifying your culture, (c) support for cultural identity, and (d) support for first language. Banks (2013) shared that Latino students’ cultural recognition in the K–12 environment included their language and values integrated into the curriculum and classroom practices. The findings in the study showed that recognition of culture and support for cultural identity in the college classroom was a needed integration as well based upon the Latino ELs’ responses. The absence of those elements increased the feelings of exclusion without them.

The mutual sharing with students from different backgrounds and cultures was motivation for the Latino ELs to get to know others. Classroom experiences with diverse professors and students developed into opportunities for the class to identify the attributes of the Latino culture which led to both giving and receiving respect and support. The Latino ELs needed to experience mutual respect to transform uncertainty into feelings of self-confidence. The participants recognized the value of having respect for one another. Also, significant was the realization by others of respect due to the Latinos for their cultural differences through the support for their cultural identity. Jamón commented on how his becoming the first college graduate in his family would contribute to the Latino community. There was pride in knowing Spanish since he knew how much the community he lived in needed Spanish-speaking doctors to help patients understand their illnesses. His classmates respected his goals and gave him the continual assurance to keep going through the tough coursework out of respect for the
contribution he would be making. Latino ELs’ perception of this type of support included practices in the classroom that include regard for themselves and others. Results indicated that respect was a stronghold for the Latino ELs wanting to participate and learn in the classroom.

The ELs needed to know that others were listening to evoke pride and self-confidence. Latino ELs shared that the support for their first language was critical to their engagement. When opportunities arose to include Spanish in learning new vocabulary or discussing a concept with a peer, the students respected the professor for including such classroom practices. Familiarity with vocabulary was essential, and translations in Spanish helped to equip the Latino EL students with understanding.

The role of CRP in Latino ELs’ perceptions of classroom experiences. For the third research question, I addressed how the bilingual Latino ELs’ experiences fit into the CRP theoretical framework developed and expanded upon by Ladson-Billings (1995, 1992) and Gay (2002, 2000). Three central themes included an understanding of the Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom: (a) recognition of culture in the classroom, (b) respect for diversity, and (c) support of primary language. The perceptions of the participants added a new viewpoint to the recognition of culture. The results indicated that the bilingual Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences included not only the recognition of their own culture but the culture of others. One contribution from the results of this research included the recognition of culture in the classroom through the modeling of empathy for others’ cultures. The Latino students demonstrated concern for others in the classroom, and they knew everyone must receive and reciprocate respect for one another. Showing support to others was not only inclusive but a focal point of the engagement experience. A challenge occurred when a participant had a negative experience in the classroom with a professor’s lack of respect for another student. This
EL knew that she had to try and reconcile the situation to experience engagement in the classroom.

Another aspect achieved through the analysis of the results was adding a deeper understanding of how CRP played a more defined role in the perceptions of bilingual Latino ELs’ experiences in the classroom. Through triangulation, multiple methods of data collection provided validity to explaining the role of CRP. First, the demographic survey provided information on the qualifications of possible participants by pre-established protocol (see Appendix A). Secondly, in the following example, reflective journal accounts revealed in-depth coverage of the support two participants needed for their primary language. The participant, Liliana, felt fear when being unsure of the meaning of English words. She did not want to say something wrong in English. She shared an incident of having to speak in class due to the “requirement” of presenting a speech. When the students clapped afterward, she wrote that she cried with joy in the restroom after class. The CRP aspects of respect and support influenced her perception of that experience.

Another participant, Bella, wrote that many times, she chose not to speak to avoid others seeing her as dumb or illiterate. Bella’s writing in English was exact and clear to read, but the reality of her fear showed as a real experience for her when reading her responses. She waited until after class to talk to a Spanish speaker for assurance that she understood the lesson. Bella shared a class experience of having a partner who also knew Spanish to work in a small group on a project together. She said they only spoke Spanish to one another a few times but knowing she could, gave her the support to learn in that class. The CRP element of use of primary language allowed Bella to grow in her confidence while working in English. The additional participant data through reflective journaling added validity to the results of the analysis.
Thirdly, the analysis of interviews offered CRP elements through the ELs describing their engagement with support from professors. Questions about the use of visuals to increase understanding or having interactions with others in the class received responses that demonstrated the significance of those CRP aspects. An example Melodía talked about was when she finally understood what the professor was talking about when she showed her a picture of a desert. The professor had accidentally written the word “dessert” on the board. Melodía looked the word up in her dictionary, and for half of the class, she could not make sense of the lesson. Then when students broke up into groups, Melodía walked up to her to ask what she meant showing her the dictionary. She did not let the missing “s” stop her perseverance. The participants shared story-after-story about what must occur in the classroom for them to learn. Their primary language was a significant factor that the Latino ELs mentioned due to their desire to understand the course content and genuinely communicate with others.

**Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

To achieve engagement in the higher education classroom, diverse students need to experience the recognition of their culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014), the first major theme in this study. The ELs shared examples in their responses of how cultural recognition encourages them to listen and engage in the learning. EL participant, Federico, shared that he wants to be recognized and share his culture with others. He feels that his experiences can benefit others’ learning in the classroom. Gay (2013) expressed that the recognition of culture is one of the motivating factors for empowering students and validating the significance of their place in the classroom. Federico’s perspectives on the significance of poverty in the study of economics added another vantage point to the course content. Distinguished were cultural background experiences as relevant to the course through the recognition of his culture. The participant,
María, shared that respect for others was critical to her. In support of the second major theme, respect for diversity, the Latino ELs provided examples of other cultures showing them respect. They clarified that even though there were differences among them, there would remain regard for others. Jamón illustrated this through mutual collaboration in the religion course with no one allowing their belief system differences to taint their listening to one another’s perspectives. Moll and González (2004) shared the funds of knowledge concept which means the cultural development of skills and knowledge. The development of cultural skills promotes respect for diversity affecting how students interact with one another. Classroom experiences need to provide the expansion of cultural respect (Moll & González, 2004).

The third theme showed that through having a voice in the classroom, Latino ELs had opportunities to exemplify areas that promote cultural pride and perseverance (Bunner, 2017). Bunner (2017) shared that the voice of the student is critical to the culturally responsive classroom. The findings support that it is essential for Latino ELs to have opportunities to align or deviate from other historical narratives or viewpoints to solidify themselves as contributors to the academic content (Harrison & Shi, 2016).

The landmark studies of Ladson-Billings (2014, 2011, 1995, 1994, 1992), showed that inclusive elements of culture in the classroom promoted cultural identity, another CRP support toward the achievement of engagement. In this study, one aspect of the inclusion of Latino ELs’ cultural identity was through having opportunities to speak Spanish in the classroom with others. Campa (2013) shared through the data analysis in her study that devaluing Latino ELs’ home language leads to denouncing their cultural identities. Through analysis, the fourth major theme, support for understanding the course content, emphasized the ELs’ need for first language support. Further support for ELs to understand the course content included the use of visual
representations (Johnston & Karafotias, 2016; Metros & Bennett, 2004). Melodía responded to
the second interview probes stating that visual representations provided connections to the
learning. The fifth major theme in this study, interacting with other students, showed that the
Latino ELs require the pairing up with a study partner or small group. In the example from
Bella, she stressed the help from others as elevating her confidence level. Gay (2013) attributed
teachers who employ opportunities for diverse students to work together with the elevation of
academic achievement.

The sixth major theme in this study, interacting with other students, demonstrates that
Latino ELs require others in the class to support the inclusion of Spanish when they need it for
increasing comprehension. This inclusion expands the learning environment with an essential
language element toward mastery of the course content. The study results aligned with the prior
research of Banks (2013), Gay (2013), and Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2002), on the significance
of language to diverse students. Lucas and Villegas (2013) and the findings from this study
show that explanations occurring in ELs’ primary language provided them assurance of their
understanding of the coursework. Gay (2013) credited students’ primary language as being a
central part of their culture.

Challenges existed for Latino ELs in classrooms that offered minimal opportunities to
affirm an understanding of the course content through translation. In order to address these
challenges, Latino Els needed to adjust to language barriers using another means. The EL
participants made plans to address understanding vocabulary and concepts taught when there
were no chances for interpretation. Han et al. (2014) shared that training instructors in a setting
with teaching that is not in English benefit them to pursue pedagogies to serve ELs. Latino ELs
sought opportunities to study after class with another Spanish-speaking student to discuss the
materials covered. Another was recording the discussions and lectures to go over unfamiliar terms and concepts with other Spanish speakers in study groups. Participants requested to meet with the professor during office hours for additional help in understanding the course content. Some ELs purchased Spanish dictionaries to reinforce the new vocabulary with terminology in Spanish. Thus, the Latino ELs described three CRP elements as factors influencing their engagement: support of first language, recognition of cultural identity, and comprehension of course content.

When instructors support the inclusion of life experiences of diverse students, deeper understanding occurs (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014). This premise was evident through the expression of different ideas and perspectives in the classroom that improved the learning outcomes of students. Participant agreements with the perspectives of the professor or other students were not necessary, solely opportunities for the Latino ELs to express themselves. Evidence of this occurred as they wrestled with the differences and commonalities of their experiences among themselves and learned to accept that there are other points of view (Ladson-Billings, 1992). One participant shared a different perspective on economics due to the influence of the Mexican Cartel where he grew up. The EL added another economic viewpoint to the class due to experiences from personal circumstances. In that example, from the professor’s feedback, there was more in-depth understanding for students. The professor took this opportunity to introduce the effect of the Black Market on the economy. For Latino ELs to experience engagement, they had to share their life experiences as well as see others do the same. The identifying of personal culture and respect for others’ cultures resulted in class discussions with all of the classmates. The students learned different perspectives regarding the course content.
The acceptance of one’s own culture with mutual respect for the perceptions of others resulted in the development of new learning.

Furthermore, the respect for others’ perspectives justified bilingual Latino ELs’ engagement as being dependent upon their exercise of empathy for others as being equal to the value of their receipt of positive cultural recognition. Exemplifying an emphasis on promoting cultural pride must occur through opportunities for all cultural groups within the classroom. Such experiences influence classroom engagement for the bilingual Latino ELs in the higher education classroom.

Another CRP researcher, Gay (2013), emphasized the premise that instruction for diverse students involved more than the delivery of academic material. Within the findings of the study, there was a connection between engagement of Latino ELs and the transfer of knowledge, which included a complete and accurate account of what transpired to coincide with the diverse students’ core values and beliefs. The connection must take place for the Latino ELs to feel like they are respected. This element of respect was critical to participation for the Latino ELs. As noted by Gay (2000, 2002), support for Latino ELs in the classroom extended beyond offering definitions in the content with the instructors making applications to culture and diversity. Evidence from the study showed the need for Latino ELs’ inclusion of input (Gay, 2000, 2002).

Research literature from the 1990s regarding CRP and engagement concentrated on diverse students and their need to be able to understand and relate to the classroom environment through various forms of inclusion (Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995). Whereas in more recent years, the CRP and engagement literature has included a focus on strategies that engage particular groups of learners (Han et al., 2014; Jackson, 2015; Nieto, 2013). Gay (2013)
emphasized engaging students by filtering the content and delivery thereof through the Latino ELs own cultures.

Banks (2013) emphasized the role of language in the expression of students’ culture and background to secure the connection that ELs require for cultural relevance to course content. Stemming from his multicultural educational research, Banks (1995, 2013) provided additional foundational support for the CRP approach to addressing the challenges ELs face regarding engagement. Also, Banks (2013) showed cultural inclusiveness as support for engagement through the use of inclusive teaching strategies.

Recent literature on CRP relative to Latino ELs pointed out, “incorporating culturally appropriate pedagogical practices that take into consideration particular strengths and needs of Latino students may enhance their sense of belonging, especially in predominantly White institutions (PWIs)” (Pak, 2018, p. 77). The article examined service learning as a link to engagement on campus as well as in the college community but without reference to providing engagement for Latino ELs specifically in the higher education classroom. Pak (2018) provided feedback from the Latino ELs, giving them a voice on the effects of service-learning on their engagement. No current literature on engagement for undergraduate bilingual Latino ELs through the lens of CRP include the perspectives of recognition, respect, and support to demonstrate the significance of the study. The voices of the students remain in need of further research. The following demonstrates how this study helped to fill in the gap.

The findings stemmed from the classroom experiences of engagement from nine bilingual undergraduate Latino ELs in the sophomore year of college. Through this transcendental phenomenological study, an exploration of the shared phenomenon of classroom engagement provided the perspectives of Latino ELs’ common experiences (van Manen, 1990,
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy provided the groundwork for the engagement phenomenon. This CRP foundation led to the extensive research on Latino ELs’ classroom experiences to answer the research problem of their engagement in the higher education classroom. The Latino ELs’ responses aligned with the role CRP plays in their perceptions of their experiences in the classroom, which include the aspects of culture regarding recognition, respect, and support. A theoretical understanding of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy through the Latino ELs’ voices in the data furthered this research on the Latino perceptions of their experiences of engagement in the higher education classroom through cultural awareness and contributions (Gay, 2013). The study afforded participants with several opportunities to share their lived experiences related to the phenomenon of engagement.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings are limited in that the study occurred in one higher education institution, and the data collection took place during one semester. Both were also delimitations of the study. The use of more than one location to acquire data may prove to provide additional insight and data results characterized from one region to another or from one university to another as diverse groups of Latinos reside in different areas of the United States. Results from other locations or universities may influence the participant feedback on classroom engagement. The use of one higher education institution could limit the deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Due to the limitation of data collection during one semester, the study could not be transferred to a broader scope of time outside of this research. Additionally, a change to the data collection period to include the entire sophomore year of the participants may allow researchers to retrieve added student experiences that influence the results from the participants. The study
was limited to include the use of sophomores as participants between the ages of 19–21 years. An examination of senior level students may have broadened the experiences of participants to provide additional findings regarding engagement throughout the college years. The scope of the study to include sophomores was due to having participant results that included one specific college level group’s engagement experiences. Therefore, senior participants would have been outside of the range of the study. Also, due to the use of sophomores in this study between the ages of 19–21 years, the findings could not be transferable to a broader age group or level of college outside of this research.

The study was limited to eight students from Mexico and one from Colombia. The inclusion of Latino EL students all from one country or region could have characterized the effects of lived experiences influencing engagement to ELs coming from a specific area. The results could deepen the understanding of the phenomenon in that location. Further study limitations included a sample size of nine participants. A larger number of participants may provide additional perspectives that influence study results but in qualitative research context is very important. The findings of the study could be transferred to a similar population who share the same demographic of the nine bilingual Latino sophomore participants. Additionally, the study was limited to participants using the ASC for at least one semester to gain access to participants at the university. Due to the delimitation of participant retrieval from the ASC, the findings may not be transferable to a broader group outside of those that are not using the ASC.

**Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

**Practice.** The implication of the results for practice in the college classroom include the CRP factors of recognition, respect, and support. Practice in the higher education classroom needs to include the recognition of the Latino ELs’ culture by offering opportunities for these
students to share their perspectives. Recognition is the practice of being inclusive of all cultures represented in the classroom and providing each one with opportunities to make contributions to gain recognition and respect for themselves and others. Practices of inclusion include such examples as the professors providing students the opportunity to work in small groups, or classroom discussions with a system in place for the random selection of participants.

Additionally, the findings showed the importance of professors creating a welcoming environment for Latino ELs by modeling respect for all cultures in the classroom. Modeling respect for cultural identity includes permitting the Latino ELs’ use of their primary language to promote understanding. Further demonstrations of respect include professors giving students a voice in the classroom to inform others about their Latino values and contributions.

Also, shown in the findings is the need for support that professors provide through offering opportunities for Latino ELs to interact with others in the classroom. The findings indicate that inclusive practice can also incorporate professors using visual representations of course content or engaging in discussions to increase Latino ELs’ understanding of vocabulary and ideas in the lessons. Thus, the implication of the results for practice include the CRP factors of recognition, respect, and support.

Policy. The implications regarding policy support the need for faculty development regarding CRP to increase Latino ELs’ engagement in the classroom (Beal & Rudolph, 2015; Han et al., 2014). University requirements should encourage faculty participation in opportunities to expand their knowledge regarding CRP practices to use in the higher education classroom (Han et al., 2014; Lucey & White, 2017). The alignment should occur with new accreditation policies that include cultural diversity awareness activities in the program completion plans and specifically within activities in the classroom (College Delegate Assembly,
The basis for the faculty development should be on the CRP literature and the input offered through the voices of the Latino ELs (Bunner, 2017; Chang, 2013).

**Theory.** The implications related to theory include the need for theorists to look deeper into the aspect of the Latino ELs’ desire to witness empathy modeled for other cultures in the higher education classroom. Further research could explore this aspect of empathy beyond the one university in this study. The CRP Theory could be expanded to include the Latino ELs’ need to witness empathy modeled for other cultures as a factor influencing their experience of engagement, as this was unique to this study. The CRP theory supported cultural integration in the classroom (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). In this study, the participants confirmed the significance of their culture in providing them a sense of belonging, but also pointed out that they wanted to see it happening with all cultures (Patton, Harper, & Harris, 2015). Another implication relative to theory includes the need for theorists to explore further what role the cultures of other minorities have in influencing Latino ELs’ engagement.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Due to the study involving one university, during one semester that included a small number of participants, the recommendation is for a larger scale study that takes place over a more extended period. By using a broader scale with an increase in the participant size between 13–16 students from various universities an investigator can explore a broader and deeper understanding of the phenomenon of engagement of EL college students. Due to the limited focus in research on Latino college-age students’ engagement further recommendations include conducting additional studies of engagement beyond the K–12 realm to include Latino ELs. Over the past couple of years, a limited number of researchers have begun to question the significance of engagement for Latino students in higher education universities, and a few
isolated studies have begun to emerge which are included in Chapter 2 (Burgos-Cienfuegos, 2015; Kim et al., 2014; Riley et al., 2016).

Also, expanding engagement research to involve students in their senior year may add new perspectives on engagement due to the students combined years of experience in the college classroom. Further studies on classroom engagement based on the length of time in the United States can extend the knowledge base (Rojas-Garcia, 2013). Additional investigations on the college year (Bovill, Bulley, & Morss, 2011), or the amount of family living near the student (Campa, 2013) can enable an investigator to extend the understanding of the phenomenon of engagement of EL university students.

Additional recommendations include studies to examine the CRP aspects of recognition, respect, and support for Latino ELs due to the limited research currently available on Latino ELs and CRP. In a new study, researchers could use a focus group for the Latino EL students to discuss the CRP aspects and how those aspects affect classroom experiences. Hearing the perspectives from other students may add another view to their responses that expand upon or differ from interview questions or journal writing. Based on my findings, the recommendation is to broaden the research to look deeper into a model of empathy and respect for others’ cultures in the classroom. In the current study, the Latino ELs individually emphasized the importance of this aspect. Other researchers can look at this perspective through a more in-depth focus on working to show how this is even more important with ELs and finding out why. The outcomes could add depth to a model of empathy through an exploration of perspectives from a variety of cultures.
Conclusion

In this transcendental phenomenological study, I examined the common experiences of engagement of Latino ELs as a shared phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of bilingual Latino EL sophomore undergraduates on their engagement in the higher education classroom. My analysis of the findings answered each of the three research questions. First, this study focused on the participants’ perceptions concerning the factors that influence their engagement in the classroom. Secondly, I examined how they described their engagement. Third, I analyzed how CRP contributed to Latino ELs’ perceptions of their experiences in the classroom. The following will outline the investigative steps and the conclusions to the study.

To begin the investigative steps, I used the theory of CRP to guide the conceptual framework of this study. Through the examination of the previous literature, I identified the elements of CRP to include in the interview and journal questions. After my examination of the participants’ responses, I identified CRP themes and subthemes in order to elaborate on the elements critical to the engagement of Latino ELs. While searching for answers to the research questions, I used the CRP framework to determine the factors that engaged and the factors that hindered the engagement of bilingual Latino undergraduate ELs in the higher education classroom. I hoped to provide students a voice to express their viewpoints and to make a small contribution regarding the elements necessary for engagement to occur in the classroom.

Through an analysis of the findings, I was able to represent the voices and experiences of the Latino ELs with engagement issues. Using epoché, I was able to discern phenomena by setting aside my preconceptions of ideas (Butler, 2016; van Manen, 2014). Therefore, I could hear the voices of the participants regarding both their perceptions of engaging and hindering
factors of engagement. I learned from the participants that one crucial factor for the Latino ELs was the recognition of the cultures of all of the students in the classroom. I also learned that recognition was critical to motivating them to participate. Meaningful learning experiences for them involved working alongside others and learning from one another in addition to solely hearing from the faculty (Amechi, & Estera, 2017). They recognized vital aspects of their life experiences that they could contribute to the learning experiences in the classroom. Next, I will look at how certain factors both engaged and hindered the Latino ELs.

Entwined with the Latino ELs’ perceptions of engaging factors, there were also hindering factors which included examples of professors and students disregarding respect for others. The participants shared the importance of opportunities to hear others' opinions, even when differing from their own. I discovered that when professors did not provide opportunities for students to share their backgrounds, discouragement arose. Additionally, the Latino ELs described their primary language as a central aspect of their culture. For the participants, the role of their first language in the classroom was both an engaging and hindering factor. I learned that when given opportunities to discuss concepts or content vocabulary with another Spanish speaker, the Latino ELs’ confidence levels magnified. In contrast, the absence of opportunities to go over concepts in Spanish made the participants feel like outsiders.

Through my review of the literature, I discovered that equipping educators to implement classroom practices which develop students’ cultural identities were foundational to supporting the significance of culture (Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). I explored CRP approaches, which included discovering the cultural strengths of students to support academic achievement for Latino ELs (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Moll & González, 2004; Nieto, 2010). The literature supported my investigation in that the inclusion of culture in the classroom was integral to
student engagement in the K–12 environment (Gay, 2013). The results of this study suggest that
the same is true in the higher education classroom. The findings from my study support that
engaging factors relate to giving support to one another while demonstrating respect for diversity
and culture in the process.

The literature delineates the value of minority cultures and the related elements of CRP.
The findings were consistent with the literature review in that the described aspects of cultural
recognition were essential to the Latino ELs (Gay, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2013). I could see
how learning about culture broadened their viewpoints while maintaining the value of their own.
Before my research, I was not aware of how essential the rights and views of others were to the
Latino ELs. Though cultural pride was relevant and fundamental to their engagement,
empathizing with others and hearing their voices was just as significant to the Latino EL
participants. They yearned for others to have that same opportunity of inclusion in the
classroom. The findings showed me that the value of culture for Latino ELs was when mutual
respect was front and center to their empowerment in their higher education classroom (Ladson-
Billings, 1994).

My review of the literature also led me to discover the role that CRP plays in the
perceptions of Latino ELs’ classroom experiences (Cole et al., 2016). Researchers agreed that
there was a need for instructors to implement strategies in the classroom that lead to student
empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1995). One example included providing the inclusion of culture
in teaching and discussions (Cole et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). I learned from the
participants that the CRP aspects of recognition, respect, and support were crucial to engagement
occurring for Latino EL students in higher education. Additionally, the implementation of
cultural curricula and practices in the classroom were essential aspects to include for the students
to know that they belong (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The participant, Melodía, commented that the inclusion of the Mexican culture in the classroom prompted her desire to learn. Opportunities for contributions afforded to the participants have to be provided by the professors.

The recognition of culture through the role of CRP was crucial to promoting student achievement (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1992). My thoughts are that when the professors include the contributions of Latino ELs in class, they provided the participants the confidence to participate more on an ongoing basis. Participant inclusion provided a more in-depth learning experience in the classroom. These steps taken by the professors appear to be an integral part of student success.

The literature supports the close alignment between inclusive classroom practices and values culminating in a climate of respect (Banks, 2013). Inclusive teaching approaches lead to the implementation of the CRP element of respect for diversity. The Latino ELs in the study shared that respect provided one of their primary motivations to engage. From my viewpoint, the participants emphasized that showing respect to other diverse students created a community of engagement. Just as integral to their participation was the CRP aspect regarding the use of their first language. Several participants shared stories about how integral the use of Spanish was to their learning. Their cultural pride emerged as they shared about the times they were able to clarify the teaching by speaking with others in Spanish. The use of their primary language was assuredly an aspect of their cultural identity and pride.

During this study, I came to know nine Latino ELs who demonstrated to me that the purpose of this dissertation was to represent their voices. I learned that their stories were significant life experiences that they wanted others to know about so that they could understand them. Also, so that I could understand them as well. I also learned that engagement could only
occur for them if their culture were respected and supported. Support of their language was necessary through the building of vocabulary and understanding. Additional support was contingent upon having other opportunities to discuss the course content in the classroom among peers in addition to the professor’s input. The Latino EL participants want to be fluent in English, as well as remain fluent and literate in Spanish.

Through the dissertation journey, I developed a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of engagement of bilingual Latino ELs in the higher education classroom. There is a need for the development of cultural literacy for professors, coupled with inclusive practices to implement and encourage both engagement and achievement for Latino ELs. The modeling of empathy for other cultures in the classroom through recognition, respect, and support is essential to the engagement of Latino ELs. The participants consistently showed passion toward others and the cultures of their fellow students. Their desire was for them to have their voices heard in addition to their own. In conclusion, the Latino ELs were passionate about everyone’s engagement in the classroom. What is significant about my findings is that the Latino EL participants stressed the importance of creating a climate of respect for all cultures in order to encourage everyone’s engagement in the classroom.
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Appendix A: Demographic Survey

Please answer each of the survey questions.

1. What is your age:
   0 17–18 years old
   0 19–20 years old
   0 21–22 years old
   0 23–24 years old
   0 Over 24 years old

2. Please specify your ethnicity:
   0 White
   0 Hispanic or Latino
   0 Black or African American
   0 Native American or American Indian
   0 Asian / Pacific Islander
   0 Other __________________________

3. What was your first spoken language?
   0 English
   0 Spanish
   0 Portuguese
   0 Latin
   0 Italian
   0 Other __________________________
4. What was your score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)?
   0 An internet-based test score between 80–90
   0 An internet-based test score between 91–100
   0 An internet-based test score between 101–110
   0 An internet-based test score between 111–120
   0 Paper-based test score between 550–600
   0 Paper-based test score between 601–650
   0 Paper-based test score between 651–677

5. How many credits are you currently enrolled in at the University?
   0 12–13 credits
   0 14–15 credits
   0 16–18 credits
   0 19 or more credits

6. In which country were you born? ________________________________

7. What is your current enrollment status at the University?
   0 Freshman
   0 Sophomore
   0 Junior
   0 Senior
Appendix B: First Interview Probes

1. I am seeking your experience of engagement in the college classroom. Engagement relates to how much attention, interest, or passion you have had that motivated or encouraged you to learn. I want to hear your voice about your experiences in depth. Please tell me your story about how the faculty has engaged you in the classroom. Is there anything that comes to mind?

2. Can you describe the demonstrations of respect for diverse cultures that occurred in the classroom? How did this affect your engagement?

3. Have you had opportunities to discuss or present differing opinions on the topics in the classroom? If so, can you describe how those opportunities engaged you? If there was not an opportunity, do you think not having the opportunity to discuss a different opinion affected your classroom engagement?

4. Please share whether you have been a part of any small group assignments or projects in the classroom. If you have had those experiences, please describe how they influenced your overall classroom engagement. Do you have anything else you would like to share about your experiences with classroom engagement?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses from this interview and any future interviews will be kept confidential. We will now schedule the next interview together about engagement in the classroom.
Appendix C: Reflective Journaling Prompts

Write the responses to each of the four prompts during the two weeks between the first and second interview. Use the https://penzu.com/ website, and the provided email address, username, and password provided by the researcher to electronically journal for research data collection.

1. Describe the acknowledgment and recognition of your culture in the classroom and how it affects your engagement. How does this experience make you feel?

2. Describe an experience that you have had in the University classroom of others identifying your cultural strengths. How did having the opportunity affect your engagement?

3. Describe the support you receive in your classroom regarding your cultural identity, and how it affects your engagement.

4. Describe the support of your first language in the classroom. How did the opportunity affect your engagement?
Appendix D: Second Interview Probes

It is a pleasure to meet with you again. I appreciate your willingness to continue to participate in my research. As a reminder, the definition of engagement for this study relates to how much attention, interest, or passion you have had that motivated or encouraged you to learn. I want to hear about your experiences in depth.

1. What opportunities have you had to share your cultural traditions and values in class? Do you believe that having this experience engaged you and why?

2. Can you describe your classroom experiences in understanding the vocabulary used to explain concepts that you are learning? Have faculty modeled or utilized vocabulary you were unfamiliar with to provide support for your understanding? If so, can you describe how they have modeled or utilized it? How did this experience or the lack of it affect your engagement in the classroom?

3. Can you describe any visual representations used during lessons to offer an understanding of course content? Please share whether the provision of visuals increase understanding of concepts and have engaged you in the classroom. If so, can you describe how they have done this to engage you in class? How did this practice or the lack of it affect your engagement in the classroom?

4. Please describe your interactions with other students in the class. How did it impact your understanding?
Is there anything that you feel might have been left unsaid that you would like to share regarding your engagement or lack of engagement in the classroom? Please share any additional factors that you feel engage you in the classroom. Is there anything else to add that we have not covered?

Thank you for participating in this interview. Your responses from this interview and any future interviews will be kept confidential.
Appendix E: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*

\[Signature\]

Digital Signature

Bette G. Mackey

Name (Typed)

June 30, 2019

Date