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## Social and Emotional Learning in a Pandemic: Lack of Cultural Relevancy for Bay Area Elementary Students

Patricia Lopez-Chavez  
*Dominican University of California*

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Patricia Lopez-Chavez  
Candidate

Jennifer Lucko, PhD  
Program Chair

Jennifer Lucko, PhD  
First Reader

Matthew Davis, PhD  
Second Reader

**Social and Emotional Learning in a Pandemic:  
Lack of Cultural Relevancy for Bay Area Latine Elementary Students**

By

Patricia Lopez-Chavez

A culminating thesis, submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

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## Abstract

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a pedagogical approach that aims to support the whole student's academic, social, and emotional growth. CASEL (2020) purports that SEL addresses inequity and empowers youth. While combating inequity is the ideal, the vast majority of SEL programs are not designed in accordance with the teaching practices of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) and Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP). Consequently, SEL programs perpetuate inequity for marginalized and minoritized students when lacking cultural and trauma considerations (Boldt, et al., 2020). This study explored if and how teachers differentiate and integrate Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy in their teaching to support Latine students' social and emotional needs. Qualitative interviews examined: 1) How do teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing Social and Emotional Learning programs to meet the unique needs of their Latine students? and 2) How do these adaptations draw from models for Culturally Relevant Teaching and/or Trauma Informed Pedagogy? This research was conducted during the 2020 world-wide pandemic of SARS-CoV-2. Teacher participants are from two elementary school sites in Northern California that serve predominantly Latine students. Most of the study pool of teachers placed SEL aside during the academic year to focus solely on academics. The research revealed that teachers found SEL and CRT to be relevant despite their own lack of SEL implementation, and that teacher knowledge on TIP is severely lacking. The research highlights the need for SEL to be integrated with Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy to wholly serve Latine students.

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*Esta tesis está dedicada a mi raza, mi cultura, mis mexicanos. Que podamos seguir prosperando en este país y viviendo el mejor 'Sueño Americano'.*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

As a first generation, Mexican American (Latina) student whose parents sacrificed greatly for my private education, I saw the direct disparities between my non-Latine peers and myself daily in school. The disparities privileged my White peers in their performance, peer relationships, and overall school experience. Witnessing many of the typical activities that my non-Latine peers and friends participated in was a culture shock for me. An example of this were sleepover parties that many of my non-Latine friends had for their birthdays. I had experienced many sleepovers with my cousins but was not allowed to attend the ones my school peers invited me to. This led to some tension with my parents as to why I was being left out. I can remember my mom saying, *“Porque dije que no. Y también uno nunca sabe lo que puede pasar en casa ajena.”* (English translation: “Because I said no. And you never know what can happen in a stranger’s house.”) Now that I have talked to my parents about this topic as an adult, I have learned that in the Mexican familial paradigm it is a common practice for parents to not allow their children to sleep outside of familiar homes. Furthermore, my parents explained that this partially stems from a constant fear that a male figure in another household might harm me. Culture, it seems to me, not only shapes our upbringings but informs our worldviews and beliefs. From then on, throughout school and other personal worldly experiences, it became clear to me that all the people I would encounter could have drastically different cultural upbringings and familial experiences. My lived experiences, belief systems, and traumas as a Latina with Mexican immigrant parents are wildly different from White experiences.

When I started fieldwork during my undergraduate studies, I was assigned to a school and specific classroom that served predominantly Latine students. There I observed how the teacher, and school, was teaching students Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). I became

personally intrigued with this approach because I felt like I had always struggled with my emotions. I had never been exposed to a practice for being emotionally intelligent and how that aids in academic success and overall life happiness. I did my own research and applied various strategies and understandings to my own life journey. The gradual transformation in my emotional maturity and demeanor was quickly evident for me and those around me.

While doing this self-care and reflection, I kept learning more and more about SEL and how it was being applied at my fieldwork site. I ended up noticing a gap between the SEL material being taught to the students which was phenomenal in theory and practice but was not culturally relevant. The teachers would teach SEL and there were school-wide posters on different SEL topics but did not meet the cultural needs of the students I have experienced in my own life. For instance, one sign that was displayed everywhere was a formulaic statement on how to address conflict. The statement read:

“When you \_\_\_\_, it makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_. I need \_\_\_\_ from you. / I am sorry I \_\_\_\_\_. What can I do to support/help/apologize to you?”

This form of communication is a powerful tool for healthy relationships. I agree that it should be taught to children, but it seemed to me that many students might receive this as practice too foreign for their home life. With their teacher — a safe, trusted adult — practicing this form of communication would be easy as teachers are expected to be somewhat emotionally intelligent to guide students, but can all students really go home and use this tool with their parents? With immigrant parents? With Latine (or other minoritized and marginalized) parents? Is this culturally appropriate (regardless of people, and/or White people, thinking it should be)? I believe it is not. Using that language and framing with a Latine parent, even more specifically with a Latine parent who immigrated to the U.S., would challenge the familial paradigm and

structure leading to further conflict. The gears were turning in my head in the attempt to understand how to bridge this gap of Social and Emotional Learning that seemed to be a 'one size fits all' with students of color, especially with Latine students. In this thesis, I explore this disconnect between the messages of Social and Emotional Learning and the experiences of Latine children.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Research on the value of the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) content, its implementation, and its ability to increase student academic success is easily accessible. Social and Emotional Learning programs are rooted in the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) definition of SEL and its five core competencies:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (para. 1)

These five competencies are the foundation for the SEL framework and serve as the parameters for all SEL programs. In many SEL articles, phrases like "preventive programming," "behavioral norms," "emotions" affecting how and what we learn, and "culture," surface often as the focuses of SEL programs.

SEL, CRT, and TIP all share the similarity of teaching to the whole child. Each pedagogical practice is student-centered and promotes student academic success. Yet despite the similarities between SEL, CRT and TIP, there are few explicit connections between these

theories in the academic literature. Moreover, there is little to no conversation on how to explicitly differentiate Social and Emotional Learning content for Latine students to meet their diverse and culturally specific needs in the academic literature. Furthermore, there is little crossover between SEL and the emerging field of TIP, despite the obvious intersection between the two pedagogical approaches. Although both SEL and TIP support children who are developing their emotional intelligence, through their mutual understanding and use of coping strategies and self-advocacy, there is a lack of awareness that SEL must be differentiated for children who have experienced trauma.

### **Overview of the Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to examine if and how Social and Emotional Learning is being differentiated for Latine students to explore how SEL pedagogy can be integrated with best practices of Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy.

The primary questions of this research sought to understand:

- 1) How teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing social-emotional learning framework/programs to meet the unique needs of their Latine students, especially during the time of a pandemic?
- 2) How these adaptations draw from models for culturally relevant teaching and/or trauma informed pedagogy?

The research was conducted at two predominantly Latine elementary school sites in the San Francisco Bay Area during the spring of 2021. For the research and academic year of 2019-20 alone, both elementary schools had over 90% Hispanic or Latino students enrolled: Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School had 96.9%, with 83% also being classified as English language learners, and Sotomayor Elementary School had 90.2%, with 66% being classified as English

language learners (CA Department of Education). Both elementary schools are in low-income housing communities serving over 65% low-income students who receive free or reduced lunch. The research was conducted when schools were generally still under the environmental restrictions and conditions being experienced due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (coronavirus). While many of the schools in the county had remained online during this period, these two sites had already returned to in-person learning because the county moved into a safer CDC approved tier for re-opening of elementary schools. These elementary school sites were chosen due to my personal connections with each through my university teaching program fieldwork placements and begin a registered substitute in their districts.

During the fall academic semester of 2020, I accepted a job as a long-term substitute teacher at one of the school sites used in my research. During this time, I taught both online and in-person. I was able to observe how the pandemic was affecting teachers, Latine students, and their families and adults in their lives. Teaching online was particularly challenging with Wi-Fi connections going in and out, having to stare at a screen for hours on end, learning and teaching how to use Google Classroom, and assuming the role of IT for myself and students, and more. For some of these young children (all of whom were Latine), it was their first exposure of a laptop, the internet, and having to sit and stare at a screen for long periods of time. The students often shared with me how they missed in-person school and missed being with their friends. The effect online teaching during the pandemic had on their mental health will one day need to be explored. Excusing students from class became frequent due to various reasons, like mom/adult had to go out and could not leave student alone, sibling or family member needed to use the shared laptop, and student couldn't make it to the space where Wi-Fi was accessible for them (like going to their aunt's house during school hours).

This qualitative research was conducted with six participants from both elementary schools through a set of interviews. The participants had the options of interviewing via Google Meet or in-person (socially distanced with masks on), based on their comfortability and availability. The focus of the first interview was to understand the teachers' raw perspectives and pedagogy on Social and Emotional Learning. The second interview's focus was to identify if and how Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy informed SEL practices.

Throughout this study, the term *Latine* is used instead of Latinx. Media outlet, Remezcla, writes, "Though many agree that inclusivity in language is a good thing, the level of facility in pronunciation of one over the other is more the topic of discussion when it comes to Latinx vs. Latine" (Carabello, 2019, Para 5). Presently, the use of either is preference, but in Spanish, my personal native language, Latinx is not a term that is pronounceable. The term *Latine* is pronounceable as the 'e' can be added to almost every gendered word in Spanish (as it is a heavily gendered language) and it is more pronounceable while being more grammatically correct. The 'e' is added to be inclusive of non-binary persons and of all genders.

### **Significance of the Study**

Through this research, three themes emerged. First, it was found that teaching Social and Emotional Learning daily is not considered a priority the way teaching mathematics or a writing program are. According to my data, the decision on whether to teach SEL rested entirely on the teacher. The fact that one school site had a school adopted SEL program and the other did not was not found to be a contributing factor to whether the teacher taught SEL in their classroom. The data showed that teaching SEL was teacher-driven and was only explicitly taught if the teachers felt it was a priority for their students.

Second, Social and Emotional Learning was not being tailored to the Latine student experience. Teachers explained that SEL is being taught primarily through teachable moments, which are spontaneous breaks from academic content to address an explicit situation with/for a student(s). An example is when participant Isabella found out during recess that one of her students had kicked another student. She then decided to take 10 minutes from her Writer's Workshop time block to address the class about body boundaries and some strategies to use when they feel upset. Teachable moments are not considered intentional teaching since they lack intentionality, planning, prepping, and assessing. Intentional teaching is needed to deliver equitable SEL that goes beyond the surface level to address Latine social, emotional, and traumatic needs, such as: deportation, immigration, and internalized/externalized racism.

Third, and collectively, Social and Emotional, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy are not being taught with the same priority as academic content nor used as tools to meet Latine students' social, emotional, and traumatic needs. A significant contribution for this finding is that the research was conducted in the 2020-2021 academic school year, during the world-wide pandemic of SARS-CoV-2. One effect of the pandemic on schools was having to cut their normal school days almost in half, which then caused teachers to be stressed over what and how to teach in a shortened amount of time (while still trying to meet every students' needs, plus their new technical needs).

This research highlights the need for the development of a differentiated Social and Emotional Learning program that is integrated with Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy to best serve Latine student populations, as well as other minoritized populations, by meeting their unique needs. When a Latine student walks in the door of a classroom, they walk in with their whole self-culture, psychology, belief systems, and possible



trauma. Addressing the whole self allows students to thrive by feeling seen and accepted because of who they are, not despite who they are, which advances equity and social justice in education.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Latine children in schools are often described in descriptive categories that denote negativity and deficiency, such as, English Language Learners, low-level learners, high risk students, and traumatized students. These descriptors impact the way in which the students' presence and performance is perceived (Gonzalez & Ayala-Alcantar, 2008). Through this deficit perspective, teachers are constantly working towards bridging the academic achievement gap for Latine students through differentiation and accommodations in their academic curriculum and pedagogical strategies. The world of education, with its policy makers and teachers, realizes these key differences that Latine students may experience. Which is why, for example, in California's Bay Area there is a big push to incorporate the SEAL: Sobrato Early Academic Language program. The SEAL program is an English Learner-focused approach to education that supports the language and literacy skills of English Learner (EL) students (SEAL, 2021). While academics tend to be differentiated for Latine students through the lens of their potential language barrier, the lenses left undifferentiated is their social and emotional needs.

The descriptive categories teachers utilize for Latine students are designed to help them succeed academically, but too often further marginalize them. Latine students need to be seen in their whole personhood first, not from a perspective of deficit, to be well served and succeed academically. The importance of bridging the language gap for these students is equally as important as meeting their social and emotional needs because, for many Latine students, they have experiences of being marginalized, discriminated against, and traumatized. Latine students not only need to learn a new language (English), but sometimes they have had to learn to culturally assimilate for their own protection, start working at an early age to support their family, share a home with other families, fear being deported or having a loved one be deported,

and/or cope with internalized or externalized racism. Therefore, it is tremendously important to understand students' backgrounds and to support them holistically to witness the academic strides that teachers yearn to see for their students.

In the following literature reviews, I discuss three key themes that inform this study's research. The discussion begins with an introduction of Social-Emotional Learning, followed by a review of a few Social and Emotional Learning based school programs. It is crucial to understand the basis of SEL to compare and analyze its similarities and differences with Culturally Responsive Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy. Next, I turn to a necessary discussion of Latine Positionality. Positionality is important due to this thesis' centered focus on Latine students in relation to Social and Emotional Learning. Understanding Latine students' common lived experiences reveals the need for differentiated programs and pedagogical strategies to meet their social and emotional needs as a marginalized and minoritized group. In the final section of the Literature Review, I compare Social Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy and outline similarities in their approaches that address the needs, lived experiences, and positionality of Latine students.

### **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

In 1994, a meeting was hosted by an institution whose attendees included various professionals within the fields of education, research, and child advocacy (CASEL, 2020). These attendees collaborated on how to improve emotional intelligence in children and adults and became the pioneers that developed the concept of Social and Emotional Learning and the organization called the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (also known as CASEL). According to CASEL (2020), Social-Emotional Learning is,

The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. (para. 1)

Through decades of research, CASEL (2020) has created the Core Competence Areas for Social and Emotional Learning known as The CASEL 5: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making. The CASEL 5 is included in CASEL's framework that "takes a systemic approach that emphasizes the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices across key settings of classrooms, schools, families, and communities to enhance all students' social, emotional, and academic learning." (para. 5) In agreement with CASEL, Paolini (2020) explains how SEL epitomizes and encompasses the fundamental skills students need to possess to excel holistically: academically, behaviorally, socially, emotionally, and professionally.

Social and Emotional Learning is rooted in addressing social and emotional needs to improve academic and overall self-success. Research shows that emotions play a part in increasing or decreasing students' academic success (Ferreria et al., 2020). One way that Social and Emotional Learning can be effective in increasing academic success is by fostering a positive school climate. This can happen through formal SEL intervention, which comes from an SEL program that provides curriculum (unit and lesson plans, materials, and assessment). This intervention requires the school and/or teacher(s) to fully integrate SEL into their pedagogical practices by creating space to teach SEL, consistently practicing and referring to SEL practices, and assessing growth over an academic year or years.

It is known that for SEL implementation to be successful, teachers' own social and emotional competence and wellbeing play a crucial role (Ferrerira et al., 2020). Students generally learn best by modeling what they see and hear, especially from a safe and trusted adult, like a teacher. When safe and well-balanced teachers consistently model healthy social and emotional competence, students are more likely to gain those skills and practice those (Crosby et al., 2018). Research on Social and Emotional Learning programs has shown that positive outcomes of SEL are significantly high for students identified as high risk or high need, like Latine students who may have language and racial discrimination barriers (Castro-Olivo, 2014). These outcomes include improving their holistic academic, social, and emotional success through various strategies that target coping, growth, self-advocacy, and resilience (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

The published Social and Emotional Learning programs used in school districts are typically rooted in CASEL's (2020) definition of SEL and its 5 Core Competencies. These programs are curated by any group of people or agency to their own liking. Some programs have more content (lessons) and materials than others, and some have SEL experts come to schools to teach SEL. Each program is grounded in the same principles and theory but can be quite different in practice. There is no current policy in California for school districts to implement an SEL program, so it is up to the district, school, and/or teachers to adopt an SEL program that they believe fits their needs. Three of the leading programs within the United States are: Positive Action, Second Step, and Responsive Classroom (Jones et al., 2017).

### ***Positive Action - SEL Program***

Positive Action is a PreK-12th grade program that promotes positive character development and social and emotional learning through the understanding that thoughts, actions,

and feelings make up who a person is and how they act/respond to life. This program is curricular, meaning it has grade specific themed lessons for a duration of 35 weeks (broken down into 4 lessons per week that average about 15 minutes a lesson). Positive Action focuses on all aspects of a person's wellbeing through their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs. They use an overall personal development philosophy with two parts: 1) focusing on allowing children to feel good about their actions, and 2) showing children that they can implement positive actions in any situation through the Thoughts-Actions-Feeling circle. The end goal is to develop children's emotional regulation and management, and to develop their social ability to work well with others. Jones et al., (2017) found evidence-based outcomes of this program to be: 1) positive gains in academic performance, behavior, motivation, and life satisfaction, 2) a decrease in areas, such as: substance abuse, violence, bullying, sexual activity, depression, absenteeism, disruptive behaviors, and school suspensions, and 3) an overall improved positive, supportive school climate quality.

### ***Second Step - SEL Program***

Second step is a PreK-8th grade program that focuses on skills for learning, problem-solving, emotion management, and empathy. This program was revised in 2012 and is used all over the United States. Second Step is a curricular program that incorporates explicit and implicit learning strategies to promote critical social-emotional and executive functioning skills (i.e., emotion regulation and working memory) to promote academic and life success. This curriculum is grade specific and allows for teachers to deliver instruction that is individualized for their students in a 22–25-week span (broken down into 1-5 lessons a week, averaged out to 20-45 minutes per lesson). Jones et al. (2017) found evidence-based outcomes of this program to be:

positive gains in empathy, impulse control, anger management, self-reliance, consideration of others, and social competence in students who lacked development in this skillset.

### ***Responsive Classroom - SEL Program***

Responsive Classroom is a research-based approach, meaning qualitative data has been collected several times to support this program's efficacy, that focuses on the connection between academic success and social and emotional learning (Stearns, 2016). This program is non-curricular, meaning it is composed of daily practices, activities, and strategies designed to improve engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness versus a curriculum with lengthy unit and lesson plans. Responsive Classroom's core practices are: Morning Meetings, Energizers, Quiet Time, and Closing Circles. A big component of this program is based on teacher-centeredness, as Responsive Classroom emphasizes that the teacher is solely responsible in incorporating these strategies into their classroom routine. Jones et al, (2017) found evidence-based outcomes of this program to be: gains in emotional support, classroom management, assertion (executed confidently) in peer relationships and reading and math scores. CASEL (2020) describes Responsive Classroom as one of the most "well-designed evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs" (para 2). This program is considered very high-quality and is very dominant in the emerging Social and Emotional Learning world as its strategies are easier to incorporate versus curricular (having to teach units/lessons) SEL programs.

### ***Critique of Social and Emotional Learning***

According to CASEL (2020), Social and Emotional Learning claims that it "advances educational equity and excellence" (para. 2) through partnerships among schools, families, and communities by developing trust, collaborative relationships, precise and empowering

curriculum, and ongoing evaluation. Although this statement by CASEL for the concept of Social and Emotional Learning is intriguing and powerful, academic research has not sufficiently demonstrated that Social and Emotional Learning *is* advancing equity for *all* students.

Even though Social and Emotional Learning programs are rooted in CASEL's definition of Social and Emotional Learning and SEL's five core competencies, studies show that there is a disconnect between SEL's promised student achievement and schools heavily populated by marginalized students (Allbright et al., 2019). These schools, usually low-income schools with predominantly BIPOC students, are struggling to implement SEL into their curriculum/school climate. This is because there is a challenge in understanding what accounts for high-quality SEL support and instruction for marginalized students that adequately provides contextual and cultural connections (Allbright et al., 2019). Current Social and Emotional Learning programs are too shallow in that they do not sufficiently acknowledge the complexity of the human social and emotional lived experiences (Stearns, 2016). According to Stearns (2016), most SEL programs are shallow because they emphasize teaching children how to regulate emotions and how to be a generally good person and peer, which are all important developmentally, but they do not cover deeper topics, such as: immigration and deportation, coping strategies for traumatic events, internalized and externalized racism, dealing with systemic inequities, and cultural related lived experiences. Stearns (2016) argues that the hegemonic positivity (pervasive good cheer and charade of easy, simple resolutions) taught in SEL exhibits an acceptance of the neoliberal story of meritocracy and its ignorance of how complex human emotion and learning really is.

In acknowledgement of the limits of Social and Emotional Learning programs, Blitz et al. (2020) describes how SEL pedagogy needs to be both relevant for the students and responsive to



their social, emotional, and family circumstances through specialized skill sets. These skill sets should not be standardized, but diverse and flexible according to its target audience of students. Therefore, Boldt et al., (2020) states that current Social and Emotional Learning frameworks/curriculum perpetuates in-equity for marginalized and minoritized students by not considering culture as a central framework. “SEL programs need to call attention to how complex socio historical landscapes influence learning and SEL implementation.” (Boldt et al., 2020) Very few SEL interventions have been developed and validated to support the multiple and diverse social and emotional needs of marginalized and minoritized students, such as Latine students (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

### **Latine Positionality**

This thesis is centered on discovering how Social and Emotional Learning programs are specifically serving the Latine student population. The Latine (and Hispanic) population in the United States is 18.4% according to the United States Census Bureau (2019). Also, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), in California alone the Latine (and Hispanic) population makes up 39.4% of the state, and 44.5% of California’s population speaks a language other than English at home. These demographic statistics are not 100% accurate, as it is probably that many non-U.S. citizens completed the census capturing this data. California is a U.S. state that shares its southern border with Mexico’s northern border and is prone to Mexicans (and other Latine populations from South American) immigrating into the U.S. Many Latine people choose to live within Latine communities and call their neighborhoods, *barrios*, where they can share in their culture. Therefore, it is important to distinguish and acknowledge the differences in lived experiences from Latine students, who are typically minoritized and marginalized, from their counterparts (non-Latine students, and especially white peers who are included in the dominant

majority). Aside from Latine populations being a minority and prone to systemic racism, an incredibly positive attribute of being Latine is that most speak and/or understand a second language, a varying dialect of Spanish. Despite positive attributes that come from being Latine, Giano et al., (2020) discussed how Latine lived experiences tend to manifest trauma whether that lived experience is of the Latine child themselves or of someone in close relation to them (i.e., parent, sibling, extended family, etc..). Statistically, Latine youth report higher negative mental health outcomes than non-Latine and African Americans in areas such as depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behaviors (Llamas et al., 2020). Therefore, Latine children are often positioned to experience marginalization, discrimination, mistreatment, and little power (Colegrove, 2019).

### ***Immigration and Discrimination***

Students who identify as Latine may have experienced leaving/fleeing a foreign country and immigrating to the U.S, having an immigrant parent, having two immigrant parents, and/or having close relatives be immigrants. Some Latine lived experiences stem from acculturative stress connected to these experiences of immigration, which is a leading factor in mental health problems among Latine students (Zvolensky et al., 2018). Acculturative stressors include learning the dominant language (English), balancing native and foreign cultural values/norms, and being minoritized, among others. Acculturation stress can be seen even in elementary school aged children, as early adolescence is a developmental period in which children become more aware and vulnerable to family stressors (i.e., their own or their family's immigration status). This awareness and vulnerability cause Latine students to dangerously manifest family stress through depression, substance use and abuse, and/or other negative, harmful behavioral/mental problems (Giano et al., 2019).

Another stressor for Latine students is discrimination. Discrimination is not limited to bullies in school, but rather it is nation-wide and systemic. An example of discrimination at the nation-wide level is the United States Supreme Court case, *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* (1975), the Supreme Court ruled that having a “Mexican appearance” was enough to make an immigration stop. This ruling is still cited in courts today when adjudicating cases that involve immigration enforcement, and resulted in legalizing microaggressions (i.e., commenting on someone’s accent) and macroaggressions (i.e., use of a blatant racist term) in law enforcement (Giano et al., 2019). Therefore, Giano et al., (2019) argue that when law enforcement disregards the importance of citizenship status it is a form of injustice that then adds to the psychological distress that exists in the Latine community due to the stigma associated with being an immigrant, being from an immigrant family, and the experiences that are related to immigration.

As mentioned above in the United States Supreme Court case, looking and, potentially, identifying as Latine is sufficient to be a victim of discrimination and racism. Moreover, given the political climate in 2020, many Latine people experience feelings of fear and internalized shame in identifying as Latine in some regions of the United States. The end of President Trump’s presidency, the presidential election of 2020, and the start of President Biden’s presidency could be attributed to deepening Latine fear and/or shame in their identify because of President Trump’s vocal feelings/biases towards Latine people. On June 16th, 2015, during Donald Trump’s campaign launch at Trump Tower he said, “They’re (Mexicans) bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some \*pause\* I assume, are good people.” (Time Staff, 2021) Trump’s words during this campaign speech in 2016 indicated that the president-to-be believed that Mexicans are generally bad people and only a few are good. The support for

Trump and his ultimate election indicates that his discriminatory claim was widely accepted across the United States and has informed the general public's perspective of Latine people.

### ***Gender Roles: Machismo and Marianismo***

The internal paradigm of Latine familial structures informs the conversation on Latine positionality. In the Latine community, traditional gender roles are very binary for cis-gendered males and females. These traditional gender roles are very stereotypical and have been historically ingrained as the normal and expected. When these culturally expected and accepted gender roles are perpetuated in the Latine community, Latine people allow their children to conform and manifest these expectations through toxic masculinity and submissive oppression (Martinez, 2019). In the following two sections, the terms 'boys' and 'girls' are used in the context of biologically born, assigned a binary gender, and then expected to be cis-gendered, heterosexual Latine males and females.

According to machismo gender ideology, biologically born males are expected to grow up while identifying as cis-gendered, heterosexual males. This gendered socialization process for Latine boys is known as machismo. Machismo has traditionally emphasized the importance of physical strength, courage, honor, independence, manliness, aggression, and male dominance (Sanchez et al., 2020). This gender role and expectancy encourages the mindset that the male is more important, valuable, and needed than its female counterpart. "Macho man" is very commonly used and said in the Latine culture, it is considered a compliment to have this mindset of 'lo que hace un verdadero hombre' (what makes a real man).

Biological born females are expected to grow up identifying as cis-gendered, heterosexual females in a traditional marianismo gender role. The gender socialization process for Latine girls is called marianismo. Inversely to machismo, marianismo emphasizes the

centrality of family (i.e., being home centered and taking lead in caretaking duties) and being submissive, chaste, and dependent (Sanchez et al., 2020). On the other hand, when a Latina (in this example; cis gendered female) chooses to not be submissive, she is labeled as ‘chingona’ (semi-equivalent term in Spanish for the *b* word in English) instead of assertive, powerful, authentic, or any other term that fits the person. Oftentimes, it is a cis-gendered Latino man who is calling the female Latina that word when she refuses to comply with whatever is asked of her - especially sexually.

According to Llamas et al. (2020), these traditional, toxic gender role beliefs are positively correlated with depression for Latine boys and internalizing problem behaviors, depression, psychological distress, and low self-esteem for girls. Even when Latine boys and girls want to live up to these expectations, there are still unavoidable psychological health problems (Llamas et al., 2020). Despite the importance of gender roles in the Latine culture, current Social and Emotional Learning framework/programs do not explicitly address gender or the possibility of flexibility and fluidity within one’s gender identity.

### **Social and Emotional Learning’s (SEL) Relationship with Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) and Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP)**

Currently, few academic researchers have explored the connections between Social and Emotional Learning and the theories of Culturally Relevant Teaching nor Trauma Informed Pedagogy. As of now, these three concepts are primarily discussed independently of each other, leaving teachers to adapt material from these concepts in their pedagogy to meet the social and emotional needs of their students who are not part of the dominant white culture, such as their Latine students.

### *Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT)*

Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) is a philosophical educational theory used by teachers that is rooted in acknowledging the importance of students' backgrounds and incorporating their cultural contexts/perspectives into all aspects of their academic learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Culturally Relevant Teaching identifies students' assets rather than their deficits and uses it to develop rigorous, student-centered instruction (Lydia et al., 2020). CRT opens the opportunity for students to connect their learning with their cultures, experiences, and issues that impact their lives. Culturally Relevant Teaching has three criteria contended by Ladson-Billings (1994) that students must meet to validate their CRT development: experience academic success, develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness that supports them challenging the racial status quo.

When teachers lack understanding of their students' cultures it perpetuates a deficit in school climate and their students' academic performance (Colegrove, 2019). There is a disproportionate number of negative outcomes for students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged due to their lives (i.e., background, culture, and living situation), resulting in their experiences and needs not being fully heard and having inadequate responsiveness to their trauma (Blitz et al., 2020). Burns et al., (2019) wrote how differentiation is needed to equitably support people's individual needs,

“Increasing recognition that the challenges faced by low-resource communities are highly complex and rooted in the diverse needs for the well-being of individuals... New and creative solutions to address poverty-related stressors of discrimination, community violence, and economic scarcity are needed to promote healthy child and family development.”

Culturally Relevant Teaching is needed in education to understand what the child needs to support their healthy being and academic performance. Latine students sometimes face a language barrier that labels them as English Language Learners (ELLs) which can result in culture shock when having to learn a new language in school. Latine English language learners have been identified as students who are at-risk and in need of culturally adapted interventions (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

### ***Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP)***

To be culturally relevant, by nature is to *be* trauma informed, as they share the core concept of acknowledging student trauma that stems from their lived experiences (i.e., life, culture, and context) within the classroom setting. Crosby et al. (2018) connect a lens of social justice through cultural relevance to Trauma Informed Pedagogy through their definition,

Trauma informed teaching seeks to acknowledge the ways in which a young adolescent's life course is subsequently affected by trauma, and to use trauma-sensitive strategies in place of the traditional, punitive, and trauma-blind school practice that has historically compounded the effects of students' trauma. (p. 17)

Trauma-informed classrooms promote equity by addressing the systemic barriers that students face. In a Twitter chat, educators discussed what trauma-informed social and emotional learning environments/classrooms look like,

We acknowledge the harmful impacts of the past and hold out hope for a future of healing. We create a safe environment for students to share their lives yet maintain professional boundaries. We provide our caring and our help to others, but have to pay attention to our own well-being, too. We work in our classrooms but depend on the support of our community. (Venet 2018, para 2)

The implementation of trauma informed approaches is guided by new research and theories surrounding childhood trauma. Minahan (2019) writes,

Up to two-thirds of U.S. children have experienced at least one type of serious childhood trauma, such as abuse, neglect, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence. Traumatized students are especially prone to difficulty in self-regulation, negative thinking, being on high alert, difficulty trusting adults, and inappropriate social interactions. Neurobiologically, students can't learn if they don't feel safe, known, and cared for within their schools. (para 1-2)

Therefore, addressing student trauma promotes equity in students' social and emotional development. Behavioral issues that are seen in students at school have a high likelihood of being rooted in childhood trauma and those challenges can be met more effectively and compassionately through trauma informed approaches (Parker & Hodgson, 2020). Durlak et al. (2011), demonstrated that assisting students in their social and emotional development may counter some of the negative outcomes that emerge from their trauma. All students need to experience a safe and welcoming school environment, but those students that are managing stress and trauma need schools that support healing and resiliency as children grow and learn (Blitz et al., 2020).

Trauma-informed schools adopt practices that promote healing and growth to lessen re-traumatization that can occur in schools. Venet (2018) writes, "To support students who have experienced trauma, start by flipping the traditional classroom paradigm: Relationships have to come before content." (para 7) Latine students are predisposed to trauma and need teacher-student relationships to promote safe spaces and to lessen the life event stressors that they bring into the classroom (Zvolensky et al., 2018). For Latine students to cope with their trauma, they



need more sophisticated Social and Emotional Learning skills and resiliency (Castro-Olivo, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy meet at an intersection of teaching to the whole child. Social and Emotional Learning is nothing unless it relates to the child who is learning it, therefore it must be rooted in the knowledge of students' cultures to make sure the lessons and information are valuable to the student (Lydia et al., 2020). The whole child IS a social being, an emotional being, made up of their ancestors, culture, and home space. They are warriors of their trauma whether it be manifested, inflicted, neglected, or reflected. Realistically, we cannot create an SEL program for each individual child... but we can group children by their similarities to offer them the best support that fits their real, whole life.

Overall, in this literature review, there is an overwhelming amount of research that has examined the individual benefits of Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy. Yet not many educators and researchers have explored the combination of these concepts as one cohesive unit. Many slightly reference the concepts of culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed pedagogy in SEL literature or unintentionally mention the principles of these concepts, but few studies have considered relationships between each approach. At the same time, some researchers do claim that Social and Emotional Learning support that is culturally relevant and trauma informed could alleviate long-standing racial inequities in education (Allbright et al., 2019).

The purpose of this study was to explore the existing use of social and emotional learning frameworks and programs that are authentically rooted in culturally responsive teaching and

trauma informed pedagogy to meet and satisfy the needs of marginalized, minoritized, Latine children. Therefore, this study examined how teachers are currently integrating Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy for their students, specifically their Latine students. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to inform the integration of culturally responsive, trauma informed, social and emotional learning frameworks to develop new approaches and programs that meet the specific needs of Latine children.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

The purpose of my research was to explore how teachers differentiate Social and Emotional Learning framework/programs with elements of Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy within their classroom teaching to meet the unique social and emotional needs of their Latine students. Based on the literature review, there is an existing need for educators to differentiate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks and/or programs, that are either provided by their school or individually implemented by a teacher, to be appropriate for Latine students. Latine students are a marginalized, minoritized, and vulnerable population that have specific social and emotional needs due to their positionality and manifested trauma from their own lived experiences or of those in close relation to them (Giano et al., 2020). Therefore, to deliver accessible and equitable social and emotional development to Latine students who have unique cultural and trauma contexts, Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy should be combined with Social and Emotional Learning.

#### **Research Questions**

This study focused on the exploration of teachers' responses through interviews in a qualitative study that answered:

- 1) How teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing social-emotional learning framework/programs to meet the unique needs of their Latine students, especially during the time of a pandemic?
- 2) How these adaptations draw from models for culturally relevant teaching and/or trauma informed pedagogy?

## Description and Rationale of the Research Approach

My approach to educational research has roots in both a transformative as well as a constructivist philosophical worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study focused on teachers' perspectives of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and how they have adapted SEL to be culturally relevant and trauma informed for their Latine students. This research was heavily influenced by the systemic social injustices that Latine people/students receive in the United States. Thus, this project was deeply committed to a transformative worldview because of the research's focal point being Latine students who are historically marginalized, discriminated against, and who consistently face inequity. A transformative worldview "holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda to confront social oppression at whatever level it holds." (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 9) This study did not implement a political agenda explicitly, but it did implicitly by addressing and attempting to identify the inequity that marginalized, minoritized, Latine students face and potential solutions.

In addition, this research also aligned with a constructivist worldview. A constructivist researcher "believes that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 7). My own personal life experiences up to the completion of this thesis project has been as a student in education. I know more about being a student than anything else. Upon starting my career as a teacher, it is important for me to combine my passion for my culture and *mi raza* (Spanish for 'my people') with my passion for education. The social and, most especially, emotional needs of Latine people and the inequities we face (including internalized forms of oppression such as toxic gender roles) have always been in my heart, which is how my passion for social and emotional learning grew. My lived experience is the seed that is sprouting into this academic endeavor. Therefore, through the process of interviewing current

teachers for this research, I sought to understand the complexity teachers face in adapting SEL for their Latine students through deep reflection.

Based on these worldviews, I designed a qualitative study built upon Phenomenological Interviewing and the Dialogical Interview. Phenomenological research is “a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 13). The sequential interviews that are fundamental to Phenomenological Interviewing was appropriate for this research because I needed to understand not only the experiences of teachers, but also the meanings of these experiences from the point of view of my participants. Understanding the meaning teachers subscribe to Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy was at the core of each interview.

In order to center the interview process on understanding meaning, I utilized dialogical interviews. A dialogical interview is an intuitive process in which “the participants have spoken, and now the interviewer is responding to their words, concentrating his or her intuition and intellect on the process. What emerges is a synthesis of what the participant has said and how the researcher has responded” (Seidman, 2013, p. 129). The mutual enjoyment of exchanging ideas with someone, sometimes going off topic where the conversation leads, re-centering, and enjoying the present moment is key when Latine people come together. I found that as a Latina, myself, I enjoyed the conversations fully; it felt very natural for me. Sharing via oral communication is a common tradition in the Latine culture. Thus, I knew I needed to add this dialogical component to my interview process in order to add extra meaning to the interview. Additionally, it added meaning for the interviewee as I made sure they felt heard and validated through my active listening and feedback.

## **Research Design**

### ***Research Sites and Entry into the Field***

The research for this study was conducted in two public, K-5th elementary schools within Northern California's Marin County. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for each school site: Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School and Sotomayor Elementary School. For the research and academic year of 2019-20 alone, both elementary schools had over 90% Hispanic or Latino students enrolled: Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School had 96.9% and Sotomayor Elementary School had 90.2% (CA Department of Education). Both elementary schools are in low-income housing communities. For the research to be conducted at these sites, I discussed my research proposal with each principal individually to receive permission to conduct research at the school.

I chose these two school sites for my research based on my personal connections to the schools. My connection to Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School is as a registered substitute teacher in their district. I have had long-term and short-term subbing assignments at this school in grades ranging from TK to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. During my undergraduate collegiate career, I also conducted fieldwork at this school site to explore my career choice by observing teachers teach. Also, during my undergraduate years, I did fieldwork at Sotomayor Elementary School. I was fortunate enough to be placed at this school site for two years, during my freshman and senior year. Post-undergrad I also subbed at this school site when needed for some short-term assignments.

### ***Participants and Sampling Procedures***

This study focused on how teachers are currently adapting Social and Emotional frameworks/programs to meet the social and emotional needs of their Latine students, therefore, the recruitment of participants was solely teachers. All teachers at both school sites work closely

with Latine students, as the majority in their class identify as Latine (See Table 1 below for more participant demographics). The participants were recruited through an email generated for the entire certified staff to the school site. Personalized emails for specific teachers that I thought would be excellent participants based on previous relationships from my student teaching and substitute teaching experiences were also emailed. Once participants agreed to participate, they signed Informed Consent Forms prior to actual participation in the research.

*Table 1 Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>School Site (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>	<b>Spanish Language Fluency</b>	<b>Teaching Grade Level</b>
Ellie	Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School	White	No	K
Robert	Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School	White	No	2nd
Jody	Sotomayor Elementary School	White	No	K
Mia	Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School	White	No	5th
Cera	Sotomayor Elementary School	Latina	Yes	K
Isabella	Ocasio-Cortez Elementary School	White	No	2nd

## *Methods*

As the researcher, I sent electronic communication to each participant to schedule a date and time for their first interview within a two-week period. Once the participants had a confirmed and scheduled first interview, I created pseudonyms for each participant for the purpose of confidentiality. The participants had the options of a video call interview or in-person interview that was socially distanced with masks out of respect for their individual comfortability level. Out of six first interviews, two were in-person socially distanced with masks on interviews. Online interviews were held via Zoom and Google Meet, per participant's preference, and recorded through the video-chat site. During the interviews, I wrote notes down on a notepad to use when writing analytic memos after each interview. All interview recordings were then transferred to my Google drive. The in-person interviews were conducted in the participants' classrooms socially distanced with masks on. These interviews were recorded through my password protected cell phone's voice recording app that were then transferred to my Google drive. During these interviews, I also wrote notes down on a notepad to utilize when writing analytic memos.

Each participant was interviewed twice. In the first interview, the participant and researcher discussed a series of questions that explored how the participant conceptualizes and teaches social and emotional learning in their classroom. They were asked to share their experiences in terms of how they learned about SEL, how they define SEL, and if they can describe SEL lessons that they taught. From there, the participant was able to discuss the relevance of their own and their Latine students' positionality when teaching SEL and asked to share their understanding of their students' demographics and general lived experiences. Lastly, the participants discussed their personal views on Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma



Informed Pedagogy, including their own definition of the terms (See Appendix C for a full list of interview questions). The first interview was designed to target research question number one: How do teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing social-emotional learning curriculum to meet the unique needs of their Latine students?

After the first interview, participants were again emailed to schedule a date and time for their second interview within the following 2-week period. During the second interview, the participant and researcher reflected on the participant's first interview and on the researcher's comprehensive analysis of the first interviews. The researcher looked for similarities among all participants' answers to see what was most known about SEL, CRT, and TIP to then share a collective response in the second interview. The remaining interview questions (see Appendix D for a full list of interview questions) focused on the teacher's teaching experience with Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma Informed Pedagogy and on questions that asked teachers to reflect on the relationships between the theories (SEL, CRT, and TIP). An example question from the second interview is, "How could teaching/practicing SEL, CRT, and TIP be easier/more effective for you?" The second interview served to expand on the first interview and to dive deep into the differentiation aspect for SEL for Latine students. In this way, the second interview provided additional data to answer the first research questions, as well as data to answer the second question: How do these adaptations draw from models for culturally relevant teaching and/or trauma informed pedagogy?

### **Data Analysis**

The data for this study was collected through qualitative interviews with teacher participants. During the interviews, audio recordings were taken, and then later transcribed for analysis. During the initial analysis of interview data, analytic memos were written to explore

research bias, intriguing findings, and to develop further ideas relevant to this study (Maxwell, 2013). In this study, analytic memos were written either immediately after the interview or after the interview transcription while re-listening to the interviews.

The analytic memos provided initial insights for categorizing the data into essential themes that were later more fully developed into findings. Categories were further developed during coding, which is a process that breaks down the data to then rearrange the pieces into specific categories that aid in the development of theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 2013). These categories can come from words, phrases, or ideas that are recurring in the interviews, whether they are expected and/or unexpected. Once initial codes had been identified they were transformed into a concept map for further analysis to be grouped into themes that represent large, common ideas.

### **Validity**

The two main threats to validity in qualitative research are researcher bias and reactivity (Maxwell, 2013). The first threat is researcher bias, which can be defined as “the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory, goals, or preconceptions, and the selection of data that ‘stand out’ to the researcher” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). My positionality impacted my data collection and analysis, therefore creating research bias. I identify as Latina, Mexican American to be specific, and the passion and drive I put into my research was deeply rooted in this aspect of my identity. There were instances where I felt defensive when speaking of Latine students and their hardships, although no one was attacking me or the ideologies I presented. It was simply my own bias on how I perceive that Latine students’ social and emotional needs are under met. I was quick to reflect on this in my post-interview analytic memos and noted how I reacted this way, so passionately, and when the interviewee did as well.

The second threat is reactivity, which is “the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). All the participants of my research were teachers who I have worked alongside at some point in time and in some sort of educational capacity. During the interviews, I often felt the energy shift when participant and researcher views differed, neither one of us wanted to ‘get into it’, possibly for fear of weakening the existing relationship. In those moments, I offered great reassurance of the beauty in differing opinions that can open new perspectives.

Clarifying and reflecting on my bias and reactivity are strategies that I used to ensure validity in my study. Another strategy to ensure validity that I used was triangulation, which is the use of multiple sources to justify coherent themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). I incorporated triangulation using multiple teacher perspectives on how they adapt social and emotional learning framework/curriculum to meet the needs of their Latine students in terms of culture and trauma increased the validity of the research. Triangulation in research studies is important in order to avoid specific results based on one perspective, which could result in being a singular bias. This study did have multiple perspectives through the teacher participants. Some teachers were veteran teachers who found their own motivation to learn about SEL or were obligated to jump on board with SEL when their school adopted an SEL program. Other teachers were just starting their teaching careers (being in their 1-3 first years) and SEL was something they learned in their collegiate career and planned to incorporate in their pedagogy prior to their teaching career. These varying perspectives and experiences with SEL added much value to the data outcomes.

## **Chapter 4: Research Findings**

Through careful analysis of the data, three overarching findings emerged through this research. First, for many teachers in this study, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is not a top priority in their classrooms nor is it as valued as other academic subjects are, like mathematics or social sciences. Oftentimes, when opportunities arise for teachers in this study to teach SEL, whether through a school adopted SEL program or teacher curated lessons, they report addressing bullying, how to be kind, and how to resolve conflict. The teachers do not report explicitly teaching and dissecting systematic racism nor immigration, among other topics, that are Latine-culture specific social and emotional needs. Second, for these teachers, Social and Emotional Learning programs and autonomously created lessons were rarely connected to Culturally Responsive Teaching or Trauma-Informed Pedagogy. The teachers in this study described Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy as three separate pedagogical approaches that can create an added burden when teaching. Third, because of the lack of conceptual understanding of the relationships between Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy, it was apparent that the teachers in this study rarely differentiated Social and Emotional Learning according to the experiences of their Latine students.

### **Social Emotional Learning Not Identified as a Teaching Priority**

Intentionally teaching Social and Emotional Learning on a regular basis was not found as a priority to the teachers in this research. When the teachers made time to teach Social and Emotional Learning, it was taught through program provided materials and/or teachable moments. Intentional SEL teaching is creating or using program provided unit plans, lesson plans, activities, daily routines, and assessments. All participants used teachable moments

instead of intentional teaching, and an example is participant Robert's SEL teaching through teachable moments in his classroom when he deemed it necessary:

I think a lot of like our read alouds and class, there are definite themes where I would embed it, but I also think that there's times... I don't know, how do I say this... I don't know, maybe if something happened at school. Something kind of I don't know about dramatic, but I guess a word or maybe something kind of a little more serious happened?

SEL teachable moments are spontaneous and small increments of time when a teacher chooses to stop teaching academics in order to deliver some form of SEL that is deemed relevant and necessary. An example is when it is obvious that a student is acting out due to an external stressor, so the teacher might take a break from academics to guide and lead the whole class in a space of meditation and/or breathing to support that student in calming their bodies to re-engage their focus - this can often be done with unintentionally knowing it is SEL. In this study, 6 out of 6 participants provided examples of teaching SEL through teachable moments, yet only 2 were intentionally teaching SEL in unit/lessons and/or classroom routines (i.e., intentional SEL morning circle) during the 20-21' academic year. Participant Ellie gave an example of how she uses teachable moments through read alouds that have SEL-related messaging instead of intentional SEL teaching.

***SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic: A Cause for SEL to be Even Less of a Priority to Teach***

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic had greatly impacted how teachers were teaching in the 2020-2021 academic year. The stress and intensity on teachers to teach all academic subjects, frequently assess students, and prepare them for state testing is tremendous. The adapted 'pandemic teaching schedule' and workload on teachers was a common reason for their lack of prioritization of Social and Emotional Learning in their classrooms. Participant Cera shared,

I don't think I've focused on it as much as I've done in the past (pre-pandemic). So I think for me, it's impacted the fact that like, now that we're in person, like, if I take those small moments of like five minutes, I need to think if it's going to be beneficial. Because right now with our small cohorts and our hybrid learning, it's like, what's going to be most impactful in this moment? And unfortunately, right now I'm like social and emotional learning and teaching moments happen if they happen, and don't if they don't, since I only have two and a half hours with them.

Cera shared this during the second interview. She expressed how the pandemic has impacted her intentionality in making space and teaching SEL in her classroom. Many teacher participants felt similarly about the pandemic's impact with SEL, and teaching in general.

***Exception: Participant Who Prioritized SEL during the Pandemic***

One participant, Mia, was an exception to the finding stated above, because she did not encounter the elevated stress of teaching SEL during the pandemic. Mia consistently taught SEL in her classroom prior to and during the pandemic due to grade-level team support. Her grade-level team has always made a point to prioritize incorporating and teaching SEL in their classrooms. Mia shared in an interview,

So we (grade level team) talked about this (continuing the use of SEL) and we were like this needs to take priority now more than ever. And I had written down a few things students had talked to me about, you know, their depression of being sad about not getting to play with friends, being in the apartment all day, relatives getting sick, fear of relatives getting sick.

Mia's grade-level team noticed how the pandemic affected their students, with the majority of them being Latine, and responded to their students' pandemic experience with SEL. Support can

greatly impact teacher ability, autonomy, and accountability to teach Social and Emotional Learning in their classroom.

### **SEL Not Connected to Culturally Relevant Teaching nor Trauma-Informed Pedagogy**

All six of the study participants understood Culturally Relevant Teaching and its importance, and generally described culturally relevant teaching to be the teacher-led integration of their students' backgrounds, contexts, and lived experiences. One participant, Jody (who identifies as White) shared,

How do I define Culturally Relevant Teaching? So to tell you the 100% truth, it's hard for me to define it because I am white. I need someone to tell me what it is and then tell me how to do it, someone like you (referring to the researcher, who is Latina). But I do also think it is absolute transparency and the ability to acknowledge that you don't know everything about people and you need to welcome the wealth of knowledge that students bring with them into the classroom.

This was a very raw and culturally sensitive response that was shared with other participants, since 5 out of 6 of them also identify as White teachers who serve predominantly Latine students. This culture shock for teachers opens opportunities for them to learn about their students and other cultures within academic contexts. Participant Robert shared in the second interview,

For Culturally Relevant Teaching, I can recall a social studies unit we did at the beginning of the year called Ancestors. Students are encouraged to have conversations with their parents about who they are, where they come from, and about their extended family. Then they made heritage dolls and family trees and wrote about themselves and

their family. It is a very good home connection. That's what sticks out the most in being culturally relevant.

Robert was able to connect that his unit was culturally relevant after teaching it, once reflecting on it. Connecting the dots after the fact is shared among all participants, resulting in the lack of intentionality in teaching CRT. All the participants spoke about CRT's importance in their pedagogy and in the classroom, but only three of the participants were able to recall ways in which CRT was intentionally integrated, and the other three were uncertain or did not identify the connection. For instance, participant Ellie, when asked how they teach CRT in the second interview, shared:

At this moment, I can't really recall anything that I've done. Like explicitly... There's been read-alouds that I have done, where the main characters are 'Latin' and things like that. So it wasn't... I didn't really do it intentionally. It just happened to be that those were the books that I thought that the kids would more or so relate to.

Ellie is identifying that she is not clear on creating an intentional connection, and in listening to her, there were noticeable pauses as she attempted to answer the question. Both her statement and her uncertainty point to the absence of intentionality with regards to CRT at the outset, much less creating connection to Social and Emotional Learning. All six participants lacked intentionality in teaching CRT and creating explicit connections to SEL.

The data also indicated that none of the participants were knowledgeable or confident in their understanding of trauma-informed pedagogy. That being the case, none of the participants had trauma-informed teaching practices in place within their pedagogy and classroom. When asked about trauma-informed pedagogy, all participants generally described TIP in relation to their current knowledge of the word 'trauma.' Participant Jody, connected trauma to Child



Protective Services in his understanding when asked to define and share their thoughts on Trauma Informed Pedagogy in the first interview, “That’s a tough one. I, as of what, you know, yeah, I can tell you that I made my first CPS report this year.” Another participant, Isabella, shared in response to the same question:

This is a term that I don’t think I ever heard in my credential program. Like this, it feels much newer to me, trauma informed pedagogy... but it also feels like something that would be really relevant to a lot of my students. And I can imagine it involves understanding different types of trauma, different sources of trauma, and then understanding the effects of trauma on a student, so like, what would that do to them emotionally.

Although the participants were able to think up their own understanding of trauma, unfortunately, simply just knowing (or guessing) the definition of the term does not denote the capacity to be able to apply trauma informed pedagogical practices in the classroom. All participants did share a deep desire to learn more about trauma-informed pedagogy after I gave them a synopsis of what it entails. Among all participants, there is a sense of disconnect between understanding an educational theory and practicing that theory in their classroom. For example, teachers might believe they are practicing CRT or TIP by having multicultural posters hung up around their classroom and by completing the annual Child Abuse webinar. While these may be small ways in which to practice CRT and TIP for Latine students to feel represented and seen, the intentional instruction, differentiation, and connection to SEL is lacking and therefore not delivering equitable access to SEL development for Latine students.

### **Social and Emotional Learning is Not Tailored to The Latine Student Experience**

The findings from this study suggested that for Latine students, the current Social and Emotional Learning programs they encountered in their classrooms were surface level. The content being covered includes important life topics and life skills such as friendship, feelings, and healthy conflict resolution that are usually taught through children's book read alouds, but they usually do not cover any topic or life skill deeper than that, like how to grieve, how to deal with internalized or externalized racism, etc. Additionally, when teachers were teaching Social and Emotional Learning through teachable moments, they were teaching these teachable moments on the spot or with just a day in advance planning.

Hence, both systems are currently surface leveled and there is not a push within these schools and their participants to dive deeper into more complex topics - and consequently, current Social and Emotional Learning is not tailored to the Latine student experience when these students come from working-class, immigrant families or do not speak English as a first language.

Latine students often experience different lived experiences and/or traumatic experiences that set them apart from their privileged white counterparts and other peers in social, emotional, cultural, and trauma needs. During the interviews, when asked about their students' demographics, all teachers shared the same demographics about their students: predominantly Latine, low to medium socio-economic status (primarily low), multi-family households (and as a result, experiencing homelessness), and Spanish speaking families. All the participants were aware of their students' demographics, as well as their personal similarities and differences to their students' identities. Although the teachers were aware of their students' demographic related traumas, they did not put conscious effort into addressing these traumas.

An exception to teachers not tailoring SEL to their Latine students is one of the participants, Cera, who did identify as Latine, Spanish speaking (bilingual), having grown up with low to medium socio-economic status, and at some point, lived in a shared household. Her lived experiences allowed her to connect deeper with her students and establish stronger relationships. One significant way Cera differentiated SEL to meet her students' needs was by creating her own phonemic alphabet chart that matched up English and Spanish language sounds. This was extremely supportive for her students, all being English language learners, while they learned English by being able to associate sounds and then words between the two languages. The difference in lived experiences for Latine students is a reason why their Social and Emotional Learning should be culturally relevant and trauma-informed, but most teachers in this study were not focused on teaching and/or are not knowledgeable/trained on these topics due to the pandemic, and lack of resources, training, and time.

## **Conclusion**

This study sought to discover how teachers respond to their Latine students' needs within the classroom setting within their pedagogical practices through Social and Emotional Learning. Additionally, this study explored the connections between teacher responses to their Latine students' needs and two theoretical concepts: Culturally Relevant Teaching and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy. Research was conducted in two low-income, predominantly Latine student serving elementary schools. The research conducted was to explore teachers' pedagogy for these research questions,

- I. How teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing social-emotional learning framework/programs to meet the unique needs of their Latine students?

II. How these adaptations draw from models for culturally relevant teaching and/or trauma informed pedagogy?

My research demonstrates a disconnect between bridging students' personal lives with their academics. Teachers with proximity to Latine students know very well the deficit categories that are often used to describe these students. Yet, knowing that students may have experienced trauma does not necessarily mean or require a teacher to practice Trauma Informed Pedagogical practices in their classroom.

The primary questions of this research sought to understand how teachers in predominantly Latine, low-income elementary schools bridge existing social-emotional learning framework/programs to meet the unique needs of their Latine students, especially during the time of a pandemic; and how these adaptations draw from models for culturally relevant teaching and/or trauma informed pedagogy?

Teachers, like the ones I interviewed, are doing their best in small ways to meet the needs of their Latine students and are aware that they have much to learn. Lack of institutional support and/or school-wide implemented SEL programs may have teachers feeling isolated and feeling like SEL is a burdensome task rather than a priority approach for their instruction. Thus, while autonomous teachers are not at fault, the Latine students are left underserved when their whole selves are not seen, and their lived experiences invalidated.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

This study sought to discover the methods teachers were using to differentiate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) for their Latine students through the uses of Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) and Trauma Informed Pedagogy (TIP). This qualitative study found that: 1) some teachers are not intentionally teaching Social and Emotional Learning in their classrooms, 2) SEL is not being connected to Culturally Relevant Teaching nor Trauma Informed Pedagogy, and 3) the lack of connections among SEL, CRT, and TIP consequently mean that Social and Emotional Learning is not being tailored to the Latine student experience. The teachers that do teach SEL are doing so through program provided material and teachable moments and are not differentiating the content for Latine students. Differentiated SEL for Latine students could look like discussions and activities centered on discrimination or immigration or teaching students how to be assertive while respecting their elders, which is an especially important cultural norm.

Both the literature review and my research findings identified that Social and Emotional Learning is a relevant pedagogical approach that supports students holistically and that promotes academic achievement. Social and Emotional Learning aims to teach to the whole child and acknowledge the impact of the child's internal/external life in relation to their academic success. For some Latine students, these life events have been extremely traumatic, such as children that still must attend school if a parent is deported, and must cope with depression, sleeping disturbances, aggression, grief, while still having to worry about their academic success (Giano et al., 2019).

Another important similarity between the academic literature and my research findings is that teachers understand the theories of Social and Emotional Learning and Culturally Relevant Teaching but have not made the connections between the two forms of pedagogy. Since the

decision to practice SEL often falls on the teacher as an individual, it cannot be expected that the teacher would have time, energy, and resources to make those connections, to attempt to integrate these pedagogies, and then apply them to their instruction. It is an unreasonable ask to have teachers do all the work on their own, and a potentially burdensome one, if there is no foundation to build upon nor institutional support for the individual teacher.

### **Implications for the Literature**

This study adds to the conversation in academic literature by demonstrating that Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy are conceptualized by many teachers to be separate theoretical approaches that each have their own pedagogical strategies and potential to serve students. In my study, only 2 out of 6 teachers intentionally teach and practice Social and Emotional Learning, and only 3 out of 6 prioritize cultural relevance in their classrooms. On the other hand, none of the participants were knowledgeable and/or had Trauma Informed Pedagogical practices in place.

When conceptualizing Culturally Relevant Teaching, researchers must begin to consider the importance of integrating both Social and Emotional Learning and Trauma Informed Pedagogy in their teaching practice. In the academic literature, researchers have only just begun to explore the relationships between Social and Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma Informed Pedagogy. The overlap and connections among all three theories should be explicit for teachers to consistently practice them in their classrooms and apply the theory to their instruction. Consequently, due to this disconnect among SEL, CRT, and TIP, teachers are overlooking their Latine students' positionality. All the study participants were fully aware of their Latine students' demographics, yet the majority do not tailor their teaching practices to meet the unique needs of their Latine students. Latine students are disproportionately

exposed to trauma (e.g., resettlement, rape/sexual assault, deportation) and therefore also exposed to a wide range of negative consequences, including in education (Zvolensky, et al., 2018). Trauma Informed Pedagogy must be embedded within Social and Emotional Learning and Culturally Relevant Teaching to authentically teach to the whole Latine child. This also applies to other minoritized and marginalized groups of children.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

Latine students require differentiated Social and Emotional Learning instruction in order to learn in a positive classroom environment. Moreover, Latine students may share similarities with other vulnerable student populations including other racially minoritized immigrants, homeless students, abused and trauma-exposed children, and students with learning differences. Therefore, teachers should differentiate Social and Emotional for their students to appropriately meet their needs and ensure their academic success.

Important components of differentiated Social and Emotional Learning for Latine students are cultural relevance in the curriculum and trauma-informed instruction. Trauma-Informed Pedagogy must be practiced and integrated into intentional SEL lessons. Trauma, whether acute or complex, impacts the brain and affects every aspect of the human being. For example, under traditional classroom management practices, traumatized students tend to be challenged immensely to meet expectations, because trauma can create social and emotional impairments that manifest themselves as behavioral problems, being impulsive, lack of emotional regulation, and difficulties with interpersonal relationships (Crosby et al., 2018). Often students exhibiting such behaviors are sent to the Principal or Dean and the gravity of the frequency or severity of the behavior may warrant suspension and expulsion. TIP could be a preventative measure to ensure such students thrive. Since Latine students carry trauma, they

must be taught SEL and CRT through a trauma-sensitive lens so that they can learn well, actively participate, and behave positively in the classroom.

Additionally, Social and Emotional Learning must be taught through a trauma-sensitive lens because Trauma-Informed Pedagogy is an act of social justice education (Crosby et al., 2018). Applying TIP means actively working toward equity in the classroom. Thus, teachers who practice TIP are actively working towards supporting their minoritized students and preventing their further marginalization. Furthermore, Trauma-Informed Pedagogy is culturally relevant for traumatized students as it “seeks to acknowledge the ways in which a young adolescent’s life course is subsequently affected by trauma, and to use trauma-sensitive strategies in place of the traditional, punitive, and trauma-blind school practice that has historically compounded the effects of students’ trauma. (Crosby et al., p. 17)”

Based on my research findings, there should be a district level policy that requires schools to choose and adopt a Social and Emotional Learning based program. This policy would allow teachers to have more SEL materials that can be differentiated for their student populations, especially if their populations are minoritized and marginalized students, like Latine students. Providing institutional support would allow teachers to feel supported and empowered in planning their SEL integrated instruction. It may mean having time worked within their school contracted hours to plan SEL lessons, in lieu of having to cut into their personal time or feeling a scarcity of time to complete additional tasks outside of school contracted hours. Another policy that could be district level or school-wide level is giving teachers time to collaborate and consider how to integrate trauma informed practices into Social and Emotional Learning, which would allow them to be culturally relevant as well. Policymakers could enforce this through Professional Development (PD) or through attending whole-school adopted trauma seminars



with trauma professionals. A potential additional result might be that teachers would be inspired and empowered to grow in their own emotional wellbeing along the way.

Beyond the district level, there needs to be state policy on differentiating SEL programs for public schools. This is a harder space to navigate since curated programs tend to be run by private corporations. Thus, the SEL program companies might be knowledgeable in Social and Emotional Learning, but perhaps do not have the necessary knowledge base to provide strategies for differentiation. The findings of this study are a call to action to foster social justice in schools and classrooms through differentiated SEL pedagogical practices. This would allow students to thrive and succeed academically, preventing the further marginalization of minoritized students.

### **Limitations of the Study and Future Research**

A limitation of this study is the sample size. If there was opportunity for a longer timeline to conduct research and collect data, a larger sample size could offer more perspectives and shed light to more patterns. A larger sample size could have included another set of 6 teachers and/or another school site. Being able to conduct research with more teachers of color, specifically Latine identifying teachers, could have added a wider perspective that is shared with the target demographic: Latine students. That perspective could reveal potential patterns that Latine and White teachers have with their Latine students. The comparison between differentiated SEL at a predominately Latine school and a predominantly White school would offer insight to the systemic injustices and barriers that Latine (and students of color) students face.

It would have been helpful to explore more Latine identifying teachers' pedagogical practices in their classrooms for Latine students and hear about their instructional priorities. Research could have shown if teachers with minoritized and marginalized identities present

themselves differently in classrooms than their White counterparts. It is possible teachers of color might prioritize SEL more or less than their white counterparts.

To better understand the process of implementing differentiated SEL curriculum, future research must consider what is needed to gain teacher buy-in when it comes to learning about educational theories (SEL, CRT, and TIP). In addition, it is critical to examine the necessary means that would get teacher buy-in to put these theories into practice in their classrooms and daily pedagogical practices. A way to gather this information could be through focused inquiry in qualitative surveys, as surveys provide complete anonymity and associated honesty. Finding reasons why teachers do not teach SEL would lead to research that can offer solutions to increase SEL in elementary school classrooms.

Building upon this recommendation, an additional key perspective is that of the administration. Principals and office staff have their own understandings and passions with educational theories that are practiced within their space and various demographics they interact with, like staff, students, parents/guardians, and third parties. It would be interesting to explore how SEL, CRT, and/or TIP are practiced in the administrative space versus the teacher space.

## **Conclusion**

Upon reflection I can acknowledge that I carried a from my personal identity, being Latina, along with my love for Latine people and culture. I had assumed that teachers would instinctively and proactively adapt their instruction to best serve the needs of their Latine students. I assumed some to most teachers were implementing these pedagogical approaches when teaching Latine students. Some Latine students share the experience of being undocumented immigrants or first-generation students in the United States of America and therefore, these students may have parents who had little to no formal education, who work

almost all day to support their family, or who are stuck in survival mode and are still thinking through the lens of their homeland (thinking that what worked over there should also work here). Differentiated social and emotional development is needed specifically for Latine, minoritized students who encounter culturally specific situations and feelings that people who have not been exposed to cannot fully understand. For example, a person who grew up in California in a middle-class family cannot possibly understand what it is like to be an immigrant and face the risk of being deported every day. For example, a core SEL area of competence is Relationship Skills with a sub skill of standing up for the rights of others. When this skill is taken literally, this could mean standing up for others through peaceful protest, which anyone can do, but this experience is wildly different for someone with citizenship status versus someone who is undocumented. Latine students, with specific and oftentimes sensitive lived experiences, cannot be taught the same SEL as their White peers and be expected to ‘live’ it out the same.

I took the challenge of writing this thesis with this essential question: how are Latine students getting equitable access to social and emotional development? With the intellectual purpose of gaining an understanding of what teachers know about the theoretical concepts of SEL, CRT, and TIP and exploring how they are adopted then adapted for Latine students. Alongside the practical purpose of increasing awareness and usage of differentiated Social and Emotional Learning instruction in California classrooms. I essentially wanted to discover how teachers put theory into practice. In doing this research, I learned that before SEL can be put into practice, SEL needs more teachers’ buy-in. Teachers need more incentives and/or policy to encourage integrating SEL into their pedagogy. Through my data findings, teachers have good intentions for SEL, but those intentions are not being manifested into practice. Once teacher buy-

in is solidified, there is a better chance for SEL to be differentiated for Latine and other minoritized students.

In hopes to inspire the future of education, these findings call teachers to recognize the need in prioritizing Social and Emotional Learning as a primary tool to advance students' holistic academic and developmental success. These findings enhance the awareness of diverse needs in the classroom, including unique social and emotional needs based on cultural context and lived experiences. With policy change and teacher empowerment, minoritized students could stop being seen through deficit perspectives, and rather have their identity and positionality validated. Ultimately, this research highlights this need and calls for the development of a differentiated, culturally relevant, and trauma sensitive SEL framework/program for Latine students.

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**Appendix A**

**Letter of Permission from Local Agency**

[REDACTED], Principal  
 [REDACTED] Elementary School  
 [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

This letter serves as confirmation that you have been presented with a brief description of my Master's Thesis research project and that by signing this letter you are giving me, Patricia Lopez-Chavez, your permission to begin my research at your elementary school in January 2021.

Post written consent of yours, I will recruit volunteers by emailing all staff through my personal [REDACTED] District email address. The email will include a background of my thesis project, what the research process would entail, and a letter of informed consent will be attached. The research process will be completely voluntary and will not interfere with teacher and staff schedules while with students.

The research I will be conducting will fulfill a requirement for my Master's in Education degree program, which is supervised by Dr. Jennifer Lucko, Associate Professor of Education at Dominican University of California. If you have questions about the research, you can contact me at (805)314-4714, my research supervisor, Dr. Lucko, at (415)482-1873, or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at Dominican University of California, at (415)257-0168. When my research is completed, I am more than happy to share with you a summary of my data collection and its important effect on my thesis project upon request.

If your approval is granted, please sign and date this letter, then please return to me at your earliest convenience via email or please let me know if you would like me to pick it up at the front office desk at your school.

Thank you for your time, trust and collaboration!

Sincerely,

**Permission is granted with signature of [REDACTED], Principal:**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**  
**Informed Consent Form**

## **Dominican University of California Consent to be a Research Participant**

I have the understanding that Patricia Lopez-Chavez is a graduate student at Dominican University of California pursuing a Master's Degree in Education. Patricia Lopez-Chavez is conducting research for her Master's Thesis to identify how educators are bridging the missing gap of culturally relevant teaching and trauma informed pedagogy that exists in social-emotional learning programs for Latine elementary school students.

I am being asked to be a volunteer and participate in this study, because I am an educator that works with Latine elementary school students and regularly attend to their social-emotional needs.

### **Procedures:**

If I agree to participate in the study, the following will happen:

1. I will participate in two interviews over the course of 8 weeks for a minimum of 30 minutes per interview.
2. I will be audio recorded for data collection, transcription, and analysis purposes pertaining to the research.
  - a. My audio recordings and transcripts will be kept confidential and stored safely in a password protected laptop.
  - b. My audio recordings and transcripts will be deleted within a year's time post completion of Patricia Lopez-Chavez's Master Thesis.
3. I will be asked to fill out a survey with questions regarding my personal preferences for a 'Thank You' gift.

### **Potential Risks:**

- ❖ Participants risk encountering uncomfortable feelings/emotions through questions or interview conversations regarding their pedagogy with Latine students.
- ❖ Participants risk encountering uncomfortable feelings/emotions through questions or interview conversations regarding lived experiences of Latine students.

### **Benefits:**

- ❖ The participants will benefit by voicing their opinions about a topic strongly tied to their current work and school climate.
- ❖ The participants will benefit by engaging in dialogic interviews that allow for their own self-exploration of the research topic.
- ❖ The participants will benefit by gaining awareness of the challenges/trauma/needs their Latine students may face.

**Questions/Comments:**

I have received background information and details about the research process from Patricia Lopez-Chavez. If I have further questions or comments about this study, I may call her at (805)314-4714, or her research supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Lucko, Associate Professor of Education, at (415)482-1873.

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should talk first with the researcher and the research supervisor. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may research the IRBPHS Office by calling (415)257-0168 and leaving a voicemail message, by FAX at (415)458-3755 or by writing to the IRBPHS, Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dominican University of California, 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901.

**Confidentiality:**

The researcher will keep the volunteer's identity confidential throughout the study. All data collected will be kept confidential and stored securely on the researcher's password-safe laptop.

**Voluntary Consent:**

I have been given a copy of this consent form, signed and dated, to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to decline to be in this study or withdraw my participation at any time without fear of adverse consequences. I am free to talk to my principal if I am uncomfortable at any point in this study.

My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study through a series of three interviews that will be audio recorded then analyzed and completion of an SEL mini lesson for Patricia Lopez-Chavez's Master Thesis research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Research Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Appendix C**

**Interview #1 Questions for Teachers**

1. How did you become interested in teaching Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to your students?
  - a. Follow up: Where did you learn about SEL? In school? Professional Development during your teaching career? Or elsewhere?
2. How do you define Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?
3. What is it like for you to teach SEL?
  - a. Follow up: What is the purpose of SEL?
4. What type of SEL curriculum, if any, does your school have?
  - a. Yearly, monthly, weekly, daily program? Adopted whole school or teacher preference?
5. (*If participants answered that they have no SEL curriculum in their school:*) How, if at all, do you add SEL in your pedagogy?
6. Can you describe an SEL lesson that was easy to teach, accessible to students, or brought joy to you and your students?
  - a. Follow up: What was that like for you? Why do you think the lesson was successful?
7. Can you describe an SEL lesson that was hard to teach, inaccessible to students, or burdensome?
  - a. Follow up: What was that like for you? Why do you think the lesson was difficult?
8. How do you make choices to teach SEL?
9. How would you describe the general lived experiences (marginalization, discrimination, socio-economic status, language barriers, shared households etc..) of your Latine students?
10. What similarities in your background and lived experiences do you share with your Latine students? What differences in your background and lived experiences exist between you and your Latine students?
11. How do you define and feel about Culturally Responsive Teaching?
12. How do you define and feel about Trauma-Informed Pedagogy?

**Appendix D**

**Interview #2 Questions for Teachers**



1. Based on my data from the first set of interviews, Social-Emotional Learning is not currently being explicitly taught through intentional lessons, but rather taught through ‘teachable moments’. Can you describe a vivid, successful SEL lesson/teachable moment during this current academic year - whether it was online or in person due to the pandemic?
2. How has teaching during this pandemic impacted your focus/priority in teaching Social-Emotional Learning, if at all?
  - a. More detail: How is it different now than from a previous year... or what it could be like.
3. My synopsis from the first interviews is that the teachers I interviewed collectively defined Culturally Relevant Teaching (CRT) as bringing students’ backgrounds/contexts into the classroom and in the teacher’s pedagogy, and some noted that it was important to teach in their classroom due to their privilege and lack of cultural/contextual similarities with their students (all teachers work with primarily Latine students, some with low-economic status, living in multi-family households, first generation students, etc.).
  - a. Can you provide an example of a lesson that you taught that was culturally relevant for your students?
4. Another synopsis from the first interviews is that teachers I interviewed collectively a) did not have much knowledge of, and b) related the term ‘trauma-informed pedagogy’ directly to their understanding/knowledge of ‘trauma’. Trauma-Informed Pedagogy is using trauma-informed practices of healing and growth that support de-traumatization of students in a school setting. It seeks to acknowledge and understand how a student’s life course is affected by their trauma. Specifically, a Latine student’s trauma can stem from: their own or loved one’s citizenship status, fleeing a country, socio-economic status, externalized and/or internalized racism, not having enough food for all the family or for a healthy number of meals, etc. Whole-school examples of Trauma-Informed Pedagogy practices are offering meditation during detention and counseling instead of suspension, among others. Teacher examples of Trauma-Informed Pedagogy practices are read-alouds that address any type of trauma and allowing for discussion, consistently working on being and presenting oneself as a safe adult, getting to know students and their trauma

(or assumptions of their trauma) and providing services, being sensitive when teaching certain topics, and having compassion/understanding with behaviors, among others.

- a. Can you provide an example of a lesson that you taught that was trauma-informed for your students? Whether you knew a student(s) had that specific trauma or not.
  - i. If no lesson can be provided; Can you describe a moment or time where you addressed a student's trauma and what that was like for you?
5. Collectively, all teachers generally described most to all their students as: Latine, low to medium socioeconomic status, first generation students or immigrant students, Spanish (different dialects) speaking households, not having lavish vacations, and more.
  - a. Based on what you know about your students... Can you provide an example of when you taught a lesson (or teachable moment) that you felt was meeting the needs of your Latine students in terms of their personal background/context?
    - i. For example, if you know your student(s) is an immigrant, did you teach/speak on immigration, Trump, or anything else in class?
6. Considering your background/context and your students, can you describe the relationship you have with them?
  - a. More detail: Whether there are more similarities or differences, can you describe the power dynamic, community feeling, parent-teacher relationships, etc.
7. In hearing about Social-Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy through this research, have your thoughts/feelings about all or either of these shifted/changed/progressed?
8. How could teaching/practicing Social-Emotional Learning, Culturally Relevant Teaching, and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy be easier/more effective for you?
  - a. What do you think of all of these put together into one curriculum and/or these embedded in other subject curriculums?
9. Lastly, how do you feel about Social-Emotional Learning needing to be tailored to the Latine student experience? Does it need to be at all?
  - a. I am focusing on 'Latine student experience' but the same question can be applied to the Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, etc. student experience.