

**Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of a Fe y Alegria**

**School in Bolivia**

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## Introduction

This study addresses the problem of a lack of culturally responsive literacy instruction in poor and marginalized communities, especially in developing countries. Relatedly, the study addresses factors that affect the implementation of this instruction, specifically the training of teachers to provide culturally responsive instruction, including literacy instruction. The goal of this research is to provide data that leads to a grounded description of how teachers in a Bolivian Fe y Alegria school use culturally responsive literacy instruction in the classroom and what factors affect, either positively or negatively, their ability to do so. A school within the Fe y Alegria Jesuit organization was chosen for this study due to its self-identified focus on education of the whole child within the context of the community. As well, this organization places an emphasis on on-going teacher training that goes beyond the national requirements as means to prepare their teachers to address the specific needs of their students.

For this study, we have defined culturally responsive literacy instruction as instruction that reflects the literacy practices of the families of the children and the community in which the school is embedded. Literacy practices refer to the texts and purposes for reading and writing those texts as well as values and beliefs related to literacy and specific literacy events (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984).

## Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by socio-cultural theories that view knowledge, language, and literacy as shaped and defined by the socio-cultural contexts within which they are located

(Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 1986; Gee, 1992; Street, 1984). Within this sociocultural frame, the Literacy as Social Practice theory (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984) is particularly relevant to this study. Those who adhere to a literacy as social practice theory view literacy as a sociocultural practice and emphasize the social relationships between people and the institutions within which literacy is embedded (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). This theory allows us to view literacy as not only the ability to use reading and writing to construct meaning from printed text, but the ability to do so in ways that allow one to participate in specific sociocultural contexts (Au, 1993; de Castell & Luke, 1983).

This ideological model also claims that the role of the institution and teachers in the instruction of literacy and the power relationships between teacher and learner, affect the learning process. Therefore, the process of acquiring the literacy skills themselves is caught up in social practice. Both teachers and learners come to the classroom with their own set of beliefs about literacy, learning, and each other. One cannot assume that literacy skills can be acquired neutrally and the social effects experienced only afterwards (Street, 2003).

Some researchers and theorists have made a distinction between the terms literacy practices and literacy events. The term literacy event refers to specific acts of reading or writing that can be observed. The term literacy practices, does not just involve the observable acts of reading and writing (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Literacy practices can be defined as

...larger than acts of print based reading and writing. Literacy practices are the socio-culturally ways of using written language and they involve values, attitudes and beliefs, feelings and social relationships. They are not observable per se but must be inferred by the literacy events and texts utilized as part of the literacy practice (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004 p. 32).

Genre theory (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) informed the analysis of this study. Based on Halliday's language as social semiotic theory, genre theory views language always as language in use with linguistic genres shaped by sociocultural contexts. Genres are fluid and dynamic text types are reflective of the communities' norms (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). According to Swales (1990) a genre is a class of communicative events which share communicative purposes. The purposes are shaped and recognized by members of the contextual community for which these genres exist. As well, the purposes shape the need for the genre and the subsequent structure or form it takes. When determining the communicative purpose genre theorist Askehave (Askehave, 1998) argues that we must investigate the context in which the text is used since the content of a text and the surrounding political, cultural or social context may reveal underlying purposes.

For the purposes of this study, genres are defined by their communicative function or purpose and the features typically characteristic of that genre (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). For example, the purpose of a budget is to help manage one's money and a budget contains several essential attributes, such as: (a) content involves money, (b) divided up according to a time period, and (c) itemizing of income or expenses. A budget is often found in a spreadsheet format with headings and totals. There are many text types, each defined by a specific purpose. A consent form is used to elicit and document consent; an evaluation is used to provide feedback about something or someone; a mailing address is used to direct where to send the item; and a testimony is used to provide an official written statement that testifies about some event that transpired.

*Theories of Culture.* This study aligns with Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition that views culture as a dynamic system of values, behaviours, cognitive codes, beliefs and ways of viewing the world that are used to give meaning to the lives of the members of the cultural group. The theoretical frame for this study views culture as a social construction (Erickson, 2001) that is a reflection of a symbiotic relationship between the person and the culture itself; one is constantly shaping the other (Banks, 2006; Gay, 2000). Since language, symbols and the values attached to them are integral parts of defining and shaping culture, the relationship between literacy and culture can also be viewed as vital.

*Cultural difference framework.* This theory views the low achievement of minority or marginalized students, not as a result of their own deficits or "deprived cultures," but as the result of discontinuities between their home cultures and that of the school (Au, 1998; Purcell-Gates et al., 2004; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Embedded within this theory is the belief that schools should therefore modify the school environment, curriculum and instructional strategies in order to render it more congruent with the cultures of the students' (Banks, 2006; Macedo & Bartolome, 1999). The cultural difference theory runs counter to the *cultural deficit theory*. Instead of viewing the school and educators as the actors that need to adapt, the deficit theory sees the students and their home environments as deficient and this deficiency as the cause for children's underachievement in schools. This deficit theory identifies the neutral school environment as the institution that attempts to "make up for" what the home or community culture is lacking. This "blaming the victim" approach has been popular in educational circles since it focuses the attention on what is missing in the communities or homes of these children and not on what the schools are lacking (Au, 1998; Banks, 2006; Macedo & Bartolome, 1999).

## Related Literature

The decision to conduct this study comes from a review of related research on education and teacher training in developing countries, literacy practices in marginalized communities, culturally responsive instruction and the Fe y Alegria organization. The following body of research concludes that education in developing countries that draws upon the community's beliefs, resources and practices is more successful than implementing purely western based models. The research also concluded that the quality of teachers and the quality of their training has a significant impact on students' academic achievement in developing countries. As well, the research supports the belief that all communities are rich in a variety of literacy practices that can be drawn upon to teach literacy in a culturally responsive way; a method that has been shown to be related to higher achievement , especially for students who come from marginalized circumstances. Finally, the research identifies Fe y Alegria schools as schools which have a higher success rate with marginalized students, due to the organization's commitment to community involvement and educating the child within the context of the community.

### *Education in Developing Countries*

Although the terms literacy and education are not completely synonymous, when discussing education in the developing world, literacy becomes a critical ingredient to basic education in the third world. However, the research clearly shows that focusing primarily on the mass expansion of formal schooling has not created the development opportunities expected, and in fact, in some instances, has created more problems and a greater disparity between socio-economic or ethnic populations (Blakemore, 1975; Jacob, 1982; Leach, 2000; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1972; Robertson, 1984; Weis, 1979; Zachariah, 1982). Research then

began focusing on identifying variables that affect quality education and on how to plan and fund it in the developing world. Some of the variables identified in the research literature showing some positive effects in raising the quality of schools include teacher training, availability of texts, health and nutrition of students, quality of administrators and parental involvement (Carlson, 2000; Schiefelbein & Farrell, 1982). The quality of teachers in schools in the developing world has been identified as a factor which has an effect on children's academic achievement (Fuller & Heyneman, 1989; Heyneman & Loxley, 1983; Winkler, 2000).

Quality of teachers in the developing world is often measured by the quality of teacher training. Several studies suggest that teacher training in the developing world currently is too far removed from the real life of the classroom, too abstract and mainly based in theory (Castro, Claudia de Moura, Navarro, Wolff, & Carnoy, 2000; Craig, Kraft, & du Plessis, 1998; Navarro & Verdisco, 2000).

### *Literacy in Marginalized Communities*

A large body of research has documented that the home cultures within which children are raised are rich in a variety of literacy practices regardless of socio-economic status (SES) and culture. It also suggests that these rich literacy practices, beliefs and ways of interacting are either underutilized or completely ignored in literacy instruction in mainstream schools (Heath, 1983; Purcell-Gates & Dahl, 1991; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986). Established principles of early literacy that have been developed and generally accepted in recent decades, are based on emergent literacy research done by scholars (Hall, 1987; Teale, 1986) operating within the belief that a child's literacy development does not begin upon their entrance into school, but at birth, assuming an

environment that includes reading and writing (Purcell-Gates, 1995). This research suggests that early-years instruction should value and recognize children's prior experiences with literacy. The research clearly suggests that schools need to bridge the gap between how students interact with literacy at home and how they interact with literacy at school, if students from diverse or marginalized backgrounds are to achieve greater success in our mainstream schools (Moll & Greenburg, 1990) .

*Discontinuities between home and school literacy practices.* Evidence continues to accumulate documenting the discontinuities between the home or community's expectations, uses for and interactions with literacy, and those of the mainstream school environment. Heath's (1983) seminal study of three different cultural communities in the southeastern United States revealed deep differences in conceptualizations of literacy and practices of literacy between the non-mainstream communities and the mainstream one represented in the school classrooms. Au (1981) similarly documented the challenges Native Hawaiian students encountered in school while participating in mainstream forms of interaction, language and participatory structures that differed greatly from the expectations held in their familial and cultural contexts.

Moll and Diaz, 1985, in a study of Latino students in the southwestern United States, concluded that many already existing language and literacy skills that students of diverse backgrounds have, that could be used as a basis for expanding their literacy skills, are either ignored or discouraged in school.

McCarthy (1997) conducted research on five students with diverse backgrounds studying their home and school literacy. This study took place in a community located in the Southwestern U.S. with a high Hispanic population. The participants varied in sociocultural

background, ranging from European-American, African-American and Hispanic, and socio-economic background. Some of the students came from middle class homes while others came from working class or immigrant families who had come to the U.S. recently. Her study again concluded that the non-mainstream children participated in home literacy activities that did not match the literacy practices occurring in the classroom. The non-mainstream children tended to keep their home and school lives more separate from each other than the students who came from a European-American, middle class background and did not feel as comfortable as these students in participating in sharing stories or items from home. Within the classroom, students were engaged in literacy activities such as writing in personal journals, story read-alouds, research, writer's workshop and book response activities which consisted of the teacher reading aloud a chapter from a children's chapter book, then discussing and summarizing with the students and finally the students writing an open ended response to what they had heard, in their response journals. At home the non-mainstream children and their families were engaged in literacy activities which had more to do with maintaining social relationships like reading or writing letters and invitations or in one case for religious purposes such as Bible reading or memorizing passages. In the cases of the non-mainstream students' homes, literacy was not used often as a means of entertainment.

Purcell-Gates (2007) conducted an ethnography of the marginalized community of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica and documented virtually no connections between the literacy practices of the immigrants and those of the Costa Rican mainstream schools. Nicaraguan immigrants have a high rate of school dropout and failure in Costa Rica.

These studies clearly indicate a gap between the home and school literacy practices that needs to be bridged. Recently theorists and scholars have turned their studies to the development of culturally sensitive literacy instructional strategies in an effort to address this issue.

### *Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*

Research that has studied classrooms that employ culturally responsive teaching methods, strongly suggest that this approach to education is effective in raising the achievement of marginalized and minority students. Studies have demonstrated that incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices can increase students' participation, motivation and academic scores. Literacy in general, but especially in developing countries, is seen as one of the most important factors in defining quality education. Therefore, this study is focusing on not only culturally responsive instruction in general but also more specifically on a culturally responsive literacy instruction.

Culturally responsive instruction draws on concepts found in the cultural difference theory. This theory also claims that there are discontinuities between the home culture of students and that of the school. However, it also suggests that despite the differences in the two environments, educators are still responsible for trying to understand the different congruencies and incongruencies between the home and school cultures, and should attempt to minimize the resulting tensions and mediate the gaps between the two (Gay, 2000).

According to Gay (2000) culturally responsive teaching “validates, facilitates, and liberates ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities and academic success” (pg. 44). As well, this theory views culturally responsive pedagogy as a fluid relationship between the home and community's cultures and

the school's culture. One is not totally conforming to the other. Gay (2000) has defined culturally responsive teaching as: validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative and emancipatory. For this study, this means acknowledging and validating, the literacy practices of the student's cultural lives within the instruction, incorporating a variety of instructional techniques to engage all types of learners and integrating into instruction, connections with their ethnic group and/or community.

Relevant to this discussion of culturally responsive literacy instruction is Paolo Freire's literacy work which focused on literacy as liberation. While Paolo Freire's literacy education theories emerged out of work with illiterate adults in the developing world, the concepts found in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* resound strongly with the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy brought forth by Geneva Gay (2000). Freire's ideas and methods are important to point out not only because they align closely with culturally responsive pedagogy, but also because Freire's theories arose from work in poor Latin American communities, much like the one in this study. As well, Freire's work is especially relevant to understanding the site for this study, a Fe y Alegria school, which has a philosophy based to a large degree on Freirian principles.

Attempts at creating culturally responsive schooling have produced promising results. For example, the Kamehameha Education Project in Hawaii adjusted its reading program based on differing language practices found in the home and schools. Teachers adjusted their instruction and incorporated a more culturally congruent, participation style called "talk story". As a result, the children's time on task increased, student performance increased as did their scores on standardized reading tests (Au, 1979).

Moll and Diaz (1987) conducted a study of a San Diego Project that serviced a population of secondary students that were largely Hispanic. By integrating writing topics and assignments that were of relevance or concern in their community or home lives, teachers were able to bridge the gap between home and school for the students, and the researchers observed high motivation and success by the students.

Lee (1995) discovered that teachers, who incorporated the African-American tradition of signifying into English lessons on literature interpretation, saw that their students could provide longer and more insightful commentaries on the texts they were analyzing.

Several studies have looked at the learning styles of the First Nations in Canada and Native Americans in the United States. Research on programs which attempt to utilize students' home cultures and adapt instructional strategies to more closely match home cultures shows a higher participation and success rate (Grant & Gillespie, 1993; Tharp & Yamauchi, 1994).

The previous discussion has focused on the ideas and concepts which shape culturally responsive instruction as a general method of instruction. This study, however, also addresses the specific notion of culturally responsive literacy instruction and because of the specific focus on literacy instruction it is necessary to briefly explain the concepts that form the basis of *authentic literacy instruction* as a practical means to implement culturally responsive literacy instruction. Much of the research that the development of authentic literacy instruction has emerged from is discussed in the following sections.

Literacy instruction that uses authentic texts in the classroom is another aspect of culturally responsive literacy instruction. Texts that are identified and used in the community and homes of students can be described as real-life as are the purposes or reasons for reading

or writing that are occurring in the homes of students. These real-life texts could be shopping lists, telephone books, newspapers or letters. Real-life purposes for reading or writing could be reading in order to find a phone number, writing a letter to keep in touch with a friend or writing a shopping list to remember what to buy. Authentic literacy activities are ones that are engaged in for real-life communicative purposes and use real-life text types within literacy instruction in the classroom (Purcell-Gates, Duke, Hall, & Tower, 2006). For example, engaging a student in writing a letter (a real-life text) in class to a friend or relative in order to tell them about a new baby that was born into the family and then actually mailing it (a real-life audience), would be considered an authentic literacy activity. Having a child write a letter to an imaginary character in a storybook and then displaying it on the wall is not an authentic literacy activity. Although this latter activity involves a real-life text, the purpose the child had for composing the letter in the first place (in order to complete the assignment or in order to display the letter on the wall), would never be found in a real-life situation by people in this child's life who write letters (i.e. people usually don't write letters to imaginary characters nor do they post letters on walls rather than mail them). For literacy instruction to be described as authentic, it is necessary that real-life texts and real-life purposes for reading and writing those texts are used in the classroom.

Authentic literacy instruction supports attempts to connect home and school literacy practices, i.e. render the literacy instruction as culturally responsive, or congruent. Using authentic texts in the classroom helps bridge the gap between the home and school and allows the students to clearly see real-life purposes for reading and writing that match the purposes used by their families or other community members. The effectiveness of this type of instruction is documented in the following two studies.

The Literacy Practices of Adult Learners Study (LPALS), conducted at Harvard University, researched which type of instruction was related to increased reading and writing as well as the reading and writing of more diverse types of text by adults with low reading skills: (a) Instruction that emphasized basic skills taught in isolation and often utilized materials such as workbooks, phonics exercises, vocabulary programs, and so on or (b) Instruction that emphasized the reading and writing of real-life texts for real-life purposes (authentic literacy instruction) (Purcell-Gates, Degener, Erickson, & Soler, 2002). This study used data collected from adult learners and their teachers from a variety of locations across the United States. The data was collected through individual and group interviews, classroom observations and teacher questionnaires. This study revealed two major findings. Firstly, the more that the teacher used real-life texts and had students read and write them for real life purposes in class, the more the students reported reading and writing more often in their lives, outside of any school assignments, and/or reading/writing new and different texts. Secondly, the study revealed that the new textual practices that were reported involved increasingly more linguistically complex texts (Purcell-Gates et al., 2002).

The second study which documents the effectiveness of using authentic literacy instruction in the classroom is the TEXT (Test of EXplicit Teaching) study (Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007). The TEXT study was actually designed to test the benefits of including explicit explanation/teaching of genre features as part of reading and writing of authentic texts for authentic purposes for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, not as a test of authentic literacy instruction. The sample included 420 students and 36 teachers over the course of two years and examined the effect of receiving one of the following two types of instruction during science class: Authentic- Only or Authentic + Explicit. The researchers worked with

teachers to include authentic reading and writing of science informational and science procedural texts in their science instruction and, for half of the classes, to embed explicit explanation of the genre features of these texts within the authentic reading and writing. The results showed that there was no impact at all – negative or positive – of explicit explanation of genre features during authentic reading and writing of those genres. However, the data did reveal that the more teachers in both groups used real-life information and procedural texts and real-life reasons for reading/writing them in the context of their science instruction, the more the kids grew on measures of reading comprehension and written composition of those genres (Purcell-Gates et al., 2007).

The LPALS study documented the relationship between the degree to which teachers bring real-life cultural practices of literacy into the classroom and higher frequencies of reading and writing of more complex texts for adults, and the TEXT study documented impressive relationships between authenticity of reading and writing activities in the primary grades and growth in reading and writing abilities of specific genres. Both studies document the effectiveness of using authentic literacy instruction in the classroom to improve the level of reading and writing occurring and the complexity of text read and written.

There are few examples in the developing world of policies, programs, or schools that use the construct of literacy as multiple and cultural to guide their educational choices and instruction. However, the *Fe y Alegria* organization is an example of an organization and network of schools which has a commitment to educating the child within the context of the community and has had more academic success than comparable public schools in marginalized communities in Latin America.

*Fe y Alegria*

The school site for this study was a Fe y Alegria school in central Bolivia. Fe y Alegria schools are public/private partnerships between the state and the Jesuits (a Christian religious order of the Roman Catholic Church) whose educational philosophy has strong ties to community/school partnerships. Fe y Alegria is a non-governmental organization that originated in 1955 and defines itself as a “Movement for Integral Popular Education and Social Development” (Fe y Alegria, 2007). Its educational philosophy is an education of the “whole child” and an “integral education which forms the person in his/her totality” and this means “taking into account the student in his/her totality as a person and as a member of a determined community” (Fe y Alegria, 2007). As well, Fe y Alegria schools claim to emphasize values education, and teaching honesty and solidarity (Reimers, 1993). Fe y Alegria schools are spread throughout most of the countries in Latin America and have a strong presence in Bolivia. They serve communities of poverty where there are very few services of any kind available to the people who live there and where there may be little, if any, access to public education. The Fe y Alegria organization not only focuses on the building of schools but also on a variety of other community based programs that aid in the goal of transforming and empowering an entire community (Fe y Alegria, 2007).

According to anecdotal evidence, graduates from Fe y Alegria schools have a better mastery of skills in reading, writing and math than graduates from the public system (Reimers, 1993). One of the schools’ primary aims is to reduce the high dropout and grade retention rates that are characteristic of many public Latin American schools. In Bolivia, the gross repetition rate for public schools is 72.88% compared to 20.35% for Fe y Alegria schools. The gross dropout rate for public schools is 26.8% while the rates for Fe y Alegria schools are considerably lower at 9.0% (Swope & Latorre, 2000). Experts identify several

factors that contribute to the success of Fe y Alegria, starting with having a clear mission and objective that focuses on keeping children in school and creating a more equitable world. This organization also asserts a belief in creating a school community that involves the parents in the school, and in operating a school within an environment of cooperation and trust between teachers, parents, students and administrators. The organization also leaves the creation and implementation of formal and informal rules to the individual schools in order to maintain a respect for the diversity among schools in different areas (McMeekin, 2003).

The stability of the teaching staff has also been identified as a strength of Fe y Alegria schools. For example, a survey of the average number of years of service of teachers in Fe y Alegria Educational Centers found that, in Bolivia, out of 90 cases, 55.5 teachers had six or more years of service with Fe y Alegria (Latorre & Swope, 1999). Once teachers are hired, they are required to participate in on-going professional development in a variety of areas to upgrade their skills, become familiar with Fe y Alegria philosophy, and share their knowledge with other teachers (Latorre, 1999).

This research on education in the developing world, teacher education, literacy practices and culture and the Fe y Alegria schools themselves has shaped the design, analysis and the initial inception of the study itself and reveals some conclusions outlined below that are integral to the framework of this study.

The above body of research points to a number of clear conclusions: (a) Policies and planning for education in the developing world need to take into account the community context, values and beliefs in order to be successful, and (b) the quality of teachers in the developing world can have a positive impact on the achievement of students, and (c) the literacy practices of children who come from marginalized communities are rich, varied and

often ignored in school, contributing to a lack of academic success in mainstream schools, (d) culturally responsive literacy instruction that takes into account and incorporates a child's home and community literacy practices contributes to a child's academic success in school, and (e) Fe y Alegria schools are an example of the type of schools that appear to be more successful at advancing their students and lowering drop out rates due to a more culturally sensitive approach to instruction, in general, and to special emphasis placed on teacher training practices to facilitate this.

In sum, this research is guided by the following definition of culturally responsive instruction: *Culturally responsive instruction utilizes a student's home culture and experiences as a guide to create or adjust educational program elements that will facilitate students' academic success. This means having a conception of all students being capable of learning and validating their own community and culture, using the knowledge of the community culture to adjust instructional strategies and content to better reflect students' realities, encouraging social relations in the classroom that develops a sense of community and encourage students learning together and giving students the skills to recognize, understand and critique social inequalities. Specifically, culturally responsive literacy instruction would involve elements of the above definition and for the purposes of this study also include the use of authentic literacy instruction as defined previously.* It is important to note that culturally responsive instruction can be described as a range or continuum of behaviours not a fixed or rigid set of practices that teachers must adhere to. However, we have used the pillars of culturally responsive instruction as described by Gay (2000) to allow us to identify elements of and describe culturally responsive instruction in practice, in order to make it more accessible to other prospective teachers.

Given the above outlined research and theory, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How is culturally responsive literacy instruction being implemented in a Fe y Alegria school in Bolivia?
  - a. Which of the seven characteristics of Gay's (2000) definition of culturally responsive instruction are reported and/or observed in the instruction overall?
  - b. Which of the seven characteristics of Gay's (2000) definition of culturally responsive instruction are reported and/or observed in the literacy instruction?
  - c. How is authentic literacy instruction used in the classroom to facilitate culturally responsive literacy instruction?
    - i. What are the literacy practices in the home?
    - ii. What are the literacy practices in the school?
    - iii. What are the alignments and misalignments between the literacy practices of the homes and those of the school?
2. What are the factors affecting the implementation of culturally responsive instruction?

## Method

### *Design*

This study was designed as a descriptive case study. Descriptive case studies generally use multiple sources of data, and describe bounded systems, investigate participants and events in their natural settings and contexts, and focus on describing already existing characteristics, relationships, events, or phenomenon whose outcomes are unknown within a defined community (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2000; Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994).

### *Research Location*

*Tracy Gates.* My interest in Bolivia and this particular school began in 2000 when I taught and lived there for one year. During that time I was exposed to both the public and private educational institutions and developed a strong interest in the issues surrounding education and development in the developing world, specifically in Latin America. Previous to this time in Bolivia and subsequently I have been an elementary teacher in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and have spent most of my teaching career teaching in schools that have been very diverse in both a sociocultural sense and socioeconomically. These teaching and travelling experiences, combined with the research and study during the initial phases of my graduate degree, led me back to Bolivia and the developing world to learn more about education and literacy in marginalized communities.

*Victoria Purcell-Gates.* This study is one of the case studies conceived by and supported by the Cultural Practices of Literacy Study (CPLS) that I direct at the University of British Columbia. The data was collected in Bolivia by Tracy and analyzed in conjunction with the CPLS research team. The Cultural Practices of Literacy Study is a large umbrella study that is composed of a variety of case studies that research literacy practices in socially and culturally defined contexts. All the studies are based in theory that views literacy not as a neutral practice, but as a social and cultural one that is influenced by values, history, beliefs, power relationships and politics. Data collected from individual case studies contribute to an extensive and growing database of literacy practices defined by different socio-cultural communities. Many of the case studies have as a goal to provide important information which will allow for the development of early literacy instruction that will be effective for all

communities, but especially for poor and marginalized communities. This instruction would build on already existing literacies found in the communities and homes of the children.

For ease of reading, we will use Tracy's name in the retelling of the data collection rather than the ubiquitous 'first author.'

### *Site*

This study was of a Fe y Alegria school located in the semi-rural community of San Angel in the city of San Pedro, Bolivia. This specific school site was chosen for its specific educational philosophy discussed previously. The city of San Pedro, Bolivia was chosen because of the Tracy's connection with the city itself.

*Bolivia.* Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in South America with 64% of its population living below the poverty line and has a large indigenous and mestizo population of 85% (CIA, 2007). Over 30 different indigenous languages are spoken in the country and it has three official languages: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara (CIA, 2007). Bolivia currently has a total adult literacy rate of 87% (literacy being defined as anyone over the age of 15 who can read or write, but not specified as to what level), and 86% of primary school entrants reach the fifth grade (Unicef, 2007).

*Political Context.* The country of Bolivia was in the midst of an interesting time in its political history. For the first time in its history, an indigenous president held power. Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia in the winter of 2005. This occurred after a number of years of upheaval, and protests decrying the disparities between the indigenous and ruling class in Bolivia. Bolivia has had a political history full of coups, juntas, military rule,

violence and more recently democratically elected leaders. No government or ruler seems to have been able to bring long lasting peace and stability to the country or to deal with the continuing issues of poverty and indigenous rights.

Upon Morales's election, many changes were implemented to empower the local indigenous populations in an attempt to better their standard of living. These changes in all areas of the government and its policies have caused great concern among the traditional ruling class and therefore have created a counter movement against the majority and predominantly indigenous party. As a result, the country was in a state of great flux during the time of this study, including a great deal of uncertainty about the direction of education and development. In addition, the role of the church and its' organizations like Fe y Alegria were under scrutiny since the new government took power. The new educational direction of the public education system had a distinct liberatory and indigenous tone to it, yet it was unclear how this would be implemented in a practical sense.

At the time of data collection, quality education in Bolivia had been somewhat elusive for the masses. Most Bolivians of the upper class send their children to private schools, either parochial, secular, or, for the very wealthy, foreign schools which provide instruction in English or another language besides Spanish. There had been a number of *reforma educativas* (educational reforms) over the years that had attempted to reform the education system, the most recent of which occurred in 2000. However, none of the reforms had had a lasting effect on the public education system. There was also a marked difference in quality between rural and urban schools. Rural schools had difficulty obtaining and retaining teachers and operate in rustic conditions with extremely limited resources. The quality of urban public schools varied depending on the socioeconomic area in which the

school is located. Bolivian public school teachers have low salaries, and most teachers try to find more than one teaching position to supplement their incomes. Due to the difficult working conditions and low salaries, teachers' strikes are common and often drawn out.

*City.* The city of San Pedro (all names are pseudonyms) has a population of about 500,000 but it is a sprawling city that has a very rural feel. It is located at the foothills of the Andes and is characterized by its spring-like weather and agrarian-based economy. The city and the surrounding area has a large Quechua-speaking population, and the traditional dress, food and way of life is still very much alive there. Both Quechua and Aymara are widely spoken indigenous languages in the area. San Pedro is a city with few paved roads and no zoning restrictions. Although, generally, the wealthier residents reside in the north, it is not uncommon to see a large, expensive house right next to an adobe, clay shack. Most of the wealthy residents live in the north area of town while the poorer populations live in the south side; the farther south you live the poorer you are, forced to live in areas on the outskirts of the city with limited facilities. San Pedro is one of three major cities in Bolivia and of the three; San Pedro has the most temperate climate which has made it the agricultural centre of the country due to its 12-month growing season.

*Local community.* Escuela Los Molinas is situated in the community of San Angel. San Angel is located in the southern-most corner of the city of San Pedro, so much so that it borders farmlands. San Angel is an impoverished semi-urban, semi-rural area. Most taxis are reluctant to travel there due to the considerable distance it is from the centre of the city and the reputation the community has for crime. Almost all commuting between this community and the centre of the city is done by truffi (a type of local bus). It is a 30- to 45-minute bus ride from the centre of the city where most people do their shopping or commute to work in

the local black market. The water that the residents use for cooking, cleaning and drinking is delivered in trucks once a week and stored in large tanks sitting out in their yards. The water is extremely expensive and the issue of access to clean, affordable water is a constant political issue for these residents. Another issue for members of this community is land reform and access to farmland. The only school in the community was the Fe y Alegria where I conducted the study. The community had access to some electricity but not for everyone. There was no running water, nor any sewage or garbage services available for the community. There were a few small *tiendas* (stores) that sold basic food items but most other items required a bus ride into the centre of town on market days. There were no medical services, post offices or banking facilities.

Most of the residents of San Angel had migrated from other parts of Bolivia in an attempt to find more work in San Pedro. There were a number of residents who immigrated from *el campo* (the countryside) and many others who came from Potosi, a mining city quite a number of hours away which was no longer booming and now rampant with unemployment for miners and their families. There were a variety of common occupations in this community such as builders, vendors in *la cancha* (the black market), bakers, shoemakers, cleaners, and so on. Some of the children's parents were working in Italy or Spain as maids or labourers and sending money back home for the family, while the children were staying with relatives.

*School.* The Fe y Alegria school, *Escuela Los Molinas*, the school site of this study, ran a morning and afternoon program. This is common in most public schools in Bolivia. From 8 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. classes are held at the school. The morning school has its own administrator, staff, materials and students. From 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. a separate

afternoon school is in session. This school is run by a separate administrator, employs completely different staff and teaches a different set of students. The only common element is the building and the fact that they are both run by and share the philosophy of the Fe y Alegria organization.

Due to limited time and resources, data was collected from the morning school only and no interaction occurred with the afternoon staff or students. The morning school offered kindergarten to eighth grade. Each class had 40 to 50 students in it.

The school was comprised of two separate brick buildings. The newer one, built in the last year from donated funds, is three stories high and houses all the grades. Each grade had its own room. The other brick building housed empty classrooms, no longer being used and with no furniture. In the middle of these buildings was a covered cement pad that was used for outdoor physical education classes. The playground was a dusty field outside the new building. Each classroom contained wooden desks, chairs and a blackboard at the front of the room. As well each room usually had a book shelf for the teacher's materials. The school itself had bathrooms but no running water or sewage facilities.

### *Participants*

*Teacher participants.* The initial contact with the administrator and teachers of the school occurred upon the first visit to the school; however, they had been advised well in advance of the Tracy's arrival and the administrator had explained nature of the study. With the aid of a translator, Tracy introduced herself to the administrator and then went around to each class and introduced herself again. After school there was a brief staff meeting where she explained to the teachers who she was, why she was there and expressed her interest in learning as much as she could about the school and their training. She emphasized that she

was a fellow teacher who was there to observe, learn and hopefully use what she learned to help teachers and children become better at teaching and learning literacy. The teachers were given an opportunity to ask questions of her.

It was at this time that Tracy made appointments to interview teachers during school hours, after clarifying that they were voluntary. The results of this study are based on, and limited to, those teachers who volunteered to be interviewed by me and fit the required criteria. Two criteria were used to select possible participants: (a) we needed to interview teachers of grades 1 and 2 since Tracy would be observing the literacy practices in those classrooms; and (b) we needed to interview teachers both novice and veteran to the Fe y Alegria school, to gain an understanding of the types of professional development and training concerning culturally responsive literacy instruction they might have received at different points in their careers.

The teachers who participated in the interviews all came from a mixed-race background with most of them from a Quechua-speaking heritage with the exception of one who spoke Aymara. Of the five teachers and administrators I interviewed, only one lived in the community where the school was located. I was able to interview two novice teachers and three more veteran teachers. Out of the six teachers I interviewed, two of the teachers were in their first year of teaching and the others had anywhere from 5 to 20 years of teaching experience. Two of the participants interviewed were teachers of the first and second grade.

The administrator also volunteered to be interviewed. She had taught for a number of years in a Fe y Alegria school and had been the administrator at Escuela Los Molinas for the past seven years. She was a fluent Quechua speaker and frequently spoke to the parents in Quechua.

*Literacy practices interview participants.* Family and community literacy practice data is based on volunteer interviews of parents in the community. Both I and the school administrator solicited volunteers for these interviews. Many families dropped off their children at school or came to the office for other business, and either I or the administrator would initially approach them about the possibility of volunteering for the interviews. We briefly explained my presence at the school, what kinds of questions they would be asked and if they would be interested in voluntarily participating. If they were available at the time and it was more convenient, some interviews were done at the school. For other participants, alternative times were set up for me to visit their homes and conduct the interview. One participant requested that the interview be conducted at her job site. Participants were chosen simply on the basis that they were willing and had time to participate.

The participants' ages ranged from mid 20s to 50s and I interviewed both men and women. Many of the participants had a rural, agrarian, background as they and their families had moved from other areas of Bolivia in an attempt to find work in a larger center. The participants had a variety of occupations. I interviewed a builder, shoemaker, janitor, electrician, baker, three housewives and a cook.

All of these families lived in impoverished conditions. The homes were sparsely furnished usually containing a few wooden chairs and dining table and maybe a shelf to store the cooking utensils. Often the floors were dirt or cement and the cooking facilities were located outside the residence in the yard. One home contained a television and a radio/stereo and a bookshelf filled with a number of books. The homes were made of clay or adobe bricks. Usually the yards housed any number of cows, dogs, cats and chickens roaming

freely. The large water tanks that stored the weekly supply of water, sat out in the yard. Since there were no paved roads in that area, dirt and dust coated everything.

### *Data Collection*

*Classroom observations.* Classroom observations occurred in the first and second grade classrooms over the course of one month. Tracy observed in the grade 1 and 2 classrooms for a total of 12 hours. She took on a friendly observer role in these instances, situating herself at the back of the room with her translator and trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. She did not interfere with any instruction or behaviors. She appeared to be interested in what the children were doing, and if a child approached her to talk she would respond. She noted all utterances, directions, assignments, and texts that involved reading or writing. She noted student responses as well but did not identify the children in any way. She recorded what both the teacher and students read and wrote in notebooks or on the chalkboard. On her first visit in each room, she completed a diagram of the room noting all the texts on the wall and what they were for as well as placement of furniture and the general layout of the room. She also dated and recorded general routines and procedures in the classes.

*Teacher training observations.* Tracy attended four workshops and professional development sessions, all of the ones that were offered during the month of August. These four included a literacy workshop offered by an outside organization that another Fe y Alegria teacher was enrolled in. Tracy also participated in the *Hora Pedagógica* (a time when certain teachers share their training with others), Open Classroom (a time when teachers observe other teachers and then debrief and offer constructive criticism) and a Fe y Alegria workshop focusing on the philosophy and direction of the organization itself. With

the aid of her translator, she documented the dialogue and instruction during the activities and collected and translated any materials they were given.

*Artifacts.* Samples were collected of student written texts, tests, reading texts, Fe y Alegria documents such as the CAPIB (*Curriculo Alternativo Popular Intercultural Bilingue*) the Fe y Alegria-designed curriculum , evaluative checklists used by the administration and the government *Educativa Reforma* curricula instituted in 2000. She also took digital photos of texts on classroom walls inside the grade 1 and 2 rooms, as well as texts found in common areas of the school.

*Community observations and texts.* On three occasions Tracy took walks through the community. On the initial walk, the principal accompanied her and the translator to explain things and answer the myriad of questions she had. She noted the housing, services, transportation and the demographic of the community. On several occasions, she took the local trufi bus home, as this would be the only mode of transport for most of the teachers and students in this area.

During her walks and bus rides she took photographs of texts found in the community, from signs to newspapers to packaging on products--a total of 40 photos of different types of community texts. She also collected samples of the texts themselves, especially if they were texts specifically referred to in the course of an interview. In total she collected 29 samples of community texts. **Refer to Table 3 for a complete list of the community texts recorded.**

*Informal interviews and field notes.* Tracy was often involved in informal conversations with parents and teachers that focused on education or the general state politics in Bolivia. The contents of these were recorded as field notes and informal interviews. She

documented a total of 22 pages of field notes on these informal interviews and conversations. These notes also included observations made during formal interviews.

*Interviews.* A total of nine home literacy practices interviews and seven teacher/administrator interviews were completed with the aid of a Spanish/Quechua translator. Tracy recorded a total of 177 pages of teacher, administrator and literacy practice interview transcripts in English. Demographic information was collected from the interview participants at the then end of the interviews.

*Instruments:*

*Literacy Practice Interviews.* The CPLS literacy practices semi-structured interview (Purcell-Gates, 2007c) protocol is divided into three major sections: (a) current reading and writing practices, and (b) historical (when the participant was a child and youth) reading and writing practices within the community, and (c) historical reading and writing practices during previous schooling. Each topic contains several prompts to guide the questions, but information from the home surroundings also served to guide the questioning. The specific questions on the literacy practices protocol were included to illicit as much information as possible about what print people read or wrote in their daily lives and for what reasons. Sample questions from the literacy practices protocol include: What kinds of things do you read or write in your daily life for work? What kinds of things do you read or write with your children? What kinds of things do you read or write for religious purposes? When you were a child, what kinds of things do you remember people in your house reading or writing for entertainment, relaxation, for work or for shopping? What kinds of things did you read or write during your schooling? For each of these types of questions, CPLS interviewers try to elicit as much information as possible about why the person reads or writes a text, what

feelings or values are reflected in the textual practice and the social activity context (Wertsch, 1998) within which this literacy event occurred.

*Teacher Training Interview Protocol.* The teacher training and administrator semi-structured interview protocol was divided into three sections: (a) formal teacher training before being hired at the Fe y Alegria school, (b) informal teacher training acquired once hired at the school, and (c) local community description. Sample questions from the interview protocol included: How were you encouraged to teach reading and writing during your formal teacher training? How does Fe y Alegria encourage you to teach reading and writing and do they provide any support for that? What kinds of literacy instruction professional development have you been involved in through Fe y Alegria or other organizations? Sample questions from the community description portion of the protocol included: How would you describe this community? Do you live in the community or somewhere else? If you live in another community, how is it different or the same as this one? What kinds of services are available in this community? Again these questions were designed to guide my interview and remind me what not to forget. However, the participants often had anecdotes, information and opinions that did not relate directly to my questions but that still proved invaluable.

#### *Data Analysis*

Field notes and informal interview notes were written up each evening. The digitally recorded interview were transferred into sound files and copied to CDs. Any reoccurring statements or themes that became apparent during the course of the time spent at the school were noted every afternoon.

The interviews were transcribed, using the English oral transcriptions provided by the translator. All the transcriptions, scanned photographs, documents and field notes were loaded into the qualitative data analysis program, (ATLAS.ti software, 2007) for coding and further analysis.

### *Coding*

The coding of the literacy practices both in the community and in the school followed CPLS procedures (Purcell-Gates, 2007b). CPLS researchers view each literacy event firstly, as shaped by the domain of social activity that it mediates (Wertsch, 1998). Further, each literacy event is coded for the function and purpose for reading or writing each text and the text type, or genre, being read or written. These categories were influenced by the work of Michael Halliday and his social semiotic theory of language (Halliday, 1978).

Each literacy event in the data was coded with the following code string: (a) participant code, (b) social activity domain, (d) literacy event/school text/community text, (e) function, (f) purpose, (g) language, (h) role, and (i) text type. Any uncertainties about how to apply the coding procedures were brought forward to the team at the weekly meetings and discussed. There were many instances of recoding as the concepts that were attached to each code became more solidified in our thinking.

Texts boundaries, or what distinguishes one text from another, were identified first by their genre and then their physical form. For example: advertisement, sign or comic, newspaper. We use the idea of genre as it is shaped by its communicative function, and then added the physical form the genre was found in. What identifies one genre from another is the social function it serves for the reader or writer and the structures that are characteristic of that genre which both work together to achieve the communicative purpose of the text

(Swales, 1990). For example, an advertisement is defined as a genre that arises from a commercial interest and is intended to entice someone to buy something. An advertisement could come in a variety of physical forms, such as a sign, newspaper, or poster. The function of a medication label is to direct the proper usage of the medication and has several essential attributes that include: (a) the name of the medication, and (b) the usage directions. It may include: (a) the doctor's name, (b) the phone number of the pharmacy, (c) warnings, and (d) the number of refills left (Purcell-Gates, 2007b).

As a team we developed a genre called Literacy Instructional Text and used the code LIT to identify it. LIT texts are texts that are read or written with the specific purpose of teaching someone to read or write. Manifestations include primers, flashcards, handouts, phonetic text on the blackboard, workbooks, copy text, pattern books, and so on. It is important to identify these types of texts occurring in the classroom since it provides us with important information on the types of texts and literacy practices commonly used in literacy instruction in the classroom.

*Teacher training code definitions.* All classroom and professional development activity observations, teacher/administrator interviews, school texts, and other school documents, were coding for the following:

All references to or instances of directly observed culturally responsive pedagogy were identified and coded. They were then coded if they occurred during literacy instruction or not. Observations or quotations from the teacher interviews, classroom observations, documents and workshops were coded for the six dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy as defined by Geneva Gay (Gay, 2000).

To address the research question regarding the factors that affect the implementation of culturally responsive literacy instruction, the data was coded for types of teacher training, included formal and informal, normal school, Fe y Alegria, materials, and so on. A total of 23 codes resulted. The codes were all derived from the interview protocols and thus were pre-determined. A number of other codes reflecting dimensions of teacher training also arose from the data.

Comparative and contrasting coding techniques (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) revealed pervasive and underlying themes in the data. These included teacher attitudes towards the parents of their students and their feelings toward their formal teacher training. As well, descriptors of the community that the school was located in resulted in a number of codes as did analysis of formal and informal interviews and documents for insights into the political, educational, and cultural context in Bolivia .

Using the ATLAS.ti software (ATLAS.ti 5.0, 2007) to isolate the different codes for the literacy practice data, I analyzed for the ways in which the literacy practices of the classrooms reflected the literacy practices of the homes and community. I also analyzed the data for all instances of culturally responsive instruction that reflected Gay's dimensions (Gay, 2000) and for factors affecting the implementation of culturally responsive instruction.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

During all phases of analysis, data was triangulated to strengthen the validity and reliability of the conclusions.

### Results

#### *Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Instruction in Overall Instruction*

Overall, there were few instances, reported or observed, of culturally responsive instruction occurring in the school. For this study, we defined “overall culturally responsive instruction” as any observed or reported behaviour or reference to a behaviour that illustrates one of Gay’s (2000) characteristics of culturally responsive instructions: (a) validating of a child’s home/community culture and seeks ways to incorporate this in instruction; (b) multidimensional, in that it recognizes students’ varied learning styles and adapts materials and instruction and curriculum accordingly; (c) comprehensive, which develops all aspects of the child including the intellectual, social, emotional and political learning; (d) empowering, which translates into teachers facilitating academic success, personal confidence, and the will to act in their students (e) transformative, which enables students to develop the knowledge and skills to make and implement reflective decisions in a social, political and cultural context; (f) emancipatory, because it represents diverse cultures and groups as valid producers of their own knowledge and skills and generates pride and a liberation from the view that only one source of knowledge is valid and true; and (g) caring, which is shown in interpersonal relationships between teachers and students that demonstrate patience, persistence, an interest in their lives outside of school and a facilitation of academic and personal success. The instances in the data that were observed or reported fell mainly into one of the four characteristics that define culturally responsive instruction as (a) validating, (b) caring, (c) multidimensional and (d) comprehensive. Most of these instances were reported in teacher interviews and/or documents.

Only four instances of overall culturally responsive instruction were actually observed in the classroom. These instances involved such activities as taking students outside on a community field trip and discussing the local environment, a teacher attending

to a child's personal emotional needs, using actions or games to help with classroom management and using familiar context or scenarios to make up math word problems for the students to solve.

The remaining instances of overall culturally responsive instruction were reported in teacher interviews or were made reference to in administrator checklists or *Fe y Alegria* /government curricula. Several teachers reported participating in or organizing folkloric dances in the community festivals, or using the child's first language to explain words or ideas in class. Some teachers indicated that they were incorporating more student-centered strategies into their instruction. Sample strategies included: (a) allowing students more choice in their assignments, (b) encouraging more critical thinking and dialogue, (c) decreasing the amount of copying the students were required to do, and (d) utilizing more group work in class. One teacher and the administrator reported using Quechua to communicate with the parents and that same teacher reported using a culturally accepted mode of communication known as "kitchen radio" to contact parents in the community. If a person within the community needed to speak with another person in the community, they would walk to their house. If the person was not home a quick oral or written message left with the next door neighbour was the next best option. The message was sure to be delivered and this method was known as "kitchen radio". The administrator also had developed a checklist to assess teachers' instruction based on some culturally responsive components such as: (a) Is the classroom atmosphere democratic? (b) Has the teacher presented the lesson as a collaborator? and (c) Does the lesson meet the expectations of the students?

*Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Instruction Found in the Literacy Instruction?*

Again, there were few indications or instances of culturally responsive literacy instruction in the data, but of the few documented, teaching using the community ‘context’ became a reoccurring theme in both the teacher interviews and the classroom observations. Most of the instances of culturally responsive teaching fell under two of the seven main characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. This is instruction that is (a) validating, and (b) multidimensional. The few instances that fell into the other categories of (a) emancipatory, (b) comprehensive and, (c) transforming, were almost exclusively found in Fe y Alegria or government documents.

A typical literacy lesson observed in these two classrooms would start off with the teacher introducing a syllable the students would be learning for that day, e.g. the syllable “pa-”. The teacher would ask students to suggest different words they knew that started with the same sound unit and she would write them on the board, e.g. *pala* (shovel). The teacher would typically draw a simple picture to accompany the word, and she would underline or circle the “pa-” phoneme within the word. The teacher would take three or four suggestions, and continue on in this way. When the teacher finished printing the examples on the chalkboard, the students were instructed to copy them down and draw a picture to go with them. Often for homework or in class they were assigned to copy out the “pa-” phoneme several times in a row in their notebooks and as well copy out the several associated words. An emphasis on very neat printing was emphasized. As well, the students might be instructed to open their primers, in this case *Coquito*, and complete an exercise page filling in the blank or circling words and pictures that were associated with the “pa-” sound.

During the month of data collection, four instances of culturally responsive literacy instruction observed in the classroom. One instance involved a teacher using hands-on

objects and activities to teach vocabulary for a personal hygiene lesson. Another instance involved students completing a poster called *Paisaje Cultural* depicting what they saw during their walk in the surrounding community. One teacher was observed using plants commonly found in the community to teach the spelling of words and the reading of common words like *Biblia* (Bible), and *vaca* (cow), to demonstrate the two different types of “b” sounds in Spanish.

The instances of culturally responsive teaching that were referred to in teacher interviews and curricula, described some methodologies that they had been encouraged to use either from *Fe y Alegria* or during their formal teacher training, when teaching reading or writing. The methods encouraged were games, songs, and movement activities. One teacher also explained how he sometimes used Quechua words to explain vocabulary words in Spanish. Another teacher explained how she attempted to adapt literacy materials for her students since some of the vocabulary and content was too difficult and irrelevant for them. The administrator indicated that she wanted the teachers at her school to have at least a little bit of knowledge of the Quechua language so that the teachers could communicate more effectively with the parents.

There were also several references to culturally responsive instruction in both the *Fe y Alegria* CAPIB (Fe y Alegria, 2000) and the *Reforma Educativa 2000* document (Ministerio de Educacion, 2000). The *Reforma Educativa 2000* curriculum document describes one of the objectives of language and communication in Bolivia as “taking into account the cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 38). The *Fe y Alegria* CAPIB (Fe y Alegria, 2000) states that students, when learning language, “find out that in the country there are many different languages and he [sic] sees them with respect” (p.45).

Despite the overall lack of observed or reported instances of culturally responsive literacy instruction, there was a common theme that did emerge from the instances that were documented. The administrator and all of the teachers indicated that they knew that using the community context as a means to improve instruction for the students and make it more relevant, was important for their students. Several teachers stated that during their formal teacher training they were instructed to use “things of the context of the area” to teach reading or writing like boxes, papers, sticks, etc. Another teacher was told to “find out material which is in the context” such as posters or packaging text to teach phonics. One teacher was observed teaching students science vocabulary, using words of local plants that the students discovered when the class took a field trip around the community. The children also completed a poster called *Paisaje Cultural* depicting what they saw during their walk. Another teacher was observed using a local activity like riding the truffi bus to another town to teach a math lesson on money and problem solving.

Several teachers expressed frustration at government-produced teaching guides or curriculum guides that suggested activities and materials that did not reflect the local community’s cultural, geographical or economic context. One teacher stated that using commercially produced texts like fairy tales, was inappropriate because many of the words like *prince* or *castle* would simply have no meaning for her students.

Other teachers were instructed during their formal training and at Fe y Alegria workshops to use local texts to teach reading and writing or use commonly used words from the community like *planta* (plant) or *pala* (shovel).

The government curriculum and documents such as the Fe y Alegria CAPIB emphasize acknowledging, valuing and utilizing the students’ local, cultural context. In the

most recent *Reforma Educativa 2000 Language Arts* curriculum produced by the Bolivian Ministry of Education, an important reading strategy is “association of the content of the text with students’ personal experiences” (p. 45). It also states that “the area of language and communication is orientated [sic] to communicate within the context” and that teachers should be developing students to “produce written text using special strategies for each process for a meaningful and an authentic communication” (p. 39). The *Fe y Alegria CAPIB* states that the learner should “recognize that his language and other languages are important for communication in his family at school and in the community” (p.45). The CAPIB also indicates that a learner should be able to “describe differences and similarities among some texts produced in the community” (p. 45). The teachers and administrator at the school were also embarking on a project to produce a handbook of instructional strategies for reading and writing based on activities already deemed successful for this community’s context.

All of the above leads to the conclusion that providing culturally responsive instruction in literacy or any other subject was limited to acknowledging and utilizing aspects of the community context and most of the observed instances were limited to the two areas that partially define culturally responsive teaching as validating and multidimensional. There were few, if any, observed instances of culturally responsive instruction seen as transformative, empowering, emancipatory, and caring, despite the references to these ideals in the official documents. The next section reports the results related to culturally responsive literacy instruction.

#### *Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction*

*Literacy practices within the families and the community.* In the community of San Angel, the community texts observed were composed primarily of advertisement signage,

labels, or package texts in some form. Table 3 documents the total community texts documented in this study. See Figures 1 to 3 for photo examples of community texts.

Table 3. Community Text Types/ Unknown Domain

Text Type	Total
Advertisement, sign	14
Bible	1
Calendar	2
Labeling sign	7
Menu, blackboard	1
Name, graffiti	1
Package text, food	3
Public notice/announcement, flyer	1
Regulatory sign	2
Slogan, poster	1
Slogan, wall	2
Word, graffiti	1
Grand Total	36

*Social activity domains.* Parents in San Angel reported engaging in a variety of literacy practices in their daily lives. Table 4 displays all the social activity domains documented by percentages out of the total.

Table 4. Social Activity Domains

Social Activity Domain	Percentage of Total
Civic Rules & Regulations	2.05%
Cooking	5.13%
Community Life	1.54%
Entertainment	11.79%
Family life	17.95%
Information	9.23%
Interpersonal Communication	12.31%
Maintenance	4.62%
Politics	3.08%
School	1.54%
Self-motivated Education	6.15%
Spirituality	11.28%
Work	11.28%

*Text types.* According to the text type analysis, 231 instances in total were reported and of those, 66 different text types were observed or reported as being read or written by the children’s parents, in varying degrees since not every text type occurred in every home. Tables 5 through 18 display text types categorized by occurrence in each domain and also by percentages of total texts overall.

Table 5. Domain of Responding to Civic Rules and Regulations

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Form filling text	3	2.60 %
Information, form	1	0.43%

Table 6. Domain of Cooking/Eating

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Advertisement, sign	3	10.82%
Recipe, book	4	2.16%
Recipe, TV	1	0.43%
Recipe, unknown	2	0.87%

Table 7. Domain of Participating in Community Life

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Agenda	1	1.30%
Invitation	1	0.43%
News story, newspaper	1	0.43%

Table 8. Domain of Entertaining Oneself or Having Fun

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
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Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Activity/Word puzzle	4	1.73%
Activity/Word puzzle, answer	5	2.16%
Biography, magazine	1	0.43%
Comic, magazine	3	1.30%
Comic, newspaper	2	0.87%
Information text, book	1	0.43%
News story, newspaper	1	10.39%
Novel, book	2	1.30%
Short story	1	0.43%
Short story, book	1	0.43%
Subtitle, TV	1	0.87%
Unknown, pamphlet	1	3.03%

Table 9. Domain of Acquiring or Disseminating News and Information

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Almanac	1	0.43%
News story, newspaper	16	10.39%
Unknown, pamphlet	1	3.03%

Table 10. Domain of Family Life

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Advertisement, sign	1	10.82%
Calendar	1	1.30%
Dictionary	2	1.73%
Fable, unknown	2	0.87%
Form filling text	2	2.60%
Homework, unknown	5	2.16%
How to text, book	1	0.43%
Information text, handout	1	0.43%
Item list	1	3.46%
LIT, alphabet book	1	0.43%
LIT, homework, alphabet	3	0.43%

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
letter		
LIT, homework, unknown	1	0.43%
LIT, homework, word	1	0.43%
LIT, primer	1	0.43%
LIT, textbook	1	0.87%
News story, newspaper	3	10.39%
Novel, book	1	1.30%
Recipe, book	1	2.16%
Signature	3	2.60%
Textbook	1	0.43%
Unknown, pamphlet	2	3.03%

Table 11. Domain of Relating Interpersonally

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Dictionary	1	1.73%
Greeting card	3	1.30%
Lyrics	1	0.87%
Official letter	2	0.87%
Personal letter/note	16	6.93%
Poetry	1	0.43%

Table 12. Domain of Maintenance of Tools and Home Environment

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Advertisement, sign	3	10.82%
Item list	2	3.46%
Labeling sign	2	4.76%
Textbook	1	3.03%

Table 13. Domain of Participating in Politics

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Exam/question answer	1	0.87%
News story, newspaper	1	10.39%
Slogan, graffiti	2	0.87%
Slogan, poster	1	0.87%
Unknown, pamphlet	1	3.03%

Table 14. Domain of Participating in Formal Schooling

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Agenda	1	1.30%
Spirituality pamphlet	1	2.60%
Textbook	1	3.03%

Table 15. Domain of Transacting with School-Like Learning Practices

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
LIT, alphabet letter, poster	1	0.43%
LIT, copy text, notebook	1	0.87%
LIT, copy text, oral	1	0.43%
News story, newspaper	1	10.39%

Table 16. Domain of Participating in Spiritual Life

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Bible	12	5.63%
Exam/question answer	1	0.87%
Lesson plan	1	0.43%
Lyrics	1	0.87%
Slogan, graffiti	1	0.87%
Spirituality pamphlet	5	2.60%
Survey	1	0.43%

Table 17. Domain of Work

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts in all Domains
Advertisement, sign	3	10.82%
Agenda	1	1.30%
Exam	1	0.43%
Form filling text	1	2.60%
Item list	5	3.46%
Labeling sign	2	4.76%
Menu	2	0.87%
Order, form	1	0.43%
Signature	2	2.60%
Textbook	1	3.03%
Unknown, pamphlet	1	3.03%
Work application letter	1	0.43%
Work estimate	1	0.43%

Table 18. Domain of Self Motivated Education/Personal Improvement

Text Type	Number of Occurrences within the Domain	Total Percentage of all Texts
Advertisement, sign	1	10.82%
Dictionary	1	1.73%
LIT, copy text, notebook	1	0.87%
LIT, copy text, TV	1	0.43%
LIT, textbook	1	0.87%
News story, newspaper	1	10.39%
Phone number	1	0.43%
Subtitle, TV	1	0.87%
Textbook	3	3.03%
Unknown, pamphlet	1	3.03%

The text types found in the Unknown domain were previously displayed in Table 3 above.

*Purposes for reading and writing.* Purposes are the social goals served by instances of reading and writing. Thus, they are to social activity domain within which literacy events occur. We documented 101 distinct social purposes for reading and writing texts within the

children's homes and community. In this analysis, the Community Texts were included and the purposes for reading and writing were inferred. For reporting purposes, I have grouped together similar social purposes. The largest category of purposes (comprised of six separate purposes) revolved around identifying or buying a good or service at 14.77%. Out of the total 231, 16.86% of the purposes (comprised of 19 separate purposes) had to do with helping children with school work or the adults, themselves, engaging in a school activity. Several participants engaged in reading or writing (comprised of 5 separate purposes) in order to be informed or share news at 10.82%. As well, 8.22% (comprised of 3 separate purposes) of the participants read or wrote in order to communicate with their families or significant others, 7.77% (comprised of 7 separate purposes) read or wrote to obtain or share information from the Bible or another text to prepare for religious rites, 3.45% (comprised of 5 separate purposes) of the participants reported reading or writing recipes in order to prepare food and 3.46% (comprised of 4 purposes) read or wrote for pleasure, to entertain oneself or another, or to take a break. Other purposes reported included In Order to Know What to Order for Work, In Order to Know Information About Birthdays, In Order to Know the Correct Date, In Order to Know What the Danger is, and In Order to Document your Attendance. For a complete list of all 231 purposes, see Figure 4. For a complete table of all 231 purposes with the number of occurrences for each purpose see Appendix E.

Figure 4. Total purposes for reading and writing in the homes and community.

In order to act out the story	In order to improve her writing
In order to advertise the special	In order to keep track of supplies and prices
In order to agree to a compromise	In order to know about the politicians
In order to alleviate depression	In order to know how her family members are
In order to alleviate loneliness	In order to know how to fix or make something at his job
In order to apply for a work transfer	In order to know how to fix things around the house
In order to assess student's knowledge	In order to know how to teach her children to read
In order to avoid a beating	In order to know information about their birthdays
In order to be entertained	In order to know the correct date
In order to be informed about children's schooling	In order to know the order of events

In order to be informed about news events	In order to know the results of a sports match
In order to be informed about other religions	In order to know the sale information
In order to be informed about the community	In order to know what is for sale in the store
In order to buy child's school books	In order to know what is on the menu today
In order to check homework for errors	In order to know what the danger is
In order to check the meaning of a word	In order to know what the promotion or sale is
In order to communicate with distant family	In order to know what the service is
In order to communicate with significant other	In order to know what to order for work
In order to complete assignment	In order to know where and when the meeting is
In order to conduct a meeting	In order to learn a new recipe
In order to cook a meal for one's family	In order to learn about history
In order to dictate the letter to the mother	In order to learn about the Bible
In order to discuss the news with friends	In order to learn about the Biblical prophecies
In order to document having read teacher's note	In order to learn how to sign own name
In order to document your attendance	In order to learn how to spell family names
In order to ensure that you buy what you need or want	In order to learn how to spell words
In order to entertain the children	In order to learn information about the course
In order to explain what stories are about to kids	In order to learn new things
In order to express one's opinion	In order to learn Quechua
In order to find the cheapest price	In order to modify a recipe
In order to get on the correct bus	In order to obtain a job
In order to give a customer a work estimate	In order to obtain counseling for her children
In order to give permission for child to do something	In order to participate in the Catechism
In order to give the employer a record of work completed	In order to pass the time
In order to help child with homework	In order to pay government taxes
In order to help children read	In order to play the game
In order to help children read recipes	In order to prepare children to be safe
In order to help children with homework	In order to prepare for sacred rights
In order to help her children learn Quechua	In order to prepare oneself to be a community leader
In order to help the children understand the text	In order to provide information for the government
In order to help the church	In order to receive the pay cheque
In order to identify the item	In order to receive training for a job
In order to identify the store	In order to recite a Bible verse
In order to identify the taxi	In order to remember important dates
In order to improve handwriting	In order to remember important information later
In order to improve her reading	In order to respond to husband's legal requests
In order to satisfy one's curiosity	In order to spell a word correctly
In order to share her recipe	In order to take a break
In order to share the Bible with others	In order to teach a Bible lesson
In order to sing the songs	In order to teach the history to her children
	In order to understand the text

*Literacy practices in the school?*

*Purposes.* Our of 11 distinct student purposes for reading or writing, the most common was In Order the Complete the Assignment(70% of the total distinct purposes). Table 19 displays the frequencies for all of the documents student purposes for reading and writing in school.

*Table 19. Student purposes for reading or writing in school.*

<b>Purposes for Reading/Writing</b>	<b>Total</b>
In order to answer a question	3
In order to complete assignment	42
In order to complete the exam	4
In order to demonstrate the correct spelling	1
In order to document your attendance	1
In order to join in the choral reading	3
In order to know the order of events	1
In order to know which one to use	2
In order to learn the letter sounds	1
In order to show competence in reading	1
In order to study the information later	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

*Text types.* In the grade 1 and 2 classrooms, 29 different text types were documented. Of these, 78.02% were literacy instructional texts, or texts read or written specifically to learn how to read or write. These included such texts as, copy text in a variety of forms, individual words in a variety of forms, primers, spelling lists, poetry, short stories, phoneme tiles and so on. For a complete list of all the in-school texts see Table 20.

*Table 20. Total In-School Texts*

<b>Text Type</b>	<b>#</b>
Agenda	1
Attendance Chart	1
Exam	1
Exam/question answer	1
Labeling sign	2
LIT, activity/word puzzle answer, handout	1
LIT, activity/word puzzle, handout	2

<b>Text Type</b>	<b>#</b>
LIT, alphabet letter, poster	2
LIT, copy text, blackboard	9
LIT, copy text, notebook	2
LIT, copy text, oral	2
LIT, copy text, poster	1
LIT, phoneme, tile	3
LIT, poetry	1
LIT, primer	4
LIT, sentence	1
LIT, short story, book	1
LIT, slogan	1
LIT, spelling list	2
LIT, title, poster	1
LIT, vocabulary list, poster	1
LIT, word caption	9
LIT, word card	1
LIT, word, blackboard	2
LIT, word, notebook	1
LIT, word, poster	1
Number	4
Title, album	1
Title, notebook	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>

### *Home and School Literacy Practices Alignment*

The only text that occurred in both the school domain and domains outside of school in the lives of the family or community was the agenda. Both children and adults were observed reading an agenda for a school dance presentation. As well, one adult reported using an agenda to keep track of the order of events in a community meeting and at work. The agenda text was present in the school but was not used for any instructional purposes in reading or writing. Thus, it did not meet the definition of *authentic* for the classroom, which requires that students read and write real-life texts for real-life purposes, in addition to learning to read and write through the activity.

There were three other instances of real-life texts found in the classroom. Although these texts, (title, album; title, notebook; and attendance chart) were all used for real-life purposes

by the children in the class and are real-life texts, they were not used during literacy instruction by the teacher. These instances just happened as a matter of course during the day and were not capitalized on by the teacher for literacy instruction.

Overall, there was little culturally responsive literacy instruction being implemented at this school as defined by Gay (2000). There were no observed instances of using authentic texts during literacy instruction despite a wide variety of literacy practices reported from the parents and a wide variety of text types found in the homes and community of the students. Most of the literacy instruction that falls under the definition of culturally responsive is characterized by the teachers using “context” to make a connection for the children between the school and their homes. The instances of culturally responsive literacy instruction observed and reported were limited almost exclusively to modifying, creating or using materials that were “real life” or came from the community context. Teachers, despite the philosophy and objectives documented in the curricula, used a limited number of text types in the classroom which had very little, if any connection to students’ real lives and most of the work completed by the students was done so in order to complete the assignment. Although, referred to in official documents, specific characteristics of Gay’s definition such as, transforming, emancipatory, and comprehensive instruction were rarely seen implemented in the classroom. Most of the instances were categorized as validating or multidimensional and were reflected in teachers’ actions such as, speaking in Quechua to students or being active in students’ lives outside of school. There was little evidence of any culturally responsive literacy instruction that was intentionally implemented during the teaching of reading or writing.

*Factors affecting the successful implementation of culturally responsive instruction.*

During the course of the teacher/administrator interviews, class observations and a review of school documents, two major themes emerged regarding culturally responsive literacy instruction and the factors that affect the teachers' ability to implement it.

*Predominantly theory-based teacher training.* Teachers reported that their teacher preparation for literacy instruction was primarily theoretical and that they were given few examples of how to put the theory into practice in their classrooms. All the teachers at the school were fully qualified and had attended a teacher's normal school, a separate teacher's college, or a university to obtain teaching certification. However, none of the participants felt that their training was practical, and all expressed disappointment at the lack of practical or methods focused content in their formal teacher training coursework, especially concerning literacy instruction. They did feel their coursework prepared them for teaching, but only in the sense that it gave them a solid knowledge of educational theory and expanded their content knowledge in subjects like history, math, Quechua, or Spanish. While the teachers were all required to take content and education courses, none of them reported taking a methods course for reading or writing. Any strategies for, or reference to, practical applications of instructional techniques specific to cultural responsiveness or otherwise, were mentioned only in passing by their professors. The references seemed vague, according to the teachers that I interviewed, with the implication that the students were left to interpret on their own how this strategy might be incorporated into a real teaching situation. None of the teachers felt they were taught "how to teach".

Most of the training provided by Fe y Alegria that directly related to reading and writing was more practical in nature, as compared to the formal training received by the teachers. Teachers reported attending Fe y Alegria- sponsored workshops that taught literacy

strategies such as songs, games and movement activities. Some teachers also mentioned receiving “modules” or guides that gave explicit instructions on what to teach and when, for different subjects. Again, however, teachers indicated that many of the workshops focused heavily on theory and gave only general ideas regarding literacy instruction.

All the teachers and the administrator mentioned the “Pedagogical Commission” and the *Hora de Pedagogia* or the “Teaching Hour” in a positive way and felt it was useful for their own professional development in terms of literacy instruction. This Pedagogical Commission is a small group of teachers who go outside the school to workshops provided by Fe y Alegria or other outside sources. The group then returns to the school and once a month shares the information they learned at the workshops. This group as a whole also serves as a support system for teachers who have question or problems in their classes.

Both the administrator and teachers indicated that there was again, emphasis and importance placed on planning at the school. The Fe y Alegria school places such importance on this that they give the teachers two full weeks at the beginning of every school year to prepare lessons for the rest of the year, and teachers are expected to submit monthly teaching plans to the administrator for review. The administrator also indicated that she did not do a significant amount of observations of actual teaching in the classrooms, but rather supported the teachers by helping them with their planning. However, there was no mention of utilizing this planning in order to modify materials or instruction to incorporate more culturally responsive methods or materials.

In addition to Fe y Alegria support, several international agencies provided professional development support for the teachers. However there was no indication other

than from the teacher's own initiative, that this training, or the training provided by JICA or Fe y Alegria, had any emphasis on making literacy instruction more culturally congruent.

*Negative teacher perceptions of parents and community.* Another factor that seemed to impact the teacher's ability to implement culturally responsive literacy instruction was the predominance of negative perceptions of the parents and the community. Over all, despite the Fe y Alegria philosophy and doctrine emphasizing education of the whole child and building on their strengths, most of the teachers interviewed still operated using a deficit model when talking about the community, the children and the parents, to explain the low academic achievement of the students.

When asked to describe the community served by the school, all the teachers but one and the administrator, used negative terms and focused on the problems and lack of services in the area. When asked to describe the community and the people that lived there, common responses were that the community has a lot of crime, domestic violence, alcoholism, many fathers abandoning the families and parents going abroad to work and leaving the children with relatives. The teachers interviewed also focused on a lack of services in the area such as no running water or sewage, no medical services and no post office.

As well, all but one teacher commented on the lack of support from the parents as greatly affecting the students' academic achievement. All of these teachers felt that the majority of parents were apathetic about their children's education, didn't bother to check with the teacher or school about their child's progress, failed to show up to parent teacher meetings and failed to help or ensure that their child completes the assigned homework. For most of the teachers, this "blame the victim" response became a common explanation for students' difficulties in achieving academic success at school.

*Counterexample.* One teacher provided a different perspective on the children, parents and community. This teacher was the only teacher to live in the community of the school. She chose to live in San Angel because she “felt fine” living there and felt at home. She had grown up in the countryside and had experienced a great deal of culture shock when living in the city while attending university and expressed that she had great difficulty getting along with city people. This teacher was a fluent Quechua speaker, one of the dominant languages in that community, and could communicate easily with the parents. She stated that she “feels as they feel” when talking to parents about the students. When asked to describe the community, this teacher was also the only teacher that commented on the discrimination in the community from outside authorities and society at large.

In general this teacher finds the parents supportive of her and their children’s education. When asked about the parents she offered alternative explanations for their of involvement in their children’s education. She suggested that many of the parents do not meet with the teachers or come to the school because they work long hours, because the parents lack of literacy makes it difficult for them to read notices sent home, or that it might be culturally acceptable not to attend the meetings. The teacher indicated that if she needed to contact a parent, she would use a form of communication used in the community called the “kitchen radio”, whereby one leaves a verbal or written message with the neighbour of the person you wish to speak with. This teacher was the only participant to mention this form of community communication.

This teacher was involved in weekend literacy workshops over a period of several months and was enthusiastic to try out any new strategies or materials. She also indicated that many materials given to them were inappropriate for use because they contained

vocabulary that was too difficult or vocabulary and concepts that didn't reflect the students' realities or the community context. She stated, "I know the area. I know the context, so I can put in things students know [into the lesson]." She went on further to explain that she was aware that modifications needed to be made to materials but it was difficult to find appropriate materials, and to modify or create new materials and distribute them to the students was a significant cost born solely by the teacher, which made it nearly impossible to do on any kind of regular basis.

In sum, two main factors appeared to affect the successful implementation of culturally responsive literacy instruction this Fe y Alegria school. Firstly, the lack of practical teacher training, either formal or informal, that focused on culturally responsive literacy strategies for reading and writing that was available to the teachers left the teachers feeling ill-equipped and at a loss as to how to address the diverse needs of this population. The teachers seemed receptive to new information and willing to attend professional development in these areas but consistently reported that these workshops or previous formal training had not given them adequate practical strategies for reading or writing. Secondly, despite the clear Fe y Alegria philosophy that outlines a more culturally responsive pedagogy in general, most of the teacher's attitudes reflected a negative perception of the community and the parents. For most of the teachers interviewed, there was a clear feeling of "us" (teachers) and "them" (parent/school community). The one teacher, who was the exception, displayed a more culturally responsive attitude towards the parents and community in general and saw the parents as generally supportive and an asset to their children's academic well being.

## Discussion

### *Limitations*

Before I discuss these results in light of the larger picture of culturally-congruent literacy instruction, it is important to note certain limitations to this study. First, the case study was small in scope and the literacy practices identified through the interviews are certainly not seen as comprehensive. The literacy practices identified and analyzed in the previous sections were identified in order to provide a sampling of commonly occurring literacy events in these children's homes and communities in order to provide a comparison to the in-school literacy practices they were exposed to. It would not be appropriate for a study of this scope to use the data to make sweeping generalizations about the literacy practices identified or not identified in this community.

As well, due to time constraints, holidays and teacher schedules, my interviews and classroom observations were limited. I had a limited number of opportunities to gather data during the one month I was at the school. More observations and interviews would have strengthened the validity of the results and conclusions of this study. By design, case studies are also limited in terms of generalizability. Case studies are used to gain insight into a particular situation, problem and/or group of people therefore the context of a case study is of great importance and the transferability of conclusions to other sites or contexts is limited to the degree that others identify their own situations within the contextual data. However, this case study can provide insights into the larger issues of culturally responsive literacy instruction, teacher training, and other factors that affect culturally responsive instruction in the developing world. This case study can also contribute to the limited body of research on culturally responsive instruction in the developing world. The triangulation of multiple data

sources such as teacher and parent interviews, classroom and community observations, and school documents contribute to the reliability and validity of this case study.

### *Contributions to Existing Research*

This study adds to current research in two main areas. It further illustrates how a variety of literacy practices do exist in poor or marginalized communities and provides another example of how teacher training programs in the developing world are often impractical and emphasize theory rather than practical strategies.

#### *A variety of literacy practices do exist in poor or marginalized communities*

The first clear finding that contributes to similar research in this field is that in this poverty stricken community there were a large number of varied literacy practices reported that reflected a community that participated in literacy on a regular basis and viewed literacy skills as important for themselves and their children. These varied literacy practices can provide a rich basis for designing culturally responsive literacy instruction as will be discussed in subsequent sections. The literacy practices for the community members of San Angel were varied in text types, purposes and social activity domains. Despite this being a small sampling and a poor area with almost no access to bookstores or libraries, there were 14 different social activity domains reported that mediated the ways people used reading and writing in their daily lives. Of the 231 literacy events recorded, they involved 66 different text types and 101 different purposes.

Clearly there is a wide variety in all three areas: social activity domain, purpose and text type. Overall, the social activity domain of Participating in Family Life figured prominently in peoples' reading and writing lives. This is also reflected in the high number of purposes that linked parents reading or writing in order to help the children with

homework. This indicates that for the parents who participated in this study, literacy and education is important for them and are willing to support their children's education despite their own limited formal education and access to formal educational materials.

Relating Interpersonally was another social activity domain that was found to commonly mediate people's use of reading and writing. This domain was comprised mostly of letters or greeting cards used in order to keep in touch with family or significant others. For many members of this community, reading and writing letters was an important way to stay in touch with relatives living or working abroad or in the countryside, especially since access to the internet was almost non-existent. The world of technology is still very distant from this community, limiting their quick access to global knowledge as we know it in the developed world.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, a large number of participants at times engaged in reading and writing as a means to entertain themselves or relax. This involved mostly reading comics or completing word puzzles and to a lesser degree, reading stories or novels. This challenges some misconceptions that members of poor or marginalized communities rarely use reading and writing as a form of entertainment. This is especially significant in a community that has extremely limited access to books of any kind and where it was rare to see paper or books in any form in the community. There was only one public library in the entire city therefore people who were going to read books had to invest the considerable cost to buy them for themselves. Even though, for all of the participants, the opportunity to read during their free time did not occur very often, they still expressed enjoyment at being able to read for pleasure when they were able to and when they had access to reading materials. In the developed world, easy access to reading materials and free time on the weekends or

evenings is a fact often taken for granted. However, the significance of these challenges that members of this community must overcome in order to read for pleasure cannot be overstated.

As well, in this community, participating in spiritual life was a common social activity that often involved reading or writing. The Bible and other spirituality pamphlets were important sources of text and many people reported reading the Bible regularly. In a Latin American community such as this, often the Bible and spiritual texts become important sources of comfort and in some cases, other than the newspaper, may be one of the most accessible texts the community members have (Purcell-Gates & Waterman, 2000). While North American public education has separated religion from education, many developing countries have not, especially in Latin America. Although as educators from a North American perspective we may feel uncomfortable with the idea of using religious text as a means of providing literacy instruction, we cannot ignore that it often figures prominently in the lives of students and their families.

Reading in order to acquire or disseminate information or news was a common activity and newspapers were one of the few readily available and affordable text types found in this community. The participants saw the newspaper as a way to stay abreast with the local events that affected their community and provide them with necessary information about the “problems” in their community. These participants were very aware of the common “problems” in their community and of the lack of services they were provided with compared to the rest of the municipality and although there was little evidence of civic or community activities that involved reading or writing, being informed about their community was obviously important to them. The participants also appeared to be critical readers of the

newspapers, citing preferences for different types of newspapers based on the content and how that content affected their own perceptions. This reflects a reader who is making critical choices about the type of literacy activity he or she wishes to engage in and it also reflects an awareness of how different types of texts of content might affect oneself. Parents also appeared to see the newspaper as an educational tool in the home. Several parents reported using this type of text to either teach their children about the community or help them with their homework. This shows that when they have access to varied materials, the members of this community are capable of making critical choices about the literacy they engage in. These findings also illustrate that there are some readily available sources of text in the community could be used in the schools that are also reflected in the home literacy practices.

For many of the people interviewed, most of their daily lives revolved around either running small commercial enterprises, such as a one table restaurant out of their home, or traveling to and buying goods needed for everyday life. Commercial activities that exposed the children to texts such as shopping lists, labels, packaging text, and advertising signage all figured prominently in their families' lives. Again, this is all text that, although we may not readily identify it as "real" literacy at first glance, surrounds the children in their community and home. Directly outside of the school there was a tienda full of goodies encased in packaging and labels for children to buy. In fact, there was a small tienda located inside the school! These kinds of "everyday" texts and purposes are often overlooked by educators as viable opportunities for literacy teaching and learning. These children are bombarded with these types of texts all day and are readily available to students and teachers to integrate into classroom instruction for real purposes that connect with the real life purposes parents and children engage in reading and writing these texts outside of school.

Children from these homes are exposed to their parents' reading and writing for real life purposes on a regular basis and see a variety of text types and purposes for reading and writing in their homes and communities. These findings are similar to those of Moll (1985) who also found that many of the families in his study of Mexican-American used literacy for largely functional or practical purposes or homework. While many of the purposes and text types relate directly to more practical, day to day upkeep of home and family, using reading and writing to participate in spiritual life, acquiring or disseminating news and entertaining oneself, demonstrates that children in these homes are also exposed to a variety of text types and purposes for reading and writing that illustrate reading and writing as important for more than just everyday tasks.

While exploring the factors that affect literacy instruction in the school located in San Angel, data emerged that further confirms what other researchers have concluded regarding teacher training practices in the developing world.

*Models for teacher training in the developing world are impractical and theory laden*

This study also adds further data to support previous findings that conclude that most teacher training models in the developing world are theory laden and impractical (Craig et al., 1998; Navarro & Verdisco, 2000). These teachers who will soon be teaching in the most challenging circumstances in the world with the least access to literacy resources seem to be given the least amount of training in practical literacy instruction. These teachers have been a product of a system of education which traditionally has seen little change and does not allow for consideration of the child as an individual learner or member of a culture/community. Then during their teacher training continue to learn about teaching through lecture format lessons filled with fact and theory designed by instructors and

institutions that do not necessarily reflect the beginning teachers' needs or strengths. Of all the teachers interviewed, not one expressed feeling prepared by their formal training in any practical sense for day to day teaching in the classroom. Some could express only a small degree of satisfaction with the fact that their formal training had expanded their content knowledge. One teacher, who had gone on to receive a Masters degree in education, described his formal training experience as just an extension of high school.

Neither the length of the program, the type of facility (normal school or university) nor the location (urban or rural) had any affect on quality of teacher training in terms of practical methods, especially concerning literacy instruction. Even during the practica that each teacher was required to complete, the emphasis was on planning. However the large amount of time dedicated to planning was not meant to encourage varied methods, modifying or adapting materials or incorporating culturally responsive instruction; it was to ensure that the lesson was well organized and that the student teacher had a regimented, step-by-step guide to follow during instruction. This lesson plan guide was also given to the supervising teacher during evaluation and served as a major method for evaluation. Again the lesson was not evaluated for creative instruction or methodology that met the needs of the students, but for detailed planning and a lesson in progress that closely followed the lesson plan on paper.

None of the teacher reported attending a methods course for literacy instruction. What education courses they did attend focused on theory and what limited practical knowledge they did gain seemed to be completely at the discretion of the instructor. One teacher stated that when one of the student teachers would ask for some practical strategies or methods or ask how a certain theory would apply to the classroom, the instructor would tell them that you had to figure it out yourself because every child is different. This "figure it out

yourself' attitude seemed pervasive in the formal teacher training institutions these teachers attended. The instructors were well versed in theory and spent the majority of their time imparting educational theory or content knowledge to the students. However, there was virtually no attempt to translate the theory into practice. It leads one to ask whether or not the instructors themselves knew how to bridge the gap between theory and practice and then further bridge the gap between instructor and student?

As for the informal training provided by Fe y Alegria and other outside agencies, the teachers felt it was marginally more practical but still heavy with theory. In many instances teachers were using or given materials to use that were not culturally appropriate for that area but had little resources available to them to adapt these materials. As well, most of the practical methods they were encouraged to use comprised of games, songs or movement activities. These somewhat focused on addressing different learning styles within the classroom but none of the teachers mentioned any type of literacy teaching strategy that focused on using a child's home culture or focusing on the strengths of a child as a possible vehicle for literacy instruction. As well, none of the teachers had received any training on how to adapt or create new materials for their students that were reflective of their students' cultural realities. Although the philosophy of the Fe y Alegria organization emphasizes many of the ideals that shape Freirian and culturally responsive literacy instruction, there is little reflection of this occurring in its everyday instruction by the teachers. However the teachers are a product of the national system of teacher training which does not emphasize these ideals, as illustrated above, and once they are employed by a Fe y Alegria school, are given informal training by instructors that also were a product of the national system of teacher training and while the instructors may have knowledge of the theory and philosophy

that shapes the Fe y Alegria organization, do not have a clear understanding of how to translate that into practical teaching strategies for the teachers they are mentoring.

Again there was an emphasis on planning and weekly, monthly or yearly organization. There was also an assumption that better or more planning was equal to better teaching. This seemed to be an unquestioned belief by the teachers although none of them could explain how this led to better teaching, except for one teacher who referred to allowing students more choice in the classroom planning led to an “idea of respect”. This was a concept introduced by the outside agency JICA which again emphasized more rigorous planning by the teachers as a way to improve classroom instruction. It did not appear that any of the teachers had any real input into the training that they were given. Courses during their formal training were mandatory and lecture based. The workshops they attended while employed at Fe y Alegria, while for the most part voluntary, did not meet their needs as classroom teachers and were not based on input given by the participants.

Overall, it did not appear to matter how much further training a teacher received either in terms of number of courses or length of program, any further training was still seen as very limited in its ability to give teachers practical strategies for any kind of instruction in the classroom and the informal training teachers were engaged in, with some minor exceptions, still did not reflect the needs of teachers.

Despite a continue movement in the developed world towards a more constructivist theory of teacher education during formal teacher training, teachers in the developed world continue to receive their training through mostly theoretical courses that focus on facts leaving the teacher with a plentitude of information but without any way to connect it to classrooms instruction or relationships with students. These disconnects, both within the

teacher training programs and the literacy practices in the home and school, become the topic of the following sections. However, before committing a significant portion of the discussion to describing the disconnects I would like to highlight some of the “connections” observed during my one month at this school.

### *The Connections*

Firstly, simply by being employed at this particular school the teachers and administrator were committing themselves to a philosophy of instruction that demanded more of their own personal time in terms of training, planning and time spent in the community. All of the teachers were made aware of these expectations during the hiring process therefore committing themselves to these ideals upon their hiring. Teachers employed in regular public schools in Bolivia are not bound by the same expectations so one could assume that a teacher employed by Fe y Alegria would at the very least be open to the ideals that guide the organization and its schools.

Some of the teachers did spend extra time in the community attending funerals, birthday parties or participating in the band or local dance festivals. These types of activities not only build a stronger bond between a teacher and student, and school and community, but also are the beginnings of learning more about the community and altering any misconceptions about the students and their families. The administrator was also more familiar with the community and the families that resided there. She spoke fluent Quechua with the families and had obviously made home visits before since she guided me on several occasions to people’s homes. The administrator was also interested in using the school as a site for some parent education meetings on a variety of social issues.

Most of the teachers that were interviewed were interested in learning more about literacy instruction. They were curious as to what sorts of strategies or methods were used in Canada. They requested that I send a video to them of myself teaching so they could watch and perhaps learn some things from it even if they could not understand what I was saying in English. They often asked my opinion of the instruction here or wanted to know what my training was like. While I refrained from giving my opinions I did explain to them that the setting was very different and it would be difficult to compare instruction. These teachers, despite their dissatisfaction with their training, were still actively participating in further training available to them through formal and informal settings and requesting information from a complete outsider.

The one teacher I interviewed who had an intimate knowledge of the community could provide the rest of the staff with valuable information. This teacher could be used as a mediator in terms of language and community norms. There were several teachers at the school who were not interviewed and perhaps might also be able to contribute to the school's knowledge about the community and how to better communicate with the families.

The teachers, although somewhat apprehensive, were all participating in a professional development program which required them to be evaluated by their peers. Most teachers would be apprehensive about this type of activity, yet the teachers I interviewed felt it was constructive and a valuable tool they could use to improve their own practice.

Despite the many challenges these teachers are facing, with regards to the community and their own lack of practical training, they are open to further professional development and are actively trying to improve their own practice. This can be seen as one of the first steps that are already in place in bridging the disconnects that are discussed below.

### *The Disconnect*

This study highlights the ongoing disconnect in two areas of education in the developing world.

#### *The First Disconnect: Teacher to Student*

Firstly, there is a disconnect between the world of literacy that the student experiences at home and the world of literacy the student experiences at school. As clearly shown in this study the “banking” model of education (Freire, 1993) is still pervasive in this school, despite the fact that this school is supported by an organization that is already grounded in Freirian philosophy, and claims to value students’ home culture and community. Freire (1993) describes that in the banking type of education a teacher’s role is to “organize a process which already occurs spontaneously, to ‘fill’ the students by making deposits of information which he or she considers to constitute true knowledge” (p.57). Students and parents are seen as having little to bring to the table in terms of their own education and the education of their children and teachers feel they have little to work with. Teachers feel that they must make up for what is lacking in the community and home by transmitting the “correct” knowledge and skills that in most cases, as suggested by my results, has no connection to the home. Students are not expected to do more than passively receive the knowledge, since they are not seen as active participants in the creation of their own knowledge. How could they be when they are viewed as devoid of any real knowledge until the teacher imparts it to them?

However, it was clear from the results of this study, that students and their families do have their own knowledge and culture, do see education as an important vehicle for improving their lives and do see literacy as an important means of obtaining information that

affects their day-to-day reality. Unfortunately, there was virtually no connection between how and why the community members used literacy in their own lives and how the students were taught to read and write and how the students were using literacy in their day to day school lives. It was rare to see any type of dialogue occur between teacher and student other than the fact based question and answer routine and there was no dialogue facilitated between student and student other than the “off task” conversation initiated by the students themselves. It is not surprising that there is still this disconnect between home and school in the developing world in light of the teacher training practices that perpetuate the type of “banking education” (Freire, 1993) model described by Freire. How can we expect practicing teachers to “connect the pieces” for their students and create a world of understanding that bridges home and school if no one has done this for the teachers? This second disconnect is discussed in the following section.

#### *The Second Disconnect: Institution to Teacher*

The second disconnect this study highlights is the disconnect between the theory laden instruction imparted by the instructor and institution and the practical teaching strategies that teachers in-training need to be successful in the classroom. Again in this educational context teachers-in-training are treated as “empty vessels” (Freire, 1993) that need to be filled with content knowledge the instructors must transmit to their students or taught educational theory rarely generated from the needs or queries of the students with little if any connection being made to the real-life context of the classroom the teachers in-training will soon be embedded in. Little value is given to student teachers’ cultural backgrounds, languages or individual strengths. As Freire (1993) states, “The more completely she fills the

receptacles, the better teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are” (p.53).

In both scenarios the students are treated as “objects” (Freire, 1993) with no control over their learning. In many cases, at the time, students are unaware that this learning process is disempowering and will have little real practical application to their lives outside of the school context. In order for these students to move from “object” to “subject,” the learning must become dialogic and in doing so the teacher also becomes a learner (Freire, 1993). Knowledge is not static and emerges only through interaction and inquiry with the world and others (Freire, 1993). If this is true, then there are no absolute teachers and absolute students locked into roles. The teacher and student must exchange information, implying that the student has as much valuable knowledge as the teacher does. Much like Freire, advocates of culturally responsive instruction view the student as an active participant in the construction of their own reality, using their existing knowledge as a basis for further growth (Gay, 2000). Teachers, in this type of instruction, are seen as facilitators that can utilize and validate student’s home culture and knowledge to promote a student’s personal and academic success. This involves a teacher bridging the gap between the home and school, and theory and practice for the student. As Gay (2000) states, culturally responsive instruction, “creates cultural bridges, or scaffolds, between academic learning in school and the socio-cultural lives and experiences of different groups of colour outside of school” (p.214).

#### *Addressing the Disconnect with Culturally Responsive Instruction*

Culturally responsive instruction and more specifically culturally responsive literacy instruction can help address these disconnects in education in the developing world. These “gaps” between teacher and student and theory and practice are not easily bridged. Further,

the need to take into account large educational institutions in the context of the developing world makes this shift in how we think about training and pedagogy in the developing world even more challenging. However, despite the challenges, as educators it is imperative that we continue to search for methods and ideals that will help bridge these gaps and hopefully, by improving teacher training, give students from the developing world a better more culturally responsive education.

Culturally responsive literacy instruction builds upon the strengths and needs of children as individual persons and as members of a cultural community. In order to use culturally responsive instruction as a way to bridge these “gaps” mentioned above, requires that teachers and planners gain deeper knowledge of their students’ community context for three main reasons: (a) in order to move beyond a superficial use of “context” as culturally responsive instruction, (b) in order to help alter teacher/school perceptions or misconceptions of parents and the community, and (c) in order to design literacy instruction that utilizes authentic texts and purposes found in students’ communities and homes. Facilitating these actions are imperative to implementing culturally responsive instruction and would be impossible without studying and considering the social, cultural, political, economic and linguistic factors which shape a child’s context.

#### *Moving beyond context as culturally responsive instruction*

Culturally responsive instruction requires educators at all levels to gain concrete, accurate, and firsthand knowledge of the community they are working in and the students they working with. This allows educators at the planning, training or policy stage to give more than vague references to using “context” to help beginning teachers plan and implement literacy instruction. It also enables practicing teachers in the field to better

understand their students' as whole beings with specific strengths that can be drawn upon to help facilitate growth in their areas of need.

In this study, both the teachers in training and in the field were told to use things in the area to help them teach literacy but could not recall any further elaboration on how to actually do this. Any references to using context as a method for literacy instruction involved using found print in the area as an alternative print source like using newspapers as a source of alphabet letters. This however, is a superficial use of context. This newspaper was not to be used for a real life purpose so therefore there was no real bridge between the student's home life and school life during this assignment. A "deeper" more authentic use of this type of text would be to discover what ways and for what purposes families use newspapers for in that community, and train teachers on how to develop these same kinds of real life purpose newspaper activities in the classroom (Purcell-Gates, 2007a). Culturally responsive instruction is also more than just utilizing the materials from the area in order to bridge the gap between home and school. As discussed in previous sections, this type of instruction involves validating a student's personal self worth and culture, building on their existing strengths and addressing their needs with strategies that best suit their learning style, guiding students to think critically about their circumstances and question idea that there is only "one truth" , and guide students to transform themselves and their community by giving them a sense of empowerment and a sense of responsibility for their success and the success of others (Gay, 2000).

Teachers must have an intimate knowledge of the community in order to help validate students' cultures and guide them in becoming empowered and transformative members of their communities. This kind of action cannot be facilitated unless a teacher has deep

knowledge of the community context from which her students come. Freire (1993) contrasts the “banking model” of education with the “problem posing” practice. This type of instruction attempts to engage students as “co-investigators” in their own education encouraging students to develop their power to question, investigate and perceive critically the way they exist in the world and the previously unquestioned knowledge presented to them. As co-investigators the students’ background and history becomes as important as the teachers’ background and subsequently shaped perspectives. As Freire (1993) states, “Problem posing theory and practice takes people’s historicity as their starting point” (p.65). If accurate knowledge of a community’s context is the basis for all further instruction in culturally responsive instruction, then cursory knowledge that may be tainted with inaccuracies or misperceptions is not acceptable. The teacher both in basic and high institutions, must make the effort to deepen their knowledge, bridge their own personal gaps in knowledge about their students in order to enter into a true reciprocal dialogue with the students. In this way a teacher can design culturally appropriate, relevant, learning experiences that resound with the student and become part of the scaffolding that will enable student’s success.

This type of instruction and a deeper use of context cannot be taught in a separate class or viewed as a separate curriculum. Teachers implementing culturally responsive instruction draw on their knowledge of community patterns, ways of communicating, literacy practices and values to shape a program of instruction for their learners. The type of instruction must filter throughout the entire program. However this type of instruction relies heavily on teachers’ own attitudes and perceptions to guide the instruction.

*Altering teacher/school perceptions of community*

Culturally responsive instruction in any area can only be implemented if teachers' attitudes and perceptions allow them to do so. Abell (1999) refers to how the existing perceptions and attitudes teachers have about communities and groups of people greatly affect how they interact with and view their students. Allen and Labbo (2001) describe the considerable changes in the attitude teachers had regarding their students and their community after they asked students to take photographs of their community and write cultural memoirs. The teachers then planned instruction based on the information the students had gathered for them. They claim that these teachers realized afterwards that the students came from valued and diverse backgrounds and in order to reach each student they must be able to connect with them. This required deeper knowledge of the students as individuals and members of their community. Although Allen and Labbo's study took place in the United States, the teacher participants were of a different ethnic background than the majority of the students they were exposed to during this study. The 22 participants were all white, middle-class undergraduate students in a teacher education program while the elementary students they were working with during a 4-week field experience came from diverse backgrounds. Although this study did not take place in a developing world setting, it still documents the effectiveness and importance during teacher training of inspecting our own personal cultural make up and that of our students, especially when teaching students that have cultural backgrounds that differ from our own, no matter what the setting may be. Another study that focused on student achievement in elementary constructivist-based classrooms, studied students and their families that all came from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in Kentucky (Kyle, McIntyre, Miller, & Moore, 2002). All of these families faced challenges in their personal lives that seemed to affect school performance

such as financial hardship, death in the family, divorce or addiction issues and the teachers themselves came from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds than most of their students. In this study, the teachers and researchers read professional books for ideas on how to connect school with the lives and students. They found that through the involvement of families, and the teachers' greater knowledge of the students as people outside of the classroom, that the students' level of achievement rose (Kyle et al., 2002). Our personal culture lies at the heart of all we do and shapes our beliefs, values, actions and perceptions of others. As teachers we must be aware that our perceptions of our students are shaped by our own cultural makeup and we bring these perceptions with us into the classroom and whether we are conscious of this influence or not, it shapes our daily interactions and beliefs about our students (Spindler & Spindler, 1994)

The teachers in San Angel, with the exception of one, all harboured negative perceptions of the community and did not recognize much that the community had to offer in terms of supporting the students' education. They also did not see the parents as being supportive or interested in their students' education. In fact, they viewed in many cases, the parents as a hindrance. This is in direct contrast to the information and attitudes revealed in the parent literacy practices interviews in which the parents indicated seeing literacy as important and trying as much as they were able to support their child's education.

The above statement and the fact that most of the teachers indicated they had limited communication with the parents and spent minimal time in the community after school hours, allows one to assume that the teachers' knowledge of the families and community and their understanding of the embedded attitudes, values or methods of communication was limited as well. Also, the one teacher who resided near the school, who did appear to have more first

hand knowledge of the community displayed attitudes and perceptions about the community that were markedly different from the remaining teachers who did not live in the community. In developing countries, such as Bolivia, there are often multiple indigenous groups, languages, tribes or mixed cultural groups that exist. In a relatively small country such as Bolivia there are over 30 distinct languages represented; each with its own set of beliefs, traditions and ways of communicating. The teachers themselves come from a diverse set of backgrounds; Aymara, Quechua and mestizo. Even within my own interview process I could sense a distinct difference between how some of the teachers interacted with me based on their cultural background. In circumstances such as these, it is even more imperative that teachers become aware of their own cultural background, that of their students' and how their own personal beliefs about their own cultural and that of others, shapes their instruction.

By investing time in gaining a better knowledge of the customs, values, beliefs and ways of communicating that are part of the community culture, it is likely that teachers will enhance not only their knowledge of their students' lives, but also enhance their ability to instruct and communicate with students more effectively. This first hand knowledge can greatly alter what might be misguided attitudes or perceptions that greatly affect a teacher's instruction in the classroom. Teachers must develop an awareness of their students' world, through their eyes, if they are to move from the idea of transmitting knowledge to creating knowledge together (Freire, 1993; Purcell-Gates, 2000). This awareness of their student's world can lead to designing literacy instruction that reflects the real life world of literacy that the student experiences at home or in their community.

*Designing literacy instruction using authentic texts and purposes*

A deeper knowledge of the community and the literacy practices that are embedded within it is imperative if the teacher is to bridge the gap between home and school using authentic texts and purposes. Using authentic texts and purposes in classroom literacy instruction is one very practical application of culturally responsive literacy instruction.

As discussed previously and illustrated by the result of this study, poor or marginalized communities do have literacy practices that can be drawn upon to facilitate classroom literacy instruction. The community of San Angel had a wide variety of text types, purposes and social activity domains to draw upon. The children observed their parents engaging in a variety of functional literacy practices, but also, although to a lesser degree, reading or writing for pleasure or entertainment purposes. However, it was clear that during the authenticity analysis phase of this study that there was virtually no connection between a child's home and school literacy lives. The large majority of texts found in schools for literacy instruction were literacy instructional texts designed for the specific purpose of teaching someone to read or write. These texts are not necessarily designed, in terms of content, methods or even illustrations, to reflect a child's reality. They are designed to teach literacy skills, such as phonics or comprehension strategies. These types of texts provide no connection for the student to their home life and the large majority of reading or writing assignments that the students in San Angel completed were solely completed in order to complete the assignment. There was no real life purpose for reading or writing other than the teacher had told them to read or write something. When children see their parents read or write there is a real purpose for it that reflects a real need that requires a person to read or write something even if that need is simply to relax.

In the developing world, literacy success is almost synonymous with educational advancement and therefore escaping the cycle of poverty. As educators, then, using culturally responsive literacy instruction as a means to continue bridging the gap between home and school is of utmost importance. In more practical, strategy-based, terms, under the umbrella of culturally responsive literacy instruction, authentic literacy instruction is yet another piece of scaffolding a teacher can use to facilitate this process.

The following discussion and example of how authentic literacy instruction can be implemented in this context, draws upon the work of Duke and Purcell-Gates (2003) and their study of the nature and uses of print in children's homes and in schools. These studies highlighted the types of genres and literacy events observed in homes and schools and analyzed for any overlap between the two. Duke and Purcell-Gates compared two sets of data involving children and families from the Boston area in the United States. One study involved 20 low socio-economic families with 1 or more children in the home from ages four to six. Researchers in the home observed and recorded instances where children were involved in or observing written language. The second study documented information about classroom activities occurring in a grade 1 class that involved print in any way. Researchers recorded information like the type of activity, genre of text involved and the amount of minutes spent on the activity. Duke and Purcell-Gates concluded that there was little if any overlap in genre usage between the home literacy practices of these children and the literacy practices they were involved in at school. Subsequently, Purcell-Gates (2007a) has created, based on previous research (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003; Purcell-Gates et al., 2002) and genre theory, a practical method for incorporating literacy practices found in the home into classroom instruction, called authentic literacy instruction. The following section briefly

describes the steps a practicing teacher would follow to implement this type of instruction, specifically in the context of San Angel.

The first step is investigating and gaining an accurate picture of the literacy practices that the children in the community are exposed to. What reading and writing do they see people engaging in on a daily basis? What kinds of text types are commonly found in their homes and communities? Why are people around them reading and writing? What kind of social activities are people engaging in that require people in the community they live in to read and write? Without these critical pieces of information, the teacher is in danger of imposing his or her own perceptions of what literacy is, or is not, in this community onto the students and further widening the gap between home and school. This is similar to Friere's recommendation to literacy workers to study and live in the community that they are involved with and participate in "culture circles" (p.101) in order to report and discuss the findings that workers have regarding the culture and literacy practices they are finding in the community that reflect the community members' reality. This information would then inform the themes that will shape and guide the literacy instruction (Freire, 1993).

Once the teacher has gathered this information the next step is to identify some of the commonly used texts and purposes for reading and writing in this community and think about ways to incorporate these into classroom literacy instruction. This does not mean using posters, newspapers, or packaging text for teaching skills. Authentic literacy instruction does not mean bringing in local newspapers, assigning an article to read and having the students answer comprehension questions afterwards. This is using a real-life text but with a school-only purpose. An example of an authentic use of newspapers in the classroom would be bringing in local newspapers, having the children read an article that highlighted an issue in

their community, using this information to write a letter to the editor expressing their views on the issue and then actually sending the letter to the newspaper. In this instance there is a real-life text (actually two, since a letter is also being written) composed for a real-life purpose to be read for a real-life audience. The students are engaged in an activity that has meaning for them, validates their reality and their opinions and is encouraging them to engage in a dialogue with the teacher, the community at large and each other. These kinds of activities are not only authentic, bridge the gap between home and school but are also potentially transformative and empowering for students (Freire, 1993; Gay, 2000).

This is not to say that skills do not have a place in literacy instruction. Specific literacy skills can and should be taught; however, ideally, they should be taught embedded within the context of authentic literacy instruction or alongside. In reality it is unrealistic to expect teachers in the developing world to be able to make this kind of theoretical and practical shift without a much work and time investment. Understanding the theory behind culturally responsive and authentic literacy instruction takes time and reflection, and translating this into practice for the classroom can be even more challenging for the classroom teacher. However, small steps in this direction can be made, and authentic literacy instruction does not require large investments in money or resources. To truly be authentic, teachers should be utilizing literacy resources that already exist in the community. What this kind of instruction does require however, is a commitment and belief that the children and the families that they come from have valuable literacy resources that can be drawn upon in order to further bridge the gap and create a more meaningful literacy world for the students. Effective culturally responsive literacy instruction also depends on the type and content of training that teachers are receiving at the formal and informal levels.

### *Addressing the Teacher Training Factor that Affects Culturally Responsive Instruction*

This study clearly demonstrated the impact that teacher training has on the implementation of culturally responsive instruction. The teachers involved in this study were dissatisfied with the almost non-existent practical content of their teacher training. None of them felt prepared for the classroom, even after several years of training. As well, most of the subsequent professional development or further formal education these teachers participated in reflected their needs or realities as educators teaching in a diverse, and socio-economically challenging environment. The problem of inadequate teacher training in the developing world needs to be addressed. While it is not acceptable to relinquish the responsibility of other social, political and economic institutions and transfer sole responsibility onto teachers for solving the plight of the poverty stricken, the focus of this study and paper only addresses the teacher training factor that affects culturally responsive literacy instruction. Therefore the following discussion recognizes the complexity and scope of other factors that bear on the current state of education in the developing world. The subsequent discussion highlights one more possible piece of scaffolding that will contribute to improved teacher training and literacy instruction that bridges the disconnect between teacher and student in both the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.

#### *Ground-up training focused on practice*

Repeatedly the teachers in this study described their training as impractical, lacking in any “real life” strategies that they could use in the classroom and laden with theory. There was little they could take with them from their coursework that would be useful in the real classroom. The disconnect that teachers in-training feel during their formal training is replicated when they enter the classroom and instruct their own students. As Navarro (2000)

asserts in studying Latin American teacher training programs in general, more teacher training at higher levels of education such as universities, does not directly result in better teachers who are more prepared to deal with the realities of challenging teaching circumstances. The focus should be on how and what we are teaching our newest teachers; not for how long or how many courses or qualifications they need to fulfill before receiving their diplomas. Navarro (2000) even suggests that in the developing world, by pushing teacher training higher up on the educational ladder, we run the risk of allowing the academic side of learning become even more abstract and removed from the practical needs of the classroom. How can we address this problem?

According to Freire (1993), like in any learning situation, the needs and existing knowledge of the learner can be used as a basis for generating further knowledge and topics of investigation. A review of teacher development programs in a variety of developing world settings concluded that even teachers with minimal training or education that become involved in reforming their own classrooms or schools are capable of change and improving their students' success (Craig et al., 1998) They also conclude that when teachers are not consulted or ignored, given reform policy and procedure from higher up the educational ladder or are not connected to the realities of the every day classroom, educational interventions are likely to fail (Craig et al., 1998).

Teachers' needs should to be considered when designing programs for training. New teachers in-training will need to spend more time in the classroom experiencing and observing what kind of information and strategies they will need to learn about during their training in order to bridge the gap between training and practice. Alternating time in practical (in-class) settings and theoretical (classroom course work) settings, allows a new

teacher to observe real situations, reflect on the possibilities, examine their existing or lack of knowledge in these areas and question or enter into a dialogue with their own instructors about these issues. None of the aforementioned or following discussion negates the importance of theory in solidifying important educational concepts. Good educational practice is always based in sound theory. However, embedding formal teacher training in the context of a real-life classroom helps to bridge the disconnect between theory and practice.

During the interviews with the teachers from San Angel it became obvious that any mentioned of practical instructional strategies, for literacy or otherwise, were rare in their teacher training experiences. These teachers wanted and needed answers to questions most teachers have. How can I teach reading and writing better? What do I do with a student who isn't learning to read? With so many students how do I deal with the struggling readers? With limited resources how can I modify materials? These are common, real-life problems that confront classroom teachers all over the world, but in the developing world with limited access to resources, money, support, infrastructure and teachers who are often struggling financially themselves, these issues become even more challenging. Asking teachers to "figure it out themselves" does not help bridge the gap between theory and practice. This leads to more frustration and a feeling of helplessness. Teacher trainers need to help bridge the gap for the teacher in-training between theory and practice. This, however, means that the instructors themselves have a solid understanding of how pedagogical theory translates into practice.

One practical strategy for literacy instruction which is grounded in theory and transferable to any context, is the authentic literacy instruction referred to in the previous sections.

### *Authentic literacy instruction training*

Authentic literacy instruction (Purcell-Gates, et. al, 2006; Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007) reflects the community and cultural context in which the school is embedded. This means that no matter what educational context you are teaching in, this type of instruction can be used. It responds directly to the type of context you are working in and to the type of learner you have in your class. This solves the dilemma that some teachers-in-training were presented with when they asked for specific strategies for teaching reading and writing and were told they had to figure it out themselves since every child was different. This type of literacy instruction is based on the premise that every community is different and has different literacy practices that need to be explored and analyzed before using them as a basis for planning and instruction.

Authentic literacy instruction does not require large sums of money, resources, or books. It relies on the text types and purposes that already exist in the community. Many educational reforms fail because they lack funding, training, teacher support or resources. Authentic literacy instruction relies on an adequate knowledge of the theory that forms the basis of the practical instruction and on teachers who are willing to invest the time in investigating, analyzing and subsequently using this information to plan culturally responsive literacy lessons for their students. It requires preparing teachers to explore and value cultural practices and literacy practices that may be different than their own. It requires that teachers continue to try and bridge the disconnect between home and school through literacy instruction.

This type of literacy instruction can be an integral part of teacher training in the developing world as well as the so-called developed world. It clearly bridges the gap

between theory and practice. This type of instruction is documented as effective (Purcell-Gates et al., 2007) and procedures for its development have been laid out (Purcell-Gates, 2007a). With the issue of underachievement by students in the developing world still persisting, incorporating authentic literacy instruction into teacher training programs seems a worthwhile endeavour. This instruction can be part of a teacher-in-training's initial preparation or easily integrated into ongoing teacher professional development on-site with adequate support. Finally, rigorous research must accompany these changes to learn how to best implement them for the maximum benefit of the children.

Authentic literacy instruction does not require a large input of resources or money to implement. It does require, though, as does all aspects of culturally responsive instruction, teacher preparation that enables teachers to reflect upon their own cultural backgrounds, attitudes and perceptions and how these aspects of their cultural makeup shape their instruction.

#### *Teacher's own attitudes and perceptions in training*

The results of this study suggest how the attitudes of teachers and their perceptions of their students, parents and community appear to shape teachers' ability to implement culturally responsive pedagogy. Despite being familiar with the rhetoric and philosophy of the Fe y Alegria institution, the attitudes and perceptions of the interviewed teachers appeared to be entrenched. None of them reported having any formal pre-service training that encouraged them to reflect upon their own backgrounds and how this would affect their classroom instruction. It hardly seems logical to expect a teacher to understand and implement the tenants of culturally responsive instruction if the teacher has had no opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes and perceptions.

Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2005) state that teacher education is just as much about “sociocultural competence in working with the diversity of students...” (p.244) as it is about subject matter or technical expertise. Given the fact that most of the teachers in this study lived outside the community that they taught in and had minimal contact with students or teachers outside of school hours, it seems critical that a new teacher understand the importance of sociocultural competence, how it can affect their teaching and use these concepts from their pre-service training to help them understand a community they may not be familiar with.

Many teachers both in the developed and developing world contexts, will be teaching in classrooms where their students’ backgrounds differ significantly from their own. Gay (2000) describes teachers as “orchestrators of social contexts for learning” (p.43) who need to acknowledge the important influence of culture on teaching and learning to become “cultural mediators” (p.43). In order to effectively mediate any situation, the mediator must have a deep understanding of all sides; in this case, their own cultural backgrounds and attitudes and those of their students.

Freire’s problem posing theory of education can be applied to formal teacher training as well. According to Freire (1993), in problem posing education, people empower themselves to critically view the way they exist in the world. This allows one to see reality as a process constantly in transformation. Culturally responsive instruction also requires teachers to empower themselves and their students to critically inquire about their world and how they view themselves in their world (Gay, 2000). This empowerment can lead directly to learners facilitating their own transformation and that of their reality.

We suggest that re-service training is the optimal time for teachers to closely examine their own personal biases and perceptions. During this time, they have the time to reflect without being bombarded by the daily demands of classroom teaching, but hopefully have enough hands-on exposure to real classrooms to use those experiences to help shape newly forming ideas about themselves as educators and students. This type of self reflection on one's attitudes and perceptions is not relegated to something that occurs only during formal pre-service training; rather, just like the learning process, examination of one's own personal perceptions is a practice that should be on-going throughout a teacher's career.

#### *Further Research*

Several important questions arise from the present study. These include the following: What does culturally responsive instruction look like in the developing world? How is it being implemented? How does the teacher training contribute to the culturally responsive instruction occurring? Where are successful teacher training models in the developing world, and what do they look like?

#### *Culturally responsive instruction in the developing world*

There are several descriptions of culturally responsive teachers and schools trying to implement more culturally responsive methods and attitudes into their daily instruction. However, most of these descriptions take place in a North American context. Some occur in marginalized or poor communities within the North American context, but nonetheless, these North American studies cannot take the place of descriptions of culturally responsive instruction within the context of the developing world. We cannot assume that the ideals and methods that guide culturally responsive instruction in the developed world can be easily transferred to teaching and learning in the developing world. The latter presents unique

challenges and perspectives culturally, socially, politically and economically that, depending on the locale, could vary significantly from the developed world context. Further research needs to be done locating and providing detailed descriptions of sites where culturally responsive instruction is occurring that might provide insights on how to implement other such programs in other areas of the developed world.

*Practical teacher training models that contribute to teacher quality*

As this study has shown, the ability of a teacher or institution to implement culturally responsive instruction is affected by the quality of teacher training provided. As discussed in the related literature section of this study, there have been calls by others for more practical teacher training programs in the developing world. Further research needs to be done on what successful teacher training models look like in this context. As well, it needs to be more clearly defined what makes up a successful teacher training model and why? How are we defining quality teachers and their practices? In the few studies that refer to quality of teachers in the developing world, the measure of a quality teacher has been defined by the number of years of training (Fuller & Heyneman, 1989; Schiefelbein & Farrell, 1982). We now know that the number of years of teacher training does not necessarily contribute to higher academic success by students. How will we define a quality teacher? And how will we create teacher training programs to facilitate this? More research needs to be done on what the characteristics of quality teachers are in the developing world, identifying teachers who have these characteristics and identifying the components of their teacher training programs that facilitated this practice?

Finally, more research needs to be done on the effectiveness of the authentic literacy instruction described in this study not only in a North American context, but in the multiple sites in the developing world.

Ultimately, much of the success of individual students in the developing world lies in the relationship built between the student and teacher. Culturally responsive pedagogy sees a child, their reality and their learning as a process of constant transformation. Educators who view themselves and their students in this light, despite the myriad of challenges they encounter, can't help but see the possibility for hope and change. If we as researchers and educators can identify and implement practices that will help an individual teacher bridge the gap between home and school, success and failure, for a student, perhaps the student will be able to bridge the gap between poverty and prosperity.

## Appendix A.

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of a Fe y Alegria School in  
Bolivia

Demographic Information  
(to follow the Literacy Practices interview)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

(1) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) Age Range: 8-12 \_\_\_\_\_; 13-18 \_\_\_\_\_; 19-30 \_\_\_\_\_; 31-55 \_\_\_\_\_; 55-70 \_\_\_\_\_;  
70+ \_\_\_\_\_

(3) Gender:    Male                  Female

(4) Race: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Ethnicity:

\_\_\_\_\_

(5) Country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Native language:

\_\_\_\_\_

(7) Language spoken in the home: \_\_\_\_\_

(8) Are you a Bolivian citizen?    Yes    No

(9) If no, what is your status? \_\_\_\_\_

(10) Are you currently a student?    Yes    No

(10a) If yes, where do you attend school? \_\_\_\_\_

(10b) What type of school is it? (e.g. literacy class; technical school; high school, university etc) \_\_\_\_\_

(11) Highest level of schooling you have **completed**:

Some elementary/primary school

Some college

Primary school (6<sup>th</sup> grade)

College degree (B.A./B.S.)

Some high school

Master's degree

High school/12<sup>th</sup> grade

Graduate degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., etc)

Vocational training

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(12) Highest level of schooling your **mother** completed: (somewhere in here a question about WHERE this schooling occurred (i.e. what country? What location in the country (like rural village; capitol city; major city?))

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Some college                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some elementary/primary school         |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary school (6 <sup>th</sup> grade) | <input type="checkbox"/> College degree (B.A./B.S.)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school/12 <sup>th</sup> grade     | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational training                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                             |

(13) Highest level of schooling your **father** completed: (see above for location of schooling)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Some college                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some elementary/primary school         |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary school (6 <sup>th</sup> grade) | <input type="checkbox"/> College degree (B.A./B.S.)               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some high school                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school/11 <sup>th</sup> grade     | <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree (Ph.D., M.D., J.D., etc) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational training                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                             |

(14) Your occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(15) Your **mother's** occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(16) Your **father's** occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

(17) Where you live now (choose one):

\_\_\_\_\_ Urban      \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban      \_\_\_\_\_ Rural      \_\_\_\_\_ Small town

(18) Number of people who live in your household: \_\_\_\_\_

(19) Number of people **under age 18** who live in your household: \_\_\_\_\_

(21) Do you have a computer in your home?      Yes    No

(21a) If yes, is it connected to the Internet?    Yes    No

If no, do you have access to one? If yes, where? (e.g. office; library; friend, etc.) and do you use it for email or for the Internet?

Appendix B.

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of a Fe y Alegria School in  
Bolivia

## Semi-Structured Literacy Practices Interview

(Each participant should have already read and discussed the Informed Consent letter with the interviewer and have signed the consent form)

### Current Literacy Practices

I. What kinds of things do you **read** in your life (that are not part of any school you might be attending)? For each text or practice mentioned, elicit information about why (purpose of reading), social context (as part of what type of activity, like work, church, committees, shopping for family, etc.).

PROMPTS (with each of the following, you can give example texts but don't ask about any one specifically):

- for daily tasks?
- with your children? with your spouse? with your friends? with your co-workers?
- for official purposes like getting a visa or work permit?
- for paying taxes?
- at your job?
- for entertainment?
- for relaxation?
- for information?
- for shopping?
- for worship (or religious purposes)?
- Internet?

What kinds of texts do you **write**?

II. What kinds of texts do you **write** in your life (that are not part of any school you might be attending)? For each text or practice mentioned, elicit information about why (purpose of writing), social context (as part of what type of activity, like work, church, committees, shopping for family, etc.) and how important and/or enjoyable/fulfilling is it (Don't belabor this; the goal is to remain conversational and informal).

PROMPTS (with each of the following, you can give example texts but don't ask about any one specifically):

- for daily tasks?
- with your children? with your spouse? with your friends? with your co-workers?
- for official purposes like getting a visa or work permit?
- for paying taxes?
- at your job?
- for entertainment?
- for relaxation?
- for information?
- for shopping?
- for worship (or religious purposes)?
- Internet?

#### Historical Literacy Practices

I. When you were a child, what kinds of texts (or 'things') did people in your family (or house) **read** regularly (except for those things that kids or adults read for school assignments) (use questions from above to prompt)?

For each text or practice mentioned, elicit information about why (purpose of writing), social context (as part of what type of activity, like work, church, committees, shopping for family, etc.) and how important and/or enjoyable/fulfilling is it (Don't belabor this; the goal is to remain conversational and informal).

PROMPTS (with each of the following, you can give example texts but don't ask about any one specifically):

- for daily tasks?
- with your children? with your spouse? with your friends? with your co-workers?
- for official purposes like getting a visa or work permit?
- for paying taxes?
- at your job?
- for entertainment?
- for relaxation?
- for information?
- for shopping?

- for worship (or religious purposes)?
- Internet?

II. When you were a child, what kinds of texts did your family **write** regularly (except for those things kids or adults wrote for a teacher in school as an assignment) For each text or practice mentioned, elicit information about why (purpose of writing), social context (as part of what type of activity, like work, church, committees, shopping for family, etc.) and how important and/or enjoyable/fulfilling is it (Don't belabor this; the goal is to remain conversational and informal).

PROMPTS (with each of the following, you can give example texts but don't ask about any one specifically):

- for daily tasks?
- with your children? with your spouse? with your friends? with your co-workers?
- for official purposes like getting a visa or work permit?
- for paying taxes?
- at your job?
- for entertainment?
- for relaxation?
- for information?
- for shopping?
- for worship (or religious purposes)?
- Internet?

1. What kinds of texts did other people in your community when you were a child read or write? (these should be texts that the participant remembers seeing people use, not those that he 'supposes' people used)

PROMPTS (with each of the following, you can give example texts but don't ask about any one specifically):

- for daily tasks?
- with your children? with your spouse? with your friends? with your co-workers?

- for official purposes like getting a visa or work permit?
- for paying taxes?
- at your job?
- for entertainment?
- for relaxation?
- for information?
- for shopping?
- for worship (or religious purposes)?
- Internet?

Do you think that the way you feel about reading and writing-- like how useful they are or how enjoyable they are --is about the same or different in some way from how people in your community and in your family felt? (Probe for explanations and examples)

#### Historical School Literacy Uses

I. What kinds of texts did you read in your school as part of the school instruction/assignments? (e.g. textbooks, novels, basal readers, encyclopedias, internet, short stories, poetry, worksheets, picture books, information books), etc.? ----

PROMPTS (for each of these, it will help to conduct a brief conversation about the grade-level like where the participant lived then, do they remember the school, teacher, etc.?):

- During Kindergarten?
- During Grades 1-3?
- During Grades 4-6?
- During Grades 7-8
- During Grades 9-12
- During post High School education (technical school; college; education classes in the military, etc. (for this, be sure to elicit what type of education/school they connect to specific literacy practices)

II. Which of these literacy practices/texts did you particularly enjoy? Dislike? Find Difficult? Boring? Why? Examples?

III. What kinds of texts did students write in your school as part of the school instruction/assignments? (e.g. stories, poetry, spelling practice, reports, worksheets, essays/compositions, journals, class books, etc)?

PROMPTS (for each of these, it will help to conduct a brief conversation about the grade-level like where the participant lived then, do they remember the school, teacher, etc.):

- During Kindergarten?
- During Grades 1-3?
- During Grades 4-6?
- During Grades 7-8
- During Grades 9-12
- During post High School education (technical school; college; education classes in the military, etc. (for this, be sure to elicit what type of education/school they connect to specific literacy practices)

IV. Which of these literacy practices/texts did you particularly enjoy? Dislike? Find Difficult? Boring? Why? Examples?

V. When you were in school, do you remember how you felt about what did you think about learning to read? About learning to write?

VI. Do you think the reading and writing you did at school prepared you for the the kinds of things that you read and write now? Why or why not, or in what ways?

VII. How do you think the reading/writing you did at school similar to or different than the reading/writing you do now as an adult?

Appendix C.

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of a Fe y Alegria School in  
Bolivia  
Investigator: Tracy Gates

Fe y Alegria Administration Interview Questions

1. How do you choose or hire your teachers?
2. What minimum training do the teachers need to have before being hired at Fe y Alegria? Are there any exceptions? If so, please describe them.
3. What professional development or training is required of teachers before they begin teaching here?
4. How many days of training are there before the school term begins? Throughout the year?
5. What topics are covered? How is this decided?
6. Does Fe y Alegria require teachers to speak a language other than Spanish? Why? If so how is the other language used to instruct?
7. How are teachers prepared to teach reading and writing at your school?
8. Has it ever happened that a teacher does not feel confident using that methodology or resource? Tell me about what types of actions you might take with such a teacher to help him or her.
9. Are the teachers given further training at FyA in this area (literacy)? Please describe the kind and frequency of training in as much detail as possible.
10. What materials or resources are being used here to teacher reading or writing?
11. Do teachers ever develop their own materials?
  - If not, please explain why.
  - If so, please describe an example of when and how a teacher would modify or create a resource to use in the classroom.
  - Also, tell me why FyA would encourage teachers to create or modify materials for their students.
12. Tell me about any processes, support, supervision, etc that FyA uses to support new teachers. Prompts:

- Is there a “support group” or mentoring program? Please describe the program, its purpose. How does it work? Is participation mandatory? How often do they meet? What kind of issues do they discuss?
- How are the teachers supervised or evaluated? How often are they evaluated? Describe any systems in place for supporting for struggling teachers.

### Community

1. Tell me about where you live.

Prompts:

- Is it in this community or a different one? Which one?
- How far is it from here?
- Describe the community you live in.

2. If you live elsewhere tell me about any activities you might engage in, in this community, outside of your teaching hours.

Eg: Go for a walk, grocery shopping, go for lunch, use the convenience store, visit friends or family, etc.

3. Tell me about how you get to school each day. What do you notice on your car/bus ride or walk?

4. Are you involved with any other activities that happen within this community or at the school outside of teaching?

Eg: Coaching, tutoring, walking kids home, after school programs, church, etc.

5. Please describe any time you have visited a student’s home in this community.

6. Is the school ever open before or after regular school hours to the children and community members? If so, for what purposes or activities and who is allowed to attend or participate?

7. Are there any staff or administrators who, run programs off-site in other locations within the community?

8. Are home visits ever done by staff or administration? Please explain when and why this would occur.

9. How would you describe this community and its residents?

Prompts:

- What kinds of services are available in this community? Eg: Banks, stores libraries, laundries, buses, taxis, tailors, stationary stores, pharmacies, medical offices, garbage collection, electricity, phone, internet, clean running water, places to buy gas tanks, markets, other schools, restaurants, etc.
- What kind of problems residents might encounter living here? Eg: Lack of adequate services, lack of spaces in schools, crime, transportation difficulties, problems with housing, etc.
- Who lives in this community? What kinds of employment can be found here? Do the residents mostly stay in the community to work or do they commute?

## Appendix D.

### Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: A Case Study of a Fe y Alegria School in Bolivia

Investigator: Tracy Gates

#### Teacher Preparation Interview Questions

Each participant should have already read and discussed the Informed Consent letter with the interviewer and have signed the consent form.

#### Formal Teacher Training before being employed at Fe y Alegria

1. Tell me about your formal teacher training before coming to Fe y Alegria. What can you remember?

Prompts:

- Where did you obtain your formal teacher training?
  - Was this a state or private institution?
  - How many months or years did it last?
  - What kinds of classes did you attend during your formal training?
  - Were they all mandatory or were there some electives? If some were electives, which ones did you choose?
  - Which courses did you take that gave instruction on how to teach reading or writing? Describe how useful or helpful you think these courses were in how you teach your current class.
  - How did the instructors of these courses encourage or train you to teach literacy?
  - Were there specific materials, books, literature, manipulatives or other resources you were encouraged to use?
  - What can you remember about the methods or materials that you were taught to use with regards to teaching reading or writing?
2. During your teacher training were you ever required to “practice teach” with children? Please describe the experience as best you can.
    - How long or how often did this occur?

- Did you ever modify or adjust your lessons or materials for different kinds of students? If so can you tell me about what you were asked to do and for what reason(s)?
3. Did you have to complete a student practicum? If so, can you describe the experience?

Prompts:

- How long was it?
  - Where was it?
  - Who supervised you?
  - How were you evaluated?
  - What ages and subject areas did you teach?
  - How were you encouraged by your practicum supervisor to teach during the practicum?
  - Tell me about any times you modified or adjusted your lessons or materials for different kinds of students.
  - If you modified materials during your practicum, were you given any support or instruction in how to do this?
4. How did you feel overall about your formal training program once it was completed?
5. Do you feel it prepared you adequately for your current position now? What kinds of things (experiences, knowledge) make you feel prepared? What kinds of things make you feel not prepared? What would you like to know or know how to do that you don't know now regarding teaching reading or writing in this school?

#### Teacher Training while at Fe y Alegria

1. Tell me about any professional development workshops or training sessions you have attended since you were hired by Fe y Alegria.

Prompts:

- Have there been any that focused on teaching students how to read and write? Please describe what you can remember about what was covered during these sessions.

- When does the professional development occur? During or before the school year?
  - Can the teaching staff choose not to participate or is it mandatory?
  - Does the teaching staff determine what will be focused on or is it pre set by the administration? Describe the process that goes into deciding the topics and facilitators.
  - Who have been the facilitators?
  - What topics do you cover before the school term begins and then during the year?
2. What methods of instruction and materials does Fe y Alegria encourage you to use when teaching reading and writing?
  3. Do you ever teach in languages other than Spanish? If so, which ones, when and why?
  4. Do you ever prepare any literacy materials before school begins? If so, tell me about them. What types of materials are they? What are they intended to teach? Why do you prepare them yourself?
  5. Tell me about the supervision or support that the teaching staff is given during the year by the administration.

Prompts:

- Does anyone assist you in preparing or planning for the school year?
- Do you have a supervisor who observes you teach?
- How are you evaluated as a teacher? Are you given advance notice before someone observes you? Do you receive feedback afterwards and what kind of feedback? In your opinion is this a useful practice or not and why? Do you feel this helps you improve your teaching at this school? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the relationship between the teachers and the administration?
- Do you have a mentor at Fe y Alegria? How does this partnership work? When do you meet? What do you talk about?

6. Tell me about any instances when you modified or created materials for the students in your class.

Prompts:

- Could you describe an example of a resource you created or modified and for what reasons? What other reasons might you modify materials for, at this school?
  - If you do modify materials, please describe what kind of support (training, time or assistance) you have been given, if any.
7. How do you feel overall about the training or professional development you have been given at Fe y Alegria? Do you feel it has been helpful in preparing you to teach literacy to your current students? If so, describe how the extra training at Fe y Alegria has been helpful?

### Community

1. Tell me about where you live.

Prompts:

- Is it in this community or a different one? Which one?
  - How far is it from here?
  - Describe the community you live in.
2. If you live elsewhere tell me about any activities you might engage in, in this community, outside of your teaching hours.

Eg: Go for a walk, grocery shopping, go for lunch, use the convenience store, visit friends or family, etc.

3. Tell me about how you get to school each day. What do you notice on your car/bus ride or walk?
4. Are you involved with any other activities that happen within this community or at the school outside of teaching?

Eg: Coaching, tutoring, walking kids home, after school programs, church, etc.

5. Please describe any time you have visited a student's home in this community.
6. How would you describe this community and its residents?

Prompts:

- What kinds of services are available in this community?

Eg: Banks, stores libraries, laundries, buses, taxis, tailors, stationary stores, pharmacies, medical offices, garbage collection, electricity, phone, internet, clean running water, places to buy gas tanks, markets, other schools, restaurants, etc.

- What kind of problems might residents encounter living here?

Eg: Lack of adequate services, lack of spaces in schools, crime, transportation difficulties, problems with housing, etc.

- Who lives in this community? What kinds of employment can be found here?

Do the residents mostly stay in the community to work or do they commute?

Appendix E.

Table 22. Total Purposes for Reading and Writing

Purposes for Reading and Writing	Total
In order to act out the story	1
In order to advertise the special	2
In order to agree to a compromise	1
In order to alleviate depression	1
In order to alleviate loneliness	1
In order to apply for a work transfer	1
In order to assess student's knowledge	1
In order to avoid a beating	1
In order to be entertained	1
In order to be informed about children's schooling	1
In order to be informed about news events	10
In order to be informed about other religions	1
In order to be informed about the community	4
In order to buy child's school books	1
In order to check homework for errors	1
In order to check the meaning of a word	1
In order to communicate with distant family	10
In order to communicate with significant other	4
In order to complete assignment	2
In order to conduct a meeting	1
In order to cook a meal for one's family	4
In order to dictate the letter to the mother	1
In order to discuss the news with friends	2
In order to document having read teacher's note	1
In order to document your attendance	1
In order to ensure that you buy what you need or want	2
In order to entertain the children	1
In order to explain what stories are about to kids	2
In order to express one's opinion	1
In order to find the cheapest price	5
In order to get on the correct bus	4
In order to give a customer a work estimate	1
In order to give permission for child to do something	1
In order to give the employer a record of work completed	2
In order to help child with homework	9
In order to help children read	2
In order to help children read recipes	1
In order to help children with homework	4

Purposes for Reading and Writing	Total
In order to help her children learn Quechua	3
In order to help the children understand the text	1
In order to help the church	1
In order to identify the item	3
In order to identify the store	4
In order to identify the taxi	1
In order to improve handwriting	1
In order to improve her reading	2
In order to improve her writing	1
In order to keep track of supplies and prices	2
In order to know about the politicians	8
In order to know how her family members are	5
In order to know how to fix or make something at his job	2
In order to know how to fix things around the house	1
In order to know how to teach her children to read	1
In order to know information about their birthdays	1
In order to know the correct date	2
In order to know the order of events	2
In order to know the results of a sports match	1
In order to know the sale information	4
In order to know what is for sale in the store	5
In order to know what is on the menu today	1
In order to know what the danger is	2
In order to know what the promotion or sale is	5
In order to know what the service is	6
In order to know what to order for work	2
In order to know where and when the meeting is	2
In order to learn a new recipe	1
In order to learn about history	1
In order to learn about the Bible	12
In order to learn about the Biblical prophecies	1
In order to learn how to sign own name	1
In order to learn how to spell family names	1
In order to learn how to spell words	1
In order to learn information about the course	1
In order to learn new things	5
In order to learn Quechua	1
In order to modify a recipe	1
In order to obtain a job	1
In order to obtain counselling for her children	2
In order to participate in the Catechism	1
In order to pass the time	12
In order to pay government taxes	2

Purposes for Reading and Writing	Total
In order to play the game	2
In order to prepare children to be safe	1
In order to prepare for sacred rights	1
In order to prepare oneself to be a community leader	1
In order to provide information for the government	3
In order to receive the paycheque	1
In order to receive training for a job	1
In order to recite a Bible verse	1
In order to remember important dates	1
In order to remember important information later	1
In order to respond to husband's legal requests	1
In order to satisfy one's curiosity	3
In order to share her recipe	1
In order to share the Bible with others	1
In order to sing the songs	1
In order to spell a word correctly	1
In order to take a break	4
In order to teach a Bible lesson	1
In order to teach the history to her children	1
In order to understand the text	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>231</b>

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