


7-2015

# Acronyms and Identities: The Perceptions of Latino Teenagers Regarding their Experiences as Long-Term Second Language Learners

Kristina E. Granby  
George Fox University, [kgranby10@georgefox.edu](mailto:kgranby10@georgefox.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/edd>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Granby, Kristina E., "Acronyms and Identities: The Perceptions of Latino Teenagers Regarding their Experiences as Long-Term Second Language Learners" (2015). *Doctor of Education (EdD)*. 62.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/edd/62>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Education (EdD) by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolfe@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolfe@georgefox.edu).

ACRONYMS AND IDENTITIES: THE PERCEPTIONS OF LATINO TEENAGERS  
REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES AS LONG-TERM SECOND LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS

by

KRISTINA E. GRANBY

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

Chair: Suzanne Harrison, Ph.D.

Member: Ginny Birky, Ph.D.

Member: Susanna Steeg, Ph.D.

Presented to the Doctoral Department  
and the College of Education, George Fox University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

July 23, 2015

George Fox University  
School of Education  
Newberg, Oregon

“ACRONYMS AN IDENTITIES: THE PERCEPTIONS OF LATINO TEENAGERS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES AS LONG-TERM SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by KRISTINA E. GRANBY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

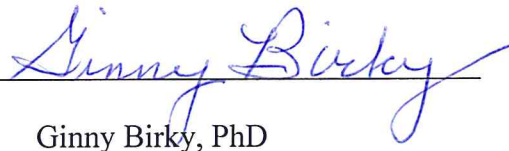
7/23/2015 

Date

Suzanne Harrison, PhD

Committee Chair

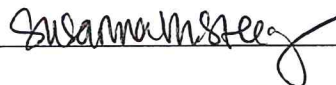
Assistant Professor of Education

8/5/15 

Date

Ginny Birky, PhD

Professor of Education

8/5/15 

Date

Susanna Steeg, PhD

Assistant Professor of Education

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of older Latino teenagers regarding their experiences as long-term English language learners. The data were gained from in-depth interviews based on a phenomenological methodology. The participants were interviewed individually using a modified three-part interview structure. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using initial and thematic coding to identify common and related themes. The data was presented primarily using participant quotes to illustrate identified themes.

The results of the study were organized into three major aspects of the culturally and linguistically diverse participants' life experiences: Articulations of Personal Identity; Relationships with Parents, Family, and Latino Peers; and Experiences in School and the Local Community. The participants articulated a cultural identity that was clearly different than that of their Spanish-dominant, immigrant parents, but also different than the mainstream "White" culture. Linguistically, the participants dealt with issues of fluency in both their native language and their second language of English. In all endeavors, the participants' primary motivation in life was their desire to support their loved ones and improve their families' situations in life. In experiences with the school and local community, the data showed that participants had experienced difficulty navigating the American educational system and also felt a lack of cultural representation at school. The data also revealed that participants articulated ongoing experiences of racism through their stories, yet had a difficult time defining acts as instances of racism.

The findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of the life and scholastic experiences of long-term English language learners. Possibilities for future research included an examination of how the results could be applied by educators and school districts,

particularly in the areas of building and maintaining teacher-student relationships, developing culturally responsive instructional practices, and creating more effective district family outreach programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation for George Fox University and the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department/Doctor of Education department faculty and staff. I extend an indescribable amount of gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Suzanne Harrison, who first welcomed me to the doctoral program, and who has now seen me through to its completion. I also extend warm thanks to my committee members, Dr. Ginny Birky and Dr. Susanna Steeg, for their support and suggestions. In addition, two faculty members helped me immensely during the initial phases of designing this study: Dr. Terry Huffman and Dr. Eloise Hockett. Thanks to all of the George Fox professors for sharing their wisdom and their individual talents and areas of expertise with our cohort over the years. Each one of you has provided me with a different and valuable vision of faith and education.

I would also like to thank my cohort, which is technically named the 2011 cohort, but is known throughout the land as “The Collective.” Our strange mixture of personalities, life experiences, and leadership and learning styles somehow resulted in the perfect support structure. This experience would have been nothing without all of you (maybe not even existent)! We are surely proof that the cohort is THE model for educational success.

I would like to thank my entire family for providing all types of support throughout this long journey. I thank: my parents, Jon and Marian; my sister, Margee; and my grandmother, Margaret, who is nearly 104 years old as I write this. I would also like to thank my partner in life, Jim, for supporting me and keeping me going through all of the ups and downs and especially all of the stress! This doctoral experience was punctuated with unexpected pitfalls and life changes, but, whether close by or far away, all of my family and friends have been by my side to create the support structure that was necessary to make it through.

My school district and local site have also provided me with support during these past 4+ years. I would like to thank my school district superintendent, assistant superintendent, my ELD program director, my site principal and assistant principals, my coworkers in ELD and the language department, and my language and equity team members throughout the district. Especially, I thank Leonard Terrible, who introduced me to the world of second language acquisition by giving me my first job working with ELL students and who has been with me through every year since then. I also especially thank Lucy Aguilar, who has been a coworker and friend throughout my years in ELD. She has provided invaluable personal insights into the life journeys of our Latino second-language students.

Despite all of the money I've spent on "fuel" and "rewards" during this process, I still have to thank the public locations that have become my offices – various coffee shops, restaurants, and wine shops throughout the state of Oregon, including: Insomnia Coffee, Primrose & Tumbleweed, and Starbucks in Hillsboro; Urban Decanter and Maggie's Buns in Forest Grove; Great Earth Bakery in Madras; and a variety of McMenamins locations and public libraries throughout our fair state. I would also like to thank the bands 311 and Sublime for providing the music that blocked out any café bustle that was not contributing to the writing.

Finally, and most of all, I would like to thank my past, current, and future students. For the past 8 years, you have given me glimpses into your lives, your struggles, and your triumphs. Through this study, I finally had the chance to focus only on you, your life experiences, and what you can share with the world.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Research Question(s).....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Limitations and Delimitations .....	8
Role of the Researcher and Bracketing.....	10
Summary.....	11
CHAPTER 2.....	12
Review of the Literature.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Ethnic Identity Development.....	13
Familismo.....	18
Acculturation.....	21
Stigma, Racism, and Politics Surrounding CLD Students.....	22
Teacher Perceptions Regarding Work with ELL Students.....	26
Teachers' Attitudes, Feelings of Preparedness, and Linguistic/Cultural Knowledge as Barriers .....	28
Previous Research into the ELL Experience.....	31



Conclusions Following the Literature Review.....	35
CHAPTER 3.....	37
Method.....	37
Introduction.....	37
Setting.....	38
Participants and Sampling.....	42
Research Ethics.....	43
Research Design.....	45
Interviewing Model.....	49
Data Collection.....	59
Data Analysis.....	60
Role of the Researcher.....	61
CHAPTER 4.....	68
Results.....	67
Introduction.....	67
Review of Research Method and Data Analysis.....	69
Participant Profiles.....	73
Results.....	79
Articulations of Personal Identity.....	79
Relationships with Parents, Family, and Latino Peers.....	106
Experiences in School and the Local Community.....	155
Concluding Remarks on the Results.....	206

CHAPTER 5.....	208
Discussion and Conclusions.....	207
Research Question 1a.....	208
Research Question 1b.....	210
Research Question 1c.....	214
Effects on the Researcher’s Professional Practice.....	215
Recommendations for Educators and School Districts.....	217
Implications for Future Study.....	221
Conclusion.....	223
References.....	224
Appendices.....	234
Appendix A: Letters of Consent.....	235
Appendix B: Prospective Interview Questions .....	243

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

In the first decade of this century, public schools in the United States experienced a massive demographic change in terms of linguistic diversity. While the nation's overall public school student population grew only 7.22% from 1999 through 2009, the rate of growth in the English language learner (ELL) student population was over 51% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011). As of 2011, 5.4 million pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public school students in the United States were designated English learners (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011), and of these, nearly 4.7 million participated in academic programs specifically designed for English language learners (U. S. Department of Education, Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

As of the 2010-2011 school year, states in the western part of the United States held the highest percentages of ELL public school students. Oregon was one of eight states in which at least 10 percent of K-12 students were English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The rate of K-12 English languages learners in the state of Oregon grew 112% in a decade, from 30,768 ELLs in the 1997-1998 school year to 65,314 in the 2007-2008 school year (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2010).

Since nationwide standardized test subgroup reporting began in 2002, each yearly report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has shown that 4th- and 8th-grade students who are ELLs are scoring lower than their non-ELL peers. This disparity is commonly referred to as the *achievement gap* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In 2011, the achievement gap in reading between 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELL and non-ELL students was 44 points, which on a testing scale of 500 points represents an 8.8% gap. The size of this gap has not changed

measurably in either the 4<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels since 2002. Considering the ever-increasing population of ELLs, it is not surprising that educators are desperate to find ways to close the achievement gap and provide ELLs with access to the core curriculum as the students are simultaneously gaining the English language skills that will be vital to them in school and in life.

During the past eight years I have worked almost exclusively with high school English Language Learners (ELLs). I moved into this specialization after having the opportunity to interact with ELLs when I worked as a language arts teacher in a very diverse urban school. Their different educational needs led me to pursue more training in the area of language acquisition. The language-learning students and the field of language acquisition fascinated me, and I transitioned to become an ESL instructor. Within the ESL realm, I have taught students of every proficiency level from beginning to advanced learners. I have also taught a variety of courses, all with the specific needs of the second language learner in mind. No matter the course topic or the proficiency level of the students, I have repeatedly observed a feeling on the part of students that they want to exit the language program as soon as possible. These students are second language learners who have specific needs that are being met through specialized coursework. Why, then, do students want to escape as soon as possible, often before they are truly academically prepared to leave these support programs? While I see the students' desire and desperation to proceed on, I do not truly understand their feelings, perceptions, and motivations. I pursued the research question in this study because I believed that it would help to address what I have observed on the surface over the years. Due to class sizes, schedules, and rigorous content requirements, I have rarely had the chance to speak to students in-depth about their life experiences in the classroom setting. I knew that individual, in-depth interviews might allow me to hear the students' real experiences through their own voices. As of the completion

of this study, I have been unable to find any other studies that take an in-depth look at how teenagers perceive their experiences as long-term ELLs and members of mandatory support programs. What do their responses tell us about their experiences with cultural conflict, the acculturation process, possible stigma stemming from labeling and isolated courses, or other factors? Through this study, I examined the perceptions and thoughts of a small group of Latino English language learners in an effort to better understand their experiences and serve the educational and emotional needs of this population of students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In my eight years working with Latino/a second language learners, I have observed that students who have been in mandatory language programs for five or more years are experiencing both academic and social difficulties in high school. These students are known as Long-term English Language Learners, or LTELs. While most students who receive direct language instruction exit out in five years or less and join the mainstream, there appears to be a group of students who takes longer and, therefore, spends a significantly greater amount of time in mandatory programs. In my experience, these LTEL students frequently exhibit negative attitudes: toward school; toward language; and toward learning in general. In addition to their language acquisition progress or lack thereof, these students are often unable to meet state testing benchmarks in reading, writing, and mathematics. They are frequently low in many academic areas and have trouble passing the coursework required for graduation. They appear to lack both the skills and the motivation to improve, which becomes a toxic recipe for failure in the critical final years leading up to high school graduation.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of Latino/a teenagers who had participated in five or more years of mandatory ELL programs. In

addition, this study explored the students' interpersonal interactions with teachers and peers as well as their own identities as learners. A phenomenological method was chosen because its purpose is to develop meaning based on rich descriptions of the lived experiences of individuals. In-depth interviews allowed the participants to share their stories, their thoughts, and their perceptions. The text generated through the interview process provided, through the participants' own voices, a depth of illustration regarding their lived experiences. The findings of this study may help educators and parents understand the elements at play in Latino ESL students' educational experiences.

### **Research Question(s)**

In this phenomenological study, the research question remained general in the beginning, allowing for more specific areas to emerge as the investigation proceeded. This research began with one overarching question and three subsequent areas of inquiry:

1. How do Latino English language learners articulate their experiences as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who were enrolled long-term in mandatory ELL programs?
  - a. What do they describe as their positive/negative experiences as an ELL in mandatory programs, and in public school in general?
  - b. How have their interpersonal interactions with family members, teachers, and other students shaped their experiences?
  - c. What are their expressions of identity as language learners?

## Definition of Key Terms

*Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD or CALD):* CLD is a term that may be broadly used to refer to all persons who are ethnically and/or linguistically diverse, regardless of their language proficiency status (Harry, 2008).

*Dual-identified:* *Dual-identified* students are individuals who receive both ESL instruction and special education services. The state of Oregon defines *students with disabilities* as children or students who “require special education because of: autism; communication disorders; deaf/blindness; emotional disturbances; hearing impairments, including deafness; intellectual disability; orthopedic impairments; other health impairments; specific learning disabilities; traumatic brain injuries; or visual impairments, including blindness” (Oregon Administrative Rules for Special Education, 2013). Dual identification is significant in that, while official designations may mean that a student receives needed support, a student may also experience greater restriction throughout the school experience due to the high number of required support classes and the resulting scheduling difficulties. In addition, dual identification often makes it difficult for educators to determine whether the cause of academic problems might stem from language barriers, from disabilities, or from a combination of factors.

*English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):* These terms are typically used to refer to an entire program or department related to teaching English to speakers of languages other than English. An ESL program focuses on developing English language proficiency as the main avenue for helping ELLs meet academic standards (Oregon Department of Education, 2013). Grammatically, these terms are commonly used as adjectives, such as *an ESL student*, or *an ESOL program*.

*English Language Development (ELD):* ELD was the name of the department that administered ELL language services in the district in which the study took place. ELD courses were grouped by proficiency levels and sought to improve students' language in the domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

*English language learner (ELL or EL):* This term was used to refer to a person who was in the process of acquiring English and whose primary home language was not English. Oregon Department of Education (2013) defines EL or ELL and notes that it is the preferred terminology for a person: EL signifies "a national-origin-minority student who is limited-English-proficient. This term is often preferred to limited-English-proficient (LEP) as it highlights accomplishments rather than deficits" (Oregon Department of Education, 2013, p. 5).

*Exited/Portfolio Exited:* This is a common expression for "reclassification" (Oregon Department of Education, 2013) in the district in which the study took place. Students who attain the advanced score on the required state language testing are considered *exited* from ELD services. However, the state does allow for a margin of teacher, school, and district discretion. Students who have a body of evidence demonstrating advanced proficiency may be *exited by portfolio* even if they have not passed the state exam.

*Latino and Hispanic:* While *Latino* and *Hispanic* do have slightly different meanings, most demographic measurements use one or both of these terms and the two words are frequently used interchangeably in school enrollment reporting and other statistical representations of population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). *Latino* refers to individuals who reside in the United States and whose ethnic and/or linguistic background lies in a Latin-American country. In this broader designation, an individual's language of origin is often Spanish, but not exclusively. I will use the term Latino in this study.



*Limited English Proficient (LEP):* LEP is the term that is frequently used by the U.S. federal government to refer to students who are still receiving direct language instruction. In usage, this is interchangeable with ELL, but as previously noted, it is not the preferred term (Oregon Department of Education, 2013).

*Long-term ELL (LTEL):* This is a term that generally refers to students who have been in ELD courses for an extended number of years, particularly when the student is of middle or high school age (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2013). In this study, I will use *long-term ELL* or *LTEL* to refer to students who have been designated as ELLs for five or more years. Many of these long-term learners were born in the United States but are still in the process of acquiring the level of proficiency in academic English that is necessary to succeed in school. *Migrant student:* Under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, a migrant student is a child whose parent or spouse is a migratory agricultural worker and who has experienced movement and educational upheaval within the previous 36 months (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002).

*Monitored status through reclassification:* After reaching a score of advanced on the state language testing, students are reclassified and districts officially monitor students for two calendar years (Oregon Department of Education, 2013). This enables the district and school to ensure that the student progresses academically and that language proficiency is not preventing the student from achieving academic success in his/her classes. In other words, this system is in place to make sure that the student's passing of the test was not a coincidence. Although they will no longer receive direct language instruction, monitored students may still receive additional academic support through ESL programs. At the end of the two-year monitoring period, students are no longer considered ELLs for the purpose of public education, although they will always be culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

*Proficiency levels:* Students receive proficiency level designations based on their performance on state language testing. The generally accepted levels in the field are *beginner*, *early intermediate*, *intermediate*, *early advanced*, and *advanced*. When a student in Oregon achieves an advanced score on state-administered language testing, he/she is no longer mandated to take ELD courses and progresses into the *monitored* phase. The five English Language Proficiency standards identified by the state of Oregon address the question: “What might an ELL’s language use look like at each ELP level as he or she progresses toward independent participation in grade-appropriate activities?” (Oregon Department of Education, 2014c).

*Stigma:* Flannery (2008) notes that stigma as it relates to personal experiences and identity is “associated to the analysis of discriminatory episodes, showing how individuals’ anticipations of others’ identities impact the understanding of a situation as discriminatory” (p. 161). In this study, I use the term *stigma* to refer to negative feelings or experiences that students perceived based on their ethnic background and/or language designation. Participants related perceptions of stigmatization in terms of how they felt about themselves as well as in experiences with peers, teachers, family members, and community members.

*White:* For the purpose of this study, the term *White* will be used to refer to non-Hispanic Caucasians (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This research primarily used semi-structured personal interviews to gain data from participants. In that, three possible limitations were addressed at the outset: (a) the close pre-existing relationships between the participants and the researcher, (b) a possible reticence to talk on the part of teenager participants, and (c) challenges in maintaining communication and contact with prospective participants. Initially, I prepared for the possibility that the participants

might, at times, censor their thoughts due to their past experience of having me as a teacher. For example, I thought that students might not feel comfortable sharing true feelings with me if those feelings were perceived to be negative, or if they felt what they said might hurt or insult my program. However, this was not the case in this study. The participants clearly felt comfortable sharing both positive and negative experiences and perceptions about their school, their teachers, or their community. The second anticipated limitation of the study was the possibility that the students might be reticent to talk, or might be very brief in their comments. It is clear in the depth and breadth of the data that this was not the case. The students were extremely talkative and descriptive. The third anticipated limitation was that of communication and contact. This was an obstacle in the initial stages of finalizing a group of participants. I experienced problems with student-provided contact information, such as cell phone numbers and email addresses that were not correct and phone lines that had been disconnected. In addition, there were contact issues such as scheduling conflicts, students who got jobs or moved out of the area after graduation, and changes in life situation and availability, such as a pregnancy in one case. However, once the final four participants were confirmed, communication and contact issues were few and the interviews were scheduled with minimal changes and problems.

In designing this study, four delimitations have received the most consideration in terms of the direction of inquiry. First, I chose to restrict my sample to Latino/a participants. This is one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States and even more so in the state of Oregon and in my particular region. Spanish-speaking students comprise by far the largest subgroup of ELLs in Oregon (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2013), yet the students' personal experiences are rarely discussed through the voices of the students themselves. Second, in order to maintain a deep look into the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the participants, I

chose to use a small sample size of four students. Third, I focused very specifically on one type of ELL: the long-term high school or post-high school learner who was at an intermediate or higher language proficiency level. This allowed me to explore the experiences of a group of students who tend to be of the utmost concern to educators. These long-term learners, often born in the United States, have often stagnated in the middle and high proficiency levels, so today's educators are seeking strategies to help these students achieve academic success (Olsen, 2010). Finally, I interviewed participants from only one school district in Oregon. Demographically, this region hosts a very high percentage of Latino/a ELL students and families. The high school used in this study recently reached a makeup of 50% Latino (Oregon Department of Education, 2014b). Interviewing Latino students from a school and overall area concentrated in such a way provided valuable insight into the academic and life experiences of ELLs in the region.

### **Role of the Researcher and Bracketing**

First and foremost, my role as researcher was that of faithful listener. While I had to generate and ask the guiding questions, my more important task was to allow the participants the space to speak and share their experiences. I also was responsible for engaging participants in meaningful dialogue, which, while it may have diverged from the pre-prepared questions, provided natural insights into the thoughts and feelings of the participants. It is important to acknowledge that, as a graduate student completing a doctoral dissertation, I had a vested interest in this study to a much greater degree than did the participants. Therefore, it was my charge to record the data and to present my findings with honesty and integrity.

In addition to my role as a researcher, I occupied a professional role related to the topic under study. My position as an ELD teacher and ESL program facilitator gave me important professional ties that could not be severed from the study. My career has included a deep history

of working with students from racial and ethnic minority groups and also with English Language Learners and their families. These experiences have created my passionate desire to serve these students; these feelings have led to this study and cannot truly be separated from my work or any other aspect of my life. However, again, even if separation were possible, I do not feel it would have benefited this study. If it were not for my investment in the lives of these students, I would likely not have entered into this path of inquiry, which I hoped would provide the students with a much-needed voice and place in educational research.

### **Summary**

The research question in this study addressed the need to understand the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students who had been long-time language learners. Through this study, a small group of long-term, Latino high school English language learners related their life experiences as linguistically diverse students who had received mandatory educational support for extended amounts of time. The goal of the study was to gain a deeper understanding about the life experiences of Latino students who were engaged in a long-term process of acquiring English language proficiency. In this chapter, I defined a number of the acronyms used to label these students, as well as common terms that were used throughout the literature review, results, analysis, and discussion. This chapter also addressed the limitations and delimitations of the study. In addition, the role of the researcher and bracketing were introduced in this chapter and discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. In the next Chapter, I provide a review of the existing literature on topics related to this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in the United States, yet most previous research regarding educational disparities has focused on Black-White comparisons (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). While research has increased in terms of educators' perceptions of Latino students (Batt, 2008; Busch, 2010; Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997) and even Latino parents' perceptions of education (Lueck, 2010; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013; Vera et al., 2012), there has been little inquiry into students' experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Therefore, a high need exists for research regarding Latinos.

Research regarding Latino students is relevant at every level, but particularly in the high school years that lead to possible post-secondary college/training attendance and/or entrance into the job market. Latinos tend to have lower grades and lower test scores than White students. (Becerra, 2012; Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004; College Board, 2012). High school dropout rates are higher for Latinos than for White/Black students. Among all students who go on to higher education students of color are more likely to attend junior/community colleges rather than four-year institutions and less likely to complete degrees (Streng et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

The purpose of this literature review was to examine what research has been conducted related to the experiences and perceptions of English languages learners. I addressed factors that likely informed the linguistically diverse Latino student experience. I discussed issues in ethnic identity development and the acculturation process, as well as the small body of existing research that focused on ELL student attitudes and experiences in education. I also discussed existing

research regarding teachers' attitudes and beliefs about working with linguistically diverse students, and the implications these findings held in terms of the need for more research into the student perspective.

### **Ethnic Identity Development**

**Relevance.** Ethnic identity development holds relevance in the study of Latino/a student academic experiences for a number of reasons. According to Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, and Guimond (2009), ethnic identity is of particular developmental importance during the teen years because of both the increase in self-consciousness about ethnicity during adolescence and the relationship between ethnic group identity and self-esteem. These relationships can result in teens developing an internal locus of control, and a correlation between positive feelings about self and other parts of one's identity. In addition, Latino *ethnic identity* and *acculturation* have been identified as predictors of academic performance. Therefore, studying ethnic identity and acculturation may be a key to improving Latino educational outcomes positively in terms of reducing or mediating the effects of self-fulfilling prophecies, stigma consciousness, and stereotype threat (Guyll, Madon, Prieto, & Scherr, 2010) and to the development of educational strategies through which stigmatized populations can succeed (Zirkel, 2005). Conversely, researchers have also identified possible relationships between strong ethnic identity in Latinos and the minority achievement gap (Guyll et al., 2010). Clearly, ethnic identity and its many connections present a complex and fascinating web that comprises the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student experience.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy.** One element related to ethnic identity development is the idea of self-fulfilling prophecy. Variables surrounding ethnic identity, such as assumptions about the student in question or stereotype-based assumptions, could lead others to develop negative or

incorrect beliefs about Latinos' academic abilities. This factor could in turn create the environment in which self-fulfilling processes thrive. Overall, self-fulfilling prophecy explains how the expectations of educators have created inferior learning environments for culturally diverse children (Weinstein, Gregory, & Stambler, 2004).

Those who initiate self-fulfilling prophecy may be teachers/educators, classmates, and even parents/families/community members (Guyl et al., 2010). CLD students may be incorrectly seen as less intelligent due to the effect their language acquisition has on their current academic performance. Academic difficulties result when the self-fulfilling prophecy is initiated through situations in which others make incorrect assumptions, resulting in CLD students not receiving rigorous or challenging instruction, not having the options to pursue advanced opportunities, receiving less information about possible educational and career paths, and feeling excluded from group work and activities by peers.

Most educational personnel likely do not intend to incorrectly pigeonhole students or provide diminished opportunities, but stereotyping is a common result when educators interact with LEP students. Guyl et al. (2010) note, "when people interact with others who are not proficient in their language, their ability to know one another is impaired" (p. 117). In other words, when educators and students cannot communicate fluently, the language barriers may prevent the educator from obtaining accurate information about the students and cause the educator to default to relying on stereotypes created through previous experiences. Therefore, language barriers can result in Latino/a ELL students being placed incorrectly academically, especially in remedial coursework. Language barriers can also result in assumptions about what type of parental support exists, or even the types of extracurricular activities in which a student may or may not be interested. Overall, self-fulfilling prophecy is "a complex and multilayered



mechanism for explaining intractable educational inequity” (Weinsten, Gregory, & Stambler, 2004, p. 512).

**Stigma consciousness.** Stigma consciousness refers to the extent to which a person of a minority group believes that stereotyping affects his/her interactions with members of the dominant culture (Pinel, 2004). Stigma consciousness may originate from individual perception, but its influence produces concrete outcomes in minority populations. The perceptions of people exhibiting high stigma consciousness include (a) feelings of greater discrimination; (b) association between their specific minority group membership and most other elements of life experience; and (c) the internalization of both negative and ambiguous feedback or input as discriminatory (Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003; Pinel, 2004; Pinel, Warner, & Chua, 2005). In Latinos, stigma consciousness is often associated with lower college grades and disengagement from school (Brown & Lee, 2005; Pinel et al., 2005). Guyll et al. (2010) believe that stigma consciousness may be the key to understanding the connection between acculturation and ethnic identity and Latino academic achievement, or lack thereof. In Latinos, stigma consciousness may “increase the degree to which they perceive their ethnicity to be one of their salient characteristics” (Guyll et al., 2010, p. 118), which in turn may result in diminished achievement.

**Observable characteristics.** An active element in the process of stigma consciousness is the existence of observable characteristics. Latino ELL students nearly always possess physical and linguistic characteristics that outwardly distinguish them from White students. This reality may lead Latino students to assume that others notice their ethnicity, are aware of their minority status, and “are likely to judge them in terms of their ethnicity and its stereotype, thereby increasing stigma consciousness” (Guyll et al., 2010, p. 119). It is this perception of

discrimination against themselves and their group that may discourage Latino students from participating in various educational and extracurricular activities as well as prevent them from utilizing extra support structures that may be available in the academic system. Therefore, if a school does not take the onus to overcome stigma consciousness through specifically directed outreach out to this population of students, the students will likely not achieve to their fullest potential.

***Social information processing.*** Another element at work in stigma consciousness is the idea that ethnic identity and ethnic awareness can affect the processing of social information. Latino students with strong ethnic identities may process social input in terms of their own identity as a Latino group member. This means that they may define great differences between themselves and White teachers, peers, and community members. In addition to simply the perception of difference, these students may also “perceive the words and actions of their Euro-American teachers and peers as having been influenced by their Latino/a ethnicity” (Guyll et al., 2010, p. 119). The processing of social input through an ethnic lens could have a negative effect on achievement through two steps. First, it may result in students incorrectly interpreting feedback as discriminatory (Major et al., 2003; Pinel, 2004). Second, this interpretation of discrimination may cause students to ignore feedback that could have been essential to the students’ progress in academic skills and tasks. Guyll et al. (2010) note that, because feedback is such an essential part of the teaching and learning process, the tendency to ignore feedback based on a perception of discrimination would be extremely detrimental to a student’s acquisition of language and other skills.

**Stereotype threat.** Stereotype threat has been an area of great focus when it comes to studying and understanding the achievement gap between minorities and White students.

Repeatedly experiencing stereotype threat can result in minorities engaging in *disidentification*, or finding self-esteem in areas outside of academics that may prove less dangerous to their identity (Steele, 1997). While much of the research has focused on Black students, Guyll et al. (2010) posited that Latino students may experience even greater effects from stereotype threat when they are “less acculturated or have stronger ethnic identities because the Latino/a stereotype is more readily activated in the minds of these individuals, thereby increasing vulnerability to stereotype threat” (p. 120). In addition, Guyll et al. (2010) note that the first result of stereotype threat is lower achievement on performance assessments, which could result in a cascading list of effects:

First, teachers may falsely believe that poor performance reflects true ability, thereby setting a self-fulfilling prophecy in motion. Second, stereotype threat’s negative effects on test scores could reduce a student’s chances of gaining admission to a quality school. Third, a student who must repeatedly contend with stereotype threat may, over time, disidentify with academics. As discussed above, disidentification serves to distance one’s identity from the threatening domain and, by so doing, strips away the desire and motivation to excel. (Guyll, et al., 2010, p. 121)

Considering that the previously mentioned research correlates strong ethnic identity with improved self-esteem, Guyll et al.’s (2010) idea that Latino students may actually experience stronger effects of stereotype threat when they possess stronger ethnic identities is intriguing. The specific Latino experience with identity in terms of stigma consciousness and stereotype threat may be far more complex than is currently known, and certainly an area that deserves inquiry.

## **Familismo**

Noting that many Latin American cultures hold in high esteem the cultural ideals of harmony, social acceptance, and social support, Holloway, Waldrup, and Ickes (2009) identified several cultural constructs that are interrelated: *Sympático*, *personalismo*, and *familismo*. *Sympático* is a relational style in which social harmony is sought, with the goal of creating a personable atmosphere exemplified in smooth, strife-free interactions. *Personalismo* is the concept of personal communication based on interdependence and cooperation where the importance of personal relationships is emphasized over that of formal relationships. *Familismo* builds upon the values of *sympático* and *personalismo*, emphasizing a culture of loyalty and commitment within the family and extended family. These cultural elements are acquired through “a socialization process that beings in the family and is further elaborated and reinforced by teachers, peers, and other socializing agents, including the media” (Holloway et al., 2009, p. 1012).

The features of *familismo* include close bonds and loyalty with family, keeping up with family obligations, getting along with and supporting family, and strong attachments between family members, even to include extended and distant family (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Holloway et al., 2009; Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009). Specifically, the concept of *familismo* implies a reliance on family for emotional support by emphasizing the values of commitment and togetherness in Latino families” (Holloway et al., 2009). *Familismo* can be a positive and/or protective factor related to student achievement (Niemeyer et al., 2009) and to mental health (Ayón et al., 2010). However, Chun and Akutsu (2003) found that, when conflicts existed within a family, the connection between *familismo* and well-being was inconclusive.

**Familismo and parental involvement.** Parenting practices may act as a mediator in terms of early adolescent behavior problems (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, and Szapocznik, 2012). Familism, or an emphasis on family ties and relationships, was highly associated with successful parenting (Santisteban et al., 2012), suggesting that the overall value of a strong family orientation may be its relationship with successful parenting strategies and practices. The nature of parental involvement may manifest differently in Hispanic families as compared to White families due to the cultural construct of familismo.

Parental involvement for Hispanic parents typically involves home-based activities, such as checking homework and instilling values, rather than traditional types of parental involvement that White culture might hold as the norm (Niemeyer et al., 2009), with Hispanic students perceiving more parental emphasis on at-home activities, such as monitoring homework, study time, school attendance, and bedtimes. The Niemeyer et al. (2009) study found that Hispanic students reported a greater perception of difference between their parents' at-home and at-school involvement, with students perceiving that their parents' academic involvement at home was greater as compared to at school while White students reported a perception that their parents' at-school and at-home participation was essentially the same.

The relationship between familismo and parental involvement holds meaning for educators because examining differing cultural values may foster better understanding. Understanding differences, such as the amount of at-home involvement, "is important information for American educators to understand, as Hispanic parents may be misjudged as not involved (based on less school-related activities), when, in fact, they are quite involved in the home on activities that could have a positive impact on their children's schoolwork" (Niemeyer et al., 2009, p. 626). Dominant culture educators, particularly, need to understand what parental

involvement means to the Hispanic family and how parental involvement in the home environment within the construct of familismo can act as a positive and protective element in a student's life.

**Familismo and overall well-being.** Familismo can have a direct effect on mental health symptoms in both adults and youth from immigrant families, with feelings of familismo as an indicator of improved mental health (Ayon et al., 2010). However, in the same study, although improved mental health was associated with familismo, feelings of familismo did not appear to mitigate the negative mental health effects of discrimination. Youth and adults who perceived discrimination still had increased levels of depression, even when high levels of familismo existed (Ayon et al., 2010). Youth are at particular risk of developing internalized mental health symptoms because they may not have the kind of coping strategies needed to overcome the effects of discrimination (Ayon et al., 2010). The researchers recommended that culturally-relevant and responsive interventions are needed to help alleviate some of the mental health issues in Latinos: "By developing and implementing programs grounded in the values and strengths of the Latino culture (i.e., familial networks) barriers to accessing and utilizing mental health services may be reduced or eliminated" (Ayon et al., 2010, p. 753). Niemeyer et al. (2009) reiterated the importance of culturally relevant program development in the specific realm of education, stating ". . . we believe that it is important to redirect the focus toward protective factors that may promote academic success in this population" (Niemeyer, et al., p. 614). Latinos are more likely to rate health and quality of life as poor, more likely to report feelings of isolation, and more likely to be approached for dangerous activities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). With this in mind, it is apparent that cultural and psychological factors

could provide an area rich in information to inform a variety of fields of study, including education and health.

### **Acculturation**

In one psychological model for studying acculturation strategies, the individual is the focus when describing strategies such as *integration*, *assimilation*, *separation*, and *marginalization* (Berry, 2007). Integration occurs as an immigrant participates fully in the new culture while also maintaining some of his/her culture of origin. Assimilation occurs when the individual completely avoids his/her culture of origin while interacting with members of the new host culture. In the separation strategy, the individual avoids interacting with the new host community in order to hold on to his/her culture of origin. In the marginalization strategy, the immigrant neither interacts with the new culture nor holds on to his/her native culture (Berry, 2007).

Hispanic adolescents at the beginning of the acculturation process and those at the end reported positive feelings of well-being in different activity contexts, while those in the middle did not (Perez, 2008). In other words, Hispanic adolescents speaking only Spanish, as well as adolescents fluent in more than one language, enjoyed spending time with both family and friends. Less acculturated Hispanic adolescents appeared to experience a positive feeling of well-being *only* when with family, rating themselves with low well-being scores in other contexts, such as school, work, and alone. Conversely, those in the middle of acculturation enjoyed spending time with anyone *other than* their families. Perez (2008) notes that there is “little conclusive evidence on the relationship between acculturation and well-being. In large part this is because of the enormous complexity of the acculturation process” (p. 59). This divergent pattern illustrates the complexity of the acculturation and language acquisition

processes and points to the differing relationships that Hispanic adolescents may experience with familismo and family interactions at different points in those journeys.

### **Stigma, Racism, and Politics Surrounding CLD Students**

**Continued xenophobia/nativism.** Both *xenophobia* and *nativism* refer to negative feelings and/or actions against immigrants and anyone perceived to be foreign or non-native (Yakushko, 2009). While some scholars prefer to use the term nativism due to its perceived neutrality, Yakushko (2009) notes that the term xenophobia's connotative association with prejudice and fear makes it, in fact, a more appropriate term to describe the wave of anti-immigrant sentiment that the United States is currently experiencing. Noguera (2009) wrote that "... throughout American history, xenophobic reactions to foreigners and anti-immigrant hostility have followed each wave of immigrants, almost as predictably as night follows day" (p. 164). Most people are aware that in recent decades a majority of immigrants to the United States have been Latino, with large numbers of those originating from Mexico. Perhaps, then, it is this visibility that has resulted in Latino immigrants receiving such a public wave of modern hostility (Dowling, Ellison, & Leal, 2012), as seen constantly through rants by television pundits as well as citizens' posts on social media sites such as Facebook. In a time when incorrect stereotypes about immigrants are spread in order to "rationalize attacks on bilingual education for children and adult English courses" (Dowling et al., 2012, p. 372), the propagation of racial and ethnic stigmas is running unchecked. In fact, Guyll et al. (2010) note that the widespread tolerance of this anti-Latino rhetoric may fuel even greater discrimination against Latinos. Clearly, societal anti-Latino rhetoric has the potential to spread deeply into the public school system, both in youth-to-youth and adult-to-youth interactions. The relationship between academic performance, or lack thereof, such as the achievement gap and equity cannot be ignored. Zirkel



(2005) states “. . . efforts to improve educational equity can only advance when a corresponding effort is made to reduce racial and ethnic stigma” (p. 108). With the greater public apparently willing either to actively engage in anti-Latino rhetoric or to stand by passively and sanction it, the challenge for educational systems to create equity becomes even greater, and the need to do so is even more essential.

**Racial microaggressions.** Not all instances of racism, xenophobia, or nativism take the form of “big” or shocking events or confrontations. The term “microaggression” has been used in a variety of settings to refer to the less noticeable everyday behaviors that occur on a daily basis yet reveal bias, discrimination, and racist attitudes. Sue et al. (2009) defined racial microaggressions as “. . . brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (p. 271). It is important to note the types of racial microaggressions that likely occur within schools and communities on a daily basis. It is also particularly important to understand that microaggressions are often unconscious manifestations of personal, societal, and historical bias. Sue et al. (2009) note that:

Microaggressions are often unconsciously delivered in the form of subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones. These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous. (p. 271)

Several primary types of microaggressions mentioned by Sue et al. (2009) included:

- Microassault, or name-calling (e.g., saying “Oriental” rather than “Asian”)
- Microinsults, or situations in which rudeness and insensitivity are conveyed through implication (e.g., *I think people should be admitted to college based only on their qualifications*)

- Microinvalidations, or comments that invalidate the experiences of a person of color (e.g., *Quit being so sensitive*, or *I don't even see color*).

**Linguistic stigma.** Current debate in the United States related to English-only policies, ESL programs, and bilingual education brings language to the forefront in a way that can result in linguistic stigma, or the feeling that one is being judged negatively for one's linguistic identity. This public discussion is particularly sensitive for Latinos, considering that Spanish is undoubtedly the language in question. Dowling et al. (2012) believe that fairly widespread support for English-only policies signifies the public's loosely-veiled suspicions about Spanish use and Spanish speakers: "Such anti-Spanish sentiment cannot be separated from the contemporary political environment, which includes a nativist response to our fourth great wave of immigration" (Dowling et al., 2012, p. 371).

There currently exists in public and political debate a belief on the part of some White Americans that immigrants may not be willing to assimilate into mainstream U.S. culture, most specifically that Mexican immigrants are reticent to learn English. However, as Dowling et al. (2012) note, there is no evidence that is true, and in fact, very little real research exists regarding how immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, feel about gaining English proficiency. In their 2012 study, Dowling et al. sought to examine the increasingly common stereotype that Mexicans coming to the United States do not want to learn English. First, the study found that the stereotype was strong among non-Hispanic Whites and African-Americans, who felt that recent immigrants do not make efforts to learn English within a reasonable amount of time. Conversely, the Latino respondents in the same survey had approximately the opposite responses, with more Latinos feeling that recent immigrants *do* learn English within a reasonable amount of time (Dowling et al., 2012). In another part of the same study, the researchers'

findings flew in the face of U.S. stereotypes about how Latinos view the English language. The Mexican immigrants actually placed a relatively high importance on English proficiency – an *even higher level of importance* than did many English speakers. The findings of this study clearly counter pervasive stereotyping, but, as the researchers noted, “...it is easy to see how immigrants are constantly reminded of the problems they face in the workplace and the public sphere without English proficiency. Those most affected by the language barrier are most likely to recognize the importance of English” (Dowling et al., 2012, p. 372).

**Linguistic tracking.** Another element of linguistic stigma is its existence within the school system. While sometimes unavoidable, the separate nature of ESL coursework makes it *different* or *other* from what White and non-linguistically diverse students’ experience, and therefore more open to misunderstanding, stereotype, and stigma. Students learning English benefit from explicit English language instruction, but this often creates a group of courses that segregates students from interacting with a diversity of peers as well as has the possibility of holding students back from fulfilling core graduation requirements. This situation – which some refer to as the *ELL Ghetto* – can result in the loss of a number of educational opportunities, such as access to advanced or college preparatory courses, interaction with peers that would create exposure to multiple perspectives, and enriching elective courses (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Because ESL coursework generally earns elective credit and rarely fulfills core graduation requirements, many students, particularly those who enter the country at an older age, need more than the traditional four years of high school to fulfill graduation requirements, resulting in the possible stigma of being a *super-senior* or fifth-year senior. While language acquisition support through ESL coursework is necessary and beneficial, it is also important to take into account the

time constraints, the limitation of peer interactions, and the possible stigma that students experience when they participate in ESL programs.

### **Teacher Perceptions Regarding Work with ELL Students**

Research related to ELLs thus far has clearly focused heavily on other stakeholders' viewpoints on Latino and ELL students rather than individuals' own perspectives. Particularly, research in this area has been largely focused on teacher perceptions of ELL students and, to a lesser extent, parent/family perceptions of ELL education (Lueck, 2010; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013; Vera et al., 2012). In recent decades, many researchers have turned their attention to the relationship between teacher attitudes/beliefs and practice (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Joram & Gabriele, 1997, 1998). In order to determine how this knowledge may apply to our changing student population, researchers have felt it important to more specifically examine the nature of teachers' attitudes and beliefs about working with linguistically diverse students. One goal of the research has been to examine how pre-service programs may address these questions in order to transform teacher training to meet the needs of a new, 21<sup>st</sup> century student population.

Individual thought processes and life experiences that occur prior to student interaction shape the classroom interactions of teachers (Fang, 1996). Therefore, in order to produce teachers qualified to work with linguistically diverse students, it is essential to understand the attitudes and beliefs of teacher candidates (Delany-Barmann & Minner, 1997; Fang, 1996). Teachers and teacher educators in several studies expressed that they valued diversity (Assaf, Garza, & Battle, 2010; Colon-Muniz, Brady, & SooHoo, 2010), yet teachers still do not always exit pre-service education programs prepared to work effectively with diverse populations of students.

The study of effective training for teachers also holds relevance in relation to federally mandated reform. While legislation has required *highly qualified* teachers to work with LEP students (Batt, 2008), concern about mainstream teachers' ability to provide effective instruction still exists (Clair, 1995). The majority of mainstream teachers have not received adequate training related to ELL student needs (Reeves, 2006), with only 12.5% of mainstream teachers having had eight or more hours of training to work with LEP students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Teachers' beliefs clearly affect learning. In examining the student perspective regarding ELL educational programs, it is possible that teacher attitudes may emerge as a theme.

**Relevance of studying attitudes and beliefs.** In recent years, the research focus has shifted from an emphasis on teacher behavior to a more cognitive focus on the teachers' underlying belief structures and thought processes (Fang, 1996). In terms of predictors, both training in ESL teaching techniques and positive experience with foreign cultures have been found to relate to positive teacher attitudes toward culturally and linguistically diverse students (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Byrnes, Kiger, and Manning (1997) found that positive attitudes about language diversity were associated with formal training, and specifically with earning a graduate degree. Interestingly, any form of ESL training resulted in attitudes that were significantly more positive about ESL students as compared to those who received no training whatsoever (Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

In studying teacher attitudes toward ELLs, however, it is not enough to simply assess whether teachers' overall feelings toward students are positive or negative. Reeves (2006) found that there was a discrepancy between mainstream teachers' overall attitudes toward ELLs in the classroom and the same teachers' attitudes on specific sub-questions regarding ELL inclusion.

In addition, Reeves found that teachers were unsure about how to modify ELLs' work in a way that was equitable, but that at the same time, teachers were not particularly interested in receiving in-service teacher professional development training regarding working with ELLs in the mainstream. Finally, teachers held many misconceptions about second language acquisition. In light of the nearly identical findings of previous researchers, Reeves' work indicates that teachers' attitudes toward ELLs and their preparedness to work with this population of students have remained stagnant.

### **Teachers' Attitudes, Feelings of Preparedness, and Linguistic/Cultural Knowledge as Barriers**

**Attitudes toward ELL students in the classroom.** Most teachers exiting pre-service programs have positive attitudes toward ELL students in general, yet lack multicultural knowledge (Gay, 2002) and specific knowledge about language acquisition (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Pappamihel, 2007), and feel generally unprepared to work with linguistically diverse students. The overall positive outlook teachers might express toward ELL students becomes far more varied when broken down regarding specific issues about ELL education. For example, Karabenick and Noda (2004) conducted a large-scale study that included nearly all teachers of all subjects and levels from an entire district. They found that, in general, teachers had positive attitudes about having ELL students in their classrooms – most indicated that the students would be welcome. However, when the questions became more specific, such as questions regarding ELL student self-efficacy, which students should be in their mainstreamed classes, and the benefits of bilingualism, less than half expressed an actual desire to have ELLs in their classrooms and more than half preferred not to have ELLs in their classrooms if given the choice (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

How can these seemingly incongruous attitudes be explained? The Karabenick and Noda (2004) study demonstrated that teachers had a distinct lack of understanding about language acquisition and a distinct feeling of inefficacy in terms of teaching ELLs. First, the participants demonstrated a lack of knowledge about how content learning is affected by L1 (first language) knowledge and L2 (second language) acquisition. Teachers were also uncertain how to assess ELL students in a way that demonstrated the students' actual content knowledge without the results being skewed by language barriers. The majority of participants were uncertain how bilingual education affects student learning. Second, the participants felt that ELL students take up more time than non-ELL students and they believed themselves to be far less capable of teaching ELL students than of teaching non-ELL students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

The Karabenick and Noda (2004) results were supported by Reeves (2006), who found that secondary, general education teachers had a welcoming attitude toward the overall idea of ELLs mainstream classrooms, yet, on more specific issues, the participants' attitudes sometimes varied from that welcoming standpoint. A majority of the participants agreed that ELL students should not enter mainstream classrooms until those students could demonstrate a certain level of proficiency using the English language. A majority of the teachers also believed that they did not have time to deal with ELL students' needs and felt that they had not received adequate training and preparation to work with ELL students. However, only slightly more than half of the teachers were actually interested in receiving more training in order to be adequately prepared to work with ELL students. The superficially positive yet more complex sub-surface attitudes teachers possess toward ELLs, indicate a need to examine how people develop these attitudes.

**Teachers' feelings of preparedness to work with ELLs.** Even more recently, pre-service teachers' individual levels of confidence and preparedness to work with ELLs were found to be

lacking even with increased training (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). The researchers in this study predicted that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward ELLs would grow increasingly positive the better prepared the teachers were to work with this demographic of student, but found that this was not the case, with the majority of the pre-service teachers still feeling vastly underprepared to work with ELL students in the mainstream, even after training.

The classroom behaviors of the pre-service teachers were also found to demonstrate a lack of preparedness (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). The researchers found that there was a lack of interaction with ELL students; the teachers particularly neglected to make attempts to engage ELL students in activities and instead allowed the ELLs to quietly disengage from the class. These observed behaviors demonstrated how attitudes and knowledge base translated to classroom efficacy, or lack thereof. The observed behaviors confirmed the teachers' own self-reporting and also demonstrated the results in terms of teaching: teachers did not feel prepared to work with ELLs; they were not prepared to work with ELLs; and therefore they were not effective working with ELLs in a mainstream classroom (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010).

**Lack of knowledge, assumptions, misconceptions, and erroneous beliefs.** Some teachers' feelings of unpreparedness may relate to their lack of language and multicultural knowledge. Knowledge questions were posed to teachers in the Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) study in order to check the legitimacy of teachers' self-perceptions. The study found that (a) the teachers felt they lacked background knowledge regarding language diversity; and (b) their self-perceptions were accurate; the teachers were genuinely lacking in necessary knowledge regarding language acquisition and the teaching of linguistically diverse students.

Pre-service teachers' feelings of apprehension prior to field experiences with ELL students and their families also relate to their lack of knowledge. Hooks (2008) found that most pre-service



teachers were nervous about the experience, and their nervousness was primarily related to their lack of knowledge about the students' home languages, which the teachers felt would affect both their ability to provide instruction and their ability to communicate with families. Similar findings have been found among mainstream in-service teachers as well. Batt (2008) surveyed 165 ESL teachers and/or specialists at a conference in Idaho and found that teachers felt that not all educators who work with ELLs in their buildings were actually qualified to do so. The teachers in the study believed that their mainstream teacher colleagues' lack of knowledge about ELLs and lack of skills in educating ELLs was one of the top three challenges facing ELL teachers.

This lack of a knowledge base regarding language itself is often intertwined with teachers' attitudes toward ELLs. Teachers often lacked specific linguistic knowledge (Joram & Gabriele, 1997), even holding drastic misconceptions about language acquisition (Busch, 2010; Byrnes et al., 1997; Pappamihel, 2007; Reeves, 2006). Based on assumptions that anyone can learn easily, pre-service teachers tend to believe that anyone can teach, so there is nothing particular that needs to be learned about teaching in order to do it successfully (Joram & Gabriele, 1997). Preservice teachers often assume that classroom management is the key to learning and that once management and discipline are in order, all children will easily learn. Further, Joram and Gabriele identified these key beliefs as the basis for a barrier that holds pre-service teachers back from a constructivist viewpoint that welcomes continued inquiry, which provides a possible explanation for why some teachers lack a knowledge base regarding language acquisition.

### **Previous Research into the ELL Experience**

While there is a large body of research studying teachers' experiences with ELLs, at this time, very little research has been found which is grounded in the perspectives and experiences of ELL students themselves. Given that the demographics of the United States have shifted

dramatically in recent years, it is not surprising that this is an area with little existing research. As a result, the experiences of ELLs, and particularly long-term, Latino learners, are in great need of inquiry in the immediate future.

In one of the studies conducted in recent years regarding the attitudes held by ELLs, Ajayi (2006) investigated the manner in which Hispanic adolescents defined their own images of self in terms of culture and language. The study found that (a) students wanted to both learn English and preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage; (b) students expected the education system to provide the avenue through which they learned to navigate multiculturalism and to create their own multicultural identities; (c) students valued multiculturalism and multilingualism as assets, not liabilities; and (d) students believed they needed multilingualism/multiculturalism in order to attend success and participate in school and in society. However, it is important to note that not all ELL student experiences are the same. Niehaus and Adelson (2012) investigated students' reporting of self-concept and found a significant difference in attitudes between ELLs from different cultural groups regarding academic and social-emotional self-beliefs. This study reconfirms the need to study ELLs from specific cultural groups, such as Latinos, rather than always lumping all ELLs together.

Comparing ELL students to non-ELL students has also revealed interesting differences and at times, similarities. LeClair, Doll, Osborn, and Jones (2009) found both significant differences and a significant similarity in the responses of ELL and non-ELL upper-elementary students. Students' perceptions differed in terms of the students' visions of their own academic efficacy and in terms of the perception of order and behavior in the classroom. However, the students' perceptions of self-determination and of relationships with teachers, parents, and peers

did not significantly differ between the two groups, which suggested that the ELL students perceived their classroom environments as positive (LeClair et al., 2009).

Another interesting study from the Latino perspective involved participants' perceptions of the barriers that affect K-12 student achievement (Becerra, 2012). However, this study was different in that, while the focus was on K-12 achievement, the participants were not actually students themselves, but rather Latino/Hispanic community members asked to share their own perceptions of K-12 education. The findings of the study indicated that the participants felt the major barriers to academic success for Latino students were income, level of education, and linguistic acculturation. A possible limitation of this study is that it did not ask the participants to respond based on their own personal experiences in education, but rather about their perceptions of the current barriers in K-12 education for Latinos.

**Content/topic specific.** Thus far, studies of ELL student attitudes have narrowed to inquiries on course content, such as how students felt about science classes (Fayon, Goff, & Duranczyk, 2010; Flores & Smith, 2013), reading classes (Howard, 2012), music programs (Carlow, 2006), and teaching quality (Bell, Eweaida, Lynch, & Zenkov, 2011). While these studies provide useful insight for specific disciplines, they present what may be almost too narrow of a direction in that they do not allow for the students' responses, stories, etc. to guide the study into other valuable areas of inquiry. In addition, the nature of these studies seems to be geared to elicit more about teacher, teaching style, and course design than about the students' experiences as ELLs.

Of the content/topic specific studies, two seem to allow room for the richness, depth, and complexity of the high school ELL students' stories. Flores and Smith (2013) focused on the experiences of chemistry students, discussing the linguistic aspects involved in learning

chemistry, yet also allowing the study to reveal how students perceived aspects of teachers, teaching methods, classroom environment, and curriculum elements. The study's deep look at learning the specific discipline of chemistry makes it very valuable to science educators looking for clues to improve ELL success and investment in science coursework. Similarly, in a yearlong case study of a high school ELL student in choir, Carlow (2013), deeply immersed herself in a particular community in order to paint the most detailed picture possible of the world of immigrant students in high school choir. This ethnographic study provided a rare in-depth look at the experiences of an older immigrant and ELL student. While the focus of the study was on experiences in chorus, Carlow's depth of immersion provided insight into a variety of the elements of life as a high school ELL, including family tensions, cultural identity crises, and linguistic difficulties.

**Age, immigration status, and proficiency level.** Another gap in the current body of research is that studies do not often include the voice of the older ELL student, the non-immigrant, and/or the long-term learner who is no longer in direct language classes. Studies are largely focused on younger (LeClair et al., 2009; Niehaus & Adelson, 2013;) or newcomer/early proficiency students (Carlow, 2006; Flores & Smith, 2013), and nearly always focused on students' attitudes about specific coursework or other external topics rather than the overall personal ELL experience.

Another layer of the ELL experience is the frequent assumption that ELLs, or even their parents, are fairly recent immigrants. For many students, particularly the older learners, this is not the case. Carlow's ethnographic case study, as well as the studies of Streng et al. (2004) and Toppelberg and Collins (2010), focused on the perceptions of recent immigrants, which is often not the life story of the long-term high school English learner. The majority of ELLs are not

foreign born (Capps et al., 2005), making it all the more essential for future educational research to include the study of the long-term ELL experience.

### **Conclusions Following the Literature Review**

Overall, little attention has been directed toward how ELL children and adolescents perceive their experiences and identity in terms of academics and social interactions in the school setting (Niehaus & Adelson, 2013). While the number of studies of the educational achievement of Latino youth has increased, many of these have focused on structural or institutional reasons for lower achievement, with less study focused on the cultural and psychological factors that may contribute to Latinos' educational achievement or lack thereof (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). Thus far, I have been unable to locate any studies that account for or specifically investigate the experiences of long-term ELLs. In addition, none of the studies referenced in this review differentiated for (or at times even identified) the various proficiency levels ELL participants might have.

Given the clear disparities between Latino and White student achievement and social and emotional health, we, as educators and as a society, need to understand what may be contributing to these disparities in order for Latino students to fulfill their potential, both for their own personal benefit and in the context of becoming contributors to society (Becerra, 2012). For educators, there are also practical and pedagogical reasons to determine how ELL students view themselves. Bell et al. (2010) stated that "Asking youths about their relationships to school – instead of just *telling* them about its importance – helps them to engage in school, grow as proficient English writers, and find new reasons to care about our classes and, ultimately, their education" (p. 38). One of the fundamental issues surrounding ESL is the need for educational

professionals to better engage students in education and linguistic development by understanding students' needs, interests, preferences, values and desires (Ajayi, 2006).

Considering similar findings of many researchers that teachers do not feel prepared to successfully work with ELL students, a logical next step would be to discover how ELL students themselves are experiencing education by examining the attitudes and beliefs of the students themselves. Perceptions can differ widely between various stakeholders, such as parents, administrators, teachers, and students, possibly leading to situations in which teachers/administrators/legislators enact policies based on their own beliefs rather than taking into account real students' experiences (Becerra, 2102). Without understanding what ELL students have experienced in classrooms, it is not likely that educators will be able to solve the issue of how to better prepare teachers to work with ELLs. So far, the current body of research has dealt primarily with teachers' attitudes and little with students' attitudes and perceptions. With no apparent research devoted to their perceptions, feelings, and experiences at this time, older, long-term, Latino ELLs present a line of research that demands to be followed. These students have rich, fascinating stories that deserve a place in the body of educational research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method**

#### **Introduction**

This study explored the experiences of Latino/a teenage second language learners. A qualitative phenomenological methodology used in-depth personal interviews to document the perceptions of a small sample of Latino/a English Language Learners (ELLs) with their experiences as long-time members of a labeled group. The study included students' experiences with ethnic and linguistic identity development, family and peer connections, teacher relationships, school culture and climate, and educational services. The research was guided by an overall question with illustrative sub-questions:

1. How do Latino English language learners articulate their experiences as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who were enrolled long-term in mandatory ELL programs?
  - a. What do they describe as their positive/negative experiences as an ELL in mandatory programs, and in public school in general?
  - b. How have their interpersonal interactions with family members, teachers, and other students shaped their experiences?
  - c. What are their expressions of identity as language learners?

This chapter describes the research methodology that was used in the study, including the setting, participants, research ethics, research design, sampling size and strategy, data collection, analysis procedures, and the role of the researcher.

## Setting

**State and general region.** The research study took place in a semi-rural community in the state of Oregon. In Oregon at the time of the study, students of color represented about 35% of all students, with the fastest growing subgroup being that of the Hispanic population at 22% of all students (Oregon Department of Education, 2014b). In 2011, students whose language of origin was Spanish comprised the largest group of English language learners at 77% of all ELLs in the state (Oregon Education Investment Board, 2013). Oregon has experienced a large surge in the Latino population in recent years, as is evidenced in a 63% growth between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The study occurred at a large Oregon high school that was located just outside of a major metropolitan area. The district can be considered semi-rural in that it has traditionally been a rural area rooted in an agricultural economy, but is also beginning to overlap the suburban sprawl that emanates from the metropolitan area. The racial makeup of the county in which the school is located is approximately 83% White, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 9.3% Asian, 3.9% two or more races, and 2.1% Black (U.S. Census, 2012).

**School district demographics.** In this school district, which serves a population of around 6,000 students, nearly 20% of students are ELLs. During the 2013-14 school year, an average of 60% of students district-wide qualified for free and reduced lunch/breakfast programs, and approximately 12% of students were identified as migrant. Ethnically, the district's makeup was predominantly Hispanic (49%) and White (45%), with other ethnic groups represented in small percentages (Oregon Department of Education, 2014a).

**High school demographics.** The high school used in this study was large, with a population of approximately 1,800 students. The school's most recent official demographics



from the 2013-14 school year were reflective of the district overall. ELLs comprised 32% of the student body. A total of 53% of all students were economically disadvantaged as defined by their eligibility in free and/or reduced meal programs. Ethnically, the school was: 49% White; 44% Hispanic/Latino; 2% multiracial; 1% Black/African-American; 1% Asian; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native; 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (Oregon Department of Education, 2014a).

**High school ELD program.** In order to provide a backdrop of the students' educational support experiences, I will briefly outline the ELD program used by the school.

**ELD program staff.** The high school's English Language Development department has three full-time staff, all licensed and highly-qualified teachers, one of whom is the researcher in this study. Two of the teachers have a full-time teaching schedule, while the third staff member (the researcher) teaches half-time and serves half-time as the program facilitator. One of the full-time teachers has a similar background to the students, having herself been a Latina second-language learner who graduated from the same school district. The second full-time teacher is White and is a fluent Spanish speaker. The researcher is White and speaks minimal Spanish. Each of the teachers is highly qualified to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In addition, each of the teachers is also highly qualified to teach at least one other content area, with specialties including math, reading, and English/language arts.

**ELD student placement.** All ELL students are enrolled in courses based upon their individual language proficiency levels, which are determined based on a combination two factors, which are (a) student scores on the state's mandatory yearly language proficiency test (ELPA) and (b) teacher recommendations based on evidence of performance in class. Courses are divided into five levels:

ELD 1A – Beginner

ELD 1B – Early Intermediate

ELD 2 – Intermediate

ELD 3 – Early Advanced

ELD 4 – Approaching Advanced

Monitored Year 1/Monitored Year 2 – Advanced

Students at the beginner and early intermediate levels receive a larger load of English language coursework, while intermediate, early advanced, and approaching advanced students receive one block of ELD in their schedules. The participants in this study had reached language proficiency levels of Advanced (monitored) or higher at the time of the study. They had all been enrolled in mandatory ELD programs for a period of at least five years during their school history. This study focuses on students at the higher levels of language acquisition, who all entered high school at an ELD 3 level or above. These higher-level language courses were the most recent formal language instruction the participants had received, during their middle and high school years. Therefore, the majority of their recollections were from those higher-proficiency ELD classes. Next, I describe the daily educational experience of students in the higher proficiency levels.

Students in ELD 2, 3, or 4 have their ELD class as one of their 7 blocks each semester. In ELD classes, students receive explicit instruction in the *forms* (grammatical structures) and *functions* (purposes of language) of English. For example, an objective in an ELD 3 class might be “Students will ask and answer questions in the present perfect verb tense in order to discuss events that have happened at indefinite points in the past.” In this case, the *form* is the present perfect verb tense and the *functions* are (a) asking and answering questions and (b) discussing

past events. ELD teachers work systematically through the forms and functions appropriate to each of the proficiency levels, ensuring that students learn and practice language through each of the domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

Monitored students have either (a) achieved a passing score of Advanced on the ELPA; or (b) achieved a score of Early Advanced on the ELPA and been portfolio exited by the ELD team based upon a body of evidence of language proficiency. Students experience two full school years of this status, during which their academic performance is closely monitored. These two years are known as Monitored Year 1 and Monitored Year 2. During this time, the students are still considered part of the ELD program and, while they do not take a direct language instruction class, may receive other supports, such as specialized classes offered by the department. As students leave the official Monitored Year 2 status, they no longer qualify for academic support that has been funded by the English Language Development department or its programs. However, it is absolutely essential to realize that an official designation does not change these students' status as culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been long-term English language learners. Their continuing language development and academic success should continue to be a focus for all educators in their building. After Monitored Year 2 ends, language support for these long-term learners occurs primarily in the mainstream content area classrooms through sheltered instructions techniques, highlighting the fact that it is every educator's job to support language development.

**Purpose of the setting.** This setting was chosen because it could inform my school district and provide value to my students, my fellow educators, the entire community, and myself as a person who works with and deeply cares about the success of these students. The results of this study could help foster greater understanding in my fellow educators and myself regarding

the experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of students who have been long-time members of mandatory language support programs. This research informs my practice as a teacher, program facilitator, and staff development presenter in terms of (a) learning how to better building relationships with students, (b) understanding the cultural and linguistic experiences that affect student achievement, and (c) having a better understanding with which to address issues of equity in our school and district. These improved understandings have the potential to help me to better connect with my students as well as to enhance my effectiveness as a champion of equity and culturally responsive practices within the school and district.

### **Participants and Sampling**

The participants in this study were selected through purposeful sampling in which the individuals were selected specifically based on several criteria rather than randomly (Creswell, 2013). My study focused on four Latino/a ELLs who were high school students or recent high school graduates. The participants were selected based on the criteria of age, language proficiency level, and personal educational and cultural background. The school used in the study serves students at a number of levels, but this study focused on the experiences of students who were long-term learners at the advanced level of English proficiency. In the proposal phase, I identified that the participants could be either: (a) enrolled in ELD 4, which signifies that they are approaching advanced language proficiency; (b) enrolled in the monitored category, which means they have been in direct ELD programs within the past two years and are being monitored for progress; or (c) have left the official designation of the monitored category within the past three years. The actual participants all fell into the third category, which meant that they had progressed through their monitoring phases within the past three years. This allowed students to reflect back on their ELD experiences with some distance, but not so many years that their

memories would have faded. The participants were all long-term ELLs, having experienced language instruction through mandatory programs for five or more years during their lives. The participants were all of Latino/a heritage, with Spanish having been their first language. Three of the participants were the children of Mexican immigrants, while one participant was a Mexican immigrant himself. Although it was not planned, the final group of participants was gender balanced, with two female and two male participants. A sample of four participants was found to be sufficient given the depth and breadth of the data collected. It was clear during the first phases of interviewing that data saturation was already occurring.

### **Research Ethics**

The ethical considerations in this study presented a need for extra attention and care due to the fact that, while none were minors, the participants were members of a vulnerable population. I followed all of the procedures required by the George Fox University Institutional Review Board, including an informed consent letter and informed assent letter (see Appendix A), and confidentiality and anonymity measures to protect both the students' individual identities as well as the specific names and locations of their school sites.

An informed consent process was used with the participants, who were all over 18 at the time of the study. The informed consent letter (see Appendix A) was written in both English and Spanish, with the Spanish version having been translated by a certified translator. Due to my choice to use only higher proficiency students and the fact that the participants were all over 18 at the time of the study, it was the English version of the informed consent letter that was actually used in this study.

**Confidentiality and anonymity.** The aforementioned consent letters included discussions with participants regarding the level of confidentiality and anonymity they would be

guaranteed if they participated in my study. My goal was to assure students they should hold no fear of reprisal for anything they might say in an interview. They were informed that none of their school connections, including their grades, schedules, activities, etc., would in any way be affected by the interviews or other elements of the study. Participants were also assured that their comments would be completely disconnected from their real identity through the use of a pseudonym that would be chosen by the participant him/herself.

As participants were told, each student received a pseudonym in order to maintain anonymity. To increase the participants' engagement in the research process, I encouraged them to choose their own pseudonyms, provided that the choices were appropriate to appear in academic writing. These pseudonyms were used on all documentation in this study, such as notes, transcripts, and drafts. In order to further maintain the anonymity of the participants and the participating school district, I did not use names for schools or other locations mentioned by the participants and only revealed general, relevant information about the region. When participants mentioned specific teachers, I did not identify those teachers unless the participant was referring to me, the researcher.

To ensure confidentiality, I secured the research materials at all times by storing hardcopy/physical items in private, secure locations and keeping computer-based information password-protected. These materials will remain secured for three years following the completion of this study. When the three-year period has expired, I will destroy all research materials that might serve to identify individuals or specific schools or programs. In meeting with the participating school district to gain permission to conduct the study, I committed to following any additional ethical guidelines desired by the district. The district in this study did not possess its own set of human subjects study ethical guidelines. The district superintendent

approved my study, both verbally and in writing via email, on May 27, 2014 based upon my commitment to adhere to ethical guidelines I have outlined here and for which I received approval through George Fox University.

## **Research Design**

*“Thoughtful reflections may bring ancient and novel sights and insights into perspectival view. The phenomenological pathos is the loving project of bringing all the living of life to meaningful expression through the imageries and languages of phenomenological writing, composing, and expressing.”*

*(van Manen, 2014, p. 18)*

**The choice of phenomenological study.** Phenomenological study seeks to describe common meanings based on the lived experiences of individuals within a phenomenon. The purpose of phenomenology is not to arrive at an explanation or analysis, but rather to develop a description that arrives at the essence of the experiences (Creswell, 2013). I was interested in understanding the lived experiences of the culturally and linguistically diverse participants within their school and ELD programs. I wanted to understand and grasp the meaning of experience in a study that “aims to provide concrete insights in the qualitative meanings of phenomena in people’s lives” (van Manen, 2014, p. 40). I conducted in-depth interviews with each participant based on van Manen’s (2014) theories of phenomenological research, with questions based on the three elements of Seidman’s (2013) interviewing model. The purpose of this research was to take the individual experiences of participants and reduce them to a description that reflected the universal essence of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013). I selected phenomenological methodology for several reasons.

First, a phenomenological approach was appropriate, and even necessary, due to the nature of my question. Phenomenological questions can arise anytime experiences make us pause and reflect (2014), and my question was borne from teaching experiences that had given me pause and cause for reflection. My research question stated “How do Latino English language learners articulate their experiences as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who were enrolled long-term in mandatory ELL programs?” which in a stripped down, layman’s phrasing might say, “What is it *like* for them?” As I can never know myself what the experience is *like* for my students, I often pause and reflect on what it could or might be like. I *wonder* what it is like for them, which leads to the second reason that my question is best explored through the phenomenological approach: Wonder.

My question is based in *wonder*, which van Manen (2014) identifies as the essential nature of the phenomenological question. Van Manen notes that, although wonder may be a phase within a phenomenological study, there is no exact moment in which wonder transitions to questioning, no methodological position for wonder. So while wonder may precede the process of inquiry, there is no clear delineation between methodological steps: “. . . just as between inspiration and poetry there lies the poetic talent and writing ability of the poet, so there lies reflective insight, knowledge and narrative ability between wonder and phenomenological questioning” (van Manen, 2014, p. 37). The state of wonder is both a phase through which all phenomenological studies should pass, and a state of mind that should remain, always, in the very attitude of the researcher.

Finally, the overall goal of phenomenology reflected the overall purpose of my research. Phenomenology “aims to provide concrete insight into the qualitative meanings of phenomena in people’s lives” (van Manen, 2014, p. 40). My goal was to provide educators, others, and myself



with concrete insight into the lived experiences of a particular group of ELL students. This goal was both philosophical-reflective and practical. Van Manen (2014) focuses on phenomenology as a vehicle for practice, which is to say it provides a way for us to act in real life. Engaging in phenomenological study and writing a phenomenological text is a “reflective process of attempting to recover and express the ways we experience our life as we live it – and ultimately to be able to act practically in our lives with greater thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 2014, p. 20). By conducting a phenomenological study that sought to reveal the essence of individual experience, I hoped that it would be possible to inform the practice of living.

**Issues regarding phenomenological methodology.** While all qualitative methodology may present difficulties due to the need for flexible, creative, and sensitive interpretive skills, the methods of phenomenological research can be particularly challenging to define. Van Manen (2014) states that “. . . it can be argued that its method of inquiry constantly has to be invented anew and cannot be reduced to a general set of strategies or research techniques” (p. 41). Therefore, rather than a set of methodological steps, the major methodology of phenomenological inquiry lies in two states of being: *Epoché* and *reduction* (van Manen, 2014). The epoché, which we refer to as bracketing, is the suspension of one’s natural everyday attitude, or the suspension about what is real (Creswell, 2013). This suspension, or freeing of oneself from one’s own suppositions, is required for one to take an original look at the lived experiences of others, and to reach the essences of pure experiences. In order to reach the descriptive philosophical nature, or essence, of phenomenology, one must enter the state of epoché (van Manen, 2014). Only within the suspension produced by epoché can the reduction, or “the constitution of meaning” (van Manen, 2014, p. 92) fully occur.

Van Manen (2014) defines the reduction as the moment that the meaning of the phenomenon shows itself to the world. He emphasizes that reduction is not a technical procedure or set of steps but rather the result of the open state of mind created by the epoché in which the essence of lived experience is given the space to reveal itself. More than a method, the reduction is the attitude that must exist within anyone who desires to embark in phenomenological inquiry. It is helpful, van Manen (2014) says, to remember the purpose of the reduction: “. . . to gain access, via the epoché . . . to the world of prereflective experience-as-lived in order to mine its meanings” (p. 221) and to remember that the state of wonder “should remain as part of the phenomenological attitude in the total inquiry process” (p. 224).

**Procedures of the study.** Following the development of the problem statement and research questions, the next step in enacting this study was to gain official permission from the participating school district in order to begin the study. As the chosen district did not have an official Internal Review Board (IRB) process, I spoke with the district superintendent in order to gain permission to conduct this study. I was told that the George Fox University IRB documentation was more than sufficient in terms of ethical considerations for the study. Once I had gained the necessary district-level approval, I met with the high school principal to explain the process and the purpose of the study. She was comfortable with the procedure and ethical considerations of the proposed study and gave her permission to recruit participants from the high school, and even to conduct interviews on the school property, although the school did not end up being a locale choice for any of the participants.

The next step was to recruit high school students to become participants. Due to my choice of phenomenological study, I culled potential participants only from current high school students with whom I had long-standing relationships and what I believed to be very positive and

comfortable relationships. I considered long-term, Latino ELLs who might be interested in participating in the study. I initially identified about 10 students who fit my participant profile and who were still enrolled at the high school at the time I was recruiting. Of these, all were interested in finding out more about, and possibly participating in, the study. As preparation for the study continued, the school year ended and I was not able to maintain contact with all of the prospective participants. Prior to presenting prospective participants with consent documents, I made sure that all of the participants understood the purpose and structure of the study, and that they were still interested in giving their time to be interviewed. In the end, the initial sample was comprised of four students, all of whom were 18 prior to signing their consent letters and beginning the interview process. I determined early on that the sample of four students was large enough due to the depth and breadth of data that was already presenting itself in initial interviews.

Having finalized the group of participants, I worked with them via email, face-to-face contact, and text messages in order to maintain contact and to schedule personal interviews and follow-up interviews as necessary. These interviews occurred over a 12-month process, from June 2014 to May 2015, which included one summer and one entire school year.

### **Interviewing Model**

This study was designed to engage participants through in-depth, phenomenological interviewing. The in-depth personal interview allowed for a depth of inquiry into the feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of the participants regarding their experiences in long-term language programs, their identities as learners, and their overall life experiences as English language learners. I have previously discussed van Manen's (2014) comments regarding how the nature of phenomenology makes it a type of inquiry in which the method practically has to be

re-invented every time it is undertaken. Particularly, I have kept in mind his comments that phenomenology “. . . cannot be reduced to a general set of strategies or research techniques” (p. 41). However, as a first time interview-based researcher, I needed guidance in terms of how to structure and conduct interviews that would enable phenomenology to happen. As a basic structure, I was informed by the three-interview style outlined by Seidman (2013) in which participants explore the meaning of experience within the context of their own lives. In Seidman’s model, each part of a three-interview series serves a specific purpose. The elements in each interview segment are designed to build upon the previous, with the first two interviews serving as the foundational components that build the base for the final interview. In the following sections, I outline the purpose of each interview element and list the main questions I developed therein. The full set of interview questions and anticipated sub-/follow-up questions can be found in Appendix B.

Although I based my initial structural plans and question-generating on the Seidman (2013) model, I was also greatly informed by van Manen’s (1997) comments on the interview process. He noted that the role and “art” of the researcher “. . . is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open, to keep himself or herself and interviewee oriented to the substance of the thing being questioned” (p. 98). I anticipated that my longstanding and comfortable relationships with the participants would provide a prime basis for deep and rich interviews that were semi-structured and open to the participants’ directions, but I also kept in mind that my participants were teenagers who might need additional support in opening up to the interview process.

Toward that end, I planned for the possibility that the rigor of the Seidman model might be necessary in order to coax teen participants into sharing. However, I also believed that the

nature of the conversation and the pre-existing rapport between the participants and myself might make adherence to the exact Seidman model unnecessary. The entire purpose was to allow the participant to share his/her lived experiences, and I was not going to stand in the way of whatever natural shape the participants' sharing might take. Therefore, while I envisioned three parts to the interviews, I did not necessarily envision three separate interviews. I kept myself open to the fluidity that I felt might occur with the participants based on the comfort levels I predicted they would feel based on our preexisting relationships.

***Interview part 1: Focused life history.*** The first part of the Seidman (2013) interview process is a focused life history that establishes the context of the participants' experiences. The questions in this component should encourage the participant to tell as much as possible about him/herself regarding the topic up to the present point in time. During this phase, participants reconstruct early experiences related to the topic, such as experiences with friends, family, teachers, classes, school, and neighborhoods. Overall, the interview questions should lead the participants to reconstruct their own overall narratives. The main interview questions in the first interview included items related to students' background and cultural identity; language identity; elementary, middle, and high school experiences; ELD class experiences; parental involvement; and overall views on school and learning. A selection of the primary interview questions I developed based on Seidman's process is listed below. However, I also anticipated additional and probing questions, which are outlined in the full set of questions in Appendix B.

1. Tell me about yourself... Where is your family from? Where did you grow up?
2. Tell me about what it's like to have English as your second language.
3. Tell me about what it was like for you in elementary school, especially with language and learning English.

4. How about when you got a little bit older? Tell me about what it was like for you in middle school, especially with English as your second language.
5. Now that you're a high school student/finishing high school, how would you describe your high school experiences, especially with English as your second language?
6. Tell me about what you think of your parents in terms of school... How are they involved?
7. Tell me what you think about yourself as a student.
8. What do you think about school overall?

***Interview part 2: Details of experience.*** In the second part of Seidman's (2013) interview process, the researcher leads the participant into the details of his/her experience within the context of the topic. The researcher should "... concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). It is important to note that this is not a time to search for opinions, but rather for the details upon which opinions may later be built. For example, the researcher might ask a participant to reconstruct a full day in his/her life as a student. In developing these types of questions, my goal was to give the participants an opportunity to add anything they had thought about since the first interview and then continue on with questions that asked for detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences and memories regarding: School life; language; ELD courses; interactions with teachers/students at school; parental involvement in school; and cultural/linguistic identity. The following list represents a sampling of primary questions, with additional and probing questions to be found in Appendix B:

1. In our last interview, we covered a lot of topics! I'm sure you've been thinking about our discussion. Is there anything you would like tell me, or anything you want to add to what you said last time?
2. Walk me through a typical day for you at school.
3. Describe what you usually do in the afternoon/evening on a school day.
4. Tell me a story about a time when you realized language was important
5. Describe, from your viewpoint, what happens in a typical language (ELD) class.
6. Tell me about an experience with a teacher at the high school that really sticks out in your mind.
7. Tell me about an experience or memory that really sticks out in your mind about another student/other students.
8. Tell me about the last time your parent got involved with what you're doing at school. Describe what happened.
9. If I were your mother/father, what would you tell me about school? (Seidman, 2013, p. 89)
10. Overall, is there a major memory or an experience you could tell me about that sticks in your mind regarding language or being an ELL?
11. Is there a memory or an experience you could tell me about that sticks in your mind regarding being Latino/a (or other identification student has already mentioned)?

***Interview part 3: Reflection on meaning.*** The third element of the interview process encourages participants to reflect on the meaning(s) that their experiences hold for them. In this phase, participants should be making intellectual and emotional connections between their educational experiences and their lives. Participants must “. . . look at how the factors in their

lives interacted to bring them to their present situation” (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). Participants are asked to reflect on the details they have constructed during the first two interviews in order to assess the meaning these details have to them. They may be asked, given what they have already said, how they understand the topic in their own lives at this time. In addition, the reflection on meaning may take a future orientation by asking the participant where this information may lead him/her in the future. Overall, the focus must be on the participants’ understanding of their own experience having looked at the situation in detail and within the context of the topic under study.

In developing questions related to this final portion, I again offered participants a chance to add anything they else they wanted to say. Next, I tailored questions to what participants had shared in the first two portions. The goal of the questions was to push participants to create personal meaning from what they had said, to share what they would like others to know about their experiences, as well as ask them to reflect on what these experiences might mean in terms of their lives in the future. The final interview questions were anticipated to include items such as:

1. We’ve talked a lot about your personal experiences and memories. Is there anything you have thought about that you’d like to add right now?
2. (Explain how this is a more reflective set of questions) I want to give you a chance to reflect on what some of this stuff means to you.
3. Thinking back to what you’ve said about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., identity, discrimination, limitations, support, your teachers, etc. – various topics) how do you understand/describe your overall experience as an ELL?



4. You've talked about your parents and what they've done with you at school, so thinking about that, how would you describe their overall involvement?
5. Given what you've said about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., being an ELL, being Mexican-American, etc.), how do you understand/describe your personal identity?
6. Overall, what is your feeling about the relationships you have had with teachers?
7. If you could tell teachers anything about your own personal experiences as an ELL, what would you tell them?
8. If you could tell people out in the community anything about your own personal experiences, what would you tell them?
9. If you could tell other, non-ELL students anything about your own personal experiences, what would you tell them?
10. Thinking toward the future, how do you think your experiences as an ELL will inform/influence your life in the future?
11. Thinking back on these discussions, is there anything else you would like to reflect upon?

***Flexibility of the structure.*** Clearly, the three-interview structure is designed to help lead participants through a complex process that culminates in the creation and expression of meaning in their own lives. Seidman (2013) notes that it is very important to maintain the focus: Each interview “. . . provides a foundation of detail that helps illumine the next” (p. 23). While flexibility and responsiveness in an interviewer is valuable, Seidman notes that losing control of the interview's direction can cause a researcher to lose the power of the logical and foundational nature of the three-interview structure. However, Seidman's (2013) model is designed to elicit meaningful interactions with participants who are likely strangers to the researcher. In the case of this study, years-long relationships already existed between each participant and the

researcher. I could not predict how comfortable the participants would feel and how easily they would share experiences, but I had a strong feeling that their responses would be more in-depth and natural than those normally anticipated when one uses the Seidman model with strangers. Therefore, as previously mentioned, I envisioned Seidman's three interviews as "parts" or "elements" that I hoped to elicit, though not necessarily in a specifically-spaced three-interview series.

Luckily, I was prepared for the interviews to diverge from what I read about in Seidman's (2013) process. While I followed the prospective interview pattern and began with "Interview Part 1" questions, the participants' natural responses absolutely did not follow the linear model of the three parts. Participants often spoke in such depth and breadth that they frequently addressed "Interview Part 2" and "Interview Part 3" segments all in the same anecdote or description. Overall, participants covered nearly every aspect of all of the interview segments in a non-linear manner. This seemed much more natural to me, so I did not stop or redirect the participants just because what they were discussing was "supposed to be later." While I made sure to, at some point, introduce all of the essential questions for each interview segment, I completely allowed the participants' words to guide the process.

***Interview length.*** In the Seidman (2013) format, the recommended length of each of the three interviews is 90 minutes. He notes that this length is long enough to make participants feel like their experiences are truly being taken seriously. However, he does mention that, for younger participants, a shorter period of time may be more appropriate. In this study, interviews were planned for approximately 60-90 minutes, accounting for the idea that the participants were teenagers who might be reticent to share and an interview might be at its natural end in a shorter amount of time. This was an erroneous assumption and led to the timing of the interviews being

vastly underestimated. Each participant interview lasted approximately two hours, with the length always having been extended at the request of the participant himself or herself. I remained quite aware of the interviewing length in order to be respectful of the time constraints each participant might have had. The interviews were only extended from the previously-estimated time because the participants expressed a desire to continue the conversation.

***Alternative interview structuring.*** Seidman noted that interview research must at times be flexible due to unexpected scheduling conflicts, such as emergencies, serious illnesses, and even weather constraints. The scheduling of interviews must, of course, be convenient in the lives of the participants. Overall, Seidman (2013) reminds prospective researchers that the world is not perfect and that “. . . the governing principle in designing interviewing projects might well be to strive for a rational process that is both repeatable and documentable” (p. 25). The interview scheduling in this study varied frequently due to last-minute changes based on participants’ work, family, and transportation schedules. However, due to the fact that the participants addressed the breadth and depth of all three parts of the interview process in one or two long interviews, the spacing and timing was not of great concern or effect.

***Validity/reliability.*** In addition to interviews, I took field notes immediately following interviews. While I had initially considered the idea of adding a journaling/open-ended writing prompt element in order to provide an additional data source, I decided against that element in the end. The rationale for the possible inclusion of a journal was that students have different communicative strengths; while some may have felt very comfortable expressing themselves in a personal interview with me, others may have felt more adept at communicating their thoughts through writing. While conducting the interviews, it became increasingly apparent that (a) the participants were having no trouble at all expressing their thoughts and experiences in great

depth through conversation, (b) the participants were far more comfortable speaking with me than writing, and (c) they were not at all interested doing anything that seemed like extra schoolwork.

Eliminating a second data source did not present me with any concerns of validity. Van Manen (2013) stated validity cannot be a part of the discussion in terms of phenomenology, because “measures such as content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity apply to tests and measures that are not compatible with phenomenological methodology” (p. 347). He additionally stated that if one is to judge phenomenology, “the validity of a phenomenological study has to be sought in the appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive processes demonstrated in the study. No predetermined procedure such as ‘members’ check’ or ‘triangulation of multiple methods’ can fulfill such demand for validating a phenomenological study” (p. 348). Therefore, the most important way for me to maintain validity in this study was to open myself through bracketing my preexisting assumptions in order to be able to observe what emerged. No matter what one might do to minimize the effect of the interviewer on the process, interviewers inherently play a role. Seidman (2013) notes that we must recognize that in these human interactions, “. . . the meaning is, to some degree, a function of the participant’s interaction with the interviewer” (p. 26). Qualitative research both recognizes and values this role, in which the research instrument is a human interviewer and, therefore, an instrument that can be intelligent, adaptable, flexible, tactful, and understanding as needed. However, in bracketing my preconceptions and understandings, I sought to create that openness in order to allow my participants’ to related their own experiences and understandings in terms of the phenomenon under study.

## **Data Collection**

This study used a process in which semi-structured personal interviews were the primary data source (Seidman, 2013) using a phenomenological approach (van Manen, 2014). Field notes acted as a secondary source to help me in the continuous process of bracketing my personal assumptions and preconceived understandings (van Manen, 2014). Field notes additionally informed my transcription and data analysis (Hatch, 2002), particularly in terms of noting participants' vocal tones, facial expressions, and demeanors. The interviews followed a series of guided questions (Appendix B), but allowed a wide berth of flexibility for participants to move into other areas of discussion that related to the topic under study.

Personal interviews occurred in public locations chosen by the participants. The locations needed to be neutral, comfortable, and private enough to allow students a sense of freedom of expression. For this reason I did not suggest using my own school classroom/office area, but rather left the location open to the participants' personal choice. I worked with participants to organize meeting times that were convenient to their schedules and that enabled them to plan their own safe transportation home. In addition, I suggested that they think of "fun" public places such as local coffee shops or restaurants. Per our informed consent agreement, I provided the participants with a snack or meal at the place of their choice, so I encouraged the participants to suggest somewhere they enjoyed the food, or a place they had always wanted to try. The interviews were recorded digitally and there were a few times where I jotted down extremely brief and unobtrusive notes during the interviews. For the most part, I took field notes on my own thoughts directly following each interview, and continued to jot down notes to myself throughout the course of data collection, analysis process, and writing process.

## **Data Analysis**

Throughout the interviewing process, I made field notes and preliminary notes to begin considering emerging theoretical concepts. Each of the participant interviews was audio-recorded using a digital recording device. Following the interviews, I began the verbatim transcription of the digitally recorded interviews. I analyzed the data as soon as collection commenced rather than waiting until all data was obtained (Hatch, 2002) and attempted to identify prevailing themes (shared experiences/perceptions) and patterns (connections between identified themes).

Van Manen (2014) notes that coding is not necessary in phenomenological study: “It should also be clear that phenomenology differs from concept analysis, grounded theory method, and similar qualitative methodologies that make use of coding, labeling, and classifying types of procedures” (p. 347). However, considering the volume of data generated in my interviews and the non-linear manner that all of the interviews took, I found it necessary to use some type of labeling system. To identify the themes and patterns, I used a conventional qualitative coding process of three steps: Initial coding, focused coding, and thematic coding. During initial coding (Seidman, 2013), I kept labels tentative and wrote identifying words or phrases next to all of the relevant experiences and perceptions that appeared in the data. Next, I used focused coding to collapse the data into categories of similar experiences and perceptions (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I generated common terminology that expressed the major items that had come up during my initial coding. This enabled me to go through the data again and use a common language to label relevant items. Finally, thematic coding sought to identify the patterns that existed, or did not exist, between participants’ utterances around identified themes (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Seidman, 2013).

## **Role of the Researcher**

Two elements create the basis for phenomenological methodology: Epoché and reduction (van Manen, 2014). Epoché refers to the need to suspend belief in terms of preconceptions, ideas taken for granted, assumptions, etc. This suspended state in turn allows the researcher to attentively observe the phenomenon in an open state of mind (van Manen, 2014). Within the idea of epoché is the task of bracketing, or “putting into brackets the various assumptions that might stand in the way from opening up access to the originary or the living meaning of a phenomenon” (van Manen, 2014, p. 215). Bracketing is so essential to phenomenological study that van Manen states that “‘Doing phenomenology,’ as a reflective method is the practice of the bracketing, brushing away or reducing what prevents us from making primitive or originary contact with the primal concreteness of lived reality” (p. 41). ). In this section, I address the state of epoché by discussing my role as a researcher and attempting to bracket those elements about myself that could prevent me from achieving the natural attitude that opens the researcher to finding “originary” meaning, or contact with the point of origin, through reduction.

**Bracketing: The researcher’s career in ELD.** For the past eight years, I have worked exclusively with English language learners at the high school from which the participants for this study were recruited. I have taught students at every language proficiency level discussed in the setting description of this study. I have also worked with students in after-school settings, such as homework tutorials and Latino/a student clubs such as MEChA, and enrichment opportunities such as group trips to the Cesar Chavez Leadership Conference. During the school year in which I recruited participants (2013-14) and school year in which the data collection took place (2014-15), I taught essentially the same schedule, which included two proficiency levels of students: Early intermediate and early advanced. I spent the majority of my teaching schedule working

directly with LTELs, many of whom were born in the United States and who had been in our school district their entire lives.

In addition to my duties as a classroom teacher, I have also acted as the building program facilitator for English Language Development at the high school for the past two years. In this capacity, I have been responsible for the correct placement of students in proficiency levels and corresponding course offerings. I have also been responsible for monitoring the academic progress of Monitored – Year 1 and Monitored – Year 2 students and ensuring that they are provided with available academic supports as needed. As the ELD facilitator, I have also conducted a variety of peer observations in mainstream/general education classrooms in order to assess the types and levels of language support that are occurring in various content areas. The purpose of this is to ensure that the district's goal of providing sheltered language instruction to both ELLs, monitored students, and all culturally and linguistically diverse students, is occurring in classrooms.

In addition to my roles as teacher and program facilitator, I have also acted as a professional development trainer and presenter in topics related to language acquisition and ELLs for the past seven years. My particular areas of focus are: (a) direct language instruction for secondary students at each proficiency level; (b) sheltered language support for LTELs in general education settings; and (c) writing programs geared toward the needs of ELLs, and specifically toward the unique needs of LTELs.

In my years as an ELD teacher, facilitator, and staff development presenter, I have interacted primarily with Latino youth and worked entirely in the school district in which the study takes place. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the semi-rural location of my community and the nature of both migrant and non-migrant job availability have led the



population in this area to become increasingly Latino over the past decades. The majority of my students have been of Mexican heritage, with Spanish as their first language. The second most common types of students I have taught have been students of Mexican or Guatemalan heritage whose first language is a local indigenous language and whose second language is Spanish. Quite rarely have I had any non-Hispanic students, to the point that I can pinpoint exactly those non-Hispanic students I have worked with in the past eight years: Two Chinese students, two Iranian students, three African students, and one Vietnamese student.

Over the course of working with our local Latino community, I have become very close with many of the students and their families and extended families. There are some families from which I have already taught four or five of their children and expect to see more siblings in the near future. There are also many other connections between my Latino students and their families and myself. For example, I have a variety of connections with cousins of former students, children of friends and coworkers, and godchildren of former students, friends, and coworkers. I keep in contact with at least a hundred former students using social media such as Facebook. In addition, the relationships formed in the school setting often extend out into our local community. I see former students or parents/siblings/cousins of former students in a variety of settings around town – at the coffee shop, out to eat, shopping, at local markets and fairs, etc. Many of my former students now work in businesses that I frequent in the area in which I live.

**Bracketing: The researcher's personal background.** Despite all of these close connections built over years of working with the local community, I hail from a very different cultural and linguistic background than that of the students and families with whom I work. I am a White woman from a solidly middle class, Protestant background. I was born in another rural

community in Oregon, about three hours from the community in which I now live and work. I grew up living in a single-family home, with my own private bedroom, a huge property and safe neighborhood to roam, and few worries about how the bills would be paid. My parents' mortgage had been completely paid off by my grandfather before I was born, which gave my parents a comfortable level of security regarding bills. My father was a police officer and my mother was a trained teacher, but their financial situation made it possible for her to stay home rather than work. Both of my parents, both of my grandmothers, and all of my maternal great-aunts, great-uncles, and even great-great grandparents had been college educated. It was never a question for me whether or not I would attend college after high school. I was always expected (and I expected of myself) to go to college, and I expected to get some academic scholarships as well. I grew up reading constantly, getting straight As in class, and not realizing that there was any other possible existence in school. I graduated and moved on to a sensible college that was affordable. My parents did not pay for my education, other than helping with transportation and books each semester, but I never really worried too much about money, and I never had trouble finding a job. In college, I consistently had scholarships, but also maintained at least one job constantly in order to pay the bills. I never anticipated anything for myself other than heading to college and someday having at least a decent, middle class career. Today, in my work and my research, I try to remain very aware at all times that this is not the same experience the majority of my students are having in our community right now.

Politically, I also grew up in a very different world than the one in which I now live, or at least I was not aware of my world in the way I now am. My parents and the entirety of my mother's family were (and are) financially conservative Republicans. I also lived in a rural community in which the "redneck" attitude was (and is) strong. There were giant trucks with

Confederate flags and gun racks parked in my school parking lot. I grew up consistently hearing racial and ethnic slurs, terms, and jokes. As our area's demographics changed with an influx of migrant workers, I increasingly heard derogatory comments about immigrants. I also grew up next to a Native American Indian reservation and heard a lot of comments about that as well. I felt fairly comfortable with our racially diverse community, myself, and had friends from every different group. But then again, I didn't really notice when my Hispanic and native classmates started to disappear fast from our high school classes. Overall, I was blissfully unaware of most of what was going on around me in terms of equity issues surrounding race and class. It was not until college that I was first exposed to exploring issues of racism, classism, gender bias, and other inequities.

In terms of becoming more interested in equity, and particularly in cultural and linguistic diversity, it was my career as a teacher that made the difference. I started out teaching humanities in a very White, middle- to upper-middle class school district in an affluent area outside of Seattle. After two years, I got a job in Las Vegas, in an area that was basically what one might call an "inner-city" neighborhood. My world was turned upside down by the differences in the schools and communities in which I worked in Las Vegas. My students were primarily NOT White. For the first time in my life, I was in a situation in which I was one of the only White people around. I taught English/language arts to primarily low-income Black and Latino middle school students for my full-time job, and I held a second job on the weekends, working with mostly Black and Latino high school students in an enrichment program at the university. Those students were so different than who I was and what I had known -- culturally, linguistically, and economically, but also behaviorally and academically. I was bombarded with emotional and behavioral issues the like of which I had never seen before, and certainly never

experienced myself. It opened my eyes to the need for teachers to understand how to work with different types of students. I took workshops about students of poverty, minority students, and eventually, ESL students. I spent a year of night classes earning an endorsement in graduate certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). And then I decided to move back home to Oregon.

In Oregon, I began working exclusively with ESL students. I quickly learned strategies for teaching the forms and functions of English, and I quickly started learning about the local culture and lives of my mostly Latino students. Over the years, I became more and more involved in ESL instruction and programs at the local and state level. I also became highly involved in school and district level equity teams. I am extremely interested in examining White privilege and helping others on their own journey to improving cultural responsiveness. Since returning to Oregon in 2007, I have not taught in a “mainstream” English/language arts classroom. I feel I am especially good at working with those who are long-term learners, who need the support and motivation to make that extra push toward proficiency and academic language success. Overall, I really love working with Latino students and their families. Their cultural background is so different from mine, but I find it to be rich and fascinating. I believe it is essential for me to keep learning and trying to understand my students’ culture in order to help facilitate the continuous development within our school and district of the positive relationships that our students need to succeed.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the participants and the setting of this study. I also discussed the study design, including research ethics, procedures, interviewing model, and data analysis. In addition, I wrote in-depth about the role of the researcher, particularly in terms of bracketing my

own background and life experiences. In the next chapter, the students' voices will bring to life the themes identified during data analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

I examined the following questions in order to understand the experiences of Latino teenagers who had been long-term members of mandatory English Language Learner programs. The overarching question was followed by three sub-questions in anticipation of the major areas that might inform the overall phenomenon:

1. How do Latino ELLs articulate their experiences as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who were long-term participants in ELL programs?
  - a. What do they describe as their positive/negative experiences as an ELL in mandatory programs?
  - b. How have their interpersonal interactions with teachers, family, and other students shaped their experiences?
  - c. What are their expressions of identity as learners?

Given the complicated interplay between responses that relate to these questions within the interview responses, the questions do not lend themselves to being answered in the organizational manner above, 1 a/b/c, etc., but rather in terms of an entire picture that attempts to illustrate these students' experiences with identity, language, and learning. Therefore, I have organized the identified themes into three major areas that encompass the spirit of the phenomenon experienced by these students. The three overarching areas are: Articulations of Self; Relationships with Parents, Family, and Latino Peers; and Experiences in School and the Local Community. In this chapter, I (a) review the research method and data analysis process, (b) provide participant profiles, and (c) share the data as organized into the three overarching areas.

## **Review of Research Method and Data Analysis**

**Method.** As outlined in Chapter 3, I chose participants based on their ELL status, their age, and the strength of their rapport with me. The participants were all culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who could be categorized as long-term English language learners and who had Spanish as their first/native language. I did not have a delimitation regarding participants' birthplace, because, while this information can be offered by students and families of their own volition, it is illegal for school entities and agents to initiate or ask questions about immigration or legal residency status. Additionally, I would not have wanted to limit the birthplace of the participants because our long-term ELL population, in my own experience, seems to have a large number of people who were born in Mexico as well as a large number born in the U.S., and I did not anticipate that this information would have much of a bearing on the phenomenon under investigation.

While they will always be long-time/lifetime learners, the participants had all exited the direct ELD services program by the time this study commenced, but no more than three years prior. This allowed for students to reflect with some distance, but not too much, on past experiences in the mandatory programs. It also provided the assurance that I would never have the possibility of being a classroom teacher to any of the students again in the future. The students recruited were also older teenagers, which was a conscious choice. I wanted a more mature student, with more life experience, who might possess a higher disposition toward reflecting on past experiences with the view of the deeper personal meaning. For this reason, I also wanted to interview students who were entering or close to entering adulthood and who might be more apt to be looking toward the future with a critical and introspective eye. All of the participants chosen to participate were 18 or older at the time of the interviews.

The participants were selected purposefully because of their past relationship with me, the researcher. Given my choice to use a phenomenological study designed with respect to the research methods outlined by Seidman (2013) and van Manen (2014), it was beneficial to recruit participants with whom I already had a strong rapport. I recruited students that I had known personally for at least three years. These personal relationships were the result of me having been their teacher in one or more required English Language Development courses at the high school level, usually during their freshmen year of high school. I had not been their teacher for several years at the time of the interviews but had continued a positive relationship with them in my capacity as the department chair and English Language Development facilitator. In the years following their time in my classes, I continued to see and talk to these students during after school activities, such as clubs, homework help sessions, leadership opportunities such as the Cesar Chavez conference, and when they would visit my classroom for help or just to say hello and visit. In selecting participants, I believed that having these strong existing relationships would provide the students with the most comfortable and safe possible place to discuss their experiences, which would in turn maximize the depth and breadth of conversation during the interview process.

In the end, of the group of students initially considered, four students (two male, two female) were chosen to participate in the study. Two of the students were 2014 graduates who were interviewed during the summer directly following their graduation. One of the other participants was a prospective 2015 graduate who was interviewed during the winter of his senior year of high school, but who was several credits deficient at the time of the writing of this dissertation. The final participant was a prospective 2015 graduate who was interviewed during the winter of her 5<sup>th</sup> year (“super senior”) of high school and had completed her credit



requirements for graduation at the time of the writing of this dissertation. The interviews took place at the public location of each participant's choice. These included a local casual dining restaurant, a national chain breakfast restaurant, two different local coffee shops, and a local pizza joint near the college campus. The interviews were recorded digitally. I took extremely brief notes as needed during the interview, but mainly reserved my notetaking for directly after the interviews in order to avoid distractions and to stay present during the conversation. I then transcribed the interview recordings verbatim. I did the entirety of the transcription myself, which gave me the chance to become increasingly intimate in my knowledge of the contents of each interview.

**Data Analysis.** After data collection, I used initial coding as I read and re-read printed copies of the transcripts. I printed these with large margins so that I would have room to take a variety of notes. During the first readings, I jotted down illustrative phrases and main ideas as well as my own thoughts and notes to myself. I continued reading and re-reading in order to develop an initial list of recurring or shared ideas between participants. I refined the list to eliminate repetition and to streamline wording. I then organized this list of main/recurring/shared ideas into like-groups, which then became the major themes. While examining the major themes, I decided that they lent themselves into an organizational structure of three categories: Self, Family, and School. I then continued to code the transcripts by color-coding them for each of the three categories and noting the related theme(s) that appeared in various interview sections. I later refined my three overarching categories with these names: Articulations of Personal Identity; Relationships with Parents, Families, and Latino Peers; and Experiences in School and the Local Community.

Although I had planned my interview questions based on the Seidman (2013) three-interview process, I also maintained the perspective that these interviews needed to be flexible and responsive to the students themselves in terms of time commitment as well as the natural flow of conversations. As previously mentioned, the interview process did not proceed according to the Seidman (2013) framework. First of all, the interviews with every participant went far longer than planned/estimated, at the prompting of the participants themselves. Because these were teenagers, I had been prepared for the opposite, such as a bit of reticence to talk, or at least more brevity of speech than an adult might offer, and I accordingly estimated for shorter interviews when I outlined my prospective methodology. Although I made it very clear at the beginning of each first interview that I wanted to respect their time and would be ready to stop at 60 minutes, in every single case the participant had barely scratched the surface at the 60-minute mark and definitely wanted to continue the conversation. When the hour mark crept by, I waited for an opening point and reminded the participants that I wanted to be respectful of their time. In all cases, they wanted to keep talking. I heard comments such as, “No, I don’t have anywhere to be!,” “This is fun!”, “Oh, no, I have something else I was going to talk about,” “Oh, no, you probably have things to do, but I can definitely stay and talk more . . .” I got the distinct feeling that talking about themselves and their life experiences in such a direct way was new to the students, but once they got going, they did not want to stop.

In terms of the prospective questions outlined in my methods, I also had to make a variety of adjustments to respond to the flow, tone, and subject matter of the interviews, taking the students’ responses as the lead for the direction of the interviews. For example, participants did not simply answer a question and then stop; they nearly always went on in great detail and also veered off onto other topics (I would say tangents, but they were not really tangents since

many of these side-trips let to incredibly insightful and important ideas). Participants sometimes asked questions. They sometimes forgot what they were saying and started talking about something else that applied to questions I had planned to ask later. Most importantly, their train of thought did not follow the Seidman (2013) outline in which one first reflects on general experiences over time, then goes through specific memories and current experiences, and then reflects on overall meaning and looks toward the future. Rather, the students' responses often did all three of these at the same time, weaving back and forth between generalities, specific memories, judgments, reflections, and thoughts. The students were often thinking through ideas as they spoke, needing time to mentally and verbally process as they worked through concepts they may never have articulated before, even to themselves. Overall, I allowed the students to guide these interviews, and therefore the interviews often went in a variety of directions and went on for a long time. The conversations were exceptionally free and rich. I attribute this to our existing relationships, which were based in trust, respect, and especially humor. In every case, I was exceptionally pleased with how the interviews went. These interviews were interesting, energizing, thought provoking, and at times heartbreaking. I truly believe the students felt the same way, and I hope they gained something special from having the chance to slow down and spend time in a setting where the focus was entirely on them and their unique personal life experiences.

### **Participant Profiles**

The goal of this study was to allow the participants' voices to illustrate the phenomenon of their experience as Latino, long-term English learners. Therefore, it was important for anyone who reads work to have a bit of background on each participant. A personal profile for each participant, using their pseudonyms, will introduce the reader to them. In these profiles, I have

attempted to describe each person in a way that will help the reader imagine the actual student as his/her dialogue “speaks” from the page.

**Crystal.** Crystal, age 19, was born near the local community in which the study took place and in which she grew up. She has lived there in the same house her entire life. Crystal’s parents are both from Mexico, but came to the United States at different times. Her father arrived in the United States on his 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. After living and working in the United States, he married Crystal’s mother in Mexico and subsequently brought his new wife to Oregon. Crystal’s father has been working at the same job for over 20 years. He works with machinery at a local manufacturing company. Crystal isn’t even sure exactly what he does, other than it is with oil or some other dangerous liquid that can burn one’s skin. Crystal’s mother, who earned a secretarial certificate in Mexico, moved around between a few companies, but has been at the same one for over ten years now. Neither of Crystal’s parents knew English when they arrived in the United States. Both of her parents had made efforts to learn some English in order to be successful in their jobs, but neither had achieved a high level of fluency. The family speaks Spanish exclusively at home, with Crystal and her older brother having been introduced to English for the first time when they entered school and were placed in ELD programs.

I have known Crystal since the first semester of her freshman year when I had her as a student in an ELD Writing Workshop course. I kept track of her academics during her “Monitoring” two-year phase as part of my job as the ELD facilitator, and we stayed close touch at the school throughout her high school years. At the time of our interviews, it was summer 2014. Crystal had just graduated from our high school and had just begun working at a local retail giant. Crystal has a bright smile and a sweet, fun, friendly personality. She is bubbly, stylish, and talks in what one might call the typical American teenage girl accent – very girly and

cute with a lot of “like” dropped into sentences. She had fun with our interviews, laughing a lot, but she could be serious and brutally honest as well.

**Daniel.** Daniel, age 19, has lived in the local community in which this study took place ever since he was born down the street from his home at the local hospital. Daniel had just graduated from high school a few weeks before our first interviews, which were held in early summer of 2014. Daniel’s parents are both originally from the state of Guanajuato in Mexico. His mother is from a small village and his father is from the capital city of Guanajuato. Both came to the United States as adults and then started their family. Daniel has two sisters – one is three years older and currently attending a nearby community college. The other sister was born when he was in high school and was only three years old when we spoke. Daniel has been to Mexico, but never lived there for more than a summer, and has not been back in several years, which has been his own personal choice.

I have known Daniel since the first semester of his freshman year when I was his teacher in an ELD 3 (early advanced proficiency) class at the high school. He was also my student during his sophomore year during an ELD Reading Workshop/Careers course. I kept track of Daniels’ academics during his “Monitoring” two-year phase as part of my job as the ELD facilitator, and we were always in touch at the school during his entire high school career. Daniel has a deep, strong voice and a slow, deliberate way of speaking. He comes off very serious most of the time, but also enjoys more subtle or sarcastic humor. Rather than laugh out loud, Daniel usually gives a sly glance or a chuckle when making a joke. When speaking, he pauses frequently for emphasis as well as to consider if what he is saying is what he really wants to say. He is a bit reserved in terms of how much he says about a topic and waits until he has a chance to think things through before he decides if he will say more or not. That being said,

Daniel was never hesitant to share his bold/blunt opinions with me, both throughout his years in high school and during the interview process.

**Ben.** Ben was 18 years old and a senior at the high school's community alternative school branch at the time of this study. His parents both grew up in Mexico. His father is also partially of Italian heritage. Ben was born in Mexico in his family's home state of Prueba. Ben lived there with his mother on his grandfather's *rancho* (farm/ranch) until he was about three years old. During the majority of that time, Ben's father was already living in the United States. Ben doesn't remember his journey to the United States, but he has been told the dramatic story many times over the years. His mom bundled him up into the back of a trunk while she and some others attempted to cross the border. Ben spent ten or more hours riding in the trunk and finally reached the United States. Ben's mother was caught and turned back, but Ben was not found and made it to the United States, alone and with strangers. He stayed in California with these strangers for about a month while his mother was back in Mexico making arrangements for Ben's father to pick the little boy up. When Ben's father and uncle picked Ben up in California, the father and son had not seen each other in nearly four years. Just as he had lived with one parent for the first three to four years of his life, he lived with the other for the next three to four years of his life. Despite repeated attempts to join her son and husband, Ben's mother was not able to migrate to the United States until 2000. By that time, Ben had entered school in a local Oregon community. He entered kindergarten speaking very little English and immediately became part of the ELD programs at his elementary. After a few years, with high rent becoming an increasing pressure, the family moved to the small area in which this study took place, and they have remained there ever since.

I have known Ben since his freshman year of high school when he was a student of mine in an ELD 3 (early advanced) course. He was also later in an ELD writing workshop with me during his sophomore year, and I kept track of his academic progress during his two-year monitoring period. I have been in close touch with Ben throughout his high school years. At the time of the study, I saw and spoke with him briefly every other day at the alternative school where he was taking online courses and I was assisting ELD students in small groups. Although he can become extremely talkative, Ben at first comes off as quiet, shy, and reserved. He has a calm demeanor and a sweet, innocent smile and laugh. He speaks slowly at first, and then works into a faster pace when he becomes passionate about a topic. Ben is extremely friendly and respectful to the people around him at all times. He has a more “alternative” appearance than the other participants, and it is obvious that he is into music, such as heavy metal and reggae. He is also very interested in politics, human rights, and other world issues.

**Juliet.** Juliet was 18 years old and in her fifth year (second senior year) of high school at the time of this study. She was born in a metropolitan area of Oregon and grew up in the small, local community in which this study took place. Juliet’s mother grew up in Mexico and came to the United States in her late teens. She married and later divorced Juliet’s father, who was extremely physically abusive. She later married Juliet’s stepfather, a fellow Mexican immigrant who has raised Juliet since she was very small. During high school, Juliet reached a point where she was not being successful in school and felt herself losing control. She found out about a military-sponsored educational program for teens. Through this program, she spent a term in a rigorous, boot-camp like environment while also taking high school classes. After completing the program, Juliet returned to the local high school feeling confident, on-track to graduate, and physically strong. She felt like she had “grown up” and felt like the people back at high school

were still immature. Due to her previous lack of progress, she was not on track to graduate, but immediately began to work to regain credits. She spent her two senior years working more independently and gaining her credits primarily through online opportunities at the high school rather than in the traditional classroom setting.

I have known Juliet for the past five years. She entered high school as a freshman in my ELD 3 (Early Advanced) class. She was always friendly, talkative, and engaged. She was best friends with another girl in class and they tended to get off-task, but they were both still a lot of fun and tried to be respectful. I have kept in touch with Juliet in the hallways and through her “Monitored” status in the ELD program. In terms of her personality, Juliet is outgoing and hilarious. She is extremely talkative and loves to visit. She is incredibly animated when talking, emphasizing words and telling stories to illustrate her points. She gets passionate talking about makeup and makeup artistry, which are her passions. She hopes to continue developing her skills as a makeup artist in the future, possibly working on movie sets. In addition, she is still interested in a military career. Juliet likes the discipline and structure that comes with a military setting. In addition, Juliet sees the military as a way to secure her future in a stable manner, which will in turn allow her to provide an easier life for her mother.

During the interview process, Juliet was extremely open, talkative, and detailed in her responses. She frequently used scenarios in which she recreated dialogue between herself and others and especially dialogue from her own internal thoughts. When transcribing the interviews, it was very important for me to note Juliet’s facial expressions and vocal tones because she frequently acted out different scenarios, attitudes, and body language to go with what she was saying.



## **Results**

In the remainder of this chapter, I share the data generated in this study. As previously outlined, identified themes are organized into three over-arching areas: Articulations of Personal Identity; Relationships with Parents, Family, and Latino Peers; and Experiences in School and the Local Community. The goal of this section is to allow the participants' own words to tell the story of their life experiences and to illustrate the themes that emerged.

### **Articulations of Personal Identity**

**Initial self-identification: A focus on local community first.** I began each interview by asking participants in a very general way to discuss where they and their families "were from." I was careful to remain non-specific with the participants in the beginning, not mentioning nationality or ethnicity at first so that their responses would reflect the first thoughts that came to their minds. Three of the four participants began with their local identities and ties to the local communities and only moved on to discuss family ethnicity/nationality later when prompted with a more specific follow-up question. Only one participant mentioned national identification with Mexico from the beginning. None of the participants at any time mentioned identifying as being "American" or "from the United States," even though three were born in Oregon and the fourth was in the process of becoming a citizen. For the three who first identified their local community as where they were "from," responses were emphatic about their connections to the small towns that comprise the community in which the study took place:

I grew up, like in ----- [the local community], my whole life. Like ever since . . . I've lived there ALL my life. Like all I can remember is the trailer park [here]. So, that's like my home...as people say, 'my hood.' (Juliet)

I've lived here in ----- , in the same house, actually, for 19 years. So basically our whole life has been here . . . This is all I really know – this little town. (Crystal)

Alright, okay, so I was born in -----, 1995, in the hospital by Jack in the Box. . .

(Daniel)

Participant Ben was the sole interviewee who spoke of Mexico from the beginning, stating, “Well, I’m from Mexico, born and raised. Well, I was raised here in Oregon, but my family’s from Puebla . . .” This difference in initial identification may be due to the fact that he was the only participant not born in the United States. Ben came to the United States at an extremely early age, but his original nationality remains a major part of his life story. While the details of his immigration are not part of his actual memory, the story of his and his mother’s journeys have been told and re-told so that they have become a collective memory. Ben continued by explaining how he was from Mexico but had been here most of his life, and the harrowing journey he made at age three:

I don’t remember that at all. But my mom told me that I was in the back of a trunk and that was how they brought me here . . . But then, my mom got caught, trying to cross. So I was the only one who made it. I ended up being in [New]Mexico, and I ended up staying with the people [the smuggler’s family]. (Ben)

The trauma to the family -- the separation caused by his father’s immigration, and then by Ben’s successful immigration alone when his mother was caught -- have likely made Mexico a focal point in the family narrative.

While Ben was the only one to immediately mention Mexico in terms of where he was from, the other participants began to mention Mexico after being asked to go into more detail regarding how they would describe their (or their families’) ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds.

These three participants had somewhat varying responses in terms of the strength that identity seemed to have for them.

Crystal, who first pegged her entire identity as having been born and raised in the local community, interestingly began to use the pronoun “we” as the interview continued and she identified her family’s place-identity: “We are from Michoacán, from a little rancho, very tiny, actually.”

Another participant, Daniel, also went on to reference Mexico, but he did not use the “we” pronoun, identifying his family’s place-identity as somewhat separate from his own, even noting his dislike of their home country:

My parents are from Mexico. My mom’s from San B-----, my dad’s from Guanajuato, yeah, and I’ve been to Mexico, visited where they’re from and everything... Didn’t really like it. I like it here better. (Daniel)

When Juliet was asked how she would describe her ethnic background or culture, she was somewhat at a loss, wondering out loud “How would I describe it??? Ummm . . . Honestly, I’ve never thought about it.” She continued to be unable to find a description of her own background, but when asked about how her mother and stepfather might identify themselves, she talked about how her mother was born in Mexico and came to the United States at age 16:

I feel like she’s always going to have in heart, her ranch, like her family and her Mexican in her. I mean, she’s REALLY Mexican, but she’s grown to . . . She’s grown into the country . . . but she’s still Mexican at heart. She’s super Mexican. (Juliet)

When redirected back to herself, Juliet became very focused on her own outward physical appearance and how others view her (observable characteristics), which seems to have been a source of consternation for her in the past:

When people ask me my ethnicity, I always ask them, ‘What do I *look* like I am?’ and I’ve actually gotten so many different ones that I would be like, ‘Really?’ I feel like if I were to see myself, I’d be like, ‘Oh, she’s Mexican.’ (Juliet)

Juliet then noted that she found it very odd that people frequently approached her and asked her “what she is” or offered what they thought she was, such as Hawaiian, Samoan, Native American, and a variety of other ethnicities. While she at first said she could not think of anything to say about herself and had never thought about the matter, the chance to verbally work through others’ perceptions of her led Juliet around to a very definitive identification:

People always tell me I look like whatever, but I’m not. When I tell people what I am, I’m just like, ‘I’m Mexican and I’m *tejana*, because my family’s from Texas, too. So I’m like, ‘I’m *tejana*, and Mexican!’ and they’re like, ‘What?!’ You don’t even look Mexican. . . .’ And I’m like, ‘Yeah, I DO’ . . . because I consider myself super-Mexican. I love everything about Mexico. I love Mexican music. I love the culture; I love everything. I don’t have any shame in being Mexican at all. (Juliet)

Overall, considering later responses that identified a high level of investment in their Mexican heritage, it was very interesting that most of the participants did not reference that heritage first when asked where they were from. One participant even expressed displeasure with the nation of Mexico itself. But this was just at the beginning of the interview process. As demonstrated by Juliet’s think-aloud about her identity, these interviews provided the chance to discuss, share experiences, and work through concepts the teenagers may never have discussed with an adult or even thought consciously about on their own. Their identities in terms of culture and language emerged as much more complicated and layered as the discussions continued.

**Cultural connections and/or lack thereof.** One of the most complicated aspects of the participants' identity was the tug they felt between being feeling Mexican, but at the same time experiencing a lack of connection with their family's native country. Juliet used comedy to identify how out of place she felt during when spending time at her family's *rancho* during visits to Mexico:

And then like, like I said in Mexico, like how they see me as not Mexican, because I don't know how to make *tortillas*, or I don't know how to cook like a Mexican lady! I don't know to go into the chicken pen and, like, look for where the chickens lay their eggs! (Juliet)

Participant Ben, who, due to his immigration status, had not been back to Mexico since he left in the trunk at age three, also discussed his lack of connection with Mexico. It appeared to be the first time he had really thought about trying to describe his cultural identity, which proved difficult for him considering the cultural loss he has experienced:

I guess since I've been here, I know more about this culture than I do my own . . . Because I don't really know anything about Mexico. Like I don't even know it's own national anthem. So like ever since I was here, I've known more about the United States than I know about Mexico . . . Like, I mean, I feel like it's kind of bad, because I don't really know anything about my own roots. Like, I know where I come from, like I know my background . . . but, I don't know. I guess I made my own life here. So I'm like, this is my culture, I guess. Like I'm mixing them all three together: Mexican, American, Italian. So . . . I don't know. I never really thought about it! I guess, I don't know . . . I've never really thought about that.

Daniel explained his relationship with Mexico in terms of why he did not enjoy going to his family's traditional home in Mexico and had stopped going, particularly noting his connection to his local community here in Oregon:

I didn't like it mostly because it's really different from here, and Mexico is like a really dangerous place, so I always had that fear, you know, that something would happen. And being in Mexico, you know, anything can happen, so I didn't really like it. Not only just because of that, but because in Mexico I . . . I just . . . I didn't feel comfortable in Mexico, if I could put it like that . . . I always missed . . . here, like ----- [local city], mostly. I told my parents that I didn't want to go to Mexico. Ever again. But I think I'm giving it a try. (Daniel)

However, it was interesting that while Daniel repeatedly expressed his dislike for actually being in Mexico, he later described himself as Mexican and used the pronoun "us." Although he clearly identified most with the small town in which he had grown up, Daniel also identified himself as culturally Mexican/Latino with his family, in step with the intrinsic Latino value of *familismo*. Daniel at one point stated that he is who he is because of "The whole experience, you know, the food, and just everything and as where we come from, our culture, as you know Mexicans or Latinos or whatever."

***Complex issues of pride and shame.*** In discussing their cultural background, two of the four participants brought up the term "shame." While he frequently discussed enjoying and feeling pride in his culture at other points in the interview, shame was the first thing that came to Daniel's mind when asked which terminology he would identify with in terms of race/ethnicity:

I think that . . . I think that's good – Latino. Because I mean, that is what I am and you know, I'm not really ashamed of it or anything . . . (Daniel)

Early in her interview, Juliet made a similar comment that she had “no shame in being Mexican.” I asked her to talk about that feeling and if she felt that shame was something she observed happening a lot around her:

Yeah. I feel like a lot of people do. One of my friends . . . she said that she hated Mexicans. She said that she hated being Mexican. She’s like, ‘I hate it.’ She would say that ‘they’re dirty, gross,’ just a bunch of stuff. And I was like, ‘Your parents started off like that! Why are you talking so bad upon them?’ and she’d just always say that she was ashamed of being Mexican, that she didn’t like it that, she didn’t consider herself Mexican because she was born here. And I’m like, ‘Girl, whether you like it or not, you have Mexican in you.’ (Juliet)

These feelings of shame that the participants seemed to be observing in other members of their culture at times prompted an aggressive type of pride in response. Juliet discussed how she likes to flaunt her cultural ties and often uses somewhat derogatory terms about her own culture in order to regain power over the culture and “own it.” She discussed her use of the term *paisa*, which technically means “countryman” but is generally used as a pejorative against immigrants who are seen as too Mexican and not acculturated in the U.S. mainstream behaviors and fashions:

Sometimes I really want them to know I’m Mexican. Like, I love embracing it. Like I have a shirt that says ‘Team *Paisa*,’ which is like saying ‘Team Mexican’ but it’s more like a rude way to say Mexican . . . It’s like saying [aggressively] ‘Yeah, I’m super-Mexican, and WHAT about it?’ I like it. Yeah, *paisa* is like SUPER-Mexican, like that, like with the hats and the boots. That’s why I say, like, ‘Team *Paisa*,’ like I don’t mind letting them know that I’m Mexican and I love it. (Juliet)

**Linguistic identity.** This study focused on linguistically diverse, long-term language learners. As expected, the participants' articulations of self often related to their linguistic history and identity.

***History of learning.*** At the beginning of the interview process, I asked students about their first memories of language. The memories they shared painted a picture of their linguistic beginnings. All of the participants described their first language as Spanish. With the exception of hearing words or phrases, or watching English television shows, the participants did not learn any English until they entered public school in Oregon as kindergarteners. Crystal illustrated the sentiment of all the participants when she said, "So, yeah, that was my first thing, Spanish. Spanish was my first language, my native language. It was all Spanish, that's all I knew. Umm, up until I even got to kindergarten, I didn't know any English."

As they talked about these early language experiences, each participant immediately began to describe difficulties that came with entering school as a Spanish-only child. Crystal remembered her relationship with her very first teacher:

So, yeah, Spanish was our first language. And that's the only thing we knew at home. In kindergarten, actually, I remember not being able to communicate with my teacher, because she didn't speak any Spanish, so she would try her hardest to understand me when I showed her the projects or anything we were doing. She would just give me a smile back because she couldn't understand me. (Crystal)

Two participants, Ben and Daniel, discussed being held back a grade in elementary school, an action they both attributed to their lack of English at that point in time:



I think that's why. Because at the time, I didn't really know anything [English]. Because I remember the people around me, they would like talk to me in English and I wouldn't understand them, so it was hard . . . (Ben)

I went to ----- Elementary. I went there. I was actually there for 5 years, because I got held back a grade . . . Yeah, it was actually because, um, I couldn't speak English that well. So they held me back so I could learn more English. (Daniel)

One participant (Crystal) wasn't able to remember any details of her very first years of learning English, but the other three participants all told stories about what it was like in the beginning:

And then that's how my reading got better. Because we'd have, like, little books, and then we'd read. That's how I got better at reading. Because at the time I couldn't read at all because I couldn't pronounce words. And I felt kind of weird, because I was like, 'Uh, ok. Everything's in English.' So I'd ask if I could get, like, Spanish copies, because I couldn't understand it. But they said that I couldn't because I had to learn more English. . . I didn't know what to do, because I had to learn somehow. And like with the little knowledge I had, like with the TV shows and stuff and all the words, I was like, I felt like I could do it. And I did. I eventually did. (Ben)

Well, I, ummm, obviously grew up speaking Spanish first, because of my parents. But, they . . . they knew a little bit of English, but they didn't want to teach us, because they knew that once we started going to school, it was just going to be English. So, what they did, is like they spoke Spanish to us at home, and then we learned English at school, so we kind of went back and forth... And it was hard at first, cuz, as a kid, you know, speaking two languages, you get confused. (Daniel)

Well, all four of us, my mom's kids, learned with just Spanish first, but since I was the baby, and my brother was already in school, all my siblings were already in school . . . when I was going to enter school, I knew like the basic of English. Like, I knew what some things were. But I didn't know what the remote was . . . I would say 'the chemote,' because I didn't know how to pronounce them right, cuz I was only like five, and I was barely learning how to speak English well. I remember, basically like all my school years, until like my freshman year was when I was always in an English class, like learning English, English as a second language, always. (Juliet)

Over the years, each participant continued in ELD to the point where he or she became increasingly fluent. While the participants will always be second language speakers, they have been conversationally fluent in English for many years and consider themselves bilingual. Their experiences with bilingualism surfaced in many of their stories and life experiences.

***Bilingualism.*** When asked how it felt to be bilingual, all of the participants responded quickly and strongly that bilingualism was a positive and extremely useful quality, particularly in terms of areas such as the work world, helping one's family, helping others, and protecting oneself. Regarding the last point, protecting oneself, it became clear at certain points in the discussion about bilingualism that negative experiences have been a part of becoming bilingual and/or have led the students to value the bilingualism they have earned over the years. This duality was often apparent in the students' comments as they qualified the positive element they were discussing with a "but" or an "even though" that revealed the complicated reality of being bilingual. One example of this kind of qualification appeared in a response from Crystal regarding what it was like to be bilingual. Crystal discussed the positive nature of her bilingualism effusively, but then quickly qualified it before continuing with the positives:

It's awesome! I would never change it for the world . . . Probably something I would change, though, is having someone that can speak English to me so I would have been a little more equal on both . . . But having two languages is such an advantage. Being able to communicate with so many people, because you know those two languages . . .

(Crystal)

The reader will see that these types of qualifications often accompany the participants' descriptions of and stories about the experience of being bilingual. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing. In learning about these students' lives in terms of bilingualism, it is important to keep in mind that the struggles and negative aspects that were part of becoming bilingual have likely led the participants to value that skill immensely.

*Usefulness of bilingualism.* The real life applications of knowing two languages, even at a basic level, are immeasurable, particularly in Oregon and in the local community. When discussing the usefulness of being bilingual, participants frequently first mentioned the world of work:

Yeah. I feel like it gives me more opportunities, and more options for jobs. Because there are a lot of jobs where they're looking for someone who's bilingual. So, I feel like that helps for, like . . . I feel good, even though it took me awhile to finish ELD. (Ben)

While talking about the life experience of being bilingual, Crystal shared this story about a specific way in which her bilingualism had manifested in her job at the local location of a nationwide retail/grocery chain:

Just yesterday, for my job, ummm, our assistant manager, she doesn't know any Spanish, and a customer had an accident. He fell, actually. And they needed someone – a Spanish speaker associate – to go help out. And we actually have really rare associates that can

speak Spanish, so we kind of have to be looking for someone. So I offered myself out: ‘I can speak Spanish! I can go, I can help.’ And I did, and it feels good to be able to communicate with someone and know if they need help or not. So it’s a really big advantage for a lot of things. (Crystal)

Even in her first job during high school, Crystal was already experiencing how a bilingual individual could provide a unique level of assistance in many situations, some a matter of urgency. Being bilingual was not required at the business and most of the associates were not bilingual, so Crystal’s Spanish skills in a situation such as this gave her both the opportunity to help others as well as a way to shine in front of management in a way other associates may not have been.

In addition to finding their bilingualism an asset at work, the altruistic aspect of being bilingual was evident in all of the participants’ stories. They talked about helping family members by acting as translators in a variety of different situations, from banking to applying for jobs, to medical situations. For example, Ben became the sole family translator during a potential medical emergency when his mother went into labor. He discussed the responsibility and the stress, but also the overall success of this incident:

When my mom was having her baby and I had to call. Because we went to the hospital, so like, I had to do it. I was telling them, ‘Oh, her water broke’ and stuff. When we got to the hospital. And I was translating. I was like, 10, 11, so I was doing okay. Cuz there was words that I couldn’t say, but I still managed to say them, kind of. They were like, ‘Ahh, okay,’ like they knew what I was saying. (Ben)

Outside of assisting family members, Crystal identified some broader ways that being bilingual had enabled her to help others. She described being a counselor at an outdoor school

for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Crystal noticed that a young girl was about to put herself in danger by taking off the required protective goggles during a science activity. Crystal quickly gleaned from instructors that the girl spoke absolutely no English, at which point Crystal intervened and explained the necessary safety instructions in Spanish:

She felt more . . . well, you could tell that she understood better. She didn't feel as left out and lost anymore. When we first started, she kind of just stared and I didn't really know why [laughs]. . . (Crystal)

This story showed how CLD students could use their bilingualism to help people who are still learning English. Crystal was able to help a young girl who was on a path similar to the one Crystal herself had traveled as a young girl, which gave her a sensitivity and an understanding that others did not possess in that situation. In addition to relating her past stories about helping others, Crystal looked forward to future opportunities to communicate with others as she expressed her desire to learn additional languages and communicated her appreciation for both the usefulness and the beauty of being multi-lingual:

I actually want to get another language. I want to do four languages, at least that! . . . I like having languages. It's such a benefit. It's something that's really useful. It's not something that's a waste of time; it's never a waste of time because you can just communicate with more people. You can get more knowledge from different people, from different experiences. (Crystal)

*Bilingualism as a protective feature.* When discussing what it was like to be bilingual, one unexpected concept came up that revealed a negative root issue embedded in a positive attribute. All of the participants mentioned the idea that being bilingual was an asset because it prevented one from being tricked, teased, or talked about by others in English. For example, Ben

said, “Being bilingual has given me more opportunities. And like, it’s funny, because sometimes someone makes fun of you and they think you don’t understand it, and you’re like, ‘Ha!’”

Every other participant made at least one comment similar to Ben’s regarding how being bilingual can prevent one from being tricked or mocked. Obviously, for this to have been identified as such a huge benefit, these students must have experienced painful and embarrassing instances of being tricked, teased, and talked about when they were in the vulnerable phase in their lives before becoming functionally proficient in English. Crystal identified these types of attacks as the only negative aspect she could think of about being bilingual:

Well, probably just not being able to understand a couple things. So, I know that when I was learning English, people would talk behind my back or say things or giggle about me. Umm, I had like friends, they would tell me. So, not being able to understand them, it hurt me at first. I’m like, ‘Why? I can’t understand you. I can’t communicate with you, so why?’ (Crystal)

Students who are not fluent in English are extremely vulnerable to bullying and other ridicule from peers. Before her English was conversationally fluent, Crystal was the target of elementary classmates. Her position as the butt of jokes quickly became obvious to her, even if the actual comments were out of her reach. When her bilingual friends told her what had been said, all she could do was wonder why those people were hurting her in such a way. In eventually becoming bilingual, she developed a strong shell of defense mechanisms to deal with this.

It was clear through the participants’ comments that even when no one was actually attacking or ridiculing them, they were mentally prepared for the possibility of an attack. For

Juliet, her past experience being protected by bilingualism prepared her to keep that defense ready in anticipation of attacks that she perceived might be on the horizon:

Yeah! I love that I know Spanish sometimes, or English, because . . . I think I was in Mexico and someone was speaking English, and I was like, [to herself] ‘Oh my god, these losers think that I don’t even know English!’ I just like the fact, knowing a second language, that like if anybody talks kind of bad or talks about me or anything, I understand them. (Juliet)

In addition to their own experiences, the students have observed other people being disparaged because of a perception of lack of fluency in one language or the other, not just English. Juliet illustrated this through two stories: One about her cousin and another was about a White stranger she observed in a store. In the story about her Latino cousin, people were actually attacking him based on their perception that he did not know Spanish because of his light skin tone:

I feel like it actually makes it a little bit easier [knowing two languages]. Because like my cousin Eric, the ladies that he works with, cuz he works at Taco Bell, like they were talking crap about him, and like he told them in Spanish, ‘You guys know I speak Spanish, you know I’m Mexican, right?’ and then they’re all ‘Oh, I’m sorry! I didn’t know you were Mexican!’” (Juliet)

In the second story, Juliet talked about how her own assumptions were challenged by a White woman who was fluent in Spanish. Juliet revealed her admiration for the secret armor that being bilingual can provide a person:

Cuz it’s weird, like the other day I met some lady at Coach and she looked like a total White lady, she looked normal, kind of like if you [the interviewer] were at Coach just

trying to sell me a purse, and I was like, ‘Okay’ and then just started talking to my mom in Spanish and then she [sales lady] just started talking in Spanish to my mom and I’m like, What the . . . ?’ and She’s like, ‘yeah, I like having this secret of knowing Spanish’. And she totally spoke Spanish like as if she was Mexican! And I was like that’s so crazy! So I feel like it’s like a talent to know another language. She surprised me a lot. She’s like, ‘Yeah, a lot of my coworkers don’t know I know Spanish.’ I was like that’s such an awesome thing to have, to know Spanish. I’m like that’s so good, because if she’s at a store and someone’s talking about her, she’s probably like, ‘You know I just HEARD you!’ (Juliet)

***Issues of fluency in both languages.*** Every participant mentioned, more than once, that they still had issues with fluency in English, and that learning English had in turn affected their Spanish fluency. The participants recognized that while they were conversationally fluent in both languages, they were not as fluent as native speakers in English, and not as fluent as family members who grew up in Mexico. All of the students felt that, despite bilingualism being incredibly useful, there was still a cost involved in learning both languages. As Juliet said, “I feel just for the fact of me knowing both languages kind of like messed me up . . . as in, like if I just straight knew just English, it would have been SO different.”

One of the major fluency difficulties identified by all of the participants was finding the right vocabulary to express oneself in various situations. Crystal noted that this happened to her in both languages, and revealed how she had noticed that she felt less than fluent in both her new tongue English and her native tongue of Spanish after 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade, which was the point at which she exited the bilingual elementary program and ceased to formally study Spanish:



Because sometimes not being able to explain myself would happen a lot....and still happens.. I can't explain myself fully in either English or Spanish. Sometimes I forget the words. It started happening, probably, after Tom McCall, which is when I stopped taking Spanish, technically. (Crystal)

Participants also made it clear that they were truly lifelong learners in that they were not just aware of their gaps in both languages, they also wanted to continue to work on these in the future:

Fluent? I feel like I still need to work on it. Like there's some words that I can't pronounce still. Yeah. I feel like . . . like I've perfected it the way that I wanted to, but I still want to perfect it more. So I could use it more. Because, like, I can't translate.

That's the thing. I can't translate very well. So, when I go to the stores with my parents, I have a difficult time combining them. (Ben)

I want to practice more of my Spanish, because I've been forgetting it a lot. (Crystal)

*Linguistic strategies.* As they discussed difficulties with fluency in English and Spanish, the idea of strategies emerged. For example, Crystal brought up times when she tried to “get around” her lack of fluency: “Just like everybody else, I believe, I just switched the phrase or the sentence around and tried using something else . . . which is actually something that damaged my writing, because I wouldn't be using the right words. I wouldn't put them together correctly, so that was a big bad on my side.”

Even without explicit instruction in language strategies, Crystal developed her own methods to facilitate communication and survival. In actuality, Crystal was using what is considered an essential and desirable skill for language learning: Circumlocution. Using circumlocution allows a learner to practice his/her other vocabulary and language structures

while continuing to communicate with another person, and to eventually get across their meaning. This interaction generally leads to the other person understanding the meaning and then providing the word in question, leading to an authentic learning moment! None of the students were aware that they were using beneficial and well-known linguistic strategies, such as circumlocution, but those strategies emerged as they told their stories.

Unfortunately, the students did not always view their use of linguistic survival strategies as positive. It was clear to me that the students often identified reliance on strategies as a weakness or a marker of their struggles. Earlier, Crystal discussed how she believed that using circumlocution strategies damaged her writing. Another participant, Daniel, laughed derisively at himself as he noted fluency issues he remembers from middle school and before, and how he dealt with them through strategies such as circumlocution:

Yeah, I think I still had like some problems with my English. Like, um, I remember a big problem that I had is that I would get stuck while talking. Like I would say something, but I couldn't really get it out, so it was kind of weird. Or I couldn't find the word for it, so I'd try to like say something else instead. [Laughs]. Yeah, I did that a lot. I did that a lot. Because either I couldn't pronounce a word, or I didn't know the word for it. So I would just find another way how to say it. (Daniel)

Crystal also noted another situation in which her lack of fluency required both her own use of strategies and the understanding and patience of the person with whom she was interacting:

Even now, for a couple of job applications, I don't fully understand the sentence, you could say, or the phrase that they want to ask. For my interview, actually, for my first interview for my job, he kept on asking questions and there was a couple that I just

couldn't understand. I wasn't familiar with those words, so I couldn't put them together and I couldn't understand how to respond to them. (Crystal)

Crystal's interviewer also employed the use of strategies in how he dealt with Crystal's struggle. Rather than dismiss her as incompetent, he tried to help her by using strategies of his own. Crystal continued to do everything she could to remain successful during her job interview, including identifying Spanish cognates as best she could:

Well, he cut down the questions into smaller portions and asked me little by little. That helped me a lot. And I just kept on trying to think of that word, if it sounds familiar to something else. If it sounds familiar to a Spanish word, at least! Something that I can relate to that word and try to wing it, kind of thing, it sounds right [laughs]. (Crystal)

The students' stories of their fluency gaps made me think of what I often encounter in my job as an ELD facilitator. I frequently have counselors, administrators, and general education (non-ELD) teachers come to me, wondering (or complaining) about students being in ELD classes when they are so clearly "fluent" in English. They believe the students are "fluent" because the students do not have an apparent accent and are conversationally (BICS) fluent in English. However, in terms of depth and breadth of vocabulary in various situations, these long-term ELLs often have numerous gaps.

These gaps in vocabulary became apparent to Crystal in the work world. She worked at a large "big box" store that has nearly every department one could imagine. The terms for various objects were often not a part of her personal lexicon, forcing her to use circumlocution and other coping strategies in order to figure out how to help customers. She described how there had been words for certain items, and even for entire departments, that she did not know. As one might

imagine, this was often embarrassing for her when she could not figure out the desired item quickly. One woman looking for a certain type of pants even became angry with Crystal:

And to this day I don't know . . . I still remember this lady, she was asking about a certain type of pants . . . and I didn't know what she was talking about . . . a certain type of fabric I guess? And all that . . . They were just around the corner, right where I was standing. And she kind of got mad, too, and said, 'And for NEXT TIME, they're right here . . .'  
(laughs). (Crystal)

Even years after exiting direct ELD services in the public school system, the participants continue to function as lifelong learners. These difficulties with language were not isolated or infrequent incidents for the students. The participants expressed the ongoing struggle of not knowing words and having to cope. Crystal, as she expressed in her stories from work, recognized that gaps in her knowledge had direct effects in her everyday life and job life:

That's an everyday life kind of thing . . . At my job . . . I pick up the phone and sometimes they'll tell me a story, and I'll be like, 'Okay, get on with it' but actually I need to listen . . . sometimes I need that story to know what the item is, because sometimes I don't know what the item is. I've never heard about that item. They'll tell me, 'Oh, I'm looking for this' and I'll be like, 'Uh, what is it? Can you explain it to me?' You know, or what department is it at least, to transfer them. So it's an everyday thing.  
(Crystal)

Participant Daniel also noted the difficulty that comes with not being completely fluent. He discussed feelings of stigma and embarrassment that he experienced when someone drew his attention to gaps in his English abilities:

It happened a couple of times, because, it's like um, they say you're doing something wrong and it kind of makes you feel like the way you speak or the way you write things down is wrong. Because of what people tell you. So it is, like, when I write a paper or something, they would be like, 'Oh, it's wrong' or this or that. It's like, 'Well, that's how I would say it if I was talking to somebody, so maybe it's wrong.' Maybe the way that I would say it is also wrong . . . it kind of made me feel like, watch what I say or how I say it, yeah. So there's like... every time I would say something, I would play it in my head first. I would say it in my head first, and then I would say it. But sometimes it wouldn't come out the same; so it would be like, 'Maybe I'll have to like whisper it to myself.'

(Daniel)

*Spanish fluency issues.* Of all of the concepts we discussed related to language, participants seemed the most consciously aware of how their Spanish fluency has been affected by entering school and learning English. Every participant felt that his/her Spanish had suffered, both in terms of lack of continued growth and vocabulary development and in terms of previous skills devolving over time. Juliet summed up the overall feeling of the participants that learning English had been important, but it had also been the genesis of their declining Spanish:

I was always in an English class, like learning English, English as a second language, because it really was my second language. And then from there, like you just kinda forget to speak Spanish! And it kinda like left me. Like, now, I hate that I don't know how to speak it well [Spanish]. (Juliet)

Juliet and Ben discussed the nature of these feelings about their Spanish skills:

I feel bilingual . . . But when I speak English, it's like the strongest point that I have versus me speaking Spanish. It's like I make up words! Like, I add – ing to the end of

Spanish words, like to say ‘she’s running’ instead of ‘run.’ Like, *limpiando* is cleaning, and I’ll say, she’s *limpiandoing*! Like, cuz she’s doing it right now! I make up words all the time, and I’m like, ‘C’mon, girl, you know that’s not a right word, like you know it’s cleaning, *limpiando*!’ (Juliet)

I feel like I’m not saying it right. Because when I talk to my mom in Spanish, like you can already tell that I’m losing my Spanish . . . Yeah, like it’s hard for me to pronounce words in Spanish as well. So, I feel like I need to work on my Spanish more, as well.

(Ben)

Juliet felt that her declining Spanish was particularly concerning to her in terms of how it had begun to prevent her from communicating with Spanish-only family members in Mexico:

This last time that I went to Mexico it was so hard for me to even have a conversation with my grandma because I would just like stutter a lot, slow down, and be like, ‘Mom, how do I say this in Spanish?’ Or ‘How do I say this?’ So I always had to have my mom there. When I didn’t, I would try not to talk to her [grandma] because I would be like I don’t know what say. But, I knew Spanish very well and then it kind of just left me because I never spoke it because my mom never forced me to speak it at the house. And I know some parents are like, ‘When you’re at the house, you’re going to speak only Spanish!’

Crystal also had a strong self-awareness of her loss of Spanish skills, which is something that she noted was very irritating to her mother:

Words, I would sometimes say wrong. There’s literally some times like, oh, like the time, 1:00, *la una* and sometimes we say *las una* and that doesn’t sound right. You don’t add that ‘s,’ so that’s one example. My mom is like, ‘It’s not *las* it’s *la*!’ [laughs]. There

are other words like that, that I might pronounce wrong, and she lets me know it's not right. (Crystal)

Ben expressed similar experiences in which his mother had called attention to his Spanish errors:

But like when I'm texting, when I try to text her in Spanish, I come home and I tell her if I texted her in Spanish right. And there's times that I did, but there are times that she tells me I didn't spell it right. Yeah, because her phone's set in Spanish, so she shows me. I'm like, 'Sorry!' (Ben)

In general the students expressed appreciation for having their mothers correct their Spanish. Of course, there was the typical annoyance anyone might feel at being nagged by a parent, but that annoyance was far less important to the participants than maintaining and developing their language skills. Crystal described how, overall, she would rather keep learning even if it means being bothered:

Honestly, I think it's helpful. Umm, sometimes, though, it's just . . . she's correcting SO much, and sometimes when I correct her, she doesn't want it either. She's like, 'Oh, well, I don't speak English!' and I'm like, 'Hey, I get confused in Spanish sometimes, too. You're the one who's always telling me . . .' So sometimes we get too much of that, but it's helpful. In the future, we won't say them wrong. And I'd rather learn how to say it than forget the word. (Crystal)

In one case, a participant discussed how his parents had taken measures even more extreme than just correcting his Spanish. Daniel's parents became concerned when they felt his English was overtaking his Spanish completely:

Yeah, and so at a certain point I started going toward English more, so I would talk English all the time and it bugged my parents because, because they knew that I was

forgetting Spanish, like how to write it and to read it. So that's why they sent me off to Mexico . . . Yeah, I had to go to Mexico every summer, for about three months, and we could only speak Spanish with my aunt, so it kind of brought the Spanish back. (Daniel)

Daniel's story about being required to study in Mexico revealed a lot about the dichotomy between parents really wanting their children to learn English, but at the same time wanting them to be completely fluent in the native language. It was particularly interesting to me to hear about this, because I had known Daniel's parents fairly well from meeting them at parent conferences and other events over the years, and I knew that they were very focused on having their children learn English. While Daniel's father was far more skilled in English than most of my students' parents, he did not feel comfortable teaching his children English at home because he did not want to teach them incorrectly or undermine the teachings of the American school system. But, while Daniel's parents truly wanted him to learn English, they also felt at least partially negative about the experience when he became increasingly English dominant in his usage. They seem to have become quite aware that studying only English at school could result in a loss or stunting of his linguistic growth in Spanish, prompting them to send him to Mexico to attend school there in the summer.

This pull between fluency in two languages is something of which all the participants were aware. Not only did they expect to continue dealing with it the rest of their lives, they also anticipated that it would be an issue for their (possible) future children. Juliet was particularly concerned that she did not want to follow the same path that many American immigrants have taken in which native language was lost in the younger generations. She described how she had already observed this in some Latino families and how she did not want the same for her own children:



I see some people that are like me, like Mexican-American, like first generation with their kids and they know NO Spanish! They know like nothing about their culture, and I'm like 'NO!' I want my kids to embrace their culture; I want them to know Spanish. I mean, I know my Spanish is bad, but I want my kids to know Spanish, because hopefully my Grandma gets to live to meet her great grandchildren, and I want them to be able to speak to them, and I want them to understand what their grandma is saying. Because I know some of my nephews, their mom raised them to know Spanish and they still kind of struggle trying to talk to my grandma, and I don't want that for my kids. I want them to be able to speak both languages, cuz obviously they're going to look Mexican and people are gonna be like, 'You're Mexican, do you not know Spanish?' I just want them to know Spanish. I always say that. I want them to know Spanish. (Juliet)

Overall, Crystal summed up the feelings that all four participants had about fluency:

Yeah, my native language is Spanish. But 'What's your main language?' or 'What's your fluent language?' I don't have a fluent language. I'm not 100% fluent in Spanish, and I'm not 100% fluent in English . . . I don't think I'm ever going to get completely fluent in either one. (Crystal)

It really hit me when Crystal (and others) said that she's never going to feel completely fluent in either language. As a native English speaker and an absolute LOVER of English and language in general, it is hard for me to imagine what it must feel like not to have true fluency in any tongue. It made me feel sad for her. Yet at the same time, her language skills are so high in both languages that she really is bilingual, which made me jealous, because of the opportunities. Perhaps the answer to the problem of not having fluency in either language has come in the next

theme that came up in participant interviews, which was the blending of the two into a new linguistic beast.

***Spanglish.*** One fascinating aspect of bilingualism, and one which I have had the privilege to experience on a daily basis at work and in the community, is the blending of English and Spanish into what we all refer to as *Spanglish* (or, in Spanish, ‘*Espanglish*’!) While I never asked the participants to discuss Spanglish directly, it came up multiple times in each of their interviews. Rather than define Spanglish through my own words or a rote definition, I will have Crystal explain how it developed in her mind as she grew up learning English on top of Spanish:

Just like, if I didn’t know a word, I’d think about it, and whichever popped inside my head first, I’d say! You know, ‘bacon’ . . . I wouldn’t know how to say bacon in Spanish, so I’d be speaking Spanish, I’d probably change a little to English and say something like, “*y el bacon!*” [laughs]. Yeah, I really don’t know what it is in Spanish, still! So, those kind of things, yeah . . . (Crystal)

Juliet shared that Spanglish was such a part of her that it came out naturally, no matter what the situation or who she was talking to: “I, when people will talk to me, I can’t help but throw it in there. Like I’ll speak to my mom and always throw English in it. I’m always speaking Spanglish!”

Crystal noted that this blending of Spanish and English, while not a true language as defined by linguists, has become a default means of communication for people like herself. When a person feels fluent in neither English nor Spanish, Spanglish gives them an identity of their own:

Now, I’m sure I’m not the only Latino that’s not completely fluent in one language or the other. We’re Spanglish. Which I’m sure they should make that a new language: We are

fluent in Spanglish! [laughs]. We mix it up. And sometimes we forget that with people . . . we forget that with people and we start speaking Spanish, and they're like, 'Wait, I didn't get that word cuz you changed the language around!' (Crystal)

***Conclusions on personal and linguistic identity.*** Overall, the participants' feelings on their personal and linguistic identity revealed that they felt thankful and lucky to be bilingual, yet they recognized that they would never feel fully fluent in either language. In addition, they all recognized that their own cultural identity could never be the same as that of their parents. As much as they identified with their Spanish language origins and their family ties to Mexico, they also knew that their culture would never be the same as their parents. They felt that they would always be working harder than someone else might to define a place for themselves:

I feel like it means that you HAVE to know two languages. You have to be able to communicate with other people, you have to know what the food is and how to cook it . . . I feel like just a bunch of things. You have to know more, in a way. I feel that way.  
(Juliet)

Ben summed up how the positives and negatives intertwined when he told me how he felt about being bilingual and bicultural:

"I feel like it's . . . I don't know . . . I want to say it's a gift and a curse. I feel like it's a good gift, because I could talk both languages, so I could go over there, I could go to Mexico, and understand . . . like college, I could take Spanish and English classes. (Ben)

When I asked Ben to define the "curse" part of his analogy, he said the curse was "Losing my ability to speak Spanish. Because I talk English all the time, all the time."

### **Relationships with Parents, Family, and Latino Peers**

If there was one concept that appeared most clearly and most often in my interviews, it was the importance of family and friends, whether positive or negative. As expected, the Latino ideal of familismo (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Holloway et al., 2009; Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009) was resonant with each participant. The participants repeatedly voiced variations of the phrase “family first.” In addition, connections with Latino peers also emerged as an important theme. With both of these though, “important,” did not always signify positive. Parents, family members, and Latino friends also often served as negative examples; in other words, as motivation for the participants to NOT be like the person. Either way, the influence of family and friends presented a large piece of each participant’s life experience.

**Family first.** All of the participants mentioned some variation on familismo, or the idea that family comes first and is the basis for everything in life. Daniel exemplified the ideal of familismo when he described the importance of family in this way:

I would say my culture, as how I was raised by it, I think It’s pretty nice, because of everything. The whole experience, you know, the food, and just everything and as where we come from, our culture, as you know, Mexicans or Latinos or whatever, it’s um, we really have like a tight bond with family. It’s like ‘family first.’ Always. So I think that’s probably one of the best things. Even though anything can happen, I know that I’ll have my family there. So, I think that’s probably one of the best things of being a Mexican, or being Latino, in my case. (Daniel)

Ben noted that believing in family first does not mean wearing rose-colored glasses and assuming one's family is perfect, or holding family first only when one is happy about how life is going:

I feel like family is . . . Your family comes first. I don't know, like . . . Our family has always been . . . Our family isn't always the most happy. We've had our share of experiences where everybody separates and like, they all come together. But that happens all the time, so I got used to it. (Ben)

Bad or good, participants echoed that the family foundation was the most important thing, more important even than one's own personal needs and desires. Even if fights, disagreements, or past trauma existed, the family connection was always of utmost important. Juliet related that, while her biological father had been extremely physically abusive, she was not aware of it until after she had had a chance to meet him and form her own opinion. Juliet's mother glossed over Juliet's father's abuse in order to preserve that sense of family:

Because she never let me know how bad he was, so I could get to know him, or she didn't want him to think that she was brainwashing me. So she was like, 'Do you want to go see your dad?' and was like, 'Go ahead, go and meet him . . . (Juliet)

Another extremely personal example of putting family before personal needs was when Juliet further revealed that she was sure her mother had re-married in order to help ensure the family's security rather than for love:

He was like, 'I can help you out with your kids,' and I feel like my mom, for her need, like, accepted his help. Not because she was in love with him, but she just really needed the help at the time . . . (Juliet)

**Parental identity.** We have already seen that the participants possessed a cultural and linguistic identity that was somewhat removed from that of their immigrant parents. In understanding the effect parents and family have had on the participants, it is important to delve into their identity as well. In this section, the participants' comments illustrate the themes that arose about parental/family identity.

***Personal cultural, and linguistic identity.*** All of the students in the study were the children of Mexican immigrants to the United States. Linguistically, the parents' identities were also similar to one another in that none of them spoke fluent English when the participants were growing up. While most of the parents have made efforts to learn some English, they are still not fluent speakers. As previously mentioned, Daniel's father became quite conversationally fluent in English, but chose to speak only in Spanish to his children.

While many of their family members' experiences had been difficult and even traumatic, the participants also noted the positive effects of immigration on their parents/grandparents lives. Every participant stated that their families live a far easier life than relatives back in the home country, and according to the participants, their families enjoy visiting Mexico, but (as Daniel mentioned earlier) would probably not want to return to live there.

First, to understand the parents' identities, it is essential to acknowledge the stress and even trauma that came with their migration from Mexico to the United States. We have already heard Ben's story of migrating to the United States in the trunk of a car, ending up alone when his mother was caught. However, there is more to his mother's side of the story. Ben's mother endured three more years of separation from her husband and child while repeated attempts to come to the United States were unsuccessful:

Yeah, my mom eventually got here in, like, 2000, so . . . Yeah, it took three more years for me to . . . for all of us to be here. Because she got caught like twice. So. . . Yeah . . .

(Ben)

In one instance, a parent's migration to the United States to avoid a difficult life in Mexico only resulted in a different type of hard life. Juliet described how her mother had quickly married a Mexican-American man and left Mexico as a teen in order to escape hard work and daily beatings. Unfortunately, her new life in the United States only led to more of the same:

And she [the grandmother] would always find like one little thing to beat her [Juliet's mother] about. Because like every day, there was no doubt about it, she was going to get beat twice. All the time, by her mom and her dad. And it's scary hearing that, because I'm like, wow, my mom got abused from like day one to just recently, kind of! Like, 22 years of her life was getting beat up by her parents, and then like another 15 years getting beat up by her husband. So it was crazy. (Juliet)

Luckily, there was a happier ending to the story. Juliet's mother left her abusive first husband, and, as previously mentioned, found a stable man in the United States, who ended up raising Juliet and her siblings. Juliet expressed how surprising it was to hear her mother's past experiences with abuse, because her mother had changed dramatically in the years since. The way that Juliet describes her mother shows how much her mother had made a new life for herself in the United States:

And I always look at my mom and think 'How did she let herself get hit?' because she's such a strong woman now. She doesn't let my dad [her stepdad] say anything to her, or threaten her, nothing, because she's really like a tough woman . . . She just raised us really differently, like, I knew she was a strong woman. Like that's how I grew up

knowing my mom, like not knowing how sensitive she really is, knowing her as like as a strong woman, an independent woman that doesn't take crap from anybody. (Juliet)

Participants shared several stories about their parents' struggles living in a country in which they did not speak the language, and their struggles to learn enough of the language to survive. An extended look into Crystal's family's struggles to learn English illuminated the complexity of the issue. The idea of language was important to Crystal's family, and while all members of her family have grappled with English, their individual struggles have been different:

My parents are from Mexico. They came here. My dad actually came here, I believe, on his 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. And, uh, once he married my mom, he brought her back over here, too. It was something really new for her. She didn't really know English. It was really hard for her to communicate with a lot of people. Like things that would happen, she wouldn't even be able to tell people. It was really, really hard for her to actually be here. She always tells me that she always expected to go back, from the first year that she was here; she always expected to go back. And then after that year, she kind of set it in her mind that she was never going back and she was staying here, and this was going to be her life. I mean, now, she *won't* go back over there and live there! [laughs] She's so used to this, uh, kind of environment. (Crystal)

Over the years, Crystal's mother made efforts to learn English, mostly out of necessity: "She started taking a couple classes – that's what helped her a little. Uh, working at the companies that she was working in, she was going to have to translate things sometimes, even though she really didn't know how to, she would just find a way to do it."



In addition to wanting to learn English for more mundane and work-related activities, traumatic experiences often highlighted for the immigrants the need for them to learn at least minimal English. For example, Crystal's family has often relayed the story of a time when Crystal had a medical emergency:

I got asthma when I was probably three months old and I know that I used to get really bad asthma attacks, really bad. I couldn't breathe. Terrible. And I was most of the time in the ER, it was awful. But, uh, they took me in once, when I first got diagnosed with asthma. I guess I couldn't breathe. I was connected to all of these things, and my mom.. my parents didn't know how to communicate because they had just been there for two to three years, not enough to learn and actually communicate. She hadn't taken any classes yet, either, so she couldn't communicate, um, on anything, honestly. She didn't really know how to talk to the doctors or like, how to say 'She's feeling like this' or 'She's feeling like that.' I think they got an interpreter, but I'm not sure. I remember that she told me that she couldn't communicate with them at all, and that was pretty scary, because I couldn't breathe. . . I think that's one of the reasons, though, that she learned English. (Crystal)

People may not realize that immigrants WANT to learn English, not just for jobs or daily life activities, but also for the sheer safety of their families. However, other than the obvious barriers to taking language classes (such as working, raising children, monetary demands, and lack of access) there can also be even deeper reasons that adult immigrants have difficulty learning English.

Crystal's story about her mother learning English continued with more details about what it took to actually make it happen. It took some convincing for Crystal's father to be "okay"

with the idea of his wife taking classes to learn English. At first, Crystal's father was not supportive of his wife taking classes because he believed it might impede her duties in the home. Crystal said he was uncomfortable, ". . . because like I said, they just saw it as a woman thing – her staying home and doing everything."

When she first began taking English classes, Crystal's mother had to assure Crystal's father that the household duties would not fall down:

Which, at first, my Dad . . . I guess it's a really manly kind of thing . . . When my mom told him that she wanted to join those kind of classes to learn a little more, his response was 'As long as I get my food on the table, you can do it, you can do what you want' . . . but he expected the cleaning to be done and everything else to be done – us to be taken care of, him to be taken care of. (Crystal)

In the end, Crystal's mother took enough classes to be able to communicate at work, while Crystal's father continued to learn in a "manly" way by asking questions at home and at work. Crystal notes, "Um, I know my dad didn't really take much English . . . I don't even think he took one. So he's a little lower in his speaking and writing skills and all that . . ." However, Crystal's mother's successful initial experiences with education later spread throughout the house, even to her husband:

I'm glad my mom took those classes. They're actually looking into taking their GED, I believe? They're looking for classes at PCC. I love hearing them talk about it. It makes me really happy and proud of them being my parents, because they're actually trying to do something to improve. (Crystal)

Seeing her parents struggle with learning a new language actually created a sense of admiration and respect in Crystal. To her, being a role model did not mean being perfect. As she

watched her parents struggle with a new culture and a new language, she was able to see the work that goes into difficult process, and to watch them grow as they overcame those challenges.

***Role models/anti-role models.*** The participants frequently identified parents (and sometimes grandparents) as both role models and anti-role models.

Ben discussed how he has observed his parents' lives and how they have shared their difficulties with him in the hopes that he has a better life:

And plus, the struggles of my parents, I don't want to go through that and they don't want me to go through that. They don't want me to . . . since they didn't finish school. My mom, she didn't finish school because she had me. And my dad, he didn't like school. He told me he didn't like school at all; he preferred working. So that was their decisions. So, I . . . they told me that they don't want me to go through that . . . Yeah, cuz they always tell me . . . they always give me talks and stuff, about what's going on . . . (Ben)

Daniel, whose grandparents were life-long field workers, had observed the life of a laborer firsthand as a child working in the fields:

We used to eat a lot of fruit because my grandparents, they would go and like pick berries and stuff. That's what they've done their whole lives and stuff. And we would see them, like, struggling and stuff, so we would all go and just help them out. (Daniel)

Daniel went on to describe how, in their late sixties, his grandparents are still working in low-paying jobs as laborers. His grandmother had a factory job at the time, which he considered better than working the field, but which he still found undesirable for his relatives and especially for himself.

Yeah, they're still working. Um, my grandma is actually working um at a cannery over here in----- [nearby city]. Yeah, which is kind of better, because she doesn't have to

be outside, she gets to be inside in the factory and everything. I actually worked with her like two years ago. I was working with her there, and I kinda saw that, like, I kinda enjoyed it because I saw what my grandparents had to go through, like their whole lives pretty much, because that's the only thing that they've done. And it was pretty hard work, so... (Daniel)

Daniel's experiences both observing his grandparents' existence as laborers and working with them had already greatly affected his aspirations for the future. Although he loved and admired them, he definitely did not want to be like them in terms of the hard life of a laborer. However, he wondered if his education would be enough to lift him out of their type of work:

I did not like it. Especially, being, as a like . . . cuz I was in high school. I would always think like, I have an education, you know, I should not be working here! I should have like a better job, because I have more education than people here. Yeah, but, that's kind of how I saw it. Yeah, you know you expert by having more education than others, you know, you would have more opportunities and stuff. But sometimes it's not like that. (Daniel)

Daniel later mentioned that he was seriously considering joining the military because he felt that it would be a solid job to support his family. He was concerned that he would not be successful in college, so the military was an option that, in his mind, was the best type of job he could get without a college education.

Juliet also talked about how her mother had explicitly discussed not wanting Juliet to have a job laboring, and how the military might be the solution:

She always tells me that . . . recently she's been telling more, like 'What do you want to do after high school? I don't want you to be working at this minimum wage job, working

every single day, not having anything to look forward to.’ And I’m just like, I want to go into the military, that’s my first thing, to like have a strong backbone for my future.

(Juliet)

Even when the participants viewed their parents and family members as anti-role models, their respect for the hard work of a laborer was apparent. They did not want that life for themselves, but they recognized that it was their parents’ work in the fields and in factories that had even given them the option of something different. They all expressed that they wanted to achieve a better life than their parents, but that they would not be living it alone – a better life would only be meaningful because they could bring their parents with them to an easier existence.

**Family Expectations.** In interviews, the participants’ comments revealed a great deal about their families’ expectations. As with most of the themes revealed in this study, there were always two sides to the matter. Expectations were often considered too pressure-filled or too archaic and traditional. Yet, at the same time, the idea that parental expectations were often too low was also prominent in the data. In general, participants perceived that their parents had expectations of their children based on the easier and more opportunity-filled life that the parents felt they were providing here in the United States in terms of education and lifestyle. The expectations were not specific, but more a general feeling that the participants’ lives should be “better” than theirs. Ben illustrated the essence of what all of the participants described in terms of their parents expected from them:

They expect . . . what they expect from me is just to have more opportunities . . . I have more opportunities than they had. Like, I can have . . . they want me to have a better future for myself . . . Being independent, providing for myself. (Ben)

Participants' descriptions of their parents' and families' expectations fell into four major sub-themes: academic expectations, career expectations, language expectations, and gender expectations

***Academic Expectations.*** The participants described their parents' academic expectations as being somewhat removed from the reality of the culture in which they lived in the United States. The parents, none of whom had graduated from high school themselves, saw the high school diploma as a very large achievement, even an ultimate goal, while the participants recognized that, in American society, the high school diploma has become a fairly low expectation and a low predictor of economic success.

In addition, the participants recognized that they did not even have to meet their parents' low expectations of a school diploma to maintain their parents' love and respect. The participants knew their parents wanted them to finish high school, but they also felt that there would not have been dire repercussions or destroyed relationships had they not graduated. The idea of college was so far from the parents' life experiences that they only referenced it in generalities or in a "pie-in-the-sky" manner. Crystal's comment about her parents' expectations was representative of all four of the participants' feelings:

I feel like . . . See, it might sound kind of bad, but they're just glad that at least we graduated high school. And they didn't really expect us to go to college. I mean, if we go to college, that would be awesome. (Crystal)

In using the phrase "it might sound kind of bad," Crystal revealed that she saw the gap between her parents' academic expectations and those of the middle-class American mainstream. Crystal went on to describe how her father at one point had decided that she probably wouldn't graduate. He wasn't particularly concerned or surprised about it, which annoyed Crystal. Her father's

perception that she would fail motivated Crystal to make graduating a personal goal, and she found satisfaction in proving his low expectations wrong:

Umm, something else that I did for myself . . . I graduated high school for myself, because my grades were lowering, my dad thought I wasn't going to graduate. I proved him wrong. (Crystal)

Ben also expressed disappointment in knowing that his family didn't necessarily expect him to graduate. When Ben was an underclassman, one of his close cousins dropped out of school. Ben noted that his cousin's lack of success caused his family members to lower their expectations of him:

Like, they don't believe in me. Like they only see the bad, not the good . . . but that's the thing I hate about it. If something happens . . . That's what they expect. They expect I'm going to end up going down that same road. (Ben)

Ben, like Crystal, took his perceptions of his family's lowered expectations and used them as motivation. Just as Crystal described, of her father, how she "proved him wrong" when she finally graduated, Ben wanted to "prove" his abilities to the family and, at the time of this study, was using that desire as personal motivation to push on toward graduation:

I try my best to, like, show them that I'm not going to go down that road. I prove to them that I'm not going to do that. (Ben)

It was very interesting to me that Ben and Crystal both identified how graduation only became a personal goal for them when they perceived their family's low expectations. All of the participants described how graduating from high school and even considering college were not personal goals for them, but rather family-oriented goals. They thought about academic achievement in terms of how it would please their families and in terms of how an education

would enable them to help support their families in the future. Crystal described how everything she had done at school was for her parents rather than for herself, and how in the past she had envisioned a college career only because of how it would have made her parents feel:

At first, I was like, ‘Yeah, I’m going to go on to college and get straight As’ . . . but that was mostly just for them. That was just like to be a good daughter, for them. (Crystal)

Crystal then said that her priorities had changed over time, particularly when she wasn’t doing so well in high school and her father didn’t believe she could even graduate. She pressed on, and is still thinking of trying college, but mainly for them:

I believe that, at least what I did, was mainly for them. I kind of just, I wanted to graduate for them. To make them feel proud. Because they know, I mean, they didn’t finish school, and they know how hard it is to come over here, and everything they went through. I would say I did it mostly for them. And college, I was thinking of going for them, not for me, though. That’s the reason I only want to go two years to PCC, and if I really want to keep on going, then I will go to a four-year college. . . (Crystal)

Crystal noted that she was looking into community college rather than a four-year school due to the financial cost. She was weighing the cost to the family with the pride she believed they would feel if she at least went to college for a couple of years. She only thinks of her own wants and needs as an afterthought, saying that she will consider the extra financial burden of trying for a four-year degree, but only if she is really doing well enough to succeed. Her hesitation about going to college has everything to do with not wanting her parents to have the burden of helping her financially. She wants to be in the position to help THEM as soon as possible.

When Daniel discussed achieving his family’s goal for him (high school graduation), he also focused on how important that goal had been in terms of family. It was their goal, and



achieving that goal was of paramount importance to Daniel only in that it was one more step toward being able to improve his family's life in the future:

It was exciting, too, because it's like all the people. It's like a celebration for you, but I liked it, because my family was there, too, so it's like . . . it's kind of like, all this, my hard work, you know, it's paying off for . . . not just for me, but for them, too. So, I kind of liked that. And then I remember when we went outside, my grandma actually started crying, because she was like, 'You actually did it!' and everything. So, I remember that. I almost cried, too, because of that, because she started crying. I remember I told her, I was like, 'This is it.' Just like, for my future . . . It's to have a great future for myself, but it's also for my family to have a great future.' Because I know that someday I'm going to be able to give them everything that they deserve. And I'm still hoping on that. (Daniel)

***Language expectations.*** In addition to academic expectations, the participants expressed that their parents and families held very specific expectations related to language, both in terms of learning the new country's dominant language, and, as we have already seen, in terms of preserving Spanish fluency. The language expectations, however, extended beyond simply going to school and learning English. All of the participants noted that they were expected to be able to perform a variety of tasks in both languages in order to assist the family. Crystal summed up this feeling when she talked about how her mother expected her to be able to help with language related to any and every task in life, and how this had motivated Crystal to keep trying to learn:

They kind of expect us, my brother and I, to *know*, like . . . I get a lot of questions from her [Crystal's mother]. Even when I tell her I don't know, she keeps on asking . . . I can't explain something I don't know! I'm not going to be able to explain, no matter how

many times you ask me!’ But yeah, sometimes they just expect you to know the answer to it, and for a lot of things, like debit cards and all that . . . I mean, I used to not know what a debit card and a credit card was. I couldn’t tell them apart. So, I just you know, day by day, I learn them, because I see them. I’m trying not to be as shy no more, and if I don’t know a word, then if it’s a common word, like *lamp*, I’m just like, ‘What is that?’ and even if I look a little dumb, at least I know the word by next time! (Crystal)

Crystal had been experiencing these feelings of inadequacy or lack of knowledge long enough that she had developed various coping strategies, but more importantly, she had also developed a great attitude in the face of frustration and sometimes embarrassment. She realized that even if an unknown word was “easy,” and even if she might be embarrassed, the opportunity to learn and grow was more important to her.

***Gender-based expectations.*** The participants were very aware that their parents’ views on gender roles were based in tradition and native Mexican culture. They were also aware that their parents’ views on gender roles were not necessarily in line with the modern mainstream culture in which the students had grown up.

Crystal was very aware of the lack of education in her family, especially in terms of the difference in gender roles. She talked about how her grandmother got married at very young age and never had the opportunity to attend school at all:

No never. It was back then, like that, honestly. It was mainly the guys that got a little more education, and then the women didn’t get as much. (Crystal)

Juliet discussed how it had been hard to find boys her age to date who were modern enough to consider her equal to them. She said that boys her own age who had grown up in the local community were still influenced by their parents’ values:

I feel like in a way, cuz, like, their dad was from over there, I feel like they're still kind of being raised with that mentality, like, 'Oh, your woman has to do everything for you, she has to cook and clean for you, do all that lady stuff.' (Juliet)

Crystal also brought up the idea of machismo, but regarding her own father. I asked her how she felt about the men in her culture, having grown up as a woman in the United States, Crystal talked about her dad's views on gender roles and how she may have started to change those views:

It's been hard, because I know that I can't change the way that my dad is completely. But I think I have changed him around a little. Yeah, I'm sure he thought that even here, the woman's doing the cooking and all that, right, and I told him, 'No, it's not like that all the time. We can help each other. It's not a bad thing to help each other do things.' I know that he would always give me attitude about not being able to cook or not doing the dishes. I was like, 'I know how to cook – I CHOOSE not to do it at this time!' But definitely I changed a lot of how he felt about all of that. He gives me a little bit more freedom than just being that woman that needs to clean and just get good grades. (Crystal)

The struggle between the participants' parents' traditional Mexican culture and the new cultural reality the participants have to navigate was clear, but it was often identified through humor. The participants know that their parents' beliefs are considered archaic by most of White, middle-class America, but they tended to choose to view it in comic way, with a bit of an eye-roll at how old-fashioned their parents are. Juliet related the type of interchange she frequently has with her mother regarding traditional gender roles:

It's funny, cuz my mom always told me, she's like, 'What are you gonna DO when you get married? You're husband's going to be like, you don't know how to COOK' and all this stuff. And I'm just like, 'Mom,' I'm like, 'I'm going to marry a White guy who's going to be totally fine with me just making him a sandwich!' And I'm like, 'And we can go out to EAT!' And she's like, 'You know, if you marry a Mexican, they're not going to want to go out to eat all the time. You have to have dinner ready for them when they get home from work.' And I'm like, 'Mom, I'm more modern than that.' I'm like, 'If he's hungry, he can make himself something, or he can freakin' wait!' And my mom's like, 'You're not going to find yourself someone like that.' And I'm like, 'Well, I don't want to find someone that is EXPECTING that . . . ' (Juliet)

Juliet clearly thought it was funny to shock her mother with the idea that she might marry a White man who would not expect her to cook and clean all the time and would be willing to share household duties. She told me that she was not just joking, though; she had always considered the idea that she might only be able to find a modern sensibility in a White husband. At the same time, she mentioned that she had recently been very successful in finding a Latino boyfriend who believed more in equality, but that he was an anomaly compared to most of the boys she knows. She felt his upbringing had been different than that of kids like her whose parents came to the United States as adults:

But I know how my boyfriend is, I know that his mom's a little bit more modern for the fact that she came here young but she also went to high school here. So he's a little bit more like, 'OK, I can help you' . . . It's a little bit more like a fair game. We both do one part, we both have our parts and stuff . . . " (Juliet)

Juliet had even gone so far as to try to change the minds of more traditional Latino boys her age:

I know, like, sometimes my friends scoot around about like, ‘Oh, I don’t know how to do my wash . . .’ and I’m like, ‘What are you doing to do?’ and they’re like, ‘Oh, I’m gonna have my girlfriend do it!’ And I’m like, [scolding] ‘You need to learn, too!’ I’m like, ‘What if one day you don’t have a girlfriend? How are you gonna wash your clothes?’

(Juliet)

It was not just the girls who discussed gender. Ben acknowledged that machismo was an integral part of the Latino male identity, and that it was difficult for him to see his father’s tough facade break down after his grandfather’s death:

So, that’s what hurt me the most. And seeing my dad like that was probably the toughest thing ever. Because, like, that’s my dad. He’s a strong man, you know, how every boy thinks. And then seeing him like that was, like, ‘Man . . .’ That was really tough. That was probably the most tough experience I’ve ever had. Like, going through that. (Ben)

Ben also showed how gender roles are changing when I asked him about how he would raise his future children. He noted that he would probably raise his future children the same way he was raised in terms of language; he would want to start them with only Spanish at home and then transition them to learning English in the public schools. However, when I said, “Yes, you’ll get to make that choice someday,” he replied that he would share the decision:

I feel like that’s what I would do. Then again, it doesn’t only depend on me; it depends on her as well. So, whatever we both agree on. (Ben)

***Career Expectations.*** As Ben said, the participants’ parents expected them to have a “better future,” but regarding choosing or pursuing a specific career, the participants felt that their parents’ support was often vague. When asked about what her parents expected of her in terms of a career, Crystal said:

I didn't get much actual support, like, 'Oh, yeah! You're going to do it! Let's do it!' Like I said, he just expected us to graduate kind of thing. So I never really got . . . I feel like I never really got support toward an actual career that I wanted. I never really felt like, 'Oh, yeah, that's exactly what I want to do and I've got my parents right behind me!' Maybe my mom, but not really my dad. (Crystal)

When asked about what his parents expected from him in terms of a career, Ben talked about how his parents each have their own ideas about what "good" job would be in the United States:

Yeah, because my mom . . . since they've passed the immigration reform, my mom wants to work for Intel. She wants to be like one of the cooks, so she wants to work there. And she told me that she wants me to do something with computers since I'm like kind of . . . she says I'm really good with electronics, so . . . And then my dad, he wants me to do something with cars. Like be a mechanic and stuff. But I never got into all the cars and stuff. (Ben)

When I asked Ben how he felt about his parents pushing for him to have a job in technology or mechanics, he was a bit shy to admit that he was not really interested in either of those "safe" careers. He noted that, while they had pushed certain jobs, they also wanted him to be happy. He tried to be diplomatic about their recommendations while still acknowledging that his interests lay elsewhere:

Well, it's something I've *liked* but I've always wanted to do something with like music or film . . . Yeah . . . my parents have always . . . they said that whatever I wanted to do, they would always support me with my decision in life. I told them that it's not like . . .

it's not that I don't like cars . . . It's just that I've never been into it as much as he has.

(Ben)

Crystal described similar experiences with her father, who had a set list of stereotypically “good” jobs in his mind that he had always recommended to his children, and how she had come to realize that those jobs were not necessarily areas in which she had interest:

He's always, for some reason, been telling my brother and I that he wants us to be, like, doctors or lawyers, or something ‘big’ . . . But it's not something we're interested in. I was actually thinking of doctor/nurse kinds of things like that because of him, but that's not something I'd like to do. I'm not really into medicine. SO... But he always pushed us to that, like, ‘That's a pretty good career!’ Like nursing, nurses. I think it's like two years, you can do something pretty small [in nursing]. And he's like, ‘See, it's not that bad! Go into nursing! They pay good.’ He honestly sees more of like how good they pay, because he knows how hard it is to, to, you know, get that good pay and all that. So he just really looks at the pay more than the actual career itself. I mean, I don't want to be doing something I'm going to be hating for the rest of my life. (Crystal)

Crystal mentioned that while her dad seemed to be pushing certain jobs on her and her siblings, it was most likely because, as a laborer, he was only aware of a certain set of jobs:

He doesn't really know much about a lot of careers. So we're kind of on our own when it comes to school. We can talk to them about it and we can try explaining it as much as we can, but there's a certain point where they won't understand anymore. And sometimes we just don't know how to explain it to them, either, and it's hard to let them know, ‘Oh, no, this is the process that you do’ . . . (Crystal)

Overall, the participants' parents were only aware of a small set of the more common "good" middle-class jobs (nurses, doctors, lawyers, mechanics, computer engineers, etc.). When it came to actually helping students explore a variety of job options, the parents were at a loss. The participants were left floating without any support in terms of what jobs even exist in the world, much less the process for pursuing the education and training necessary for these jobs. Although certainly not the fault of the parents, it was an area where little support was available through the home.

**Parental involvement in school and academics.** As expected, participants' comments revealed that their parents' involvement in school was generally far different than that of a mainstream White parent in the United States.

Most participants recalled their parents, particularly their mothers, being more directly involved in schoolwork and school activities when the participants were at a younger age. This was due to the fact that the participants' schoolwork and activities were more accessible, both academically and linguistically, to their parents at that time. As the participants aged, their parents felt increasingly inadequate and backed away. Crystal explained both the gender dynamic and her mother's higher involvement at a younger age:

I just remember them going to parent conferences, that's about it. My mom was the most involved. So, in our culture, like, our . . . the men are more like, how do you say it? They call them *machistas*. Yeah, so, my mom would be more involved. She would volunteer for field trips we would have in elementary school and all. Definitely, I remember my mom being more involved in those kind of things. Because she just had to take care of like a little group, she didn't really have to communicate much, so she was more involved in that. And then her job kind of, uh, didn't let her keep on volunteering. My dad, no.



Never. He just kind of expected the good grades and that's it. Unless it was something big; then he would go to school. But I wouldn't really get in trouble, so . . . He didn't really know how to get around school here. (Crystal)

Juliet noted that her mother was also most involved when Juliet was in the first few grades of public school:

I remember my mom being really hard on me my first grade and second grade to get me into reading. She made me cry because I didn't want to read! But I feel like after, it got harder for her because she didn't know how to help me, because she didn't have much education . . . I feel like that's when she stopped helping me because she didn't understand the work I was doing. I remember, like after second grade she stopped helping me with, like math homework, stopped understanding what I was doing . . . So it just went years with me doing it by myself. And I still struggle now, with my schoolwork and stuff, because I try to ask them, but they're like, 'I don't know what you're doing!' (Juliet)

Ben felt the same way, noting that his mother had only made through approximately eighth grade in Mexico, so she didn't feel that she could help him out after he reached the same point. He also believed that her inability to help him was one of the factors that limited his success the following year as he entered high school:

But she never finished. So it was hard for her to help me out, with like schoolwork and stuff. So that's kind of what put me down. I think the hardest year for me . . . well, it wasn't the hardest year, but it was where I gave up, my freshman year. (Ben)

Crystal described how her parents' educational levels and lack of English contributed to their decreasing their involvement in her schoolwork:

My mom, she finished . . . she went up to probably middle school, or maybe she finished high school? See, they have different, like levels. I believe she got like a degree for a secretary kind of thing. I think she had a job as a secretary. My dad, I think, only finished up to eighth grade. So, here, when they try to help . . . like, they tried to help us a lot on the homework, but they got either taught different or they didn't even get taught the actual subject. So they didn't really know how to explain it to us. And then homework was in English. If English was our second language and we couldn't understand a couple of the words, it was hard to translate to our parents on what to do. (Crystal)

Another dynamic that appeared in the participants' comments was that not only did their parents reach a point at which they were unable to help their children, they also held the viewpoint that their direct help would be an interference and a detriment to their children's education. Crystal's parents felt that they might confuse their children:

And also, they didn't want to confuse us. Like I said, they got taught different, so they didn't want to confuse us more if we were already confused in the first place. They tried, but they didn't really know much about what we were doing, so . . . (Crystal)

Juliet also perceived that her mother acted on a belief that she should not interfere:

She was never pushy about ANYTHING. Ever. Because, I feel like . . . I feel like she felt like she didn't have the RIGHT to do it. I feel like that's how she felt. Like she was like 'I don't have the right to tell my daughter to go do her homework, because I didn't go to school.' I feel like that's what she would think. And, um, like now in my high school years is when I actually . . . well, I was such a BRAT in my freshman and my 10<sup>th</sup> grade years! I never did my homework . . . I never really paid attention in class.

On the other hand, Daniel felt that his parents' lack of understanding regarding the U.S. school system resulted in his father becoming very heavy-handed and trying to force school to work the way it might in Mexico. When Daniel was in first grade, his father determined that he did not know enough English, and demanded that the school hold Daniel back to repeat first grade:

Okay, I didn't know that much English, but that's why you go to second grade, cuz you learn more things. And then you go to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because you learn . . . you go on, learning more and more. I guess he didn't see it like that. He just wanted me to stay there until I had it down. So that's kinda held me back, because I didn't get to graduate with the class of 2013, which was some of the people that I knew, so . . . (Daniel)

Daniel said that this incident had remained a bone of contention between himself and his father, with both of them maintaining that their view on education was correct. He described how the continued to have the same argument:

But it's always going through the same thing, like "Why would I have to go to second grade if you didn't know any English?" And then it's like, 'Well, that's why you go to second grade – to learn!' (Daniel)

While was talking about her recent high school graduation, Crystal returned to the theme of parental involvement. Crystal integrated these thoughts:

What people don't see is that as a Hispanic, our parents don't really . . . not many of our parents get involved in school, not for the reason that they don't want to, but because they can't . . . they feel like they can't. Parents sometimes they don't feel comfortable because they don't know the language either. They don't know how to communicate with the people there. Now, we have more people that can, you know, talk Spanish, so

it's a little more helpful, but my parents never really were involved in school. They kind of expected me to get the good grades and that's it. We didn't really know much about proficiencies [grading system], and it was hard to explain what proficiency was to them. They didn't understand that. My parents only went to parent conferences for a little bit, also because some of the teachers couldn't communicate with them. That's another thing, actually, I feel that if parents could be more involved it would help us more. We'd feel more supported in school, all of the Hispanics. (Crystal)

In this conversation, Crystal revealed the realities of having families who had not gone through the American public school system. She was not judging them for their inability to be directly involved in school and she understood the factors that play into their discomfort with school involvement, but at the same time she did not necessarily feel this was right. She believed that Hispanic parents should be more involved and that this would create a better support structure for students like herself.

All four participants recognized that their parents did not have an understanding of the U.S. school system, which impeded their ability to become involved in direct ways, such as helping with schoolwork. Although they recognized that their parents supported them emotionally, they felt that the concrete assistance with assignments and navigating the school system was lacking. Crystal summed up the essence of this feeling, which was one of understanding combined with regret:

I think just the hardest part of the Latinos that I've seen, even with other Latinos, with my friends and all, is that some of them feel like 'Yeah, they feel like I will drop out,' so they do. They just don't feel supported. And it's not that their parents don't want to support them, it's just that they don't know how to get involved in school either. That's a reason

why a lot of students drop out, too. And they feel really stressed over it: ‘Oh, my parents don’t really care.’ I’ve heard that a lot. ‘They just expect me to get good grades, but they don’t know how it feels.’ It’s not that they don’t want to help you, it’s just that they don’t know how to get involved. I think that one’s the biggest one: Parents don’t know how to get involved. (Crystal)

**Linguistic power dynamics between children and families.** Initially, I had anticipated that students would share numerous cheeky stories about how their own linguistic skills had enabled them to “dupe” their parents, or at least get away with more – it only seems human, especially for a teenager. However, this was not really the case. The one time when a participant mentioned using their English skills nefariously was when Ben laughingly shared that hadn’t always shared the whole truth when relied upon to translate:

Yeah! I got away with some stuff! Like school . . . like when you go parent-teacher conferences. Like, I had my few tricks. Like maybe I did something wrong, but I said I did something right. I shouldn’t have done that. But, yeah. But now I’m just like . . . we go, and they tell them how I’m doing . . . I think it was last year when we went, and they said that I was doing pretty good, and I felt better. Because every time we go it’s always something negative, but it was straight to the point positive [this time]. (Ben)

Ben admitted that he used his translation to trick his parents, but only when he wanted to prevent them from finding out he wasn’t doing well in school.

For the most part the participants noted that they did not abuse the skewed power dynamic in which knew more English than their parents and had to act as translators. What they did reveal was a complex relationship between parent and child that often put the child in the

position of power. Crystal mentioned that, while some kids might be tempted to “cheat,” she never does that, but she is not beyond poking fun at her parents at times:

I mean, I’ll goof around with them and joke around and be like, ‘Oh, yeah, I know English and you don’t kind of thing, but I’m just goofing around. Not really that I thought that I was better or anything . . . [They say] ‘You always think that you’re smarter than us,’ and it’s like, ‘No, I just know English, though!’ (Crystal)

Crystal noted that she was careful not to make her parents feel uncomfortable about their lack of English and their need for her to help them conduct business and other life activities. But even when children want to help their families, the pressure on bilingual children can be intense. Even if their dual language skills are still emerging, they may be relied upon to be the translators/interpreters in serious situations. Ben discussed how sometimes the back-and-forth between himself and his parents had caused tension, and how sometimes he was not able to do what they needed him to do:

Like, there’s times when we get mad at each other because of that. Because I feel like even . . . even though I know English very well, it’s still hard for me to translate everything. And, like, they get annoyed and stuff. It’s, like, stressful. Because, like, when we go to stores and they ask me something and they want me to translate it, I can translate it, but it’s like what they say back . . . I feel like I’m not saying it right. (Ben)

The reversal of roles between non-English speaking parents and their English-speaking children continued to appear. The participants described taking on roles that children in a monolingual household would never have to, much less be trusted to. Crystal shared some of the typical situations in which she had helped translate over the years:

So, like I said, I helped my parents out a lot for that [English]. I'd call in to do appointments, or like insurance kind of things . . . I sometimes go to the doctors appointments or something, because for sure, doctors, they use those big words that you're like, 'What?,' even for an English-speaking person. (Crystal)

Crystal mentioned that she was even relied upon to help her father with translating things for his job. This included translating and helping him respond to performance reviews at work, including the elements his supervisors had shared that are negative or he needed to work on:

Actually I get this pretty often, a couple times a month, he comes up to me and he's like, 'Oh, how do you say this?' or 'How do you say this if . . .' like for his job, sometimes if he needs to communicate with his boss or something. He's like, 'How would you say this?' or 'I need to tell them a problem; How would you say this?' But even to this day, I'm not sure if they're yearly or not, but they get a little report, like how they're doing in their jobs, I'm not sure what that's called . . . Yeah, probably a review. And you know, trouble you're having at work. He's ALWAYS getting help from my mom on that, and they're always asking me, 'How do you say this?' 'I want to say this.' (Crystal)

One can imagine that having to rely children to act as translators must be a frustrating position for parents; knowing less than a child does not seem like the natural state of things. For example, a father sharing his entire work review, including the negative elements, with his teen daughter would not be a normal situation for most families. The parental feeling on this end is easy to understand – it is odd to have children take on the role of helping their parents in business and work matters. However, it was interesting to hear how the participants felt about their roles in a skewed power position. Ben and Crystal had differing feelings about being relied

upon so heavily by their parents. Ben noted that it could be frustrating for him when he was put in the position of translator:

Because, like, I can't translate. That's the thing. I can't translate very well. So, when I go to the stores with my parents, I have a difficult time combining them [English and Spanish], so I'm just like . . . [sigh]. There's times when like my parents get letters from the government and stuff, or medical things, and my parents want me to translate it and I'm like, 'I don't know what this says!' . . . And my dad thinks I know everything! He's like, 'You go to school and you don't know that?' And I'm like, 'They don't teach us about that . . .' I mean they do, but not that much. (Ben)

On the other hand, Crystal felt that it was a positive experience because translating and teaching her parents words in English made her feel helpful to them:

I think it's good. Because I'm a daddy's girl! So, I think it's good that he actually has that confidence to come up to me and he feels good coming up to me, because yeah, I don't make fun of him. But we both . . . so, like we said [last time], I'm forgetting my Spanish a little. So they correct me in Spanish, and I correct them in English. (Crystal)

The participants all identified that their parents had received a low level of education in Mexico, as compared with the average American education. This, combined with their lack of English skills, often puts immigrants in a very different position than their own children. However, due to the participants' focus on family and on helping and supporting their parents, this disparity in education was actually seen as a positive. When asked to describe what it was like to have more education than her parents, Crystal said:

It feels good being able to help them. I like being able to help them in anything they need, like if they ask me questions: 'Oh, this or that,' 'Yeah, I can help you!' 'I know the



knowledge so I can help you.’ When, back then, I couldn’t. Like my English, reading, language was pretty funny. My mom would be like, ‘I can’t understand you!’ and now I can’t understand her reading! [laughs] Um, but yeah, being able to actually help them because I actually know what I’m doing. (Crystal)

The non-traditional role of the student as English translator and sometimes-teacher can create a different parent/child relationship, but not necessarily a negative one. The give and take here requires a level of respect and equality that might not usually exist in the “normal” parent-child relationship. It is important to note that, of the two participants who talked extensively about their roles as family translators, one student felt that it was stressful, but helpful to the family as a whole, while the other student felt that, while she was not always successful in helping with business matters, she enjoyed being able to help and teach her parents.

**Desire to support the family.** Another theme that emerged throughout this study was the desire of each participant to support his or her family financially, both at the present time and into the interminable future. Regarding the present, the participants shared the expectations they had of themselves to assist that family, even while in high school, and at times, how their parents had also expressed the need for them to contribute. Ben said, “I give them some money. If they didn’t have enough, I’d give them some, yeah.”

Ben discussed how he would like to go to college, but his family’s financial situation was the major consideration in his mind at the time:

I want to do the best I can to fulfill those goals. Because I know I can do it. I know I can. I just have to work at it. Since it’s expensive, might as well look into other schools. Because I started working last summer but they didn’t give me enough hours, so I just wanted to finish school. But like, the money issue . . . like the house we’re renting? It’s

really expensive. We can barely afford it. So, they're always asking, like, 'When are you going to find a job?' (Ben)

This part of Ben's discussion showed how he truly saw himself and his family as a "we" – his own financial situation was not and never would be separate from theirs. Ben was struggling internally because he wanted to go college to fulfill his goals and make his parents proud, but the more immediate need was for him to help contribute to the family's daily survival.

Crystal also talked about how she was involved in her family's financial security. She planned to take the money from her new job and apply it to buying items she had previously forgone in order to take the burden off of her parents:

I want to start saving up, do my checking thing. I still don't really know how that works, but . . . my checking. Put the amount that I need to put in there to save, and the rest do a little bit of clothing shopping, because I didn't shop my senior year for back to school, you know, I didn't do it last year, because I just felt like I didn't want my parents to waste all that extra money, and I was like, 'Oh, I can get a job.' Which... I've been looking since like the beginning of senior year! (Crystal)

Ben had also helped his family out by trying to take care of his own needs, but also ended up giving money directly to his parents:

Yeah, when I first got paid, I just went all out. I bought myself what I wanted, and then my dad's like, 'So, how does it feel?' I was like, 'You know, it feels good, buying my own stuff, contributing to the family.' That's what he always told me, 'Once you get a job and once you start buying your own things, you're going to see how it feels . . . how good it feels to buy your own things and not having to depend on someone.' But then it

got to the point where we had the money issues, so I ended up saving money and I gave the rest of it to them. So, I felt like I helped them out a bit. (Ben)

Whenever participants talked about goals in life, those goals were inevitably linked to a plan in which the participant would eventually create an improved life for their parents and family members. Daniel mentioned that seeing his grandparents work so hard had been a powerful motivator for him to graduate from high school and go on to the military or to college. However, the sentiment was not that he did not want to be like them because he didn't respect them or wanted something more for *himself*; it was much deeper. He wanted to be different than his parents and grandparents so that he could *save* them from the difficult life they led in hard labor jobs and give them a different existence:

And I would say, like, my grandparents even more because they would always tell me to finish school, because, like, the life that they lived, it's a tough life, and you know, just having your grandparents talking to you about it, you kind of want to do better so that someday, you know, you can take them out of the life that they live and bring them into this life that they never could experience, of money, you know, like . . . It's not all about money, but it's nice, when you don't have anything, and then all of a sudden, you have all these things that you didn't have before. And I think that's probably still one of my goals, like in life, to give my parents and give my grandparents the life that they never got to experience. Like with my parents, they want to move to Mexico, so me and my sister want to build them a house there, but not just any house, like a nice house, so that they can actually like live there. (Daniel)

Ben, in a similar vein, discussed how he knew his parents wanted him to be successful and independent, but he was more concerned with his own expectation of himself, which was to help his parents:

What I want to do is I want to help them for what they've done for us. I want to give back to them for what they did. Just give them the opportunities that they want. Because my mom, she still wants to finish school. She told me. She wants to go to college. She wants to finish, yeah. Yeah. (Ben)

I asked Ben what it would look like to fulfill this goal of giving back to his parents, and he said:

I feel like... well, I've had a plan of like, just buying . . . like . . . I want to have a job where I can say to my mom, "Don't go to work anymore. Just stay home . . . or go to school'. I want to say that, and give her the opportunities that she couldn't have. Since my sisters are older now, she can have her own time. So she could have her own time and just stay home with us and spend time with us. I just want to help them, that's the thing. (Ben)

Juliet's dream of helping her parents was nearly identical to Ben's. She particularly wanted to save her mother from a physically difficult, dead-end job, stating that a military career could help because ". . . from there, I feel like I can help her to kind of stop her normal routine of being like 9 to 5 [with a sneer] and all that stuff." When asked what to describe what it would look like if she could fulfill this goal for her mother, Juliet's plan echoed Ben's, and was even more detailed in terms of a specific plan in life that would make her able to help:

I feel like mine would be, kind of like this upcoming year to the beginning of next year, I'm either done with basic training or in basic training, getting like, kind of paid, but going to school [military training] but being able to help her out at the same time, so she

just has like a little bit less to worry about. And then when I'm totally stable, I hope to, like, one day just have her retire. Like, I don't want her to be working til she can't no more. I want her to like, retire, and still be . . . still alive, still kind of live life. Because I feel like she never go to do that. Ever. Cuz, I'm telling you, like from the moment she could walk and talk, it was like, 'You're gonna start doing this, you're gonna clean this,' and then she got married, and it was again and again and again, and then she got kids and it goes on again . . . I feel like she hasn't had a break from like having to be like, a mom. I don't know. I just know I want to give my mom a break eventually. I want her to, like, if I want to take my kids to her house one day to visit, or for her to babysit, then I can. I don't have to worry about Grandma having to wake up to go to work. I want to be able to just let her rest for a little bit. (Juliet)

**Advice for parents/families.** At some point toward the end of each participant's interview process, I asked what advice they would give to parents like theirs – parents who were immigrants and who were culturally and linguistically different than their own children. Their comments were illuminating and potentially very useful in terms of parental outreach.

Crystal mentioned that, while her mother helped as much as she could, her father was never directly involved. She felt that he did not try to understand the U.S. school system and that if he had been more involved, she might have been more successful:

Just even in high school. Like I said, he just expected the good grades and sometimes, like, I just needed like him to understand that it's hard, too. Sometimes if you're taking hard classes, it's hard, and I'm going to fail a couple of tests but it doesn't mean that I can't do it or get a good grade. Um, that was kind of hard to get through his head . . . (Crystal)

Ben stated that if he could speak to those parents who did not speak English and who came from a different culture than that culture in which their kids were growing up, he would acknowledge their struggles in life, but he would ask them to recognize the struggles of immigrant children as well:

Be patient. Be supportive. Like, I feel like . . . I feel like adults put too much pressure on us a lot, and it stresses us out. I feel like they don't really see that. Because, I mean, they've been through worse than us, but I feel like we go through it as well and they don't really see that. So I feel like, just be patient. Be more supportive. Talk. I feel like talking, communicating . . . Communicating helps because I don't like it when, like, people ignore each other, like they don't talk things out. Because I feel like if you ignore something, if you keep things to yourself, I feel like it'll just make things worse . . . But, just be patient. Be supportive. Motivate each other. Things will go well. (Ben)

Daniel said that it was important for parents to be involved and to feel that they were able to intervene in their children's lives when necessary. He noted that he "almost went to like the wrong path, but I always had my parents there to actually straighten me out." He felt that unconditional love was sometimes a little bit too unconditional, and that holding children to expectations was important. Daniel expanded what he meant by this by talking about how "helping" did not mean bailing kids out or shielding them from punishment, but rather letting children experience consequences in life:

They kind of helped me. They just kind of were like, 'You have to accept the consequences' . . . They kind of left it up to me to figure it out. And that was actually good, because I figured it out. And now it's kind of like, um kind of made me realize, you can lose the support of your parents. (Daniel)

Juliet gave advice for parents in terms of how she believes she will act as a parent. She discussed how she was planning to parent differently than the way she was raised:

I feel like I would want to be super-involved in my kids' school, because I know how much I struggled, like wanting to get help from my parents, and they couldn't help me. So I know I want to get my kids and tell them, 'Okay, when we get home from school, you're gonna just straight do your homework.' And I want to be sitting down with them, helping them, and like, 'You're not getting up from this table until you're done with your homework!' [laughs]. I want to be hard on my kids about school, because I didn't take it seriously until recently, and that's what sucks because I'm just like, 'Wow, I should have taken it more seriously, like from the get-go.' (Juliet)

**Latino peers.** As one might expect when talking to any teenager, age-group peers, and especially friends, hold an important place of influence. The participants in this study spoke frequently of friends, with a particular emphasis on how their main friendships occurred in groups of Latino peers, which I will refer to as their "in-groups." In addition, the other two major themes that arose related to peers were the effect of peers dropping out of school, and the prevalence of in-group ethnic jokes and judgment.

***In-groups versus White friends.*** The participants identified that fellow Latino students were usually the basis of their friendships. Ben stated that a past experience he had living in a neighborhood that was mostly Latino gave him the opportunity to develop a friend group of Latino kids with similar experiences: "Yeah, I felt more comfortable being around them since they had the same struggle as me."

Crystal and Juliet also identified more with Latino friends, and particularly noted that their friendships existed in “groups” rather than just with individual friends. They also described how they consciously self-identified their groups as Mexican girls:

And, um, my high school years I just stuck with the same ones from like 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. It’s just the same ones, always, that we would like hang out, but I was always friendly with everybody else. But I would stick more with . . . the people I would hang out with outside of school were just my ‘Mexican friends’ [gestures quotes]. (Juliet)

Since elementary school we’ve been with that little group of, uh, Hispanic people.. I’ve known them forever like ----- and -----, I’m sure you’ve had them [in class]. All of them, we always talk. We’re always saying, ‘Oh, yeah, us Mexicans . . .’ (Crystal)

Only one participant, Juliet specifically brought up White friends. She talked about how, while she might like her White friends as much as her Latino friends, it is not as easy or comfortable to spend time with them. An anecdote about a White friend revealed the internal monologue that manifests when Juliet spends time with White friends and their families:

I feel like sometimes when I hang out with like my White friends and their family sees me around, and they’re family’s like, “What the . . .? ‘Why is there a Mexican here?’ I know my friend, she just gave birth, and I want to go see her at the hospital, but I feel kind of weird going because it’s like her family doesn’t really remember me . . . And I feel weird, I feel if I walk in there I’m gonna look so awkward, like, ‘Who’s this Mexican lady here?’ I feel like they’re going to be like, “Who IS she?” Because it’s going to be, you know, a room basically full of a bunch of White people and her family . . . and then it’s gonna be me. Like, they’re all redheads or blondes, and I’m just like, ‘I’m the brunette here, with dark brown eyes...’ [laughs] . . . I think it’s just in my head, like



they're probably thinking 'Who the heck is this?' Because sometimes I know, when I go somewhere and there's a lot of White people, I'm just like, I bet they're thinking 'Oh my god, who is this MEXICAN?' I tell my cousin like, 'I bet these White people are really scared that we're in here! They probably think we're gangsters or something!' [laughs] Because I know when I have my makeup done, and like my winged eyeliner, I come off as like a total 'B' [bitch], I look mean, and they're probably like, 'Look at this *chola*,' 'Look at her – she looks gangster!' I'll wear my dark lipstick and they're probably like, 'Oh my God, this gangster girl –s he's gonna kick my butt!' (Juliet)

***Friends and academics: The dropout issue.*** The participants all referenced friends and same-age Latino peers the most when they discussed getting into trouble, not doing well in class and/or dropping out of school. It was clear that the participants were well aware of the impact that their friends and peers could have on them. It was the two male participants, Ben and Daniel, however, who talked the most about being affected by peers. They were very focused on the issue of dropping out of school, which is something many, many of their friends and grade-level peers had done.

In his discussion of how peers had negatively influenced him in the past, Ben led into the issue of peers dropping out. A peer drop-out affected how he thought about his own future:

Yeah. It was just like the people who I used to hang out with . . . they were into drugs and stuff. I'd known them for a long time, so . . . I guess one example could be my cousin. I remember he said that he would never smoke weed. And when I was in like 7<sup>th</sup> grade and he was an 8<sup>th</sup> grader, he got really into it. He's been doing that since 8<sup>th</sup> . . . for a long time. Yeah, and like, I didn't want to end up being like him. Because he dropped out. He dropped out of high school. (Ben)

Daniel also discussed how he knows quite a few friends and peers who have dropped out. He empathizes with them due to his own embarrassing experience of having been held back in elementary school, but at the same time, he doesn't want to experience that stigma again:

Well, I know that they feel bad. But they just don't want to admit it because they want to make themselves feel good. I know how they feel, because, you getting held back in first grade and knowing that you should have graduated with the class of 2013, and then seeing them graduate, it's like 'I should have graduated with them'. So I know how I felt, so I know how they feel. And it's a pretty bad feeling. So, I wouldn't even want to go through that again. (Daniel)

Ben observed that, while being held back could be embarrassing, the stigma that comes with being held back or taking longer to finish is not nearly as bad as the stigma of dropping out:

People make fun of you. They think you're stupid because you didn't graduate. I always felt like, I mean, they're doing the best they can to finish high school. At least they didn't drop out. Like, I know a lot of fifth years who graduated last year, and, like, there's a sixth year at CALC. He's still going, and he wants to finish. (Ben)

Ben admired the sixth year student he knew who was still doggedly trying to graduate. Although there was a stigma attached to taking longer to graduate, Ben felt like the judgment regarding dropping out was far greater, which produced a pressure or stress that could actually be positive in terms of keeping someone in school:

Like, I mean, it's bad, because you didn't graduate on time, but it's good that you're actually wanting to finish and not drop out. Like it's a better option, having a fifth year, than dropping out. (Ben)

Ben was very aware of the drop-out stigma due to what he had observed happen with the cousin who had dropped out. He described how, to his dismay, his cousin's dropping out had caused family members to start to expect failure of Ben as well:

It's kind of hard, because our family . . . since that happened, everybody looks down on him. So they look down, and they expect the same thing from me, like I'm going to go down that route. And that puts a lot of stress on me. I'm not like that. I stopped doing all that. I don't want to do that anymore. (Ben)

Daniel admitted that there were times when he thought he might also go down the path some of his peers had and drop out of high school. He said it was the feeling of being overwhelmed that made him consider dropping out the most: "Yeah, it's like you just think there's so much to do, like, you're not going to finish, so you might as well give up." He then related how when he thought about dropping out, he engaged in some internal dialogue in order to convince himself to stick it out:

Um, my senior year, I was 18 so I could have dropped out easily. I did think about it a couple of times, but I would always be like, 'You've been going to school for like 11-12 years. If you stop going now, it's just going to be a waste of time.' I said, 'You might as well just stick it out another year, and then once you graduate, you can stop going to school if you want, like get a job or something, but just finish this year off, and then . . .'" (Daniel)

Ben had a similar experience. When he was working and going to school at the same time was when he started to think about giving up like his cousin and others had done:

It definitely stressed me out a lot. I felt overwhelmed. Yeah. There was a point where I couldn't . . . I didn't know what to do anymore, so I just . . . I don't know . . . I just . . . I let everything get to me and I exploded, because I didn't know what to do anymore. (Ben)

I asked Ben to describe what it was that kept him from dropping out when others he knew had gone ahead and quit. He first brought up a peer relationship:

Mostly the people around me. Since, like, they believe in me. And they know I can do it. Like, my girlfriend.. I met her last year and we've been dating for a year. I want to say she . . . I feel like she brought out the best in me. She sees the good in me. And she told me that I could do it. Like, she believes in me. So having her and my parents, their motivation, it helps out a lot. That's what made me . . . (Ben)

As Ben continued, he described another major way in which he had been motivated to stay and school, which was his parents' lives. He respected the difficult life his parents had had as immigrants and laborers, and he did not want their sacrifices to be for nothing:

And plus, the struggles of my parents, I don't want to go through that and they don't want me to go through that. They don't want me to . . . since they didn't finish school. My mom, she didn't finish school because she had me. And my dad, he didn't like school. He told me he didn't like school at all; he preferred working. So that was their decisions. So, I . . . they told me that they don't want me to go through that. (Ben)

Parents also came up when Daniel was discussing his peers who had dropped out. He had a very definitive idea about why he thought they had dropped out and he had not:

I think, um, from what I've seen, like, from the friends I used to hang out with, the friends who didn't graduate, I think that their parents kind of gave up on them, because it's like they went into the wrong path. And you know, their parents did everything that

they could to kind of try to pull them out, but once you're in there, you know, you're in there. And their parents were just kind of like, 'Ok, you can't do anything else, so . . . ' They kind of gave up on them. And I feel like that's probably one of the reasons – because they never had that encouragement . . . or they did, until their parents were just like, 'Ok, we're done.' You know, they give up on you. It's hard to do that as a parent, I'm guessing, because you never want to give up on your kid, because you want your kid to succeed and have a better life than you did. But you know, if they don't, then they're just going to have the same life that you did and all of your work is going to be for nothing. Yeah, so I feel like that was probably one of the reasons why they didn't graduate: Because their parents just gave up on them. They didn't keep nagging them or anything, but I mean, once you're in that, pretty much anybody can say anything to you but it's not going to change the fact that you don't want to do better. Because if you don't want to do better for yourself, then you're never going to do better at all. (Daniel)

***Racial/ethnic judgment among Latino peers.*** While the participants had described feeling most comfortable with groups of Latino friends, they were also not shy about sharing some of the in-group joking, judgment, and even bullying that was common within their Latino peer circles, and the greater Latino community at large. When reading their comments on in-group attacks, it is important to realize that the participants related these stories with a sense of humor, but also a sense of entitlement. The participants did not always support how Latinos judged each other, but it was considered acceptable or tolerable because they were making fun of their own culture, not someone else's. I would also note that it was my longstanding relationship with the participants that made them feel comfortable talking about these racially charged issues and using terms that would probably not be considered acceptable in polite conversation or

mixed company. In other words, there are many comments that I do not believe they would feel comfortable sharing with a White stranger.

*White-washed.* In order to illustrate the in-group judgment that arose in the data, I will focus on students' experiences with a term that came up in every single participant interview:

*White-washed.* I had, as a high school teacher, heard this term before, but it was Daniel who first brought it up during the interview process. He was discussing how it was strange to see Mexican kids involved in activities at school, and how he would say to himself, "Oh, they're, like, White-washed and everything." I then asked him to give his own definition of the term:

So, um, you hang out . . . Um, it's pretty much like you hang out with the White people so much that you pick up their habits, like you start living the lives that they live and you forget where you come from. So, it's like if I hang out with like a lot of people, then I started going out, like eating out all the time, and everything, when right now, I eat at home, you know, what my mom makes and everything, so . . . I'm starting to pick up on other people's habits and starting to live a life that they [other people] live, them being White... And people'll be like, 'You're White-washed because now you're turning into a White person.' (Daniel)

Daniel's definition of White-washing included hanging out with White people and picking up their habits, such as eating out a lot, which is not typical for the average Latino family. Juliet also brought the term up several times, so I asked her to give her own definition. She expanded Daniel's explanation by giving more specifics and identifying some situations in which she and her friends might use the term:

The term White-washed? I honestly use that for like the randomest things, like, I'll be like, 'Oh my God, their cousin is SO White-washed!' Like, 'She hates Mexican music,

she hates *tortillas*, she doesn't like Mexican food, like she's all about her hamburgers and, like, her cheese . . . ' And we'll just like name a bunch of things that are [gestures quotes] 'American-like' or so White-washed and American to use, and we'll be like . . . We'll say 'This place, it's so White-washed. There's, like, no Mexicans in here!' Like that's how we say it. Like we'll say, 'There's no *paisitas*, like *paisas*,' Like, they're racist terms, but we're using it on ourselves, like 'Whatever.' (Juliet)

Juliet defined terms like White-washed and *paisitas/paisas* as "racist," but qualified that she felt it was okay for people in the same racial group to use racist terms on each other. Ben, who also brought up racial judgment, acknowledged that this in-group racism was happening, but that he did not approve of it, and it was not just teenagers doing it:

It's weird, though, cuz even though my friends are the same race as me, they're still racist towards each other. I don't get that. Like, why are you being racist to each other? You're the same. Like, there's people, there's Mexicans who are racist toward other Mexicans. Like, my dad's like that. It's stupid. (Ben)

I asked each of the participants if anyone had ever called them White-washed, or something similar. Daniel responded with a defensive, "No!", and then gave me an "Of course they haven't!" kind of look. I then asked him if he had ever said it to anyone else. He smirked, laughed, and responded truthfully:

Yeah, I've said to a couple of people! . . . Well, it's kind of . . . the only reason I said it was because it kind of bugged me, because it's like you're trying to hide where you're coming from. And I know that, because you would say like, 'You're Mexican' and they would be like, 'No, I'm not' so they would like deny you. So you would be like, 'Look at your skin tone, like, you're Mexican, and you can try to hide it but it's not going to

change the fact that you're Mexican.' You know, I mean, that's something that kind of bugs you, because being Mexican, you don't want other people to like deny that they're Mexican . . . because it's like 'What's wrong with being Mexican?' (Daniel)

When asked the same question, Juliet also discussed feeling offended:

I've actually gotten told, like, 'You're so White-washed' like 'Your Spanish is SO horrible,' and I'm just like [defiantly] 'I am NOT White-washed!' [Laughs hard]. I get offended when they tell me that! (Juliet)

Then Juliet then acted out how she might respond to being called White-wash by using humor: She switched into an exaggerated American "Valley Girl" accent and said, "I'm like, *I'm Mexican!*" and then burst into laughter.

Crystal also had fun acting out a scene regarding the term White-washed, but in this case, she acknowledged that she was definitely the one using the term to pick on others. First, she described how she saw term:

We definitely still use that one (laughs). White-washed. Because we have a couple of Latinos that forget their Spanish completely. They may have learned it when they were smaller, but they don't even know how to communicate anymore, not even with their parents. So we call them White-washed. Because they always speak English. They only hang out sometimes with White students. Yeah. I have a couple people that are like that that I talk to. (Crystal)

Crystal explained that the people she was talking about were two of her friends, about whom she added, "Yeah, they're REALLY White-washed!" Crystal admitted that she had called them White-washed to their faces, and then acted out the interchange for me, using the same kind of funny "Valley Girl" accent that Juliet had affected:



Okay, this is her words . . . this is how they call me, too: [valley girl accent] “Ahhh, Cryyyysie....” They even sound White-washed, too! “Nooo, Cryyyysie, I’m not White-washed, Cryyyysie!!!...” [drops back into her own voice]. Yeah, exactly my point. The way that you’re talking is totally White-washed! (Crystal)

On the other hand, Ben took a much more serious tone when he discussed the use of the term White-washed. He noted that peers had been using that term on him in recent years because of how he had been assimilating more into mainstream American teen culture:

Yeahhhh, I’ve always been getting that . . . Yeah. That’s the thing that I’ve always . . . like it kind of gets me off-guard all the time. It’s not that . . . it’s because I’m more used to everything that’s been around me, because I’ve been here for like, 13-14 years. And I got used to it. So, like, it’s not rare for me to get, ‘Oh, you don’t listen to Mexican music – you’re not Mexican.’ I get that a lot, because I listen to rap a lot, and like rock, and stuff. And people are like, ‘Oh, you’re not a real Mexican because you listen to this and that,’ or ‘You’re not a Mexican because you don’t dress this type of way . . .’ I just don’t like it. I like the [Mexican] music. I just don’t like . . . I just don’t like how they dress; that’s just me. I don’t know. (Ben)

I asked Ben to describe how he felt when he got the “you’re not a real Mexican” comments and attitudes from his peers:

I’m just like, at the end of the day, I’m still a Mexican and I’m still going to love the country where I’m from. I can’t do anything about it. I can’t change the color of my skin. Like, all my friends, they’re all Mexicans, so I don’t understand why they would say that. (Ben)

Ben said that he felt like Latinos using those attacks against their own friends was really “bringing people down.” Juliet also brought up situations she had observed where people judged one of their peers for adopting the clothes and music that they felt weren’t Mexican enough. While Ben had been teased for being too American in terms of his rock/rap style, Juliet had seen a boy getting harassed for being too “country”:

I know some of my friends were like that. Especially like with the hicks. I remember one of my friends . . . they would be like talking about this other guy ‘cuz he was Mexican, but he would ONLY hang out with the hicks, only the hicks. They would be like, ‘Oh, he’s a Mexican hick!’ Like, ‘He doesn’t respect his culture’ and all this stuff. And I’m like, ‘Let him be, like whatever.’ (Juliet)

On the other hand, while White-washing meant someone wasn’t Mexican enough, it was a fine line, because the participants also noted how they or others had been picked on for being TOO Mexican. As she was talking about in-group racial jokes, Crystal brought up the other side of the line:

I think this is for all races . . . It’s okay for the same race to joke around about, you know, they’re own race. We definitely do that a lot! We’re always like, ‘Oh, that’s so MEXICAN.’ Or ‘You’re being so Mexican’. Mexican music... it’s not really just ‘Mexican’ music, it’s just Spanish music, but we call it Mexican music. Yeah. (Crystal)

Juliet also discussed how she and her peers would joke both about being White-washed, and about being ultra-Mexican:

I feel the people that I know that have said and how I say it, we all use it as a joke . . . We mostly use it like, ‘God, that place is SO Mexican!’ Like, um . . . like the Mexican store

in -----, we'll be like, 'Oh my God, I don't want to go there cuz there's *hella* Mexicans...' It's kinda rude, but . . . that's how we talk. (Juliet)

Juliet felt like between the two extremes of being White-washed and being super-Mexican, they were both in equal use by herself and all of her friends. She decided that it was okay, because they were picking on both ends of the spectrum equally:

I feel like the in-between is honestly here, like ----- [local city] is the in-between.

There's half Mexicans, half White, and then like . . . not even half, but like a quarter this, a quarter that . . . It's just, like, super . . . I feel like it's really mixed here. It's not just like, 'Oh, I don't want to go there cuz it's like super *White-washed*,' or like 'This place is super *Mexican*' So, like, I know there's a Mexican restaurant by where Grande Foods used to be at. And every time we go in the parking lot, we're like, 'Oh, we're going to see so many *Mexicans*, so many *paisas*, I hope we don't see anybody we *know*...' Just like stupid stuff like that. (Juliet)

Juliet did not consider her own use of the terminology in general situations to be a big deal, but she could see how it could be bad when used to judge people directly. She was willing to share times when she had been on the receiving end of judgments and jokes about her own "Mexicanness." She was very focused on how she felt the tide had shifted lately in that it was becoming less desirable to be assimilated, or White-washed, and more desirable to be seen as very into one's Mexican culture:

Yeah, I remember like, my friends, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup> years, when I started to be more Mexican, like I loved the dancing, I loved going out to dance, I loved going to quinceañeras and to the parties, the concerts . . . everybody'd be like, 'Oh my GAWD, you're SO Mexican!' 'You're so *paisa*, that's SO weird!' And I'm just like, 'Whatever,

that's what *I* like.' And I'd get made fun of SO much for being super-Mexican, and now it's like THE THING. Now it's like, kinda cool to be Mexican and like having the hats and the boots. Now it's cool. Even in school. Like now I'll go walking around the hallways and there's these guys with a guitar, all singing in Spanish and stuff. And I'm just like, a few years go, or even months ago, people would be like 'That's so MEXICAN' and all this stuff, like, 'That's so ghetto.' And now it's just like this thing, like it's cool when you're 'embracing your culture.' (Juliet)

The prevalence of students accusing each other of being White-washed yet on the other hand being mocked for being "too Mexican" shows how complex the experience of cultural identity was for the participants. The idea of assimilation is considered negative, but so is the idea of total avoidance of assimilation. It seems that a person cannot win.

**Conclusion regarding parents/family/peers.** Both parents/families and Latino peer groups emerged as extremely important factors in the participants' life and school experiences. However, important could connote either positive or negative effects. As the participants discussed their experiences with family and friends, their roles as navigators of multiple worlds was again apparent. The participants repeatedly voiced variations of the phrase "family first." But while helping the family was always foremost in the participants' minds, their families were not always capable of helping them through their life and educational experiences in the United States. The participants greatly respected the struggles and sacrifices their parents had made. Yet, the participants' ideas of success in life were hinged on achieving the exact opposite. Their goals were to leave behind the lives their parents had created in order to forge new and better situations that would hopefully benefit the entire family. Similarly, complex connections with Latino peers also emerged as an important theme. Latino peer in-groups were comforting and

supportive to the participants, but at times were the impetus behind poor life and academic choices. In addition, while Latino friends provided a support structure of similar cultural values, being part of the in-group also made created a whirlpool of stinging racial judgment.

### **Experiences in School and the Local Community**

**Introduction.** All four of the participants attended school almost exclusively in the district in which the study took place. All were long-term English language learners who had been enrolled in mandatory ELD programs in the school district for more than five years. All of the students began kindergarten in the United States and immediately entered ELD programs. Here is a breakdown of the participants' ELD experiences in terms of years and types of programs:

**Crystal.** Received direct ELD services for nine years (kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade) and was exited at the end of her 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. She then received additional ELD coursework to support her reading and writing skills as a monitored student at the high school. She participated in a bilingual program for part of elementary school, receiving instruction in both English and Spanish.

**Daniel.** Received direct ELD services for 12 years (kindergarten through 10<sup>th</sup> grade, plus an extra 3<sup>rd</sup> grade year when he was retained). He was exited from direct ELD services at the end of his sophomore year and then received additional ELD coursework to support him in reading and careers as a monitored student at the high school. Daniel was also a dual-identified student who received support services through special education based on a specific learning disability.

**Juliet.** Received direct ELD services for 10 years (kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and was exited at the end of her 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. She attended a special military-sponsored program in

another part of the state during part of her junior year, then returned and completed two senior years in order to gain enough credits for graduation.

**Ben.** Received direct ELD services for 10 years (kindergarten through 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and was exited at the end of his 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. He then received additional ELD coursework to support him in reading and writing as a monitored student at the high school.

All of the participants spent an extensive number of years in ELD services in the school district in which the study took place. A long-term ELL is generally defined as being enrolled in language instruction for more than five years; all of the participants in this study received language instruction for nine or more years. Three of the participants attended school exclusively in this district, while one participant (Ben) went to kindergarten and first grade in a neighboring community and then moved to our district. The participants' time in mandatory direct ELD services ended by their 11<sup>th</sup> grade years, which allowed them to look back and reflect on their experiences with a couple of years of distance. All of the participants identified that ELD had been a major part of their school experience from kindergarten through high school. Daniel summed up how ELD has always been a part of his life: "Yeah, I was in ELD. And I've been doing ELD since I can remember, so . . ."

**Acquiring English: Participants' histories of learning.** In order to understand the participants' long history of different types of English language instruction, we will examine how the participants described their history of learning. All four of the participants described their first years of learning English at school as an ELD pull-out model in which they were removed from their elementary "home" classrooms and taken to another location to work on English with other ELL students. Daniel describes the pull-out model in this way: "Yeah, they would pull us out of class. Like they would come get you. And then take you to a different

classroom, and then you would learn like sounds and all that stuff.” Crystal also defined the pull-out experience in a similar way:

It was a pull-out, also. It would be in the morning for about an hour. We would just go to this little classroom with about four to five other students from either same classroom or other classrooms. Also Latinos, Hispanics. And we’d just go there and we’d just read books, read and write. (Crystal)

On her early elementary experiences with an ELD pull-out that happened a couple of hours every other day or so, Crystal said:

I just went over to another classroom and practiced a little bit of my English and all... so I got pulled out of class. It was actually something that can be a pro and a con. I missed a couple of things with the students, with my own classroom, for going to this other thing. But it was also fun, because we would get to do something. Watch movies, or we would do something fun with our own little group. (Crystal)

There was a clear dichotomy in how Crystal recalled her early ELD pull-out experiences. The small ELD pull-out group provided a close-knit group of similar (Latino) peers and frequently bilingual teachers, which created a feeling of comfort and safety. The “safety” of this situation might also have had to do with the idea that she found the activities fun and not overly demanding. On the other hand, her ELD pull-out also prevented her from being a 100% member of her normal classroom as she often missed activities and experiences with the whole group.

Daniel also described how the pull-out affected his daily activities with his regular class:

Well, I think at some times, I did miss some things, but it was mostly during like reading time when they would come pull us out. So when we would have to be reading, they’d pull us out to go. Because we couldn’t really read, so they took us to help us. (Daniel)

When asked what types of activities happened during these early years of ELD pull-out, the participants had a difficult time remembering because it was so long ago. The most detailed memories came from Juliet, who said:

I remember, like, my fourth-gradish, third grade . . . Or, like, I remember them putting us, like a picture of a pizza, and they would be like, ‘What is this? A pizza, a hamburger, or a hot dog?’ Sometimes I would be like, ‘Oh, what is that called? . . . It’s called a pizza!’ And I remember the numbers – we would have to say them in English, because I only knew them in Spanish . . . And now I can’t say my numbers in Spanish! So it’s really weird. And then . . . what other things would they do? They would make us do, like, the basic stuff... Kind of like learning colors, but in a different language. It was kind of easy, I feel. But I just feel like I didn’t take it seriously. (Juliet)

While they did not have many specific memories about teachers or activities, the idea of “fun” surfaced frequently for three of the participants as they recalled elementary ELD. Crystal, discussing one of her few memories from the early years, said, “But that was actually a really fun experience. She brought ponies and I got to ride different horses – that was really fun!” There were numerous other comments about elementary ELD being remembered as fun, but there was one participant who did not echo that sentiment. Daniel, did not feel the same way as the other participants regarding the fun in ELD pull-out classes during his younger years:

I didn’t like it. Yeah, it made me feel dumb . . . Yeah, especially all of the things that we did. It’s like, you know, it’s like why am I the only one who has to do it? Why doesn’t everybody else have to do it? Because I don’t even know why we were doing it? And it kind of made you feel weird, like, you know, why doesn’t . . . why don’t they have to do it? So, it kind of bugged me. (Daniel)



This was a bit different than how the other students I spoke to felt about their young ELD experiences. Most other didn't begin to express these feelings of stigma until much later in their school careers. Crystal, particularly, felt that the ELD group was positive because of the Latino-peer group it created for her. When asked about her favorite memories of elementary school, she said:

Definitely ELD! Even though I got pulled out, ELD was just awesome. Having the same people around. We basically moved together, about five people at least, that I even had in your classroom [in high school] that I'd had since kindergarten. So just having those people. (Crystal)

***ELD in middle school & high school.*** As participants moved into more recent recollections of their ELD programs, their memories became a bit clearer and they provided more specific details of experience.

Daniel, who had felt very negative about his elementary ELD experiences, but did not remember much about them, reflected back more specifically on what happened in middle school ELD interventions:

I remember it was just reading. So we would go . . . so they would pull us out from different classes and there would be probably, like, four to five of us. We would sit on the table, a round table, and they would give us these books that had a story. They would have like a short story, and then at the bottom they would have some of the words that they used in the story so you had to like sound them out and everything. So we would take turns reading the story and then take turns sounding out the words. And then we would do, like, a worksheet of what the story said, and what we learned from it. (Daniel)

I asked Daniel to describe how he felt those middle school ELD years had affected him:

I think probably more reading skills, they probably improved. Because if I look back from like 7<sup>th</sup> grade to my freshman year, I think that my reading actually got better. So I think those books really helped me, just sounding out the words. Once you can sound things out, then you can put them together, you know, so I think that really helped me.

(Daniel)

In middle school, most of the participants still felt that ELD was “fun” and they were yet not concerned about their mandatory enrollment in the course. As Juliet noted, the participants often enjoyed ELD because it placed them almost entirely with their Latino peer group. She described how people were probably being exited from the program, but she wasn’t concerned about it at that point in her life:

I never paid attention to it, honestly, because like I said a lot of my friends were in it for the fact that they were also Hispanics. And I’m just like, ‘Aww, whatever, it’s just another class’ . . . I never cared, just for the fact that I thought ‘It’s an easy class . . . all of my friends are in it . . . It’s super fun to be in . . .’ And when I would see people pass out of it, I would just be like, ‘Oh, that’s cool,’ but I didn’t really mind the class because I was having fun and I was never like, ‘Girl, you’ve gotta get out of this class’ . . . because I was enjoying myself. (Juliet)

As the participants entered high school, the nature of ELD changed in their minds, sometimes in a positive way, but mostly in a negative way.

This was not because of the coursework or the teachers, but rather because the students began to realize how long they had been in ELD and how much time it was taking up in their schedules. Daniel, who actually preferred his high school courses to the earlier years because he felt a reduction in stigma, noted the positive/negative aspects of high school ELD. He felt better

about how the program worked because he felt it reduced his visibility as an ELD student, but also acknowledged that it was taking up time:

Ohhh. When it became an actual class, it was actually better than being pulled out. But it was still like taking up some of your classes . . . I don't know if it would have been better to get pulled out for one class . . . But then you wouldn't have as much time, so . . . it could go either way. It could be a good thing, or it could be a bad thing. I found that, overall, I think it was better, because it was just a class with people. The same thing, so they could kind of relate to you. And you didn't have to go get pulled out from a class, where everybody would see you and make you feel kind of awkward. Yeah, so I think that was better. (Daniel)

Juliet noted the stigma that began to surface in her mind as she entered high school as a 10<sup>th</sup>-year ELD student: "Like in my freshmen year, I was really like, 'This class isn't supposed to be for me! I'm really good at English! Like, why am I in this class?'"

***ELD tracking: Missing out.*** The more the participants discussed their ELD years, the more they focused on "tracking," or the idea that students miss out on some opportunities when they are enrolled in mandatory courses. Even in the earlier years when students were receiving pull-out services, they discussed missing elements of the regular school setting. The nature of the pull-out made it so that ELD students were absent for part of the classroom bonding and collective experiences that are natural in the self-contained elementary classroom:

Yeah, it was like, um, it was like during 4<sup>th</sup> block. You would go to your class, and then they would, like, pull you out. And then it was the same class all the time . . . And then you would miss stuff. Because you know, the class goes on whether you're there or not. But since you had ELD, you had more time to do the work. (Daniel)

You are missing . . . which is something that I didn't think about back then . . . You are missing out on experiences with your classroom or things that your classroom are doing, because you're with this other group. Which I didn't think about, like I'm saying. I thought it was so fun, 'I'm getting out of class,' you know, that's what kids want! 'Oh, I'm getting out of class! I don't have to do work!' (Crystal)

Crystal recalled that it was in middle school that she finally started to think about how ELD was guiding her educational experiences. She discussed the feeling when she was finally allowed to take a general education (and non-remedial) language arts course in her 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, and how that led her to realize what else she'd been missing:

It was pretty awesome, actually! I liked it. I liked having that regular language arts, not worrying about another writing class or another reading class or . . . The thing, though . . . that by having ELD classes, the missing out in electives, which would be at ----- [middle school]. I couldn't choose home economics, I believe, was one of the famous ones. I did NOT get that, because I needed ELD. (Crystal)

Moving into high school, students' awareness of tracking became even stronger. Here is a selection of the comments the participants made about tracking and missing out on other high school courses and experiences:

Yeah, I had like a lot of required classes. ELD was required, you needed ELD, but then you also needed, like, all these . . . like, you also needed math, you also needed, um, science, you needed all these other things that you couldn't take because you had ELD, so . . . I was taking math, science, ELD, tutorial. So ELD always took one spot in that class when I could have been doing something else. . . They, they made me take it. I tried getting out of it but they said that I couldn't. (Daniel)

Yeah, mostly because I didn't have an elective until like sophomore year, and that was metals. But I didn't really like that elective . . . It was my only choice as that point. I guess the tests, like the OAKS, kind of got in the way. I didn't pass, so I didn't have the chance to have an elective. (Ben)

I'm like, 'This is not even counting as an actual high school credit, it's just like an elective.' And I'm like, 'You need to get OUT of this class!' It's just another elective that's not really counting toward your graduation. So that was kind of, like, upsetting. And I was just like, 'Dude, this is NOT a fun elective' because it was just an elective. And I was like I need to get out of this class and get on to something that I want to do.' (Juliet)

Yeah, especially since they, like, since I had to take ELD, I couldn't take required classes I needed to graduate, so I kinda . . . that kinda held me back in school until I got out of it, and then I got to get back on track. But I didn't get out of it until junior year . . . (Daniel)

Luckily, the participants never seemed to feel uncomfortable sharing their actual thoughts with me, even though I had been directly involved in the history of what they were describing. As an ELD teacher and facilitator, I had often been involved in creating their schedules, and at times I was the teacher of the class that was taking up one of their blocks. For example, Crystal noted that, while she really liked my class, and me, it was my class that had also prevented her from something else she was interested in:

I believe that freshman year is when I had you [the researcher] as a teacher, right? I didn't get French, which they took off [of the school schedule] sophomore year, and I had to wait to get French until junior year, so that shortened my years of French to two years

when I wanted to take my full four years. So that's another thing that, uh, ELD kind of . . . [messed up]. (Crystal)

***ELD self-awareness and stigma.*** The participants described how, as they aged, they became increasingly aware of being an ELD student. When asked what her perceptions were about why she had been in ELD, Crystal said:

Honestly, I didn't really think about it until I was probably in 7<sup>th</sup> grade . . . Yeah. I thought it was just cuz I was Latino, you know. So it was just an extra class for 'us' kind of thing. I thought all the Latinos would go there. But I saw a couple of my friends, which were also Hispanic, that weren't in there. And that's just because they had a higher level of English. (Crystal)

During this story about 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Crystal actually stopped as she recalled another, earlier, instance in which she felt stigma at being a language learner. As she related the incident, she started to consider how it had affected her overall attitude about learning:

Sixth grade, actually, I didn't know the word 'q-tips' or 'band aids.' I didn't know what that meant, at all. And I actually asked one of my friends, and I'm like, 'Oh, what are these two words? What do they mean?' and she kind of giggled a little. She's like, 'Really? You don't know what that means?' I'm like, 'No, I don't. They don't look familiar to me. I've never really heard them.' We were doing an assignment, actually, and those words came up. And actually, throughout my elementary school, there were a lot of words that popped up that I didn't know what they were, and I was embarrassed, sometimes, to ask, because of the giggles of other people. They're just 'Oh, you don't know that word?!' Like, 'No . . . I don't.' [sad voice]. But I'll learn it! Yeah, I think that was a really bad experience, not being able to ask what the word was, because that . .

. it like pulled me down on learning words, lots of words. There was like words I would have loved to have learned. Or I know I would have learned, but I couldn't ask. I was so shy about that. (Crystal)

As Crystal discovered that not all of her fellow Latinos were in ELD, she began to gain awareness of the stigma that could come when others observed her as linguistically different.

Daniel noted the same awareness: "Yeah, they were kids that spoke Spanish, too, but none of them were in ELD, just me. So, that kind of did make me feel like I wasn't as smart as them."

When Daniel said this, I asked him to describe what he did about it, for example, whether or not he ever talked to anyone about it:

No, I tried to stay away from that. From talking to them about it. [long pause] I don't think they, even like actually knew that I was in ELD. Because I didn't really tell them. You know, they'd be like, 'Why'd they pull you out of class?' I'd be like 'Oh, cuz I had to go do something.' But I wouldn't say it was because I had to go to ELD because I cared, I cared about what people thought about me back then. As you know, a younger person. (Daniel)

Daniel also talked about how the stigma of ELD made him feel defensive and even combative toward staff members:

I just think because like, since I was in ELD, I didn't feel like I was smart like other people. So when the teacher would point me out, it would kind of be like 'Why are you pointing at me? Why aren't you pointing at everybody else?' Like, you know, it kind of took me back to when they took me out for ELD. It was like 'Why are you taking ME out? Why aren't you taking everybody else out?' So it made me feel DUMBER than the other people, so that's kind of what bugged me. And you know, that's why I would snap

at them . . . too much . . . That was really bad. [laughs]. I shouldn't have done that, but I was a kid. (Daniel)

As the participants entered high school, their awareness of their ELD status and their desire to get out of ELD only increased:

And then, I noticed more and more of friends getting out of it [ELD], like testing out of it during my freshman year. So I'm like, okay, I need to get out of this class . . . Like, "I need to be more serious about this." Because it's kind of embarrassing. I feel like it was embarrassing for me to say, 'Oh, I'm in ELD class,' like, 'All you speak is English, girl, you're Spanish is HORRIBLE. How are you in ELD class?' And I'm like, 'Yeah, I know!' So it's kind of embarrassing, so I kind of pushed myself into getting out of the class because it WAS kind of embarrassing for me to say, 'Oh, I'm in ELD...' (Juliet)

Juliet noted that it was seeing the "new" ELD students who hadn't been in the United States for long that really made her feel aware of where she was at in ELD. She became embarrassed when she, who had been born in the United States, was testing into the same proficiency level as students who had only been in the country a couple of years.

Yeah, and I was kind of comparing myself to them. Like 'they just came from Mexico and their English is, like... even people that weren't in ELD. I'm like 'look at their English – how are they not in ELD and I am?' Like, 'How is that possible?' So it was kind of embarrassing and I actually pushed myself to get out of the class . . . because I was enjoying myself. Until my freshman year. And I was like, 'Girl, this is not your second language, you're really good at it. Why are you in this class?' Because I never put effort to testing out of it. (Juliet)



One reason I chose older participants was so that they could reflect on their ELD experiences after the fact, after they had been exited into the mainstream. All of the participants expressed their feelings of relief at “finally” passing out of ELD. Ben said, “I felt good, even though it took me awhile to finish ELD. I felt good that I passed. I was like, ‘Yessss!’” Juliet perhaps summarized it best in her description of the stigma she felt before she tested out of ELD, versus what it felt like after:

I felt better [after passing ELPA], because [before] people would ask me, like, ‘Oh, let me see your schedule’ and I would be like ‘I have this and this and this’ [gestures hiding the schedule from the person] and they would be like, ‘Let me see your schedule!’ And I’m like, ‘Uh, I don’t know where it’s at.’ It was kind of embarrassing, like, seeing them go, ‘Why do you have ELD?’ And after that [getting out of ELD] I didn’t really care. I’m like, ‘oh, here’s my schedule!’ [gestures handing it to a person]. It felt relieving, honestly. (Juliet)

***Understanding the purpose of ELD.*** While the participants admitted the stigma they felt being ELD students, especially when they were older, they also acknowledged that ELD had been necessary and helpful in their paths to learning English. Ben talked about how testing difficulties caused him not to pass the ELPA test during his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, but he ended up being glad it had turned out that way:

Yeah, because I thought I was supposed to pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, but my microphones didn’t work, so the talking part, I guess that’s kind of what made me stay. But I’m really glad I took that class, because it helped me, too. Yeah, it definitely did . . . Like my writing, ummm . . . reading. And there’s like speaking English more, like phrasing words and stuff. (Ben)

One element that helped students appreciate their ELD experiences was coming to understand why they were there and how ELD was helping their language skills. Several participants noted that having the purpose of language programs and language-learning strategies explicitly explained to them would have been extremely helpful. For example, Juliet told me that it was not until she received explanations in middle and high school that she stopped feeling “dumb”:

I feel like you [the researcher] and Ms. ----- [middle school ELD teacher] were the first ones to make me realize, like, ‘You’re not in this class cuz you’re DUMB; you’re in this class to IMPROVE your language and to be at a certain level with everybody else.’  
(Juliet)

At one point, when Daniel was talking about different ways he had tried to get around English words he didn’t know when he was younger, I couldn’t help myself – I stopped and explained to him that he what he was doing was using a strategy “circumlocution” and that it was a valuable language skill. Here was the remainder of our side conversation:

Researcher: It’s actually a really good skill. Some kids won’t do it.

Daniel: Really?

Researcher: Yeah, they just want to look up the word. It’s better to keep the conversation going, and you know, practice.

Daniel: See, if somebody told me that back then, I probably wouldn’t feel so bad about not knowing the word.

As our interview continued, Daniel talked about how adults could do a better job of explaining the purpose of ELD, and other learning activities, to children, and how he had often had to fill in the blanks for himself:

I think that adults explain things so that THEY understand what they're saying, not so that the student understands what they're saying. I think that's a big problem with the adults, because as a student . . . If I wanted to tell a student something, then I wouldn't explain it how the teachers knows it; I would explain it how I know it. Because I'm pretty sure he'll understand it more coming from the point of view of a student than from a teacher. So when a teacher talks to a student, he just says it in a way that he'll understand what he's saying, but he's not really concerned about if the student understands what he's saying. And I had that problem with a lot of teachers. Like, I didn't really know what they were saying, so I needed to, like . . . So I would just . . . what I would do is I would take like . . . Like they would say something, and I would wait until something popped out at me, and then I would put it all together. (Daniel)

***ELD informs the future.*** Despite the stigma and tracking that sometimes came from being in ELD, all of the participants stated that they would want the same educational process for their own children. Even though the participants were now English-speakers themselves, they all planned to start their future children with Spanish at home and have them begin officially learning English through ELD in the public schools. Ben and Juliet were both more concerned about how the Spanish exposure happened than the English. Ben stated:

My kids? I feel like they'd be both. But I feel like we'd stick to Spanish first, and then later on, like mix it with both. (Ben)

Juliet recognized that her children would probably be exposed to both Spanish and English at home, but decided that she would focus on Spanish at home and rely on ELD programs for the majority of their English instruction:

But I want them to, like, still know Spanish, kind of how I did. But obviously when they're little, they're still going to get spoken to in English and stuff. So, it's kind of hard to answer that question, but I wouldn't mind it if they were like in an ELD class . . . I feel like kids, from when they're little, that's when they're a sponge! I want them to just know Spanish. And then when they're in school, they'll learn English. (Juliet)

***Conclusions about ELD.*** Toward the end of our conversations, I asked each participant to reflect on what ELD had meant to them and how it might inform the future. Each participant had an overall feeling that, despite a variety of unfortunate effects, such as stigma and tracking, the benefit of their ELD instruction had outweighed the negatives. Juliet summed it up briefly, saying that “it didn’t do me any bad. Like, it did me good.” Daniel reflected on his overall ELD experience as he shared some advice for ELD students of the future:

Like if I could tell somebody, like a younger person, about ELD, I’d probably tell them, like, I know what they’re going through, and I know that they hate it at this point, but at the end, it all pays off. Like, this is only, like, for right now. ELD is just a thing for right now. But once you finish high school, it’s like, it’s all going to be worth it. It’s all going to pay off. Just stick with it, even if you feel like you don’t fit in with people. I always thought ‘I don’t fit in with people, but if I stop going, then it’s like they’re right. Like I’ve lost, and they’ve won, right? They’re better than me.’ But now that I’ve finished, it’s like they’re no better than me. The fact that I’ve finished and they’ve finished, it’s like the same thing; it’s the same diploma . . . Now that I’m graduating, it’s like I can do anything that I put my mind to. I mean, I see it as in, ELD was an obstacle in my life, and I overcame it, so . . . I can overcome anything else. (Daniel)

**School and local culture/climate.** Throughout their discussions of their school experiences, items related to the school and local culture and emotional climate surfaced. In addition, many of my interview questions had been designed to elicit what students had experienced in terms of school culture and how they perceived the school climate to have been.

***Cultural representation and Latino involvement.*** Crystal, of all the participants, had the most to say about what the representation of Latinos at her high school had been like during her four years there. She described how she had often discussed the issue of cultural underrepresentation with a group of her Latina friends:

We always talk. We're always saying, 'Oh, yeah, us Mexicans . . . ' We feel like we should have a little bit more, uh, ways to express our culture. I guess that's it. We wanted to . . . there's a couple things at high school, actually, that I wanted to do, to express our culture, that we're proud Mexicans – that's our culture, that's our background. And sometimes they wouldn't let us, because it didn't seem 'appropriate.'

(Crystal)

When asked for some examples of what she and her friends had not been allowed to do, Crystal immediately had several stories mind. First, Crystal told the most recent story, which was about how she and her friends had wanted to wear graduation sashes to represent their Mexican heritage:

And it was the three colors of the Mexican flag. We wanted to get that to represent our culture for graduation . . . I believe one of the girls talked to our principal, and that was the response – that it wasn't 'appropriate,' I believe. (Crystal)

Crystal barely paused before she said that there were more examples and launched into the next, which was related to the yearly Lip Sync contest. This is a fun event that still occurs

each year at the high school in which the study was conducted. Students from each class meet together for several weeks in order to plan a lip-syncing and dance presentation. The dances are then judged at a school-wide assembly. Crystal told about her unsuccessful attempts to incorporate some more equal representation in the event:

The lip sync . . . It's a fun thing, right, for your class? What we wanted to do, because there's such a high population of Hispanics, is incorporate the Spanish music. Why not have something that we like, too? But, uh, it didn't happen. (Crystal)

Crystal noted that none of the other students ever blatantly refused to play Spanish music or said anything outwardly racist, but rather the kids most in control were passive-aggressive in their failure to include Spanish tunes:

I think one of them . . . What did they say? The point is that they said that 'English music – everybody understands it' kind of thing, 'so why not stick to that?' . . . And also, we would give our opinions and they would listen, but they would just scratch them later. (Crystal)

As Crystal continued, the negative effects of this denial emerged:

And that's actually a reason that I stopped joining lip sync. And that's actually a reason I didn't join a lot of activities in high school, because even though they say they want to include us, they don't. They don't include our culture. They don't include us. We feel excluded. We don't feel like our voice is being heard. (Crystal)

This line of thought prompted Crystal on to her next example, which was an instance involving another student group at her high school, one which she had joined hoping to become more involved and make a difference in at the school:

And I was so excited about it! They asked us, my second year, my last year, senior year, they asked me to do a Spanish playlist for the assembly, for the freshmen orientation. And I did. I spent a couple of hours looking up songs, making sure that they were appropriate and all, and I handed them to the guy that was doing the music. Well, he never played any of the music. He only played the English music. He just didn't want to. He didn't at all want to play the Spanish music . . . He just didn't want to incorporate that. And I feel like that would've made the Latinos feel more welcome, because that's what we want. We want to feel welcome. We want to feel like we belong there. And I know that. a lot of people don't feel like that. They don't feel like they belong, don't feel like they can actually go up to someone to talk, or feel like they can get involved in an activity, because their voice just doesn't get heard. (Crystal)

In a later conversation, Crystal brought up yet another example of this kind of exclusion from a different school year. In this case, it was another lip sync contest in which she had tried to participate:

I know that one of our class presidents, I actually told our president, 'Oh, I have a couple of songs that we could include in lip sync' and I sent them to her. She received them but never used them. For the last one, there was a song that we voted on Facebook, and all the Hispanics chose, voted on one, which was the one that won . . . but it didn't get played either. So I just feel like if they would just do that little effort to actually include things that. I mean, it obviously got the highest vote, so why not just do it? Just because we [Hispanics] voted for it, doesn't mean . . . (Crystal)

While Crystal never directly identified the terms racism or prejudice, those concepts were clearly present as she discussed all of the times when she felt her attempts at cultural

representation were shot down. While racist comments were not directed at Crystal and her friends, the xenophobia of other students and staff members was obvious as she told what had happened. Overall, Crystal felt that these instances represented reasons why she became less and less involved. The blows added up as Crystal felt less and less included, which eventually discouraged her from joining school activities in which she was interested:

I definitely stopped going for that reason, too. Clubs are like that, too. Activities, I would have loved to have done more activities, but like I said, I just didn't really feel included. That's why I stopped going to, like, meetings for our class, class meetings. 'Oh, yeah, come!' [they would say] and then I would go and we wouldn't really get much [represented] out there. (Crystal)

The incidents regarding graduation, assemblies, and the lip sync contests seriously influenced Crystal's relationships with students and staff at the high school:

With the people that pushed ideas away, that they wouldn't even try to acknowledge them, that wouldn't even try to do something . . . Definitely I didn't have the same respect as I would have for someone else. I didn't look at them the same . . . I would see that you just didn't want to put that extra effort – you didn't really care much about that . . . Even with something small, I can see that your personality is not something I want to be related to. (Crystal)

Another participant, Juliet, also noted that the historical "Whiteness" of assemblies and other activities at the high school had created a climate in which the Latino students did not see those activities as something available to them. She said that when she was interested in joining an activity, she was deterred by her friends, who reinforced the idea that school activities were not for "them," but were for White kids:



I *wanted* to, but it's just the fact that, like, my friends. They never were into it. They were like, 'Aw, that's dumb.' Like, now that I think about it, I'm like, 'I wish I would have been part of more groups and more clubs.' I feel like everybody says that after high school, like 'I wish I would have been part of this and that . . . ' I honestly wish I would have, but it's just the fact that I was always scared to do things without my friends.

When I asked Juliet exactly why her friends did not want to get involved, she said it was "Cuz they thought it was dumb, or like for White people. For the nerdy kids and stuff like that." She went on to admit that she and other Latinos would denigrate their Latino peers who got involved:

I don't know, because I know some Latinos that I see in like student government... like the ones that I see, I'm like, 'Oh, they're super White-washed" they're not that Super-Mexican kid. (Juliet)

***Why is it like this and what can be changed?*** As the issue of underrepresentation arose, I was curious to know the students' thoughts on why the school culture tends to be so unrepresentative of Latinos, even though the school population is nearly half Latino. Crystal attributed peer and staff behavior to fear of change:

I feel like it's just what I said – that they feel like, 'Ok, so we all know English, so let's just get to that.' I feel like they're just afraid to do something different . . . to be . . . to stand out more. And that's what we should do – stand out! Make our school stand out for all the cultures that we have. For joining them all together. And I feel like that's something they're definitely afraid of, of changing something around a little. (Crystal)

I thought it was interesting that Crystal attributed staff and student behavior not to a label like racism or discrimination, but the more innocuous "fear of change." I had to wonder if this was a protective measure; perhaps it was a defense mechanism to protect her own feelings so that

she would not have to admit that others were biased against her culture. I asked Crystal what she thought would need to happen for attitudes to change and for cultures to be more equally represented. She was very focused on inclusion and bringing cultures together rather than just forcing Latino representation into the school:

Well, there's definitely all types of cultures at school. I just feel like more culture should be incorporated. Like back to that one thing, I wanted to do something for that one year, for senior year, I wanted to do something for lip sync that would incorporate all cultures, not just Hispanics, not just, you know, Caucasian – all of them. I wanted to put like 'Gangnam Style' – that's a different culture! Something different and just add a little bit of everything. Feel more welcome. Because there's definitely all cultures everywhere. I can see them. I can see all different kind of people, different kinds of personalities. I just feel like, um, how do I say this?? Hmmm. I can't think of the word I'm missing. But we should have more programs that are more mixtures, I guess . . . anything that we could just join all cultures together. (Crystal)

Perhaps not wanting to share only negative memories about school activities, or perhaps using a defense mechanism of squashing negative memories into the past, Crystal seemed to be trying to remember a positive experience to share with me during her interviews. In her entire high school career, there was one assembly that she felt represented her cultural heritage and it stands out to Crystal as vivid memory:

I liked the Ballet Folklórico – that one was awesome. And I know a lot of the people that I hanged out with, they really liked that. They really felt connected to that. They felt something familiar. I also heard that was the last dance that they were going to let the people [Ballet] do, though. That's another bad thing. But even with just that dance, we

felt really connected. We felt happy to see that. We liked seeing that . . . When we *do* see something from our culture, see, we do feel really happy. But most of the time, you're so used to the other stuff, so you don't feel anything different. But then this was unexpected when you see something different, you're like, 'Oh, that was awesome! I like that they're putting that in there.' (Crystal)

Crystal's recollection of the one time she remembered Latino culture being represented simply highlighted for her how rare of an experience it actual was to see Latino culture being celebrated school-wide. Overall, she felt that a more demographically equal representation would help to change the way Latino students feel about getting involved:

If we can just have that 50/50, if we can actually *see* that 50/50, I think that would make it way better. Definitely. Definitely would get more of the Latinos included. (Crystal)

Clearly, the two female participants spoke the most about cultural representation at school and in activities, with Crystal delving into a variety of experiences. When it came to the male participants, Ben spoke more about race relations in general, such as throughout the country and the world. Daniel was the only participant who did not identify that race/ethnicity held any importance for him in terms of the school culture he had experienced:

I probably feel the people, because even though they were like from different backgrounds, like from different races and everything, it was still like this united school. Like when we had to, you know, we stuck together as a school. And other schools, a lot of schools don't do that. They have a lot of problems with their school. You know, at ---  
----- [the high school], I didn't really see many people having problems with each other there. Everybody just kind of got along. And maybe you didn't know them that well, but you knew who they were, so . . . (Daniel)

When Daniel did talk about various segregated groups that existed, he didn't ascribe much weight to them:

So, it's kind of like, um, like . . . you do have groups and everything, but just you stay to yourself and everything. It's like everything's all right, because you have your own group, you hang out with them. Like, you have your own group that you hang out with, but you also talk to people from different groups, but that's when you guys are in class or something. You guys don't hang out with each other's groups, like just one on one with each other. So you had like a lot of friends, but you always had like that group that you hung out with. (Daniel)

Juliet also addressed the groups that existed at the high school, noting that she had seen the self-segregating groups change over time:

It has changed a lot. I remember my freshman year, I remember like the 'gangster Mexicans' would hang out, kinda by where your room is, in that south hall by the little loop, that's where the gangster Mexicans would hang out. And then like, the other gang Mexicans would hang out by the bridge. The White people would hang out in the Commons area, and then like some, like, the other 5%, would hang it in other random spots everywhere here and there. And I remember being part of those Mexican groups that would hang out by that hallway. It was weird because you could tell that people would like separate themselves. And I feel like now, that little group of Mexicans still hang out in that little loop, but I feel like everybody else has been mixed and they just don't see it that way [separated] anymore. Because I know my cousin and a lot of his friends are Mexicans, but they hang out with like a lot of White people, with Black

people, they hang out with like a lot of people, so it's no longer like, this group of Mexicans, this group of White . . . I feel like it's a lot better, honestly. (Juliet)

**Issues with race and ethnicity.** In this section, I will use the term “racism,” as it is generally used in common conversation, to refer to any instances of ethnic, linguistic, or racial disparaging and/or discrimination. This includes the concepts of xenophobia and nativism, which refer to negative feelings or actions against immigrants and/or foreign/non-native persons (Yakushko, 2009), and racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2009), which were addressed in the review of literature related to this study.

***Recognizing instances of racism: A difficult task.*** It was fascinating to see the manner in which participants talked about school and local culture in terms of their own experiences with racism. What was strange about it was that, initially, several said that they had not personally experienced racism, but then they discussed it later and provided clear examples of racial and ethnic discrimination and/or bullying. An example of this was a comment in which Ben first denied ever seeing racism at school, but then in the next breath stated that he had experienced racism:

With school . . . like school, you don't really hear it. I guess it depends who you hang out with. I never see it... Well, I do see it, and I say something, but like, I don't say anything racial. I'm just like, 'You shouldn't be saying that... We're all the same.' (Ben)

An exchange with Crystal showed the difficulty the participants have in defining and acknowledging the racial issues they deal with on a daily basis. At first Crystal wanted to place herself away from racism. When asked if she had noticed any racial or cultural tensions, she said, “I think I haven't yet. But for sure, a lot of people . . .” She trailed off and then discussed what one might call a “safe” topic regarding race, which was how she had noticed that people

look at her and expect her to know “Mexican” things because of her outward appearance. A bit later, she came back to the topic of racism on her own and we had this exchange:

Crystal: I’m sure I’ve had, like, racism. That’s for sure.

Researcher: Like what?... Could you describe some times?

Crystal: Oh, see, that’s the thing. I know I have a story, but . . .

The previous interchange, while short, felt very meaningful to me because Crystal was so incredibly quick to say that she had definitely experienced racism, but then she was unable to think of an example, even after taking a few minutes to think about it. What could this mean? My two instincts were that (a) she experiences instances of racism/xenophobia, particularly through microaggressions, on a daily basis throughout her life, making it hard to pick out any specific instances; and (b) the “bigger” or more shocking examples of racism she has experienced have been painful enough to shove down inside her.

As the discussion continued, Crystal spoke in generalities of typical types of things that have happened to her many times, such as feeling that people are judging her, noticing changing attitudes, and other daily occurrences, rather than a specific, “racist” memory. She mentioned that what she gets is a general feeling of racism, “Just for being Latino. They think that we’re illegal, we shouldn’t be here.”

I asked Crystal if anyone had ever said those types of words directly to her, and she replied again in the generalities that she experiences frequently:

I’m sure I have received it. Yeah, I get that . . . You can tell when someone’s being racist or just mean kind of thing. So, yeah, I’ve gotten that feeling of racism a lot. Just people that . . . they think that they’re right when they judge you by your looks. (Crystal)

During this conversation, I kept foremost in my mind that racial experience could be a sensitive topic, and I did not want to make Crystal feel uncomfortable. However, it seemed to me that her inability to give specific memories had more to do with the fact that things happen so often rather than the fact that she felt uncomfortable sharing. I asked her if she could explain what it was that gave her that “feeling of racism” that she had mentioned:

Well, for one, they’re different with like certain types of people. Like, let’s say they’re talking to someone from their certain type of race, and they’re all friendly and all . . . and then they come to you, and their attitude completely changes. Like you’re not worth talking to kind of thing. They just change out of nowhere. It’s like, ‘What?!’ (Crystal)

***Nature of racial/ethnic comments/insensitivity.*** Some of the racial tensions that the participants experienced came from small, daily experiences, or microaggressions. For example, people making seemingly innocuous comments that bring up issues of race and ethnicity. Crystal stated that it bothered her that “some people, actually, they expect you to, like, know certain things just because you’re Latino.” She disliked the feeling that people were making assumptions about her based on her ethnicity. Particularly, she did not like it when people assumed she should know something just because she was Mexican:

Like, ‘Oh, like, how can you not know what this type of food is?’ or what this word means, or like things that supposedly are obvious for us to know . . . But it’s not that obvious! Because we grew up here! (laughs) So, we might have that culture still in us, but we were raised in a . . . how do you say? . . . In two different ones, kind of, put together kind of thing. So we don’t have fully that Latina culture, not fully at least. (Crystal)

When people made incorrect assumptions about what Crystal should know or what her culture should be, it made her feel uncomfortable and inadequate, like it was highlighting how she might not be Mexican enough. This was an example of a microaggression in which the speaker did not intend to cause pain and probably did not even realize they are saying something racial.

Another participant, Ben, had obviously thought a lot more about racial issues, but he was also quick to move the discussion into generalities or more of a world-view rather than his own personal experiences. When I asked him what he thought about race, he stated:

Race is always an issue. Not just in America, but in other parts of the world. Race is a bad thing . . . No, *racism* is a bad thing, not race . . . You know, it's still going to happen no matter what. I've always been through that. I've been through a lot of racism before.

(Ben)

At that point, I asked Ben to expand on the last statement he had made, about having been through a lot of racism. However, at that point, he did not discuss personal experiences with race and instead talked about how he had been bullied about his weight when he was younger. After discussing those experiences for a few minutes, he found his own way back to the topic of race and finally mentioned personal experience:

Like, since I was born over there [Mexico], they'll be like, 'Oh, you *beaner*, you should go back to Mexico where you're from' you know. Like, ever since I've been here, I've always gotten that. (Ben)

I then asked Ben to describe where or who those reactions were coming from:

Anywhere. Even just by not them saying anything, but by the way they look at you.

They're just like, 'Oh, you're a thug. You're a gangster.' Like, where I live. My neighborhood is . . . there's not that many Mexicans. (Ben)



Ben went on to describe some of the feelings he gets when walking around his neighborhood. It should be noted that Ben lived in the downtown area of the local school district boundaries, which was physically close to the high school and had a much different ethnic makeup than the outer-lying areas a bit further from the high school, where the majority of the Latino students lived. Ben's neighborhood was primarily White, and he described feelings he gets as he walks to school, the bus, or to friends' houses:

A lot of them stare at me really weird. They think that I'm going to rob them, I think. Because I always have my backpack with me. It's because I go to ----- [a nearby city] a lot to go see her [his girlfriend]. And I take my charger with me, but I don't like carrying it, so I take my backpack. So they feel like I'm going to rob them. That's what I think. And also, the cops pass around there a lot. So, they like stare at you really weird. And I've had that as well, like cops stare at you really weird. But I've never been stopped or anything. (Ben)

When I asked Juliet if she had any memories of past racial issues, she immediately responded: "I HAVE!" but then stopped as she had difficulty thinking of an example. She pondered it for a few minutes: "Where did I feel that way? . . ." Like Ben and Crystal, it took time to process her life experiences in terms of race. After a few moments, a memory popped into her head regarding a recent trip. Juliet discussed how she had experienced feelings of racial judgment in a restaurant even when nothing was said aloud:

I think it was . . . Actually, when I went to Seattle, it kind of felt like that. When me and my cousin went, I'm like, 'Look! We're the only Mexis here!' Or, Oh! I went to this restaurant in Seattle called Serious Pie, and it's kinda like fancy and kinda pricey, and we went in there and people were like, 'Who are these Mexi girls that we've never seen in

our lives? And then I would tell my cousin, I'm like, 'I think we're the ONLY Mexicans that have ever came in here before!' Like, 'cuz me and my cousin consider ourselves like, Super-Mexi and we're like [whispering] 'We're the only Mexicans in here!' 'We're probably like the first Mexicans that have ever gotten here!' (Juliet)

Juliet's internal monologue, in which she imagined what people were thinking based on the body language she observed, was very rich and honest. This same type of internal conversation appeared in a story she told about what it was like to have a White guest at her home. She shared how her stepfather anticipated White people's thoughts and how the family tended to deal with it by using humor whenever a White friend would come over:

So, now she's my cousin's girlfriend, and I know when she gets into the house my dad is like, 'What? There's a White person here!?' He gets kinda . . . 'Whaaa?' [surprised].

It's weird cuz we pay attention to her like, 'Wow, you're WHITE and you're with a buncha MEXICANS!' We'll make little comments, like, 'How does it feel to be in a room full of Mexicans?' [laughs] and we'll make stupid comments, we'll make dumb comments like that. (Juliet).

***Students' reactions to racism.*** The first clue regarding how students had been affected by the instances of racism and discrimination that they experience was how difficult it was for them to think of specific instances or memories regarding race. Only after some thought and more general discussion were they able to allow some past experiences to flow out. Often, it was obvious that the students had never consciously processed those incidents in terms of racism or discrimination. They had general thoughts on racism, such as racism in the world, but they needed time and space in order to process racism in their own lives. Overall, I got the impression that the participants had spent their lives dealing with racism by putting on a heavy

armor. When asked how they felt or how they dealt with these experiences, they all expressed that they “didn’t care,” “tried not to think about it,” and tried to stay positive. The participants clearly had a long history of pushing racial experiences down inside themselves. Here are some of the participants’ comments regarding how they felt about racism and how they had dealt with some of the experiences they had described. Juliet stated that she was not affected when she perceived racism or judgment against her:

Not really. Not really, because I feel like I just kind of was raised to not really care what other people think. And I don’t. When other people see me, I’m just like ‘Whatever.’ ‘You’re jealous.’ [laughs] (Juliet)

Ben felt that dwelling on racism was not necessarily helping society:

Yeah. I’ve got my own feelings towards how I feel about things. Even if I still get things like that [racism], I just ignore it. Like when I talk about peace and stuff, and like spreading positive messages, people think that’s corny, ‘whack’ . . . like, ‘Oh, you shouldn’t be talking about that – that’s stupid!’ But like, that’s what we need! We live in such a negative world and we don’t even see the positive side of it anymore. (Ben)

Ben continued to focus on positivity as his protective shield:

I feel like judging people isn’t a good thing. It’s wrong. But then again, it happens. But I never let it get to me. I ignore it. Like, I’ve always ignored negative responses. I always stay positive. I’ve always had a positive mindset. I always tell people, like if something’s going on, just to stay positive – don’t let the negative get to you. I don’t know, I’ve always been a positive person. (Ben)

Juliet took a more aggressive stance in terms of how she reacted in the face of racism:

Do I take it as offended? No, I just always take it kind of funny, like, ‘Whatever.’ Cuz like, why take that to heart? It’s, like, some people WISH they were Mexican! Some people wish they were White. Some people wish all these kind of different cultures and I’m just like I’m proud to be Mexican and . . . *I . . . Don’t . . . Care . . . !* I’m just like, whatever. (Juliet)

Crystal stated that she handled racism against herself by brushing it off, and the only time it bothered her was when it is directly not at her, but at someone she loved:

I try to ignore it. I mean, I don’t really care. As long as they don’t disrespect, like the family. (Crystal)

The effect of racism and racial issues on their family members was at times easier for the students to discuss. While it was hard for Ben to acknowledge that he himself had been experiencing racially charged situations, he was quick to talk about his dad’s experiences:

Yeah, my dad has had a lot of racial stuff before. Since he’s not from here, and him trying to speak English. So, it’s hard for him. That’s pretty much it. (Ben)

Juliet discussed how racial experience may be changing in the latest generation; her family’s physical appearance was changing due to family members having children with White partners. Her response was very complicated in that it revealed that she was proud of her Mexican appearance, yet realized how her lighter cousins might start to benefit from NOT looking Mexican:

But then sometimes I like that I don’t look super White, because I know that some of my family looks super White, with light hair, green eyes. And it’s like, a lot of my nieces that are getting born, they’re like third generation now, they look White because they have light brown hair, green eyes. My baby nephew has like light blue eyes and brown

hair... So I feel like in a way its' easier, because maybe someone racist sees a Mexican and they're kind of rude to them, like purposely, but if they see someone Mexican that looks White and they don't suspect them, they might be, like, a thousand times nicer. So I think it just depends. (Juliet)

When I asked Juliet to describe a time she had felt the type of rudeness, her response was equally complex. She did not want to admit that she had experienced the discrimination she had just mentioned:

Umm . . . honestly, I feel like I haven't. Well, that I've noticed, no. I haven't noticed anything like that because it doesn't really affect me even if they were to say something like that. I'm just like, 'Whatever' it's a hair flip! [laughs] (Juliet)

Even though she had already related instances of racism in her life earlier in the interview process, it was more natural and comfortable for Juliet to deflect the idea of racism and resort to her protective armor in the "it doesn't affect me" attitude.

***Participants actively eschew being judgmental.*** One positive effect that experiences with racism seemed to have had on the participants was that each one expressed a conscious desire NOT to be judgmental themselves. Obviously, their discussions of racial joking and judgment revealed that they, too, had at times have passed judgment, but overall the participants were actively trying not to be discriminatory toward others:

I love talking to anyone. I have a friendly personality. I don't care who you are, if you're short, you're tall. I don't look at your race. I look at who you are. So, I've had pretty good relationships with all types of cultures. (Crystal)

And our neighbor, she's Mexican. And then our other neighbors are, like, White. And they're nice. They're very nice. I accept all people for who they are, always. I've never

been one to say things like that. I feel like we're all the same . . . I've always been . . . I don't want to shove my beliefs down people's throats, because I feel like if you do that, it's wrong. I don't know . . . I accept everyone for who they are. Like, I don't judge anyone. You shouldn't be one to judge; we're all the same. (Ben)

I feel like, for the fact that I never, like, felt embarrassed of my culture, and I would always talk to everybody else, like . . . I feel like everybody was equal to me. Nobody was I like, 'Oh, that's the rich White kids,' and 'That's the hicks' and 'That's the Mexicans.' I always talked to everyone like a normal person. I was never like, 'Oh, I don't want to talk to them cuz they're hicks.' I don't know, that just never even came into my head. I can't even answer that question right because I never saw anybody for like, 'Oh, they're hicks,' 'Oh, they're Mexicans.' (Juliet)

Juliet discussed how understanding that racist attitudes often originate in the home had helped her deal with racism, and how her own attitudes had luckily been shaped in a positive way by her parents:

I think it honestly all starts at home of how their parents are. Because I know my parents, my mom and dad, well, mostly my mom . . . she never raised me to be like 'Oooh, those Black people over there – they're ghetto, they're bad people, they're really rude, they're all gangsters,' or 'Oh, look at those groups of Mexicans over there – they're all gangsters, don't mess with them.' She never made me see them like that. She always told me, 'How they treat you, you treat them.' So, mostly it all starts at home, how people see groups of people. (Juliet)

***Conclusions about racial/ethnic issues.*** Of the four participants, only one did not eventually discuss personal experiences with racism. Daniel, when asked about racial

experiences in his life was extremely brief and dismissive, stating he had not noticed any racism anywhere at the high school: “No, not really. Nothing like that.” He noted that some people made comments about racism and racial tensions between groups, but that this had not been his experience:

I actually liked the school. A lot of people say they don’t like it, but I don’t see why.

(Daniel)

Daniel declined to discuss the issue further, feeling that there was nothing more to say about it. However, he did later talk at length about the previously discussed intra-group bullying and judgment within the Latino community, such as calling people white-washed.

Ben’s final reflections on racism were profound and also depressing. He mentioned to me that he believes “the American dream is just an illusion.” I asked him what he meant by that, and if he had his own version of the American dream. He responded that no, he did not have a version, because the American Dream doesn’t exist:

Naah. I feel like my definition of America is me being in a jungle, fighting off like leopards and stuff. I feel like Tarzan. That’s what I feel like . . . I’m fighting, like, racism and stuff. And like, just prejudice all the time. Barriers. It’s like it’s divided into two, and I’m just in the middle, like ‘What am I doing?’ . . . It’s like you have the people who know what’s going on and they’re afraid, and then there’s the people who ignore it, and then there’s just me: You know what’s going on, but you feel like if you speak out, something’s going to happen. But then, like, I don’t know . . . (Ben)

I then asked Ben what he thought about being a leader against racism. He replied that taking on that responsibility was too daunting for him, personally:

Ben: I feel like being a leader is too much. People depend on you too much. I just want to spread a positive message for people in our times, and just be positive. But I feel like if you speak out, it'll cost you.

Researcher: What would it cost?

Ben: Your life. There's people who spoke out and we haven't heard from them since.

**Teacher-student relationships.** When asked about their school experiences, the vast majority of the participants' comments focused on teachers. For the most part, they discussed teachers they had known in their more recent middle school and high school years, with a few participants remembering teachers from elementary school. Teacher relationships were absolutely the focus of all of the participants' discussions about their teachers. Not once did a participant reference a classroom activity in anything more than generalities (reading, playing games). The participants' comments were completely focused on the relationships, positive or negative, with their teachers. Daniel revealed the importance of teacher-student relationships when he shared that his one major fear about high school was that it would mean having to build all new connections. He said that he found high school "a little scary, because I knew that I would have to make new relationships with teachers . . . I'd have to meet new people."

The importance of building relationships with students cannot be stressed enough. Interviews with every participant highlighted how essential the teacher-student relationship, or lack thereof, was in terms of how they perceived their school experiences. Those relationships were also important in terms of how effective a teacher could be in helping students succeed academically. Daniel expressed how teachers who had created positive connections were on equal ground with his family in terms of their influence on his success. The teachers he had



relationships with were able to hold him to higher expectations and give him the push he needed to graduate:

Um, I would probably say my family is a big part, but the teachers are also a big part because they push me. They give you that push that you need. And then sometimes you're like, "Oh, my GOD, just STOP!" [laughs]. But now, like you said, I graduated; I made it. Now looking back, it's like, I'm glad that they actually did that. It might have bugged me back then, but if they wouldn't have done it, maybe I wouldn't have finished. So, same thing with my family, like they gave me that motivation that I needed to . . . to actually finish high school. Just everything that they would say. (Daniel)

In the next section, the participants' stories and comments highlight their experiences with positive teacher relationships, as well as how relationships were destroyed. With each participant, there were experiences on both ends of the spectrum. In addition, the participants gave their advice about what they felt made certain teachers effective, and what they thought others could do to create relationships with kids.

***Stories of positive relationships and effective teachers.*** The participants invariably showcased how the relationship was the key in terms of a teacher being a "good" or effective teacher. Strong relationships made it comfortable for the participants to ask for help with class content. In this section, I have compiled some of the major points the students shared in terms of what it means to be a good teacher.

Crystal explained that her positive relationships with teachers usually stemmed from her feeling that they both liked her and found her helpful in class:

It felt good . . . knowing that they . . . like, knowing that I'm doing good. I like to help. Knowing that I can help that person is such an amazing feeling. I just love that feeling.

And then being friends with teachers helped me a lot in being comfortable with them and being able to get my assignments done. Because sometimes I wouldn't understand what the assignment would mean. (Crystal)

Ben discussed what teachers had done in the past to make him feel supported:

That even though, like, they see that the student is slacking all time, or even if they see that the student is trying their best, they don't get impatient with them. They talk to the student and they let them know; they work with them as much as they can, just to see them, like, succeed. I feel like that's some teachers at the high school, for sure. (Ben)

Ben continued with some advice for how teachers could try to build the types of positive relationships he had talked about:

I feel like, checking up on the student. Letting them know what's going on and stuff, would help. Like, I've always had . . . it's hard for me to work with a teacher because I feel like I'm going to make them mad if I do something wrong. So I've always had that mentality that, 'Well, they're going to get mad if I answer something wrong...' (Ben)

When asked to describe what it was that made her best teachers so great, Juliet said:

Probably the fact that they never made me feel like 'Oh, you're dumb and your second language is English' like, 'Oh, you should know more by now', and stuff like that. Like, they never made me feel uncomfortable about being in that class. And I feel like they both, like you [the researcher] and Ms. ----- [middle school ELD teacher], both pushed more into, like, learning. Like you pushed it more, like kind of forced it IN me, like, which was like super-hard for me [laughs] but I mean, I feel like you guys were just more pushy about it, but like in a GOOD way, where I actually liked learning. (Juliet)

Crystal referenced how her positive relationships with teachers helped her to push negative experiences down in her memory. She chose to identify with the positives in her educational experience, such as cultivating great relationships with teachers:

I always liked school, actually. Even with those bad memories, I try to just push that to the side and keep the good memories of school. I've always tried to be involved with teachers, mainly. I still go visit them to this day. I like helping them out a lot. I've got a lot of good reviews from my teachers: 'Oh, yeah, she's such a good helper!' or 'She always wants to help. She's so patient.' I've always received those compliments from teachers. It's always the same compliments. (Crystal)

***Feelings of comfort.*** It's the feeling, not the specific content taught or conversations had, that creates relationships. The feelings that teachers invoke in students are important – especially comfort, in terms of feeling comfortable to ask questions. Crystal mentioned that her relationship with her sixth grade teacher was so positive that she would skip recess in order to spend time with her in the classroom. However, Crystal said that she couldn't remember exactly what was so entertaining about spending recess with the teacher: "I don't really remember. It's been a long time. . . She was just really . . . she was the lovable teacher. Really fun teacher that you got along with, and you didn't mind spending time with her and being in that classroom." The key of this memory is that Crystal does not even remember what they talked about. It was the attitude and feeling that the teacher engendered that made Crystal feel so comfortable and has stayed with Crystal all of these years.

Juliet mentioned a group of four favorite high school teachers that included her two ELD teachers (one of whom was the researcher). She said these were her favorites and that she felt

comfortable with them, but that when people asked her why those were her favorite teachers, she had always felt at a loss to explain herself with specific details:

I mean, I know I liked you [the interviewer], Ms. ---[ELD teacher], Ms. ---- [Spanish teacher], Ms. ----[online learning staff member] are my four favorite ones that I can truly remember. And then they ask you, ‘Why?’ and I’m like, ‘Uh . . . I don’t know . . . They were a good help?’ They were funny; they were relaxed. (Juliet)

Later during the interview process, Juliet revisited this group of four teachers and went into greater depth about them:

I feel like, with these four teachers, they actually cared in a way, more of teaching you. They cared more TO teach you. They cared more to help you. And I feel like they would interact with you by asking you, ‘Oh, how was your weekend? What did you do?’ or ‘Did you do your homework?’ Just kind of asking you personal questions without getting too informed . . . But I feel like they were more engaging with students than other teachers were. Instead of being [monotone voice] ‘This is what we’re doing today . . .’ I feel like there are some teachers that are just like, ‘I’m just gonna talk and if they don’t listen, it’s up to them.’ But a good teacher is like, ‘You need to listen, this is gonna benefit you,’ like, ‘Do your work; you’ve got it!’ And it kind of motivated me in a way because they weren’t like other teachers where they were like, ‘You know what? If you don’t want to do it, then don’t do it’. And that’s when I would be like, ‘Oh, whatever. Then I don’t want to do it.’ And my other [good] teachers would be like, ‘Oh, come on. You’ve got it!’ And they would set step-by-step, kind of like wanting to help you, and be like, ‘Come after school and I’ll help you with this.’ I feel like it’s just the teacher themselves engaging with the student. (Juliet)

Daniel described his middle school ELD teacher as one of the first who really provided him with the sense that a teacher-student relationship could provide comfort and help. He said,

“She was actually the first teacher that I felt comfortable with, just being with her. So she really like stood out at ----- Middle School because she really helped me a lot.”

(Daniel)

Two of the interviewees specifically noted that one-on-one help was something that built great relationships and that they could tell when teachers were happy to spend extra time working with them one-on-one:

They’re willing to help me and they have patience. That they understand that sometimes I don’t get those words or don’t get the assignment. And they have that patience with me and they explain it better, and they do one-on-one with me. You actually see that they want to do a one-on-one and they want to help you. They like giving you that help. Because I’ve had a couple teachers that you can tell that they don’t really want to do anything one-on-one or anything like that. (Crystal)

Yeah, like when you’re kind of having trouble, they’ll still believe in you and stuff. Yeah. That’s how I feel. Like, I feel like, I work better with someone that is patient. Because I like working one on one with someone, by myself, when there’s no one there, because that makes me feel less nervous, and less shy. (Ben)

In describing how she could tell if teachers did/didn’t want to help, Crystal said it was a variety of factors, not just the words teachers say out loud:

You get that vibe. You get that feeling that . . . you feel comfortable with them. You feel comfortable asking them questions. Because if I don’t feel comfortable with a teacher, I won’t ask questions. That’s a bad thing because I wouldn’t understand the assignment or

the homework or whatever, and I wouldn't ask a question because I wouldn't feel comfortable with that teacher. (Crystal).

When asked what made her feel *uncomfortable* with teachers, Crystal said:

Their attitude. Their attitude was not something I wanted around... not something I can communicate with. It's just... yeah... I just don't really like negative too much, either. (Crystal)

***Perceptions of helpfulness.*** Often, the relationship cornerstone had to do with how much or how little the participant perceived someone was interested in helping:

Like there's some teachers that don't really pay attention to the ones that are struggling. I feel like they only pay attention to the ones that are doing good. But then again, there are some teachers that actually help the students. (Ben)

When asked about her ELD teachers, Crystal said, "Hmmm . . . ELD teachers were pretty hard sometimes. I've always had good connections with my ELD teachers. They've always been really nice." It was interesting that Crystal labeled her ELD teachers as hard but at the same time nice, which is not always what one might expect a student to say about "hard" teachers. When asked to go more into depth about what made her ELD teachers "nice," Crystal explained that "they were helpful, yeah. They were patient. They knew that I didn't know the language." It was the connection with the ELD teachers that she mentioned first. Even when she felt they were "hard" teachers, the relationships and connections were what she deemed most important, making it fine that the classes seemed hard.

Daniel specifically discussed how his ELD teachers during middle school provided both comfort and support through offering help and anticipating when he needed help:

I think that they understood when I couldn't do something, they would try to help me more than other people, because they knew . . . they knew about that I couldn't really speak English very well. (Daniel)

Daniel also talked about how the helpfulness of his teachers and his comfort with them were intertwined. At the middle level, he appreciated that some of his teachers were aware of his English proficiency issues and were willing to put extra effort into helping him:

I think that they understood when I couldn't do something, they would try to help me more than other people, because they knew . . . they knew about that I couldn't really speak English very well. (Daniel)

As he moved into high school, Daniel was worried about the transition to new, unknown teachers. He found that the more teachers offered help, the more he became comfortable with them, and as he became more comfortable, he started to accept that help:

I think it was mostly because I got to know all the teachers that were helping me. I think just knowing them kind of helped me, made me feel more comfortable with them. It kind of made me feel like, 'Oh, you know, can you help me with this?' So I think that was like, a really big part. Because going into freshman year, I was like, 'Oh, I don't know you,' but once I got to know them it's like, it kind of changed my view of it. (Daniel)

***Thoughts on bilingual teachers.*** Some might wonder if Spanish-speaking student would have stronger relationships with bilingual teachers and staff. In this study, none of the participants identified bilingualism as a major factor in whether or not they had a positive relationship with their teachers. Only one participant referenced teachers' language abilities at all. I will share Crystal's comments about bilingual teachers and staff because they clearly illustrate two important points: (a) being bilingual has the potential to be a wonderfully positive,

relationship-building factor, but (b) being bilingual definitely does not guarantee that a positive relationship will exist with a student.

Crystal remembers her relationships with bilingual teachers at a critical point in her education. She particularly remembers a husband and wife duo who taught her in 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades when she was in elementary school and still unsure of her English skills:

Both of them were great teachers. They were also bilingual. Uh, and I just remember being really close with them because I KNEW I could communicate with them. I felt that I could go ask them anything, and because they were bilingual, they could understand my Spanglish! [laughs] Which was very important, because when I was learning, English was hard . . . (Crystal)

One of the teachers Crystal mentioned was her 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in a bilingual education program in which they alternated the primary language weekly, teaching for one week in English and one week in Spanish. The fact that her 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher was bilingual stuck out in her memory because it was a unique and helpful quality, but his language ability was not the first quality that made him such a positive memory for her:

I just really liked that he was honest with you. He didn't . . . how can I say? He was just really himself. I can see that, and I love being able to communicate with a teacher and being able to actually feel comfortable to ask questions, mainly... And him being a bilingual one, that was another thing that made me comfortable. (Crystal)

Having a bilingual teacher was meaningful to Crystal, both because it was a rather rare experience throughout her education and also because she remembers the comfort level having a Spanish-speaking teacher afforded her in those difficult early years learning English. However, other experiences had shown Crystal that a person's ability to speak Spanish was not always an



important factor in relationship building. Crystal went on to discuss two very negative relationships that existed with Spanish-speaking staff members she had known in the past. The first was an office secretary at her middle school. Crystal was very passionate in her memory of how much she had disliked this staff member, to the point that she felt she had to actively censor herself to avoid cursing during the interview:

She was SO MEAN. And that's it, cuz I don't want to say 'another word.' She's SO mean. And she was, I'm guessing she was a Latina, too, because I think she knew Spanish. Now, she's the kind of Latina that people don't really feel comfortable going up to because she was just mean, just plain mean. I remember I got hurt once. I think it was . . . Anyways, I went in and she was really rude. She didn't care that I was in there or whatever. Then the principal walks in and she was like, "Oh, how are you FEELING?" [fake sweet voice] 'Are you feeling better?' I'm like, 'Five minutes ago you didn't even care that I was here! Just cuz the principal walks in . . .' Then the principal walks out, so you forget about me again. Uh uh. I mean, I know for a fact that a lot of Latinos didn't like her. Definitely. She was just cranky. [laughs] (Crystal)

Crystal continued this line of thought as she reflected further back on another Spanish-speaking teacher with whom she had a bad relationship:

Another Latina teacher, for some reason she didn't like me. Only teacher who didn't like me, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Remember, I told you I had the bilingual classes? One week and one week? She is the only one that gave me a well, a detention, they're called here. Demerit probably over there. She's the only one who gave me one. For some reason, she didn't like me. She was also Latina. And I actually felt closer to my English speaking teacher than to her, my Spanish speaking teacher. . . I never really felt a connection with her. She

wasn't really a teacher I would go up to . . . I STILL visit my other teacher! She's still there . . . both of my second grade teachers are still there, but I only go to my English-speaking one. She's really sweet. (Crystal)

What was especially notable about these stories is that being Latino/a did not in any way guarantee that a staff member could connect with a Latino/a student. I think this is very important in terms of hiring practices. While it is absolutely important to promote equity and representation in hiring practices, a person's capability to create relationships with students is always of the utmost importance. Being bilingual or being of the same ethnic group/race as students may be a benefit, but only if the individual in question is also excellent at their job and relationships with students.

***Stories of negative relationships and interactions with staff.*** As exemplified in Crystal's experiences with Latino/a staff members, there is no single quality that can ensure positive teacher-student relationships. It is important for teachers to understand that relationship building and maintaining can be complicated, so I felt that it was better to let the students speak and share some of the stories that came up when I asked them to tell me about any negative school memories they might have had. In getting to the root of "what" makes or breaks a teacher-student relationship, the negative qualities proved difficult to break down into a specific list of qualities. The students' stories do a much better job of showing what a negative relationship looks like in the eyes of a student.

During a discussion of her middle school classes Crystal shared this negative teacher/student interaction that occurred in a remedial language arts course that she was put into due to her lower English skills:

That one was just a waste of time, honestly, that classroom. The teacher wasn't helpful. He actually screamed at me. Um, he had issues. Yeah, I remember exactly what happened. The little cards, like the pride cards? I was just writing my name, because we were in a group. None of them wanted to really do anything, none of the people in the group, so I couldn't get my work done, either, you know, goofing off and all. So I decided to you know, well, 'While they're goofing off, at least I'm going to start writing my name' why not just write my name? That's all – I was just writing my name on the little pride card. And he comes up to me and he's like, 'You're not doing your work!'... He took me outside and he started to yell at me, saying that 'That's not okay,' that what I was doing was wrong. The next day, I believe, that I had him, uh the next day he apologized actually. He was like, 'I'm sorry that I used my outdoor voice' and I honestly thought that it was BS, so I didn't really pay attention much to his apology, because I didn't believe him. So . . . that was just a waste of my time and I didn't really learn anything. (Crystal)

Reflecting on this same incident later, Crystal decided that it was not the man's yelling that bothered her so much as it was his dishonesty. She did not believe his apology was sincere, so she ceased to have respect for him and stopped paying any attention and got nothing out of the class:

With everyone, honestly, if you don't see that honesty then you don't really know that what they're talking about is truthful, so you don't know if it's worth it to keep that conversation going. And they're going to be lying to you, sooooo . . . (Crystal)

To me, this negative teacher-student interaction as recalled by Crystal showed the fragility of the relationship between teacher and student. She does not mention what their relationship was like

prior to the incident, but whether it was positive, negative, or neutral, it is clear that, from Crystal's perspective, this one day completely destroyed their relationship and additionally destroyed any chance of her investing in the coursework.

When asked about any negative school experiences, Juliet immediately recalled a teacher with whom she felt she had had a horrible relationship. She admitted that she had responded badly herself, but she also believed that the teacher's behavior had caused her to behave in a way she normally would not have:

I can remember my English teacher, but I can't even remember his name because I didn't like him that much. He was just SO RUDE. I felt like every time I would ask him a question, he would make me feel super stupid, like, [condescendingly] 'How do you not know this?' or 'Come ON. You need to pay attention' and I'm just like, 'I'm asking you a question!' He would always make me feel so dumb and it would make me never want to be in his class and I'd never pay attention . . . I think it just has to do with how you are as a person as to how people treat you. I mean, I know with my English teacher, I had something to do with him to be . . . for him to act like that with me all the time. Because I was rude because I felt like he was coming off rude to me, so I would be like ten times as rude, like reacting. (Juliet)

When asked if she could describe what it was that made relationships negative, Juliet was very focused on the idea of rudeness and described what happened when teachers seemed rude to her general:

Just the way they approach you when they want to like, correct you, it's like totally rude. Or when they ask you like 'Oh can you please be quiet?' and I know I talk a lot, but it's like, [softer, nicer voice] 'Okay, Juliet, you really need to pipe down now' or 'You need

to be quiet,’ but some teachers were super rude and like, [harsh voice] ‘Can you BE QUIET?’ or ‘Can you just leave the classroom?’ instead of being like, you know . . . I mean, some of it had to be . . . some of it was my fault. But I feel like just the way they approach people has a lot to do with it [relationships]. Their tone of voice and their body language. (Juliet)

When the expression “body language” came out of Juliet’s mouth, it seemed to trigger something in her memory. She then relayed this story:

I remember, I think it was like my freshman year, one of my workshop teachers was SO rude to me. I feel like no matter what I said or no matter how hard I tried to be nice, she would always give me this horrible body language. It was like, ‘Uck...’

As she said the last phrase, “Uck,” Juliet was pretending to be the workshop teacher. Juliet acted out how the teacher had appeared to her, rolling her eyes, pursing her lips, and saying “Uck” with disdain, as if Juliet had been a total waste of her time.

Ben also shared a negative relationship that he remembered from the past. He talked about what it was like trying to ask for help in a math class, and then moved into describing other experiences that had felt similar:

Like, I stayed after class, and then I felt like I was making the teacher mad, so I felt bad.

I was like, “ohhh . . .” [dejectedly] . . . Because math has always been a struggle for me.

I hate math. And, like, I felt like every time I work with a teacher with math, I feel like if

I answer something wrong, I’m making them mad and stressed out. And that puts more stress on me, so, I feel like . . . (Ben)

Because Ben had mentioned that he thought he was making the teachers mad and stressed out, I asked him to describe how he knew they felt that way. I was very surprised when his answer

was direct and brutal. He replied, “Well, when they say that they shouldn’t be wasting their time being there, or whatever.” I was so shocked by Ben’s answer that I actually had to stop and ask him, incredulously, “Someone SAID that to you?” He replied as if it were normal:

I’ve heard that before. The only other thing that I’ve experienced is the teachers’ facial expressions. That’s how I feel. I’ve heard some teachers say that, though: ‘Oh, you’re wasting my time.’ Yeah. (Ben)

For the most, the participants discussed relationships with teachers, but there were times when other school staff members surfaced in conversation as well. Most notably, Daniel perceived that throughout his school years, he had been a target for school staff. He discussed how he felt that administrators had always assumed he was a bad kid:

I’d probably say the principals were always a pain . . . because they, I don’t know, I just feel like they always had it out for me, because they would blame me for stuff that I didn’t even do. And it wasn’t like minor stuff. It was like major stuff . . . I remember once, at NAMS, there was this whole thing about people selling drugs and stuff, yeah. They called me into the office and they said that I was doing it. They didn’t even ASK me if I was, they just assumed that I did, so they were going to suspend me and everything because they thought that I was doing. And then a couple days later they found who was actually doing it. (Daniel)

The previous student voices reflected relationship experiences that were completely negative, but one story a participant shared was a bit different. Crystal was discussing how she attributed part of her failure of algebra to her problems with the teacher, when she suddenly revealed that this was a teacher with whom she had initially felt a very strong positive

connection. Her conversation about this teacher reveals how maintaining positive teacher-student relationships can be just as important as creating them in the first place:

I remember my first algebra teacher, I went up to her once, to ask her a question, and her answer was, 'You're supposed to know how to do this.' And her second answer was, 'It's in the book.' So, I stared at her, and I'm like, I wouldn't be asking you if I knew how to do it! I wouldn't be asking you... I wouldn't need your help. Plus, you're the teacher! You need to teach me the subject. If I don't know it, then you're not really teaching me anything. I ended up getting a D, I think my first semester, and the second semester, I totally failed it. And I love math! Math is MY THING. And I didn't pass that one.

(Crystal)

It was when I asked Crystal to discuss their bad connection in more detail that she revealed that this was actually a teacher she had had the year before and with whom she had initially experienced a great relationship:

See, that was a weird one. I had a good connection with her at first. I had her for freshman year, for math workshop. I learned a lot, I passed my test. I actually liked her a lot. I was so psyched to have her for Algebra II, because I was like, 'I know her; I know she's a good teacher', I had that connection with her. She was amazing. And then I get to Algebra II, and she's one of the teachers that teaches fast, too, kind of hard to keep up with her sometimes. But then when she kept on doing this, not just to me, but to other students, that kind of got to me. I'm like, 'Well, we're asking you for a reason, not just cuz we want to bug you.'" (Crystal)

Looking back on Crystal's comments, one can see Crystal's internal thoughts as she received the brush-off from her teacher after asking for help: "You're the teacher! You need to

teach me the subject! If I don't know it, then you're not really teaching me anything." Her statements show the destruction of the relationship as it was occurring in that moment in time. The destruction, which took only a few seconds, became even more poignant when Crystal revealed that this had been a teacher with whom she had a long history of feeling a strong, supportive connection.

***Conclusions regarding teacher relationships.*** It is clear that teacher-student relationships were a major factor in how the participants perceived their school experiences. The complexity of these relationships is important to keep in mind. Building relationships may not be easy, for teachers or students. Daniel illustrated this complexity when he admitted that he had at first tried to stay away from creating relationships with teachers in middle school and high school, but in the end found those relationships important:

It was pretty rough, because I didn't want to make relationships with teachers. I was trying to stay, like, on my own, you know. I wouldn't take their help and everything, so that made it hard to actually build relationships with them. I think when I started doing it was actually when... Ms. ----- came to the high school as a teacher. And I remembered her from ----- [middle school], and I had already built a relationship with her, a friendship, so that's kind of how it started. Like, I would go talk to her and everything, and then I started talking to other teachers, and that's kind of how I started building relationships with teachers. I started being okay with it. (Daniel)

### **Concluding Remarks on the Results**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of being a long-term, Latino English language learner. The three main thematic groupings that emerged were: Articulations of Self; Relationships with Parents; Family, and Latino Peers; and Experiences in



School and the Local Community. The richness of the data demonstrated the complexities of the personal and academic lives led by these culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the next chapter, I discuss the results in terms of each research sub-question. I also discuss the effects this study has had on my own practice as a professional, provide recommendations for educators and school districts, and discuss implications for future research.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This qualitative study used formal, semi-structured phenomenological interviews to investigate the life experiences of four culturally and linguistically diverse Latino teens who had also been long-term English language learners in the same school district in Oregon. The researcher transcribed the interviews, and emergent themes were identified. The themes elicited were organized into three over-arching thematic areas. In this chapter, I discuss how the data addressed the research question and sub-questions that prompted this investigation. In addition, I discuss how this research has affected my own practice, how it has the potential to inform school districts and educators, and what might be the implications for future study.

The question and sub-questions driving this study were:

1. How do Latino English language learners articulate their experiences as culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students who were enrolled long-term in mandatory ELL programs?
  - a. What do they describe as their positive/negative experiences as an ELL in mandatory programs, and in school in general?
  - b. How have their interpersonal interactions with family members, teachers, and other students shaped their experiences?
  - c. What are their expressions of identity as language learners?

#### Research Question #1a

*What do they [the participants] describe as their positive/negative experiences as an ELL in mandatory programs, and in school in general?*

**ELD.** The participants' experiences learning English through mandatory ELD programs were intertwined with both positive and negative elements. The participants found ELD programs helpful and enjoyable, and had very positive memories of their ELD teachers. At the same time, as they got older, the participants began to increasingly experience stigma consciousness (Brown & Lee, 2005; Gyll et al, 2010; Pinel et al., 2005) regarding their mandatory enrollment in ELD. By the end of middle school, the participants had begun to notice that not all of their ESL peers continued to be enrolled in ELD classes, which began to cause them embarrassment. In addition, the participants described how they began to realize that their enrollment in ELD courses was resulting in tracking (Darling-Hammond, 2010), or the fact that they did not always have access to desired elective and other courses due to their restricted schedules. However, despite these negative elements inherent in their enrollment in ELD programs, all of the participants felt that ELD was beneficial. In addition, they all predicted that they would pursue the same educational path for their own children, starting them as Spanish-dominant speakers at home and then relying on public school ELD programs to officially teach English to their children.

**School culture, representation, racism, and microaggression.** During their interviews, the participants related a variety of racially charged incidents and perceptions about dealing with racial issues in the school and community settings. Shockingly, they were for the most part unaware of it at first. It is this researchers' opinion that a lifetime of experiencing racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2009) on a daily basis had created a defensive shell over the participants. This shell made it difficult for them to recognize racial issues on a personal level; it was difficult for the participants to even think of any examples of racial issues in their lives at first – they had to peel back a protective layer in order to “remember.” When they did begin to

describe life experiences, they were often not at all aware of the racial nature of the microaggressions they were describing. However, for each participant, just having the chance to discuss and process their experiences led them to deeper thoughts about race, culture, and equity.

Overall, as anticipated, this study found that participants did not always feel that their school culture represented the nearly 50% Latino population. Activities were primarily White, mainstream, and did not leave room for Latino cultural activities or values. In particular, Crystal, a recent high school graduate, shared rich and descriptive anecdotes about how her attempts to incorporate Latino culture into school activities such as graduation, assemblies, and class competitions had gone completely ignored, not through obvious or outright racism, but through clear microaggressions in which her input was invalidated. She felt that immigrant and Mexican cultural connections may have been stifled because they were uncomfortable to White students and staff. This is in line with the long-standing history of xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States (Noguera, 2009), as well as the specifically anti-Latino public sentiment that Dowling, Ellison, and Leal (2012) note has become increasingly prominent and socially acceptable in the United States in recent years.

### **Research Question #1b**

*How have their interpersonal interactions with family members, teachers, and other students shaped their experiences?*

**Familismo.** The driving factor in each participant's life was the family unit. The data in this study were highly supportive of the large body of existing research on the essential Latino value of familismo (Ayón, Marsiglia, & Bermudez-Parsai, 2010; Holloway et al., 2009; Niemeyer, Wong, & Westerhaus, 2009). The participants wished to please their parents by succeeding, but their definition of success was opaque and had little to do with academics. The

participants' goals and dreams for the future had only one clear defining quality, which was a desire to be able to support their parents and provide a better life for the entire family. While the participants respected the hard work that their parents and grandparents had endured as laborers, they did not want the same for themselves. These goals were not personal, but family-oriented; the participants primarily wanted a better life so that they could share that life with their families.

**Parental involvement and expectations.** Niemeyer et al. (2009) noted that Latino parent involvement often took a different form than that of what was normally expected in the United States. The participants in this study were aware that their parents' roles in education had been different than that of most of their White peers. While they knew why it had been difficult for their parents to help them, the participants said they would have preferred more direct support with their schoolwork. Also, participants believed that their parents' expectations in terms of academics were low, especially regarding graduation and future education. For example, parents felt that a high school diploma was an ultimate goal and a source of pride, while the participants realized that "mainstream culture" values the diploma very little these days. At times, low expectations motivated the participants to succeed so that they could "prove" their ability to doubting family members. On the other hand, the participants all felt that their parents had very high expectations in terms of how much they should help the family linguistically; the participants had all been expected to translate and assist with business tasks, such as bills, from a young age.

The participants in this study all expressed respect and admiration for what their parents had gone through as immigrants. They admired their parents' and grandparents' hard work as laborers and their attempts to learn English. This was a finding that all types of parents could learn from: Being a role model does not mean being perfect. Allowing children to see parents

work hard and attempt to learn something new can give them a firsthand look at life's necessary struggles. Overall, the participants realized that they were engaged in their own struggle, which was to reconcile their parents' traditional values, beliefs, and perceptions with what they were experiencing at school and in the mainstream American society.

**Teacher relationships.** The data revealed that teacher relationships were the key element in the minds of the participants when they reflected on their school experiences. They described clearly how relationships could be made or broken through a variety of factors, including attitude, sense of humor, facial expression, tone of voice, body language, and of course, words. While having a positive relationship with a teacher did not ensure that a participant would do well in a content area, it certainly helped regarding student buy-in and effort. However, a negative relationship with a teacher almost surely guaranteed that the student would disengage from the teacher and the class, most likely leading to poor academic performance. One important finding in terms of relationships was that simply building a positive relationship with students is not enough – maintaining those relationships is also essential.

In the recent decades, much research has examined teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Byrnes et al., 1997; Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Joram & Gabriele, 1997, 1998). However, there does not seem to be much research regarding student perceptions of teacher attitudes. Both the positive and the negative experiences shared by the participants in this study revealed how words, body language, and tone of voice had formed and re-formed student perceptions of teacher attitudes. Primarily, the participants noted that how much they liked and felt comfortable with a teacher hinged on their personal perceptions of how much a teacher cared about them and was willing to help them. Teachers who were perceived as caring and openly helpful were liked

and perceived as effective, while teachers who were perceived as dismissive and unwilling to spend extra time helping were not liked and were considered “bad” teachers.

**Latino peer relationships.** Connections to the Latino peer group were strong in the participants’ experiences, particularly from middle school on. While they had friends from other ethnic groups, participants felt more comfortable in friendships with other teens from the same Latino ethnic and linguistic background. However, the participants also identified that instances of their failure to thrive in school were partially related to these peer relationships. In this study, participants primarily described instances in which they had been negatively influenced by Latino peers. This supports the Guyll et al. (2010) finding that there may be relationships between the minority achievement gap and Latinos with strong ethnic identity. In addition, the negative academic behaviors that the participants noted about their Latino peers were in line with research on the effects of stereotype threat, in which minorities find self-esteem in non-academic areas because it may feel less threatening to their ethnic identities (Steele, 1997).

This kind of disidentification (Steele, 1997) with academics and mainstream White culture was relevant as the participants described the large amounts of ethnic pressure coming from within their Latino friend groups. While ethnic pressure and judgment often took the form of jokes, the participants were clearly in a serious balancing act. The in-group judgment ranged back and forth between (a) attacking people for being “White-washed”, or too assimilated into White, American culture, and (b) being too Mexican, or not assimilated enough into White, American culture. The pressures of the acculturation process (Berry, 2007; Perez, 2008) in Latino teens were evident in the judgment and attacks the participants experienced in peer interactions. Overall, it is important for adults, both educators and parents, to try to understand

the various pressures that teens are putting on themselves, and how, such as was revealed in this study, the pressure often takes the form of ethnic judgment through derogatory racial stereotypes.

### **Research Question #1c**

*What are their expressions of identity as language learners?*

The participants in this study were caught between two worlds. The students felt that they would never belong to the same culture as their parents, and that they were forging their own identities. In particular, the participants' linguistic culture emerged as a major part of their articulations of self-identity. The idea that affected this researcher the most was that none of the participants felt they would ever be completely fluent in either of their languages. How must it feel to know that you have no true fluency in any tongue? As a native speaker of English, an English teacher, a student of various Romance languages, and a lover of language in general, it simply broke my heart.

As they discussed fluency problems, the participants related a variety of strategies that they had developed in order to survive in a world in which they did not always know the right thing to say in either language. Their use of "Spanglish" was described as a natural expression of the vocabulary and language structures that were most comfortable to them in any given situation. Spanglish gave the participants a place to feel linguistically adept in a way they would never completely feel in Spanish or English alone.

Yet, at the same time, these students were fluent enough in Spanish and English that they could be considered bilingual. The participants in this study were aware of the many positive aspects of their linguistic identities. They highly valued their bilingualism, supporting the Ajayi (2006) study in which Hispanic adolescents regarded their multiculturalism and multilingualism as assets rather than liabilities. The participants particularly valued their language skills in terms



of three specific uses: (a) how it enabled them to assist their families, (b) how it was a valuable work skill, and (c) how it could protect them from personal, and often racist, attacks. In the latter use, participants described that they often anticipated being attacked linguistically. Dowling et al. (2012) described the anti-immigrant sentiment that could potentially lie behind instances of linguistic attacks. That idea was supported by this study, as one manifestation of participants' concerns was that someone might assume they were recent immigrants who did not speak English and subsequently say nasty things about them.

While they highly valued their English skills, the participants were also very concerned that their Spanish skills had been stunted and might even have started regressing. This increasing concern about native language may have to do with developmental importance of ethnic identity. Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, and Guimond (2009), note that ethnic identity was of increasing importance to teenagers as they became more self-consciousness about their ethnicity during adolescence. This was also in line with the Ajayi (2006) study in which Hispanic adolescents, while valuing their bilingualism, were motivated to preserve their linguistic heritage. Several of the participants noted that they had already taken measures, such as spending time in Mexico or only speaking Spanish at home, in order to preserve their Spanish language skills.

### **Effects on the Researcher's Professional Practice**

As soon as I started conducting and transcribing interviews, my personal perceptions and professional practice began to feel the effects of this study. I anticipate that the effects on my own practice will only continue as the next school year begins. Here I will briefly describe two specific areas in which my professional practice has already been impacted.

**Relationship building and maintenance.** Our district and school have lately been engaging in more talk and staff development about the importance of relationships and connections with students. From the data in this study, I have realized that relationship building and maintenance must continue on a daily basis. Relationships are fluid and malleable; they can be built, but they can also be destroyed. Hopefully, though, this malleability means that a nonexistent or damaged relationship can also be resurrected. The comments in this study gave me the context and the background with which to tackle a relationship-building goal with a difficult student during this past school year. I took my emotional focus off of his bad behavior and tried to work on my own behavior and responses. I was informed by the aspects mentioned in this study, such as tone of voice, body language, facial expressions, and words. By the end of the school year, my student's academics were slowly improving, and it was obvious that our relationship had changed positively. During the last week of school, he brought up our rocky beginning, telling me, "sometimes I don't like people when I meet them," but that I had changed his mind.

**Supporting equity.** I have already mentioned my involvement with and my commitment to our district and school equity teams. There have been many times over the years where it became clear to me that certain staff members felt uncomfortable with or even unwilling to tackle issues of race, such as White privilege and institutionalized racism. Engaging in this study with my participants immediately gave me concrete examples to help White staff better understand student perceptions of school culture and climate. I anticipate that this study, and hopefully similar future inquiries, will continue to provide real examples of how culturally and linguistically diverse students experience the school culture and climate. At the most basic level,

this study has also encouraged me to take the time to actually ASK my own students how they perceive various elements of our school.

**Future.** Overall, my participation in this study has provided me with a wealth of information about student experiences and perceptions, but it has also left me with the most important quality needed for continued learning and growth: More questions. I am now committed to finding more opportunities for students to voice their opinions, share their perceptions, and most importantly, tell their stories.

### **Recommendations for Educators and School Districts**

Overall, the data in this study present a myriad of implications and opportunities for educators, educational programs/departments, and school districts. I will outline those implications that I believe are of the utmost importance based on what the participants have shared:

**Staff training.** One idea that was vastly apparent in this study was that culturally and linguistically diverse students are navigating two cultures and two languages. Staff would benefit from receiving training that helps them better understand Latino cultural values and norms, such as the idea of familismo. Educators would also benefit from training about the process of language acquisition. With perhaps the exception of ELD teachers, most educators have very little understanding of the actual process of language acquisition. All educators would benefit from investigating the benefits and challenges related to bilingualism, which have been illustrated in great detail by the participants in this study. In addition, this study focused on a subgroup of students -- Latino, long-term ELLs. This subgroup has become of particular concern to educators of late; in addition to having overall academic difficulties, long-term language learners have often stagnated in mandatory language programs for many years (Olsen,

2010). All staff would benefit from learning more about issues that are unique to these particular learners in order to better assist the students in achieving better success in academics and language acquisition.

**Cultural representation.** Students were aware that their Latino culture was underrepresented in their school, both in terms of types of activities and in terms of Latino student involvement, and one student explicitly described times she was denied cultural representation. The lack of Latino student involvement was linked with the lack of representation in that Latino students avoided joining activities that were seen as being too “White.” Educators, schools, and districts must take on the difficult task of representing students with more equity. Zirkel (2005) noted that only with efforts to reduce racial and ethnic stigma can an institution hope to improve educational equity. Representing different cultures cultivates respect among students, while blatantly excluding cultures or propagating a disproportionate representation creates a climate of disrespect and discourages students from joining activities.

A major way to effectively increase representation is to solicit input from a diverse group of students. Too often, schools rely on student government members, club members, popular kids, and high-achieving students for input. I think it is clear from this study that those types of students are NOT the students we need to reach. The highly involved students, no matter their ethnicity, already have a place in the conversation. Talking to a Latino student government president and honor club member does not necessarily give an idea of what would be representative of all Latino voices. Schools need to invest time in culling a variety of students’ input regarding what would be culturally relevant, interesting, and meaningful to a larger portion of the student body.

**Student outreach, support, and explanation of programs.** All participants recognized that the transition from middle school to high school was difficult, and that they often felt overwhelmed. All students, but especially culturally and linguistically diverse students, would benefit from more specific support in terms of academic expectations and how to succeed in high school. Many high schools already have welcoming or transitional programs, but students would clearly benefit from additional help, and particularly help in understanding specifics.

In this study, the participants noted that they did not always understand the purpose of courses or programs, such as ELD. They all expressed that having a deeper understanding of what was going on would have helped them. Teachers and program administrators should consider ways in which to include students more by helping them understand the educational process. One recommendation is something that I have attempted to do as an ELD teacher and facilitator, which is to develop student-friendly explanations that focus on the *why*, the *how*, and the *what*: Why students are there; how the system works; and what it will do to benefit them.

**Parent outreach.** There has already been a fair amount of research about Latino parents' perceptions of education (e.g., Lueck, 2010; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013; Vera et al., 2012). In this study, the participants felt that their parents and families were at a loss to help them navigate the school system due to (a) a lack of English skills, (b) a lack of formal education and therefore content knowledge, and (c) lack of understanding of the U.S. educational system. The participants understood why their parents had a difficult time becoming involved in their academics and their school activities, but at the same time wished for a different reality.

Clearly, the parents described by participants in this study need more support in terms of simply understanding how the school system works. Many districts have already recognized the disconnect between minority families and the school system, particularly because students of

color have been less likely to pursue higher education, achieve success in college, and complete a college degree (Streng et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Realizing that parental support could be a key in changing these trends, districts already have parent outreach programs. However, from my own experience in the district in which this study took place, actually reaching the parents in the first place has been a problem; attendance has often been low. Schools and districts will have to get creative about how to reach parents early on in their children's school experience, how to teach them about the inner-workings of the U.S. school system, and, as Harry (2008) discussed, how to better involve CLD families in collaboration. Some elements schools should consider when cultivating the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse parents and families are: (a) Nature of the outreach and advertising; (b) timing of events, with consideration to family and work schedules; (c) availability of transportation to events; (d) availability of childcare at events; (e) eliminating language barriers; (f) outward appearance of the school/event site; (g) organization and content of activities.

**Teacher-student relationship building.** For the individual educator, the most important implication of this research is what the participants have revealed about teacher relationships. I have already outlined some of these when discussing how my own professional practice has already been affected by this study. Here are some other major points for teachers regarding the nature of teacher-student relationships:

***Feelings of comfort/care.*** Students need to feel comfortable with their teachers. They want to feel cared about and that teachers genuinely want to spend extra time with them. The participants remembered few details of any coursework, even up to recent years, but their memories of *feelings* they had about certain teachers have lasted. In addition, the effectiveness of rigor was related to the relationship. Participants wanted to be pushed by their teachers, but

with understanding and support, and they only responded when they felt they had a positive relationship with the teacher.

***More than words.*** At times, the participants related memories of teacher utterances, but it was something more than words that created the overall perceptions of the relationship. Participants listed sense of humor, body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, attitude, and trustworthiness/honesty as factors involved in whether or not a relationship was positive or negative. For example, participants related times both verbal and non-verbal cues created the distinct perception that, if they got an answer wrong or asked for help, they were making the teacher mad.

***Helpfulness.*** Participants put a high value on the feeling that a teacher was willing and happy to spend extra time helping them, particularly one-on-one. The feeling that a teacher actually wanted to help an individual student was important, and when participants brought up “bad” teachers from the past, they nearly always mentioned that they felt the teacher did not want to help them and that 1-on-1 assistance was wasting the teacher’s time.

***Complexity.*** Overall, teacher and student relationships were complex and fragile. No one factor guaranteed a positive relationship with students, or that a good relationship would last. For example, race/ethnicity/language was not identified as a key factor in creating positive relationships. Being of a similar ethnic and/or linguistic background as a student could act as a positive in creating rapport, but only if the other relationship-building factors are strong as well. In addition, relationships can change, for better or worse, over time. Educators must keep in mind that just as a relationship can be built, it can also be destroyed, so maintenance of that relationship is essential.

### **Implications for Future Study**

The nature of phenomenological research creates an infinite number of possible research applications because humans have an infinite number of unique experiences. One could imagine a multitude of studies to investigate themes that emerged here, including studies that branch out from the student perspective into studies that originate with the parent, teacher, or school perspective. However, if we were just to consider the state of Oregon, there are thousands of different types and subgroups of CLD students whose experiences could be examined. Therefore, the following are suggestions for related future study that keep the focus on the perceptions and experiences of the CLD students themselves:

**Variations of CLD students.** There are many subgroups of CLD students whose life experiences might be illuminating to researchers and educators. I recommend that future in-depth interview-based qualitative studies might focus on the experiences of: female or male CLD students; middle-school CLD students; older high-school age recent immigrants; academically successful CLD students; academically struggling CLD students; or CLD students who have dropped out.

**Research based on participants' recommendations.** In this study, participants shared their own advice about what teachers, schools, and parents could and should do to support them. I have already outlined some suggestions for schools along these lines, but future qualitative research could continue to explore what the participants in this study have said, seeking to answer questions such as: How can districts help Latino parents navigate the system? How can schools keep parents involved after elementary school? How can schools encourage older Latino participation in sports and other extracurricular activities? How can traditionally White schools respond to demographic changes and become more culturally representative?



**Focus on racism.** Of all the themes that emerged in this study, that which was of the utmost concern to me was racism. As we have seen, the students were at first not able to recognize racism in their own lives, but later revealed multiple instances of racism, and especially racial microaggression. Even if it was difficult for them to initially bring to a personal level, all of the students had feelings and deep experiences with racism. I am most reminded of Ben, who said that he does not want to be a visible activist against racism, because he believes it could cost a person his life: “There’s people who spoke out and we haven’t heard from them since.” The depth of the students’ perceptions and experiences regarding racism provide such an area of necessity for future research that it cannot be emphasized enough.

## **Conclusion**

I believe that this study has shown, in vivid descriptive detail, the value in conducting qualitative research regarding the educational and life experiences of CLD students. Culturally and linguistically diverse students have rarely had the opportunity to process and share their stories, even in their own minds. The White, “American” teen voice has experienced a strong history of representation through television, movies, books, and music. But the voice of the CLD teen has thus far not been satisfactorily heard. Contrary to what most of us assume, it is not because these individuals are reticent to talk. Rather, it is because they have not been given the appropriate opportunity. In the right setting, a setting that is safe, comfortable, and open, these students have a wealth of experiences to share.

This study was entered into through a state of “wonder.” The data has provided merely a glimpse at the depth and breadth of these participants’ life experiences, and so the state of wonder continues. However, just the tiny peek provided in this study reveals how student voices can help educators better understand those they serve. I am dedicated to continuing my research

into the life experiences of CLD students, and I hope that others will join me. All that is required to begin is *wonder*.

## References

- Ajayi, L. (2006). Multiple voices, multiple realities: Self-defined images of self among adolescent Hispanic English language learners. *Education, 126*(3), 468-480.
- Assaf, L. C., Garza, R., & Battle, J. (2010). Examining the perceptions, practices, and coherence in one teacher prep program. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 37*(2), 115-135.
- Ayón, C., Marsiglia, F., & Bermudez-Parsai, M. (2010). Latino family mental health: Exploring the role of discrimination and familismo. *Journal of Community Psychology, 38*(6), 742-756.
- Batt, E. G. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education, 15*(3), 39-43.
- Becerra, D. (2012). Perceptions of educational barriers affecting the academic achievement of Latino K-12 students. *Children & Schools, 34*(3), 167-177.
- Bell, A., Ewaida, M., Lynch, M., & Zenkov, K. (2011). Student perspectives on quality teaching: Words and images. *Voices from the Middle, 19*(1), 32-40.
- Berry, J. W. (2007). Acculturation strategies and adaptation. In J.E. Lansford, K. Deater-Deckard & M. H. Bornstein (Eds.), *Immigrant families in contemporary society (Vol. Duke series in child development and public policy (69-82)*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Brown, R. P., & Lee, M. N. (2005). Stigma consciousness and the race gap in college academic achievement. *Self and Identity, 4*(2), 149-157.
- Bryan, L.A., & Atwater, M.M. (2002). Teacher beliefs and cultural models: A challenge for science teacher preparation programs. *Science Education, 86*(6), 821-839.

- Busch, D. (2010). Pre-service teacher beliefs about language learning: The second language acquisition course as an agent for change. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(3), 318-337. doi:10.1177/1362168810365239
- Byrnes, D.A., Kiger, G., & Manning, M.L. (1997). Teachers' attitudes about language diversity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13(6), 637-644.
- Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Ost, J., Passel, J., & Herwanto, S. (2005). *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230\\_new\\_demography.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311230_new_demography.pdf)
- Carlow, R. (2006). Diva Irina: An English language learner in high school choir. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 170, 63-77.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2001). Surveillance Summaries, June 28, 2002. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 2002:51 (No. SS-4). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/SS/SS5104.pdf>
- Children's Defense Fund. (2005). The state of America's children. Retrieved from [http://cdf.childrendefense.org/site/DocServer/Greenbook\\_2005.pdf](http://cdf.childrendefense.org/site/DocServer/Greenbook_2005.pdf)
- Chun, K., & Atsuko, P. (2003). Acculturation among ethnic minority families. In K. Chun, P. Balls Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research*. (95-119). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Clair, N. (1995). Mainstream classroom teachers and ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 189-196.

- College Board. (2012). *College bound seniors: The total group profile report*. New York, NY: College Board. Retrieved from <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/research/TotalGroup-2012.pdf>
- Colon-Muñiz, A., Brady, J., & SooHoo, S. (2010). What do graduates say about multicultural teacher education? *Issues in Teacher Education*, 19(1), 85-108.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Delany-Barmann, G., & Minner, S. (1997). Development and implementation of a program of study to prepare teachers for diversity. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 30(2), 78-85.
- Doda, N. & Knowles, T. (2008). Listening to the voices of young adolescents. *Middle School Journal*, 39(3), 26-33.
- Dowling, J., Ellison, C., & Leal, D. (2012). Who doesn't value English? Debunking myths about Mexican immigrants' attitudes toward the English language. *Social Science Quarterly*, 93(2), 356-378.
- Durgunoğlu, A., & Hughes, T. (2010). How prepared are the U.S. preservice teachers to teach English language learners? *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22(1), 32-41.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, 38(1), 47-65.

- Fayon, A., Goff, E., & Duranczyk, I. (2010). Impacting attitudes of ELL students: Integrated learning communities in introductory science courses. *Learning Assistance Review*, 15(2), 7-19.
- Flannery, M. (2008). Language, stigma, and identity: An analysis of the narrative discourse of racial discrimination. *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 45(2), 154-176.
- Flores, A., & Smith, K. (2013). Spanish-speaking English language learners' experiences in high school chemistry education. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 90(2), 152-158.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116.
- Guyll, M., Madon, S., Prieto, L., & Scherr, K. (2010). The potential roles of self-fulfilling prophecies, stigma consciousness, and stereotype threat in linking Latino/a ethnicity and educational outcomes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 66(1), 113-130.
- Harry, B. (2008). Collaboration with culturally and linguistically diverse families: Ideal versus reality. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 372-388. doi: 10.1177/001440290807400306
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Holloway, R., Waldrip, A., & Ickes, W. (2009). Evidence that a simpatico self-schema accounts for differences in the self-concepts and social behavior of Latinos versus Whites (and Blacks). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1012-1028. DOI: 10.1037/a0013883
- Howard, R. (2012). ELLs' perceptions of reading. *Reading Improvement*, 49(3), 113-126.

- Hooks, L. M. (2008). Help! They don't speak English: Partnering preservice teachers with adult English language learners. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 29(2), 97-107.
- Joram, E., & Gabriele, A. (1997). Preservice teachers' prior beliefs: Transforming obstacles into opportunities. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, 24-28 March 1997.
- Joram, E., & Gabriele, A. (1998). Pre-service teachers' prior beliefs: Transforming obstacles into opportunities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(2), 175-191.
- Karabenick, S. A., & Noda, P.A.C. (2004). Professional development implications for teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 55-76.
- LeClair, C., Doll, B., Osborn, A., & Jones, K. (2009). English language learners' and non-English language learners' perceptions of the classroom environment. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(6), 568-577.
- Lueck, C. (2010). ELL parents' perceptions matter. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 77(1), 9-16.
- Major, B., Quinton, W., & Schmader, T. (2003). Attributions to discrimination and self-esteem: Impact of group identification and situational ambiguity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 39(3), 220-231.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Fastfacts: English language learners*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *School and staffing survey 1999-2000: Overview of the data for public, private, public charter and bureau of Indian Affairs*

- elementary and secondary schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Retrieved 11 November 2011 from  
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002313>
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2011). *The growing numbers of limited English proficient students 1998/99- 2008/09*. Retrieved from  
[http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/9/growingLEP\\_0809.pdf](http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/9/growingLEP_0809.pdf)
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. (2010). Rate of EL growth 1997/1998-2007/2008. Retrieved from  
[http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/20/Oregon\\_G\\_0708.pdf](http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/20/Oregon_G_0708.pdf)
- Niemeyer, A., Wong, M., & Westerhaus, K. (2009). Parental involvement, familismo, and academic performance in Hispanic and Caucasian Adolescents. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 11(3), 613-632.
- Niehaus, K., & Adelson, J. (2013). Self-concept and native language background: A study of measurement invariance and cross-group comparisons in third grade. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(1), 226-240.
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Noguera, P. (2009). *Preparing for the new majority*. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (Eds.), *Change wars* (pp. 163-183). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Olsen, L. (2010). *Reparable harm: Fulfilling the unkept promise of educational opportunity for California's long-term English learners*. Long Beach, CA: Californians Together.
- Retrieved from <http://www.californianstogether.org/docs/download.aspx?fileId=227>
- Oregon Administrative Rules for Special Education (2013). OAR 581-015-2000(4). Retrieved from <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=3719>



- Oregon Department of Education. (2014a). *School and District Report Cards* [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/reports.aspx>
- Oregon Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2014b). *Oregon K-12 enrollment hits all-time high* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.ode.state.or.us/news/announcements/>
- Oregon Department of Education. (2014c). *English Language Proficiency Standards with Correspondences to K-12 Practices and Common Core Standards*. Retrieved from [http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title\\_iii/final-4\\_30-elpa21-standards.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_iii/final-4_30-elpa21-standards.pdf)
- Oregon Department of Education. (2013). *English Learners Program Guide*. Retrieved from [http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title\\_iii/prog-guide-rev\\_8\\_29\\_13.pdf](http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_iii/prog-guide-rev_8_29_13.pdf)
- Oregon Education Investment Board. (2013). *English learners in Oregon's education system*. Retrieved from [http://education.oregon.gov/Documents/archive/Issue%20Brief\\_EL.pdf](http://education.oregon.gov/Documents/archive/Issue%20Brief_EL.pdf)
- Pappamihel, E. (2007). Helping preservice content-area teachers relate to English language learners: An investigation of attitudes and beliefs. *TESL Canada Journal*, 24(2), 42-60.
- Perez, R. M. (2008). *Exploring the moderating effect of linguistic acculturation and context on the subjective well-being of Hispanic adolescents*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3338504)
- Pinel, E. (2004). You're just saying that because I'm a woman: Stigma consciousness and attributions to discrimination. *Self and Identity*, 3(1), 39 – 51.
- Pinel, E. C., Warner, L. R., & Chua, P. (2005). Getting there is only half the battle: Stigma consciousness and maintaining diversity in higher education. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(3), 481 – 506.

- Polat, N., & Mahalingappa, L. (2013). Pre- and in-service teachers' beliefs about ELLs in content area classes: A case for inclusion, responsibility, and instructional support. *Teaching Education, 24*(1), 58-83.
- Reeves, J. R. (2006). Secondary teacher attitudes toward including English-language learners in mainstream classrooms. *The Journal of Educational Research, 99*(3), 131-142.
- Santisteban, D., Coatsworth, J., Briones, E., Kurtines, W., & Szapocznik, J. (2012). Beyond acculturation: An investigation of the relationship of familism and parenting to behavior problems in Hispanic youth. *Family Process, 51*(4), 470-482. doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2012.01414.x
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist, 52*(6), 613 – 629.
- Streng, J., Rhodes, S., Ayala, G., Eng, E., Arceo, R., & Phipps, S. (2004). Realidad Latina: Latino adolescents, their school, and a university use photovoice to examine and address the influence of immigration. *Journal of Interprofessional Care, 18*(4), 403-415.
- Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, G., Torino, J., Bucceri, A., Holder, M., Nadal, K., & Esquilin, M. (2009). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 15*(2), 183-190. doi:10.1037/a0014191
- Swail, W., Cabrera, A., & Lee, C. (2004). Latino youth and the pathway to college. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/31.pdf>

- Toppelberg, C., & Collins, B.A. (2010). Language, culture, and adaptation in immigrant children. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 19(4), 697-717.
- Turcios-Cotto, V., & Milan, S. (2013). Racial/ethnic difference in the educational expectations of adolescents: Does pursuing higher education mean something different to Latino students compared to White and Black students? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(9), 1399-1412.
- Umaña-Taylor, A., Gonzales-Backen, M., & Guimond, A. (2009). Latino adolescents' ethnic identity: Is there a developmental progression and does growth in ethnic identity predict growth in self-esteem? *Child Development*, 80(2), 391-405.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2015). Quickfacts: State and County Quickfacts: Hispanic Origin. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce. Accessed 9 July 2015 at [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long\\_RHI825213.htm](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long_RHI825213.htm)
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Quickfacts*. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Commerce. Accessed 21 July 2013 at <http://quickfacts.census.gov>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Profile of general population and housing characteristics: 2010 demographic profile data: Oregon*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Profile of general demographic characteristics: 2000 census 2000 summary file 1 (SF 1)100-percent data: Oregon*. Retrieved from <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *The Condition of Education 2013* (NCES 2013-037). Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cgf.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp)

- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/index.asp>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *The growing number of English learner students: 1998-1999-2008-09*. Retrieved from [http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/9/growingLEP\\_0809.pdf](http://www.ncela.us/files/uploads/9/growingLEP_0809.pdf)
- van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). London, Ontario, Canada: Althouse Press.
- Vera, E., Israel, M., Coyle, L., Cross, J., Knight-Lynn, L., Moallem, I., Bartuccie, G., & Goldberger, N. (2012). *School Community Journal*, 22(2), 183-202.
- Weinstein, R., Gregory, A., & Strambler, M. (2004). Intractable self-fulfilling prophecies: Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. *American Psychologist*, 59(6), 511-520. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.59.6.511
- Yakushko, O. (2009). Xenophobia: Understanding the roots and consequences of negative attitudes toward immigrants. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 37(1), 36-66. doi:10.1177/0011000008316034
- Youngs, C. S., & Youngs, G. A. (2001). Predictors of mainstream teachers' attitudes toward ESL students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(1), 97-120.
- Zirkel, S. (2005). Ongoing issues of racial and ethnic stigma in education 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. *The Urban Review*, 37(2), 107-126. doi:10.1007/s11256-005-0004-4

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### Letters of Consent/Assent

#### Letter of Consent to be a Research Participant

Date:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Kristina Granby. I would like to invite your son/daughter to participate in a research study, and need to gain your official consent if he/she is interested. I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. This study would fulfill the dissertation requirements for my degree.

#### **Purpose**

I am conducting this study in order to investigate the school and life experiences of teenage Latino/a teenagers who speak English as their second (or third) language.

#### **Procedures**

Students in this study will be asked to participate in three interviews. Each interview will take 45-60 minutes. Questions will include details about the student's past experiences in areas such as: (a) education in general; (b) second language instruction experiences; (c) experiences with peers, teachers, and family; and (d) ethnic and cultural identity.

#### **Benefits**

It is my hope that this study will allow the voices of older long-term English language learners to have a place in educational research. Participants should know that, while their identities will remain anonymous, their personal stories will be told with honesty and fidelity. This will be a chance for educators to hear students' stories and learn about the students' experiences in school and in life.

#### **Risks/Discomforts**

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, some of the questions may be personal, and a student may experience discomfort thinking about past experiences and personal identity. A participant may choose *not* to respond to any questions at any time, or to discontinue participation at any time.

#### **Compensation**

There is no compensation for participation in this study, unless a participant incurs costs in transportation as a result of participation. In this case, participants will be reimbursed for their transportation costs. I will also offer participants the beverage of their choice and/or a snack to enjoy during the interview. At the conclusion of the study, I would like to provide a small token of appreciation to thank you for the time you've invested in this process.

### **Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Participants have the right to decide not to answer any questions and they have the right to completely withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Organizing Interviews/Location**

In order to organize the interviews, I will need to communicate with you/your student. This will be at your discretion. I would like to use whatever form of communication is the easiest for the participants, which might include telephone, text messaging, email, or social media messaging. I will arrange this with each student prior to the first interview. The location of the interviews will be a safe, public place that is convenient and comfortable to the student. Some examples might be a public park, a library, or a local restaurant or coffee shop.

### **Confidentiality**

All personal identifying information will remain confidential. Participant's identities will be protected in several ways. First, their real names will not be used when we are recording your interviews or when I report the results of the study. Students will be given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym (fake name), which I will use for your interview and when I need to refer to them in my writing. I will make digital recordings of the interviews, which I will later transcribe (type). That information will be analyzed and presented anonymously, without any real names. Second, I will be the only person who knows the students' identities, and any information about them will be stored in a secure location that only I will have access to. This information, as well as all recordings, will be destroyed within three years of the end of the study. The specific locations of the school the students attend and cities in which they live will not be discussed in the study.

I must inform you that, although it is unlikely this study will discuss these topics, if a student reveals any information concerning abuse, neglect, suicide, homicide, or other illegal or potentially dangerous activities, I am required by law to report this information to the proper authorities.

### **Use of the Study**

The results of this study will be used for research and dissertation purposes, and may be used in published articles, education presentations, or professional conferences.

If you are interested in seeing the final results, I would be happy to provide you with an electronic copy of my study when it is completed.

### **Other Info/Questions about the Research**

The study was approved by GFU's Institutional Review Board on \_\_\_\_\_.  
My study is supervised by Dr. Suzanne Harrison, Ph.D., of George Fox University.

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Kristina Granby at [kgranby10@georgefox.edu](mailto:kgranby10@georgefox.edu)

**Consent**

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent letter. I give permission for my minor child to participate in this study. I give my permission for my child to schedule interviews, to participate in interviews, and to be digitally recorded for this study:

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student (If of Legal Age)

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent (if student is a minor)

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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



## Permiso para participar en una Investigación

Fecha:

Estimado(a) \_\_\_\_\_;

Permítame presentarme: Me llamo Kristina Granby. Soy maestra en la Preparatoria de Forest Grove, y he trabajado con su hijo(a) alguna vez en el programa ELD ( Desarrollo de Lenguaje Inglés.) Actualmente, soy candidata para un doctorado en la Universidad de George Fox en Newberg, Oregon, y me interesa hacer una investigación, la cual es requisito para el doctorado. Por medio de la presente, quisiera invitar a su hijo(a) participar en esta investigación, pero antes que nada, es indispensable conseguir la autorización por escrito de usted(es.)

### **Propósito:**

La investigación busca información acerca de las experiencias escolares y de vida de jóvenes latinos quienes hablan inglés como segundo (o tercer) idioma, y quienes han participado en programas ELD en el pasado.

### **Procedimiento:**

Los participantes de esta investigación participarán en tres entrevistas, cada una con una duración de aproximadamente 45-60 minutos. Las preguntas les pedirán detalles sobre sus experiencias en áreas como las siguientes: a) su educación en general; b) sus experiencias en cuanto a la enseñanza de segunda lengua; c) sus experiencias con compañeros de clase, con maestros, y con la familia; y d) su identidad étnica y cultural.

### **Beneficios:**

Espero que a través de esta investigación, se escuchen las voces de estudiantes mayores que han estudiado inglés a largo plazo. Compartiré las historias personales de estos estudiantes tal como ellos me las han contado, pero mantendré sus identidades en privado. Esta sería una excelente oportunidad para que otros maestros escuchen las historias y aprendan acerca de la vida de los estudiantes.

### **Riesgos/ inconvenientes:**

Los riesgos para este estudio son pocos. Sin embargo, algunas de las preguntas podrían ser de tipo personal, y posiblemente el/la estudiante podría sentirse incómodo/a al recordar esas experiencias del pasado o al pensar en su identidad. Los participantes pueden escoger *no responder* a alguna pregunta en cualquier momento, o dejar de participar cuando quieran. Si un participante luce incómodo en cualquier momento, yo terminaré la entrevista.

### **Reembolsos:**

No hay remuneración (pago) para participar en este estudio, a menos que el/la participante haya incurrido en algún costo de transporte (autobus, p.e.) para poder participar en las entrevistas. En este caso, se reembolsará a los estudiantes el costo del transporte. También les ofreceré a los participantes una bebida y/o un bocadillo para disfrutar durante la entrevista.

**Participación:**

La participación en este estudio es estrictamente de tipo voluntario, y los participantes tienen derecho de negarse a responder a cualquier pregunta que deseen, y pueden escoger terminar su participación en cualquier momento.

**Organización de entrevistas y ubicación:**

Para poder organizar las entrevistas, yo tendré que comunicarme con su estudiante. Me gustaría utilizar la forma de comunicación que sea más fácil para el/la estudiante, cosa que podría incluir teléfono, texto, o mensajes por medios sociales. Yo acordaría esto con su estudiante antes de la primera entrevista. Las entrevistas serán realizadas en un lugar seguro y público, el cual sea cómodo y conveniente para su estudiante. Algunos ejemplos serían un parque, la biblioteca pública, o un café o restaurante.

**Confidencialidad:**

Todo tipo de datos de identidad serán completamente confidenciales todo el tiempo. Las identidades de los participantes serán protegidas de varias maneras: Primero, no usaremos sus nombres verdaderos mientras grabemos la entrevista, ni después, al presentar los resultados de la investigación. Los estudiantes tendrán la oportunidad de escoger sus propios “nombres” para estas entrevistas, los cuales usaré durante las entrevistas, y también en el informe, cuando necesite referirme a ellos. Yo voy a grabar a los estudiantes digitalmente y después voy a transferir las grabaciones a forma escrita. Esa información será analizada y presentado de manera anónima, sin ningún nombre verdadero. Segundo, yo seré la única persona que sabrá la verdadera identidad de los/las estudiantes, y la información sobre ellos/ellas será guardada en un lugar seguro y privado donde solamente yo tenga acceso. Tercero, en la entrevista no se hablará acerca de donde se encuentra la escuela ni de la ciudad en donde viven los estudiantes. Toda la información, así como las grabaciones serán destruidas a los tres años de terminar la investigación.

Es indispensable comunicarles que, aunque estos temas no son parte del plan de entrevistas, si algún estudiante revela información acerca de abuso, negligencia, suicidio, homicidio, u otra actividad ilegal o potencialmente peligrosa, estaré obligada por ley a comunicar dicha información a las autoridades apropiadas.

**Uso del Estudio:**

Los resultados de este estudio serán utilizados para otros trabajos de investigación y para discursos, y pueden ser publicados en artículos, tanto como en presentaciones educativas o profesionales. Si a Ud. le interesan los resultados del estudio, con mucho gusto le proporcionaré una copia electrónica del mismo en cuanto termine.

**Otra información/ Preguntas sobre la investigación:**

Esta investigación fue aprobada por el *Institutional Review Board* (Comité de revisión institucional) de GFU (George Fox University) el 10 de mayo del 2014. La supervisora de mi investigación es la Dra. Suzanne Harrison, Ph.D. de la Universidad George Fox. Si se le ofrece más información sobre el asunto, favor de comunicarse conmigo, Kristina Granby, en [kgranby10@georgefox.edu](mailto:kgranby10@georgefox.edu). Gracias.

**Permiso:**

He leído, comprendido, y recibido copia de la carta de permiso escrita arriba. Por medio de la presente, doy mi permiso para que mi hijo(a) quien es menor de edad, participe en esta investigación. Doy mi permiso para que mi hijo(a) haga citas, participe en las entrevistas, y sea grabado/a para este estudio.

Nombre del hijo/de la hija menor: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del padre/madre/guardián: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de  
padre/madre/guardián: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

## LETTER FOR STUDENT CONSENT/ASSENT

Date:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

My name is Kristina Granby and I would like to invite you to participate in a research study about Latino/a teenagers who speak English as their second (or third) language. I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree and this study will fulfill my dissertation requirements at George Fox University.

### **Details of the Study**

This study consists of a three-interview process. This means that, should you choose to participate, you would meet with me three times for interviews lasting approximately 30-60 minutes each. The interview questions will include topics such as: (a) your experiences with education in general; (b) your second language instruction experiences; (c) experiences you have had with peers, teachers, and family; and (d) your experiences regarding ethnic and cultural identity.

You may choose to *not* answer any questions at any time, and you are free to stop your participation in the study at any time. There is no penalty if you do not want to answer a question or if you decide to withdraw from the study.

### **Benefits**

It is my hope that this study will provide a space in educational research for the voices of older long-term English language learners. Participants should know that, while their identities will remain anonymous, their personal stories will be told with honesty and fidelity. This will be a chance for educators and others to hear your story and learn about your life experiences.

### **Compensation**

You will not receive any compensation (pay) in the project. However, if you have any transportation costs associated with your participation in this study, those will be reimbursed. I will also offer participants the beverage of their choice and/or a light snack to enjoy during the interview. At the end of the study, I would also like to present you with a small token of appreciation for the time you've spent participating in this process.

### **Confidentiality**

Your identity will be protected in several ways. First, your real name will not be used when we are recording your interviews or when I report the results of the study. You will be given the opportunity to choose your own pseudonym (fake name), which I will use for your interview and when I need to refer to you in my writing. I will make digital recordings of your interviews, which I will later transcribe (type up). That information will be analyzed and presented anonymously, without your name. Second, I will be the only person who knows your identity, and any information about your identity will be stored in a secure location that only I will have access to. This information, as well as all recordings, will be destroyed within three years of the end of the study. The specific location of your school and city will not be discussed in the study.

I must inform you that, although it is unlikely this study will discuss these topics, if you reveal any information concerning abuse, neglect, suicide, homicide, or other illegal or potentially dangerous activities, I am required by law to report this information to the proper authorities.

### **Risks/Discomforts**

There are minimal risks for your participation in this study. However, some of the questions may be personal, and there is a chance that you may experience discomfort thinking about past experiences and personal identity. You may choose not to respond to any questions at any time.

### **Organizing Interviews/Location**

In order to organize the interviews, I will need to communicate with you. I would like to use whatever form of communication is the easiest for you, which might include telephone, text messaging, email, or social media messaging. I will arrange this you prior to the first interview. The location of the interviews will be a safe, public place that is convenient and comfortable to you. Some examples might be a public park, a library, or a local restaurant or coffee shop.

### **Use of the Study**

The results of this study will be used for research and dissertation purposes, and may be used in published articles, education presentations, or professional conferences.

If you are interested in seeing the final results, I would be happy to provide you with an electronic copy of my study when it is completed.

### **Other Information**

The study was approved by GFU's Institutional Review Board on \_\_\_\_\_.  
My study is supervised by Dr. Suzanne Harrison, Ph.D., of George Fox University.

If you have any questions or would like clarification on any items, please contact Kristina Granby at kgranby@fgsd.k12.or.us.

### **Assent/Consent (Permission)**

If you are interested in being involved in this study, please place your signature next to the following items:

#### **I would like to be involved in this research study:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **I agree to be digitally recorded:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Prospective Interview Questions**

Primary questions are listed with prospective additional and/or probing questions outlined below each primary question in the event that a participant speaks only briefly.

#### **Interview Part 1: Focused Life History**

**Intro:** I have lots of questions for you, but before we start, I was wondering if you had any questions for me?

#### **Student background/cultural identity**

1. Tell me about yourself... Where is your family from? Where did you grow up?
  - a. What is your culture or ethnicity?
  - b. Have you lived in any other places? Other countries?

#### **Language identity**

2. Tell me about what it's like to have English as your second language.
  - a. Tell me about your first language(s)

#### **Elementary school experiences**

3. Tell me about what it was like for you in elementary school, especially with language and learning English.
  - a. Think back to when you first started school: Where were you? What kind of programs or classes were you in? Describe what you remember.
  - b. Did you learn English inside your main class, or did they ever pull you out of class?
  - c. Were you ever in "TWI" (two-way immersion) or bilingual programs?
  - d. What was the school culture (relationships between people) like?
    - i. Did you feel like you fit in?

### **Middle school experiences**

4. How about when you got a little bit older? Tell me about what it was like for you in middle school, especially with English as your second language.
  - a. Tell me about your ELD classes in middle school
    - i. What was/were your ELD teacher(s) like?
    - ii. What kind of activities happened?
    - iii. How did you get along with classmates?
  - b. How did you feel about school during those years?
  - c. What was the school “culture” (relationships, support) like?
  - d. Which classes/teachers/activities stand out in your memories?
  - e. In which areas did you feel successful? Not so successful?
  - f. How prepared did you feel for high school?

### **High school experiences**

5. Now that you’re a high school student/finishing high school, how would you describe your high school experiences, especially with English as your second language?
  - a. Tell me about the ELD classes you have/have had in high school (teachers, activities, classmates)
  - b. Tell me about the “culture” or environment of your school.
  - c. What kinds of relationships have you had with “regular ed” teachers in high school?
  - d. What kinds of relationships have you had with non-ELL students in high school?
  - e. Which classes/teachers/activities stand out in your memories?
  - f. In which areas did you feel successful? Not so successful?

- g. How prepared are you feeling for next steps in life?

### **Parental involvement**

- 6. Tell me about what you think of your parents in terms of school... What is their role?
  - a. When you were younger (elementary), what kinds of things did they do to make sure you were ready for school, succeeding in school, etc.?
  - b. So then what were they like as you got a little bit older, like in middle school?
  - c. How about now? What are your parents like regarding school now that you are in high school?
  - d. *(If a student has not been living with parents but rather with extended family)*  
What has it been like living so far away from your parents? What has your aunt/uncle/etc. been like in terms of school?

### **Views about learning**

- 7. Tell me what you think about yourself as a student.
  - a. Do you feel on track for graduation?
  - b. What are you thinking of doing after high school?
  - c. Do you have any specific strengths/weaknesses that you could talk about?
- 8. What do you think about school overall?
- 9. What are your opinions/views about learning?

### **Interview Part 2: The Details of Experience**

#### **Review**

- 1. We've covered a lot of topics! I'm sure you've been thinking about our discussion. Is there anything you would like tell me, or anything you want to add to what you said last time?



(Or . . . Transition to a second interview as needed: Have you thought of anything important to tell me since our last meeting? What was that experience like for you? Is there anything you'd like me to change or do differently this time around?

### **School life**

2. Walk me through a typical day for you at school.
  - a. Which classes or parts of your day do you look forward to? Not look forward to?
  - b. What happens before/after/during lunch/breaks?
3. Describe what you usually do in the afternoon/evening on a school day.
  - a. Is school a part of what you do in the evening?

### **Language**

4. Tell me a story about a time when you realized language was important
  - a. Is there a specific memory or time when language came up as an issue for you?
    - i. Maybe for yourself, or someone else, or you had to help someone

### **English Language Development courses**

5. Describe, from your viewpoint, what happens in a typical language (ELD) class.
  - a. What do you think the goals of the ELD classes are?
  - b. What do you think you're getting out of the class/got out of the class?
  - c. Tell me about the other students in your ELD classes.

### **Interactions with others at school**

6. Tell me about an experience with a teacher at the high school that really sticks out in your mind.
  - a. Positive/negative? Maybe an example of each?

7. Tell me about an experience or memory that really sticks out in your mind about another student/other students.
  - a. Could you describe a specific memory that you remember with...
    - i. Someone who is/was also an ELL
    - ii. Someone who is/was similar to you (culturally, ethnically)
    - iii. Someone who is/was different from you (culturally, language, social)

### **Parental interaction**

8. Tell me about the last time your parent got involved with what you're doing at school.  
Describe what happened.
9. If I were your mother/father, what would you tell me about school? (Seidman, 2013, p. 89)

### **Cultural/linguistic identity**

10. Overall, is there a major memory or an experience you could tell me about that sticks in your mind regarding language or being an ELL?
11. Is there a memory or an experience you could tell me about that sticks in your mind regarding being Latino/a (or other identification student has already mentioned)?

### **Interview Part 3: Reflection and Meaning**

#### **Review & Reflect**

1. We've talked a lot about your personal experiences and memories. Is there anything you have thought about that you'd like to add right now?
2. (Explain how this is a more reflective set of questions) I want to give you a chance to reflect on what some of this stuff means to you.

3. Thinking back to what you've said about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., identity, discrimination, limitations, support, your teachers, etc. – various topics) how do you understand/describe your overall experience as an ELL?
4. You've talked about your parents and what they've done with you at school, so thinking about that, how would you describe their overall role?
5. Given what you've said about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., being an ELL, being Mexican-American, etc.), how do you understand/describe your personal identity?
6. Overall, what is your feeling about the relationships you have had with teachers?
7. If you could tell teachers anything about your own personal experiences as an ELL, what would you tell them?
8. If you could tell people out in the community anything about your own personal experiences, what would you tell them?
9. If you could tell other, non-ELL students anything about your own personal experiences, what would you tell them?
10. Thinking toward the future, how do you think your experiences as an ELL will inform/influence your life in the future?
11. Thinking back on these discussions, is there anything else you would like to talk about?