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DOCUMENTING DESIRE: ADDRESSING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF UNDOCUMENTED ENGLISH LEARNERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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ABSTRACT

While research on motivation in second language acquisition is copious and the interest in undocumented youth within the education field is growing, there is a need to closely examine the intersection of being both undocumented and an English Learner (EL) and how this intersection often limits ELs, especially those in underserved schools. Using ethnographic methods, this dissertation documents the educational experiences of thirty-one Spanish-speaking ELs in a predominately of color, urban, working-class high school in the southeastern United States. EL participants were ages fourteen through twenty with varying non-citizen immigrant statuses. Semi-structured interviews and field notes were collected during the 2017-2018 school year, with follow-up interviews conducted eight months after nine participants had left high school. This study uses a desire-centered theoretical approach (Tuck, 2009), which highlights the complexities and contradictions of lived experience instead of focusing exclusively on the damage and trauma that often frames marginalized voices as depleted and helpless. The study categorized the desires that emerged into “intertwined” and “vital” desires. Intertwined desires include undocumented ELs yearning to learn English and graduate high school to gain social capital in the United States and as a contingency plan in case of deportation to their native countries. Additionally, undocumented ELs desire more inclusive school spaces where they are not alienated because of language and nationality differences. As a result of these gaps in academic and emotional support, ELs fostered solidarity and peer mentoring. Vital desires include safety, connection, and guidance. Since limited English abilities and undocumented status are often barriers to college and career opportunities, undocumented ELs desire guidance as they make decisions about life after high school and stronger connections with peers and family as they contend with the uncertainty of a non-legal status. The study recommends

investing in healing-centered, culturally-sustaining curriculums and highly-trained educators among other interventions for policy and practice.

CHAPTER 1. DESIRES IN CONTEXT

There is work in this country. There's a lot of work. There are many opportunities to get ahead, and even more so if one knows English well. One could have so many opportunities. You can achieve things that you cannot even imagine.

– Jacqueline

Interview, October 2016

These are the words¹ of Jacqueline, a nineteen-year-old undocumented² English Learner (EL) who arrived in Baton Rouge in the summer of 2015. Her words reflect the impression that many immigrants share – that the United States continues to be a country of abundant opportunity, especially for those who speak English. I met Jacqueline in the fall of 2015 when I started working with ELs as a component of an externship with Hope Academy, a critical literacy program at Frazier High School. For five hours each week, I worked with fourteen Spanish-speaking students who had been living in the United States for only a few weeks before enrolling at Frazier. I helped translate lessons and answer questions in their English and world geography classes. As the semester progressed, students who initially bounced with questions, attentively listened to the teacher, and attempted their assignments became less engaged, paid more attention to their phones, and would copy others' work instead of attempting assignments. I would notice a similar shift in engagement, to varying degrees, among ELs who arrived later in the semester. However, when I would casually ask students if they wanted to learn English, they would assure me of the importance of English and their intense desire to learn.

¹ Participant quotes are presented in English with my own translation.

² “Undocumented” and “unauthorized” are terms used to describe immigrants who reside in the United States without lawful status. “Undocumented” is often seen as inaccurate since not all undocumented immigrants are void of documents. For example, they might have documents such as visas which are merely expired, or may be waiting for their court cases to be approved. In this dissertation, I will sometimes use *unauthorized* and *undocumented* interchangeably, though I use *undocumented* more frequently since it is the preferred term used by immigrants and activists.

The shift away from classroom engagement seemed more about dissatisfaction with class structure and the limited amount of support they received in class than their desire to learn English. Some classes revolved around completing worksheets or copying vocabulary words from the textbook, with the teacher providing limited instruction. Other teachers tried to find online translations of class materials and used Google to translate worksheets and tests. However, because some ELs had less advanced literacy skills in their native languages, the translations of the material were often at an inappropriately advanced reading level. Furthermore, even if these translations were appropriate, teachers could not further explain or clarify in the students' native language, so students were not necessarily prepared to do well on assignments or tests. Students would frequently ask me why their grades were so low in certain classes if they genuinely attempted the work. They would also express feeling lost and alienated in classes where there was no EL specialist or bilingual teacher to explain the material. Frustration with their poor grades and lack of sustained support appeared to be contributing factors to ELs' discouragement and disengagement in school. Since the students did not find the class environment conducive to learning either subject area content or English, I found myself questioning what kinds of adjustments could be made to foster more effective learning within the limitations of the under-resourced school.

I also recognized that, depending on their immigration status, some of the ELs faced limited options after high school, however well they learned English. The ELs who were undocumented and could not afford to go to college would not be eligible for government financial aid and would not be able to work legally. The boundless U.S. opportunities Jacqueline describes with such confidence appear elusive from an educational and immigration policy perspective. But to Jacqueline and her immigrant EL classmates, acquiring English has a special

value because of the belief that knowing English can help them gain access to better societal opportunities, or what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu refers to as *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986). For Bourdieu, “the social world is a system of symbolic exchanges” where *capital* refers to that which holds the exchange value necessary to “buy” particular positions in a society (1977, p. 646). Bourdieu notes that cultural capital is “convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications,” such as degrees and titles (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47). One area of cultural capital with which Bourdieu is concerned is speech, specifically the social value and power of speech, where the symbolic capital of the language is inseparable from the speaker’s social position (Bourdieu, 1977). The ELs' interest in learning English seemed fueled by a desire to gain cultural capital, but since undocumented ELs are socially positioned in complex educational and immigration systems, their access to cultural capital may be limited no matter what level of proficiency with English they achieve.

This dissertation examines to what extent undocumented ELs in underserved U.S. schools can gain cultural capital through English language proficiency. I specifically analyze the relationship between English language acquisition and undocumented immigrant status for adolescent immigrants. I also explore the desires that stem from this precarious position of not yet having gained English language proficiency or legal immigration status. The project is positioned at the intersections of three fields: education, linguistics, and immigration policy. Identifying a theoretical framework and methodology that satisfies the different approaches and styles of these fields is complicated. Linguistics and education scholar Adrian Blackledge suggests that an ethnographic focus in both theory and method for language research allows for engagement with history, power, and social structure (2011). Ethnography allows researchers to examine the sociocultural processes in language learning and interrogate how societal and

institutional pressures impact learning environments (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Additionally, an ethnographic approach takes into account speakers' beliefs about the effects of their own language use and their available linguistic resources. Interdisciplinary language and literacy scholar David Kirkland argues that ethnography serves as an effective, humanizing approach to social science research, because it is "always in conversation with and through the many voices that exist within and upon the communities and peoples we seek to better know" (2014, p.197). Using ethnography both as a theoretical lens and methodology reveals the socio-economic-political limitations that may keep undocumented ELs from attaining the opportunities they believe they will gain through English acquisition. In keeping with the spirit and practice of ethnographic scholarship, this project does not offer a clear-cut solution to the complexities of these tangled systems. The conclusions found are tentative, multiple, and intertwined, but will provide scholars, policy makers, and educators with careful documentation and analysis of the experiences of adolescent, undocumented ELs in an urban, under resourced, public high school that can inform policy and practice. This chapter will first provide an overview of U.S. language policies that privilege English. I will then provide an overview of undocumented ELs in U.S. schools, followed by the theoretical frameworks used to position the project.

Privileging English: Historical Overview of U.S. Language Policies

Language ideologies are reproduced through the language policies that governments, organizations, and schools create (Darvin, 2017). The history of language policy and EL programs in the United States. is tied to the country's history of anxieties over the assimilation of Native Americans and new immigrant groups over time. Although the U.S. founders established no official national language, the prioritization of English was enforced through practice. Early legislators were wary of a country in which multiple languages might be used interchangeably

for public and legal communication. For example, in 1795, the House of Representatives voted down a petition from a German-majority Virginia colony to publish laws in German. This vote prevented a precedent for federal laws to be printed in languages other than English. Similarly, in the first half of the 19th century, facing major annexations of lands that were home to speakers of other languages (the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848), new state constitutions were ratified on the basis that all state records should be kept in English (Crawford, 2008). So while English was not made the national official language, the practice of using only English made English in effect the language of power in the United States.

English-language assimilation has been pushed through interconnected immigration, industrial, and voting policies. The Naturalization Act of 1906 required that all immigrants be able to read, write, and speak basic English in order to become naturalized U.S. citizens (Cavanaugh, 1996). In terms of industry, Henry Ford required foreign-born employees to take ESL classes, and other manufacturing companies followed suit³ (Crawford, 2008). Meanwhile, federal and state governments promoted professional certifications and employment policies that required English literacy (Macias, 2014). This meant that higher wages tied to specialized training and certification were not available to certain groups not only because of socio-economic position but because of language. Additionally, white nativists used English-only legislation to prevent growing populations of non-English speaking European immigrants from voting. These policies also restricted Black Americans with little or no literacy from voting. By passing voting laws that had English literacy requirements, white nativists ensured that they

³ Conversely, ESL classes were not mandated in agriculture and railroad industries. Non-English-speaking workers were tolerated because agriculture and railroad construction did not require as much technical training as manufacturing. Also, since agriculture and railroad industries employed immigrants of color (predominantly Mexicans and Chinese immigrants) a lack of English would impede union organizing and keep workers from knowing their legal rights (Macias, 2014).

could maintain their political control over other groups (Macias, 2014). These 20th century policies are examples of how institutions strategically reinforced English as the primary language in order to limit minority groups from gaining social capital.

Considering the history of public education, before the mid-1800's, formal education was locally-based and largely privately-funded, and thus, primarily accessible to white English-speaking children from the middle or upper classes. In the 1600's, most elementary education was offered in "common schools" which were publicly operated and either publicly or privately funded. Other families chose to homeschool or have private tutors. In the 1700's, religious institutions such as the Mennonites, Quakers, Catholics, and Lutherans opened schools. In the early 1800's, public schools continued to spread, with states shifting to publicly-funded education (Goldin, 1999). Public schools for Black children were not available until Reconstruction in the 1860's, and child labor laws were not passed until 1938, so working-class children mostly worked until compulsory education began. With the nationwide increase of schools, the Department of Education was created in 1867 to collect data about the nation's schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Meanwhile, the push for English-only education can be traced back to the American Indian boarding schools of the 1880s, where Native American children were forced to assimilate to Western customs and beliefs. Children were separated from their families, made to wear Western clothing, and severely punished if caught using their native language through physical beatings, forced isolation, verbal abuse, public shaming, washing mouths out with soap, and physically-intensive chores (Adams, 1995). School was a way to coercively assimilate Native

American children, forcing them to lose their languages and cultural identities.⁴ Over time, as mandatory school attendance and child labor laws began to pack public schools,⁵ states had greater control to push English-only standardized curriculum in response to the linguistic diversity of growing immigrant groups. By 1923, thirty-four states required English to be the language of instruction in schools. Similar to some of the cruelty administered to Native American children, Spanish-speaking children in the Southwest were also punished for speaking their native language during school. Testimonies from oral histories report corporal punishment, public shaming, and washing mouths out with soap (Macias, 2014). The practice of abusing children for not using English shows the intensity of assimilating children regardless of the method, and while present-day policy and practice of prioritizing English may take a less extreme form in institutionalized schooling, it is important to remember the history of abuse. Efforts to erase non-English native languages are tied to the roots of U.S. educational history, and this should be recognized if policies that focus on multilingual literacies are to flourish.

Most contemporary legal support for linguistic minorities grew out of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, sex, or national origin in respect to federal funds. In 1970, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare authored a memorandum directing schools to address the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) needs of students. However, this effort did not get much attention until it was upheld in the 1974 *Lau v. Nicols* case, which determined that schools would have to accommodate students' language needs. Concern for LEP students was reflected in the 2001 *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) federal educational policy. NCLB requires all students – including ELs – to be

⁴ Indian Boarding residential schools closed as late as the 1970's with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), which was passed in 1978 as a federal law allowing Native parents to refuse their children's placement in off-reservation schools.

⁵ By 1885, sixteen states had compulsory-attendance laws and all states had them by 1918.

assessed through standardized testing to drive schools to pay more attention to them, but there is no indication that this policy lessens the achievement gap between native speakers and ELs (Crawford, 2008). Moreover, although studies validate the effectiveness of bilingual education in gaining both English language proficiency and academic achievement, most states continue to only promote English-only approaches (MacSwan et al., 2017). Yet Callahan and Gándara's (2014) edited collection of studies of bilingualism in the U.S. labor market validates that bilingualism is economically advantageous in a digital-age globalized workforce. Bilingual individuals are found to have higher potential employability, as employers prefer to both hire and retain bilinguals and use them as client liaisons (Cere, 2012; Porras, Ee, & Gándara 2014). So while multilingualism is a sought-after and profitable skill, current English-only centered policy and practice does not offer students the opportunity to develop this skill. This disservice of preventing ELs from building literacy in two or more languages keeps students from profiting by being bilingual.

Undocumented English Learners

ELs are students categorized as having difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English because it is not their first, or home, language. According to the most recent data, the U.S. national average of ELs is 9.5% of students, with the most common home language reported as Spanish at 77% (McFarland et. al., 2017). Not all ELs are immigrants, and not all immigrant students are ELs. In the United States, 80% of ELs in elementary schools and 60% of ELs in middle and high schools are native-born, U.S. citizens (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, Zong & Batalova, 2015). These U.S.-born ELs have a primary or home language that affects their English language proficiency since the home language is usually dominant in a child's life until school enrollment where English is typically the dominant

language. Meanwhile, immigrant ELs have a variety of legal statuses. Some ELs are immigrants who have temporary or permanent legal residency, asylee or refugee status, or have gone on to become naturalized citizens. However, some school-aged ELs arrive in the United States without legal paperwork, or might have paperwork that has expired. These are the ELs who are undocumented, and their educational experiences are strongly influenced by the age at which they arrived in the United States. An undocumented EL who entered the public school system in elementary school will have a different experience than one who entered in middle or high school. Second language acquisition studies suggest that mastering an additional language becomes more difficult as people age (Birdsong, 2006; 2014), which means the older a student is when they enter the U.S. school system, the harder it is for them to learn English due to a variety of linguistic, psychological, and social factors. Educational scholar Guadalupe Valdes (2001) indicates that, even if a student comes to the United States in the sixth grade, the student has only six years to reach a fluency level that will allow them to successfully take college preparatory classes. Since mastery of academic language skills takes five to seven years (Valdes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008), immigrant learners who enter high school in their late teens are at a disadvantage for graduating on time, if at all. Additionally, most undocumented ELs face educational inequalities similar to those faced by some U.S.-born students of color in underserved schools, such as overcrowded buildings, inadequate curricular resources, test-centered instruction, and de facto segregation. As a result of these intersecting factors, ELs have lower graduation rates than their non-EL peers. The national graduation rate is 84% while ELs remain at 67% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; Sugarman, 2019).

Under the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* ruling, all school-age children, regardless of citizenship status, are entitled to a public education. However, ELs, whether they are in the United States

legally or not, often fail to receive the instruction and resources needed to succeed academically in an era of high-stakes testing, where graduation hinges on passing tests administered in English (Valdes, Enken & Castro, 2015). The *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) of 2009 are a state-led initiative with national reach that outline college- and career-readiness standards. These standards do not take the place of *No Child Left Behind's* assessment and accountability requirements, so there are multiple sets of requirements currently in play. All CCSS and NCLB assessments are administered in English, which means they serve as language proficiency exams even when their stated purpose is to measure academic content knowledge. Since, as stated above, content is often not taught in the native language, most ELs do not have a grasp on the material and yet are required to take these high-stakes tests. Accommodations such as extended time, bilingual dictionaries, and testing in smaller groups are provided, but they do not appear to level the playing field, since the national achievement gap between ELs and their non-EL peers ranges from 20-50 percentage points (Menken, 2015).

Moreover, sometimes accommodations such as reading questions aloud have been found to be distracting, which interferes with student performance (Abedi & Ewers, 2013). It may also be, as in the case of my fieldwork, that some of these legally-mandated accommodations are not consistently offered at all. Additionally, standardized assessments are not pilot tested with ELs (Menken, 2015). This exclusion ignores the fact that ELs are a heterogeneous group with unique needs. The very fact that these assessments are largely administered using computers is an example. ELs have varying technology literacy levels depending on their experiences in their home countries. Testing on an unfamiliar computer, or on any computer at all, may generate anxiety that can interfere with student success regardless of content knowledge or English language ability (Boals et al., 2015).

Much like testing accommodations, classroom accommodations for ELs are required by law, but are not necessarily implemented well. Titles III and VI of the NCLB Act require adequacy of resources, dictating that staff, curriculum materials, and facilities for alternative language programs are equivalent in quantity and quality to resources provided to non-EL peers. This means that EL programs should have appropriate classroom space, equipment, and certified EL teachers. However, the existence of these requirements does not mean they are properly funded or applied. Schools may provide accommodations such as EL specialists, supplemental materials, and permission to use translation applications on phones. Yet, depending on availability and funding, EL specialists might not be on campus every day. There might not be enough supplemental materials for each student, and teachers might not allow students to use phones (and even if they do, translation only goes so far when learning new material). The ineffective implementation of accommodations prevents students from learning English, from being able to do well on high-stakes testing, and from achieving academically in their classrooms.

Even if undocumented ELs are able to overcome the barriers to high school graduation – through arrival at an early age, resistance to family pressure to drop out of school in favor of paid work, access to well-resourced schools, hard work, and teacher support – immigration policies limit undocumented youth’s access to higher education. Most states require undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition fees, even if the student graduated high school in that state and has resided there for most of their lives. Also, in most states, undocumented students are ineligible for federal and state grants and scholarships. Paying out-of-state fees out of pocket is not a possibility for most low-income, undocumented students. One study found that college attendance of foreign-born non-citizens was lower in states that did not allow in-state tuition for

undocumented students (Villarraga-Orjuela & Kerr, 2017). Additionally, most states do not have clear policies in place for undocumented applicants (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This lack of clear policies can make the college enrollment process overly-complicated for undocumented youth. In his work with 150 undocumented youth over twelve years, Roberto González (2016) finds that college staff lacking clear protocols for how to handle undocumented student enrollment leads to youth being sent from office to office, resulting in feelings of frustration and discrimination. González also notes that, once enrolled, undocumented students may feel isolated, as they are a special minority group on campus. But the limitations of not having a legal status remain after graduation from a university. Without a work permit, undocumented former youth would still be unable to work legally in the United States. Just as a high school diploma does not grant legal rights, no college degree at any level will provide undocumented youth with a path to citizenship.

Two major immigration policy reforms that relate to undocumented immigrant youth are the 2001 *Deportation Relief and Education for Alien Minors* (DREAM Act) and 2012 *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* (DACA). The DREAM Act was envisioned as creating a path to citizenship for youth who were brought to the U.S. by their parents. However, the DREAM Act has been defeated in Congress every time it has been introduced (in 2007, 2009, and 2011). DACA was proposed as an alternative and was signed as an executive action by President Obama in June of 2012. Although DACA does not offer a pathway to citizenship, it does offer a two-year reprieve from deportation along with the opportunity to apply for temporary work permits and social security numbers if they can prove they have the financial necessity. With these work permits recipients can apply for work and educational opportunities,⁶ such as

⁶ Applying for driver's licenses depends on individual state regulations regarding DACA.

internships. However, under the Trump Administration DACA was rescinded on September 5, 2017, rejecting all new DACA applications and renewals while adjudicating pending applications on a case-by-case basis (Duke, 2017). This policy applied to 689,800 individuals, who when their DACA rights expired would be under threat of deportation (USCIS, 2017). Despite the efforts to completely eliminate DACA, federal district court orders made on January 9, 2018 and February 13, 2018 upheld DACA renewals, meaning immigrants who already had DACA would be allowed to apply to renew DACA. However, individuals who had never before been granted deferred action under DACA remain unable to apply. The recent, amplified anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. has created increased anxiety for undocumented families (McGreevy, 2017). In these uncertain times, when there is no reform in sight, it is crucial to understand what kinds of immediate support undocumented ELs need, and to consider whether the current supports only reinforce the structures that keep them marginalized.

In order to address some of the challenges for newly-arrived adolescent immigrants, a growing number of school districts have established Newcomer Programs (Short & Boyson, 2012; Sugarman, 2017). These highly-specialized programs serve newly-arrived immigrant ELs by helping students acquire beginning levels of English, providing content-area instruction, strengthening native literacy, and acculturating students to the U.S. school system. Some of these programs also provide mental health services. For example, the Baltimore school district's Newcomer Project for 2016-2017 was staffed with two full-time, bilingual social workers. The program provides a fourteen-week support group for trauma-exposed Latinx immigrant students and a six-hour workshop series to support the reunification process for families who have been separated. They also provided professional development sessions for educators that teach culturally-relevant and trauma-informed practices (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2016). These

resources ameliorate some of the short-term difficulties for newly-arrived immigrant ELs. A three-year national study conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics finds that the most efficient Newcomer Programs provide flexible scheduling, expert staff, content-area instruction, basic literacy development, social services, and family outreach (Short & Byson, 2012). Another study by the Migration Policy Institute also points out the importance of adequate funding, constant evaluation and appropriate modification of programs, and innovative community partnerships (Sugarman, 2017). However, the majority of these programs exist in cities and states with high immigration. These immigrant-friendly cities and states offer more substantial resources to immigrants, including in-state tuition for undocumented students, than is available to immigrant youth living in areas with smaller immigrant populations.

Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that undocumented ELs in the United States are at the intersection of two broken systems – education and immigration. Reforming one system and not the other will not fully improve the quality of life for undocumented ELs. For instance, if the immigration system is reformed to provide undocumented youth with a pathway to citizenship, but the education system is not reformed, then undocumented ELs would continue to have low English proficiency and low graduation rates. Conversely, if the education system is reformed, but there is no improved immigration policy for undocumented ELs, then the youth would continue to face the consequences of lacking legal status. Callahan and Humphries (2016) argue that school-based linguistic status and immigrant status should be studied together to better understand immigrant educational achievement. However, their analysis of college-going first- and second-generation immigrant students does not take into account the legal status of foreign-born students.

Immigrant youth come to the United States for a variety of reasons, such as war, gang violence including forced gang membership, government corruption, and endemic poverty that threatens their survival in their native countries (Bhabha & Schmidt, 2008; Brenden et al, 2017). According to a 2013 study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2013), the country with the highest murder rate per 100,000 inhabitants is Honduras. Honduras, along with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, are the countries where the majority of unaccompanied alien children in the United States come from (Kandel, 2017). A separate study found that the majority of immigration clients from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador listed fleeing violence, particularly gang-related violence, as the main reason for migrating (Brenden et al, 2017). In this context, immigrant youth flee their countries in search of safety. Presenting oneself at a U.S. port of entry, such as the U.S./Mexican border, is a lawful means of requesting asylum protection. International law (International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) prohibits the U.S. government from turning away immigrants who claim their lives are in danger. This does not guarantee asylum status, but rather the right to an asylum interview, and possibly a hearing before an immigration judge to determine whether one merits protection. Yet, in June 2018, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions ruled that claims to asylum relating to “domestic violence or gang violence perpetrated by nongovernmental actors will not qualify for asylum,” which limits the already constrained access to safety and pathway to legal status for unauthorized immigrant youth. This anti-immigrant stance is in addition to the Trump Administration’s May 2018 push for a “zero tolerance” immigration policy, through which undocumented adult immigrants detained by Customs and Border Protection will be prosecuted in federal court. If convicted on a first-time offense, they would be imprisoned for up to six months before being deported. Repeat offenses

have an up to two-year imprisonment. Meanwhile, minors crossing with their families will be placed in custody of the Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement. Thus youth fleeing from danger in their native countries, and at the same time, they face a host country that currently is not disposed to their presence.

The precarious conditions undocumented youth face take a toll on their mental health. The traumatic experiences related to their undocumented status, such as perilous border crossings, temporary detainment, separation from family, and the general anxiety of potential deportation can adversely affect youth's learning and development (Capps et al., 2007; González, 2010; Kohatsu et al. 2010; Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). Undocumented ELs endure chains of trauma: leaving their homes, traveling across perilous countries, being held captive in crowded cages to then arrive at an unfamiliar school. This trauma often goes unprocessed, as ELs have limited access to mental health resources. This dissertation considers the whole student, by a) recognizing the complex social position in which undocumented ELs find themselves in underserved public schools, and b) investigating the relationship among linguistic and immigrant status, through the documentation of desires, motivation, and investments that spring forth from and despite these students' precarious social situations. This approach is useful in assessing undocumented EL's potential for gaining cultural capital.

Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

For the purpose of this ethnographic study, the following theoretical frameworks will be woven throughout the narrative to understand what is happening in terms of cultural capital, desires, and language learning. When considering the precariousness of the social context faced by recently-arrived, undocumented ELs, in which multiple intersecting factors are at play as they learn an additional language, an interdisciplinary focus is important. The Douglas Fir Group, a

collective of Second Language Acquisition scholars, promotes such an approach. They pose three interrelated levels of social activity that impact language learning: 1) the micro level of social action and interaction, 2) the meso-level of sociocultural institutions and communities, and 3) the macro level of ideological structures (2016). At the micro level of social action and interaction, individuals in multilingual contexts use various semiotic resources (linguistic, prosodic, nonverbal, graphic, pictorial, auditory, artifactual) to engage in interpersonal interactions. At this most individual level, neurobiological mechanisms and cognitive capacities help build an individual's multilingual repertoire. The meso-level of larger institutions and communities (families, schools, workplace, etc.) affects how people build and navigate their social identities in relation to agency, investment, and power. Finally, the macro level includes ideological structures, such as belief systems, cultural values, political values, religious values, and economic values. This transdisciplinary model of the multifaceted nature of language learning and teaching recognizes the multifaceted nature of language learning and teaching:

When L2 learners participate in particular social contexts of action, they do so as actors with specific constellations of historically laden, context-sensitive, and locally (re)produced social identities. Social identities are aspects of L2 learners' personhoods that are defined in terms of ways in which individuals understand their relationship to the world. (Douglas Fir Group, 2016, p. 32).

Language learners remain in constant interaction with all three levels, as these levels shape their language-learning experience. Using this model, the limited resources and potentially inadequate interpersonal interactions that undocumented ELs in underserved schools face at the micro level may limit them in building their multilingual repertoires. The meso-level of social and cultural institutions and communities takes into account the complex social identities in play with undocumented learners who may have a high language investment but limited access to personal agency and power. At the macro level, undocumented ELs face the ideological structures which

are reflected and reinforced through education and immigration policies and limit their access to social capital.

Because my research highlights the desires of undocumented youth to learn English, I want to take a closer look at the meso-level, in terms of language investment and the related construct of L2 motivation. Norton and Darwin used language investment to develop the Model of Investment, which positions investment at the intersection of ideology, capital, and identity. Borrowing from Bourdieu's (1986) definition, Darwin and Norton define capital as "the power that extends from the material/economic to the cultural and social" (2015, p. 44). Ideology is the "dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion" (ibid), and identity is "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (2013, p. 4). As the model illustrates, these constructs are not mutually exclusive, but rather, have overlapping characteristics. The value of capital is based on ideological structures and is negotiated within the individual's identity. As learners move across spaces, different ideologies challenge each other, shaping and shifting the learner's identities and the ways learners position themselves within these ideologies. Ideologies also influence the perceived value of a language and the construction of language policies.

Since the Model of Investment presents the interconnections of identity, ideology, and capital, it is a fitting model to look at the complexity of undocumented ELs' investment in learning English in their quest for cultural capital. For example, undocumented ELs have ideologies that shape the perceived value of learning English and graduating from a U.S. high school or higher education institution. Undocumented ELs see learning English as a way to gain economic, cultural, or social capital through obtaining good employment, doing well in school,

or being able to make connections with influential native speakers. Since this model posits identity as a site of struggle impacted by ideologies and in constant flux, it can also help in analyzing how undocumented ELs position themselves and are positioned by others in their learning environment in relation to ideologies.

While the Model of Investment provides a way to think through the underlying power structures behind the complex drives to learn English, Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System (L2 MSS) provides a theory to examine how ELs envision their futures and how that vision influences second language (L2) motivation. Dörnyei's L2 MSS, also referred to as future guides, builds from the notion of Markus and Nurius' theory of possible selves (1986). Markus and Nurius propose that possible selves reflect what individuals imagine they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid to become. The concept of possible selves serves as a powerful motivational self-mechanism that guides a person's behavior.

Dörnyei's adaptation of these possible selves to the realm of L2 motivation is the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is who the language learner aspires to be in their future. The Ought-to L2 Self is based on the expectations of those around them and the avoidance of possible negative outcomes. The L2 Learning Experience reflects the learner's present learning conditions and motives related to the current learning environment such as the L2 teacher, the peer group, curriculum, and affective factors. For these future guides to be motivationally effective, they need to be elaborate and vivid, within grasp yet requiring extended effort, and must be "in harmony - or at least not clash - with the expectations of the learner's family, peers and other elements of the social environment" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 32). Henry (2015) and Thorsen, Henry, and Cliffordson (2017) add that L2 self-guides do not operate in isolation but rather are part of constantly shifting

backgrounds of self-concepts and self-knowledge that are embedded in other systems.

Consequently, L2 self-guides may self-revise when facing shifts related to the likelihood of achievement or interactions with other self-concepts.

A review of L2 motivational research over the past decade finds that the L2 MSS has been validated in diverse learning contexts (Boo, Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). The L2 Ideal Self component of the model, in particular, is a powerful motivator across learning contexts and is indicative of how much energy a learner is willing to expend to reach the desired goal of learning the new language (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Both the Ideal L2 Self and investment relate to a learner's association of the effort expended to learn an additional language as commensurate with the potential benefits of learning the language. However, the Model of Investment posits that this drive to learn a language is at the intersection of identity, ideology, and capital — constructs not fully addressed in the L2 MSS. While the L2 MSS acknowledges that the future guides must be in harmony with the social environment, the Model of Investment fleshes out the complex power structures entangled with learning an additional language. Moreover, the L2 MSS does not closely consider uncertain futures and the ways in which uncertainty impacts the formation of possible selves. In the context of vulnerable individuals, such as undocumented ELs, whose anxieties around such uncertainties may make it difficult to envision what the future may hold, the question emerges as to whether the L2MSS alone can accurately capture their language learning motivation. Therefore, taking an interdisciplinary focus and combining both models is essential to holistically analyze English language investment and motivation in undocumented immigrant youth. The L2 MSS provides the model to look at undocumented ELs' perceived possibilities and how their perceived limitations shape their imagined possibilities. Meanwhile, the Model of Investment provides a process for looking at the interconnections of

identity, ideology, and capital as the underlying and interconnected constructs that drive undocumented ELs to learn English.

Linguist and education scholar Michael Grenfell also promotes the use of Bourdieu to study language, linguistics, and literacy (Grenfell 2011; Grenfell et. al., 2012). He refers to “classroom language ethnography” as the blending of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Bourdieusian social theory to delineate a methodological space with an ethnographic perspective. Similar to Bourdieu’s sociology, which promotes words as not value-neutral but rather in a constant state of power dynamics within social contexts (Bourdieu, 1986), NLS views literacy in its full range of social, cultural, political, institutional, economic, and historical contexts (Gee, 2015; Street, 1984; 2003). Positing literacy as a social practice dependent on particular contexts instead of a neutral skill, NLS challenges the “Autonomous Model” of literacy (Street, 1984), which suggests that improving literacy will automatically improve social conditions. Instead, NLS takes into consideration the socio-economic conditions that account for a group’s “illiteracy” in the first place (Street, 1984; 2003). An NLS approach to undocumented ELs and their English language investment acknowledges that ELs social mobility is not guaranteed through the acquisition of English because English language and literacy acquisition does not undo the limitations of ELs' undocumented status and other intersectional factors that prevent social mobility. Thus, classroom language ethnography analysis is 1) specific to a particular time and place; 2) promoting of reflexivity that requires researchers to consider their position in the field and the way they represent the people they study; 3) iterative and cyclic so that outcomes stay open to revision; and 4) focused on relationships among the large-scale economic-cultural-political contexts, key educational organizations and state institutions, and individual participants (Grenfell et al., 2012).

Because I talk about youth immigrants who are an often-disenfranchised group, I have chosen a desire-centered theoretical framework. Eve Tuck (2009) promotes desire as a theoretical approach to center the complexities of people's lives instead of focusing exclusively on damage and trauma. Tuck argues that a damage-centered research approach that documents people's pain and loss in an attempt to hold systems of power accountable for their oppression often reinforces and reinscribes a simplistic account of the group as helpless and broken without taking into account the "complexity, contradictions, and self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). A desire-based approach recognizes that documenting damage and presenting that documentation to those in power does not guarantee a response focused on amending the damage. Since damage-centered approaches fail to include a group's hopes, dreams, and knowledge, Tuck warns about the long-term consequences of reproducing a group's damage narratives.

With the stakes of focusing only on deprivation in mind, I choose to honor the desires, knowledges, and determination of the immigrant youth on whom this project focuses. As the overview in this chapter demonstrates, education and immigration policies, along with other intersectional social factors such as race and class, place these youth in a precarious position that they cannot control. However, this complex positioning should not overshadow the reality that these young people remain motivated to learn English, graduate high school, and obtain employment. Despite the lack of resources, I found youth actively seek to attain these goals. Driven by their desires, they fostered community through collaboration on school work and mutual encouragement to practice English. Additionally, they grew to share their frustrations and advocate for one another when facing injustices at school. Critical youth scholarship reframes youth not as problems to be solved, but rather as problem-solvers who are capable – with

appropriate tools and guidance – to be agents of change (Ginwright, Noguera & Cammarota, 2006). I highlight these youth desires for improved conditions not just for the youth in this study, but for others. As one participant, Violet, stated when asked what she would like others to know about the youth immigrant experience, “We come here to better ourselves, to learn a new language. . . . One suffers so that others won’t have to climb as far or suffer as much.” Violet understands suffering as part of a necessary process that will make conditions easier for those who come after her. This empathy is paired with the desire for self-improvement that participants echo throughout the study and with participants' understandings of how the concepts of *superarnos* (bettering ourselves) and *salir adelante* (move forward) are tied to learning English. These findings dispel the racist narrative that immigrants are unmotivated and unwilling to learn English.

Since the immigrant youth in this research are at the intersection of being young, immigrant, and of color, they are positioned within US society's ageist, xenophobic, and racist narratives that label them as lazy, selfish, and unengaged. This study found that they have a deep motivation to learn English, graduate high school, and work with dignity. It found peers wanting to help each other reach these goals. There was an overflow of communal hope and collective advocacy among this group of research participants. There was also the desire of families and teachers to see the youth reach their goals; this shared desire appeared to become, in many ways, a fused goal for families and teachers. Additionally, although the school and district administrations' lack of understanding and counter-productive actions regarding undocumented ELs often came from a lack of information, unchecked personal bias, and inadequate training, they too expressed a desire to improve conditions for undocumented ELs.

Positioning the Project

I am a scholar who studies immigrant youth within education, and who wants to document and respond to the educational needs of undocumented ELs. Although there is copious research on motivation in second language acquisition (for a review, see Boo, Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015) and though interest in undocumented youth within the education field continues to grow (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; González, 2016; Lopez, 2010; Perez, 2009), no studies in L2 Motivation, to my knowledge, expand on the intersectional limitations of being both undocumented and an EL student during a particularly anti-immigrant time. This study is intensely relevant in light of the anti-immigrant position of the present U.S. administration, which does not appear to have either pro-immigrant reforms or student-centered education reforms on the agenda in the immediate future. Latinxs are the largest EL group in U.S. schools at a rate of 71% (Ruiz, Hooker & Batalova, 2015) and the largest ethnic group detained and removed by Immigration Customs Enforcement (USCIS, 2017). As this study focuses on the intersection of English language acquisition and undocumented legal status in adolescent immigrants, it is pertinent to look at this representative group.

This project also does the important work of considering implications for undocumented ELs living in areas where resources for immigrants in general are limited. Lopez (2010) suggests that the lack of attention given to Southeastern states in addressing undocumented youth needs is due to their smaller immigrant populations. However, immigrant students in such states require support that helps them improve English proficiency and graduate on time. As the present study shows, schools in such states may not be prepared to handle an increasing non-English speaking population. From 2011 to 2017, the EL student population in Louisiana, where the study takes place, increased by 86% (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). The growth in this

population parallels the growing population of Latinxs in the United States. According to the latest U.S. census, there was a 79% increase in the Latinx population between 2000 and 2010 in Louisiana. This can be compared with the increase of Latinxs for the entire United States, which stands at 43%, and the 57 % increase for the Southern states. Additionally, the population increase follows the steady influx of Central American childhood arrivals that began in 2008 and gained public attention in 2014 (Aronson, 2015). The Louisiana Department of Education website does not indicate that there are any Newcomer Programs in Louisiana to address recently-arrived immigrant youth. My project, based in an urban school in the Deep South, addresses the need to give more attention to immigrant youth experiences in an area that is not highly represented. This project also calls attention to Louisiana's troubling public school graduation rate for ELs, which is at 50% compared to the 79% state average and the 84% national average for non-ELs according to the most recently reported data (McFarland et. al., 2017).

In chapter two, *Methods for Documenting Desires*, I will present the study's methodology as well as the research site's context. I include an overview of Frazier High School and the district it belongs to, discussing how present-day segregation of under resourced schools impacts undocumented ELs and how often seemingly small adult choices can profoundly affect undocumented ELs' access to graduation. I provide the participants' demographics and my entry into the research site as well as the methodology I used to ensure the safety of participants who trusted me with their experiences. This chapter also highlights the implications of working with participants who have undergone traumatic events and how bearing witness to the trauma impacts the researcher.

The third chapter, “Intertwined Desires: Investing in Self and Community,” highlights the major desires of graduating high school and learning English while also desiring more inclusive and engaging school spaces for immigrant youth. I discuss the general findings of the study in terms of how graduation and English acquisition are perceived as means to gain cultural capital either in the United States or as a contingency plan upon deportation. I also discuss how in a space of limited resources, EL students and their EL teachers found ways to fill in gaps and mutually support each other. EL students were not only invested in their futures but also invested in the well-being of their peers.

The fourth chapter, “Vital Desires: Guidance, Connection, and Safety,” evaluates how close undocumented EL immigrant youth get to reaching their desires after leaving high school while considering current ideologies, structures, and policies. I present the case studies of nine immigrant youth who had been able to graduate or had left Frazier High. I examine how immigration status influenced participant perceptions on schooling and whether to pursue college. In analyzing this intersections of their immigrant statuses and what they chose to do post-high school, the desires for guidance, connection, and safety also emerged. ELs yearned for more support as they made decisions of what to do next with their lives.

In the final chapter, “Conclusion and Suggested Practices,” I describe interventions that address undocumented ELs’ educational needs based on the findings of this study. I particularly showcase the interventions that the non-profit Hope Academy provided undocumented ELs in terms of culturally sustaining curriculum, caring and competent teachers, and inclusive practices. I address the challenges of implementing these practices and reflect on the major implications of this project for policy, practice, and research in English education.

CHAPTER 2. METHODS FOR DOCUMENTING DESIRES

Mrs. Brown: We are doing Imagine Learning and MobyMax, and homework, and Grace is crying so I'm waiting for her to finish so we can talk, and Ericka is breaking out in a rash as we speak, says she keeps getting them when she goes to the bathroom but she has to go anyway, and others are sleeping and copying other people's work.

Alex Torres: A day in the life. I love them so much. Thank you for being the wonder woman teacher you are!! They are so lucky to have you! (Personal Communication March, 2018)

The above transcript is from a text Mrs. Brown, the EL specialist, sent me when I asked how students were on a day I could not be on campus. On that day, all 10th, 11th, and 12th graders were doing ACT school-wide testing and 9th graders were taken off campus to watch a movie. However, the office did not provide translated field trip forms in time for 9th grade ELs to go to the movie, and the test administrator did not choose to give the regular ACT test to 10th, 11th, and 12th grader ELs. Instead, the test administrator planned to give the ACT WorkKeys assessment, an alternative college entrance exam targeted for two year colleges, on a separate day. Consequently, since ELs were neither tested nor on the movie field trip, all ELs on campus along with non-ELs who had not turned in field trip forms were shuffled into an empty classroom with Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown's text description is a snapshot of the various occurrences in our EL classroom. For example, the text illustrates the resourcefulness of Mrs. Brown and students trying to use the time efficiently. Some students work on learning software programs, fulfilling the district EL office requirement for Level 1 students to have 90 minutes daily of individualized language instruction. Other students use this time to catch up on homework for various classes, and although Ms. Brown does not mention it, I can picture her carefully answering questions and doing interactive mini-lessons related to the homework, as she usually does. Meanwhile, students copying each others' homework is a common occurrence, especially when some teachers do not

modify their work to accommodate ELs. Even though I am not condoning cheating, copying work in this context indicates some desire to complete the work as opposed to not submitting anything at all.

Also, note the social-emotional and health factors in the classroom. Some students sleep, which can denote a sign of lack of motivation, and can also be a sign of needing to catch up on sleep since some students work and/or take care of younger siblings after school, and most have to catch early buses to get to school before the first class begins at 7:05 A.M. Additionally, a student openly cries, and Mrs. Brown desires to address the problem, but first grants the student time and space to express her emotions. In a way, the student openly crying in front of her peers seems to indicate that this is a safe classroom to show emotion, where no other students are judging her for crying. And finally, there is a health concern linked to the 56-year-old campus buildings needing major repairs. In this case, the bathroom is possibly giving a student a rash, much like the mold in other classrooms and temporary buildings have made students and teachers severely sick, causing inflamed glands. But, students do not have control about having to be in these buildings.

These academic, social-emotional, health, whole-student concerns are, as I reply, a day in the life. Our EL team of teachers respond with as much love, patience, and resourcefulness as possible, along with sincere gratitude for one another as colleagues who care deeply about our students. But we also have shared feelings of frustration and disillusionment at the lack of resources and the example after example of marginalization of our EL students. It is in these conditions that I conducted research using an ethnographic methodology which allowed me to be reflexive about my positionality in relation to the participants and the research site. I was both teacher and researcher, using what urban youth researcher Kiesha Green describes as double

dutch methodology, where “the participant observer seeks to at once participate as a ‘member’ of a group and critically observe the ways in which the participants perceive, make meaning of and introduce the interactions that define the group over time” (p. 148, 2014). But along with being participant-observer in the form of teacher-researcher, I was also advocating for immigrant youth and attempting to heal from wounds concerning my immigrant experiences that I discovered still ran deep. Building relationships with undocumented ELs, listening to their border crossing stories and then reflecting on my positionality unearthed for me past traumas about growing up undocumented and present anxiety tied to the safety of my students, friends, and family who lack legal status. To an extent, it also uncovered concerns about how safe I feel as an immigrant with permanent residency but who, during the time of the study, was still ineligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. As I will relate in this chapter, my background and lived experiences influence the way I interpreted and responded to the data. Likewise, the research site’s environment and conditions influenced the way I was able to collect the data. While the first chapter gave a larger national immigrant EL context, this chapter centers on the methodology of my embedded research within Frazier High. I will first give an overview of the district and school context and how the disconnects of practices between the two affect ELs. I will follow with a description of my entry into Frazier High and the methods used to collect, organize, and analyze data. I will close with insights of how working with trauma affects the research process.

District Overview

District History

The district where the study takes place has history of racial segregation which is important to consider as the district remains de-facto segregated and presently has to contend with the linguistic segregation of ELs as the immigrant population continues to grow. The struggle with integration also reflects the city-wide issue of a racial divide. Historically, the

district was involved in one of the longest desegregation cases in the United States. It lasted forty-seven years, from the 1956 overturning of “separate but equal” laws until 2003, when Judge James Brady granted Frazier’s school district unitary status. From 1956-1981, there was a “freedom of choice” desegregation plan which did not actively desegregate the schools, but rather allowed parents to choose what school their children could attend. From 1981-1996, mandatory bus desegregation approaches made integration a bit more visible. In 1996, magnet school approaches were implemented to attract more white and middle class students. The segregation case officially ended in 2003, with provisions to continue magnet and gifted programs to keep white and middle class students from leaving the schools (Cowen Institute, 2010). However, despite these integration efforts, the majority of the district remains de-facto segregated. According to 2016-2017 public demographics, nine of the twelve high schools in the district have 92% or above students of color. These are also the schools which have higher levels of ELs, high economic disadvantage rates and a school rating of “C” or below.⁷ Meanwhile, the two highest performing high schools with the only “A” school ratings in the district are the two schools with the lowest economically disadvantaged rate, are in the top three schools with the lowest percentage of students of color, and only have a handful of ELs (Louisiana Department of Education, 2016).

The district as a whole has an 80% poverty rate, a graduation rate of 67%, and a “C” level rating. These district demographics reflect the copious amounts of research indicating a link between socioeconomic status, race, and academic achievement where students of color from working class households typically attend schools with fewer resources, have teachers who expect less of them academically, and are prone to lower graduation rates (APA, 2019; Stanford

⁷ School ratings are based on graduation rates, ACT scores, college enrollment post graduation, state test results, and Advanced Placement test results.

Education Data Archive, 2016). While these racial and socioeconomic factors build academic barriers for working class students of color, requirements for linguistic proficiency also negatively impact academic achievement. For example, Latinx students face triple segregation due to racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic status (Gándara & Aldana, 2014). Often Latinx students who are ELs are placed in their own classes separated from English-speaking peers. Rumberger and Tran (2010) found linguistic segregation affected EL academic achievement more than any other school factor, including resource availability. The linguistic separation promotes socialization separation that often forces ELs to only engage with similar-speaking students instead of English-speakers. This segregation also does not allow for relationship building across differences. Whether these differences are racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religion-based, learning to work collectively despite difference benefits students. A joint 2011 report from the U.S. Education Department and the U.S. Department of Justice finds, “Racially diverse schools provide incalculable educational and civic benefits by promoting cross-racial understanding, breaking down racial and other stereotypes, and eliminating bias and prejudice.” In other words, districts that work to intentionally integrate their schools could help better equip students for an increasingly multicultural world. The context of the current study’s school district and the city where the study takes place continues to be one of struggle to fully integrate, thus resulting in decreased opportunities for all students, regardless of race, class, and native language.

Enrollment Process

When a family of an EL student wishes to enroll their child in Frazier’s school district, they are given a home language survey. If the family indicates on the survey that a language other than English is spoken at home, they are sent to the EL district office. The EL district

office workers then evaluate the level of English that a student knows through a family interview and English language proficiency screening test. If the screener confirms that the student is not at proficiency level, then the student is classified as an EL and will receive EL services. The district EL office workers then help families fill out an intake form to establish the student's school and grade. The school the student will attend is usually identified based on the student's home address and the grade level is assigned based on previous school transcripts if they are available for the student. If no transcript is available, and the student is of high school age (i.e., fourteen or older), the office may place the student in 9th grade by default. After the guardians and student receive the name of their assigned school, they, along with their paperwork, are sent to their assigned school for registration and schedule assignment.

Based on student accounts and my observations, in this process of moving people and paperwork from the district office to assigned school, there can often be a miscommunication in terms of validating credits of newly-arrived immigrants. At the time of this study, the district office would provide each school with a binder detailing which credits on a student's transcript from their native country would transfer to U.S. school credits. In other words, each school could determine which credits were transferable. However, sometimes the transcripts were not adequately or readily translated, so the school would send the transcript back to the district office for translation. The process of the transcript getting sent back and forth for translation and validation would slow down the schedule-making process for students. Consequently, ELs would often have to go home or wait in the library for most of the day until an available guidance counselor received an accurately-translated transcript to make a schedule for the EL. In the case of one participant, the paperwork going back and forth for translation resulted in the complete loss of the original transcript. This loss is particularly frustrating as original transcripts are either

preciously guarded by immigrants when they journey to the United States, or else someone has to be entrusted to find and mail them from the native country.

District Tracking and Accountability

Once ELs are in their schools, students can receive EL services until they reach an overall level of “Proficient” on the English Learner Proficiency Test (ELPT). The ELPT has tasks which measure reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills separately. Each skill is given a composite performance level score on a scale from 1 to 5 (beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, advanced). The test then takes the skill subscores and generates an overall proficiency determination of Emerging, Progressing, or Proficient. EL services include accommodations such as extended time on tests, group work, and usage of bilingual dictionaries. Services also include modification of assignments, such as limited multiple choice questions or shorter written responses. Ideally, EL specialists work with teachers to help them modify assignments and ensure accommodations are being met. Likewise, EL specialists and paraprofessionals go into classes to give support to ELs (push-in) or pull ELs out of class for specialized instruction (pull-out). However, as seen with this study, often EL specialists are tied down with paperwork, translation, and other bureaucratic responsibilities that keep them from working with ELs or supporting teachers. Similarly, teachers are often bombarded with other school responsibilities besides teaching, grading, and planning, such as monitoring students during lunch and before and after school, faculty meetings, testing meetings, communal planning meetings, parent meetings, and all the documentation paperwork that these meetings require. So it is often hard to find time to meet with teachers about ensuring ELs have their accommodations.

Another challenge to ensuring ELs achieve proficiency level is access to resources. For instance, at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, I met with the EL district office to ask for materials for the upcoming year. The district administrators told me to look into the Title I funds of the school. Title I funding provides schools with high percentages of low-income students with federal funds from the Department of Education. I talked to the Title I coordinator at Frazier High, who said the official procedure was that a core subject teacher could directly submit an order request to them. However, the practice at the school was for the chair of the department to first review and approve the order. Ms. Trudeau, the EL English teacher, asked for a culturally responsive classroom book set; a classroom set of bilingual dictionaries in Arabic, Spanish, Farsi, and Chinese; and state test practice books. However, the chair of the department encouraged the use of dictionaries and books already in the library, and modified the order to drastically reduce the number of bilingual dictionaries. The order was submitted to the interim principal, but in the transition from interim to new principal, the books and resources were never ordered. In this situation, Ms. Trudeau followed the set procedure to procure the necessary resources, yet met resistance at the department chair level and then no follow-through at the administrative level. As a core-subject English teacher, Ms. Trudeau was expected to yield strong test scores from her ELs, yet no resources entered her classroom to help her achieve this.

District Attempts for Improvement

Due to the growing population of Spanish-speaking students particularly in the U.S. South,⁸ the district sought to form a district-level EL task force to address the growing EL population. In February of 2018, a school board representative who had heard about my research invited me to be on the task force. The task force consisted of a school board member, an

⁸ See Pew Research Center, 2019 to learn more about the growth of Spanish-speakers in the U.S. South.

assistant superintendent, the head of the district-wide EL department, two district EL funding directors, one parent liaison, three EL specialists, and myself positioned as an embedded researcher. From our first meeting, another major disconnection I noticed was in terms of prioritizing elementary schools for immediate changes. Two district office task-force members had already been working towards dual language pilot programs in two elementary schools with the hope to implement them in the 2018-2019 school year. Dual language programs for elementary students are not undesirable; indeed, dual Language programs have generated long-term positive academic achievement in both ELs and their non-EL counterparts, and promote efforts to integrate these often-separated groups (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Steele et. al., 2017). However, as I mentioned in chapter one, Second Language Acquisitions studies (Birdsong, 2006; 2014) indicate that prepubescent children typically acquire additional languages at a faster rate than older children and adults, and it takes five to seven years to learn academic English (Valdes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). Because of this language acquisition timeline, elementary-aged students have a better opportunity to be able to acquire proficiency in English and thus gain academic English in time for graduation. For example, an eight-year-old EL in third grade would gain academic English by the time they entered ninth grade and would arguably be well-positioned to graduate high school. However, a fourteen-year-old EL in ninth grade, given language acquisition timelines, would not necessarily be able to gain academic English in time for graduation, much less without proper resources. In a school district that measures school performance based on graduation rates and high-stakes testing, it surprised me that there was not an equal push to make changes in the secondary schools. Improving support structures for the students who have less time before graduation and who are at an immediate higher risk of being

pushed out⁹ of school would yield short-term benefits to the district, as opposed to the longer-term benefits of dual language programs. While investing in a long-term solution is sage, in this context focusing only on the dual language programs harms the current students who are not receiving the resources they need. Overall, the task force only met two times and both meetings focused on the progress of the dual language efforts, so it came to feel like it was not invested in all ELs in the district.

School Overview

History of Frazier High

The desire for education among marginalized groups is at the historical core of Frazier High. Founded in 1927, Frazier High School was the first publicly-funded Black high school in the state. As such, many black students would travel from across the state in the quest to receive a formal education. During this time, there are documented cases of students moving to the area to stay with relatives or family friends in order to attend Frazier High. Frazier High also served as a community center which held movie nights and community performances, thus promoting a culture that valued youth participation and voice (Hendry and Edwards, 2009). Despite this history of desirability, currently Frazier High is often represented by the narrative imposed on most inner-city or urban schools - that it is an undesirable place where the blame of low graduation rates and low test scores are placed on youth and their parents (Harry, Klingner, & Hart, 2005; Odenbring, Johansson & Lunneblad 2016; Rollins, Hargrave, & Romero-Hernandez 2018). It is important to remember that low graduation rates and low test scores are not exclusive to urban schools. Suburban and rural schools also struggle with academic outcomes. Reducing

⁹ Pushout refers to practices and policies that contribute to students dropping out of school. Examples include negative school climate, perceived discrimination, and zero-tolerance policies (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011).

urban schools such as Frazier High to an urban school stereotype (Schneider, 2017; Spencer, Logel & Davies, 2016), ignores the complexity of its rich history and the ways that present-day segregation is in play in its current situation.

Demographics

The high school's population for the 2017-2018 school year was 1,358 students. Ninety-five percent of students are of color and 5% are ELs. Frazier's student population also has a 90% rate of economic poverty, which is assessed by the number of students who receive free or reduced lunches. Because of the high number of low-income students, Frazier is considered a Title I school. Title I schools receive supplemental funding from the U.S. Department of Education to help bridge the gap between low-income students and other students. But often that funding is not enough to address some of the disadvantages or lack of resources, especially when racial segregation increases disadvantages. As mentioned above, the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice (2011) finds that racially-segregated schools have fewer effective teachers, higher teacher turnover rates, inferior facilities, limited resources, and limited curriculum options. As a school of mostly students of color, Frazier High has high teacher turnover rates, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of administrative office spaces. From my observations and students' reports, overextended administrative school staff has led to misplaced student files, students placed in the wrong classes, schedules adjusted several weeks or months after the start of the school year, and postponed meetings with students. Frazier High had approximately one hundred teaching and disciplinary staff,¹⁰ four guidance counselors, one testing coordinator, and at the time of the study, an entirely new administrative team of four assistant principals and one head principal.

¹⁰ Turnover rates caused a fluctuation in staff numbers. Vacancies were often left empty.

Consequences of Overextended Staff

I want to take a moment here to explain the importance of the guidance counselors' job, because counselors' not being able to give students careful attention in regard to their course schedules results in consequences that hurt students and school performance scores. Minor scheduling errors are bound to occur regardless of context. Yet, when there are only four guidance counselors and one school test administrator for a student population of over 1,350 students in the challenging climate of a de facto segregated school, there is simply not enough people power to meet all students' needs. One way incorrect student schedules become a difficult challenge to overcome is that they result in wasted instructional time for students. For example, at least four Spanish-speaking ELs, including one EL student with a learning disability, were placed in a French class as an elective, when there were Spanish elective classes available where other ELs had logically been placed. While some of these misplaced ELs were able to be relocated, it was not until the end of the Fall semester that the schedules were rectified. This change so late in the school year affected student performance as they attempted to catch up on lessons. The students were also impacted emotionally and motivationally as they lost interest in classes that were not appropriate for them.

Other examples of erroneous schedules included giving students classes they had already taken and passed, or even not scheduling students for certain hours so there were gaps in their daily schedule. In those cases, some 9th grade ELs who were new to the school did not know who to tell or how to tell in English about the mistake, so they wandered around school. They were then caught walking around and written up for skipping. Since they did not know English, they could not explain what had happened. Eventually, the EL specialist, Mrs. Brown, was summoned. She was able to clear up what had happened and find a counselor to correct the

schedules. Since Mrs. Brown did not have the ability to fix schedules, she would have to wait for a counselor to make the adjustments. Correcting scheduling inconsistencies resulted in Mrs. Brown being pulled from her teaching and ELs losing instructional time with her. Another version of ineffective scheduling involved not grouping EL students in cohorts, as was done the previous year so that push-in and pull-out sessions would be easier to conduct. And although Mrs. Brown was assigned a paraprofessional to assist with students, the district EL office had not given the paraprofessional any official EL training. The EL specialist was somehow expected to help train the paraprofessional on site, give each Level 1 proficiency student 90 minutes daily of English intensive lessons, welcome the newly arrived EL students who trickled in, do push-in and pull-out sessions, do EL professional development for the school, work with teachers to modify their lessons, help fix schedules, provide her own teaching materials, and document all of these activities.

Additionally, the lack of responsiveness from guidance counselors resulted in students not receiving clarity on graduation requirements. For instance, Ms. Trudeau and I had asked the guidance counselors to come speak with our students during their English class to explain graduation and course requirements in more detail, given that this information was not provided in our students' native languages. Our EL teaching team also wanted more clarity on why new ELs were automatically placed in the Jump Start program without consulting or adequately explaining to the students what the program entailed. Jump Start is an alternative graduation path that does not require students to take the courses required to attend a four year university, but rather those required for a two-year university or post-secondary technical training. Ideally, some of the latter courses offered at Frazier would transfer to certain certifications. However, some of those courses required Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) safety training

that required students to have a social security number. Since the undocumented ELs would not have a social security numbers, they are not able to take these kind of trainings, which results in a loss of time since they are unable to finish the courses. Also, these courses are categorized as electives, which often do not receive as much support from the EL specialist because core courses (Science, English, Math, History) are state tested and receive priority in attempts to hold teachers to required modifications and accommodations. Consequently, ELs with lower proficiency levels and no proper accommodations find themselves sitting in classes unsure of what to do and unsure of why they were signed up for these classes in the first place. Another problem with placing students automatically in Jump Start without consulting students is that it takes away student choice. While there are many barriers that keep undocumented, EL, and economically-disadvantaged students from attending four-year universities, automatically placing ELs in Jump Start does not grant a moment to present students with all their options and allow them make an informed decision.

Our EL teaching team sought more guidance from the counselors on these matters, yet the guidance counselors cancelled visits to our classroom at least four times that our EL team documented during the year. While these cancellations were in part due to their understandable time constraints, it also came to feel, for the students and the EL teachers alike, that we were being ignored. These feelings were exacerbated when, on the day of one of the cancellations, while I was searching for a student, I found all four of the counselors doing a group dance in the gym. And while they might have had a perfectly good reason for why they were dancing (I strongly believe in joy in the workplace), that moment of dancing was taking priority over students who needed to be addressed. Moreover, when I conducted interviews with the counselors, and I asked what they perceived were challenges for ELs, none of them mentioned

how undocumented status may affect the students. This showed a lack of training and understanding of this population.

Mrs. Trudeau and I again experienced this feeling of being ignored when we talked to the school's test administrator about scheduling state tests with accommodations or following up about state test results. Four of our graduating seniors did not know their state test retake results, which would determine if they could graduate, until two days before graduation, which caused them great anxiety. While state test results do take time to come in, students and their EL teachers wondered if students' distress could have been avoided if they had been allowed to take the tests as soon as the testing window had opened, per Ms. Trudeau's request. This is, of course, not even considering that, had the students had enough support the first time they took the state tests, they might not have had to retake the test.

None of these problems requires that the guidance counselors' and test administrator's behavior came out of a malicious intent. The overcrowded space, the lack of staff and resources, combined with a new head principal and three new assistant principals, led to an unorganized environment that created challenges to being able to address all students' needs. Yet it is clear that seemingly small adult choices (sending students away, cancelling information sessions, putting students in certain academic tracks without their consent, not prioritizing their testing windows) built up to make learning even more difficult for ELs. These administrative choices also made me wonder, in this high-stakes era of testing accountability in which students and teachers are held accountable for their performance in the classroom, who was holding administrative staff accountable? As school climate studies show, student perceptions of efficacy and competent school leadership are linked to standardized test scores and GPA for kindergarten through twelfth grade. In other words, disjointed, unorganized, and unprepared administration

contributes to a negative school climate and lower student and teacher performance (Lee & Shute, 2010; Wang & Degul, 2015). EL students consistently being treated as an afterthought, especially when testing and graduation requirements were at stake, seemed a direct contradiction of the school's stated goals of strong retention, high graduation rates, and improving test scores.

Participants

Demographics

In terms of the entire EL population at Frazier High, sixty-seven students were classified as ELs in the computer system at the end of the 2017-2018 year. Fifty-eight were native Spanish speakers, five Arabic, two Farsi, and one Chinese. However, the number of Spanish speakers appearing in the system was not an accurate number, since at least six of these students were no longer attending or had moved out of state, but their names had not been taken out of the computer system. Frazier High Spanish-speaking ELs are mostly from Honduras, though there were a few ELs from Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico. Of the sixty-seven total population for the 2017-2018 school year, ten students were 12th graders, eight were 11th graders, eighteen were 10th graders, and thirty-one were 9th graders. As I mentioned in chapter one, Latinxs are the largest EL group in U.S. schools at a rate of 71%, (Ruiz, Hooker & Batalova, 2015) and they are the largest ethnic group detained and removed by Immigration Customs Enforcement (USCIS, 2017). Since this study focuses on the intersection of English language acquisition and undocumented legal status in adolescent immigrants, Spanish-speaking participants were the population I concentrated on.¹¹

¹¹ Middle Eastern and other non-Spanish-speaking ELs can be doubly othered by not knowing English or Spanish (Mehta, 2016). As an ethnic, linguistic, and often religious minority, Middle Eastern ELs are lumped together with the Spanish-speakers and are often not given as much attention as the Spanish-speaking ELs. While examining non-Spanish-speaking ELs is outside the scope of this research project, more research should be done in documenting the experiences of non-Spanish-speaking ELs.

Of these sixty-seven EL students in the 2017-2018 year, thirty-one chose to participate in this study. Eighteen participants identified as female and thirteen as male. Twenty-six were from

Table 1. Participant Demographics at the Beginning of Study 2017

Country of Origin	Grade	Age	Sex	Time in the United States	Immigration Status
Honduras: 26 Colombia: 3 Guatemala: 1 Mexico: 1	9th: 6 10th: 11 11th: 5 12th: 7 No longer enrolled: 2	14 yrs: 1 15 yrs: 10 16 yrs: 7 17 yrs: 6 18 yrs: 4 19 yrs: 1 20 yrs: 2	Female: 18 Male: 13	0-1 yr: 12 2-4 yrs: 17 5+ yrs: 2	Undocumented: 24* Permanent Resident: 4 Asylee: 2 Temporary Visa: 1
*9 of these were in immigration proceedings or seeking counsel					

Honduras, three from Columbia, one from Guatemala, and one from Mexico. The majority of participants in the study were between the ages of fifteen and seventeen and in the 10th grade. The higher concentration of 10th grade participants partly stems from the lower numbers of 11th and 12th ELs. While the largest number of ELs at Frazier High were 9th graders, most 9th graders were not interested in participating in the study. This is possibly because they had not known me as long, while most of the 10th graders and all the upperclassmen had interacted with me for at least one semester before the study started. The higher number of participants who knew me and were willing to participate in the study reflects the importance of building relationships with participants (Christopher et al., 2008; Jagosh et al., 2015; Petrova, Dewing & Camilleri 2016). In terms of 10th, 11th, and 12th graders, over half participated in the study. Two participants were no longer officially enrolled, but wanted to participate. By the end of the 2017-2018 school year seven more participants no longer attended Frazier because they had moved or had dropped out.

English Language Skills

In terms of English proficiency levels, Frazier data on ELs was neither accurate nor up-to-date. Based on scores from the state department's EL assessment called the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELDA) for the 2016-2017 year, one student classified as Advanced, seven as Upper Intermediate, six as Lower Intermediate, and fifty-two as Beginner. These classifications were not up-to-date or accurate for several reasons. First of all, the 2016-2017 EL specialist, Ms. Q, who was on campus only part of the week, was unable to test all of the students. Consequently, the students who were not tested were given a default score of beginner. Because of the lack of steady documentation, the number of students who were given this default score is unknown. Secondly, as a review of research on school climate and student outcomes indicates, the validity of the assessments can fluctuate if the overall school climate is not conducive to test taking (Wang & Degol, 2015). For instance, in the 2015-2016 school year, the EL specialist had no dedicated space to conduct language assessments, so she conducted them in the teacher workroom where teachers would come in and out to make copies on the industrial printers. Thirdly, the scores are difficult to track because there is no one place where the scores are kept. As mentioned above, the district implemented a new school computer system in the 2017-2018 school year. This system does not have updated scores from previous years. The above numbers are based on a list Mrs. Brown consolidated using paper records provided by Ms. Q and the EL district office. A challenge with not having accurate, up-to-date student scores is that student progress cannot be effectively tracked to provide the exact support students need based on their actual skill levels.

As discussed in chapter one, unfamiliarity with technology can increase test anxiety (Boals et al., 2015). Also, students were assessed in large groups, so there were added distractions when students had to speak into the headsets so the computer assessment could

record their oral answers. In terms of the thirty-one study participants for 2018 Spring testing, 10 did not test because they were no longer at Frazier by the Spring of 2018, and in one case, the student had tested out. Otherwise, sixteen were placed at Level 1 - Emerging, and five were Level 2 - Progressing. Of the total sixty-seven EL students at Frazier who were tested, the majority of the students (73%) scored at a Level 1 - Emerging, as indicated in Table 2 below. Sophomores and Seniors had an even distribution of half Level 1 and Level 2, whereas Freshman and Juniors had much larger concentration of Level 1. No student scored above a Level 2 - Progressing composite score. However, from working with students and knowing some of them

Table 2. Spring 2018 English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) Scores

Grade	Total Students Tested	Level 1 - Emerging	Level 2- Progressing
9th	31	28	3
10th	18	9	9
11th	8	7	1
12th	10	5	5
Total Students	67	49	18

for multiple years, I am not convinced that these composite scores accurately measure the English skills some students have shown in non-testing contexts. This could be in part because of distractions in the testing site and test anxiety interfered with students being able to perform to the best of their abilities (von der Embse, 2018). Studies document that excessive high-stakes testing often interferes with meaningful learning (Koretz, 2017; Meier & Knoester, 2017; Knoester & Parkison, 2017), so it can also be that some students had not received enough ELPT preparation because they were concentrated on studying for the LEAP state tests in U.S. History, Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, and English, which count towards graduation while the ELPT does not.

Immigration Status and Time in the United States

The majority of EL participants have been in the United States between two and four years. Twenty-four were undocumented or in the liminal space of waiting for some status adjustment, two were asylees, one was on a temporary visa, and four were permanent residents. Many of the undocumented participants seemed unclear about their immigration status. Some shared that they had talked to an immigration attorney or that they had court cases pending but could not fully articulate the specifics about their immigration proceedings. This is not uncommon since immigration laws are complex and subject to changing, especially under the Trump administration. Of the four participants with permanent residency, three of them were siblings who were refugees from Colombia and were able to have help with their immigration processing. The other participant who had permanent residency was from Mexico and was able to adjust his immigration status through his father, who was also a permanent resident. Although this study focuses on undocumented ELs and those waiting to adjust their status, I found it useful to consider this small subset of permanent residents within the larger study on non-citizen participants. Essentially, this subset worked as a control group to see what commonalities existed regardless of immigration status. The chapter four looks at these particular differences.

Methods

Entry to School Site

I spent two years going to Frazier and building relationships with participants before engaging with a year-long ethnographic data collection stage in 2017-2018. I was first introduced to Frazier High in December 2014 during my first year of graduate coursework when a colleague and friend, Anna West, was conducting her dissertation research on a critical literacy program she and Destiny Cooper were piloting at Frazier. Anna invited me on a field trip with their

students to an Andover Bread Loaf writing workshop. During the field trip, I was enraptured by how Anna's supportive relationships with her students, collaborative teaching partnership with Destiny, and timely doctoral research were all richly intertwined. This was the first in-the-flesh interaction with critical ethnography I had been exposed to, and because of my interest in teaching and working with young people, I decided I wanted to do an ethnography for my dissertation.

The following school year (2015-2016), I was invited to do a 20-hour-a-week externship with the critical literacy program at Frazier. Two of my professors who had done work at Frazier before mentioned that there was a pressing need for more EL support. Since I have an ESL certification and am a native Spanish speaker, I decided to dedicate 5 hours of my externship towards EL support. I met with the then-EL specialist, Ms. O, who was only able to be on campus three times a week. She asked if I could do some push-in support sessions for a Geography and English II class for a handful of recently-arrived ELs. As I mentioned in chapter one, I noticed the students' eagerness to learn English and concerns about their grades, and I considered what adjustments would have to happen to improve the quality of instruction they were receiving. As some students made passing comments about their undocumented status, I wondered how aware students were of how their immigration status might affect their post-secondary plans. I wanted to know the EL graduation and college acceptance rates of Frazier compared to other schools in the district and questioned what specific efforts the district was making in order to address immigrant youth needs. One day, as I was in my car pulling out of the school parking lot with these questions on my mind and Frazier High in my rearview mirror, I told myself that it would take a dissertation-length project to tackle these questions. I realized that this would be my research.

The year following my externship, my graduate program required me to teach composition classes at the university. So for the 2016-2017 school year, I was unable to do a second externship at Frazier. However, I knew the ethnographic project I wanted to pursue would require building trust with EL participants before the study started. Even though I was teaching at the university and completing my doctoral candidate exams, I decided I would go to Frazier to volunteer with EL students a few times a month. I desired to keep building relationships with potential participants so they could grow to trust me and know that I would represent them ethically in my research. I considered fostering trust with individuals who are undocumented to be especially necessary since disclosing one's undocumented status is potentially dangerous. Part of my research process was to cultivate relationships through my volunteer work so my participants could feel assured I would not betray their trust.

In 2017-2018, the number of EL students had increased from the previous year, so the school had incorporated an English for EL class taught by Ms. Trudeau, who was working on her EL certification. Ms. Trudeau's French-Canadian parents were first-generation immigrants to the United States, so her first language is French. Thus, she was an EL student when she started school, and she vividly remembers her first grade teacher and classmates bullying her as she began to learn English. She shared how this experience has contributed to her empathy for ELs, and she works to build an inclusive, culturally-responsive classroom. She now reminds her EL students, "This is our safe space. Here no one makes fun of accents or tells us that we do not fit in. We are a family, and we accept each other." When I reached out to Ms. Trudeau to see if I could occasionally volunteer and check in with students, she warmly welcomed me into her classroom.

Study Approval and Engaging Participants

The summer before my fieldwork would begin for the 2017-2018 year, my committee approved my prospectus, my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research project, and Frazier's new interim principal gave me permission to use Frazier as a research site. Two days before school started, I met the new EL specialist, the third one in the three years. Like Ms. Trudeau and myself, Mrs. Brown was not a native English speaker. She was originally from Ghana. She arrived in the United States when she was seven years old. Her choice to be an EL teacher was also influenced by her immigrant background. For the three of us, English had not been the primary language, and we were all immigrants and/or the children of immigrants. Additionally, Mrs. Brown and Ms. Trudeau had briefly worked together at another school before and both were in their 25th year of teaching. From our first meeting there was a sense of collegiality stemming from shared work and life experiences. Mrs. Brown and Ms. Trudeau were enthusiastically supportive of this study, providing me access to their daily lives as we collaboratively co-taught and advocated for our students.

When school started for the 2017-2018 year, two years after I first became involved with Frazier, I announced during Ms. Trudeau's English for EL classes that I would be conducting this study. I explained that I would be observing them in their classes and conducting interviews with them out of class. I assured them they did not have to share anything they did not want to, they could stop participating whenever they wanted without consequences, and that the entire process would be confidential. Since students would be sharing potentially traumatic experiences, it was critical they understand they should share only what they felt comfortable sharing. I explained the IRB consent forms which were translated into Spanish (Appendix B). I told them the safety measures I would use to keep their identities safe and uphold their

confidentiality. First, I would be using pseudonyms for them and the school during data collection and any written reports. Second, their pseudonyms and real names are not on the same file. Third, the information and data concerning them remain in private, password protected files. As I mentioned above, 10th, 11th, and 12th students who I had worked with before were more interested in the study than the incoming Freshman students who I had not had time to build a tighter relationship with yet. The students who were interested brought back their consent forms that they and their guardians signed.

Data Collection

I worked with three types of data: 1) field notes covering the 2017-2018 academic school year, 2) forty-four semi-structured interviews, one per participant, and 3) nine informal follow-up interviews with nine selected participants. During the data collection stage, I went to Frazier High every day for the duration of the school day to participate and observe classes, shadow and help support the EL specialist, and conduct interviews. Since I was often doing a combination of teaching, translating, and following up with students, I would rarely write in-class observations. Mostly, I jotted down notes in a pocket-sized notebook throughout the day, and when I got home, I would write descriptive summaries based on the notes I took. From August 9, 2017 (the first day of school) to May 5, 2018 (the day after graduation), I wrote ninety-three single spaced pages of field notes.

I conducted interviews with students during school. With their teacher's permission, I would take individual students out of their elective classes to conduct twenty to sixty minute long interviews. I chose a semi-structured interview format in which I had a list of interview questions, but I had the liberty to expand with follow-up questions. I designed questions which would elicit responses about participants' desire to learn English, their educational experiences

in their home countries versus their experiences in the United States, especially in relation to learning English, the level of support they felt they had from adults, and their plans for life after high school (See Appendix C for questions). I did one-time interviews with the majority of participants. However, I did informal follow up interviews with nine key participants who had graduated or left Frazier High which are highlighted in chapter four. In order to obtain a sense of adult perceptions about immigrant youth, I also decided to do one-time interviews adults who make critical choices that affected the youth participants, such as their parents and teachers. I conducted one-time interviews with four parents, four non-EL teachers, four guidance counselors, and the one testing coordinator. With the adult and youth interviews combined, I conducted and transcribed a total of forty-four 20-60 minute-long ethnographic interviews.

Inquiring about participant's undocumented status is a highly sensitive topic, especially during the current heightened anti-immigrant climate. Scholars strongly recommend researchers to weigh the risks and benefits of collecting any data on immigration status, and that questions around immigration status should be asked through less structured process after building rapport (Masey & Capafierro, 2004; Young & Madrigal, 2017). Not only do these studies call for researchers to think deeply of the ethical consideration when planning for data collection of legal status, they also recommend that undocumented immigrants play a part in these conversations. It is also important to note the shifts of status changes, as to not flatten the complexities around immigration (Manugal Figueroa, 2017; Young & Madrigal, 2017). Other studies show that silence around undocumented status in school settings is common, stemming from the 1982 *Plyler vs. Doe* ruling instructing schools not to explicitly ask about legal status. This silence affects what immigrant students feel safe to disclose about their status (Manugal Figueroa, 2011; 2017).

Taking into account these considerations around legal status, I opted for not directly asking participants for their status. Instead, I was able to find out students' immigration status during observations, when they made direct comments such as, "But I'm undocumented," or indirect passing comments such as, "But if we go to the hospital, I will get deported," or "Ask Ms. Trudeau if she thinks I'll get deported." For other participants, I was able to infer legal status through the interview responses, asking them how they arrived in the United States and following up, when possible, by asking if they were under any immigration proceedings. These careful methods of collecting status information also align with ethnographic practices of "worthy witnessing" (Fisher & Ubiles, 2019) and *cariño* (Duncan-Andrade, 2006) when conducting research with students. Worthy witnessing requires careful entry and confidentiality, while *cariño* is an authentic caring that centers on seeking improvements for the participant's community as opposed to prioritizing data collection only. I centered participant's comfort disclosing immigrant status through asking for it in a way that was organic and considerate to their comfort. I also have documented changes of immigrant status and engaged in conversation with willing participants around the language used to describe immigrants' diverse statuses.

Data Analysis, Validity, and Member Checks

Ethnographic research requires a data analysis process which is cyclical and open to revision (Grenfell et al., 2012), reflecting a belief that a continuous process of revisiting data is an effective way for patterns to emerge during the coding process (Heath, Street & Mills, 2008). My analysis included several revisitings of the transcribed interviews, field notes, text and email correspondence, and EL program documentation. Since I had field notes documenting their behavior, I was able to see compare their self-reported importance of learning English to their choices in their classroom. During a first phase of coding, I coded for references to immigrant

status, future goals, language learning, and perceived support or lack of support. From this phase, themes of language investment in order to gain social capital emerged. In other words, ELs associated learning English as a means to graduate high school as well as being able to attain better jobs, whether in the United States or their native countries. While the desires for graduation and language learning were obvious themes that I expected would come out of the data, additional desires for an improved educational environment were a theme I did not expect as much. Participants were candid about their school experiences along. ELs were grateful for the opportunity to attend school but yearned for more inclusivity, meaningful curriculum, and overall support. Through their interviews and observation, I noted how in many ways the ELs and their EL teachers attempted to fill in the gaps of the under resourced school. I discuss these findings further in chapter four.

A second phase of coding included comparing interview answers across participants to see what patterns surfaced. I looked for common experiences and outliers across participants in terms of prior schooling, their immigration journeys, their current school experience, their home support systems, and their indications of the importance of learning English. During this phase, themes of the need to migrate arose, the strains that immigration had on their families, and how their immigration status influenced their perceptions on schooling and whether to pursue college. This is where I paid particular attention to the students who were of graduating age and the intersections of their immigration statuses and what they chose to do post-high school. I discuss these findings through case studies in chapter four.

A way I worked to ensure the study's interpretive validity was to conduct member checks. Member checks are an opportunity for participants to affirm that the researcher is accurately representing their views and experiences. For my English-speaking collaborators, I

emailed them the passages I had written about them for them to read over and offer any revisions about. The process with my Spanish-speaking participants was slightly different. Because of their limited English skills, they are not able to read full sections of my findings that were in English. Therefore, I provided them with an online copy of the original Spanish quotations that I used along with a summary of my findings in Spanish. After reading over the quotations and talking over my findings, participants confirmed they were comfortable with me sharing these quotations and the manner in which I represented them.

Working with Trauma: Researcher Positionality and Effects of Trauma

Positionality

My positionality as a Latinx, working-class native Spanish speaker who grew up undocumented provided me with a partial insider position within the population. This partial insider status provided my research with some advantages since participants may trust a member of their own community more than an outside researcher and, in turn, may be more open and give deeper responses (Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Zentella, 1997). However, the criticism for researchers as insiders is that they have personal stakes and emotional investments in the community that may inhibit them from seeing certain patterns that an outside researcher may see more easily (Brannick & Cogan, 2007; Zentella, 1997). In order to counteract some of the disadvantages of insider research, researchers need to constantly reflect about their roles (Alyesson; 2003; Brannick & Cogan, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Zentella, 1997). I also have considered how my positionality as an authority figure influences participant responses. Although the participants and I built a friendly rapport, my role as teacher and researcher could make them feel like they have to provide the “right” answer or behave in a certain way. I was aware of these dynamics and constantly reflected on how my positionality and relationship with

participants influenced my research. I have also had to navigate how the research, which deals with injustices and trauma, affected me as a researcher.

One such opportunity to really reflect on my positionality and how the research affected me was through working closely with Pedro on his senior project. Pedro was an outlier in the study not only because of his permanent resident status, but because of his ability to acquire English at a rapid rate. He was able to reach Advanced Level of proficiency in three years. Pedro chose to focus his senior project on the experiences of immigrant youth at Frazier High. He asked if I could be his mentor for the project, and we had a rich exchange that involved me sharing my project and what I was learning with him and then advising what he could do with his project. Additionally, our positionalities were somewhat similar since we are both Mexicans and permanent residents navigating a space that is mostly undocumented Hondurans.¹² In sharing these traits, we also shared in the process of recognizing the privilege of permanent residency as well as knowing English amongst a mostly-undocumented non-English speaking population. We had to confront our feelings of impotence for wanting to do more and the deep sadness of knowing that our community members deserve better. In my field notes, I write about how Pedro and I share these feelings while we code data from his project:

Pedro's eyes tear-up. "Is it ok to cry, Ms. Torres?" he asks in Spanish. "Yes. I spend every weekend crying. It's too much," I reply in Spanish as we look at the 46 (47 if you counted his) free writes on students' future dreams that we are coding at an empty table in the back of the library. Pedro tries to find words. He looks so dejected. He fiddles with his hat and adjusts his glasses. He goes on in Spanish, "One complains so much and doesn't even realize..." I tell him in Spanish, "You help out a lot. You set an example of what it is like to be kind and hard-working. Everything can't be done." He switches to

¹² Recognizing the different nationalities within Frazier is important. As scholar Frances Aparicio indicates, Latinxs are often lumped together in one group, without recognition that Latinxs come from separate countries with diverse and nuanced cultures, despite sharing the same language. Instead of looking at Latinidad as a unified group, Aparicio calls for reflecting on Latinidad as an oppositional and multiply varied identity marker (1999). Aparicio defines interlatino sites as spaces "where two or more Latina/os from various national origins encounter, construct, and transculturate each other" (2003, p. 93).

English: “Isn’t there anything that can be done? A school that could work with immigrants, anything?” I tell him not here. I point out how areas with large immigrant populations have more resources but our district does not know how to address the issues. I tell him that at least by knowing English, students could *defenderse*, defend themselves. He and I make plans to do a poetry workshop day. We also discuss how to make Ms. Trudeau’s English for EL class more interactive. He initially wants to do an after-school program, but I tell him that’s an issue of transportation. I tell him the starfish story where the child on the beach throws stranded starfish back in the ocean. Although she knows there are many she will not be able to help, she also knows her actions are important for the few for whom she can do something. (Field notes October 18, 2017)

I shared the starfish story with Pedro because it is my go-to story in the moments when I feel like there are so many students who face so many injustices, and although I know that I cannot individually reform unjust policies, I can do what I can for the few who I am in a position to help. Social justice theorist Adrienne Maree Brown refers to a “strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions” as “emergent strategy” (2017, p. 2). The action plans Pedro and I came up with at the end of the interaction described above, consisting of a poetry workshop and interactive lessons, reflect what could be done in a direct, daily way. These actions are seemingly small but highly important to show the ELs that they matter and their education matters. Eventually, when Pedro presented his senior project, it brought awareness to a few more teachers and English-native speaking students who did not realize the magnitude of how immigrant students at Frazier felt excluded. These acts of raising awareness and being resourceful with what one has are ways to navigate daily injustices.

To an extent, my participants and I share similar experiences, but it is important to explore the differences and how those differences played a role in the research. The majority of my EL participants and myself are Latinx, Spanish-speaking, have a working-class upbringing, and were undocumented youth. However, the timing of my arrival in the United States and the immigration policies available to me were different and allowed me to have access to certain opportunities that most of my participants do not. My parents brought me to the United States

when I was three years old on a tourist visa which later expired. Before entering preschool at age 5, I remember my father telling me that if I was ever asked, I was to say that I was born in Texas. Although the memory is a bit fuzzy, what I do remember clearly was the tone of urgency and seriousness in my father's voice. The secrecy and instructions to lie frightened me, and since no other explanation was given to me, I inferred that that my native country must be a secret because it was something shameful, dangerous, or both.

Like most other undocumented youth, my immigration status was something that then was pushed aside until high school, until a valid social security number was needed for a driver's license, voting registration, and college application. My experience with realizing the extent of an undocumented status is congruent with studies that show the realization does not fully occur until a need for a social security number is required (González, 2016; Vargas, 2018). Like others, I did not understand my situation until the pivotal moment of applying for a driver's license, hoping that the limitations of my social security card would allow me to be able to drive and would not raise any red flags in any system. When I arrived in the United States in 1995, the laws allowed immigrants, regardless of status, to apply for a social security number (Puckett, 2009). However, stamped across the card were the words "not valid for employment." By having arrived at the right time, I fortunately had a social security number. Consequently, I was able to get a driver's license, which meant I did not have to risk getting tickets for driving without a license. I could also apply for college and not have to pay out-of-state fees. However, I still could not vote in the country that I had grown up in. And the "not valid for employment" exception meant I could not apply for legal employment. There are systems like E-Verify that ensure that only valid social security numbers are being used. I also could not apply for federal grants and financial aid to help pay for college. I was only able to access university-granted scholarships

that did not require a social security number. So although I had the GPA, test scores, extracurricular activities, low income, and minority status to qualify for several scholarship programs at four-year universities, the lack of a valid social security number kept me from applying to many of them. I felt like I had worked too hard to take out loans, so I looked at other options and chose to attend community college, where I was able to get a full ride through institutional scholarships.

When I transferred to a four-year university, I also managed to acquire enough institutional and private scholarships that I was able to graduate loan-free. It was in my third year of college that DACA came out and I was able to apply for a valid social security number, which then later allowed me to be able to apply to graduate school and legally accept an assistantship. In 2015, with the ruling of same-sex marriage, I was able to gain permanent residency through marriage to my partner. In my story, the timing worked out so that I had access to certain policies when I needed them most. The timing of my arrival in the United States also meant that I came in at an early-enough age to be able to acquire English and attend pre-K through 12th grade in U.S. schools. Because of my privilege of growing up speaking English, I was able to advocate for myself and seek out the appropriate academic scholarships, which immigrant youth who come in at a later age might not be able to do. As described by policy and the public imagination, I was a DREAMer who was able to find a path to legal status.

However, the youth participants in the study are not necessarily DREAMers in the way a DREAM Act policy would define a DREAMer. The DACA policy, which is loosely based on previous DREAM Act bills, defines DREAMers as “Individuals who are under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012; came to the United States while under the age of 16; have continuously resided in the United States from June 15, 2007 to the present.” If this is the legal definition,

none of my undocumented participants would classify because they all arrived after 2012. If one disregards the cut-off date and focuses on age, only eleven of the thirty-one participants were under age sixteen when they arrived. The cut-off age of sixteen means that current 10th, 11th, and 12th grade age students do not count as children. Yet in some states, like Louisiana where this study takes place, they would still be legally obligated to go to school due to compulsory attendance laws that require children ages seven through eighteen to be enrolled in school. Youth who left their country close to graduation and seek graduation in this country find it is almost impossible to be able to graduate. Specific youth participants' experiences will be discussed further in chapter four.

Implied in the DACA/DREAM Act policy and public imagination of a DREAMer is that they were brought to the United States, suggesting that they did not necessarily participate in the decision to immigrate. Yet 46% of this study's EL participants consider that they did have a say in the decision to come to the United States. DACA and DREAMer rhetoric often centers on the lack of "children's" agency. So in these participants' cases, would a touch of agency change their access to a path for legal status? Moreover, the requirements for DACA and the DREAM act are contingent upon being in school or school completion. As discussed in chapter one, undocumented ELs have so many roadblocks for graduation that it is just not viable for many. However, not being a policy-defined DREAMer does not mean that these immigrant youth do not have dreams. The youth-led collective 67 Sueños, advocate for the 67 percent of migrants who would be excluded from the DREAM Act policy because they do not have the resources or are in circumstances where they cannot become the high achievers who could meet the school attendance/completion requirements for policies such as DREAM Act or DACA (Arriaga, 2012). Despite their agency in the decision to immigrate, their age, and their ability to

graduate, immigrant youth should still be afforded a path to citizenship that does not make them jump through seemingly impossible hoops.

Because of the differences among my participants' and my position, I struggled with a sense of survivor's guilt and what I later came to find out is called "trauma mastery." Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, a social worker and trauma specialist, defines trauma mastery as a coping mechanism in which people reconcile lack of control and thus create and re-create situations similar to the traumatic incident in the hope that this time it will be different. Van Dernoot Lipsky's research also shows that trauma around us can alter our own psychological and physiological responses, including altering our worldview (2010). There was an emotional toll for me in having to conduct intense interviews that showcased traumatic moments for youth - their separation from one or more parents, their feelings of alienation, their perilous border crossings, the uncertainty and poor conditions of the detention centers. The intense fear and injustice seeped through those interviews while I maintained an empathetic, professional, humane response for all of the sessions, assuring participants they only needed to share what they felt comfortable with. The data in this study triggered trauma and other debilitating emotions, such as hopelessness, that I did not have the training or skills to productively or healthily navigate. In sharing this, it is not to deflect the attention from my participants to me. These participants showed immense courage in sharing their experiences and this research is indebted to their openness. However, I share my struggles because it is important to note the effects of the researcher's positionality on the researcher, how secondary trauma may be uncovered during data collection, and how critical it is for both participants and researchers to have access to therapy and/or a way to build healthy coping skills.

Since I was acting as a teacher, researcher, and advocate, I found little escape from primary and secondary trauma, as my roles went beyond the classroom and the emotional labor provided to my students within the research site. Outside of the research site, I did organizing and advocacy work through a non-profit where I work with colleagues to bring resources to our school. My non-profit colleagues and I try to use Tuck's (2009) desire-based strategies that do not center solely on the damage when talking with potential funders. However, we still have to talk about some of the disheartening data to make a case for why we need the resources. Outside of the teaching and advocacy, I also had to relive trauma at each step of the research process in collecting, recording, transcribing, analyzing, and writing research.

During data collection, when I was learning about and actively summarizing the many ways students were being underserved along with the trauma they experienced in their journeys to the United States, I had several panic attacks, increased anxiety, and would often uncontrollably cry on weekends. The students' trauma would trigger my trauma, which was taking a toll on my physical well-being as well as my relationships with others. It wasn't until the end of September that I sent an email to my closest teacher collaborators setting up the boundaries that I felt I needed to make this work sustainable. I was attempting to establish ethical reciprocity with my participants and research site so my work was not at the sake of my well-being. These boundaries helped alleviate some of the effects, but not all.

Meanwhile, the effects of secondary trauma during the transcription stage in Spring 2018 looked like deep avoidance. Even if I could have afforded to pay out of pocket or would have carved out time to apply for grants to outsource my transcriptions, I chose not to. Because of the delicate nature of the data, I wanted to be the sole curator of the interviews so as not to put my participants at any risk should the transcription agency be reckless with their records. During this

time, I often found myself stalling to complete the transcription, not just because it is time-consuming work, but because I did not want to relive the interviews and face the secondary trauma, which is not an uncommon challenge (Kiyimba & O'Reilly, 2016; Mazzetti, 2016; Woodby et al., 2011). I managed to push through transcriptions thanks to my dissertation workshop group, which held me amiably accountable to deadlines I set. As for the data analysis and writing stage, I found myself at times not easily focused, anxious, short of breath – the telling signs of being triggered. Fortunately, by this stage, I was able to have a therapist to help me process the trauma and anxiety and build my tools to navigate the mental health affects on a daily basis.

Again, I disclose this information with the intention to highlight the effects of primary and secondary trauma while conducting this type of research. I also want to call attention to how universities, or at least my institution, did not provide what I felt were comprehensive resources or adequate preparation for the effects of this type of research. For example, while the university student mental health center provides dissertation support groups, not all dissertation experiences are the same. Arguably, dissertations dealing with human subjects with whom a researcher has built close relationships can have a different effect on a researcher than a dissertation topic that does not deal with direct contact with human subjects on a daily basis. Moreover, while group therapy has numerous benefits (APA, 2018), individuals might feel more comfortable unpacking personal trauma one-on-one with a licensed therapist. In the case of my university's mental health center, individual sessions are less available and have extended wait lists. For example, I had to wait an entire month to be able to obtain individual therapy. This was an entire month of my dealing with panic attacks and anxiety issues on my own. I might have been able to find private therapy more quickly but as I was living on graduate student stipend, I could not afford to

pay for mental health care on my own. The health center policy is that individual sessions are intended to be short-term, with an approximate semester-long duration. A graduate student may be dissertating over several semesters, so this limitation does not fully support the student. Fortunately, in my case, my therapist advocated for my continued one-on-one sessions. After a semester of individual therapy, she also encouraged me to do group therapy, which was an additional layer of support. However, not all graduate students who are working with trauma might be so fortunate. The emotional effect of my research exposed the trauma and pain I had been living with, but it also provided me a way to heal. I feel that my close personal connections to my research have provided me with rich data and the ethos to talk deeply about these factors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I contextualize the research site historically in terms of the remnants of segregation and how a lack of human resources affects undocumented ELs. In this contextualization, I uncover how seemingly small adult choices and clerical errors due to overworked staff affected the ELs' graduation outcomes. I also detailed my positionality coming into the research site as a teacher-researcher but also someone who still has personal trauma from growing up undocumented. I spoke of the challenges of navigating this trauma during different stages of the research process and how I came to realize the importance for participants and researchers to be provided with adequate resources to process and heal from trauma when engaging in research.

In the next chapter, I examine what happens with undocumented ELs' desires in this school space of limited resources and de facto segregation. I will describe how undocumented ELs fill in the resource gaps by providing each other with emotional and academic support.

Through this support, undocumented ELs show how they invested in learning English in their quest for self-actualization and how they are also deeply invested in each other.

CHAPTER 3. INTERTWINED DESIRES: INVESTING IN SELF AND COMMUNITY

Empathy and help is what can make [immigrant] teenagers feel more complete and happy. It's what can make us feel as if we are not as new to this country and as if we are already integrated into the community.

– Pedro

Interview October 3, 2017

Desire, for my part, accumulates wisdom, picking up flashes of self-understanding and world-understanding along the way of a life. This wisdom is assembled not just across a lifetime, but across generations, so that my desire is linked, rhizomatically, to my past and my future.

– Eve Tuck

“Breaking up with Deleuze”

The previous chapter provided the context of the marginalization and limited resources of immigrant English Learners (ELs) at Frazier High. In this chapter, I turn towards student's intertwined desires that kept them coming to school despite the challenging conditions, or what I will call “cold spaces” where peers and teachers were perceived as alienating and the curriculum regarded as inaccessible. I also explore how in these cold, under-resourced spaces, students and teachers formed a community and creatively filled in some gaps as they supported and advocated for one another. Immigrant ELs and the EL teacher team used the rhetoric of family to embody a space of critical hope and possibility, where desire, as Eve Tuck frames it, accumulated wisdom, as well as, in this community context, warmth.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1990, 2003) posit desire not as a lack, but rather as an expanding assemblage, which is contextually specific, influenced by experiences and informed by people's economic status and cultural capital. Building off of Deleuze and Guattari's work, Tuck (2010) frames desire as agentic – as both a producer and a product of social systems. As such, desire is smart, wise, and insightful. Throughout lived experiences, desire gathers self- and world-understanding. The ELs' desires are insightful in that they reveal the complexity of ELs' lived experiences. Their desires are linked to the social systems surrounding them and show what

they have access to, what they want to be able to reach, and who they want to become - as participants framed it, how to *ser alguien* (to be someone). Additionally, their intense desires to learn English, to graduate, and to help each other reach their goals counter the flattened narrative of youth as unresponsive, short-sighted, and self-centered (Bell, 2010; Conner, Ober & Brown, 2016; DeJong & Love, 2015). Instead, the desires they spoke of and collectively worked towards demonstrated immigrant ELs as motivated and invested in working towards their goals, as well as wanting to do what is best for their loved ones and community.

In addition to positing desire as insightful, Tuck argues against damage-centered research that does not frame the complexity of experience and the power communities hold. She argues that damage-centered research assumes that if enough damage – lack, trauma, violence – is demonstrated, then institutions must provide the resources, but this is not the guaranteed case. Moreover, these damage-centered narratives reinforce negative depictions of communities as powerless. Tuck states, “The theory of change is flawed because it assumes that it is outsiders, not communities, who hold the power to make changes” (2009, p. 639). The Frazier High community of undocumented ELs was forged in the zone of triple segregation (Vasquez Heilig & Holme, 2013) due to race/ethnicity, poverty, and language, which are further complicated when legal status is lacking. However, undocumented ELs at Frazier High have the power of solidarity and the wisdom to develop creative solutions in response to marginalization and limited resources. Following Tuck’s call for desire-based research, this chapter will detail the interconnected desires of undocumented ELs. I will share the more visible desires of gaining cultural capital through high school graduation and acquiring English, as well as the desires of wanting welcoming spaces and pleasurable, peer-supported learning. The chapter will shine a light on what emerges from limited resources and marginalization, and how, through their

desires, ELs and their allies formed a warm community to attempt to fill in the gaps from the cold systems and failed policy around them. First, I will highlight the participants' more obvious desires that motivate them to go to school, emphasizing how learning English is the greatest motivator, especially since it is considered a contingency plan for deportation. Then, I turn to the less apparent desires, particularly exploring cold and warm spaces and how ELs' desires for pleasurable learning and reciprocal support can generate more welcoming spaces as students help each other meet their goals.

Ser Alguien: Desiring to Be Someone

The main question I had when I started this project was whether there was a connection between undocumented status and motivation to learn English. What I found was that since undocumented ELs' perception of the future is influenced by the possibility of deportation, youth participants, along with their parents, believed learning English was not only a necessity for obtaining stable employment in the United States, but also a contingency plan in case of deportation. Undocumented participants reasoned that in case they were deported, they could potentially have better job opportunities in their native countries if they had learned English during their time in the United States. To them, learning English is a form of cultural capital that would be beneficial in navigating the poor economic conditions of their native countries.¹³

For example, undocumented 18-year-old participant Susana states, "English is important because it's the language here. But English is important even in Honduras. If you get deported and you already know English, then you're worth two people there." This comment reflects a perception that English speakers have more value or social capital because they know two

¹³ Studies indicate how climate change has impacted farming and thus the economy in Central America, making it harder to secure food and increasing the rates of poverty and civil strife ((Inter-American Development Bank et. al., 2017; Rigaud et al., 2018)

languages. Susana's implication that bilingual people have more "worth," to an extent, corresponds to studies on bilingualism and economy, which also forefront the economic value of bilingual speakers. Callahan and Gándara's (2014) edited collection of studies of bilingualism in the U.S. labor market validates bilingualism as highly desirable in a digital-age, globalized workforce. Bilingual individuals are found to have higher potential employability because employers prefer to hire them as well retain them as client liaisons (Cere, 2012; Porras, Ee, & Gándara 2014). The economic and social capital that bilingualism affords makes it desirable to become bilingual. Another participant adds that learning English is valuable because one could teach English in Honduras. Undocumented eighteen-year-old Jacqueline states, "One could even teach English there. In the school[s], they ask people who come back from the U.S. who know English to be teachers." Whether in the United States or in their home countries, learning English is tied to a perception of employment possibilities which is then associated with a better quality of life.

Because of English being associated with a better quality of life, 100% of the participants who were asked whether they considered learning English important answered yes. They also self-reported as being highly motivated to learn English. Youth participants associated school with an opportunity to learn English, especially when it is one of the only places where they are exposed to English. Susana shares, "I would like to have someone that knew English who would practice with me because in my house only one brother knows English but he works all day. So I don't see him, so I'm only around Spanish." At school, ELs hear English through their teachers and English-speaking peers. Listening to English is beneficial to learning the language (Ahmadi, 2016; Gilakjani, A. P., & Sabouri, 2016; Renukadevi, 2014). Some ELs may not be exposed to English consistently since they tend to "hang out" exclusively with Spanish speakers and/or tend

to listen only to Spanish media. Yet limited but relatively consistent exposure to English speakers is better than none at all. This exposure is something participants see as valuable, and because of the importance they attribute to English, they feel the need to keep attending school. When asked in an open-ended question what motivates them to go to school each day, 52% of them answered “to learn English.” In other words, almost half of the participants named learning English as a reason they keep attending school, despite the challenging conditions.

Table 3. Open Ended Response: What Motivates You To Go To School Each Day? (31 Total)

Response	Number of Students	Percentage
Learn English	16	52%
Better Career/Future	8	26%
Graduate High School	7	23%
Learn to Gain Knowledge	5	16%
Family Expectations	5	16%
Be with Friends	3	10%

As Table 3 shows, in addition to learning English, graduating high school and obtaining a better career/future were the other top recurring answers. The open-ended question allowed participants to name several factors that contributed to their motivation to come to school. Their responses showed an interconnection among these different motivating factors. Note the desire to “learn to gain knowledge” from five of the students, which serves as a counter-narrative to youth not wanting to learn for knowledge's sake (Cammarota & Fine, 2010; Caraballo et al., 2017; Kirshner, 2015; Mirra, Garcia & Morrell, 2015). Also, their desire to see friends speaks to the need to form community and feel included. A review of positive youth development theories indicates that youth benefit from building healthy relationships and community (Benson et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2009;). I will expand on how these aspects of desiring to be taught and form peer bonds manifested in the classroom later in this chapter.

Meanwhile, the motivation of wanting to graduate high school is also tied to family expectations for youth to graduate, especially since there is a perceived value among families to a U.S. high school diploma. Eighteen-year-old, undocumented Pablo shares:

My parents want me to graduate. I've told them that I want to drop out, and they tell me no, to stay in school for them, especially my mom. She says she wants to see me graduate here in case one day I return to Honduras, because the [Frazier] diploma will be worth more than a title from there. She motivates me to learn English and tells me to do it for her, to not drop out. (Interview October 27, 2017)

In Pablo's case the motivation to go to school is external and based on his mother's desire for him to graduate. His mother envisions a possibility of a better future back in Honduras if he knows English and has a U.S. high school diploma. While Pablo would rather drop out of school and is old enough to do so, the influence of his mother's desires is great enough for him to stay. Outside of compulsory laws which require students to stay in school until a certain age, varied motivational factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, propel immigrant ELs to continue attending school. It is important to remember, however, that for those ELs who are undocumented, attending school to learn English and earn a U.S. high school diploma has an elevated importance as a contingency plan.

Family pressures to finish high school, like the example of Pablo's mother, were a common thread in what compelled undocumented ELs to want to better themselves. Seventeen-year-old, undocumented Marieth shares, "My father tells me every day that I have to go to school, have to behave myself, have to learn English, and have to be someone in life. I have to be someone in order to enjoy life, to travel everywhere, and so no one can look down at me." Marieth's lengthy list of "have to's" shows the pressure of being expected to do much, which is similar to the studies that show undocumented youth want to become successful in order to ensure their parents' sacrifices were not in vain (Enriquez, 2011). Marieth views having to be somebody as a prerequisite to enjoying life. Being somebody implies the desire to avoid

becoming “a nobody” and rather becoming someone who gains cultural capital, such as access to travel, and is looked up to rather than looked down on.

The *ser alguien* theme echoed with several other participants during interviews. For example, undocumented sixteen-year-old Chiche relates, “It is hard to make the decision to come to the United States because you don’t have what you need in your own country. It is hard to leave your family in order to become someone in life and to be able to be economically stable.” Chiche points out the economic disparity in her native country of Honduras (Inter-American Development Bank et. al., 2017). Not having what you need is a push out of a country, and for Chiche, becoming “someone in life” requires the sacrifice of leaving family behind. She acknowledges that this is not an easy decision to make, but implies it is a necessary sacrifice. Undocumented fifteen-year-old Mateo adds, “The majority of us come with dreams of getting ahead and improving ourselves. My friends and I wish to graduate and go to college.” Mateo links graduation and college attendance to self-improvement and access to a better life. In mentioning his friends and using the collective pronouns of “us” and “ourselves,” his comment also reflects this as a collective desire that belongs not just to him but to his peers in his community.

Yet, undocumented ELs who sought graduation and higher education often faced external factors, such as financial limitations, which pushed them out of school and affected the way they looked at their futures. For example, James, age 17, and Ezra, age 18, were bright, inquisitive students eager to do classwork. When James finished his assigned classwork early, he would quietly get up, go to the classroom library shelf at the back of the room, and grab a book to read. He would sound out the words to himself and raise his hand to ask questions if he got stuck with a word. As for Ezra, he exhibited an exceptional drawing ability, so he was in the process of

being transferred to talented art classes at Frazier. The talented art program at Frazier High allows students to take tailored classes and exhibit their art in special showcases. Though he had artistic abilities, Ezra dreamed of being a chemist like his uncle in Guatemala. Meanwhile, James wanted to potentially study art or languages at the college level. When I asked James what steps he would need to take in order to go to college, he answered, “strive to study, make good grades, and be someone in life.” Eventually, both Ezra and James stopped coming to school. Students informed me that Ezra and James had to go to work to help their families make ends meet. I did not have access to Ezra’s phone number, but I acquired James’s and texted him to check in. His text message response read, “I didn’t want to drop out of school! Perhaps, this was my destiny that I wouldn’t get to be the person I wanted to be!” Not being able to continue his education made James believe that he would not be able to become the person he wanted to become or to gain the type of life he envisioned. For James, and for other students facing the necessity to leave school, the desire to “be someone” or be the version of themselves they desire may remain unfulfilled.

Similarly, eighteen-year-old Joel was pushed out of school and came back only to be pushed out again. Joel had several factors tied to economic status and perceived lack of family support that did not make staying in school a viable option. Joel’s family situation was similar to that of other participants who had been separated from one or more parents from a young age. Joel had been separated from his biological mother since infancy. Joel’s mother left for the United States shortly after he was born, leaving him to be raised in Honduras by other family members. When Joel reached age 16, a local gang gave him the choice of joining their gang or being killed. Since he did not want to join and feared for his life, his estranged mother sent for him to come to the United States. However, upon arrival, she sent him to live with an uncle

instead of her. At the time of the interview, Joel had just returned to Frazier High after a few months of attempting to live with his mother in a neighboring state. When he was out of the state, he was working instead of attending school, but then had a fight with his mother and decided to move back with his uncle and come back to Frazier High. Joel was helping his uncle pay half of the rent and paid his own car and phone bills, but was having difficulty finding a job because he was undocumented and trying not to work during school hours. When I asked Joel why he returned to school, he gave the response of *ser alguien*. Joel saw his graduation as a requirement to being the accomplished person he wanted to show his mother he could become despite what he felt was a lack of support. When asked what motivated him to come to school each day, he responded:

The fact that my mother did not want to keep supporting me [motivates me]. I would tell her that she didn't help me, but others did. I would take my diploma and throw it in her face. A diploma would mean so much to me. I would have a better job. I would not be working under the sun like so many people who do in order to support their children. Others come here [to school] to waste time. I am different. I have to work for myself. I have to study for myself. I have bills. I am not begging anyone to give me a single dollar. I pay for everything. If I chose to come back to school it's to better myself and see that I get a better future and to give a better education to my future children. (Interview September 27, 2017)

This exchange shows how highly Joel values a high school diploma. He sees graduating as a way to show how much he has worked by himself and as a way to gain access to better economic opportunities. He seeks a job that is not “working under the sun,” implying work that is physically strenuous, but he acknowledges that this is the type of job others have in order to support their families. In passing comments, it was not uncommon for other students to reference the construction work that their families did such as painting and sheet rocking. Others also commented that this is the work they would end up doing. But in this quote, Joel distinguishes himself from this type of labor. He also separates himself in regards to others whom he sees as “wasting time.” He sees returning to school as linked to self-improvement. Joel wants a “better

future” for himself and also wants to ensure that his future children have access to a better education. Joel, in linking to the possibility of future children, seems to be striving toward a form of trauma mastery. As I discussed in chapter two, trauma mastery is a response to trauma where an individual recreates circumstances in hope of a more favorable outcome (Van Dernoot, 2009). Because of his strained relationship with his mother, which was influenced by immigration, Joel desires to have a better relationship with his future children. He seeks, as a high school graduate, to gain cultural capital and be a supportive parent and provide his children with more than what his mother could.

Joel’s exchange also touches on the desire for self-sufficiency and the American Dream. Based on public opinion surveys of U.S. adults, the Pew Research Center defines the American Dream as the notion that “hard work will pay off and that each successive generation is better off than the one before it” (Lopez et al. 2018). Based on this definition, Joel’s assertion that he has his own expenses and that he works diligently to sustain himself, along with his belief that this will get him and his future children ahead, reflects his belief in the American Dream. This goal of self-sufficiency is named by another participant. When asked what motivated him to come to school, eighteen-year-old Pedro answers, “I want to be somebody and don’t want to depend on anyone for money or for translation or anything.” The idea of self-sufficiency is one that is tied to the American imagination of a romantic past where the United States developed out of self-reliance and independence. As historian Stephanie Coontz (1992) explains in her book *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, the image of an American “pioneering spirit” who heads out West to accomplish Manifest Destiny overshadows the historical accounts of how individuals throughout U.S. history had to rely heavily on community in order to survive. However, the self-reliance attached to the American Dream remains a

pervasive myth. Although Joel and Pedro are Latinx immigrants, they too subscribe to this notion of self-reliance. Their adherence to the American Dream counters the xenophobic narratives of immigrants only wanting handouts from the government and adultist narratives that frame youth as lazy and unmotivated. Joel and Pedro, along with other immigrant ELs, show that they want to “be someone” – someone who sets goals and is prepared to work toward them. Additionally, in the case of Joel, who had limited support from adults, he refrains from taking a defeatist stance, but rather takes one of fierce determination in the face of adversity. When taking into account all the challenges that immigrant ELs face, self-determination and resilience result from their desire for self-actualization and to gain cultural capital. These ELs are not just self-reporting what are their desires. Their behaviors reflect that they are doing the things they say they want to do, as we see with Joel making the effort to return to school. In other words, their choices and behavior over time reflect how they are working towards. However, there are times when school and other factors put a strain on achieving those desires.

Desiring Warm Spaces

While the ELs saw school as a key to learning English and gaining cultural capital, there was often a disconnect between students recognizing the importance of school and their responses to the frustration of marginalization and lack of resources in school. Often, students found themselves in what I call “cold spaces” – spaces where teachers, staff, and English-speaking students were perceived as alienating and the educational material inaccessible. When ELs became frustrated at such conditions, they would choose to avoid these “cold spaces” altogether. Disenchanted ELs would react by not coming to school and/or cutting classes. Often, they would skip classes in small groups and go off-campus to buy food and spend time together. Fifteen-year-old asylee Gabriela describes the reasons she and others avoid class:

Sometimes the teachers aren't inclusive. I think if teachers had fun activities or something that would interest us as Latinos – I've skipped class, I'm not going to lie – but if my teachers did something, I'd be motivated to go to classes. We would be motivated to go and not skip. There should be more events, fun activities where we learn. I've heard people say they skip because the teachers ignore them. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Gabriela describes the conflict of wanting to attend class but not being able to engage with lessons. Gabriela's request for activities that "interest us as Latinos" is a cry for more culturally relevant/culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Alim & Paris, 2017) that could improve students' academic performance. In updating her theory of culturally-relevant pedagogy, Gloria Ladson-Billings describes culturally-relevant/-sustaining pedagogy as a teaching practice that "shifts, changes, adapts, recycles, and recreates instructional spaces to ensure that consistently marginalized students are repositioned into a place of normativity – that is, that they become subjects in the instructional process, not mere objects" (2014, p.76). Culturally-sustaining pedagogy involves curriculum that allows students to see themselves in the lesson and readily connect their life experiences to the material. Incorporating more culturally-sustaining pedagogy at Frazier High is an opportunity for EL immigrant youth to engage in lessons where they feel included and the material becomes more accessible.

Chiche also relates how she and her peers feel included neither in the curriculum nor in the actual class space. When asked why ELs skip, Chiche theorizes:

I think it's because of the classes. Perhaps because some students are by themselves and, well, everyone wants to be with their friends in class, so they can help each other. So there's a lot of them who want to change their schedules but [the guidance counselors] won't change it. That's why I think that when one is alone in a class with only Black students, where no one listens, no one helps you, has a lot to do with [skipping]. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Chiche points out that there are English-speaking peers and teachers who do not offer to help them, which results in feelings of isolation. She describes a space where she and other ELs do not feel listened to or supported. As a result of perceived lack of support, there is a communal

desire for friends to be in the same class so they can help each other with school work, and when they are not in classes with EL peers, students would rather skip class. Moreover, there are moments of explicit, racially-based bullying that teachers were not prepared to handle, which also discouraged ELs from attending class. Multiple participants share that teachers did not address the bullying they face in classes when they are belligerently called “Mexicans,” an inaccurate term because the majority of Frazier ELs are from Central America. In one interview, fifteen-year-old undocumented Mateo from Honduras shares a time when a teacher did not address peer discrimination:

In art class, we have rulers the teacher lends us. And I turned mine in in good condition because I told myself, "He's lending them to us so we have to turn return it in good condition." But I gave it to the Black student who was collecting them and the student broke it. The teacher asked, "Why did you break the ruler?" and the student said, "It wasn't me, it was the Mexican." Then I said, "It wasn't me, it was him." The student said, "You did it," and threw the ruler in my face. The teacher didn't say anything. (Interview September 13, 2017)

Mateo also said that students often would hit him with the rulers but that “the teacher doesn’t get on to them. He laughs when they hit you.” In this situation, Mateo is being verbally and physically harassed, and the teacher is not addressing the problem. From my observations of professional development and conversations with Frazier teachers, teachers often do not receive training that centers on culturally-sustaining pedagogy or on effective strategies that de-escalate these unsafe situations. However, despite receiving inadequate training, teachers should be able to ensure a basic level of safety for students under their charge. In addition to non-engaging material and lack of support, a lack of safety in the classroom also makes ELs avoid class.

When asked if improving the class curriculum and teacher responsiveness would help reduce cutting class and poor attendance, Chiche responds:

I think it would help a bunch because I see the difference between last year and this year. Last year we had classes with Hispanic students and we helped each other. Last year, I didn't notice as much skipping as this year. This year a lot of us are placed alone

without anyone to help us and explain things. And they place us in strange classes that we do not know what they are about.¹⁴ We want to learn but we do not know why we don't have the group of friends who help us. For example, many students now know English and Spanish and they help us too, like [Gabriela]. And perhaps students are alone and what are they to do? Because some teachers say, "Oh, this one doesn't know English. Why should I give them work?" or perhaps they do give us some [work] but others won't do the work because they do not understand. And that is where one feels alone and doesn't like the class and wants to leave it. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Chiche recalls how the 2016-2017 administration recognized the usefulness of having ELs in a cohort so they could support each other. The administrator who set up that system was Latinx and understood the communal aspect of Latinx culture. Some studies suggest that Latinx culture is a collectivist one where group activities dominate and responsibility and accountability are shared (Gudykunst, 1998; Oyserman et al., 2002; Rhee et al. 1996). Thus, it is not surprising that the Latinx students gravitate toward helping one another. This particular administrator did not continue working at Frazier after the next school year, and the 2017-2018 administration did not follow a similar cohort structure that could capitalize on the collective tendencies of Latinx students.

Recognizing the importance of communality, I asked participants if they had made any cross-cultural friendships. Some participants shared that they have been able to make friends with native speakers who are open to the friendship and do not bully or ignore them. They pointed out that these friendships have encouraged them to improve their English.

Chiche expands:

It's like the Black girls don't want to hang out with us Hispanic girls. But there are some Black boys that are chill and always help us. I had more American friends in middle school. But here I get along more with Hispanics because Black students don't make it seem like they want to get to know us. (Interview October 3, 2017)

¹⁴ As I mentioned in chapter two, ELs were placed in the Jump Start program without being consulted. Since the program consists of more electives compared to other tracks, it does not have priority for the EL specialist to ensure modifications/accommodations are being met.

Chiche's perception is that, while some Black students are standoffish and do not want to make an effort to make them feel welcome, there are others who "are chill"¹⁵ and willing to help ELs.

James similarly states:

Some are super chill and others are not. I get along with two. Then there are Black students who are, um, who make fun of you. Maybe not because they are racist, but because it's a joke. I sometimes try to take it as a joke because I don't care. As long as they don't hit me or something like that, I don't care. (Interview September 26, 2017)

While James says he copes with what could be bullying by simplifying it as a joke, Gabriela stresses the emotional weight such "jokes" carry. Gabriela shares, "There are people who look at us and discriminate us but do not know what is going on with us. They don't see that each word they say can hurt. Sometimes it's something simple. Something small can hurt you." Teasing can have a detrimental effect on ELs who are already coping with emotional trauma linked to their separation from family, journey to the United States, and time spent in a detention center. Some immigrant youth do not have the tools or resources to be able to healthily cope with this trauma in addition to other mental health stressors. For example, in just the span of seven weeks from October 16 to December 4, 2018, two ELs were hospitalized for attempted suicide, one was found cutting themselves, one verbally expressed their suicidal ideation, one had their first panic attack, and three students exhibited signs of drug usage. These eight cases are the cases we teachers were aware of and do not include the students who might have been struggling with their mental health but were hiding their symptoms.¹⁶ James' strategy to ignore frustrations might help him cope, but the additional layer of a perceived unwelcoming environment has deep effects on the mental health of ELs, which in turn also affects their attendance. For most urban

¹⁵ Participants used the word *tranquilos*, which connotes that their English-speaking peers were calm and did not cause them any problems.

¹⁶ During this time, there was no bilingual mental health professional available at the school to help address these crises.

schools, the established response to excessive class cutting is not restorative justice practices that might address root causes, but, rather, punitive measures such as detention and suspension (Payne & Welch, 2015; 2018; Fronius et al., 2016). These punitive practices result in more missed instructional time and further alienate students.

Just as some teachers have not received culturally-responsive professional development, disciplinary staff are not necessarily trained in culturally-responsive practices either. In one case, I was in the breezeway outside of the office talking with two ELs. Pablo was nineteen and undocumented at the time, and Keath was about to turn eighteen and was in the process of legalizing his status. Both had inconsistent attendance because they both frequently did construction work in order to help contribute financially to their working-class families. Keath was part of a single-mother household, and Pablo was helping to cover medical expenses for his pregnant teenage sister. Because of so many absences, they had fallen behind in all their classes and their grades were low. On the rare occasions Keath and Pablo went to school, they had a propensity to skip classes and both were considering dropping out. The only reason Pablo was there that day was to see if his sister's homebound application had been processed, and Keath was there to accompany him. As we were talking about their options if they chose not to drop out, a disciplinary staff member or "dean" walked by, as I describe in my field notes:

The dean tells me to tell [Keath] to take his earrings out. [Keath] playfully answers in English, "I don't speak English or Spanish." The dean laughs loudly. "Are you getting deported? No? Then you are here. Take out them earrings." Without waiting for a response, the dean goes into the office. I am trying to keep myself together. I am stunned and furious at the "deported" comment but everything happened so quickly that I have no time to respond. Instead, I talk with the students a few more moments about their options before the bell rings, and I have to get to the next class. (Field Notes, November 7, 2017)

While Keath playfully engages with the dean, the dean is in a position of authority and his job is enforcing school rules. Yet, the dean makes a comment that could make non-citizen students feel unsafe. The comment could be interpreted not merely as an insensitive "joke" but, instead, as a

threat. This “joke” could be read as a reminder that the dean has the power to call the police, a major anxiety for immigrants of color who can face deportation as a consequence of any minor legal infraction, especially since the establishment of 287(g) agreements between local law enforcement and ICE. This agreement deputizes local police as ICE agents who can initiate deportation proceedings (Albence & Gautreaux, 2017; Nuñez, 2018). In a study of over 600 recently-arrived immigrant students in seven different cities, students reported that school is where they find themselves most potentially vulnerable to deportation authorities (Verma et al., 2017). Whether or not the dean intends to be threatening, the laughing manner in which he delivers the deportation comment does not make for a welcoming, safe environment, especially for undocumented youth on the verge of dropping out. This is an example of a moment where students can feel they are being pushed out instead of being encouraged to finish school. In the cases of Keath and Pablo, the combination of economic factors and the lack of support contributed to both of them not finishing high school.

Creating Warm Spaces

When faced with these “cold” school spaces, the desire for more inclusive spaces and a sense of belonging grows. Ms. Trudeau frames her class as a safe, warm space. She says, “Students walk into this classroom and they immediately relax. They know they are safe here.” From my observations, students do walk in the classroom with a sense of relief. Their shoulders relax. They break into smiles. Some even come in singing or cheerfully greet Ms. Trudeau and me with a side hug or high-five. This is a space where ELs know they can be themselves. And for Latinx ELs, it becomes a space where they can talk in their native language and where the majority of their classmates look like them. In Ms. Trudeau’s class, they do not face bullying based on ethnicity, and they trust that the teachers will address any unsafe behavior. They also

believe the teachers genuinely care about them. When asked in an open-ended question to name which teachers were most supportive, 79% named Ms. Trudeau. The family rhetoric that has been established is also evident in student's conversation in class. On one occasion when the class was working in two separate groups, and one group finished long before the other, seventeen-year-old Sarah stated, "We are a family in here so we are not really all finished until everyone is finished." Similarly, Gabriela, in times of classroom conflict, would remind her classmates, "We are a family, we need to be together." The EL classroom became a warm space built from an accepting community.

The warmth of Ms. Trudeau's EL classes is something that bilingual Latinx students or ELs who have a high enough proficiency to be in non-EL English classes also gravitate towards. For example, Ms. Trudeau sponsors the "Multilingual Club" at Frazier, where students occasionally meet up for lunch and go on field trips together. During these activities, a handful of Latinx and immigrant students who are not ELs, and ELs who are more English proficient and therefore not in Ms. Trudeau's English classes, come along. I suspect that in a school that is majority African-American, and that tailors events accordingly, such activities feature a sense of inclusion the non-EL or higher-level EL Latinx and immigrant students are seeking. I have seen this especially with incoming Latinx 9th graders who do not get to take Ms. Trudeau's English class and are thus separated from other Latinx students. One such student sometimes hovered by the classroom door as the rest of students went in. He would peek into the classroom and, in some instances, tried to sneak in. I had to remind him that this is not his class, and was saddened as he reluctantly stepped out. This student recognized the community that is formed in Ms. Trudeau's classes and wanted to be a part of it. In order to make more students feel included, structures would need to be developed to facilitate warmer spaces throughout the school. I will

offer suggestions on how to set this up later in this chapter, but first I want to further explore what the idea of cold and warm spaces signifies in relation to immigrant status.

The invocation of family and the seeking of warm spaces become more complex when considering the larger U.S. immigration context and what *family* and *space* signify to undocumented immigrants. Immigration laws determine which bodies are excluded from entering the United States, which bodies can be held in the liminal spaces of detainment centers, and which bodies can be forcibly removed from the country. These practices of detainment and deportation mirror punitive school measures that also isolate student bodies of color through detention, suspension, and expulsion. Some studies show how school policy and practices form a school-to-prison pipeline for youth of color, and in the case of immigrant youth of color, a school-to-deportation pipeline (Pantoja, 2014; Verma et al, 2017). In this pipeline, immigrant youth of color are surveilled and racially-profiled, conditions that disproportionately push them out of school. Verma et al. (2017) argue that the racialization of immigrant youth of color is the first step in the school-to-deportation pipeline where “everyday social norms within schools are intimately tied to systemic practices of exclusion” (p. 226).

The daily practices of isolation and separation create for immigrant ELs a heightened awareness of spaces, specifically which spaces are safe and welcoming and which are not. Studies show how race-related stress can lead people of color to feelings of paranoia and invisibility (Franklin et al., 2006; Paradies et al., 2015; Sue et al., 2008). The question of safety and being able to confidently take up space becomes difficult when the environment trains one to be on-edge and imperceptible lest the attention one draws to oneself may lead to negative consequences, in particular deportation. Because of this anxiety, in many ways, undocumented immigrants learn to “live in the shadows,” as discourse on immigration typically frames it

(Chavez, 2012; Ellis & Chen, 2013). Immigrant-led organizations like United We Dream have led campaigns like “Here to Stay” that counter the anti-immigrant rhetoric of non-belonging and mass deportation. “Here to Stay” exhibits a communal desire to stay and a resistance to being, in a sense, thrown away or removed from a space.

However, the fear that one will be removed from a space and thus separated from family and loved ones, only to be transplanted to another space all over again, is a valid fear. The Trump administration’s 2018 “zero-tolerance” immigration policy capitalizes on the fear of family separation. The separation of families, in particular of children from parents, was meant to deter families from unlawfully coming into the United States (Sessions, 2018). However, the concept of family separation and reunification has historically been a central part of immigration policy and discourse. As sociologist Catherine Lee explains in her book *Fictive Kinship* (2013), immigration laws have used family relation as a means of determining who is allowed to come into the country and who is not. In order to apply for legal residence, immediate relation through marriage, parent-child, or siblings must be confirmed with some age and marriage-status restrictions.¹⁷ Family is closely tied to immigration in terms of policy, but also in terms of the inevitable result of being separated from family when certain family members are in different countries.

¹⁷ There are age restrictions, such as that siblings and children petitioning for their parents or siblings must be over 21. Meanwhile, parents can only petition for their children if their children are under 21 and are unmarried. Certain relationships are given priority and have smaller waiting times depending on whether the petitioner is a citizen versus a permanent resident. First preference is given to unmarried, adult children of U.S. citizens. Second preference is for spouses and unmarried children (under 21) of permanent residents. Third preference is married children (any age) of U.S. citizens. Fourth preference is siblings of adult U.S. citizens. Notice that only immediate family members can petition or be petitioned for. Family ties connected with cousins, aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews, grandparents, grandchildren are not allowed.

Fifty-seven percent of EL participants at Frazier were separated from one or both parents for at least a year. Twenty-three percent had been separated for 10-17 years, meaning students had been separated from mothers and fathers for most of their lives. Within the context of families being used as bargaining chips in immigration law and the amount of family separation in the students' lives, the invocation of family rhetoric in Ms. Trudeau's EL class holds a deeper complexity than is immediately apparent. When students frame the EL class as a family, they use the EL classroom to fill a gap between their desire to feel unified with others and mutually supported in their lives and the reality of their experience. These students have felt isolation and separation in concrete ways, especially when we take into consideration that for 78% of them, their first interaction with the United States was in detention centers. These detainment centers are referred to as *hieleras* or ice boxes because the rooms are kept cold. The first spaces undocumented ELs face are cold spaces because of the temperature but also because of the hostile treatment most of them face: being caged in with no beds, limited food, restricted access to bathrooms, and separated from relatives. Because of these experiences, undocumented ELs often demonstrate a deep sense of empathy towards incoming immigrant students, whom they welcome into the family space.

It is useful to consider school spaces in relation to legal status, especially when thinking through EL pedagogical approaches. As I explained in chapter two, the contrasting approaches of sheltered inclusion classes (pull-outs) versus immersive assimilation (push-ins) are ever-present in EL instruction. In the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, Frazier High was navigating these different approaches. Mrs. Brown, the EL specialist who has been an instructional specialist for nine years, feels that students are inherently resilient. She states, "Youth succeed in spite of adults." Mrs. Brown believes that with enough support, ELs should be immersed into the

larger population and acclimate to the school. Meanwhile, the inclusion EL English teacher, Ms. Trudeau, centers her EL teaching philosophy on affective filters and providing safe spaces where students can let their guards down and learn. In our conversations and reflections about our work with ELs, Ms. Trudeau cites Krashen's work on affective filters, where learners with high motivation, high self-confidence, and low levels of anxiety are more successful in acquiring a second language (Du, 2009; Krashen, 1982; Liu, 2015; Raju & Joshith, 2018).

For me, both of these approaches have serious drawbacks if they are held to the extremes of sheltered classes only or strict assimilation. If students are only surrounded by native-language peers, they tend not to try to speak English because there is no sense of urgency to breaking out of their comfort zone. They are also not as exposed to hearing English, which helps language acquisition. However, without the right support or modifications in non-sheltered classes, some students will completely shut down in spaces where they are the only EL. If they remain in the cold space, they will sleep or not pay attention, or as participants described earlier in this chapter, they respond with high incidences of cutting class and overall low attendance. Instead of a polarized approach that supports isolation through either sheltered classes or assimilation, I want to find a balanced approach that would help students to get acclimated to mainstream classes in an ethical, organic way so that they would not shut down. I lean towards building a safe space, the warm place, first until the colder areas can become warmer themselves. Mixing non-English speaking students with other students without the proper structures in place leads to more damage in the form of bullying and low attendance. I will suggest how to create effective classroom structures for ELs later in this chapter, but first I want to share a cautionary example of how warm spaces can be poorly attempted.

Attempting Warm Spaces: Global Family Day and the Desire to be Seen

In October, just as Hispanic Heritage Month was ending, the 2017-2018 administration asked our EL teacher team if we would put on an event for our ELs. While the ELs are predominantly Latinx, we do have a handful of students who are not, so I was wary of the perceived conflation. I suggested to the administration that since Hispanic Heritage Month was ending, we instead do something for all our immigrant students regardless of ethnicity at the beginning of January. I also suggested that it would be more beneficial and engaging to students if it were a student-led event. Since Pedro was doing his senior project on immigrant students, which required a service project, I recommended that our EL team could support him in organizing this event. We decided to call the event “Global Family Day” in order to celebrate us being one family in Ms. Trudeau’s classroom culture.

Pedro, with our teacher team support, coordinated a conference-like event with multiple community speakers in the morning, a communal lunch featuring Central American and Middle Eastern dishes, and a resource fair in the afternoon with a variety of community service providers. The event was intended to make the ELs feel like they had a special program tailored to them, especially because many school events do not feel culturally inclusive. For example, pep rallies, homecoming elections and prom as they are celebrated in the United States high schools are not common in many other countries. Events like these, without the proper explanation, felt confusing to the ELs. Multiple students would ask me what homecoming was or why prom was celebrated. In an interview, Gabriela stated:

We should be able to do events that are from our countries. Like in Honduras we celebrate Child’s Day. Things like that. We could have like an international day for immigrants, for Latino and EL students. A day that we could go to the auditorium, play our national anthems. Show this is our country. This is what is happening. This is what we are living, so others can see our struggles and our efforts. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Gabriela desires some sort of festivity centered around immigrants and does not conflate Latinx and EL students. She lists them separately and she recognizes that there are multiple countries represented by the multiple national anthems. Also, she shares the desire of wanting others to see their “struggles and efforts.” In this quote, Gabriela wishes to be seen and to take up space; she does not want to remain invisible. Similarly, Pedro also craves being seen. He states:

I think we would need to raise awareness among the students here. Whether or not they speak Spanish, they could help you a bit more to understand the minimum of what’s going on in the class, or to simply say hi, to help you feel included, feel like part of the class, part of the school. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Pedro calls for all students to take on the responsibility of making all students feel included and also acknowledges that raising consciousness is among the first steps.

This desire to be seen was not only a student desire, but also came from parents. In an interview with Marieth’s father, who raised her as a single parent, he states:

I think that [Frazier High] as a school, I am personally so grateful for it. If I could communicate with the teachers, I’d hug them and thank them. But as an institution, I think that since we are minorities, they need to turn to look at us a bit more. (Interview September 21, 2017)

As a parent, he also seeks to be seen. While he opens with a desire to express deep gratitude, he points out how, as an institution, Frazier needs to literally *look at* the growing minority. Gabriela, Pedro, and Marieth’s father all speak to a desire for recognition from the school. They position the work of inclusion as a shared responsibility, which would consist of an administration actively supporting events that are inclusive of everyone, a student body reaching out to their fellow classmates, and teachers ensuring that all students feel part of class.

A shared responsibility for inclusiveness requires that all members of the institution work to make spaces feel warmer. While “Global Family Day” was created per the administration’s request, administrators did not offer to collaborate in the planning. They did not help pay for the event’s luncheon or promotional material. Instead, students pitched in for the food and Ms.

Trudeau paid for the promotional posters. Moreover, none of the administrators were available to actually attend the event. Despite the event being held on campus, neither the head principal nor the three assistant principals attended even a portion of it. The day after the event, the head principal did tell me he wished he would have been able to come, but he had meetings off campus. While I acknowledge the hectic working conditions of the administrators in this particular school, at least one representative of the administrative team dropping by for a few minutes would have been a meaningful gesture.

Ultimately the collective school community was not able to follow all the way through in terms of administrative support or bringing in non-EL students and teachers to help raise awareness. As a whole, the event was intended to celebrate our immigrant students and support their positioning as part of a global community. To an extent, it provided participants with a culturally inclusive event. However, it also showed that a larger school-wide support still needed to be cultivated.

Desiring to Learn: Literacy as Pleasure

Frazier High can be framed as a space where students face multiple barriers to learning. First of all, ELs often faced inadequate accommodations and modifications for navigating a language barrier and being able to work at the same level as native-speaking peers. Then, there is high-stakes testing, which pressure teachers to focus on teaching to the test with little room for a more engaging curriculum. Additionally, there are the affective factors of hostile spaces that trigger past traumas, leading to increased depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Finally, there are the disciplinary actions, which further isolate students and cause them to fall further behind. However, Frazier High can also be framed as a space where students genuinely desire to learn. Nineteen percent of the students in this study stated that the motivating factor that kept

them coming to school was the desire to gain more knowledge, and fifty-two percent said it was to learn English. I observed rich moments when students were intellectually curious and enjoyed learning. Despite the challenging conditions, students engaged in and made the most of the education provided. I will share two such moments, one in the 10th and one in the 12th grade class.

In October in the 10th grade classroom, students were working on writing their own creative short stories with the topic and genre of their choice. I describe in my field notes:

All students are working hard on their stories. Everyone is spread out around the classroom with their notebooks, pencils, and phones to use Google translate. Dan is writing a horror story, and the class gets into an impromptu conversation of cross cultural monsters. Pedro chimes in with the story of la Llorona; Gabriela with the Honduran Lechuza shapeshifter; and Seth on a similar Middle Eastern monster. I walk around and look at the different topics. Miley writes a family comedy. Violet writes a story of two teens having a fight very similar to her love story with her boyfriend Joel (I'm assuming). Shirley also writes about a school romance. Jonathan writes about superheroes, and Seth on Messi and soccer. Monserat writes about "God and his people" and Gabriela on a fairy/mermaid romance. My heart is full of joy. Gabriela and Seth return to their stories. Meanwhile, Pedro and I talk more about horror movies. Joel came in from another class to use the computer to work on his online class. He's engrossed, reading out loud, and flipping through different pages in search of answers. (Field Notes October 1, 2017)

On that class day, students were all engaged in writing and sharing stories about subjects which were interesting to them and related to their lives. Even Joel, who typically struggles with staying on task, was able to concentrate in this space. I believe that the small size of that class that day, the lack of pressure to produce a "right" answer, the freedom of choosing their topic and genre, an immediate safety from bullying, and the opportunity to be creative sustained a pleasurable learning environment. During this class, no students had sleepy heads on desks, fidgety hands playing games on phones, disruptive voices talking out of turn or other behaviors that usually denote disengagement, boredom, or frustration. Students appeared to clearly understand the assignment. No students muttered that they could not do the work and request for

step-by-step assistance was limited. In that moment, the ELs were confident students taking their time on a project that they seemed to be enjoying. Overall, the ELs seemed responsive, even eager, to engage in this lesson which was more than a worksheet. The story assignment was Ms. Trudeau's choice of an interesting way to teach literary elements. The students, spread out across the classroom, taking up space, demonstrated that they desired to write and take ownership of their learning.

I found a similar moment for the seniors as they prepared to take the End of Course (EOC) state tests that would determine if they could graduate. On the day before the English II and Algebra state exams, the seniors and I sat in a circle reviewing a study packet I had given them to complete at home. I describe in my notes:

Marieth had finished the entire EOC English packet, which she presents to me to look over. All her answers were neatly marked. Although Johely complains constantly about the work, she has some good engaged moments where she eagerly answers grammar questions. Later, we transition into Algebra. Pedro helps explain square roots. He innately knows how to keep explanations clear, fun, and engaging. Students are so attentive to him. I keep smiling and laughing. "Why are you laughing?" Marieth asks me. "He's so good at teaching," I beam. Johan is so quick to answer math questions that he does not give time for others to respond, so I work ahead with him in the practice book, while Pedro teaches the others. Johan already passed the Algebra state test last year, but still needs to pass the English one. Technically, he does not even need to study right now for Algebra, but he loves working math problems. When we transition into writing, everyone works quietly. They ask me clarifying questions, especially Victoria and Marieth. I mark grammar corrections on Marieth's paper, and she smiles, a rare occurrence, and thanks me. (Field Notes December 4, 2017)

This snapshot with the seniors highlights how collectively engaged students were in preparing for their high-stakes tests, which is often a tedious and anxiety-provoking task. While the weeks leading up to the state tests were an anxious time for students, Johan's joy in solving math problems and Marieth's and Johely's desire to perfect their grammar shine through as moments when students took ownership of their education and were supportive of one another. Pedro had already passed all of his state tests, but he shared his expertise with his peers in an innately

engaging way, to the extent that I could step back from teaching. I share these moments of pleasurable learning to demonstrate how ELs creatively found ways to support and engage with each other to fill in the gaps created by limited resources. If ELs are able to fashion pleasurable learning experiences in spaces of limitation, I would like to imagine that ELs, and even non-EL students, would be able to learn even more deeply and joyously if they were given equitable resources. Before concluding, I want to expand on the student desire of wanting peers to excel and how tapping into this desire could lead to warmer spaces.

Desiring Reciprocity: Students as Peer Teachers

In late November of 2018, before I start the opening class meeting, 10th grader Alexander, who some days is more attentive than others, already has his hand up and asks me to come to his desk. I make my way to where he sits in the last seat of the first row. He tells me in a grave tone, “Ms. G asked me to finish my four assignments and then help the new student complete theirs. I have to do this.” His body language denotes confidence. He sits tall and still, maintaining eye contact while I respond that as it is a support day, his plan to catch up on his own work and help someone else is an excellent plan.

By mid-fall semester of 2018, our EL teacher team began implementing weekly “Support Days” where students could break into groups to support each other on projects and homework from other classes. These support days were partly in response to ELs’ propensity to work collectively. During support days, students who demonstrated higher comprehension in certain subjects or assignments were encouraged to help students who were struggling. In this way, struggling students were given the support they needed, while the peer teachers were reinforcing their content knowledge and thus gaining confidence as well as honing facilitation skills. The support days were also successful because they allowed students to learn in the communal style

that they enjoyed, fostering a convivial, pleasurable environment. Students could see that while some of them were good at certain subjects, they might be struggling in other subjects, so many had the opportunity to take turns being the peer-teacher. The positive effects of peer-to-peer learning are reflected in other research. In a review of fourteen studies, peer-mediated interventions with ELs were linked to medium-to-large effects on measures of phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension when compared to teacher-mediated interventions (Pyle et al., 2017). Peer mentors are found to offer linguistic, social-emotional, and academic support (Bartlett, 2017; Bowman-Perrott et al., 2016).

Desiring to further capitalize on this approach, our teacher team wanted to offer students an elective that would help them improve their facilitation and build their interpretation and translation skills. During the “Language Assistance Lab I” elective, students would spend part of the class reading and discussing texts on interpretation, translation, and facilitation. They would then apply what they learned by going into the 9th grade EL classroom to peer teach. Finally, they would also have time in class to reflect and refine their facilitation and interpretation skills. This elective provided valuable training in soft skills that would translate to future jobs. Additionally, the elective provided a way for students who had transitioned out of EL classes, or bilingual non-EL Latinx students, to purposefully remain in or come into the community.

The longer-term goal for this elective was to have a “Language Assistance Lab II,” where students would then work with non-EL English teachers to provide interpretation and translation in other core classes such as chemistry, algebra, civics, and history. The EL peer-teachers would become like student paraprofessionals who do pull-in sessions. In this way, EL peer-teachers would help fill in the gaps by helping interpret lessons and even assisting teachers in translating or modifying written assignments. Non-EL students would be exposed to a model of student

leadership. Through such a process, colder spaces could become warmer, as ELs serve as trained peer-mentors to support teachers and classmates. This elective could provide the training and experience for students to get certified as interpreters for the school district or, with additional preparation, in other sectors. Freelance interpreting could generate income for undocumented youth who might offer their paid services to their communities. If students desire to work communally and help each other, then opportunities should be created to allow students to do so in a way that allows them to continue to serve their school community. I discuss more about the benefits of EL peer-mentoring in chapter five.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted EL's desires for graduation and language acquisition that are often intertwined with desires for warmer school spaces. ELs share a belief that acquiring English proficiency is tied to advancing in life either in the United States or as a contingency plan if they are deported to their home country. While undocumented ELs are invested in learning English for their self-actualization, they also desire to help their peers advance and to invest in their school community by sharing their emotional and academic support. In addition to giving back, undocumented ELs at Frazier High School shared a quest for building warm spaces, pleasurable learning experiences, and visibility. The ELs' multiple and intersecting desires provide a roadmap for how schools could be more than holding cells for youth. However, current educational system lacks equitable funding, an investment in preparing and supporting high-quality teachers, and a prioritization of collaborative learning (Darling-Hammond, 2019; Schneider et al., 2017) which stop schools from being spaces where youth have the opportunity to grow and learn together – where students' developmental needs are valued and cultivated so they can achieve their full potential.

In the next chapter, I analyze how immigrant status intersects with language ability and educational access. Through nine case studies of ELs with varying statuses, I examine to what extent undocumented ELs in underserved U.S. schools can gain cultural capital through English language proficiency once they have left high school. The nine cases of EL participants are subdivided into 1) high school graduates with legal status but who do not feel college-ready, 2) high school graduates without legal status who feel college-ready, 3) high school graduates without legal status who do not want to pursue higher education, and 4) participants who were unable to graduate and have mixed feelings about higher education. Through these case studies, three additional desires will be added to those already identified: guidance, connection, and safety.

CHAPTER 4. VITAL DESIRES: GUIDANCE, CONNECTION, AND SAFETY

“I remember Johely saying we would graduate only to go work in sheetrocking,” says Victoria as she, Jasmin, Marieth, Sarah, and I sit together at a local coffee shop. Eight months after their May 2018 graduation, these four participants gathered to check in about what had happened since they left Frazier High. From what they shared, none of them were able to change their undocumented status. Victoria and Jasmin were working for a sheetrocking and painting company. The company pays under the table, so Victoria and Jasmin were able to work for the company without having a social security number. Meanwhile, Marieth had a family friend who managed to help her secure a job in customer service for a cell phone retailer. Sarah had temporarily worked on weekends as a bartender, but she mostly stayed at home to take care of her preschool-aged sister who has Down Syndrome. Sarah had intended to begin classes in spring 2019 at a local community college, but, due to difficulties navigating the college application process, she would now have to wait until fall 2019.

These four young women had spent months working diligently to pass three state tests in order to graduate. They passed all their classes with grade point averages ranging from 2.13 to 3.66. However, because of their unauthorized immigration status and their perceptions of their English proficiency, they did not choose to actively pursue a higher education. Although Johely could not make it to our reunion, her comment about graduating only to work in sheetrocking, as remembered by Victoria, appeared to resonate with the others. They nodded their heads and softly laughed. According to my field notes, Johely made this comment the week before state tests when the students were at their peak of studying. The prophetic comment raises the question of why immigrant students would put in the effort to graduate if they know they are likely to end up in similar working conditions to non-graduates.

This chapter examines to what extent non-citizen ELs who attend underserved U.S. schools can gain cultural capital through English language proficiency once they have left school. Nine case studies feature a range of variables in terms of immigration status, English proficiency, and age of arrival while each highlights one participant's central desire. Case studies are particularly useful to explore the complexity of social and cultural contexts and to gain insight into how individuals interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences and how they construct their worlds (Harrison et al., 2017). Particularly in the field of education, case studies allow researchers to interpret how certain education programs and curriculum impacts students (Simons, 2009). Creswell et al., define case studies as

A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes. p. 245, 2007

As a whole, this study is an embedded ethnography in which I was a teacher-researcher who both participated in the research site and critically observed the ways participants made meaning of their social context. The case studies in this chapter feature particular cases bounded by the time frame of participants' senior year and the year following their intended/actual graduation date.

These case studies are divided into two parts: those who were able to graduate and then those who were not. Part One details those who were able to graduate, and is then subdivided into 1) graduates with legal status but who do not feel ready to start college, 2) graduates without legal status who feel ready for college but cannot attend due to status-based financial barriers, 3) graduates without legal status who do not want to pursue higher education. Part Two focuses on the participants who were unable to graduate and have mixed feelings about higher education. The findings from these case studies document a variety of vantage points. However, what these vantage points have in common is that they highlight the need for more trained high school

guidance counselors and the importance of learning English in high school regardless of post-graduation plans.

While I chose to highlight one central desire per case study to demonstrate a specific larger implication, I did not do so because I believe that the participants are limited to a single desire. On the contrary, all the case studies presented could be interpreted through a variety of lenses. As Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1990) illustrates, an individual's social categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability intersect and result in different advantages and disadvantages according to the individual's social contexts.

Part I. Students Able to Graduate: Permanent Residents with Varying Confidence in English Proficiency

This first section takes into consideration the experiences of Pedro and Johely, the two outliers in terms of graduating and having permanent residency, which means they do not live under the threat of potential deportation, do not have to pay out-of-state fees if they choose to go to college, and can work legally. Despite not having to pay the international fees most undocumented college students face, neither felt ready to go to college. In part, they felt unprepared because of economic factors and lack of career guidance counseling. They also felt insecure about their English abilities when it came to college-level studies. In terms of work, Pedro and Johely were both offered opportunities to work as paraprofessionals at Frazier High.¹⁸ Pedro had the English proficiency to pass the paraprofessional exam and exhibited the self-reliance needed to navigate the job application process, and he was successfully hired. Meanwhile, Johely had lower English proficiency levels and had difficulty with the job application process. Both cases demonstrate that permanent residency does not itself confer

¹⁸ Paraprofessionals are school staff who do not have a teaching certification and assist teachers or work with small groups of students, often those with needing specialized services such as EL or ESS.

enough social capital to immediately access higher education. Moreover, these cases emphasize the need for sufficient highly-trained guidance counselors and postsecondary transition programs in schools to help youth navigate the stress of making post-secondary plans.

Pedro, a Desire for Connection

While Johely and Pedro both have permanent residency, one central difference between them is the speed with which Pedro was able to learn English. I posit Pedro's relatively fast language acquisition connects to what some linguists consider willingness to communicate (WTC). WTC addresses why some individuals are more willing to engage in communicating in a second or additional language (L2). Language learners with high WTC are more likely to practice in the L2 (MacIntyre et al., 1998), are more prone to use the L2 with others (Kang, 2005), and acquire higher levels of language fluency (Derwing, Munro & Thomson, 2008). I believe Pedro was able to learn because of his high WTC, driven by his need to connect with others.

For example, Pedro recalled that in his first year at Frazier High, his math teacher took note of Pedro's math skills and invited him to join the math club. Pedro accepted because, "I felt like I could learn more English if I could interact with more people. I enjoyed the interaction despite that I felt frustrated, stressed, and nervous." Pedro wanted to get to know others and did not dwell on the frustration of learning a new language, but rather enjoyed the interaction with others. Pedro went on to share how this positive interaction made him feel connected:

When I was in Math club, we went to a math convention. We spent two days meeting people, talking about math, and competing in math exams. I didn't know much English, and I was a bit frustrated that I didn't understand. But I enjoyed it because I came out of my comfort zone to do something I had never done. I met bunches of people and they were nice to me and I had so much fun despite not knowing English well. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Here, Pedro speaks of being included regardless of how much English he knew. Consequently, Pedro felt like he had the space to make mistakes and would not be rejected as he learned the language. When I asked if he saw a connection between his ability to learn English in less than three years and the positive experience of being included in the math convention, he confirmed, “[The experience] helped me come out of my comfort zone. I think building relationships with others awakened in me an independence to not rely on parents, sisters, friends to translate for me. That awakening of language independence made me learn faster.” Pedro’s desire for connection sparked an equal desire to be independent. Pedro’s situation shows that he does not conflate connection with reliance, but rather sees language independence as a way to be able to connect with others who do not speak his native language.

Pedro further associates building relationships with learning English through his desire to do community-centered classroom activities. When I asked Pedro what he would like to see more of in an English class, he said story circles where “people sit in a circle and answer questions based on their experiences to get to know each other better.” Pedro’s English IV teacher introduced him to story circles. Story circles were developed by Junebug Productions, a civil rights community theatre group, as an activity to question inequitable conditions through active listening and communal reflection (Michna, 2009). Since this practice allows participants to get to know each other through sharing personal experiences, it can be used in classroom settings to build community. Pedro explains:

I would like for us students to get to know each other better. Let’s be real, we spend four years here and maybe we’ve known each other since 9th grade but we really don’t know each other. Also, if we do [story circles] in English, we would practice our English.
(Interview October 3, 2017)

Since it was beneficial for him to break out of his comfort zone and to get to know others, Pedro advocates this method for others to learn English. Pedro recognizes that “warm spaces” need to

be developed for learning, especially because learning a language can feel risky and provoke anxiety. As foreign language anxiety (FLA) studies show, FLA is not just about reducing anxiety but also managing it (Dewaele & Tsui Shan, 2013; Dewalee et al., 2016; MacIntyre, 2017; Tran & Moni, 2015). Communal learning spaces and activities designed to build trust allow students to feel like they will not be penalized for making mistakes and thus learn more.

Not only did Pedro advocate for the benefits of relationship building in the process of learning a language, but he also actively engaged in using his language privilege to improve his school community for his peers. During his senior year, I asked Pedro about his post-graduation plans. He responded that he wanted to take a year off to decide because “everything feels like too much right now.” Although Pedro was highly proficient in English, passed his state tests, graduated *cum laude*, and was a permanent resident who could apply for federal financial aid (FAFSA), he did not feel like he was ready to go to college. One reason was because he found the application process overwhelming. Additionally, Pedro shared that he felt like his English was not college ready. Since he was going to take a year off, I suggested he do a job-corps-like program and work with the non-profit Hope Academy at Frazier High, so he could work with me to build the EL program. However, due to the non-profit’s limited funding at the time, this opportunity fell through. Instead, Frazier High hired him as an EL paraprofessional, which allowed him to act as an interpreter and EL teacher who leads small group tutoring. This job seemed a wonderful fit for Pedro, since even as a student, he demonstrated a knack for teaching. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, when he peer-taught or explained math problems, he would be able to engage other students and clearly explain. Other teachers and I were amazed that he instinctively knew how to lead students through instruction with warmth and

accountability. Pedro used his charisma, bilingualism, math prowess, and teaching aptitude to fulfill his desire to connect with others and give back to his community.

While I frame Pedro as an immigrant youth outlier who was able to gain fluency, graduate high school, and access a path to permanent residency, Pedro viewed himself in a different light. In February 2019, six months into his new job, Pedro, Mrs. Brown (the EL specialist), Ms. Trudeau (the EL classroom teacher), and I had an after-school conversation about how he was feeling about being paraprofessional and his future college plans that highlighted his post-graduation insecurities.

Mrs. Brown opened the conversation: “I keep telling Pedro he needs to get his feet wet with at least one college course.” Pedro confessed, “I just don’t feel motivated.” I asked him, “Wait, why do you think that is? Are you feeling unmotivated or you feeling scared?” Mrs. Brown laughed at my questioning and said, “Exactly!” Pedro said, “The fear of failure is so much. I know so many successful people and I want to be successful too.” Among the three of us, we told him how successful he already is. We told him how much our students look up to him. Ms. Trudeau said that in class, when they were talking about *Star Trek* actor and prolific Tweeter George Takei being gay, students said, “He must be cool like Pedro.” I told him that he is an example of what non-toxic masculinity looks like and what a wonderful human being looks like and that we are all the better for it. He shielded his eyes from us as he started to tear up. Mrs. Brown praised him for his maturity and told him we all forget he is barely 19. Pedro elaborated, “I just feel tired all the time and I keep putting off work until tomorrow. I don’t feel like doing anything. I’ll go work out and that helps a little, but I don’t feel like doing anything. And I just feel like I have trouble liking myself.” We told him how loving oneself is a long process and congratulated him for his mature ability to articulate these feelings. I also chimed in that these

could be symptoms of depression and/or anxiety, and that if he wants, we would look into therapy options. When we asked if he felt like he was overworked, he said, “It’s not that. I like to come here because working distracts me. I can focus on others instead.” Pedro’s admission of fear and difficulty showed that despite all his accomplishments, he did not feel accomplished and did not feel motivated to take next steps. Though he was working hard at Frazier, being a paraprofessional and coming to school to help others felt to Pedro like an avoidance tactic so he did not have to focus on himself.

In other conversations I have had with Pedro, I remind him that going to college to gain the cultural capital of a college degree can help him better serve his community in the long run. He perks up when I remind him of this. I believe that Pedro will attend college when he is ready and that will be based on his own timeline. However, with Pedro’s situation we see a larger implication of anxiety for immigrant youth who seem to “have it all” because of fluency and legal status. Even with permanent residency, a high school diploma with honors, advanced English proficiency, an extended support system of loved ones, steady employment, good physical health, and being well-liked by students and colleagues, Pedro remains terrified of the next step. Studies confirm that high school students on the brink of graduation are stressed about future plans. Studies regarding perceived post-graduation stressors indicate students are concerned about choosing the right college, major, and financial aid options (Infantolino, 2017; Kreig, 2013; Poynton, Lapan & Marcotte, 2015). Because of these stressors, youth need support with the weight of transitioning to life after high school, even more so if they are also dealing with the additional immigrant youth-related stressors such as coping with trauma and the need to contribute financially to their families.

Johely, a Desire for Guidance

Johely's situation reflects the need for more culturally-responsive guidance counselors. Johely arrived in the United States when she was fourteen-years-old and started Frazier High as a ninth grader. She gained permanent residency before graduating in 2018, which meant she would be able to attend a university without having to pay out-of-state fees and would be able to apply for financial aid. However, her permanent residency arrived late in the spring semester, when most graduates have already solidified their post-graduation plans. Johely had not had much time to consider all her options or even know what they were. Johely's unmet desire was to understand what opportunities were available to her.

During the semester, Johely established herself as a bright, mostly-motivated student. For example, when Johely detected an error on her transcript, she advocated for herself to make sure that it was corrected so she could graduate. Additionally, she was diligent about knowing which state tests she had yet to pass. During history state test study sessions, she memorized a handful of facts with just a few minutes of review. On the day of the test, she was the first one to complete it. While her grades were a stable 2.23 GPA and her English reading and listening comprehension was high, Johely was not confident about her English speaking abilities. When asked about her confidence levels, Johely said she felt especially uncomfortable speaking English around Spanish speakers, because she felt they would make fun of her. She shares, "I get embarrassed when I am around Spanish-speakers. I don't know. I'm really shy. I prefer to speak English only to people who know English." Johely shared that she would order in English in restaurants and other social situations. It seems that the perception of being judged by peers is what made her most nervous. This is different from Pedro's situation where his drive to learn English was bound to his desire for connection.

Although she said she does not get too nervous speaking English around English speakers, Johely would still not fully engage in higher-stakes interactions. For example, Johely received a recruitment letter from a fine arts school in Los Angeles. She showed it to me and wanted to know more about it. This surprised me because Johely hated her theater class. She had asked multiple times to be taken out of the class. Her theater instructor had many conversations with Mrs. Brown, the EL specialist, and me to give Johely alternative assignments because she would refuse to participate in class. The theater instructor understood that Johely did not feel comfortable with her English and did not want her to fail the class, yet he shared that even in simple non-speaking activities, Johely would shut down and refuse to participate. Knowing this, it seemed highly improbable that Johely, who self-identified as “shy,” would be willing to move across the country to attend a competitive performing arts school. Yet, when she received a recruitment call, she wanted me to call them back. I dialed the number, but did not reach the extension that had originally called her. I explained that it was a general recruitment call. The whole episode with the recruitment shows, however, that Johely’s interest was piqued. She was open to exploring options. She might not have had confidence or initiative to pursue an out-of-state school, but the idea of other possibilities was appealing to her.

Johely’s situation of being open to options but not knowing the type of opportunities available shows the larger need for sufficient and effective guidance counselors who can guide students through options. Studies show that students see guidance counselors as helpful but feel like there are not enough counselors to serve all students (Infantolino, 2017; Ohrt et al., 2016). Moreover, schools like Frazier High with growing immigrant and EL populations require bilingual counselors, or, at the least, counselors who are in tune with immigrant student needs. During the time Johely was at Frazier, none of Frazier’s guidance counselors seemed informed

about the different challenges associated with legal status for immigrant students. When I interviewed all four counselors and asked about the most serious obstacles for immigrant EL students, none of them considered the implications of undocumented status. As an immigrant with permanent residency, Johely had somewhat easier access to attend college and to gain employment than those without legal status. However, without the proper guidance, she did not have the tools to navigate college and job applications on her own. She had no guidance to even really understand the options she had.

In addition to appropriate guidance counseling, another component to transitioning into post-high school life, especially for those attending college, is getting connected to university EL, academic, and social support services. Studies show the benefits of programs that help students navigate the transition into college (Dowd et al., 2013; Tovar, 2015). Partnerships among high schools and universities are necessary so that ELs are on a pathway where they will receive the necessary support.

Seeking to Surpass: No Legal Status with Confidence in English Proficiency

While Pedro and Johely had legal status, the rest of the participants who graduated did not. Despite not having permanent residency, Marieth and Sarah were both highly-motivated students who enthusiastically expressed interest in pursuing college. Both were highly confident in their English abilities, especially in terms of speaking. Since neither had permanent residency, neither applied to go to college immediately after graduation. However, both had been working in customer service-oriented jobs. Additionally, they both have families who, of all the participants, are the most adamant that they pursue a college education. These two cases highlight the connection between supportive caregivers and youths' desires to achieve whatever they set their minds to.

Marieth, a Desire to “Go Far”

Marieth proved to be a passionate young person with incredible English-speaking abilities. In fact, when I first met her, she only spoke to me in English. This surprised me not only because she showed a masterful level of English, but also because studies show that bilingual individuals will choose one language over the other in specific social contexts as an in-group marker (Dąbrowska, 2013; Rodriguez-Fornells, 2012; Tsiplakou, 2009). In choosing to speak English instead of Spanish, Marieth seemingly separated herself from her peers. She seemed to want to be distinguished as someone who had English speaking skills. Later on, Marieth shared that the reason she speaks only English at school is because it is her father’s rule. Marieth attributed her unusual proficiency with English to her father’s English-only rule. At first I wondered why Marieth would be so inclined to follow her father’s rule if it would mean she wouldn’t make as many friendships with Spanish speakers who would not understand her adherence to English. Later, I would come to realize that Marieth has a special connection with her father and that her desire to go far is also closely tied to the love and respect she has for him.

Marieth’s relationship with her father is close because he raised her as a single father. Although neither Marieth nor her father go into details, from their separate interviews it appears that Marieth’s mother left when Marieth was an infant. Her father went to the United States when Marieth started elementary school, leaving her to be raised by her grandmother. He then brought Marieth to the United States when she was twelve. Marieth explained the difficulty of the transition when they started living together after six years apart: “At first my father and I had problems understanding each other, especially since he’s a man and I’m a woman and all that. But thank God, our relationship got better and better, especially now.” From their separate interviews and from the interactions I have had with her father at school events, it is clear to me

that the two are closely bonded and deeply care about each other. Her father described it best: “It’s just the two of us. She has me. I have her.”

Because of this close bond, it is not surprising that Marieth’s father desires what is best for his daughter and Marieth desires to please her father. In initial encounters with Marieth, she would say, “I want to be a chef or a teacher, but not both. People tell me why I don’t just teach cooking, but I want to be one or the other. But mostly I want to travel. I want to go far.” Similar to the notion of *ser alguien* that I discussed in the previous chapter, the idea of “going far” ties to a desire to surpass others – to distinguish herself on a different level. Moreover, this desire of “going far” is a desire that is aligned for both Marieth and her father. When I asked Mr. Ortega where he imagined Marieth in ten years, when she would be age 27, he replied:

Well, I imagine her to be a happy child. Above all. That is so important. I tell her that the first goal of human beings is to be happy. One can have a degree – with all due respect, I don’t have one, and I am happy. Not having [a degree] does not bother me. In a few years, I want to see her happy, and I’d love to see her on the way to a career. One of her choosing. I’d like that. I’d like that she’d call me up one day, from I don’t know, say Virginia, or something like that, and she’d tell me that college is going great. I see her like that. I see her out. Out, away. Clearly, she needs to go far. (Interview September 21, 2017)

Mr. Ortega focuses on his daughter’s happiness, which he considers to be more important than any degrees she may attain. He imagines her out-of-state, again in a separate physical space, pursuing a career that is “of her choosing.” He desires for his daughter to pursue her goals.

Similarly, Marieth wants her father to pursue his desires as well. Marieth shared:

At 27, I want to have degrees to show my father that I made it. My dad will be much older and I want to make my dad’s dreams come true. He wants to spend his final years in Spain because Spain is so lovely. My dad envisions a lot of things from Spain. He pictures the remote towns. The Spanish government pays people to go live in these remote towns. So my dad wants to live there in his final years. He says he doesn’t want to die until he goes to Spain. I would do everything possible so that my dad can go to Spain. I want to travel to France and get engaged in France. I want to go to France, Italy, and Spain. It will be lovely. (Interview September 14, 2017)

Mr. Ortega wants Marieth to be happy, and Marieth wants to ensure that her father is happy as well. She said she “would do everything possible” to make her “dad’s dream come true.” They mutually envisioned each other in a place that is neither their home country of Honduras nor their current residence, but elsewhere, further away. The physical distance matches a symbolic stance of going far or surpassing. Some might say this is a romanticized version of the proverbial “grass is greener on the other side.” Additionally, this future vision is heavily Eurocentricized. Yet what I want to focus on is the alignment of the desire to gain English proficiency and potential degrees to “go further” than where they currently are.

Mr. Ortega and Marieth’s desires highlight the larger implications of parenting for immigrant parents who bring their children to a different country. As I mentioned in chapter three, 57% of the participants in this study were separated from one or both parents for at least a year. Meanwhile, 23% had been separated for 10-17 years, indicating that they had been separated from mothers and fathers for most of their lives. Multiple studies confirm children’s behavioral, psychological, interpersonal, and cognitive trajectories are heavily impacted when separated from their parents (APA, 2018; Ahrens, Garrison & Courtney, 2014; Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Le-Scherban, et al, 2018; Miller et al, 2018). Consequently, the potential trauma based on separation and immigration requires awareness, much patience, and an openness to a healing process. Mr. Ortega describes:

We should feel proud of these youth because they arrive to a completely unfamiliar place. We should recognize the cruelty of us to bring them, snatching them from their cultures. We have to value that. Us parents are not the only ones who sacrifice ourselves in bringing them. They also sacrifice themselves. They leave their friends, family, pets, everything. We have to value that and feel proud that they took that step alongside us. Perhaps a lot of them did not have options. They were brought here and that was that. We should respect that they are here now and make the most of their youthful potential and support them. (Interview September 21, 2017)

Often the conversation about sacrifices is centered on immigrant parents and their challenges in crossing the border and working long hours (Bjorklund, 2018; Callahan & Humphries, 2016; Enriquez, 2011). Parents in this study similarly commented on their willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure their children have a better a life. In the quote above, however, Mr. Ortega shines the light on the sacrifices that immigrant children face. He seems keenly aware of his daughter's sacrifices of giving up her way of life and joining him in a completely new country. Because he is aware of these sacrifices, he responds with empathy and patience. With this type of support and understanding, it comes as little surprise to me how much Marieth is able to envision herself going as far as she wants to.

Sarah, a Desire for a Career

The other participant who had a clear vision for her future plans was Sarah. Sarah was able to articulate that she wanted to be a doctor, but would settle for being an entrepreneur. Of all the participants, she was the one who completed her college application first, despite her undocumented status. At our 8-month, post-graduation check-in, Sarah turned to me and asked, "How many years did you say it was to be a doctor?" I told her about ten, depending on whether she wished to specialize. "Yeah," she replied, "I know. That is so long. I'll stick to business." Sarah shared that she would be starting community college the following fall (2019), but she applied as an international student, so she would be paying approximately 60% more than her peers, even though she had been living in the United States since she was twelve and had graduated from a local high school. Sarah attending college would be a financial burden to her family. Yet, much like Mr. Ortega and Marieth, Sarah came from a tight-knit, supportive family. Sarah's mother stated, "One sacrifices so much for them to have it a little better than we did in our own country. And if we have to work day and night so they can keep studying then that is

what we will do.” Sarah has the support of her parents, economic and emotional. Her mother confirmed that although it may be a financial burden, they will continue to work hard so that they can provide a better future for their daughter. This commitment is not uncommon in Latinx parents. According to a 2016 Pew Research Center survey, 72% of Latinxs in the United States believed their children will have a much/somewhat better standard of living than themselves (Lopez et al., 2018).

Yet the sacrifices, especially to finance college, are not just on Sarah’s parents. Sarah does her part to finance her education. After graduation, Sarah took a job at a bar, although she is underage and undocumented. Sarah worked at the bar for a few months, but eventually, the shifts ending at 3:00AM were too much. She opted for staying home to take care of her younger sister instead. Working late at night at a bar that would hire underage servers might seem unsafe, yet Sarah certainly has not been a stranger to dangerous situations. On her voyage from Honduras to the United States, she and her sister were kidnapped in Mexico for a week until her parents were able to pay the ransom.¹⁹ When sharing this experience, Sarah remained calm and matter of fact, as if she had put the whole traumatic event behind her. I do not share her calmness about the situation, nor do I assume that there has been no trauma from this life-threatening event. However, I want to highlight Sarah’s resilience and determination to focus on her future goal of college in quest of a career. When asked why she wanted to graduate high school, she confidently answered, “I want to set myself apart from the rest.” Sarah seeks to achieve more.

¹⁹ According to the U.S. Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), there were over 770 kidnappings in Mexico in 2017 and the number of express kidnappings are increasing. Express kidnappings refer to those which happen with a 24-hour turnaround and smaller ransom amounts (around hundreds of U.S. dollars). There’s also an increase of virtual extortions where kidnapper call family members abroad, claiming they have kidnapped a loved one.

Tied to the desire to *ser alguien*, Sarah yearns to separate herself from her peers and does not shy away from the difficulty. Instead she accepts the challenge.

Sarah's embracing of challenges demonstrates the larger implications of youth resilience. Resilience results from adversity and is related to a person's ability to handle stress and respond to trauma (Ungar, 2008; Yigit & Tatch, 2017). One study on the resiliency of Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC) shows that as they grew into adolescents, they showed "high internal locus of control, goal directedness, and altruism" and developed "a resourcefulness to convert life experiences into useful skills transferable in the school setting" (p. 175, Peña et al, 2018). Some immigrant youth, like Sarah, are able to develop a healthy resilience that allows for moving beyond perceived obstacles. However, studies find that a strong support system is key to helping them develop their resilience (Gámez, Lopez & Overton, 2017; Juang, 2018; Peña et al., 2018). Both Marieth's and Sarah's situations show how supportive caregivers help give them the confidence to dream big.

Desires Outside of School: No Legal Status with Limited Confidence in English Proficiency

While Marieth and Sarah could see themselves going to college, Victoria and Jasmin were both motivated students who did not express strong desires to attend college. Both Victoria and Jasmin expressed frustration and shame with not learning English as quickly as others. After graduating, they both began working in the same job that consists of mostly Spanish-speakers. While they gain the English vocabulary on the job, they do not feel like they have to use English on a daily basis and consequently feel like the little English they did know is waning. These two cases highlight the need for students to gain English fluency in high school, regardless of their post high school plans.

Victoria, a Desire for Family Reunification.

Although Victoria is a bright young woman and her English has the potential to improve, college does not align with her central desires of being economically stable and being reunited with family. Ever since I met Victoria, her desire to return to Honduras has been prevalent, and was at odds with the other participants in the study. Eighty-nine percent of participants said they would not want to return to their home country, explaining that the violence and economic instability deterred them from wanting to return. However, Victoria expressed severe homesickness and a desire to return regardless of these common deterrents. In her interview she states, “After graduation, I want to return [to Honduras] because my niece, my grandparents, my father, everything is there.” Not only does she view everything and everyone that she loves as being in Honduras, I believe her lack of agency in the decision to come to the United States also played a role in her remaining severely homesick.

Victoria was not consulted at all when her parents made the decision to migrate. In fact, her younger sister was slated to come to the United States with her mom first. At the last moment, when the *coyote*²⁰ arrived, he deemed the younger sister too young to travel and decided to do a last-minute switch to Victoria. Victoria had no time to mentally or emotionally prepare for leaving. She was given no time to say goodbye to her friends, other family, or loved ones. In a group parent interview in which Victoria’s mother participated, the mother also expressed the deep desire to go back to Honduras, especially since, at the time, her youngest child and her first, newborn grandchild remained there. I would argue that the overpowering desire to return, and the homesickness modeled and reinforced by the mother, made it difficult for Victoria to see the United States as a potential home.

²⁰ *Coyote* is used to refer to the smugglers who guide immigrants into the United States.

Victoria does not see continuing school as a priority, either in the United States or if she returned to Honduras. When I asked her why she does not want to keep studying, she replied, “I would not want to keep studying because I don’t think I’m smart.” Victoria shared that math has been difficult for her and that not many school subjects interest her. Her only consistent interest has been cosmetology. In her 2017 interview, she mentioned wanting to be a cosmetologist and that she would potentially attend a cosmetology school after she returned to Honduras. At the eight-month post-graduation check-in, Victoria said she was still interested in cosmetology but would not likely pursue it since cosmetology school is too expensive in the United States.

Unlike other participants or studies that show the pressure of family to pursue higher education (Enriquez, 2011), Victoria’s family is unconditionally supportive regardless of her post-graduation choices:

My dad says that I need to do my best because I am in my last year [in school] and it could be that I return to Honduras and that once I can return I can figure out what I need to do. At least I’ll be reunited with them. My mom also says that if I want to, I can [go straight to] work. This way I can buy my own things and no one can take away what I earn. She also supports my decision to return. Even if she does not return with me, she supports my decision. (Interview September 19, 2017)

This interview suggests that Victoria has a family that will be supportive no matter what she chooses to do. With Victoria, there’s less pressure to *ser alguien* through pursuing higher education from her family and more of what seems to be a deep connection and unconditional support. Marieth and Sarah appear to feel more pressured to attend college, which correlates to other reports of undocumented youth who feel like they have to succeed in order to repay their parents’ sacrifices (Bjorklund, 2018; Enriquez, 2011).

Nevertheless, her family does ask her to consider her economic situation and to strive to be someone who has steady employment. Victoria stated, “I want to go with my family [in

Honduras] and they want me there but they advise me to think about the economy in Honduras. That makes me unsure because of what they tell me of how bad it is over there. So maybe I stay here as long as Trump allows me to.” The tension for Victoria is her and her family’s desire for her to return to Honduras. Meanwhile, they all consider the unstable economic situation in Honduras while at the same time recognizing the anti-immigrant political climate in the United States. As Victoria states, “Trump” might deport her, so her time in the United States is not guaranteed. Significantly, Victoria’s father underwent deportation. Having experienced deportation so close to home may make Victoria feel that her own deportation is more imminent. So while she acquired a steady job immediately after graduation, she still heavily felt the threat of being deported.

Ultimately, Victoria still sees the United States as the country with more opportunities for her. During our post-graduation check-in, Victoria mentioned that she wanted to return to Honduras, but if she and her current partner were to marry and have children, she would prefer the children to be born in the United States, so that they could “have U.S. citizenship and more opportunities.”²¹ Although reuniting with her family is a central desire, she is willing to further extend the separation if it means that her potential children could be United States citizens with access to more resources than in Honduras. Additionally, Victoria wants to learn English, and feels that she was not learning fast enough. She shares her frustration:

I want to speak English but there’s words I can’t pronounce. I want to go to the mall and ask questions about items and I can’t. I’m embarrassed that I’ve been in this country for four years and I do not speak English. What saddens me most is that I can’t defend myself. (Interview September 19, 2017)

²¹ Although I did not directly ask, I inferred Victoria’s partner is potentially undocumented since she did not make a reference to being able to gain access to permanent residency through marriage. Victoria and Marieth readily made a joke about Sarah’s boyfriend giving her “papers” if they married. From this interaction, I posit that Sarah’s boyfriend has legal status, while Victoria’s does not.

She desires to be able to do more and feels frustrated with herself when she considers how long she has been in the United States. As I mentioned in chapter one, learning English takes five to seven years (Valdes, 2001; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). Moreover, Victoria's persistent homesickness and desire to return to her native country show the larger implication that it may be extra difficult for ELs to engage with the language if they do not feel like there is a definitive future in this country. As Norton argues, learners may seem to have ambivalent desire to learn and practice English due to their social context and the power relations at play (Norton 2016, 2018). Victoria's seeming lack of progress to acquire English may be tied to an overwhelming feeling of not belonging in the United States and wanting to return to the familiar in Honduras. Although learning a language takes a long time, it is frustrating to not know the necessary language in the present moment. This frustration of not learning English as quickly as desired can be disheartening for ELs, especially those suffering from severe homesickness, like Victoria. Not knowing the new, unfamiliar language might only make them feel like they do not belong even more and might dissuade them from learning it as well as only sticking to people who know her native language.

Jasmin, a Desire for Safety

Similar to Victoria, Jasmin was also a bright student who did not desire to pursue higher education. I met Jasmin in Spring 2017 when I first started to go into Ms. Trudeau's English classes. She expressed a deep desire to learn English, and she would practice reading children's books aloud with me. Jasmin would share her concerns about strictly hanging out with other Spanish-speakers and therefore not learning English: "I've been in the U.S. for three years, and I haven't learned much English and I feel bad about it." During the 2017-2018 school year, Jasmin was the type of student who would occasionally daydream during classes, which the other

students would gently poke fun at whenever she would zone back in with a question that was just answered. However, she would never shy away from asking for clarification, and if she was fully engaged in a lesson, she would give insightful answers. Besides Pedro, she was the only participant to pass her English state test before her senior year. Although graduating high school was a priority, post-secondary schooling was not a huge concern. Jasmin describes how she viewed higher education in terms of her native country:

Let's say I finished college in Honduras. It is so hard to find a job even with a degree. Then you are in debt because college is so expensive. For some people, continuing education does not work because you can't find work. I think that's why some people go to the U.S. to study. (Interview September 11, 2017)

While Jasmin describes the uncertainty of finding employment in a Honduran context, her description of being in debt and not finding a career in one's field is something United States college graduate may also face. According to *Harvard Business Review*, as of 2019, the unemployment rate for recent college graduates is higher compared to data sets from 2006 to early 2008. Meanwhile, Friedman (2019) reports that as of 2018, over 44 million U.S. borrowers collectively owe \$1.5 trillion in student loan debt. In addition, taking into account inflation, the bottom quarter of recent graduates make less today than they have in the past compared to data sets from 1990's and 2000's. These are additional challenges for undocumented students who may graduate college but do not have DACA or any other way to legally work in the field they studied (Bjorklund, 2018). Jasmin raises the important question of the value of a college diploma if one cannot necessarily find fitting employment.

So why does Jasmin wish to stay in the United States, if she does not plan on pursuing higher education? Unlike Victoria, who fantasized about returning to her native country, Jasmin did not feel as strongly about returning home. Instead, Jasmin craves the safety she associates with the

United States. She shares some of the anxieties she has over the conditions of her native country:

Everyday someone winds up dead. It's become normal to see someone dead on the street. It's horrible. And girls, if they are attractive, you know, bad men find them, do what they please with them, and then the girls wind up dead. That's my fear. (Interview September 11, 2017)

The murder and sexual violence in Jasmin's Honduran neighborhood are a valid concern. While living in the United States unauthorized, Jasmin might have to live under the constant threat of deportation. This threat creates its own set of particular anxieties and health concerns. Yet, she does not have to live in constant fear of being sexually assaulted or murdered as she would if she were in Honduras. In 2013, Honduras was the country with the highest murder rate per 100,000 inhabitants (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013; 2019), which overlaps with the surge of unaccompanied alien children emigrating from Honduras, along with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, in 2014 (Kandel, 2017). These violence statistics are amplified when considering gender. According to a report by the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2018), Honduras reported 446 femicides in 2016, which was a rate of 10.2 per every 100,000 women. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras reports that in the last fifteen years, 5,600 women have been murdered in Honduras, with 90% of these cases remaining unsolved. With these statistics in mind, Jasmin's concerns for her physical safety, especially as a young woman, are not out of place.

Jasmin's desire for safety highlights the value of trauma-informed and healing-centered classroom practices, particularly for students who have been exposed to violence. Being exposed to violence is not unique to immigrant students from Central America. Studies show that for U.S. youth living in poverty, as many as 96% have witnessed or experienced some form of violence in their early lives (Zimmerman and Messner, 2013). Post-traumatic stress disorder among youth of

color in poor communities is prevalent and can have negative consequences for healthy development, which requires trauma-informed classrooms where healing can take place (Ginwright, 2016; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014). Victoria's and Jasmin's cases show the need for warm, inclusive, healing-centered classroom communities which can help immigrant ELs learn English. Moreover, learning English while they are in school is especially important since they might not have time to access EL classes after high school.

Part II. Students Unable to Graduate

Despite the overwhelming barriers immigrant ELs face, the participants in the previous sections were all able to graduate in the spring of 2018. I would posit that this was largely due to their having arrived at an age that allowed them to start high school as freshmen.²² Additionally, they all received support through the piloting of Hope Academy program, which I will discuss more in the last chapter. However, the participants in this section – Alexa, Jacqueline, and Susana – were unable to graduate due to insufficient support, limited English proficiency, and, in the cases of Jacqueline and Susana, arriving to the United States at the age of seventeen.

Alexa, a Desire for Degree Completion through State Testing

I first met Alexa in 2017 when she was classified as a senior at Frazier High. She was a soft-spoken student who avoided eye contact and did not interact with many of the other students. This avoidance of others was in part because she had faced much bullying at the U.S. high school she attended before Frazier High. When I asked her what she wanted to do after high school, she said she wanted to become a doctor. Alexa arrived in the United States at age fourteen as a refugee from Colombia after her family escaped major violence from paramilitary

²² Of the participants who graduated in 2018, Pedro was the only who arrived at fifteen and was classified as a Freshman instead of a Sophomore. All the others had been middle schoolers in the U.S. or enrolled to Frazier High by age fourteen.

groups.²³ Because of this violence, she has gained permanent residency and has filed to become a U.S. citizen. Alexa was a motivated student who was passing all her classes, and her course credits satisfied the requirements for a high school diploma. As long as she passed her state tests, she would be able to graduate high school and attend college.

As graduation approached, Alexa was under the impression that she had passed all her state tests. She paid for her graduation fees and robe. However, when she went to finish her graduation paperwork, the guidance counselor told her that there was a clerical mistake and that Alexa had not passed her English state exam. Alexa shares her heartbreak:

I went from being so happy to so sad. I had just signed off paperwork and headed to my car, when the counselor ran after me to tell me she made a mistake. I had to call a friend to come pick me up [from school] because I didn't feel like I could drive. I almost fainted. (Interview October 13, 2017)

The dream she had of graduating was ripped from her. Although she had passed all her classes and had permanent residency, the state tests and a clerical error kept her from graduating.

Despite this major set back, Alexa has consistently shown tenacity to take the exams “as many times at it takes.” Alexa took her missing English state test again in Spring 2018. With bated breath, we waited on the results, which arrived two days before graduation day. The guidance counselor told us she had passed, and Alexa burst into happy tears. She purchased a whole new graduation robe. (The robe company did not refund her for her first robe that she never received.) She proudly walked at graduation. However, when it came time to pick up the actual diploma, Alexa texted me that she was unable to pick it up. We checked in with the guidance counselor, and she said she would look into it. Due to some other clerical error, Alexa was mistakenly put on the graduation list, although she still had another missing state test. No

²³ For more information on the conflict in Colombia, please see Historical Memory Group, 2016 and Riano & Uribe, 2016.

one had noticed that she was missing her U.S. History exam. On the one hand, Alexa was able to finally go through the graduation fanfare of walking across the stage in her white Frazier High robe. However, no diploma meant she still could not attend college, which, a year later, she still wanted to pursue. Saddened but undaunted, Alex attempted to take the Fall 2018 version of the History exam. That day I was called in to check on her since she had burst into tears, and the exam proctor could not understand why she was upset. Minutes before the exam, her mother called her to inform her a relative was murdered in Colombia. Alexa was too upset to be able to take the exam. She muttered to me before leaving, “Why would my mom call me to tell me this now? She knows this exam was too important.” Alexa took the May 2019 version of the U.S. History state exam. She said:

I really want this degree. It’s not fair that I’ve made so many sacrifices and all the terrible things I went through, but I’ve overcome them, thank God. From the worst previous school to racist teachers who treated me wrong. So I’m not going to rest until I get [my diploma]. (Interview May, 2019)

The larger implications in Alexa’s story reflect the importance of skilled guidance counselors who are not so overworked that they can't look closely at each student case. Being under the impression that she would be able to graduate, then told the opposite, was a terrible emotional shock for Alexa. This shock was in addition to the already traumatic experiences of Colombia and the bullying she faced when she first arrived in the United States. Alexa’s story speaks of the importance of not only competent guidance counselors, but once again of mental health professionals in schools to address other trauma, as well as trauma-informed trainings for teachers and staff.

Alexa’s case also highlights the barrier of high-stakes testing for ELs. This level of testing without proper accommodations serves as a gatekeeper for even highly-engaged ELs. Alexa arrived to the United States at age fourteen, and started high school as a ninth grader. She

was a dedicated student with consistent attendance and has continued to practice and attempt taking the state tests, yet she was still unable to pass the state test. In Alexa's case it does not matter that she has permanent residency if she is still unable to get through the state test.

Jacqueline, a Desire for Degree Completion through GRE/HiSET

Graduation is even more challenging for students who arrive at age sixteen or seventeen and have more limited options because of undocumented status, as demonstrated by the following cases with Jacqueline and Susana. Jacqueline arrived undocumented to the United States at age seventeen in the summer 2015. She enrolled at Frazier in August 2015 and was under the impression that her secondary school transcripts from Honduras had been reviewed, credits had transferred, and that she was accordingly placed in 11th grade. She had not questioned that she was in 11th grade because her student ID card said she was an 11th grader. Thus, she thought she would be a 12th grader for the 2016-2017 year and eligible for graduation in May 2017. However, when school resumed for the 2016 fall semester, she found out that she was in 10th grade instead of 12th. Her transcripts from Honduras were misplaced, had never been reviewed, and she had been registered as a 9th grader in the system for the 2015-2016 year. If this error was not clarified, she would not be able to graduate until May 2019. Jacqueline had spoken to a school administrator about her situation, but her credits were never adjusted. Jacqueline shared that she felt disillusioned afterwards: "Graduating at 22 years old is too late. In Honduras, I would have already graduated. Last year I would have graduated." Because she faced graduating much later than expected, she considered leaving school after the end of the school year. In addition to her transcripts not being validated, her late age of arrival and limited language proficiency created barriers for Jacqueline to be able to pass all her required class

credits and her state tests in order to graduate on time. Discouraged, Jacqueline left school in May 2016.

I touched base with Jacqueline in February 2018. Since leaving Frazier, she had gained temporary legal residency through a U Visa. U Visas offer undocumented immigrants temporary legal status and a path to U.S. citizenship if they cooperate with law enforcement after being a victim or witness to violent crimes (Kanno-Youngs, 2019). Jacqueline was a survivor of an armed assault in July 2017 and was able to gain a U Visa.²⁴ The U Visa program is meant to protect victims and help law enforcement prosecute violent cases (USCIS, 2020). However, with such limited options for pathways to citizenship, it seems almost ironic that immigrants fleeing dangerous countries, such as Jacqueline, would have to suffer from violence locally to gain access to legal status.

Despite the traumatic assault, Jacqueline was relieved to have temporary residency. Now that she felt she had other options, she expressed interest in HiSET/GED programs to gain the equivalent of a high school degree. She shares, “I went to the website, and I was happy because I felt like I could be a step closer to graduating and going to college.” When I first met Jacqueline in 2015, she wanted to be a flight attendant. Three years later she still was interested in being a flight attendant or becoming a teacher. I asked her what she saw herself doing in five years. She cheerfully replied, “I see myself having a career of my choice.” Gaining legal status reignited her spark to continue her education despite the setbacks. She also shared a sense of wanting to put down roots in the United States now that the threat of deportation was no longer the case.

²⁴ During the Trump Administration, U Visas have become less available due to immigration restrictions. See Kanno-Youngs, 2019.

With Jacqueline's case the larger implications are how motivating it can be to gain legal status. Because of her change of status, Jacqueline feels like new opportunities opened for her and feels motivated to obtain a career of her choosing as opposed to the more limited options that undocumented immigrants face. However, most of the ways to change status center on young immigrants experiencing violence. As seen with the case of Alexa, guerilla soldiers assaulted her and her family in her native country, which led to her refugee status. Meanwhile Jacqueline was assaulted at gunpoint in her own backyard in the United States. In other cases, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status is another form of immigration relief which requires proof that a minor has experienced abuse, neglect, or abandonment (Aronson, 2015). Violence and trauma in the form of assault, abuse, neglect, and abandonment should not be the only pathway to legal status for young people seeking social mobility and safety.

Susana, a Desire to Strengthen English

Alexa and Jacqueline both gained legal status, renewing their determination and allowing them to feel like they could finish high school and even go on to college. However, Susana no longer sees herself completing her high school graduation requirements. Jacqueline and Susana have the same U.S. high school background story. Just like Jacqueline, Susana arrived undocumented to the United States at age seventeen in the summer of 2015. She also enrolled at Frazier High in August 2015 and her secondary school transcripts from Honduras had not been validated. Susana also was under the impression she would graduate in May 2017, but she would not actually be eligible for graduation until May 2019 because of those missing transcript credits. Susana also became discouraged, was unable to pass her state tests, did not complete her course credits, and left school in May of 2016.

Unlike Alexa or Jacqueline, Susana did not share the same level of determination to go back to take her missing state tests or to do the HiSET/ GED. I believe this hesitancy is largely due to not having access to legalizing her status. She also did not consider her English to be strong. During my follow-up interview with her in February 2018, Susana was working for a painting company. She showed an interest in continuing English classes, but she said attending classes would be difficult. Susana explains, “I get out of work late, and those classes are in the evening. Where I worked everyone speaks Spanish. I feel like the little [English] I knew, I’ve forgotten so much.” For Susana, learning English is not required for her current job since she works with Spanish speakers. Although she would like to regain what she has lost of the language, English classes would not be feasible due to her work schedule.

When I asked her if she was still interested in pursuing her high school degree she shared, “Honestly, I do not want to go to college. I want the high school diploma and to learn English.” Unlike Alexa and Jacqueline, who want to pursue higher education, what is most important for Susana is to have a high school degree and English. As I shared ways for her to be able to attain the high school degree, she responded, “I would prefer to graduate from [Frazier] because I feel like it is more legitimate. But if the HiSET is faster, I’d like that. Because completing the E2020 [online high school classes] is too much and having to listen to the videos. But unless I can take the HiSET in Spanish, I would rather wait until my English is better so I could actually take it without guessing.” For Susana, the lack of English proficiency continues to be a barrier to degree completion. Susana feels she cannot complete the HiSET if it is not in Spanish.

Moreover, Susana's statement also highlights the tension with the “legitimacy” of a high school degree versus an equivalent GED. Some argue that the GED is not an equal alternative because GED earners, compared to high school diploma earners, have lower job placement,

lower lifelong earnings, poorer health, and higher incarceration rates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018; Tuck, 2012). One study found that the amount of time spent in school is what matters. Young people who spend more years in school before leaving without graduating earn more than those who spend fewer years before leaving, suggesting that there might be implications about persistence (Clark & Martorell, 2014). Yet that study did not take into consideration the difference for undocumented immigrant ELs, who, although they may benefit from being exposed to an English-speaking school setting, will still have to face comparatively worse and lower-paid jobs. Studies show that migrants work in dangerous, demanding conditions with lower pay and higher rates of exploitation (Hargreaves et al. 2019; Moyce and Schenker, 2018; Thamrin, 2018; Sweileh, 2018; Yanar, Kosny & Smith, 2018).

When I asked Susana where she saw herself in five years she answered, “I do not see that much has changed for me. . . . Not having papers means earning less money.” Without either a high school diploma or documented status, Susana sees herself stuck in her current job. She recognizes the lack of social mobility possible for her due to both not being able to make as much as those with a degree, and earning less because of the lack of legal status and limited English proficiency.

Conclusion

Examining the intersection of immigrant status, language ability, and educational access uncovers multiple barriers as well as key desires. Regardless of legal status, ELs face barriers to attaining social capital. First of all, high stakes testing keeps ELs with limited English proficiency from graduating regardless of legal status. Second, upon high school graduation, much like their native-speaking peers, ELs seeking to attend college have trouble identifying what they want to study and navigating the college application process. However, ELs have the

added concern of whether they meet a level of language proficiency necessary to belong in that academic space. Third, regardless of legal status, ELs can feel like they need to contribute financially to their families and worry about affording college. When undocumented status intersects with these considerations, ELs are faced with even more of a financial burden when they do not qualify for financial aid. Moreover, if they are able to attend and graduate from college, the ultimate barrier is whether an undocumented EL will even be able to legally work in their field. Additionally, when undocumented ELs are unable to graduate high school, they face feeling stuck in a job that pays them under the table and offers no path to social mobility.

In analyzing the intersection of immigrant status, language, and educational access, the desires that surfaced in addition to social mobility were a desire to connect with others, to have guidance, and to feel safe. These are desires that have also come up in previous chapters in terms of seeking support, inclusion, and warmth. This desire for safety and connection comes as little surprise when mapping it onto the political climate of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies. In this particularly anti-immigrant time, ELs keep working to achieve more while living in a heightened state of anxiety about what the future will bring regardless of all their efforts.

With these complex barriers and desires in mind, guidance counselors and immigrant youth advocates should spend time getting to know the desires of students and to honestly consider what future options will align with a student's desires, mental well-being, and economic stability. In many cases, college may not align with what is immediately best for a student. Regardless, immigrant ELs should have access to the facts. Additionally, students should be encouraged to reflect on external societal and family pressures influencing their decisions. Having access to information and reflecting on external pressures can allow them to make an informed decision about what is best for them in their unique context. The following chapter

closes with similar reflections on recommended interventions that prioritize undocumented ELs' developmental and educational well-being.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTED PRACTICES

In 2015, I met the ELs who would inspire this research project. Five years later, a handful of participants remain at Frazier High, while others have left the school either as graduates or wishing they could have had the opportunity to graduate. Meanwhile, the violence and hunger in Central America has not ceased, forcing families to continue to migrate in the search of food security and safety (Sova, Flowers & Man, 2019; World Food Programme, 2017). Concurrently, the Trump administration's anti-immigrant stance proceeds through policies of family separation, increased ICE presence in immigrant communities through 287(g) agreements, and severe budget cuts to English classes, legal aide, and recreational activities for Unaccompanied Alien Children in federal custody (Galvan & Licon, 2019; Romo & Rose, 2019). This research project questioned the viability of undocumented ELs gaining social capital in under resourced schools while navigating the fear of deportation during a particularly anti-immigrant political climate. Additionally, this study recognizes how undocumented ELs face institutional barriers to high school graduation, such as high-stakes testing, while contending with the often unwelcoming reception of teachers and native U.S. peers.

In this intersection of educational and immigration injustices, EL participants exhibited two main types of desires that I refer to as intertwined and vital desires. Undocumented ELs expressed one set of intertwined desires of wanting to learn English, graduate high school, and find a stable job. These desires were tied to the idea of "being a somebody" or *ser alguien*. Learning English and graduating high school were seen as necessary to gain social capital both here in the United States and as a contingency plan in case of deportation to their native countries. This critical finding indicates that whatever immigration status and regardless of what future holds, learning English is viewed as an investment for life in the United States, in a

country of origin, or elsewhere. Undocumented ELs believe that if they are forcibly removed from the United States, they could get jobs as English teachers or interpreters in their home countries. This belief highlights two key ideas. First, it shows how prevalent the possibility of deportation is for undocumented ELs. Second, it shows the colossal importance of graduating school and learning English. The importance of a high school diploma increases when considering that although some participants highly desire to go to college, because of barriers to college access, a high school education could possibly be the last form of formal education some undocumented ELs will receive. As such, some participants deeply value the idea of a U.S. high school diploma and ascribe a certain prestige to it since it is from the United States.

The second set of intertwined desires is undocumented ELs' desires for warmer educational spaces where there is meaningful learning and opportunities to reciprocate the help they received. Because of nationality and language differences, undocumented ELs often felt ignored in their school spaces. They yearned for a more inclusive school environment that valued their home cultures and made a committed-effort to meet their educational needs. Similarly, they wanted lessons to be meaningful and pleasurable. When lessons were bilingual and culturally sustaining, students were more engaged and less likely to cut class. Since the school left gaps in providing academic support and a welcoming environment, undocumented ELs created warmer spaces through supporting each other with assignments and encouraging each other not to give up. Through this reciprocity, they demonstrated that they were invested in their individual success along with being invested in each other's success.

Through examining the nine case studies of students who had graduated or left Frazier, "vital" desires also emerged. These vital desires emphasized the need for social mobility, high school degree completion, and to improve English. Additionally, they included the human needs

of guidance, family reunification, connection with others, and safety. These participants wanted guidance to make decisions about life after high school. Deciding post high school plans is a challenging process for most young people, but when there are language and immigration status barriers to consider, their options are often more limited. Consequently, they desired guidance counselors to be adequately trained to be able to help them navigate their options. Besides guidance, they also sought feeling more connected to others and a sense of safety. Many participants had escaped extremely dangerous situations in their home country and had been separated from family for an extended amount of time. Upon arriving to the United States, they hoped for safer circumstances, while at the same time, they had to deal with homesickness and concern for loved ones back in their native countries. They were also keenly aware that the current U.S. political climate was unwelcoming and had to deal with the uncertainty of a non-citizenship status. These desires for guidance, connection, family reunification, and safety reflect vital human needs.

Documenting these desires matters because undocumented ELs are often stripped of their humanity in different ways, so it is crucial to center their humanity through the documentation of their desires, strengths, resiliency, and contributions. In the U.S. immigration context, Latinx immigrants are verbally dehumanized when they are positioned as drug dealers and rapists who will take away jobs. They are then physically dehumanized when they are made to wait in freezing cages, barely given enough to eat, and separated from family members. Once out of these detention centers, they face the emotionally exhausting fear of living under the constant threat of deportation. Within education, ELs, like their peers, are often reduced to test score numbers, but as ELs they are framed as the population who will bring down school scores, or who will statistically become part of the school-to-deportation pipeline. Then, as young people,

ELs are framed as unresponsive, unmotivated, and immature. This research is an attempt to frame ELs instead as the resilient survivors who are motivated to pursue their desires. I strove to present the participants as more than their traumas and the injustices they face.

Moreover, this project looks at the intersection of the two broken systems of education and immigration and how the unjust policies of these two systems keep this population from being able to achieve their full potential. This research calls for reforms to abolish high stakes testing and look into more holistic, humanized ways to assess students. High-stakes testing has been found to further racial inequality in education (Au, 2016; Knoester & Au 2017). It is an institutionalized barrier keeping lower-income, people of color, and immigrants from gaining social capital. On the whole, high-stakes testing as a practice is detrimental to all students since it prioritizes an aptitude for test-taking without accounting for the soft skills that are valuable for life (Villeneuve, 2019). Additionally, there is a need to recognize the damage that occurs with the discrepancies between policy and practice that results in failures to provide adequate resources.

Students and teachers in under-resourced schools are often not given the proper tools to be able to accomplish the task of high-stake testing (Darling-Hammond, 2019; Podolsky et al., 2016; Schneider, 2017). Because students are not often encouraged to investigate or identify the inherent problems of high-stakes testing, they often feel they are deficient, when in fact they are at the mercy of a larger system that fails to adequately meet their learning needs. High-stakes testing reform could help ELs attain graduation with more equity as well as looking at the ways to honor that ELs may take more than four years to graduating without penalizing schools.²⁵

²⁵ For more information on alternatives to high-stakes testing, in particular portfolio-based assessments that have been proven to show development of self-evaluation and deeper learning from students, see Lam, 2016, 2017; Seher, Birnbaum & Cheng, 2016; Yastibas & Yastibas, 2015. For more about the expectation of four year graduation rates that may negatively affect ELs see Sugarman, 2019.

However, educational reform would not be enough for undocumented ELs to gain social capital if not paired with immigration reforms. Undocumented ELs, as Jacqueline mentioned in the chapter four, should be able to gain access to legal status without having to experience violence. There is a critical need for pathways to citizenship that recognize ELs' hard work ethic and resulting contributions.

This research stands along with studies that look at language learning as contextualized within the intricacies of social systems. Social surroundings and circumstances deeply impact the desire to learn a language (Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Consequently, for language learning and language teaching to be effective, students, teachers, and researchers have to take into account the intricacies of social systems and the different ways power and oppression are intertwined with the language one speaks or seeks to speak. I hope that the research here helps highlight that complexity, so that stakeholders, researchers, and policy makers can make informed choices that are in the interests of undocumented ELs.

Limitations and Challenges

This study was limited in that it looks at one particular urban school setting in the Deep South. Additional studies in other settings would be useful to see what similarities or differences exist across Southern schools that are having to adjust to larger immigrant populations. Since this study focused on an urban school, it would also be beneficial to see if there are different needs for undocumented ELs in rural and other non-urban schools. As I mention in chapter two, since the largest group of ELs are Spanish speakers often ELs with other native languages get overlooked. Consequently, more research is needed in highlighting the experiences of non-Spanish-speaking ELs. Another limitation is that this study did not look at the perspective of non-EL students. I interacted with non-ELs during my fieldwork and work with Hope Academy

and got a sense that the language barrier was a key factor in students not making more efforts to integrate. However, I did not have the capacity to conduct formal interviews with them to understand their perspectives on a deeper level. Looking into non-EL students' perspectives of ELs would be helpful to understand the challenges to school integration better. Additionally, this study collected a limited amount of interviews from parents and teachers to get a context for the adults in undocumented ELs' lives. Some studies (Copland, Garton & Burns, 2014; Hassan & Selamat 2017; Katz, 1999; Ohata, 2005; Zein, 2017) have examined the perspectives of teachers, while other studies (Chen & Harris, 2009; Cun, 2019; Franklin-Williams, 2019; Koyama & Chang, 2019; Snell, 2018) depict parent perspectives. It would be useful for more studies to examine the experiences of adults who have a direct impact on immigrant ELs and document in what ways adults can positively contribute to the interests of undocumented ELs. These perspectives are crucial to explore intergenerational approaches to working together to improve conditions for all ELs.

As I described in chapter two, one of the greatest challenges of this study is the question of navigating trauma in field work. Although participants were encouraged to share only what they felt comfortable sharing, listening to the traumatic experiences of young people is no easy task and can unearth personal trauma for the researcher. Thus, researchers who engage in work with vulnerable populations should have access to therapy and/or other means through which they can process vicarious trauma and develop healthy coping mechanisms (Augusto & Hilário, 2018; Branson & Radu, 2018; Vincett, 2018; Woodby, 2011). Just as there is a secondary trauma effect, there can also be a secondary resilience effect where the researcher can learn to feel inspired through the strength and courage of participants who have overcome these obstacles (Edelkott, 2016; Engstrom, Hernández & Gangsei, 2008; Hernández-Wolfe et al., 2015).

However, developing a sense of secondary-resilience takes time, and researchers need the space and resources to be able to do this type of research in a way that honors the researcher's mental health. It is crucial that universities provide formal and continued training, guidance, and resources to researchers and participants engaging with trauma-related research.

Future Directions: Recommendations for Practitioners

Undocumented ELs are currently at the intersection of educational and immigration policies which limit their ability to gain social capital. Consequently, practitioners should continue to advocate for equitable education and immigration reforms and vote in the interests of their immigrant EL students. However, these reforms take time, so while waiting for these reforms to take root, the day-to-day adjustments in classrooms, schools, and school districts that promote equity for immigrant ELs are crucial. Based on this study's research findings, the following recommendations are for teachers and administrators who work with immigrant ELs.

Healing-centered Classrooms: Teachers should develop healing-centered, culturally responsive classrooms which attend to the anxieties of learning a new language and a new culture in a country which has an anti-immigrant administration. Teachers should be willing to acknowledge these anxieties and be open to talk with students about their fears. Teachers should be empathetic and patient with their immigrant ELs learning process, and be aware of how trauma may manifest itself in student behavior so that the teacher can refer them to mental health services.

Bilingual Mental Health Services: School districts should provide resources, time, and access to bilingual therapists, so a trained professional can help give youth the tools to navigate trauma and tap into their resiliency.

Sufficient and Efficient Guidance Counselors: School districts should ensure an appropriate number of guidance counselors are assigned to each school so that guidance counselors can have the time and energy to do their job efficiently and reduce clerical errors. School districts should provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed training to guidance counselors so they understand the nuances in providing information particularly to undocumented immigrant youth. Schools should either have bilingual guidance counselors or ensure trained interpreters are present for guidance counseling sessions so that students regardless of language can fully understand graduation requirements, know their post-secondary school options, and ask the questions they need answered.

Prioritizing Inclusion: School administrators working alongside teachers and students should find meaningful ways to incorporate ELs to school-wide activities. A language barrier should not be used as an excuse to further marginalize vulnerable students. This means administrators should provide translation of all announcements, school websites, and other means of distributing information. School administration should intentionally engage EL representatives to form part of school clubs, event planning, and celebrations from ELs native countries in a manner that does not appropriate or flatten their culture, but rather honors the culture and makes it visible.

Confidence-Building Curriculum: Teachers should build classroom activities and curriculum that uses project based learning and incorporate public speaking, so students build confidence through active participation in a classroom community where they do not fear being ridiculed. In other words, EL teachers should strive to create a classroom environment where students feel they can safely practice English.

Family Liaisons: Districts and schools provide sufficient, highly trained, bilingual family liaisons who are able to educate and onboard parents to the U.S. school system. These liaisons should be given adequate resources and time to build connections with families so that families can trust schools and feel comfortable asking questions and advocating for their children's needs.

Community Engagement: Schools should recruit, vet, and welcome bilingual community members who are able to serve as mentors and tutors for ELs during and after the school day. These bilingual community members can serve as an added layer of support. Recruiting among college students can also provide ELs with mentors who can answer ELs' questions about college and help them navigate the college application process. Another community resource that would benefit undocumented ELs would be to coordinate with local immigration attorneys who would be willing to give free know-your-rights presentations and consultations that would better help students understand their legal options. With more information concerning their rights and legal status, undocumented ELs could make better-informed decisions regarding their life plans as well as being able to recognize immigration frauds.

Student Peer-Mentors: Peer mentors offer linguistic, social-emotional, and academic support. Since immigrant ELs understand firsthand what it is like to feel helpless in a new country and new school, they are prone to help each other. Helping each other builds confidence for mentors since mentors can recognize their own growth. Meanwhile mentees feel the support and a sense of community which is beneficial for healthy development. Teachers can encourage this peer mentorship through verbal praising peer mentors, reminding students of the importance of community, and incorporating interactive lessons and group work which fosters collaboration.

These recommended interventions may take time and commitment, but they are possible and yield positive effects. For example, the non-profit Hope Academy has piloted these

approaches to varying degrees. The next section demonstrates the ways that these recommendations have been employed to foster the positive outcomes of increased graduation rates, higher state test scores, and increased student confidence.

Hope Academy Interventions

In 2014, Dr. Anna West and Destiny Cooper started Hope Academy²⁶ as a pilot to engage public high school students in learning with a civic purpose. Originally a partnership between Frazier's school district and neighboring university, Hope Academy was incorporated as an independent 501(c)3 in 2018. As a non-profit Hope Academy infuses under-resourced, high-poverty public schools with the curricular and human resources to engage students in civic problem solving, increase youth development, and boost academic outcomes. Hope Academy sees youth as problem-solvers with the agency to identify critical issues in their communities. Therefore, Hope Academy curriculum uses Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR), a social-justice project-based learning model where students identify and conduct research about their schools and communities then based on their findings develop and execute actions to address those problems (Fine, 2008; McIntyre 2000; Torre et al., 2012). This pedagogical approach increases student confidence while building critical literacy skills.

As I mention in chapter two, I was a graduate assistant placed with Hope Academy through an Educational Development Assistantship. Echoing Anna and Destiny's desire to pilot educational practices that amplify educational outcomes for all youth, I was encouraged to likewise pilot Hope Academy approaches with a group of nine senior ELs during my field work in 2017-2018. Due to the culturally responsive, trauma-informed, student-centered approaches, all nine EL seniors passed their state tests and graduated. Based on these successes, the following

²⁶ For more information on the origins of Hope Academy, see West, A. (2017).

year Hope Academy expanded from one EL class to three EL classes, serving sixty-five ELs. In this section, I explain how the Hope Academy approaches of culturally-responsive bilingual curriculum, providing adequate bilingual and culturally-competent staff, and providing real-world opportunities to practice and showcase English literacy skills yielded positive outcomes.

Culturally-Responsive/ Sustaining, Community-Oriented Bilingual Curriculum

Culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogy is not a new approach when working with minority populations in schools. Advocates such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Lisa Delpit, and Pedro Noguera have championed culturally responsive/sustaining teaching where teachers claim the responsibility of about their students' culture and thus employ the culture to teach lessons. Cultural responsiveness/sustainability asks teachers to examine their own biases and believe that their students can achieve academically regardless of social disadvantages. This approach also requires teachers to look outside of the often white-washed canonical texts and engage in material that is relevant to their students' lives (Alim & Paris, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Delpit 2006; Noguera, 2003).

To teach material that is relevant to immigrant students, classrooms must be sites for talking about immigrant experiences. In adapting a curriculum for immigrant ELs at Frazier Ms. Trudeau and I worked as a bilingual teaching team to ensure that students were receiving the content in both English and Spanish.²⁷ We developed vocabulary lists and lessons which centered around social justice for immigrants. We taught them about separate but equal policies and how such policies relate to present-day de facto segregated schools. We watched the hip-hop music video "Immigrants We Get the Job Done" from the "The Hamilton Mixtape" adapted from

²⁷ Although Ms. Trudeau did teach a handful of Arabic-speaking ELs, they had higher English proficiency. So in classes, we EL teachers would modify our speed and be mindful of vocabulary in English. Our Arabic-speaking students also felt comfortable in stopping us for clarification at any time.

the play *Hamilton* and analyzed the imagery and lyrics. We learned about civil rights versus human rights through theater exercises which allowed students to recognize the importance of standing up for themselves. We analyzed the rhetoric in news articles about immigrants and wrote counter arguments to articles with a negative slant. We drew posters with pro-immigrant sentiments to cover the walls of the classroom. We read excerpts from multicultural books like *Esperanza Rising*, *I am Malala*, and *Seedfolks*. Meanwhile, we discovered reading *The Outsiders* and watching clips from the movie to be a great vehicle to talk about alienation, family issues, and trauma.

As a class we acknowledged that being an immigrant is hard, and we celebrated students' daily efforts and progress. We built a community through games, through reading positive affirmations to each other, through writing and sharing original poems, and through practicing conflict-resolutions when disagreements arose. We did not sugar-coat problems or racism. As teachers, we encouraged students to let us know if peers or staff were bullying them or making racist remarks. We encouraged them to document these incidents on paper and would alert administrators to the best of our abilities. Often these incidents did not receive much follow through by administrators,²⁸ but we learned about the importance of documenting and owning your own narrative of the story. We role-played in class how to navigate these challenges and reminded students that they still have power in difficult situations.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that a few students occasionally did push back against healing-centered practices, though they were few in number and, it seems relevant to note, were all-male. In one or two cases, students said, "Why do we have to talk about this?". It

²⁸ Incidents that got most follow through were the ones where parents would come to school to advocate for their children. However, this occurrence was rare since most parents cannot get off of work, feel uncomfortable because of the language barrier, or as undocumented immigrants do not want to draw too much attention to themselves.

is common for individuals to not want to acknowledge trauma due to the stigma around mental health (Bharadwaj, Pai & Suziedelyte 2017; Yanos et al., 2015). It is extra difficult for males since seeking-help can seem as weak (Gearing et al., 2015; Mackenzie, 2016; Rafal, Gatto & DeBate, 2018; Vogel et al., 2011). However, healing processes require acknowledgement of this pain, even when it is difficult to talk about (Dorsey et al., 2017; Morina, Koerssen & Pollet, 2016). I also want to clarify that neither Ms. Trudeau nor I are certified therapists or social workers, so we knew when to tap into other mental health resources in cases which were outside our scope of work. I will discuss this more below.

A culturally responsive, community-oriented bilingual curriculum allows students to develop a sense of agency and grow in their confidence. National educational associations recognize culturally responsiveness as a necessary and effective practice (NCTE, 2010; AERA, 2012; NEA, 2014). As for Frazier High, this Amplified Classroom Curriculum has shown higher graduation rates for ELs than what ELs had experienced prior to HA intervention. In the 2017-2018 school year in which we piloted these approaches, there was a 100% graduation rate for ELs compared to a 67% for Frazier High seniors overall, and 50% for the public school state graduation rate for ELs (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019). In the 2018-2019 year, we also had a 100% graduation rate for the Spanish-speaking ELs. The 2020 cohort is the largest senior EL cohort Frazier has had. This cohort comprises sixteen students, six who identify as Latinx females, seven as Latinx males, two as Middle-Eastern females, and one as Middle-Eastern male. Eleven out of the sixteen senior ELs in the 2020 cohort by the 2020 spring semester had met all their state testing requirements for graduation. Three of the five who had not yet met requirements had transferred to Frazier in fall 2019, so they had limited time with Hope Academy interventions. These ELs were set to retake their state tests in spring 2019.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed schools and cancelled spring state testing, the re-testing protocol was yet to be determined.

I want to highlight the importance of these higher graduations and retention rates. Going by the current numbers, the 2020 EL retention rate at Frazier High for 2020 is on track to supersede that of the previous two years. This is especially important because according to the most recently released National Center for Education Statistics (2017), the national graduation rate is 84% while ELs remain at 67%. Looking at statistics based on race/ethnicity, Latinx males have the highest percentage of dropout rates at 9.9% compared to the 6.4% rate for Black males and the 5.9% national average for all students. At a rate of 8.4%, Latinx females are the second highest dropout group compared with the 6.5% in Black females. Consequently, a curriculum that meets students where they are and is aware of their needs, interests, and talents is critical to keeping ELs engaged and invested in coming consistently to school.

Sufficient, Bilingual and Culturally-Responsive Staff and Community Support

As I mention in the second chapter, not having sufficient staff who are trained to address the needs of immigrant ELs is detrimental to the well-being of students. Untrained staff can be part of the problem when they make deportation “jokes” or when they allow students to bully each other. They can also sin by omission when they do not attend immigrant-centered programming such as when administrators did not come to Global Family Day or when they do not actively look into student-reported discrimination. I also explained the danger of having overworked guidance counselors who inadvertently commit clerical errors that keep students from graduating or do not have time to answer student questions.

Since providing staff training and hiring more counselors was outside of our scope of control, the Hope Academy interventions were designed to increase our people power from

within. By the 2018-2019 school year, since our EL numbers had increased from approximately thirty to approximately sixty-five students, our EL teaching team was provided with two additional paraprofessionals, Morgan Johnson and Pedro Cerda. As I have described throughout this dissertation, Pedro was a Frazier alumni who, as a student, was a peer mentor who provided his fellow ELs with much support especially in math. Since he wanted to save money for college, he came to work with us after graduation. Meanwhile, Morgan had volunteered at Frazier since 2017 through a local university's honors college service opportunity. Morgan had studied Spanish abroad in Cuba, so she is proficient in Spanish. As bilingual educators who were culturally-responsive and highly sympathetic to immigrant ELs, Morgan and Pedro have dedicated themselves to providing quality academic support to ELs in their core classes. They would go into classes and push-in or pull-out students to ensure they understood content and were receiving required accommodations. With the addition of Morgan and Pedro to our EL teaching team of the EL specialist Mrs. Brown, the lead EL teacher Ms. Trudeau, and myself as a Hope Academy coach, we were now a five member teacher team. Additionally, Morgan was able to tap into her honors college connections and recruit college students to occasionally come in to give academic help.

Ms. Trudeau and I also incorporated Support-Day Fridays during which we would break out into groups to catch up on work, check for understanding, and work on projects from other classes. These support days were also opportunities for peers who excelled in certain materials to help each other in a structured space. With these added layers of support, we were able to help students achieve the grades we knew they were capable of making. For example, after the first semester with a five-person teaching team plus community tutors, one out of three EL's at Frazier High were on the Honor Roll for all of their classes compared to the previous year when

only one out of twenty ELs were on the honor roll. Increased, well-trained people power also allowed us to offer interventions when grades would start to slip. One student shares:

When my grades started to lower, the teachers noticed. They asked me what was happening. I did not want to talk to anyone because I felt they would judge me. But they talked to me and listened. I realized teachers do not just teach, they also listen when we have problems. (Anonymous Student Written Reflection²⁹ April 2019)

This student indicates how we teachers noticed the drop in grades. Since our EL team is trauma-informed, we recognize that a change in grades can be an indicator of lost motivation due to other factors. The student shares that the teachers listened to them in addition to teaching them.

In the past two years with Morgan and Pedro, they have engaged students and families outside of the classroom as well. As a trustworthy figure, Pedro was able to connect with EL families and be a source for families to reach out to for answers to their questions and an open ear for their concerns. Meanwhile, since the majority of the soccer team consists of ELs and the soccer team needed coaches, Morgan was the assistant coach for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years. Being part of the soccer team was also a motivator for ELs to maintain good grades since there is a school policy that falling below a certain grade point average makes students ineligible to play sports. As I mentioned in chapter three, most immigrant ELs have faced family separation and other traumatic events in their journey to the US. Thus cultivating a space where they feel safe and included, surrounded by adults who continuously show how much they care about students is a critical teaching practice.

In terms of helping students plan for their future, in the Fall of 2018, our teaching team was joined by graduate student Diana Aviles. Similar to my graduate teaching situation, instead of teaching a college course, Diana would work with Hope Academy. Diana has a passion for

²⁹ As a Hope Academy practice, we often ask students to write reflections about their experiences with the program. We do a mix of anonymous and non-anonymous written reflections. This quote is taken from an end of year reflection activity from our 2019 EL class.

college access, so she helped build the Dreamkeepers Initiative which pairs first generation college students with Frazier High School seniors. This mentorship program allows first generation college students to answer the seniors' questions and help navigate the application process. Currently, eight of the 2020 EL senior cohort members are part of this initiative. When I asked one of the participants of this study who is part of this initiative if it is helpful, they responded, "Having a college mentor who has already been through the process means a lot." Students can see how someone who may have similar barriers in terms of being first generation or from working class families has navigated the process. Students look forward to the time they have with their mentors and are appreciative of another layer of support during the stressful college application process.

Other ways our Hope Academy EL program has tapped into community resources is through finding a bilingual therapist from the community. Our students were greatly benefited when Jessica Castillo agreed to provide group therapy for our students. In 2018, I met Jessica through a local mental health organization. This organization agreed to allocate some of Jessica's time to the HA ELs, and when Jessica switched to working with the Child Advocacy Center, her new supervisor agreed to allow Jessica to continue working with HA ELs. Jessica has done immigrant-centered groups with the students during which they have been able to talk about and process their homesickness and culture shock. For the 2019-2020 cohort, Jessica provided bilingual group sessions on mind body/medicine – science-based techniques to reduce stress and address trauma responses. The students have expressed appreciation of this group therapy. One student noted that she feels more control over her emotions and another stated that she remembers to breathe more deeply. While these programs are a great way to build coping-skills, in the 2018-2019 school year only twelve out of 65 students had access to the groups.

Meanwhile, in 2019-2020, 35 out of 140 ELs had access to the group. Additionally, while group therapy has been effective, EL students would also greatly benefit from being able to have individual therapy. These limitations were mainly due to time-constraints since Jessica was only able to dedicate one day to Frazier, as she had other work responsibilities. As I mentioned in chapter three, many ELs suffered from suicidal ideation or turned to substance abuse. One-on-one counseling would help students with their mental health. However, one volunteer bilingual therapist is not enough. Frazier High would require either a full-time bilingual therapist or more bilingual therapists willing to serve part-time in public schools to adequately meet and sustain all ELs' mental health needs.

Frazier's school districts had difficulties providing sufficient, bilingual and culturally-responsive staff. Therefore, the Hope Academy approach to filling this gap involving looking into community partnerships which could provide the necessary culturally-responsive human resources for ELs. I want to make clear that it should not be the responsibility of the overworked and underpaid public classroom teacher to fill in these gaps. Teachers should not have to double as family liaisons, soccer coaches, and community engagement coordinators. The responsibility to meet student needs still falls on the school districts, school boards, and state agencies which govern the allocation of school funds. Citizens with voting privileges have the responsibility to hold these agencies accountable.

Real-World Opportunities to Develop Literacy

As mentioned above, the Hope Academy curriculum centers on Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR). CPAR is a communal project-based approach which allows students to identify and conduct research about issues that are important in their lives, such as problems they experience in their schools and communities (Fine, 2008; McIntyre 2000; Torre et al, 2012).

In the Hope Academy approach to CPAR, students orally share stories and write personal narratives about how they see a particular problem. They read peer-reviewed articles and other relevant texts to build their understanding of the problem. Teachers introduce different data collection methods and students design data collection tools such as surveys, questions and guidelines for focus groups, interviews, and/or processes for observation. Students then collect data through these tools and organize and analyze their data. Based on their findings, students develop and execute action projects to address the problems they have identified. Students then present their findings and projects at a student-driven conference at a local university.

Throughout the CPAR cycle, community mentors come visit classrooms to support students with specialized readings and give feedback on their data tools, data analysis, reports, and conference presentations.

For example, a 2018-2019 EL CPAR group focused on the perceptions of the then recently-installed chain-link fencing around the school grounds. When first installed, the fencing caused mix-feelings for students since they felt it made school seem more like a jail. They read articles on school fencing, and how school fencing is disproportionately found in schools with higher concentration of students of color (Nance, 2016). They did a school survey and focus groups to find out how their peers perceived the new gate, finding that students felt trapped and imprisoned. The CPAR group then hosted a school-wide poetry writing lunch session around feeling trapped so students could express themselves.

CPAR allows students to engage in a wide range of literacy practices including writing personal narratives, reading research-based texts, data collection design and analysis, writing evidence-based claims, and public speaking. They also learn how to work in teams, facilitate groups, and coordinate events. In an era of high-stakes testing, where students are given test-prep

with little relevance to their lives and which often sets up students to feel academically inadequate, CPAR offers a way to learn critical thinking skills in an engaging real world way that motivates them to want to learn more, do more, and develop real-world skills. Furthermore, when students position themselves as researchers and experts of their own experiences, they gain academic confidence which in turn translates to them having confidence to achieve higher on state tests. For example, in the 2018-2019 school year, 11th grade ELs scored 10 points higher than the district average in writing on the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT), which is the state test used to measure growth in the sub categories of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Sixty-three percent of all Hope Academy ELs increased one level in one or more sub-categories.

CPAR is a particularly useful learning tool for ELs in terms of their language investment. As explained in chapter one, language learners who fail to learn a target language might do so not because they do not have enough motivation, but rather because they might not be invested in learning spaces which might be perceived as uninviting and unsafe due to racism, sexism, homophobia, and other discriminatory factors. Linguistic investment lead scholar Norton states that ELs “need to learn to command the attention of their listeners; they need to negotiate language as a system and as a social practice; and they need to understand the practices of the communities with which they interact” (p. 239, 2018). The CPAR process allows ELs to gain academic and linguistic confidence so that they can “command the attention of their listeners.” Reading research articles, learning how to coordinate events, and presenting at a university are all highly rigorous tasks that, once ELs achieve them, allow ELs to realize they have the capability to accomplish other difficult tasks. Often the anxiety of making a mistake while speaking a new language is what keeps language learners from practicing more (Dewaele & Tsui

Shan, 2013; Dewalee et al., 2016; MacIntyre, 2017; Tran & Moni, 2015). Practicing these rigorous activities while knowing they have the support of their teachers and peers allows students to have the courage to overcome language anxieties.

Furthermore, CPAR, as part of the culturally responsive, community-oriented curriculum, allows ELs to acknowledge and learn deeply about the roots of problems they experience daily. Consequently, they can see how language works as a system and social practice, and they can understand the particular language practices of their new communities. In other words, they can learn to be critical about their own language learning as they learn about how power plays out across race, gender, nationality, sexuality, religion, and other differences. Gabriela states, “I found myself asking questions I thought I would never ask because of the fear I had, but this class has made me fearless and I’m grateful for it, and our research project is where all of this [is] reflect[ed].” Providing real-world opportunities to develop literacy skills helps ELs engage with difficult questions. Through her CPAR project, Gabriela was able to think critically about why student-teacher relationships are often fraught. She gained a deeper understanding of how positive relationships can make school a more welcoming environment and thus encourage students to have better attendance, better grades, and lower discipline referrals. Gabriela gained a new, critical perspective about her school’s social context while simultaneously gaining a fearless confidence to challenge the status quo.

In the Works: Building Inclusive Power

ELs have shown tremendous growth in confidence through and engaging curriculum and adequate educational support. Yet, one area of growth that Frazier High as a whole still needs to address is unity among students, regardless of race and nationality. As I described in chapter three, EL participants shared that while some of the interactions among Black and immigrant

students were positive, there was also plenty of bullying and/or ignoring each other. Building more unity is particularly important because a national trend shows that Black and Latinx youth are more likely to attend schools with each other than with other racial/ethnic groups (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Professor of education and co-director of the Center for Education and Civil Rights, Erica Frankenberg explains the stakes of building respect and understanding in cross-cultural schools:

In future decades, educators will need to understand how to attend to the development of children and youth in a multiracial setting, especially with respect to cross-cultural/racial understandings. Although this has long been an important aim of education, due to current and future demographic changes, it has increased urgency. If schools cannot facilitate such development, young people are likely to have increased prejudice and higher dropout rates, with significant implications for the United States' social and economic health. (p. 220, 2017)

Acknowledging a multi-racial/ethnic presence in a school is critical so that students can learn how to work past prejudices and help each other succeed.

In light of the importance of building cross-cultural solidarity, for the 2018-2019 school year, we invited Gabriela, a higher proficiency EL, to be in a non-EL Hope Academy class.

Gabriela shares her experience:

Throughout the year I had a fear that I wasn't going to be enough for a regular English class because that's how I saw Hope Academy before being here. But the first day I was here I saw that this wasn't just a regular English class it was a family. The bond was so strong with the teachers and students that made me realize that I wanted to be here. I had reason to come to school. I had no fear to say what I had on my mind, and they help me with my reading and writing skills. (Interview October 3, 2017)

Since Gabriela was the only EL in the class, she did not think she would "be enough." She quickly felt the warmth of the teachers and students, which motivated her to come to school. Gabriela also felt safe to ask critical questions, gain academic confidence, and feel proud of her CPAR research project. Feeling part of a family, Gabriela was able to thrive even though it was not an EL classroom.

Based on this success, in the following year (2019-2020), we decided to pilot moving seven higher proficiency ELs into non-EL Hope Academy English classes. We placed three in one class and four in another. Several factors in this case contributed to these classes feeling less like home for ELs. Unlike the class that Gabriela had with three co-teachers, this class had only one lead teacher with support teachers who came in twice a week. Comparatively, these classes also had higher needs in terms of students' behavior-based trauma responses, so they were not as welcoming a space and there were not as many teachers to be able to adequately respond to the behavioral needs. Consequently, in the first semester it did not seem like the ELs felt as confident to express themselves as Gabriela had, and they were still sitting at the margins of the classroom. These differences made me wonder whether having classes that are half-Black and half-Latinx and where the class content would be especially centered around critical race theories and historical analysis of Black and Brown would help students build solidarity.

Scholars who work on Black and Brown youth solidarity, such as Martinez (2017) suggest importance of building linguistic, historical, and political solidarity among Black and Latinx students, especially since these groups share similar educational inequities. Other studies show how building cross-cultural relationship can help reduce prejudice through reducing negative associations about ethnicity and race. Additionally, even knowing someone who has a cross-cultural friendship can have a similar reduction in prejudice (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Benner & Wang, 2017; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton & Mendes, 2014). Coffey and Espiritu (2016) write about an ethnic-studies class in Los Angeles that focused on Afro-Latinxs and historical solidarity among Black and Latinx communities. They used theatre exercises and written reflections to question why Eurocentric history has been promoted over Black, Latinx, Indigenous histories. In addition, they describe an afterschool program for Black and Latinx

youth in a five-school district that segregated Black and Latinx youth across schools and promoted competition among them. The program had student-led spoken word poetry performances, cross-campus dialogues, small group discussions, community-building activities that all highlighted the shared struggles and historical solidarity between Black and Brown youth in Los Angeles. The afterschool program also used YPAR (Youth Participatory Action Research) to deeply understand roots of problem of modern day segregation. They organized a week of action with a slogan of “One Love” and community-wide dialogues and spoken word poetry performances. The youths’ work eventually shifted their district to foster more cross-campus collaboration instead of a culture of competition. These examples show that interventions can happen in classroom, community, and district levels if students, community members, youth advocates, teachers, and administrators all buy in to the idea of collaborating to foster an inclusive school culture.

Embracing Challenges

Building Hope Academy interventions that center transformative learning within educational systems that are designed to promote conformity brings about challenges. Our team of educators had to navigate resistance from school administrators, invest in our growing network of teachers, and maintain support from the district and community partners. As a non-profit we also faced the time-consuming tasks of fundraising, marketing, operational management, and other countless tasks that keep an organization thriving. As we have expanded, our human resources have yet to catch up with the demands. We are currently working on how to not over-work ourselves, especially since our leadership staff consisting of an executive director, a district instructional coach, and two graduate assistants.

In order for ELs in Hope Academy to have access to an engaging bilingual curriculum and competent adults who respect youth as problem-solvers, Hope Academy has had to recruit and invest in teachers who are willing to change to pedagogical approaches that require teachers to be vulnerable, humble, and willing to learn from their students. Hope Academy educators engage in active coaching, reflection, and participation in our professional learning community which looks like the activities we have for our students – embodied pedagogies, art education, CPAR, dialogue around relevant theories, and reflective writing. We have also had to build strong relationships with administrators at the school and district levels which require time to empathetically listen to each other and align mutual goals. Some administrators have been less resistant than others, but without administrative support, the already challenging work of improving schools can be even harder. We have also worked to build community partnerships, such as local universities which have provided graduate assistants to work with us and mental health agencies to provide workshops and therapy groups. We also have cultivated a large pool of volunteers who can serve as research mentors, workshop leaders, marketing consultants, and tutors. All of these moving pieces have to be carefully managed, while we attempt to center our own well-being, so we do not burn out. Overall, however, on-the-ground interventions can only go so far if the larger systemic educational and immigration policies do not change to center the interests and well-being of students.

Closing Thoughts

Gabriela shares, “There’s too many things that keep me from being able to return to my native country. That’s why I give it my all to learn English. This is my new country now.” Undocumented ELs like Gabriela have no home other than the home they have made in the United States. This home is far from perfect. Schools are often spaces of limited resources where

teacher shortages; disconnections among school boards, administrators, and students; overworked school staff; and neoliberal practices of state testing make it hard for ELs to thrive. Moreover, this home has yet to make immigration reforms that provide undocumented ELs with a relief from the anxiety of deportation. According to recent polls, 77% of U.S. voters³⁰ support citizenship for Dreamers as long as they meet the criteria of living in the United States for at least four years, having entered the country under the age of 18, attending high school or a work credential program, and passing a background check (Global Strategy Group, 2019). If these are the requirements, then undocumented ELs like those in this study could qualify for a path to citizenship and thus gain access to legal employment, college financial aid, voting privileges, and safety from deportation.

I sincerely hope this public support continues and is reflected in the actual passage of a DREAM Act into law so that undocumented ELs can have a legal claim to their new home. However, to pretend this nation has historically been kind to immigrants, youth, and people of color is naive. Those in power to continue to benefit from the cheap labor of undocumented immigrants and the youth who are pushed out of school into lower wage jobs. Consequently, it is up to those who have voting privileges and English language privilege to stand alongside undocumented ELs and promote policy change that will more easily allow undocumented ELs to learn English, graduate high school, and obtain employment. The EL participants I have worked with are resilient, hard working, community-oriented, grateful, and hopeful. They know what sacrifice is, and they know the world can be better. This study has shown their determination to

³⁰ The public support is strong, considering (44%) “strongly” agree. Also, the support spans partisan lines 64% of Republicans, 71% of independents, and 90% of Democrats are in favor. For full report see Global Strategy Group, 2019.

succeed regardless of barriers. Imagine what could be if those barriers were cleared, and their desires were not just documented but fulfilled.

APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



TO: Alejandra Torres
English

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 26, 2017

RE: IRB# E10499

TITLE: English Language Investment in Immigrant Youth

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/research

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 5/26/2017

Approved X **Disapproved**

Approval Date: 5/26/2017 **Approval Expiration Date:** 5/25/2020

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:** When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc. Approvals will automatically be closed by the IRB on the expiration date unless the PI requests a continuation.

* All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>

APPENDIX B. CONSENT FORMS

Identifying information, such as addresses and phone numbers, has been redacted from consent forms.

Consent Forms Include:

1. Research Participants
2. Parent/Guardian
3. Youth Assent
4. School Administrator
5. Research Participants (Spanish Translation)
6. Parent/Guardian (Spanish Translation)
7. Youth Assent (Spanish Translation)

Consent to Serve as a Research Participant

1. Project Title: English Language Investment in Immigrant Youth
2. Performance Site: [School Address]
3. Investigators: The investigators listed below are available for questions about this study. M-F, 8AM-5PM.

Alejandra Torres	atorr35@lsu.edu	[Phone Number]
Susan Weinstein	sweinst@lsu.edu	[Phone Number]
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to assess immigrant youth's motivation towards learning English and evaluate school resources/support available to them.
5. Participants: A. Inclusion Criteria: Current and Previous High School English Language Learners and their families, teachers, staff, and administrators.
 B. Exclusion Criteria: those who are not affiliated with English Language Learners
6. Description of Study:
 - § The investigator will observe participants at school.
 - § The investigator will interview students, family members, teachers, staff, and administrators.
 - § Youth participants will complete a writing activity.
 - § The investigator will collect school performance and demographic data about youth participants through the school, pending approval from the school and parents.
7. Benefits: There are no direct benefits for participants in the study. However, the research may prove beneficial to the fields of linguistics, education and youth services.
8. Risks: The participants may risk feeling embarrassed by something they say or write. However, participants are encouraged to only share what they feel comfortable sharing. Participants will be identified by a pseudonym in any publications or presentations resulting from this research, so they will not be publicly identified with their words or writing. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. Files will be kept in secure cabinets to which only the investigator has access.
9. Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary. Youth will be involved in the study only if youth and parent agree to the youth's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the participant's parent may withdraw the youth from the study without penalty.
10. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Participants will be identified by pseudonyms. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
11. Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study; nor is there any monetary compensation for participants.
12. Signatures: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Printed Name: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Caregiver Consent Form

1. Project Title: English Language Investment in Immigrant Youth
2. Performance Site: [School Address]
3. Investigators: The investigators listed below are available for questions about this study. M-F, 8AM-5PM.
Alejandra Torres atorr35@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
Susan Weinstein sweinst@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to assess immigrant youth's motivation towards learning English and evaluate school resources/support available to them.
5. Participants: A. Inclusion Criteria: Current and Previous High School English Language Learners and their families, teachers, staff, and administrators.
 B. Exclusion Criteria: those who are not affiliated with English Language Learners
6. Description of Study:
 - § The investigator will observe participants at school.
 - § The investigator will interview students, family members, teachers, staff, and administrators.
 - § Youth participants will complete a writing activity.
 - § The investigator will collect school performance and demographic data about youth participants through the school, pending approval from the school and parents.
7. Benefits: There are no direct benefits for participants in the study. However, the research may prove beneficial to the fields of linguistics, education and youth services.
8. Risks: The participants may risk feeling embarrassed by something they say or write. However, participants are encouraged to only share what they feel comfortable sharing. Participants will be identified by a pseudonym in any publications or presentations resulting from this research, so they will not be publicly identified with their words or writing. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. Files will be kept in secure cabinets to which only the investigator has access.
9. Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary. Youth will be involved in the study only if youth and parent agree to the youth's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the participant's parent may withdraw the youth from the study without penalty.
10. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Participants will be identified by pseudonyms. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
11. Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study; nor is there any monetary compensation for participants.
12. Signatures: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Name of Youth: _____

Parent/Caregiver Printed Name: _____

Parent/Caregiver Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

English Language Investment in Immigrant Youth Study

Youth Assent Form

I, _____, agree to be in a study about my motivation to learn English. I agree to be observed, interviewed, and to complete a writing activity. I can decide what I do and do not want to tell the researcher. I can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

- Youth's Signature: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

- Witness* _____ Date: _____

* (N.B. Witness must be present for the assent process, not just the signature by the minor.)

-

Consent to Allow Study on School Grounds

1. Project Title: English Language Investment in Immigrant Youth
2. Performance Site: [School Address]
3. Investigators: The investigators listed below are available for questions about this study. M-F, 8AM-5PM.
Alejandra Torres atorr35@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
Susan Weinstein sweinst@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to assess immigrant youth's motivation towards learning English and evaluate school resources/support available to them.
5. Participants: A. Inclusion Criteria: Current and Previous High School English Language Learners and their families, teachers, staff, and administrators.
B. Exclusion Criteria: those who are not affiliated with English Language Learners
6. Description of Study:
 - § The investigator will observe participants at school.
 - § The investigator will interview students, family members, teachers, staff, and administrators.
 - § Youth participants will complete a writing activity.
 - § The investigator will collect school performance and demographic data about youth participants through the school, pending approval from the school and parents.
7. Benefits: There are no direct benefits for participants in the study. However, the research may prove beneficial to the fields of linguistics, education and youth services.
8. Risks: The participants may risk feeling embarrassed by something they say or write. However, participants are encouraged to only share what they feel comfortable sharing. Participants will be identified by a pseudonym in any publications or presentations resulting from this research, so they will not be publicly identified with their words or writing. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality. Files will be kept in secure cabinets to which only the investigator has access.
9. Right to Refuse: Participation is voluntary. Youth will be involved in the study only if youth and parent agree to the youth's participation. At any time, either the subject may withdraw from the study or the participant's parent may withdraw the youth from the study without penalty.
10. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Participants will be identified by pseudonyms. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.
11. Financial Information: There is no cost for participation in the study; nor is there any monetary compensation for participants.
12. Signatures: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Administrator Printed Name: _____

Administrator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Consentimiento de Participación

1. Título de Estudio: Interés de Aprender Ingles de Jóvenes Inmigrantes
2. Sitio: [School Address]
3. Investigadores: Están disponibles para sus preguntas sobre el estudio. Lunes a viernes, 8am– 5pm
Alejandra Torres atorr35@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
Susan Weinstein sweinst@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
4. Propósito del Estudio: Entender la motivación de los jóvenes inmigrantes para aprender ingles e investigar los recursos que les dan en las escuelas.
5. Participantes:
 - A. Criterio de Inclusión: Estudiantes de la preparatoria que están aprendiendo ingles y su familia maestros y administradores.
 - B. Criterio de Exclusión: los que no están afiliados con los que están aprendiendo ingles
6. Descripción del estudio:
 - § los investigadora va a observar a los jóvenes en la escuela
 - § la investigadora va a entrevistar los participantes
 - § los estudiantes van a escribir sobre que quieren para su futuro
 - § la investigadora podrá coleccionar información y datos sobre los jóvenes a través de la escuela, si lo permiten la escuela y los padres.
7. Beneficios: No hay beneficios directos para los participantes en el estudio. Esta investigación podrá mejorar la información para los maestros y mejorar los servicios para jóvenes inmigrantes.
8. Riesgos: Tal ves los participantes se sientan avergonzados por algo que digan o escriban. Pero, los participantes solo comparten lo que ellos quieran. Si este estudio es publicado o dado en una presentación, los participantes serán identificados con un sobrenombre. Así los participantes no serán identificados con lo que digan. Toda información estará en confianza. Los archivos estarán bajo llave. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a estos archivos.
9. Derecho a Rehutar: Participación en voluntaria. Los jóvenes participan solo si ellos y sus padres están de acuerdo. En cualquier momento, los jóvenes pueden dejar de participar o los padres pueden retirar a su hijo/a del estudio sin consecuencias.
10. Privacidad: Los resultados del estudios podrán ser publicados pero ni los nombres ni datos identificativos serán incluidos en la publicación. Participantes usaran sobrenombres en lugar de sus nombres de verdad. La identidad de participantes se guardará en secreto, a menos que la información sea requerido por la ley.
11. Información Financiera: Es gratis participar en el estudio. Y los participantes no serán pagados.
12. Firma: El estudio a sido discutido conmigo. Todas mis preguntas han sido contestadas. Puedo dirigir mas preguntas a las investigadoras. Si tengo mas preguntas sobre mis derechos u otras preocupaciones puedo contactar a Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en este estudio y reconozco la obligación de los investigadores para darme una copia de este formulario.

Nombre de Participante: _____

Firma de Participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Permiso de Padres/Guardianes

1. Título de Estudio: Interés de Aprender Ingles de Jóvenes Inmigrantes
2. Sitio: [School Address]
3. Investigadores: Están disponibles para sus preguntas sobre el estudio. Lunes a viernes, 8am– 5pm
Alejandra Torres atorr35@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
Susan Weinstein sweinst@lsu.edu [Phone Number]
4. Propósito del Estudio: Entender la motivación de los jóvenes inmigrantes para aprender ingles e investigar los recursos que les dan en las escuelas.
5. Participantes:
 - A. Criterio de Inclusión: Estudiantes de la preparatoria que están aprendiendo ingles y su familia maestros y administradores.
 - B. Criterio de Exclusión: los que no están afiliados con los que están aprendiendo ingles
6. Descripción del estudio:
 - § los investigadora va a observar a los jóvenes en la escuela
 - § la investigadora va a entrevistar a los participantes
 - § los estudiantes van a escribir sobre que quieren para su futuro
 - § la investigadora podrá coleccionar información y datos sobre los jóvenes a través de la escuela, si lo permiten la escuela y los padres.
7. Beneficios: No hay beneficios directos para los participantes en el estudio. Esta investigación podrá mejorar la información para los maestros y mejorar los servicios para jóvenes inmigrantes.
8. Riesgos: Tal ves los participantes se sientan avergonzados por algo que digan o escriban. Pero, los participantes solo comparten lo que ellos quieran. Si este estudio es publicado o dado en una presentación, los participantes serán identificados con un sobrenombre. Así los participantes no serán identificados con lo que digan. Toda información estará en confianza. Los archivos estarán bajo llave. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a estos archivos.
9. Derecho a Rehutar: Participación en voluntaria. Los jóvenes participan solo si ellos y sus padres están de acuerdo. En cualquier momento, los jóvenes pueden dejar de participar o los padres pueden retirar a su hijo/a del estudio sin consecuencias.
10. Privacidad: Los resultados del estudios podrán ser publicados pero ni los nombres ni datos identificativos serán incluidos en la publicación. Participantes usaran sobrenombres en lugar de sus nombres de verdad. La identidad de participantes se guardará en secreto, a menos que la información sea requerido por la ley.
11. Información Financiera: Es gratis participar en el estudio. Y los participantes no serán pagados.
12. Firma: El estudio a sido discutido conmigo. Todas mis preguntas han sido contestadas. Puedo dirigir mas preguntas a las investigadoras. Si tengo mas preguntas sobre mis derechos u otras preocupaciones puedo contactar a Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. Doy mi consentimiento para participar en este estudio y reconozco la obligación de los investigadores para darme una copia de este formulario.

Nombre de Joven Participante: _____

Nombre de Padres/Guardián: _____

Firma de Padres/Guardián: _____ Fecha: _____

Consentimiento del Joven

Estudio Sobre el Interés de Aprender Ingles de Jóvenes Inmigrantes

Yo, _____, consiento estar en este estudio sobre mi interés de aprender ingles. Estoy de acuerdo que sea observado, entrevistado y completar una actividad de escribir. Yo decido que quiero decir o callar cuando hable con la investigadora. En cualquier momento, yo puedo retirarme del estudio sin ningún castigo.

Firma de Joven: _____ Edad: _____ Fecha: _____

Testigo* _____ Fecha: _____

* (N.B. Testigos tienen que estar presente para el proceso de consentimiento y durante la firma del menor.)

APPENDIX C. GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Youth Questions:

1. How long have you been going to [Frazier High]?
2. Where are you from? When did you get to [city]? Do you mind telling me about your journey here?
3. Did you have a choice in coming to the U.S.?
4. Did you go to school in your previous country? What was your school like? Did you like school? What classes were hardest/easiest for you there? What classes are the easiest/hardest here?
5. Did you take English classes before coming to the U.S.? If so, how many years and what were they like?
6. What are some differences between your previous school and Frazier High?
7. As a student learning English, do you feel like you have enough support from your teachers and the school? What resources do you think work well? Which ones could be improved?
8. Can you tell me about a time when you felt supported in this school?
9. Can you tell me about a time when you did not feel supported in this school?
10. Do you think learning English is important? Why or why not?
11. How do you feel about your English abilities?
12. What makes you come to school each day? Can you tell me about a really good day at school?
13. What would the ideal English class look like?
14. Do you feel like your parents support you in learning English? Do you feel like your parents support you being in school?
15. What do think you want to do as a job when you are older? Do you want to go to college?
16. Describe where do you see yourself in 5 years. What steps do you think you might need to reach this vision?
17. Would you return to your first country? Why or why not?

Teacher/ Staff Questions:

1. Could you tell me about your own background and role at the high school?
2. Could you tell me the procedures that EL students must undergo in order to enroll in this school?
3. What training does staff receive to be prepared to teach EL students? What methods do they use?
4. How are ESL specialists divided among different schools? How often are they at different schools?
5. Do you feel like teachers who have EL students receive enough resources and support?
6. What EL resources and support work well? What EL resources and support could be improved?
7. Could you tell me about your experiences working with EL students? Can you tell me about a time you had a challenging experience? Can you tell me about a time you had a rewarding experience?
8. What types of barriers exist for EL students in high school?

9. Do you feel like the high school is a welcoming place for EL students?
10. What is the graduating rate for EL students?
11. What are some ways to motivate EL students to graduate from high school?
12. How do you feel about working with recent immigrants?
13. How do you think the school administration feels about working with recent immigrants?
14. How do you think teachers feel about working with recent immigrants?
15. What types of barriers exist during college applications for undocumented students?
16. What do you see ELL students doing after high school?
17. How do you think school can better prepare EL students for life after high school, regardless of students' citizenship status?

Parent/Caregiver Questions:

1. Could you tell me about your background and when you decided that your child would move to Louisiana?
2. How comfortable do you feel about speaking English?
3. Do you think it is important for your child to learn English? How might your child knowing English benefit your child?
4. Do you encourage and support your child to learn English? How?
5. Does your child sometimes help you translate?
6. Do you feel like your child is motivated to learn English?
7. Do you feel like the high school is a welcoming place for EL students like your child?
8. What types of barriers exist for your child in high school?
9. Do you encourage and support your child to stay in school? How?
10. Is it important for you for your child to graduate high school?
11. Is it important for you for your child to go to college?
12. What types of barriers exist for your child to get into college?
13. What do you see your child doing after high school?
14. Do you feel like the high school helps prepare all students for life after high school?
15. How do you think school can better prepare EL students, like your child, for life after high school?

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VITA

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