East Tennessee State University

Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

8-2020

The Lived Experiences of Adolescent ELL Students in East Tennessee

Sarah Mould
East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://dc.etsu.edu/etd

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Mould, Sarah, "The Lived Experiences of Adolescent ELL Students in East Tennessee" (2020). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations.* Paper 3786. https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/3786

This Dissertation - unrestricted is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

The Lived Experiences of Adolescent ELL Students in East Tennessee

---

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

---

by

Sarah M. Mould

August 2020

Dr. William Flora, Chair

Dr. Virginia Foley

Dr. John Boyd

Dr. Katrina Heil

Adolescent, Newcomers, Hispanic, Latino, East Tennessee, ELL

ABSTRACT

The Lived Experiences of Adolescent ELL Students in East Tennessee

by

Sarah M. Mould

Adolescent immigrant students face many challenges upon entering public schools for the first time, especially in rural areas where schools may not have the resources and cultural competence to meet their needs. Background factors like culture, previous schooling, and socioeconomic status combine with contextual factors in the learning environment, which further affect their academic outcome. The qualitative tradition of phenomenology was used to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of thirteen Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered East Tennessee public middle or high schools within the last fifteen school years.

The findings indicated that parents' perspectives and understanding of American schools and their own academic background affect how they support their children and what they expect of them. In addition, students' experiences affect their attitude toward the learning environment and their peers, and can cause them language anxiety that hinders English language acquisition. Students who are successful in schools are motivated by personal goals and have parents (primarily mothers) who advise them to do well in school, support them emotionally, and make sacrifices for their child's benefit. Parent support and personal motivation encourage perseverance. These students succeed in schools where diversity is respected and with patient and understanding teachers who assume they are capable learners despite gaps in knowledge. Personal relationships with teachers and their English-speaking peers are also essential for Hispanic and Latino adolescent newcomers.

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this work primarily to God, who sustained me throughout this challenging time and provided me with the resources I needed to persevere every time I wanted to quit. I also dedicate this work to my children, Mason and Ella, and my husband, Mike, who supported me throughout this long journey, who gave me time and space to work, who listened to my frustrations and sacrificed quality time for me to reach this goal. I could never repay them for loving me for who I am, flaws and all, throughout the challenges of the last four and a half years of coursework and research. It was especially meaningful to me to watch two small children develop an understanding of and respect for the mountain I had to climb, and that they intentionally encouraged me and considered my needs above their own desire for attention and quality time with me. I am thankful that my husband focused extra time and attention to Mason and Ella and that he picked up the loose ends at home, helping with laundry and cooking, among many other tasks. Being a working mom has never been easy for me, and adding the extra responsibility as a student, even a full-time student for two of those years, was even more difficult, and I could not have done it without their love and support.

Additionally, I would like to thank the rest of my family. I am grateful for their understanding and patience and love, and for attending special events, helping with Mason and Ella when needed, providing extra meals and going out of their way to stay involved in our lives and make sure we felt loved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who supported me as a student and as a professional over the last four and half years. I am grateful for Dr. Virginia Foley who supported me from the first time I met her, guiding me and mentoring me, but also for being compassionate and sharing advice for managing personal and professional responsibilities. She was always caring, understanding, and encouraging, and our relationship was, and still is, very meaningful to me. I also enjoyed hearing of her experiences serving as a principal in Dalton, Georgia, which has a very high Spanish-speaking population. I cherish the wisdom and input she has added to this work.

I am also grateful to Dr. Bill Flora for serving as chair of my committee, and to Dr. John Boyd and Dr. Katrina Heil for serving as members of my committee, in addition to Dr. Foley. I am thankful for the feedback and support provided by them and the diversity of input they so generously shared.

Furthermore, I am thankful for the school administrators, district staff, and colleagues who supported me and provided me with opportunities for growth and to learn and serve in many different capacities through internship hours and leadership opportunities. They helped me gain insight and experience from which I will draw throughout the rest of my career. I am especially grateful for my friend and colleague, Courtney Leifert, for encouraging me not to settle for less. I am thankful for the friendship we developed through this process and that we were in this journey together.

Lastly, this work would not have been possible without friends who helped me connect with others in the community, and the local Hispanics who trusted me with their stories and helped me connect with others. I cannot express how grateful I am for them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 2

DEDICATION 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4

LIST OF TABLES 11

LIST OF FIGURES 12

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 13

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study 15

Significance of the Study 16

Research Questions 18

Assumptions 18

Limitations 18

Delimitations 19

Conclusion 19

Definition of Terms 20

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE 21

English Learner Landscape 22

National ELL Landscape 22

Tennessee ELL Landscape 23

Factors to Consider 25

Background Factors 26

Cultural Dissonance 26

Collectivist Versus Individualistic Culture 27

La Familia 29
Challenges to Hispanic Parent Involvement 30
Hispanic Cultural Forms of Parent Involvement 34
Sacrificios 34
Consejos 34
Apoyo 35
Trust 35
Limited or Interrupted Formal Education 36
Socioeconomic Status 38
Attitude and Motivation 40
The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery 40
Motivation 40
Integrativeness 40
Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation 41
Language Anxiety 41
Other Attributes 41
Research Using the AMTB 41
Environmental and Situational Factors 42
Learning Environment 42
Positive Teacher and Leader Attitude Critical 44
Teacher Competence 45
Cultural Competence 47
Deficit Thinking 50
Culturally Responsive Teaching 52

English-Only Instruction Versus Content-Based Instruction 53
ESL Instructional Models 56
Structured English Immersion 56
Pull-Out English Instruction 57
Push-In English Instruction 57
Sheltered English Instruction 57
Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) 58
Content-Based English Instruction 58
Constraints of Rural Schools 59
Risks and Consequences 60
Acculturative Stress 61
Cultural Isolation 66
More Time Needed to Graduate 67
High Drop-Out Rates 68
Conclusion 69
3. METHODOLOGY 73
Research Questions 74
Methodology and Rationale 74
Role of the Researcher 75
Challenges in Recruiting 76
In-Person Recruitment 77
Techniques that Encourage Cooperation 78
Profile of the Successful Recruiter 78
Ethical Considerations 80

Setting of the Study 81
Participant Selection 81
Data Collection Procedures 84
Data Management 84
Measures of Rigor 85
Lens of the Researcher 86
Triangulation 86
Researcher Reflexivity 87
Lens of the Participant 87
Member Checking 87
Lens of People External to the Study 88
Thick, Rich Description 88
Data Analysis 88
Summary 89
4. FINDINGS 90
Participant Profiles 91
Themes 92
Initial Experience 94
Complications of the Language Barrier 94
Separation from English Speaking Peers 97
Background and Personal Factors 98
Academic Background Determines Grade-Level Readiness 98
Family Expectations Encourage Path Towards Education or Work 101
Encouraging Education 102

Encouraging Work 106
Attitude and Motivation Encourage Perseverance 109
Desire to Achieve a Goal 110
Effort Extended to Achieve Goals 111
Personal Satisfaction 112
Environmental Factors 114
Teachers and Principals Shape the Learning Environment 114
Deficit Thinking 119
Language Anxiety Impedes Participation and Interaction 119
Social Connections Limited Mostly to Other Hispanics 124
Final Participant Reflections 125
Advice for Other Students 125
Perseverance and Personal Responsibility are Essential 126
Students Must Seek Opportunities for English Language Development 127
Advice for Schools and Teachers 128
Teachers Must Be Patient and Understanding 128
Students Need Extra Opportunities for Learning 129
Advice for Politicians and Policymakers 132
Participant Regrets 133
ELL Growth in East Tennessee 134
Conclusion 142
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 144
Conclusions 144
Research Question 1 144

Instruction 145
Family Influence 145
Parent Perceptions of Education 146
Parent Support of Educational Endeavors 147
School Climate 149
The Principal is Key 150
Relationships with Teachers 151
Relationships with Peers 154
Research Question 2 156
Research Question 3 157
Recommendations for Practice 158
Increasing Diversity and Cultural Competence Among School Personnel 159
Encouraging Relationships with Students 159
Encouraging Relationships Among Peers 160
Building Relationships with Parents 161
Increasing Access to Content While Building English Language Skills 161
Motivating and Supporting Academic Achievement 162
Recommendations for Future Research 163
REFERENCES 165
APPENDICES 175
Appendix A: Interview Questions 175
Appendix B: Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time 177
Appendix C: Change in Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time 178
VITA 179

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Successful Recruiter Profile 79
2. Validity Procedures Within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions....................86
3. Participant Profiles 92
4. Research Questions and Related Themes....................93
5. Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time 137
6. Change in Student Body Percentages of ELLs Over Time 139
7. ELLs in East Tennessee Middle and High Schools....................141

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. Change in ELL Numbers....135
2. Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time 136
3. Change in Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time....138

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The demographic landscape of the United States has changed over the past several decades. The United States has historically been a destination of those leaving their country of origin to follow "the promise of the American Dream" in hopes of better opportunities for themselves and their children (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012, p. 5). According to Murphey (2016),

> The United States has been at the forefront in welcoming victims of war, poverty, and oppression of various kinds…A place where immigrants, even those who have experienced great trauma, can create the opportunities that help them heal, and demonstrate their resilience to adversity. (p. 4)

Murphey also indicated that immigrants have the potential to make great contributions to their host country, as they are generally highly-motivated, and often overcome many disadvantages to succeed. Likewise, Hernandez and Napierala (2012) stated that [immigrants] have great optimism and faith in the virtues of work, family, and their adopted communities.

One in four school-aged children in the United States speaks a language other than English at home (Mitchell, 2018). By 2030 it is projected that this number will increase to forty percent of school-aged children (Flynn & Hill, 2005). While immigrants used to primarily cluster in large urban areas, recently immigrants have spread across the United States into small towns, along the nation's coasts, and into regions of the country that have not previously experienced growth in migrant populations (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017). The Latino population in rural areas and small towns across the nation has doubled, and has become the most rapidly growing portion of the population (Kreck, 2014; Peralta, 2013). In Tennessee,

specifically, there was a 162.8% change in the Latino population between 2000 and 2012, and rise in the English Language Learner (ELL) population of more than 200% between 1997 and 2008 (Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017). Of the eight states that surround Tennessee, six are among the top 10 states with the highest growth in ELL population between 2000 and 2010, and include Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Virginia, and North Carolina (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Furthermore, South Carolina had the highest ELL population growth in the nation with a growth of 610% (Horsford & Sampson, 2013).

Schools across the United States have been affected by increases in the ELL population. Small, rural schools face unique challenges in meeting the needs of ELL students for several reasons. Teacher shortages and limited local funding are compounded by insufficient access to federal funding, increased numbers of ELLs, and increased demands for accountability and meeting standards (Miller, 2003). The school employees in many rural areas of the United States, especially in southern Appalachia, are less likely to include bilingual people, or anyone with the cultural knowledge needed to understand and support this growing population. They are also more likely to lack adequate training in English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, and second language acquisition, and they may have no experience working with students who speak little to no English (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Peralta, 2013).
Since the number of ELL students is relatively small in rural schools, and rural schools are often poorly equipped to help meet their needs, these students are often placed in mainstream classrooms, with little or no support (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Negative experiences in the classroom can cause ELL students to develop language anxiety and increased levels of acculturative stress. In turn, these negative experiences generate negative effects on ELL student attitudes, motivation, and achievement levels, and also on their self-esteem. The purpose of this study was

to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, information regarding ELL student educational experiences is limited, especially in intermediate and secondary schools (1993). Latinos make up the largest portion of ELL students in the nation, and they have the highest drop-out rate of all ethnic groups, with most of them dropping out before the 10th grade (CCSSO, 1993). This data supports the need for a more qualitative analysis of the experiences these students have in our public schools (CCSSO, 1993). Hernandez and Napierala (2012) agree that the high percentage of children in immigrant families who do not graduate from high school indicates not only a need to improve our education system, but also a great opportunity to do so.

Historically, educational research has not included many student perspectives of learning, and perspectives of immigrant students are even more rare (Barajas-Lopez, 2014). Student perspectives are important because they can provide educators, advocates, and policymakers with a frame for understanding how students interact with their learning environment, as well as the daily conditions and experiences they encounter within this learning environment (Barajas-Lopez, 2014). Leaving ELL student perspectives and experiences unexamined also keeps us from understanding the causes of inequities that are produced in schools, and how they may affect certain groups of students differently (Barajas-Lopez, 2014). Gaining insight from immigrant student perspectives will allow us to understand qualitative differences in their school experiences compared to other students (Barajas-Lopez, 2014). Barajas-Lopez said this is especially important "when students do not represent the linguistic, cultural, and racial norm of a

school" (p. 18). Examining student perspectives will improve our understanding of how students cope with existing inequities and how they affect their participation in both school and school-related activities. According to Barajas-Lopez, qualitative examination is necessary in order to disrupt the societal forces that create bias and differential treatment, limit their opportunities, and create differential outcomes in school and society for minority students, all of which have serious consequences for immigrant students (2014).

Significance of the Study

This study will strengthen the body of research related to how Latino student perception of self and sense of school belonging impact their academic and social outcomes (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). López (2010) said that without such an examination the long-term effects of any language acquisition method will remain unclear. Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) suggested that understanding the type of support and sense of belonging immigrant students experience when they first enter the U.S. school system will help predict the relationship and outcomes students will have within the host culture, because schools are one of the most important cultural gates for all students.

Learning about ELL student experiences and challenges also gives educators the tools to foster parent involvement, which in turn enables parents to support ELL student academic success and enrich their experiences (Panferov, 2010). Plata-Potter and Guzman (2012) reported that ELL parents recognize their limitations in understanding the system while also believing that school administrators and personnel do not fully comprehend the issues and challenges they and their children face. Marrero (2016) stated that understanding the actions and relationships within families, communities, and schools that support Latino student achievement will help to develop

expectations and policies that can narrow the achievement gap and contribute to Latino student success in other areas of the country.

Finally, the economic well-being of the United States depends on improved opportunities and support for newcomers and their children. Kirp reported that the lifetime earnings difference between a high school dropout and someone with a diploma can be more than $700,000 (2013). Furthermore, their required government benefits, possible incarceration costs, lower tax revenues, etc. can cost taxpayers around $300,000. Kirp said investing in education and boosting the number of well-trained college graduates was the only chance we have to maintain our competitive position in the global economy, which necessitates doing a better job of educating poor and minority students (2013). A statement from The Council of Chief State School Officers (1993) supports the importance of education:

> …the economic well-being of this nation hinges upon the ability of the school system to produce a well-educated workforce. Because language minority students will comprise a significant proportion of the nation's workforce, improving learning opportunities and achievement outcomes of these students at this juncture is critical. (p. 2)

Additionally, Hernandez and Napierala stated that well-educated, healthy children are critical to a strong, secure, and prosperous nation because they will join the labor force, start families of their own, and enter the voting booths to make the nation's decisions (2012). They further pointed out the dangers of allowing the current situation to continue, saying that the failure to adequately invest in the educational opportunities and health of today's children places the nation's future in jeopardy. Policies increasing immigrant educational opportunities will improve their job skills and increase their earning potential, and an understanding of ELL students' educational experiences will help shape future policies.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee.

The research questions in this study are:

1) What factors affect ELL student success in East Tennessee?
2) How do ELL students in East Tennessee perceive their educational experiences?
3) What do ELL students perceive to be the characteristics of teachers who influenced their success?

Assumptions

The researcher assumed based on personal experience and other studies that districts with higher numbers of ELL students are more prepared to serve newcomer ELL students. Therefore, the experiences of participants that attended schools with few ELL students would be different from districts with higher numbers of ELL students. The researcher also assumed the participants were transparent and truthful in sharing their experiences with the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher assumed data acquired on the Tennessee Department of Education's website and other sources were accurate.

Limitations

Because of the small sample size of a qualitative study, the findings cannot necessarily be generalized to a larger population with the same degree of certainty as quantitative analyses (Atieno, 2009). However, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), "generalizability is not the goal of qualitative research; rather, the focus is on transferability – that is, the ability to apply findings in similar contexts or settings" (p. 8-9). For this reason, detailed information about ELL

change was included in the findings. Second, qualitative research is not regarded as highly as quantitative research in many social sciences and they rare in the field of policymaking, which often requires statistical evidence for accountability purposes (Barabasch, 2018; Rahman, 2017). Finally, in an article by Child Trends, the authors stated, “The capacity of our nation’s current infrastructure to describe the characteristics and experiences of Latino families and households is limited” (Ramos-Olazagasti et al., 2018, para. 5). Indeed, while national surveys collect some information accurately, the data do not represent the diversity from within the Latino population. Furthermore, the information that is collected on surveys is limited to the parent responding to the survey, which is usually the mother. Most data sets, however, do distinguish between foreign-born and U.S.-born Hispanics and they contain some information on the basic indicators of acculturation, according to the authors.

Delimitations

The first delimitation of this study is that the sample included only Spanish-speaking ELL students for two reasons – 1) Spanish is the first language of the majority of ELL students in the United States and in East Tennessee, and 2) the researcher speaks Spanish fluently and was able to interview in either Spanish or English. Second, the sample was limited to East Tennessee. Lastly, the sample included only immigrant students who entered U.S. schools in middle school or high school because the researcher is a high school teacher and has observed the unique challenges these students face in pursuing academic success.

Conclusion

Learning about the experiences of ELL students who enter U.S. school systems in rural East Tennessee as newcomers during middle or high school provides us with knowledge concerning this growing population that we did not previously have. Analyzing their experiences

will help us to better serve others like them in the future, to establish better relationships with students and their families, and to help them more easily adjust to their new schools and communities.

Definition of Terms

ELL: "Students served in programs of language assistance, such as English as a second language, high-intensity language training, and bilingual education" (Murphey, 2014, p. 2).

ESL: English as a Second Language – in Tennessee, the alternative language program specially designed for students whose first language is other than English (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d. -a).

Hispanic or *Latino: "*a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

LEP: "Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to write, read, speak, or understand English" (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 5).

Newcomer: A term used in education to refer to a student in their first year or two in U.S. schools (Sugarman, 2018).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to explore existing literature about ELL students in the United States, specifically children and youth from Spanish-speaking families, since they represent the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, (López et al., 2017). As with any population of people, meeting Latinos' needs requires understanding their needs and their background, the schools and communities in which they reside, their family's cultural practices, and factors that place them at risk of failure in academics and the ability to contribute to the greater good of our nation, regardless of their status as legal or illegal residents. Since these students are expected to learn English, while also acquiring the same academic skills expected of their native English-speaking peers, student learning in the context of English as a Second Language programs and all academic areas was reviewed.

To begin, the review includes an overview of the English learner landscape nation-wide and specific to Tennessee. It includes recent data regarding the growth of the Latino population in the United States and more recently to rural areas of the country. The focus then shifts to factors that may complicate academic achievement for Latino ELL students, including background factors (factors the learner brings to the learning environment) and environmental factors (factors specific to the learning environment and community over which the learner has no control). Other risks and disadvantages faced by this subgroup of the population are also explored. To gain insight into the educational context, the review includes research that focuses on the perspectives of teachers and administrators. Additionally, the review includes perspectives of parents and students in order to understand how the educational context affects the learning of this group of students and their families.

English Learner Landscape

National ELL Landscape

The U.S. Department of Education defines English language learners as "students served in programs of language assistance, such as English as a second language, high-intensity language training, and bilingual education" (Murphey, 2014, p. 2). Child Trends described the diversity among ELLs nationwide:

> Many are, or have parents who are, recent immigrants. Their home language environment may include both English-speakers and those who maintain a heritage language long after the immigration experience. Some acquired two languages simultaneously as infants and toddlers; others are older children learning English after having gained facility in another language. Their first language may be one of literally dozens represented by U.S. children; for example, the Minnesota Department of Education reports that ELL students in that state represent more than 200 languages. (Murphey, 2014, p. 2)

According to the Office of English Language Acquisition, in the five years before the 2014-2015 school year, the ELL population increased by over 40% in some states, including Louisiana, Wyoming, Rhode Island, Mississippi, and West Virginia, reaching a total of approximately 10% of all students in grades K through 12 in the United States (OELA, 2017b). Nearly 60% of all ELLs in the nation's public schools were in the states of California, Texas, and Florida (OELA, 2018a).

While 10% of students in public schools in the United States were ELLs, 75% of all ELLs were Spanish speakers (OELA, 2018b). Additionally, 60% of all Spanish-speaking ELLs were concentrated in four states – California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois. During the same time, 37 states and the District of Columbia reported 65% or more of ELLs were Spanish speakers.

This population is dispersed across the grade levels. While the majority (94.3%) of Hispanic children under 18 were born in the United States, half of all immigrant youth who arrive are in their high school years, which is a critical time for the development of identity, social connections, and school engagement (OELA, 2018b; Patel et al., 2016). Many of these teens are unaccompanied minors between the ages of 15 and 17 (Murphey, 2016). The rate of unaccompanied minors entering the country grew by almost 685% between April, 2017 and February, 2019 (Arthur, 2019).

The Child Trends Hispanic Institute reported that 70% of Hispanics in the United States are of Mexican descent (Murphey et al., 2014). The next largest group of Hispanics represented includes those of Puerto Rican, Central and South American heritage. Furthermore, one in four children in the U.S. is Hispanic, and by 2050 this group will be about equal to the number who will be non-Hispanic white. In New Mexico and California, according to Murphey et al., Hispanic children are already the majority. In the Northeast most Hispanic children are of Central and South American descent, while the South has the largest share of Cuban and Puerto Rican children in the nation.

Tennessee ELL Landscape

There has been significant growth of the ELL population in Tennessee. According to the Tennessee Department of Education, the ELL population in the state has more than doubled over the past decade, with concentrations of ELLs as high as 20% of all students in some areas (Tennessee Department of Education [TDOE], 2018a). In 2016-17 132 of the state's 147 school districts and 1,451 schools served ELLs, with 17 districts serving a population of ELLs exceeding 6% of the total student body (TDOE, 2018a). Ten percent of students in the state are Hispanic (TDOE, 2018e). Students in the state speak more than 140 languages (TDOE, 2018a).

The state reported, “Should this growth trajectory continue, we will exceed 60,000 ELLs by 2020. These changes in Tennessee’s population will have a significant impact on the educational trends in the state” (p. 5). Most ELL students in the state are in grades K-4, and most of them test out of services by middle school.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, in 2015 about two-thirds of ELL students in Tennessee were born in the United States, and three-quarters speak Spanish (Sugarman & Lee, 2017). The public school districts with the most ELL students are Davidson County (Nashville), Shelby County (Memphis), Knox County (Knoxville), Rutherford County (Murfreesboro), Hamilton County (Chattanooga), and Hamblen County (Morristown).

Out of the total ELL population in Tennessee, in the 2018-2019 school year, 13% were classified as long-term ELLs (LTELs), which means they are in their 7th year of receiving ESL services and, therefore, in grades 6 through 12 (TDOE, 2018b; TDOE, n.d. -b). There was a steady increase in LTELs from 11.5% and 9.9% for the previous two school years. Forty-one percent of ELLs in grades 6 through 12 in Tennessee are LTELs who have received ESL services for an average of 8 years. State data show that chronic absenteeism is not a major contributing factor to a student becoming a LTEL. In fact, LTEL students had chronic absenteeism rates similar to non-ELLs in the 2016-2017 school year, with 15% of nonELL students being chronically absent, while only 14.6% of LTELs were chronically absent (TDOE, 2018b). Chronic absenteeism rates for all ELL students (including LTELs) were consistently lower than all subgroups besides Asians during the 2016-2017, 2017-18, and 2018-2019 school years (TDOE, n.d. -c). This is in alignment with findings from current research elsewhere in the nation, including a long-term study by the University of Chicago, which found that ELLs are more likely to attend school than their peers, despite being more likely to come from disadvantaged

backgrounds (CST Editorial Board, 2019). The University's Consortium on School Research credits this in part with the availability of free or reduced-prices meals, school transportation, and health insurance. This pattern does not hold true, however, when analyzing different grade bands in Tennessee. The rates for ELL chronic absenteeism remain lower than all subgroups besides Asians for Kindergarten through eighth grade but are among the highest rates for grades nine through twelve.

Factors to Consider

Batt (2008) and Marrero (2016) reported that the academic success rate of Latino ELL students has consistently lagged well behind other student groups. In fact, according to Hernandez and Napierala (2012) of the Foundation for Child Development, "The proportions [of immigrants] with a bachelor's degree are lowest for children with origins in Mexico and Central America (9 percent), the Dominican Republic (21 percent), and South America (25 percent)" (p. 15). Many factors can affect the academic success of ELL students. Some of these factors pertain to the learning environment, including scarcity of bilingual programs in the United States, segregation of student population by socioeconomic status, and a lack of appropriate training for school personnel (Marrero, 2016). Other factors, which pertain to family background, include linguistic, social, and academic backgrounds, financial stressors, and differences in parental involvement, among other cultural differences (Horsford & Sampson, 2013; Marrero, 2016). Raja and Selvi (2011) found that both learning environment and family background play a vital role in academic success.

Background Factors

Cultural Dissonance

Culture influences not only language, but also how someone relates to others, seeks support, thinks and learns (Portes & Salas, 2010). According to Wisniewski et al. (2015), culture includes six categories:

- values and behavioral styles;
- language and dialects;
- nonverbal communications;
- cultural cognitiveness;
- perspectives, worldviews, and frames of reference;
- identification (p. 9).

These aspects are influenced by life experiences, which are impacted by many factors, like race, ethnicity, gender, and social class (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). McMillan and Schumacher (2012) said the term *culture* includes learned patterns of actions, language, beliefs, rituals, and ways of life.

Culture affects every aspect of a person's experience in the United States educational system, either as a parent or a student. The clash between the culture a person is accustomed to and the mainstream culture to which he or she must adjust is known by some researchers as cultural dissonance. Macdonald (1998) defined cultural dissonance as "a sense of discord or disharmony, experienced by participants in cultural change where cultural differences are found to occur, which are unexpected, unexplained and therefore difficult to negotiate and which inhibit behavioral adaptation" (p. i). Another source explained that students who enter U.S. schools, especially those with limited or interrupted formal education, may experience "feelings

of isolation, confusion, disengagement, and inadequacy" because of cultural dissonance (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011, p. 37). Some explanations for this cultural dissonance are discussed below.

Collectivist Versus Individualistic Culture

Many ELL students, especially those from Asian and Latin American cultures, come from more collectivist cultures, whereas mainstream U.S. culture is much more individualistic. DeCapua and Marshall (2011) noted that in individualistic cultures like the United States, a sense of well-being and identity is determined primarily by personal attributes, traits, and individual achievements. However, in collectivist cultures, well-being and identity are based on "the sharing in and fulfillment of reciprocal obligations and commitments to the members of one's group, generally an extended familial network or clan" (p. 36). In Mexico, for example, the educational atmosphere is authoritarian because education was historically controlled by the Catholic church, and students are generally taught to conform and obey authority, rather than how to act independently, and the development of individualism is often stifled (De Mente, 1996). Education in Mexico emphasizes socialization, behavior, and culture, rather than the American emphasis on the accumulation of factual knowledge and raising the intelligence quotient. De Mente posited that Americans have a highly competitive spirit and encourage their children to be competitive in every aspect of life. They grow up to take an individualist approach to everything and are inner-directed. Mexicans, on the other hand, are primarily family and group directed and have a group orientation that promotes overall harmony within the group by keeping friction to a minimum.

As an illustration of the differences between the Mexican and North American concepts of education, in Spanish if someone says a person does not have any education, what they mean

is that the person "has not been taught or has not naturally absorbed the finer points of Mexican culture – good manners, respect for parents and other seniors, religious piety, loyalty to one's family, courage in the face of adversity, self-respect and a highly honed sense of dignity" (De Mente, 1996, p. 94). The word for "rude" in Spanish is *maleducado*, which literally translated means "poorly-educated", and someone who has been brought up well is called *bieneducado*, which literally means "well-educated".

Because they do not seek individual attention in class, students from collectivist cultures may be overshadowed by their more individualistic peers, and people commonly assume they are less capable than students from individualistic cultures (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). According to DeCapua and Marshall (2011), one of the two most important conditions for learning for students from collectivist cultures is interconnectedness, or strong caring social relationships between students and with their teachers, who are often viewed in collectivist cultures as a part of the extended group. Collectivist students prefer group learning and shared responsibilities, rather than being an independent learner with individual accountability. Peer-mediated learning, an instructional approach that emphasizes student-student peer interaction through cooperative or collaborative learning, or through peer tutoring, is successful with these students because it is different from the more teacher-centered, individualistic approaches to learning (Cole, 2013). Feeling like a part of a community has long been proven beneficial for students, regardless of race or ethnicity, but Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) recommended that "a supportive school community that promotes strong Latino cultural values and community unity (diversity) serves as a protective factor for Latino students' sense of school belonging, academic success, and community involvement" (p. 57).

La Familia

One of the most important values among Latinos is the family, "which provides support and encouragement throughout the continuum of life" (Marrero, 2016, p. 181). This is also referred to as "community well-being", which is much different from the individualistic outlook of mainstream U.S. culture (Peralta, 2013). Murphey, Guzman, and Torres (2014) said that Latino children are more likely than children from any other ethnic group to eat dinner with their families six or seven nights a week, and are more likely than others to have a home-cooked meal with family. They add,

> For most Latinos, few things are more important than family. Eight in ten U.S. adults, according to a 2012 survey, agree that immigrants from Latin American countries have "strong family values". And among Latinos themselves, more than 90 percent of adults consider "being a good parent" to be "very important". Two-thirds of Latino teens say their parents praise them for good behavior nearly every day – a higher percentage than either white or black teens report. (p. 13)

Murphey et al. also said that the social ties within Latino families can buffer adversity and help them be successful. The prioritizing of socialization over academic skills like learning numbers and the alphabet and learning to write their names may contribute to better social-emotional skills like self-control, positive interpersonal communication, and problem-solving without physical conflict, according to Murphey et al.

Like the atmosphere of education in Mexico, parenting in Mexico emphasizes "parental authority, respect for elders and superiors, obedience to authority, emotional dependence on the family and others" (De Mente, 1996, p. 109). A more recent report said the traditional family values among Latinos (not just of Mexican heritage) have long been a strength. They include

sacrifices parents make for their children, as well as seeing that children are "well brought-up", meaning they are taught proper social behavior and to show respect for elders and others in positions of authority. De Mente suggested that these strong family values developed as a product of history, specifically for Mexicans, "when family members, relatives and friends had to support each other in order to survive in a hostile political environment which was made even more onerous by the selfish, predatory nature of the Catholic Church" (1996, p. 110).

Latino students are more likely to value family over education, and therefore may postpone their educational aspirations to help support their families (Marrero, 2016). Murphey et al. (2014) reported family responsibilities as the second highest reason Hispanic students do not complete college programs, just after finances. Moreover, Latino youth make significant financial contributions to their families. One in ten Latino high school students and nearly half of Latino college students are employed, and Latino young men have more work experience than other groups. Murphey et al. said another way the importance of family may interfere with academic success is that Latina teens are twice as likely as white teens to start a family, although they are no more likely to be sexually active. Murphey et al. reported that this may be due to lower use of birth control than other groups. These views and cultural practices regarding family are a good demonstration of the primary concern of the collectivist perspective: working together for the good of the group, rather than working to meet individual needs and aspirations (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

Challenges to Hispanic Parent Involvement. Educational research has long confirmed the positive correlation between parental support and monitoring and positive academic outcomes. This task is more difficult, however, for parents of ELL students, who may lack experience with the U.S. education system, which "fails to 'speak their language' (culturally as

well as literally)" (Murphey et al., 2014, p. 16). There is a misconception that immigrant parents are not willing to become involved in school activities, but data from studies can be used to support the opposite claim – that parents of immigrant students do have high academic expectations for their children, but they may not have the knowledge base to effectively help their children realize academic success (CCSSO, 1993; Murphey et al., 2014). In other words, immigrant parents want to be involved, but they do not know *how* to help. Murphey et al., commented on the mismatch between the culture of Hispanic families and the expectations of U.S. schools:

> Latino parents' views of education may be influenced by traditions of respect for authority (*respeto*), which can inhibit behaviors seen as challenging the teacher or school. Add to that the possibility of a language barrier, and potential challenges around job schedules and transportation. (2014, p. 19)

Researchers have identified language barriers as one of many difficulties parents have in navigating the U.S. education system. Parents are often unable to read communications sent home from schools, either because the communications are not translated to their primary language or because the parents may not be literate in any language. Lacking proficiency in English they are also unable to communicate concerns or ask questions, and the time they have to communicate with educators is limited by accessibility to interpreters, assuming one is provided (Plata-Potter & Guzman, 2012). As their children become more proficient in English, they are often called upon to translate for their parents, which then leads to disruptions of family roles and the authority position of the parents (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; Panferov, 2010). According to Blanco-Vega et al. (2008),

> Some studies have shown that family roles may change, with children and adolescents taking on many new responsibilities such as mediating the communication between home and school and assuming a greater, more mature role in the outside, English-speaking world. (p. 53)

This change in family roles produces negative outcomes for Hispanic families, as it undermines parental authority and disrupts family cohesion, but studies are inconclusive regarding the direct impact of these role changes on the well-being of children and their families (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Furthermore, if the children are used as interpreters or translators there is no guarantee that the communication between the school and the parent is accurate.

> Just because a person speaks Spanish does not mean he or she can be used as an interpreter. A native Spanish speaker with a Ph.D. in the language can be a total failure as an interpreter. Interpreting on a professional level requires special skills that can usually be obtained only with professional training. Untrained interpreters invariably inject their own interpretation into the dialogue, shade meanings and do other things that influence the outcome of negotiations and conversations (De Mente, 1996, p. 103).

According to WIDA, communication in an effective home-school partnership should be meaningful, two-way communication (Mancilla et al., 2016). Educators should not assume that parents will find a way to understand school communications or ask if they do not understand. Panferov (2010) indicated that "schools that successfully help ELL parents navigate school challenges offer both two-way communications and parental guidance for effecting positive home support of school pursuits" (p. 111). Helpful strategies include regular communication in various written and spoken forms, ideally in the parent's first language, and include not only reports of negative or disruptive behaviors, but also positive content.

ELL parents may also struggle to navigate the U.S. educational system because their understanding of school processes and policies and their role in their child's schooling is based on the schooling experience in their country of origin (Panferov, 2010). Reasons for this gap in understanding may be because the parent did not remain in school very long, or because the U.S. educational system is very different from the systems in other countries. Plata-Potter and Guzman (2012) interviewed Mexican immigrant parents about their experiences with the education system in the United States. Parents reported they were unaware of specific expectations, like helping students decide what classes to take at the secondary level, which would allow them to go straight to college after high school. They were also unaware of the need to schedule parent conferences with teachers, because the custom in Mexico is for the school to arrange parent-teacher conferences, and parents are required to attend (Plata-Potter & Guzman, 2012). A principal in another study reported that he had bought into the stereotype that many white educators believe about Latino parents – that they do not value education, but he later found out through interactions with parents that they had no knowledge of basic information like report cards, letter grades, or grade point averages for various reasons (Marx & Larson, 2012).

Schools must initiate meaningful relationships and opportunities for parents to feel welcome to support their child’s learning. Wrigley (2000) and Murphey et al. (2014) suggested schools go beyond translating important documents and encourage strategies like having more well-adjusted Latino families provide outreach for their peers, and finding more ways for them to be engaged from home. Wrigley highlighted a rural school in Virginia that struggled with Hispanic parent involvement, even though translators were provided. The principal began a series of Hispanic parent nights designed to help teach Spanish-speaking parents about school expectations in the U.S. and how they can help support their children’s education. The parents

were so excited about being welcomed at the school that they requested to meet more throughout the year, and eventually they gained the confidence needed to participate in school activities like field trips and committees. Panferov (2010) found that home visits were highly valued by parents and that they helped to establish mutual respect between the home and school.

Hispanic Cultural Forms of Parent Involvement. Educators who lack understanding of Latino cultural values and beliefs may not recognize parental engagement among Latino families because they are more home-based and because they are based on a cultural group different from the middle-income, European-American group that has been the focus of most studies on parental engagement (Ramos, 2014). Researchers agree that Latino parents' understanding of parental involvement includes activities like checking homework, instilling the value of education, and making sure their child is well-rested, rather than the practices of engaging in school-sponsored activities outside of school hours, fundraisers, or being a member of the PTA (Marrero, 2016; Ramos, 2014). According to Ramos (2014), Latina mothers generally support their children's learning in three cultural forms: through "sacrificios", "consejos", and "apoyo" (sacrifices, advice, and moral support).

Sacrificios. "Sacrificios" refers to sacrifices a mother makes because she places her children's educational and developmental needs above her own. This is due, in part, to the Latino cultural beliefs about gender roles, specifically "marianismo", which refers to women making sacrifices and emphasizing the needs of their children and husbands above their own.

Consejos. "Consejos" refers to the advice parents give their children about school, which specifically reinforces values like resiliency and perseverance. This advice is considered educational support because "education" encompasses more than the English concept of education. As previously explained, education among Latino families refers not only to acquiring

educational knowledge, but also instruction in culturally appropriate behavior, such as manners, morality, and interpersonal relationships. In Ramos' study, Latina mothers interviewed unanimously agreed that "education was the key to a better life and being 'better' or 'great'" (2014, p. 4). One mother in the study gave her daughter "consejos" about character traits related to the traditional Latino value of "respeto" (respect) towards the teacher and the value of maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships with her peers:

> I always tell her to listen to her teachers, it's important that she pays attention to what the teacher is saying, pay attention to what the teachers are explaining and behave well with her classmates, to have a good relationships with them. (p. 4)

Apoyo. "Apoyo" refers to "the emotional and moral support parents offer their children to boost their self-esteem and encourage their perseverance so that they do well in school" (Ramos, 2014, p. 5). This is another reflection of the Latino cultural value of strong family bonds, the commitment to group needs above individual needs, and the belief that the family provides instrumental and emotional support. One mother in Ramos' study illustrated how mothers provide "apoyo", reporting that one of her roles is to be an advocate for her child's education by providing emotional support at home. "Emotional support", she said, "comes from home" (Ramos, p. 5).

Trust

While building trust with students and families is an important component of working with all families in education, it is especially crucial for working with families from groups "that have been historically marginalized by schools", like families of language learners (WIDA, n.d.). As with other values among Latinos, the Latino sense of trust is a product of the historical use of laws in Latin America to "preserve and protect the religious and civil authorities in power" (De

Mente, 1996, p. 65) or in other words, to oppress threatening attitudes and control behavior viewed as detrimental to the control of the state and the church. As a result, the state and the church became adversaries to the people, so they learned to depend on their families and close connections – they became collectivist – for protection and to do things they could not do as individuals. De Mente reported the sense of family and community strengthened and conformity to the group became essential for maintaining good relationships. The key to making this system work is "confianza" (trust), and according to De Mente, the key to building "confianza" is to respect the customs and feelings of the group, and to conduct oneself with dignity, honesty, fairness, etc. This aligns well with what WIDA (n.d.) defined as a trusting relationship – characterized by mutual respect, integrity, competence, and personal regard that is demonstrated by genuine care for one another. The absence of these relationships serves as a barrier that prevents or hinders family engagement practices.

Besides developing trusting relationships with parents, educators must develop trusting relationships with their Latino students. Marrero said that students "will become motivated to rise to the academic pursuits before them" when students "feel a sense of trust and care in their environment and believe the adults around them feel a sense of responsibility for their well-being, including trying to help and understand them" (2016, p. 182).

Limited or Interrupted Formal Education

Many Latino immigrants to the United States have had limited or interrupted formal education. One source reported that while the majority of immigrants from the Caribbean and South America likely have higher levels of education and enter the country with legal documentation, most Mexican and Central American immigrants are undocumented immigrants with limited or interrupted formal education (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Murphey (2016) said

that children who flee violence and other turmoil in their countries of origin are likely to have significant gaps in their education, either because they were unable to attend school regularly, or because they may have had no formal education at all. Only half the population of Guatemala, for example, has a primary education, and one in 10 Guatemalans is illiterate (Orozco & Valdivia, 2017). In Mexico, because families must contribute financially for children to attend school, especially at the secondary level, it is common for older children to work to help contribute financially, or to stay home and care for younger siblings so parents can work or fulfill other obligations (Plata-Potter & Guzman, 2012). Additionally, immigrants from rural areas where most people are farmers have little education and limited income (Raja & Selvi, 2011). Therefore, parents need their children to work to help support the family, which results in less support for educational endeavors. As a result, upon immigrating to the United States, adolescent students, and others like them, are often placed well below grade level, which further affects their self-esteem (Peralta, 2013). A recent study found that many unaccompanied children had been discouraged from enrolling in public schools at all, or are required to attend alternative programs with inferior education, even though they have a right to public education (Murphey, 2016).

Because some ELLs have had little formal education before entering the U.S. educational system, their needs vary based on their background and age (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Their learning must include not only English language skills, but also academic content their nonELL peers have mastered during earlier grades (Miller, 2003). Some of these students are also illiterate in their first language upon arrival, and therefore are often taught literacy skills for the first time in a language that is new to them (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). According to DeCapua and Marshall, these students are at a disadvantage when they enter classrooms because

there is a large gap in their content knowledge and their understanding of academic ways of learning and in their worldview.

Socioeconomic Status

The median family income for immigrant families in 2010 was 29% lower than families with U.S.-born parents (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic are more likely than any other ethnic group to live in poverty (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Murphey et al. (2014) reported that one in three Hispanic children lives in poverty, while one in eight lives in deep poverty.

Children from low-income families are less successful in school and more likely to drop out of school and participate in delinquent behavior like substance abuse and binge drinking, and they are more likely as adults to earn lower incomes, to be unemployed, and to become dependent upon public assistance (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; Hernandez & Napierala, 2012; Murphey et al., 2014). They also experience more developmental hardships, like poor health and chronic stress, which jeopardizes brain development and causes greater susceptibility to disease (Murphey et al., 2014). Furthermore, Hispanic families "disproportionately live in disadvantaged neighborhoods" (p. 7), where there is lower-quality housing, lower-quality schools, and higher crime rates. Murphey et al. reported that Hispanic children are more likely to live in crowded housing, with one in four Hispanic children sharing a bedroom with three or more people.

One source, De Mente (1996), explained that the likelihood of Hispanics to live in poverty may be partially due to the history of the government and the church in Mexico.

> For more than 200 years of the Spanish reign in Mexico it was the policy of the colonial government and the church to keep the mass of people illiterate and ignorant, and to

> prohibit them from engaging in enterprises or professions that would have bettered their economic and social status. (p. 210)

Poverty in Mexico, or *pobreza,* was a condition enforced by the Catholic Church, who was "vehemently opposed to education for the masses and to any effort to create economic opportunities for the poor" (p. 248). De Mente added that for nearly 500 years,

> Those in power looked upon poverty as the natural state for the poor class, while the poor looked upon themselves as victims of social injustices; but they were so intellectually and emotionally oppressed that for generation after generation they accepted their fate stoically. (p. 248)

Progress was not made in Mexico until after the Revolution of 1910, after which time education was taken out of the hands of the church and peasants were given land for farming and industry was encouraged (De Mente, 1996). The result of being conditioned to "passively accept their poverty and powerlessness" for centuries was a deeply ingrained sense of passivity and helplessness that still exists.

Similarly, in the United States, according to Marx and Larson (2012), U.S. schooling in the 1800s was used as a form of social control to "preserve the status quo by denying the Mexican population the knowledge necessary to protect its political and economic rights and to advance economically in society" (p. 262). This was due to "lingering animosity" towards Mexicans because of the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, at which time "Mexicans became Mexican-Americans with the stroke of a pen" (p. 261). Compulsory schooling was not required for Mexican American children at the time. If they did attend school they were isolated socially and academically, much like African Americans were,

and they often attended “Mexican schools”, which were used to control and “Americanize” them, teach them English, and rid them of their native language and customs.

Attitude and Motivation

The consequences of affective variables such as those previously discussed on student attitudes and motivation is not a new topic in educational research. Specific to second-language acquisition, research regarding the effects of attitude and motivation on achievement began in the 1940s and has continued since. In their study of the effects of attitude and motivation on second language acquisition, Raja and Selvi (2011) concluded that successful second language acquisition is somewhat contingent upon three factors: how the student views the target language and its speakers, the language learning environment, and the learning situation. Of particular interest to this researcher is the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), developed by R.C. Gardner.

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

The AMTB measures five areas of attributes associated with second-language learning: motivation, integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, language anxiety, and other attributes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

Motivation. According to the AMTB, motivation is defined by:

- desire to achieve a goal;
- effort extended to achieve the goal;
- satisfaction with the task.

Integrativeness. Integrativeness is a term unique to second-language acquisition, and refers to:

- attitudes toward the target language group or other groups in general;

- interest in foreign languages;
- motives for learning the target language.

Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation. This could include attitudes toward the teacher, the class, the curriculum, and more, but the specific components addressed in the AMTB, because they are more generalizable across studies, are:

- evaluation of the teacher;
- evaluation of the course.

Language Anxiety. Language anxiety is a type of anxiety experienced by an individual when in a situation that requires them to use a language with which they are not fully proficient (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). It is thought to be an emotional response developed because of repeated, negative experiences with the target language. In addition, it is characterized by "derogatory self-related cognitions (e.g. 'I can't do this'), feelings of apprehension, and physiological responses such as increased heart rate" (p. 5). The specific attributes of language anxiety measured by the AMTB are:

- language class anxiety (specific to the language class);
- language use anxiety (any context that requires use of the target language).

Other Attributes. This includes other attributes that do not fit in the other categories. One such aspect provided as an example is parental encouragement.

Research Using the AMTB

Much research has been conducted using the AMTB since its development. A Google Scholar search populates a list of over 100,000 articles. The AMTB was first developed for use with English-speaking Canadians learning French as a second language in high schools (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). It has also been used to study American students learning Spanish as a

second language, Israeli Jewish students studying Arabic or French, and language learning in military contexts (multiple languages). According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), studies using the AMTB indicate that attitude and motivation significantly correlate to second language achievement. In one study they mentioned, attitude was the second-best indicator of language achievement, just after language aptitude. Even studies in military contexts identified a relationship between attitude and motivation and proficiency in another language. Despite the widespread use of the AMTB, however, the researcher was unable to find studies using the AMTB to study attitude, motivation, and second language achievement of immigrant or first generation students in rural schools in the United States.

Gardner and MacIntyre suggested a reciprocal relationship between attitude and motivation and second language achievement. They argued that "motivation influences language achievement, and that language achievement as well as experiences in formal and informal language contexts influence attitudes and motivation" (p. 2). If, for example, experiences in the language classroom or other contexts cause the learner to develop language anxiety, there will be a negative effect on the second language-acquisition. Therefore, it is extremely important that we understand the experiences and perspectives of ELL students, so we can adequately understand how they affect their attitudes and motivation, and therefore their language achievement. Then we will be able to design more appropriate programs and learning environments and equip teachers and schools to effectively meet the needs of the rapidly growing population of ELLs.

Environmental and Situational Factors

Learning Environment

A positive school climate is known to be a key factor in academic success, and studies on the academic success of ELL students indicate the same. Horsford and Sampson (2013)

identified a safe, welcoming school climate as a requirement for ELL success, and Lopez (2010) said, "Different educational contexts can either promote or suppress achievement" (p. 9). As previously stated, culture influences how a person relates to others, seeks support, thinks and learns (Portes & Salas, 2010). For students from collectivist cultural backgrounds, therefore, a positive school climate will likely include strong relationships with peers and teachers. In a study by DeCapua and Marshall (2011), Latino students "consistently emphasized the importance of strong, caring social relations with each other and their teachers for them to feel welcome and valued in school" (p. 38). In another study, Barajas-Lopez (2014) concluded that ELL and immigrant students' quality of life at school depends heavily on their relationships with teachers and peers, classroom dynamics, and the overall school climate. Villegas and Lucas (2007) explained the importance of the relationship between teachers and students from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds:

> To teach subject matter in meaningful ways and engage students in learning, teachers need to know about their students' lives…about their students' family makeup, immigration history, favorite activities, concerns, strengths, their students' perceptions of the value of school knowledge, their experiences with the different subject matters in their everyday settings, and their prior knowledge of and experience with specific topics in the curriculum. (p. 3)

Villegas and Lucas emphasized the importance of teaching that is "grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning", especially when teaching students from historically marginalized groups (p. 1-2).

Positive Teacher and Leader Attitude Critical

Positive leadership at every school level is needed to successfully create programs and encourage practices that benefit ELLs (Wrigley, 2000). According to Wrigley, the principal is a key individual in the successful implementation of programs and practices and of establishing a positive climate.

> It is the principal who sets the tone of acceptance, who encourages his or her staff to warmly welcome the language minority students and their families. I cannot stress enough the importance of the principal's attitude in areas such as valuing what students bring both culturally and linguistically, and initiating efforts to communicate with the families on a meaningful level. In my experience, the schools that are most effectively addressing the many needs of their ELLs are those schools that have a principal who views the new population as an enriching rather than problematic addition to the school environment. (p. 4)

Wrigley also posited that districts that have leaders with a positive attitude about their growing immigrant population are more likely to prepare good plans for serving their ELL students. He included the story of a district curriculum specialist in a rural Virginia school who was assigned to oversee and administer the district's ESL program, which served low numbers of ELL students spread out across the district in various schools. She had no experience teaching ESL, but had "a can-do attitude that inspired her to search out resources about the field of ESL and what constitutes a model ESL program" (p. 3). Her district supported her efforts and was proactive in their approach, and they became a model for nearby rural districts struggling with the same challenges. Their success showed that having "an open-minded, positive leader" to

implement “a well-researched program” can lead the district in the right direction for many years (p. 4).

Union City Schools in New Jersey has also achieved much success in meeting the needs of ELL students and families and encouraging their success. The district chief of Union City Schools was herself an immigrant, moving to the United States from Cuba at age nine, speaking only Spanish. She attended Union City schools and worked there as a teacher, then as a principal, eventually rising to district chief (Brody, 2016). Her leadership is a demonstration of cultural sensitivity and community support from the top of the district down to the school level.

Teacher Competence

Teachers play a major role in the experiences students have. According to the TDOE (2018b), classroom teachers are the “single greatest in-school factor in improving outcomes for students” (p. 18). Barajas-Lopez (2014) said that teachers make decisions about what students learn and how they learn it, and they have the power to create situations in which students will either fail or succeed. Barajas-Lopez (2014) studied the effects of early experiences of Mexican immigrant students in the math classroom and found that their learning was affected by these experiences, either positively or negatively.

> A major influence on how these Mexican immigrant students experienced mathematics learning hinged, in part, on whether teachers presented these students with opportunities to form a positive identification with mathematics in the classroom. In the stories of success, a positive identification with mathematics and with the teacher proved to be formative in the development of these students as mathematics learners. (p. 29)

Successful students in the study said teachers referred to them with positive characteristics like “successful”, “intelligent”, “capable”, “skilled”, and “smart” (2014). They also associated the

teachers with early positive feelings towards mathematics and with schooling in the United States in general, and they described the teachers as “caring”, “supportive”, and “friendly”, and credited them with encouraging their confidence in their mathematics abilities. Information about negative student experiences in this study will be included later.

Barajas-Lopez is not the only one who has studied the effects of teacher attitude and competence on student learning. Gonzalez et al. (2003) included information about an ELL student who reflected on her eighth-grade teachers. According to the student, they made her feel like they cared about her education and allowed her to learn what the rest of the students were learning. In another study, Raja and Selvi (2011) surveyed second language students in India and found that respondents from rural areas perceived teacher competence as a higher cause of problems in acquiring the language than the environment.

Flynn and Hill (2005) suggested that mainstream teachers should gain an understanding of the basics of bilingualism and second language acquisition, as well as the role of the first language and culture in learning. They also said that teachers must learn to

- make content comprehensible;
- integrate language with content instruction;
- respect and incorporate first languages;
- recognize how culture and language intersect with classroom participation;
- and understand the needs of students with different levels of formal schooling. (p. 3)

Another researcher, Batt (2008), suggested collaboration with foreign language teachers and educational linguistics professors to develop training that would help teachers across content areas understand second language acquisition and teaching strategies that would contribute to ELLs linguistic and academic growth. According to Batt, “The ELL subgroup that faces greater

challenges in mastering academic content in a second language requires a greater number of teachers with language-teaching skills than are presently in place in their schools" (p. 41). Batt also said teacher education programs should include coursework in diversity issues and ESL teaching methods.

> As the linguistic minority populations increase, teacher education must give higher priority to include coursework in diversity issues and ESL methods for all teachers. If teacher education programs fail to supply educators with the subset of critical skills needed for today's students, administrators are left with the costly and logistically difficult recourse of providing professional development to overcome the deficiency in skills needed by in-service educators to help ELLs succeed academically. (p. 41)

Kirp (2013) also suggested that teachers be trained to meet more linguistically diverse needs, saying they should be coached as part of a group effort and shown how to use information about their students, like WIDA test results, to the advantage of the students. Additionally, Kirp suggested teachers forge a "we're in this together" sense of rapport, which aligns well with the collectivist culture many of these learners are accustomed to (p. 11).

Cultural Competence

Villegas and Lucas (2007) said that a requirement for ELL student success is that their teachers view them as capable learners.

> Teachers who see students from an affirming perspective and truly respect cultural differences are more apt to believe that students from nondominant groups are capable learners, even when these students enter school with ways of thinking, talking, and behaving that differ from the dominant cultural norms. (p. 5)

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families said community-based organizations, like schools, must become more culturally responsive in order to meet needs as our population, especially among high-poverty communities, becomes more diverse (López et al., 2017). They suggested that organizations develop their cultural competence, or:

> … the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, spiritual traditions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of the individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. (p. 3)

According to López et al., cultural competence includes three main dimensions:

- critical awareness and knowledge – awareness of personal knowledge and biases about diverse populations;
- skills development – skills and communication that enable the individual to develop trust with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
- organizational supports – systems and policies of an organization that facilitate practices responsive to the needs of diverse populations (p. 3).

Marx and Larson (2012) reported that in 2010 the teacher workforce in the United States was predominantly white, with 87% being white, and 97% speaking only English. Furthermore, more than 84% of all public-school principals were white. Tennessee reported that, in the 2017-2018 school year, at least 95% of teachers in the state were white, and 40 of the 147 districts had no Hispanic teachers (TDOE, 2018e). In the same year, only one percent of the state's teachers and administrators was Hispanic, while 10% of the state's students were Hispanic. The percentage of African American teachers was half the percentage of African American students.

Marx and Larson referred to researchers that posited, “White educators and students, most of whom spend the majority of their educational careers primarily with White children, also suffer from their lack of contact with diversity” (p. 264). They continued by saying this lack of diversity “deprives middle-class White children of multiple linguistic and intercultural skills that are becoming increasingly critical in the [world]” and contributes to misunderstandings, low expectations, and deficit thinking by preventing useful conversations about race and racism (p. 264). They referred to this as “color blindness” – “the avoidance of talking about race, racism, and systematic inequity” (p. 265). Marx and Larson also said that, because much of society continues to be built around White cultural norms, “Whites often do not recognize the privileges they receive each day” and the deeply ingrained racism they perpetuate, no matter the intentions (p. 266). The Tennessee Department of Education recently referenced a study that revealed that young people between the ages of 10 and 19 in the United States hold as much implicit racial bias as did previous generations (TDOE, 2018e). They also reported that contact with diverse teachers prepares white students better for life in a multicultural society by exposing them to different experiences and perspectives, which encourages more flexible thinking and openness to considering the views of other people. This, in turn, reduces racial barriers and dissipates stereotypes that cause “color blindness”.

Another researcher, Batt (2008), studied teacher perspectives of ELL programs and found a poor understanding of diversity or multicultural education among educators. One teacher included:

> The problem in our school is that the mainstream teachers and administrators don’t understand LEP needs and how to teach them…We still have a high number of staff who say things like “They shouldn’t be here”, “Send them back to Mexico”, etc. (p. 40)

If students are aware of this kind of negativity, students may stop trying or lose hope in their educational possibilities, or they may underperform if they believe teachers have low expectations for them (Marrero, 2016).

Deficit Thinking. Just as Barajas-Lopez found that positive early experiences had positive effects on student learning and motivation, he also found that negative experiences had a negative effect. Many people in his study remembered that their teachers expected less from them academically or did not regard them highly, and they emphasized their deficiencies and blamed them for their poor academic standing because either they were foreign-born, or because of the language they spoke, or both. These factors would keep teachers from helping them and making them feel a part of the class. This was echoed by a student interviewed in a study by González et al. (2003), who said, "This is when I started realizing that some people placed labels on me like, 'You don't know anything because you don't speak English'" (p. 241). Barajas-Lopez reported that these negative experiences were often caused in part by teacher assumptions and beliefs about the capabilities of the immigrant ELLs.

> Opportunities to build on students' knowledge…were diminished by teachers' beliefs and assumptions about what immigrant English learners can and cannot do. Furthermore, the cumulative effects of these negative experiences, in the classroom and in school, bear heavily in the everyday experience of what it means to do mathematics and school for Mexican immigrant English learner students and their willingness to engage or not engage in mathematics learning and schooling (these are not separate). (p. 30)

Barajas-Lopez concluded that early negative experiences in the math classroom were the beginning of a pattern of disengagement and withdrawal from learning in the math classroom, and possibly in schooling in general.

The negative beliefs and assumptions previously discussed are known as deficit thinking, which is a stigma common in the United States. According to Marx and Larson (2012), deficit thinking is “thinking that makes sense of these students through perceived deficits rather than strengths regarding language, education, intelligence, native culture, home life, and more” (p. 263). In the earliest years of educating Mexican American children, schools often refused to make accommodations for children who did not speak English and insisted on a monolingual curriculum. Marx and Larson said this stigma is still alive today, which is evident in the fact that bilingual education has been described as “un-American” and unpatriotic, and because of poor or lacking language assistance programs in schools and a strong focus on monolingualism and monoculturalism (p. 263).

Villegas and Lucas (2007) also said that many teachers view students from minority groups with a deficit perspective**. “**Lacking faith in the students’ ability to achieve, these teachers are more likely to have low academic expectations for the students and ultimately treat them in ways that stifle their learning” (p. 5). Villegas and Lucas (2007) described many common practices that put ELL students at a disadvantage, including:

- a school culture of low expectations for students from low-status groups;
- inadequate general and multicultural learning materials;
- large class sizes;
- assignment of the least-experienced teachers to classes in which students need the most help;
- insensitivity toward cultural differences;
- questionable testing practices;
- and a curriculum that does not reflect diverse student perspectives.

Fredricks and Warriner (2016) said these attitudes were prevalent among teachers in English-only (restrictive) education programs in Arizona. According to Fredricks and Warriner,

> Language-as-a-problem orientations, deficit perspectives on multilingualism, restrictive language education policies, and the instructional practices they promote or prohibit deeply impact the educational, social, and emotional experiences of bilingual and multilingual youth. The consequences of this can be devastating for the short- and long-term educational prospects for ELL youth – resulting in low levels of academic achievement and negative self-perception. (p. 319)

Wisniewski et al. (2015) reported that all people have implicit prejudices, whether or not they realize it, and that these prejudices affect the expectations people have of students and what teachers do in the classroom. Unfortunately, research also shows that the expectations teachers have are a powerful predictor of student achievement and long-term success, so these prejudices and lower expectations may be a contributing factor to the widening achievement gap between mainstream groups and minority and disadvantaged groups, as they face the lowest expectations, according to Wisniewski et al.

Culturally Responsive Teaching. Wisniewski et al. said teachers and schools must find ways to overcome systemic, curricular, and pedagogical impediments to learning, like those previously mentioned, and address issues of language, background knowledge, motivation, engagement, and support. Wrigley (2000) recommended the use of strategies that would broaden any existing worldview: “Any effort that results in individuals becoming more accepting – and less judgmental – of those who are different is sure to lead to an improved school climate” (p.6). Marrero (2016) added that teachers should move away from negative stereotypes and deficit thinking, and should establish trusting relationships with students and high expectations of them.

“Latino students need nurturing, trusting relationships with their teachers that are built through sincere interest, attention, and understanding” (p. 182).

According to the literature, culturally responsive teaching is required for educators. Culturally responsive teaching is instruction that empowers student voices and frees them of perceptions of deficit, and in which cultural differences are viewed as assets to the curriculum (Wisniewski et al., 2015). According to Wisniewski et al., culturally responsive teaching challenges implicit assumptions and prejudices educators may have and blocks the reinforcement of negative expectations otherwise discussed in this chapter. To include student cultural differences in instruction, teachers must seek to understand their differences.

> Culturally and linguistically diverse students often have unique perspectives, worldviews, and frames of reference that impact their comprehension of and responses to particular texts. To implement culturally responsive instruction, teachers should seek to understand their students' prior knowledge and personal experiences and reflect on how those experiences differ from their own without passing judgment. (p. 5)

This kind of instruction helps build student self-respect and feelings of security in the classroom.

English-Only Instruction Versus Content-Based Instruction

There is no single ESL program model mandated on federal or state levels in the United States, but The Migration Policy Institute reported recently that English-only instruction is the default method of ESL instruction in most states (Sugarman, 2018; TDOE, 2018d). ELL students do not necessarily benefit from the practice of English-only instruction. In fact, research shows that one of the predictors of academic success for ELLs is their level of proficiency in their native language (CST Editorial Board, 2019). Flynn and Hill (2005) stated, “Language serves a critical function in education – it is, after all, the medium of instruction” (p. 2). Fredricks and

Warriner (2016) researched teacher and student perspectives of English-only instruction. Many youth interviewed in the study expressed that they wanted to be able to talk to their peers in their native language without the risk of being reprimanded, which suggests students felt restricted in their learning environment. A teacher in their study expressed that reclassified ELLs in his content area classroom needed additional linguistic and academic support to understand the content. Instruction in his district's newcomer program focused heavily on English language development with no content-based instruction. The teacher believed there was a gap between the English skills they had acquired and the academic language used in the classroom once they entered the regular classroom. The gap this teacher identified is the difference between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which includes social language necessary for meeting everyday needs, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or language that centers on academics and literacy (TDOE, 2018b). According to the TDOE, BICS are usually developed within the first two years of studying the second language, while CALP requires more advanced vocabulary, verb tenses, and syntax.

Fredricks and Warriner concluded through their research, "Exclusive focus on teaching English as a decontextualized skill (rather than through content) appears to have compromised teachers' ability to provide high-quality academic instruction" (p. 320). They also found tension between policies and practices and "the need to ensure that all youth can understand the daily lessons and instruction – even if that means allowing languages other than English to be used in the classroom" (p. 320). Fredricks and Warriner argued against English-only instruction:

> There is substantial research that supports the argument that content-based instruction is an effective way to foster English language acquisition, and some warn that the lack of content-based instruction…is problematic for ELLs, as such students will lack the

vocabulary and language associated with the content-based learning found in the mainstream classroom. (p. 320)

They suggested teachers create learning environments that value the home languages and cultures of their students, rather than prohibiting, restricting, or ignoring them. Furthermore, they quoted Long and Adamson (2012), who said ELLs should "learn languages gradually, in context, by experiencing their use, by doing things with and through the language" (p. 43). This is in alignment with second language acquisition theory of Communicative Language Teaching, which focuses on learning to communicate in the second language through interaction in the target language (Malone, 2012).

Another researcher, Cole (2013), concluded, "students tend to learn better when they have access to their cultural knowledge and linguistic proficiencies and when linguistic, cultural, and racial differences are understood and respected", or, in other words, "when their human and cultural capital are given voice, not silenced" (p. 147). Cole also said there was "clear consensus" among his resources that "bilingual approaches that utilize students' native languages are at least as effective as monolingual approaches that utilize only English" (p. 147). He concluded through his study that students acquire English language proficiency and grade-level content-area knowledge faster when instructed in their first language at least part of the time. Cole said these findings agree with decades of language of instruction research and have important implications for states and districts that mandate English-only instruction.

Like Cole, Sugarman (2018) reported that dual language and transitional bilingual programs are more effective than English-only models, and that ELL students learn language more effectively when it is integrated with "stimulating, grade-appropriate content" instead of as an "isolated skill" (p. 12). She also said students benefit socially and academically from being

taught with their nonELL peers. The TDOE reported ELLs learn best with grade-level peers and academic language, and that they should be included in the school RTI^2 plan (TDOE, 2018a). "Students are more motivated and interested when learning with grade-level peers as they work on grade-level academics" (TDOE, 2018b, p. 15).

Although research points to the benefit of using materials in first languages, there is limited access to these materials, especially for the secondary school level. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (1993), the few materials that do exist are in Spanish and limited to only some content areas of instruction. To complicate the matter further, native speakers are not always literate in their first language, and they may not have the background knowledge, or the CALP, necessary to make sense of grade-level materials in any language.

ESL Instructional Models

Tennessee's recommended models include Structured English Immersion and pull-out instruction, both focusing more on building language proficiency; push-in and sheltered instruction, which included scaffolding and making content instruction more comprehensible; and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, and Content-based English Instruction, which both incorporate language and content instruction together. A brief description of each of these models follows. All of this information is taken from the TDOE's ESL Manual unless noted otherwise (2018d).

Structured English Immersion

The goal of Structed English Immersion programs, such as newcomer programs, is to rapidly increase language proficiency, focusing on English language development for extended periods of time. These programs are commonly used to support middle and high school students who have difficulty accessing content delivered via English-only instruction. Some bilingual

support is often incorporated, and teachers use visual aids to support comprehension. The first year in a Structured Immersion program focuses on developing BICS, shifting to development of CALP as students develop basic communication skills. Tennessee recommends students spend no more than an academic year outside of the typical classroom with peers.

Pull-Out English Instruction

Pull-out instruction, also known as classroom instruction, is another model for students with very limited English proficiency, but students miss core class time (TDOE, 2018a). This model is common in secondary schools (Sugarman, 2018). In this model students are assigned a class period for ESL and are taught in small groups by an ESL teacher. However, this model limits student access to mainstream academic content, making it difficult for them to accumulate enough credits to graduate. It also compromises ELL students' ability to develop a healthy sense of community with their nonELL peers.

Push-In English Instruction

If ELLs have a proficiency level that allows them to grasp content in the general education classroom, a push-in approach may be used. In push-in instruction the ESL teacher works with a small group of ELLs, teaching specific language aspects and scaffolding content for the entire group. This model increased time with peers while also reducing the time ELLs miss core instruction. Special efforts are made to avoid using the term inclusion since this term is specific to special education.

Sheltered English Instruction

Sheltered English Instruction incorporates the learner's environment, visual aids, and physical activities to teach content-based vocabulary and grade-level content in a comprehensible manner. This model can be used with ELLs of any level but is most commonly

used with intermediate and advanced students. This model incorporates, among other components, building background knowledge, comprehensible input, interaction, practice and application, sheltered lesson delivery, and review and assessment.

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)

This model incorporates careful scaffolding to help ELLs access content simultaneously with English language acquisition. It requires beginning to low intermediate fluency. Features include modified speech, such as slowing or simplifying language and using fewer idioms; contextual clues; multisensory experiences (i.e. visual and tactile); comprehensible input; frequent comprehension checks; formative and summative assessments; appropriate lesson design (allowing the student the opportunity to learn and respond in their stronger communication method, like orally instead of written); and content-driven plans. A final feature of SDAIE is a low affective filter, which is generally associated with increased language acquisition because it helps relieve language anxiety and allows ELLs to experiment with and practice language skills freely. To create a low affective filter, teachers create a comfortable classroom by building a warm, welcoming environment, including ELLs in classroom activities, and making content comprehensible.

Content-Based English Instruction

Content-based Instruction provides content-rich, high-standards curriculum, preparing ELLs for academic success in content area classrooms. This model supports learners through age-appropriate content knowledge that motivates them, authentic texts (not simplified), using technical vocabulary in context, and less focus on explicit language acquisition, which makes learning more purposeful.

Constraints of Rural Schools

Growth in LEP enrollment has not been confined to states like Texas and California. Meatpacking firms and poultry processing plants have attracted immigrants to rural areas in high numbers (Wrigley, 2000). Therefore, states that have historically had very low enrollment have also seen growth. Many rural areas of the country, like southeast Appalachia, have had little or no interaction with people from other cultures, and when immigrants begin to settle in these communities, residents often react with a sense of fear and develop misunderstandings based on negative stereotypes.

Directors of bilingual education are concerned about services to LEP students in rural areas, because while there has been some growth, numbers remain low enough that districts cannot generate enough funds to enhance ESL services (CCSSO, 1993). Sugarman (2018) said many schools in the nation may not qualify for a full-time ESL teacher due to low numbers of ELL students. Therefore, rural school districts are less likely to have access to the resources necessary to meet the needs of newly arrived language minority students and their families, like bilingual employees and translating and interpreting services, which limits the ability to involve parents in the decision-making process (Flynn & Hill, 2011; Wrigley, 2000). They may also already struggle with other problems typical of small, rural districts, like teacher shortages and limited funding, yet they must create new ESL programs from scratch without much help from federal funding (Miller, 2003). However, the Title I program mandates that schools serve ELL students who need extra assistance so they may perform at grade level (Wrigley, 2000). Wrigley added that immigrants in rural areas typically have had less education than metro immigrants, or in other words, immigrants to rural areas are more likely to be students with limited or interrupted formal education. Because of these complexities, Wrigley said, "Appropriately

serving English language learners and meeting the legislative requirements may entail creative solutions on the part of states, schools, and districts" (p. 8).

Because ELL students arrive in rural areas in small numbers at first, schools often must place them in mainstream classrooms with teachers who have had little to no training or experience working with students from diverse backgrounds and with language deficiencies (Flynn & Hill, 2011). Schools in urban areas with higher numbers of ELL students are much more likely than rural schools to provide in-service training to mainstream teachers, to offer foreign language instruction, and to reach out to parents of ELL students (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Rural schools, on the other hand, struggle to offer in-service training on instructional strategies for ELL students and how to meet their needs in the classroom (Batt, 2008). Therefore, mainstream teachers with ELL students in their classrooms are ill-prepared to foster English language acquisition while also teaching grade-level content knowledge and skills, and they begin to feel frustrated and inadequate (Flynn & Hill, 2005).

Another difficulty these districts face is the physical ability to reach students in isolated areas. Batt (2008) said that educators with the required knowledge and skills to work with ELL students have been in short supply across the nation. In Batt's study of teacher perceptions of ELL education, one person responded, "I am the ESL provider for 6 different schools. All grades and travel between the schools. Supposedly getting the job done in 5 ½ hours per day" (p. 41). This was a major theme found in Batt's study.

Risks and Consequences

Some of the strongest predictors of academic achievement are scholastic competence and a sense of belonging, while perceived discrimination often predicts academic underachievement (López, 2010). If not supported appropriately ELL students may feel isolated and begin to feel a

sense of not belonging, and may become frustrated by the incompetence of the poorly trained teachers. This can have negative effects on their identity, self-esteem, and achievement motivation (Portes & Salas, 2010).

Acculturative Stress

Acculturation is the process of cultural change when a minority culture encounters a majority culture, resulting in changes in cultural beliefs and customs, social behaviors, and even ethnic identity (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; Lopez, 2010). Conflicts arise, such as language barriers, perceived discrimination and racism, loss of values, and feelings of isolation and depression (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Many immigrants find themselves in a place unwelcoming of immigrants of color or immigrants who keep their native language and cultural practices, and for many of them this is the first time they have experienced discrimination and racism, and the first time they have been a member of an ethnic minority group (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). They are also faced with the need to learn a new language, disruptions to family life, and poverty, and at the same time they must adjust to a culture that may seem confusing, threatening, and contrary to their own cultural values (CCSSO, 1993). The resulting stress from acculturation is known as acculturative stress.

Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) said all immigrants experience acculturation and acculturative stress, but the type and degree is affected by their migration experience. About 80% of children and youth are separated from their family at some point in their journey to bring the whole family to the United States, due to relocation for employment, violent conflict in their countries of origin, or immigration issues. Bartlett and Ramos-Olazagasti (2018) reported that more than 2,300 children were recently forcibly separated from their parents at the U.S. border, based on data from Child Trends and the Nation Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families. A

more recent report said that number climbed to over 5,400, based on data from the American Civil Liberties Union (Spagat, 2019). There have been many other similar events. In addition, there is a high number of unaccompanied children who enter the country. In 2016 there were more than 59,000 unaccompanied minors apprehended in the United States, and in 2018 there were over 49,000 (Arthur, 2019). Many unaccompanied minors, as well as other children separated from their families, were held in facilities in New Mexico, Texas, and Pennsylvania, and according to Murphey (2016), the conditions "fall far short of what young children need to thrive, and may contribute to long-term impairments in their physical, mental, academic, and social development" (p. 9). Family separation is one of several traumatic events these children may have experienced, along with the separation or divorce of their parents, parental incarceration, human trafficking, experiencing or witnessing violence (physical, mental, or sexual), and a host of other traumatic experiences (Murphey et al., 2014; Murphey, 2016). Murphey also suggested these children are at a higher risk of mental illness and other psychological disorders like post-traumatic stress disorder. They struggle to regulate their emotions and with concentration, and they often assume roles commonly viewed as adult roles at an early age.

Children of unauthorized parents especially experience high levels of anxiety, living in fear that their parents will be deported. Murphey reported that more than 70,000 parents, usually the father, of U.S. citizen children had been deported in 2013. The deportation is a loss of up to 75% of family income, and many of the children end up in foster care or experience food insecurity because of the many barriers they face to enrolling in social programs like food stamps. They may also exhibit behavior problems at school and perform poorly at school because of the separation.

In addition to family separation, these children and youth face an entirely new learning culture – one filled with racial, ethnic, and language discrimination – to which they must adjust when they first enter American public schools, sometimes immediately upon arrival. Decapua and Marshall (2011) stated that adjusting to different ways of learning is fundamental to their success as a student, and Murphey (2016) said that how these students fare is greatly influenced by how well they are received by their new communities. The amount of acculturative stress experienced increases for children who leave their home country after age 12, and for undocumented immigrant children, who fear teachers and other school officials will report them for deportation (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Blanco-Vega et al. also reported that these students often face disappointment later in life because they are unable to enroll in college due to their status.

Even the U.S.-born children of immigrant parents will experience a degree of acculturative stress. For example, they may experience the effects of discrimination, conflicts between the majority and minority cultures, and they may be expected to fulfill responsibilities, like translating and interpreting, which can disrupt family roles (Lopez, 2010). Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) said it is important to pay attention to contextual factors in the person's environment, as positive contextual factors in the new culture produce resiliency, while negative contextual factors produce maladaptive behaviors and high acculturative stress. The following are examples of contextual factors Blanco-Vega et al. provided:

- the type of neighborhood into which the immigrant moves;
- access to or lack of access to quality education;
- exposure to violence;
- teacher expectations of newly arrived immigrants;

- the attitude of the local community toward immigrants;
- recent or current changes to public policy that affect immigration laws.

If immigrant children and youth do not cope well with acculturative stress, it may lead to negative effects on their mental health, like depression and internalizing disorders, or maladaptive behaviors, like getting in trouble at school or dropping out, associating with deviant peer groups or gangs, or drug and alcohol use and abuse (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Bartlett and Ramos-Olazagasti (2018) said younger children may respond to trauma by crying excessively, regressing, developing severe separation anxiety, or by having difficulty self-regulating, while older children and adolescents may show post-traumatic stress symptoms like irritability; withdrawal; aggressive behavior; difficulty concentrating, sleeping, and eating; or they may have physical symptoms like stomach ache.

Blanco-Vega et al. also noted that parents of immigrant children, while supporting their children's adjustment to a new culture, experience their own acculturative stress.

> Parents, or anyone responsible for bringing up a child, are the central source of social learning…If a parent is undergoing stress during his or her acculturative process, that stress will have an impact on that person's parenting, which will have an impact on the youth's outcomes. (p. 52)

Murphey (2016) said that unauthorized parents are especially likely to develop depression and social isolation, which is linked to academic achievement and social-emotional development of their children. Parents, therefore, play a critical role in helping their children adapt and cope with acculturative stress and with their motivation to succeed academically (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008).

> Parents who are supportive of and encourage academic achievement have been found to play a very important role in their children's academic success…Parents who are involved and who display effective parenting skills such as monitoring and supervision have been found to play an important role in their children's likelihood of abstaining from substance use and premature sexual activities. Involved parents often possess the skills that allow them to teach their children coping and other resiliency skills such as academic motivation, problem solving, and conflict resolution. (p. 57)

Blanco-Vega et al. reported that parent involvement was found to be one of three main sources of protection and resiliency for Latino immigrant students, with the other two being positive community support, and positive self-concept. Patel et al. (2016) agreed. They found that lower parent involvement in school and greater financial strain predicted academic difficulties, internalizing symptoms, and increased levels of distress among Latino immigrant youth.

Bartlett and Ramos-Olazagasti (2018) found that children can recover after experiencing trauma. Parents, schools, service providers, communities, and policymakers who work with children can help them by understanding evidence-based trauma treatments and services, recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma, integrating knowledge of trauma into policies and procedures, and by actively avoiding re-traumatization. Bartlett and Ramos-Olazagasti also suggested maintaining regular routines, showing physical affection, and patience, and that older children and adolescents benefit from time with their peers, and from listening to them "in an empathetic way, without being judgmental, overprotective, or unrealistic about the future" (p. 3). Furthermore, Murphey (2016) said that living with both parents, good parental mental health, feelings of safety, a sense of belonging at school, social support, and caring relationships all have been identified as protective features for immigrant children.

Cultural Isolation

One of the situations educators should avoid is isolating or separating minority students from other students. One student from Barajas-Lopez's study of early experiences in the mathematics classroom, remembered his elementary math class time with frustration, because he was always sent to work with the teacher's aide, which made him feel like he and the other ELLs were targeted and given more basic, less rigorous work (Barajas-Lopez, 2014). This also meant fewer opportunities to receive direct instruction from the teacher. He commented that he "felt left out", like he "was not important", and like he "wasn't even there" (p. 27). Barajas-Lopez said many ELLs may experience being "excluded from curricular, instructional, and academic opportunities in which their success might have best been served and rewarded" (p. 24). He gave an example of another student, Antonio, who learned during the study that he had been identified by the school as gifted. During interviews as part of the study, students and parents reviewed school transcripts and cumulative records with the researcher to help students remember specific experiences from school. Neither Antonio, nor his mother, knew that he had been identified as gifted, and reacted with disappointment and anger when they found out during the interviews. They were disappointed and angry because Antonio was not given the same opportunities other gifted students were given, they assumed because of his status as an English language learner. Marx and Larson (2012) sited the exclusion of minority children from gifted and honors programs and advanced placement classes as common practice in the United States.

Barajas-Lopez documented schools where the practice of exacerbating or reproducing inequalities was common, creating conditions relegating racially and linguistically diverse students to limited opportunities to learn in public schools (2004). This practice limited the opportunities of language minority for postsecondary education, employment, and political

participation. He continued, saying that this “institutionalized norm of alienation” fractured relationships between teachers and students, who viewed teachers as the main perpetrators of racial discrimination, even though they were simply following school norms and practices that had been established long before (p. 17).

Other researchers have studied cultural isolation as well. Cole (2003) posited that schools “magnify cultural dissonance between students and teachers” and create inequitable power relations (2003, p. 148). The feeling of isolation expressed by many ELL students is common, according to Wrigley (2000), and is often one of the main reasons ELL students choose to drop out of school. Wrigley said this feeling is more prevalent among older students, who are more sensitive to differences and whether they “fit in” with peers. The Tennessee DOE said that long-term ELL students especially may feel isolated after years of ESL courses and lower academic achievement (TDOE, 2018b). Marx and Larson (2012) said Latinos are often isolated within schools in ESL classes, special education programs, and tracking in lower courses, which causes them to feel inferior because of lesser school experiences, materials, and programs, and which deprives them of cultural and social capital students receive in stronger, more integrated and advanced educational opportunities.

More Time Needed to Graduate

According to Patel et al. (2016), half of all immigrant minors arrive during the high school years. These students face great challenges, because they are expected to learn English while also taking content area courses. The traditional approach in high schools to educating ESL students is to enroll them in separate ESL and content area courses, rather than enrolling them in bilingual content area classrooms or using other methods (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1993). This is because there are very few teachers nationwide who are

bilingual and certified to teach content area courses. But the pressure remains for students to take classes required for graduation and to meet the ever-increasing state standards and other measures of accountability, and they must do so in a relatively short period of time (CCSSO, 1993; Wrigley, 2000). This practice can be detrimental because content teachers are often poorly trained to make accommodations for these students. Because of their lower level of English proficiency, teachers often assume these students are not able to take more rigorous classes, and therefore place them in less challenging academic tracks, which frustrates students and can lead them to drop out (CCSSO, 1993).

Many sources agree that it takes several years to acquire a second language. According to the CCSSO (1993), "under the best conditions it takes 3 to 5 years to acquire a second language" (p. 3). Other sources said students need at least 5 years to develop the level of proficiency needed for grade-level content-area instruction (CCSSO, 1993; Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). Batt (2008) posited that students with limited or interrupted formal education need between 7 to 10 years. Therefore, ELL students who do complete high school are likely to need 5 or more years to do so. The national high school retention rates reflect this need. According to the Office of English Language Acquisition, in the 2013-2014 school year ELL students made up 5% of students enrolled in public high schools in the nation, but they made up 11% of the students retained (OELA, 2017a).

High Drop-Out Rates

Educators who work with ELL students in rural areas are aware of the high drop-out rates of their minority students, but they struggle to find solutions to the problem (Wrigley, 2000). Latinos are more likely than any other group to drop out of school before graduating, and Latinos born outside the United States are more likely to drop out than those born in the United States

(López, 2010; NCES, 2017). In 2000, the rate of Latino drop-outs was 27.8%, while it was 13.1% for black students, and 6.9% for white students. The rates improved over the course of nearly two decades to 8.6%, 6.2%, and 5.2% respectively by 2016, but the dropout rate for Latinos born outside the U.S. in 2016 was still high, at 16.1%. Students without legal documentation have a higher risk of dropping out of school and may have less defined career goals because they fear deportation by teachers or other school officials (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008). Blanco-Vega et al. said Latino ELL students often decide to drop out of school "after some years of exposure to poor schooling, negative teacher expectations, and racism and discrimination" (p. 50), which also results in high amounts of acculturative stress (2008). Hernandez and Napierala (2012) surveyed immigrant families in 2010 and found that 26% of children in immigrant families, or one of every four, had not graduated from high school by the age of 24. Out of all immigrant families they surveyed, Mexican and Central American immigrant children had the highest percentage of children who had not graduated at 36%.

Conclusion

Educators must understand cultural differences so they do not misjudge students and their motivations. Villegas and Lucas (2007) described an 8-year-old girl whose family immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic. With both parents working, she became responsible for taking care of her younger siblings for most of the day, and on weekends she helped her mother work at the community street fair to make extra money, negotiating prices and handling financial transactions. At home she was competent, responsible, and enthusiastic, yet at school she was viewed by teachers as "lacking in language and math skills, having little initiative, and being generally disinterested in learning" (p. 1). According to the authors, this is typical for many students in U.S. schools today. Most teachers in the United States are white,

middle class, monolingual English speaking, and therefore have very different lives and life experiences from their students (Peralta, 2013; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). If relying on their own experiences to understand their students, they will misjudge them and risk developing negative expectations that inhibit their engagement, provoke them to stop trying, to lose hope in their possibilities, and to underperform as they perceive is as expected of them (Marrero, 2016).

Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) warned that educators must consider certain ecological factors when working with Latino ELL students, especially those who are recent immigrants. Their compilation of factors includes the many factors previously discussed in this literature review. They include the circumstances of the student's immigration to the United States (including leaving their country of origin), socioeconomic status, levels of acculturation and acculturative stress, familial acculturative gaps, previous educational experiences, if any, and the context of the host culture, which includes the learning environment and community and their perception of whether or not they feel a sense of community belonging.

Horsford and Sampson (2013) identified five requirements for ELL success, four of which pertain to adolescents: instruction that addresses both English language development and the core curriculum; sufficient and appropriate family support; ongoing professional support for teachers, specifically regarding the teaching of ELL students; and a safe, welcoming school climate. Union City Schools in New Jersey has been included in many sources for its successful adaptation to meet the needs of its student body, 96% of whom are Hispanic, and most of whom are low-income ELL students who live in Spanish-speaking homes (Brody, 2016). Their success is due to their strength in many of the areas previously discussed in this literature review. Kirp (2015) included the following aspects as reasons for their success:

1. High-quality full-day preschool for children from age three;

2. Word-soaked classrooms that give children a rich feel for language;
3. Immigrant children become fluent in their native language and then in English;
4. Challenging curriculum that is consistent from school to school and tied together from one grade to the next;
5. Close-grained analyses of students' test scores used to diagnose and address problems;
6. Teachers and students receive hands-on help to improve performance;
7. The schools reach out to parents and enlist them as partners in their children's education;
8. High expectations for all students and a culture of caring that generates trust (p. 9).

Efforts to improve, according to the district superintendent, were "slow and steady", and included intentional efforts to provide their students with appropriate interventions to relieve acculturative stress, such as offering three free meals a day to students, health clinics, and parent workshops on immigration and other issues they may be facing (Brody, 2016).

According to Blanco-Vega et al. (2008), schools with supportive environments such as those found in Union City Schools help Latino youths maintain and accomplish goals and succeed academically, decreasing their likelihood to drop out. They provide students with opportunities to socialize with others from different cultural backgrounds and teach them to do so in a tolerant and accepting manner. Union City Schools' success in achieving this environment resulted in much improvement in their graduation rate – in 2011 the graduation rate was 6% higher than the statewide average, and 11% higher than the national average (Kirp, 2015).

Wrigley (2000) said that our nation's schools are responsible for meeting the needs of language minority students, especially in rural areas, where educators face tremendous challenges. He also said that with optimistic leadership, well-trained teachers, and informed parents who all share an expectation of success, students will realize their potential. "Every community", he said, "no matter how isolated, has creative people and helpful resources that can improve the quality of education for English language learners" (Wrigley, 2000, p. 8) Furthermore, he added that small successes can be a start, such as the "slow and steady" pace of the Union County Schools. "Failure must not be an option for any student" (Wrigley, 2000, p. 8).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Because of high growth in ELL student numbers in all areas across the nation, educators have been faced with meeting the needs of a diverse student population. Many children in immigrant families do not graduate from high school in the United States (Hernandez & Napierala, 2012). Additionally, half of immigrant children who arrive to the United States do so during their middle school and high school years (OELA, 2018b). Meeting the needs of this population requires understanding the challenges they face in pursuing a better future in our nation's schools and communities, and while there is existing research on this population, perspectives of immigrant youth are extremely rare (Barajas-Lopez, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee. Individual interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participant, either in English or Spanish, in order to uncover commonalities in the experiences of individuals who were either successful and graduated or who dropped out of school before finishing high school. Local demographic data of districts and schools were also analyzed to understand the context and history of the districts in which the participants' experiences took place, as well as to make the findings more meaningful for readers and educators.

According to Barabasch (2018), while quantitative analysis is commonly used to present statistical representations of individuals' life circumstances, qualitative analysis personalizes data and enables readers to imagine and make meaning of peoples' life circumstances and experiences. Through this study the author's intention was to give voice to young immigrants

through a phenomenological framework so educators and policymakers can visualize their experiences and empathize with them, encouraging them to create better learning environments and increase chances of success for these young people and future generations. Phenomenological interpretation can be used to inform, support, or challenge policy in action, according to Lester (1999). This chapter includes details about the setting and participants, unique challenges in recruiting Hispanic participants who speak little or no English, and methods used to conduct this study and analyze findings.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study are:

1) What factors affect ELL student success in East Tennessee?
2) What are the perceptions of ELL student educational experiences in East Tennessee?
3) What do ELL students perceive to be the characteristics of teachers who influenced their success?

Methodology and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee. Therefore, a qualitative framework was used. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative researchers seek to understand participants "from their own point of view, in their own voice" (p. 323), focusing on the significance of events and actions according to the participants. Furthermore, qualitative research assumes there are multiple realities that are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation. The participants provide truth and meaning, and their values, beliefs, and experiences are of utmost importance (Henry, 2015).

The qualitative tradition of phenomenology was used to frame the narrative and present participant experiences. The purpose of phenomenology is to describe the meaning of a phenomenon, rather than explaining it, based on what all participants have in common as they live through it (Creswell et al., 2007; Lester, 1999; McMillan and Schumacher, 2012). The researcher begins without hypotheses or preconceptions and puts any prejudgments aside, collecting data on how the individual makes sense of the experience, in this case the experience of Spanish-speaking ELL students who were newcomers to public schools in East Tennessee during middle and high school (Lester, 1999; McMillan & Schumacher, 2012). The goal was to describe the essence of the lived experience through an authentic narrative framework, so readers would be able to connect to the stories of each participant.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher's role is multifaceted as the researcher establishes social relationships, interacts to obtain data, and moves from one role to another as appropriate for different groups or individuals (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher acts as the research instrument, collecting data and making observations about participants and documents and interacting with them to gain information directly from the source (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). They are concerned with understanding what and how participants experienced a social phenomenon from data gathered from the participants (Creswell et al., 2007). Rather than formulating hypotheses and seeking to prove or disprove them, which limits what will be collected and can cause bias, the researcher first gathers data and then synthesizes inductively to form generalizations and present a description of the essence of the participants' experiences (Creswell et al., 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In other words, theory is developed based on detailed, specific data collected by the researcher from those who experience

the phenomenon, rather than gaining insight from the data to prove or disprove a previously created hypothesis (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

According to McMillan and Schumacher, the qualitative researcher can be a complete outsider or a complete insider, or a combination of the two extremes. Complete outsiders remain detached from and uninvolved with the participants and their naturally occurring behavior and activities, while a complete insider has an established role (teacher, student, etc.) and engages with the participants in a genuine and natural way, becoming a member of the culture (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers can also assume a combination of the two extremes, where they participate partially. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted that some level of researcher participation helps to establish rapport and trust with the participants, enabling participants to feel more at ease and continue their natural behavior. They furthermore said that the qualitative researcher's role often changes as the study progresses and the situation changes, moving from an outsider role at the onset and developing to an insider role as the situation changes. Phenomenological researchers in particular have a close, personal, intrusive relationship with participants. This transition is more difficult to make if the study has a limited time frame.

Challenges in Recruiting

Establishing trust and rapport with Hispanic and Latino immigrants took much longer than originally anticipated. Upon further investigation the researcher learned that recruiting from within this group involves many challenges. While there are well-documented studies regarding the recruitment of ethnic minority participants, studies about the recruitment of Hispanics and Latinos who speak little or no English are limited. According to Sha et al. (2017), recruiting from this population presents challenges for several reasons: they may not yet be acculturated very well; they might not have ever participated in research studies of any kind; they distrust

individuals they think are government sponsors, because of news reports or concerns about deportations of undocumented immigrants; and they may wish to remain anonymous and not draw attention to themselves. Sha et al. (2017) identified three successful strategies researchers can use to recruit from this population: recruiting in-person, practicing techniques that encourage cooperation, and considering the profile of the successful recruiter.

In-Person Recruitment

Sha et al. (2017) found that recruiting in person within the community worked best because the face-to-face interactions helped establish trust. As discussed in Chapter 2, trust, or "confianza", is a main value of Hispanic and Latino communities and is characterized by respect of the customs and feelings of the group, dignity, honesty, fairness, and demonstrated genuine care for one another (De Mente, 1996; WIDA, n.d.). Just as the absence of trusting relationships in schools prevents or hinders family engagement practices, it can also prevent or hinder their willingness to participate in any kind of research. Sha et al. (2017) suggested recruiting at community events, like festivals, and locations frequented by potential participants, such as Hispanic restaurants and stores, community centers and churches, and other organizations that provide services specifically for the local Hispanic and Latino community. They further noted that with a proper introduction (respectful greeting in Spanish) and by relating personally to the participant or study group, it was difficult for potential participants to say "no" in person. They suggested pairing in-person recruitment with ads or flyers about the study that include the researcher's contact information, and they indicated that people may not meet the exact criteria for participation, which may not be made evident until the end of the interaction.

Techniques That Encourage Cooperation

When recruiting Hispanics and Latinos with little or no English proficiency, the researcher must build rapport, calm potential fears and perceptions of risk, and personalize the benefits of participation (Sha et al., 2017). To build rapport, researchers should mention their national origin, time spent in Spanish-speaking countries, or another personal connection as a way to relate to the participants and show ties to the participants' immediate community. They should also emphasize that they are not selling anything and that their help is needed, specifying potential benefits to the immediate, local community. Researchers should dress in business casual, greet politely in Spanish, make appropriate eye contact, and display a friendly, but modest smile. Additionally, researchers should assure potential participants their information will not be shared with anyone outside the study team and avoid using the words "interview" (entrevista) or "research" (investigación) because they give the impression of government interviews and investigations. Researchers should instead use the words "conversation" (conversación) and study (estudio) (Sha et al., 2017).

Profile of the Successful Recruiter

Based on their research, Sha et al. (2017) established a profile of the successful recruiter of hard-to-reach Hispanic and Latino research participants. The profile is divided into four categories: characteristics, experience, training, and behavior. Table 1, taken from their report, delineates specifics of each area.

Table 1

Successful Recruiter Profile

Dimensions	Performance measures
Characteristics	Fully bilingual in Spanish and English (formal education or training)
	Strong ties to the Hispanic/Latino community
	Comfortable with approaching strangers and key community figures
Experience	Experienced with recruiting Hispanic/Latino non-English speakers
	Familiar with the recruitment area
	Fully comprehend dynamic quota criteria for recruitment
Training	Properly trained on the study specifics
	Ideally cross-trained to conduct interviews
Behavior	Tailor the recruitment introduction to the potential recruits
	Avert or convert refusals without causing harassment
	Flexible to participants' preference for interview scheduling and locations
	Be a team player to collaborate with and mentor fellow recruiters

Note. Reprinted from "Successful Techniques to Recruit Hispanic and Latino Research Participants", by Sha, M. et al., 2017, *Survey Practices, Volume 10,* p. 6.

In this study the researcher's roles were shaped by the previously mentioned sources. In the beginning of the recruitment process, the researcher was completely removed from the study population with only limited contacts to help her gain access and establish connections. Because of the collectivist nature and high value of trust in their culture, working as a complete outsider was very unproductive. The researcher initially began contacting people through emails and social media, but then transitioned to face-to-face recruitment, visiting local Hispanic stores and restaurants as suggested by Sha et al. This still was ineffective, however, because the researcher had not had much experience in recruiting this way, and because the researcher did not stress enough the personal connection she had with them. With time and experience in interacting with this population, however, the researcher learned that explaining her role within the community as

a Spanish teacher and her experiences working with adolescent Hispanic immigrants was invaluable. This, coupled with an introduction made to the Hispanic community of Morristown and a prolonged period of recruitment, resulted in successful connections with participants, and towards the end of the recruitment process, the researcher assumed an insider role and became an ESL teacher at a local church.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher received IRB approval from East Tennessee State University (ETSU) before conducting research. The approval letter is provided in the appendices. The purpose of the study was explained verbally to participants. The researcher created informed consent documents, child assent documents, and parent consent documents in English and Spanish that detailed the purpose and procedures of the study, benefits and possible risks to the participant, information about confidentiality, and information about the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Interview locations and names of schools and cities were left out of written documents. Names of the participant's country of origin were include, as the researcher did not feel this information would identify them, since their city of residence and school were not included in the transcripts. No participant or other person with which the researcher communicated throughout the study were deceived in any way. The researcher communicated that the hope was to use the information from this study to educate teachers, principals, and policy-makers about the challenges adolescent Hispanic and Latino immigrants face in obtaining success in public schools in East Tennessee, which the researcher observed gave some of them a sense of empowerment.

Setting of the Study

Human behavior is strongly influenced by the research setting (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher and the reader, therefore, “cannot understand human behavior without understanding the context within which the subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions”, according to McMillan and Schumacher (p. 13). Without considering the context any explanation of human behavior is incomplete. The research setting for this study was East Tennessee, more specifically Knoxville and East of Knoxville. Most of the region has low numbers of ELL students, with percentages being less than one percent of the student body. However, the rate climbs to 10.4% of the student body in Hamblen County. Other districts with larger percentages of ELL students include Knox County (4.6%), Johnson City (4.7%), and Sevier County (6.3%). A detailed analysis of demographic data will be included in Chapter 4. Interviews took place in Knoxville, Morristown, Johnson City, and Kingsport between October, 2019 and March, 2020.

Participant Selection

Qualitative sampling increases the richness of information from within a small sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2012). According to McMillan and Schumacher, “a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic” (p. 24). A combination of purposeful sampling methods was used to select participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is used to identify and select individuals who are especially experienced with the phenomenon, which allows for the most effective use of limited resources (Palinkas et al., 2013). Participant availability and willingness to participate is important, as well as the ability to articulate their experience and opinions in a reflective manner (Palinkas et al., 2013). Finding willing participants for this study proved to be challenging, however, because the study group is known to be hard to recruit.

Typical case sampling was used to identify participants who could illustrate the typical experience of an adolescent who recently immigrated to East Tennessee and entered middle school or high school within the last fifteen academic school years, specifically from a Spanish-speaking country. The researcher used information from present and prior associates, as well as public information to connect with local school districts and community organizations, specifically organizations that work with local Hispanic populations.

Public figures, community leaders, and other primary contacts from community organizations act as gatekeepers who grant access to the setting or participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Gaining the trust of these gatekeepers is crucial and establishes legitimacy and trustworthiness with potential participants (Sha et al., 2017). This was challenging, however, because some organizations did not allow any kind of advertisement or announcement, which is consistent with the findings of Sha et al. Requests to recruit participants from within school districts were denied, and several other organizations would not distribute information or even allow trusted members of the organization to announce the study. Persistence, however, proved essential to participant recruitment. A colleague of the researcher introduced her to various leaders of community organizations at the annual HOLA Lakeway International Food Festival in Morristown, Tennessee. After these face-to-face introductions, recruitment efforts were more successful, as contacts began forwarding information to other trusted colleagues. Surprisingly, the community leaders who facilitated connections with the study population were not Hispanic or Latino but were leaders of or involved heavily with organizations that served and supported the local Hispanic community in the area. Efforts to connect with potential participants in the Knoxville area through community organizations were less challenging. This may be due to the

experience the researcher had acquired by this point in the recruitment process, as well as the higher number of people who immigrate to the Knoxville area.

Snowball sampling, or network sampling, was used as a successive sampling method once initial participants were interviewed. This was done to establish trust with participants based on a mutual contact. Participants were asked to talk to friends and family who may also meet the criteria. They then requested permission to share their contact information with the researcher. Because of the collectivist nature of this population, even if referred contacts did not meet the criteria, most of them actively and continually worked to help the researcher connect with potential participants. Specific criteria (e.g., individuals who dropped out of school) were also added during conversations with participants or their referrals to allow for maximum variation. Maximum variation allows for the collection of data from diverse variations and to identify commonalities across variations (Palinkas et al., 2013). Efforts were made to collect perspectives of males and females of different ages who attended districts with large numbers of ELLs and small numbers of ELLs; from different countries; who entered during different grade levels; and individuals who graduated high school and also those who did not. Additionally, some participants were current students, while others had already graduated or left high school.

Finally, opportunistic sampling emerged from a change in circumstances of the researcher, allowing her to assume an insider role. Upon moving to a different city, a neighbor from Puerto Rico helped the researcher connect with the Hispanic Ministries Director of a local church. Eventually, the director invited the researcher to teach a beginning ESL class at the church, where she met people who met the participant criteria or who knew people who might.

Data Collection Procedures

After participants were identified, they were invited to participate in interviews at a location with which they were comfortable. All interviews were guided by a set of semi-structured interview questions (Appendix A), allowing for follow-up questions unique to the participant and their circumstances. When possible, participants reviewed the questions in advance, in English or Spanish, which allowed them time to process the questions and their responses and limited possible language barriers. This was not always possible, however, due to the flexibility required to interact with Hispanic immigrants and the informal nature of certain situations. Interviews were audio recorded and were conducted in Spanish or English, allowing participants to respond in the language they felt most comfortable using to communicate. Follow-up communication occurred through email or text messages as needed to further explore and understand the perceptions and experiences of the participants, and to expand on the experiences of other participants and check for similarities and differences across variations. Participants who were younger and had been in the United States for one year or less were either hesitant to share their perspectives with the researcher or had not had sufficient time in schools to process their experiences, or build significant observations about their experience, or both. Participants who had been in the Unites States for four years or more were better able to articulate their experiences, observations, and opinions, whether interviews were conducted in English or Spanish.

Data Management

A participant key was kept in a document separate from all other documents. In written documents, participants were referred to by pseudonyms. Participants' names were not included in the audio recordings. This was done to keep the identity of each participant confidential.

Consent forms were uploaded to the ETSU server and physical copies were destroyed. All other research documents were also maintained on the ETSU server.

Measures of Rigor

Creswell and Miller (2000) suggested that the procedures for choosing measures of rigor, or trustworthiness, are determined in part by the lens the researcher uses to validate the study: the lens of the researcher, the lens of the participants in the study, or the lens of individuals external to the study. In addition, three paradigm assumptions or worldviews – postpositivist, constructivist, or critical influence – also inform their selection. The postpositivist researcher embraces the use of rigorous methods for establishing validity and looks for quantitative equivalence of it, while constructivists assume a more interpretive, pluralistic, open-ended, and contextualized perspective. The critical influence perspective holds that certain contextual factors around the researcher (historical, social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender) govern their perspective. Creswell and Miller presented a table with nine different procedures converging between the lens and paradigm assumption of the researcher. This table is adapted below, showing procedures chosen by the researcher of this study in bold. The researcher believed there were appropriate strengths from within each paradigm assumption to validate this study.

Table 2

Validity Procedures Within Qualitative Lens and Paradigm Assumptions

Lens/Paradigm	Postpositivist	Constructivist	Critical Influence
Lens of the Researcher	**Triangulation**	Disconfirming evidence	**Researcher reflexivity**
Lens of Study Participants	**Member checking**	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
Lens of People External to the Study	Audit trail	**Thick, rich description**	Peer debriefing

Note. Adapted from "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry", by Creswell, J. and Miller, D., 2000, *Theory into Practice, Volume 39*, p. 126

Lens of the Researcher

Triangulation

The purpose of triangulation is to deepen the understanding of themes and categories by corroborating evidence across different sources of information or persons (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Henry, 2015; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Triangulation enhances the credibility, or the truth-value of the findings and the accuracy of the interpretations of the participants' original views (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). Triangulation also strengthens confirmability, or the degree to which findings can be confirmed by other researchers.

As interviews progressed, the researcher asked follow-up questions of subsequent participants in order to corroborate data from previous participants. For example, when earlier interviewees indicated that they believed the level of education of the participant's parent influenced their support of their child's education, the researcher added follow-up questions to later interviews to determine if this was an anomaly or a commonly shared perspective. The researcher then went back and contacted other participants via email or phone to ask their

opinion on the matter. The researcher also triangulated information and data presented in the literature review with statistical data available on public resources, like the Tennessee Department of Education data downloads page, which will be discussed in the findings. Additionally, all transcripts and translations of Spanish interviews were reviewed and edited by a native speaker who is also a certified interpreter since the researcher is not a native Spanish-speaker. This ensured that written representations and interpretations of the interviews were as accurate as possible.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is the process by which a researcher examines and clarifies their own assumptions, beliefs, and biases and discloses how they may affect research decisions and relationships to participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This conceptual lens, shaped by social, cultural, and historical forces, influences the researcher's interpretation. Disclosing this self-reflection allows readers to understand the position of the researcher and enhances confirmability when readers understand that the researcher's biases were bracketed, or suspended, in the interpretation process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This researcher's reflection was interwoven throughout the discussion of the findings, as suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000).

Lens of the Participant

Member Checking

Researchers and participants view data from different perspectives, or lenses, and member-checking increases the congruence between the two perspectives and also enhances credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This method is important because it increases how accurately the participant's realities are portrayed in the final account.

(Creswell & Miller, 2000). When possible, after transcriptions and translations were completed, participants reviewed the documents and responded and commented on the accuracy of the content. This was not possible with all of the participants, however, due to situational factors.

Lens of People External to the Study

Thick, Rich Description

Thick, rich descriptions include deep, dense, detailed information about the behavior and experiences of the participant, transporting them to a setting or situation experienced by the participant (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Korstjens & Moser, 2017). This makes the interpretations more meaningful and allows readers to decide if the results can be applied to other settings or similar contexts, which is known as transferability. Rich description was spread throughout the findings through the narration of interactions, experiences, and significant relationships expressed in the lived experiences of the participants. Additionally, the analysis of district and school demographic changes will allow readers to understand the implications of findings and participant experiences within their own personal context.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in phenomenological research is inherently time consuming and messy, as data are not necessarily categorized neatly and can be linked together in different ways (Henry, 2015; Lester, 1999). The researcher performs an in-depth analysis of the data, reducing them to significant statements and quotes and combining them into categories and themes (Creswell, 2007; Henry, 2015). Upon completion of the interviews, the interviews were transcribed and translated to English if necessary. Happyscribe.co and rev.com were used for initial transcriptions. The researcher then reviewed and revised the transcriptions for accuracy. One interview was summarized through detailed notes due to an error in use of technology. After

reviewing all transcriptions and interview notes, the data were coded. Quotes and summaries from each participant were extracted from the data and entered into Excel worksheets and labeled with themes. Quotes and summaries were then grouped by theme on separate sheets, allowing the researcher to more easily identify relationships and differences across participant experiences.

A second phase in data analysis included making observations about district and school demographic data available publicly through the Tennessee Department of Education's website. The researcher carefully compiled data from multiple school years to chart and compare changes in ELL numbers and student body percentages across East Tennessee. The purpose of this phase was to triangulate author claims presented in the literature review and to reveal contextual information so readers could determine transferability.

Summary

Several purposeful sampling methods – typical case, snowball, maximum variation, and opportunistic – were used to identify 13 participants for this study. The researcher conducted and audio recorded individual interviews with semi-structured interview questions and then transcribed, translated, and coded them to gather data and find themes. The researcher's purpose was to understand the participants' experiences as newcomer ELL students who entered East Tennessee middle schools or high schools and who either successfully completed high school or dropped out before finishing. These data represent the perspectives of individuals in or East of Knoxville, Tennessee.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee. Individual interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the participant, either in English or Spanish, in order to uncover commonalities in the experiences of individuals who were either successful and graduated or who dropped out of school before finishing high school. Interviews of participants currently enrolled in East Tennessee public schools also provided a unique understanding of how adolescent newcomers perceive and make sense of their experiences.

Study participants responded to semi-structured interview questions designed to reveal biographical information about themselves and their families. Additionally, interview questions revealed contextual information and personal reflection about their educational experiences prior to immigrating to East Tennessee, upon entering public schools, and throughout their time in the public schools. For participants nearing graduation or who have already left the school system, questions revealed post-secondary plans and realizations. Participants not only included information about themselves, but also about similar students who immigrated to East Tennessee as adolescents. In addition, participants reflected on advice they would give to other Spanish-speaking adolescent newcomers, educators, and politicians. Finally, East Tennessee district and school level demographic data were analyzed to reveal changes in ELL numbers and student body percentages. This analysis revealed growth and decline in ELL numbers, as well as shifts in concentrations of ELL populations.

Participant Profiles

Thirteen total participants volunteered to participate in this study. Nine are from Mexico, two are siblings from Columbia, and two are siblings from Honduras. Of the participants from Mexico, four were born in the United States and moved to Mexico as a small child, later returning to the United States. The participants, seven males and six females, immigrated to East Tennessee between the ages of 10 and 15 and entered school between grades six and nine. One participant, Shea, who entered the ninth grade upon immigration, returned to Mexico for her 10th grade year, returning again to the same school in East Tennessee to complete grades 11 and 12 and graduate. Another participant, Antonia, arrived and entered ninth grade, returning to Mexico for the remainder of her academic career, including university studies. Seven of the participants entered East Tennessee schools during middle school, while six entered during high school. Eleven of them graduated from high school and one dropped out of school during his junior year. He is still a minor and is currently working. Another, Regina, stayed in school throughout the end of her senior year but did not graduate. She recently completed requirements for a GED. One of the graduated students, Daniel, was apprehended with drugs during his sophomore year, went to alternative school for one year, and then completed high school online. Four of the participants are current students. Of the seven participants who graduated from high school, six attend post-secondary academic institutions or have already completed 2-year or 4-year degrees. Four of the participants have been in the United States for two years or less, with one having been here for less than 1 year. Four have been here between four and six years. Three have been here for 9 to 10 years, and two have been here for 15 years. All but two participants spoke Spanish at home and no other languages prior to immigration. The remaining two spoke

indigenous languages before learning Spanish and English. Table 3 gives a visual of basic participant data, listed by pseudonyms.

Table 3

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Age	Age at Immigration	Grade Entered
Alejandro	Mexico	20	10	6th
Edgar	Mexico	24	14	9th
Shea	Mexico	18	14	9th; 11th
Fátima	Mexico	21	12	8th
Paloma	Columbia	18	12	7th
Daniel	Columbia	19	13	8th
Aaron	Mexico	14	13	9th
Regina	Mexico	30	14	9th
Sebastián	Mexico	18	13	7th
Kimberly	Honduras	14	14	8th
Joel	Honduras	16	14	8th
Esdras	Mexico	17	15	9th
Antonia	Mexico	29	15	9th

Themes

After audio recordings and transcripts were reviewed and coded, a first round of data analysis revealed emergent patterns surrounding the lived experiences of the participants. This section first recounts the initial experience of participants as they began school for the first time in East Tennessee. Then the analysis moves to the description of background factors and the learning environment, which both play crucial roles in determining the academic success of adolescent immigrant students. The next section details participant perspectives on improving the support of adolescent Hispanic and Latino immigrants as well as ways in which they would have

liked for their experience to be different. Analysis of participant interviews was guided by the research questions:

1) What factors affect ELL student success in East Tennessee?
2) How do ELL students in East Tennessee perceive their educational experiences?
3) What do ELL students perceive to be the characteristics of teachers who influenced their success?

Table 4 shows the relationship between findings of the analysis of the interviews and the research questions. The final section explains a second level of analysis regarding demographic information about ELLs in East Tennessee public schools, as well as changes in ELL populations over time.

Table 4

Research Questions and Related Themes

Themes:	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
Complications of the language barrier	✓	✓	
Separation from English speaking peers	✓	✓	
Academic background determines grade-level readiness	✓		
Family expectations encourage path towards education or work	✓		
Attitude and motivation encourage perseverance	✓		
Teachers and principals shape the learning environment	✓	✓	✓
Language anxiety impedes participation and interaction	✓	✓	
Social connections limited mostly to other Hispanics	✓	✓	
Perseverance and personal responsibility are essential	✓		
Students must seek opportunities for English language development	✓		
Teachers must be patient and understanding	✓		✓
Students need extra opportunities for learning	✓		✓

Initial Experience

Complications of the Language Barrier

The language barrier was obviously the biggest difference and what many participants reported as a difficulty during their initial experience. Edgar said his initial experience was scary because he had no idea what was going on in class. Shea said, "Uh, actually, when I got here, by ninth grade, I wanted to cry every day." She also said she was placed in a regular English class (not ESL) in which she did not understand anything. She was moved to ESL after one week. Kimberly described her experience as boring, while her brother described his as strange.

The language barrier caused many of them to feel lonely as they did not have social support to help them cope. When asked to describe the initial experience, Esdras said, "Well, at first it was very difficult for me because of the language and also because I didn't know the people that were inside the classroom." Daniel said his experience was difficult, "because I had to make new friends with other students." Sebastián replied, "…I felt a little uh, lonely because I hardly understood the others, but I had like in my classroom, I only had one single Hispanic that I could communicate with and that translated for me." Antonia simply stated, "It was hard because only I spoke Spanish there at the school." Paloma said, "it sounds cliché, but, like, it's just true, like… because I couldn't communicate with [people]… I just couldn't make friends with them." Edgar said his initial experience was lonely because it was hard to fit in with other student at first.

Another effect of the language barrier was having to depend upon other people. Alejandro said, "At first I didn't like it because I felt like they didn't understand me. I always had to find an interpreter or ask my cousins or something." Edgar said his aunt would help his family translate during meetings at the school or for whatever they needed. Regina said the first

thing she looked for when she entered a new class was another Hispanic. “I was like, ‘Do I have any Hispanics who can translate me? Or help me out?’.” As a note, this same dependence upon others, which was frustrating at times for the participants, also seemed to be a comfort in the classroom found in their bilingual peers, as is reflected in Regina’s statement. This will be elaborated upon later in the section on learning environment.

In addition to the language barrier, there were cultural differences that were difficult for the participants. Alejandro said the culture was difficult “…because not everyone understands where you come from or why [you] speak English a little funny.”

> Um, at first it was a bit difficult because, as I said it was, it’s very different from life there. Then like everything is in one building and there, no. There, there are different buildings… And then the culture, which for example, here they give us lunch at school. Here, you go by bus.

Daniel and Alejandro both said it was difficult to adjust to the difference in the food. Daniel said:

> Hmm, the food… Yes, because I…from the time I was born, or since I remember I was used to going to school, so it’s not like it affects me to go to school. But I was like used to, in Columbia, like eating something that I decided. …There was a break when you could leave and there were stores in the school where you could buy whatever you wanted, pizza, I mean whatever you decide. Here it’s like whatever they give you, so that was what I didn’t like.

Alejandro described a similar reflection. He said what he liked most about school in Mexico “was when we would leave [school], it was like a different environment than here. For example, there’s the little market outside, there are little stores, so there are things from Mexico”.

Another cultural difference is the school uniform, which is more common in Latin American than in the United States, especially in East Tennessee. Regina said the principal of her high school asked the students to tell them one thing they would like the administration to change about the school. She told him:

> "The uniform." Because I had, I had trouble choosing what to wear every day… Because I was in [high school]. And you know, that's the high class… And so we weren't that rich. And it was like, I didn't, I didn't like it. I didn't like to be, um, searching for clothes everyday…what to wear, what not to wear.

The researcher also asked the participants to describe how other students treated them. Edgar said that if any of them were mean or made fun of him, he did not know because he had no idea what they were saying. She said,

> I feel like they didn't wanna really talk to me and stuff. …Some of them would be really nice, but others, like… I guess because I didn't speak a lot of English… They wouldn't be mean to me. They wouldn't be nice to me either.

Sebastián said it didn't go well at first, but that most people treated him well. "…There were people that always tried to say something in Spanish, yes. There were very few that didn't welcome me, but most of them were very good to me." Kimberly and Joel said people treated them well, giving no elaboration. Aaron said people treated him well and everyone in the class helped each other, referring to his ESL class.

Regina and one other participant specifically described their experience with racism. Fátima said, "They were pretty racist, to be honest… It was pretty hard, at first. I mean, I didn't really wanna go to school because, like, kids make fun of you whenever you can't speak English." Regina described racist treatment particularly on the bus:

> It was bad because we have to ride the bus… And there was like all the kids were racist. There was not a lot of Hispanics. So, seeing Hispanics in the bus was bad. So, I didn't wanted to ride the bus. I would rather walk…which was like 30 minutes to 45 minutes…depending on what time I would get out from my house. But I never rode the bus… Because they didn't like us. Like [my siblings and I] were the only Hispanics in the bus. They didn't even let us sit in the bus. Like we were standing. And the bus driver didn't say anything. I think he didn't like us either.

She also shared a story that took place in one of her classes, which will be detailed in the section on learning environment. Esdras said, "Uh, it's like everywhere. There are good people and bad people. …Some people were like racists, who didn't like Hispanic people, but no others were very friendly." Alejandro said some students teased him because of how he spoke English, but it did not seem to affect him deeply. Daniel was also unaffected by the opinion of his peers: "…I forget about it in three seconds and they can feel whatever they want. I've already moved on. …So, that doesn't bother me."

Separation from English Speaking Peers

Participant experiences in their ESL classes were varied. Several participants reported being in intensive ESL classes for two hours a day, for two class periods of the day, or half of the school day, separated from their English speaking peers. Students from one East Tennessee district described attending ESL classes at a different site than the main school. Fátima described her experience:

> …I was there for my first and second period. So, they used to teach us basic things, just to learn English, but they switched teachers and then we didn't learn anything. We just went there, and they'd give us something to read about, that's about it.

Paloma remembered:

> Like you would go there, and I remember one year they made us like, write stories, or like, what you did throughout the day, like, in English, just like write as much, speak as much as you can… And like at the end of the day she would like, go through the papers and be like, "Hey, like, you would use this noun instead," or like, "This is past tense…" Like, she would just like, correct…your paper and then try to teach you.

During her second year there, she remembered learning geography and some math in English. Participants commented that all of the ELLs were Hispanic except for Shea. Shea remembered being in ESL with three or four other students, one who was Chinese. Paloma reflected on the effect of being in ESL with a lot of Hispanics:

> …It just wasn't as, uh, helpful, as it like…could be? I guess? Because like, it did help, like, I guess writing the stories, and doing that. But I remember, that was like my first year, and by my second year it was more relaxed. It wasn't as enforced, like, to learn English, everyone speaking Spanish. …It just doesn't help. Because like, you're just with people…that speak Spanish.

Paloma's brother, Daniel, said he did not want to go to the different site and recognized that advantage of being at the main school campus: "I was only there for two or three months and they took me out because I didn't want to go there anymore because it was better for me to learn in a class."

Background and Personal Factors

Academic Background Determines Grade-Level Readiness

All of the participants attended school before immigrating to the United States. Some of them specifically described school in their country of origin as more challenging, where they had

to memorize a lot of things and the exams were longer and the teachers stricter. One reported that the teachers "almost don't let you take many things there". The siblings from Columbia completed sixth grade there before moving to the United States. The school year in Columbia runs from January to December, so when they moved here, Paloma entered seventh grade halfway through the school year. Daniel entered eighth grade halfway through the year. Daniel did not attend 7th grade in Columbia or the United States. He is a year older than Paloma. "…When I arrived in the United States like what I was learning in Columbia in fifth grade, they were teaching me here in eighth grade… So, I like therefore didn't, like I didn't, I wasn't so into like my classes", he remembered. Paloma reported that one of her favorite things about her school in Columbia was the challenge and the discipline it gave her. Daniel reported it is more common to go to private schools in Columbia. This is common throughout Latin America. Regina said she liked everything about school and that she didn't like to miss school. She did not graduate from high school in the United States because of her family's need for her to work during high school.

Two of the participants specified that the schedule was different. One went to school from 6:00 am to 12:15 pm. The other said there were two different shifts for students and that they either attended school from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm, and the other from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm. This participant, Regina, attended during the second shift of the day. This is also a common practice in Latin American schools. She remembered taking three classes, then having a break, then having three more classes. She also reported having only one teacher throughout the day, even in high school. She commented, "…that's in the countryside. We live in the poor side… If you go to Mexico City like the capital, I think they do have more teachers. But we only have one

for all the classes." Another participant arrived at school by walking an hour or by car for 30 minutes.

Almost all of the participants noted that what they liked most about school in their country of origin was the breaks. Some reported having two breaks throughout the day. Students enjoying breaks the most might be an assumption made by many readers; however, the details show differences in the experiences of breaks in the United States and breaks in Latin America. Fátima stated, "You actually go outside, play around, do whatever", and Daniel said, "…at 9:00 they gave us a half-hour break to go out, eat and play like, as whatever you wanted. Then at 11:00 they gave us another. So, like that's different than here". Alejandro commented, "Here you just going to eat and to school…".

All but two of the participants reported studying English before immigration, but most reported that there was not a lot of instruction or that they did not take it seriously because they did not have to use it at the time. Sebastián reported that he almost never spoke or used it. Aaron said there was a teacher from the United States at his school who taught the students how to talk a little and some pronunciation. Edgar responded that he and his peers just considered it another class and didn't take it very seriously until they had to use it. He remembered thinking later that he should have paid more attention in English class. Regina said she studied in "segundo de secundario", which is the equivalent of seventh grade in the United States. "But it was the basic. I remember they teaching us the 'to be' verb…And the numbers. And the colors. And some, but that was like, not even the basic…But we never [used] it." The two participants from Columbia reported learning English from an early age starting in first, second, or third grade. According to Daniel,

> There it's like required, English as the second language…From an early age they start teaching English…but that also depends on what school you go to. But most do require it because in Columbia they're doing something in the universities that you have to know a second language. It doesn't matter if it's English, but most people decide to learn English because it's like what will help them the most… But if you do not pass the class you can't graduate. They don't give you the printed diploma.

Family Expectations Encourage Path Towards Education or Work

A study by Johns Hopkins University identified high family and cultural expectations to be a major factor in the academic success of immigrant children, even those entering the United States at a later age (CST Editorial Board, 2019). They found this to be true for all immigrant children, not only Hispanics and Latinos, and including those from desperately poor families from Mexico. As a local educator, the researcher was very aware of the correlation between parent involvement and academic success. However, as is common for many educators, as was presented in Chapter 2, the researcher was unaware of how strongly the parent influence (or lack thereof) impacted the participants in the study, and the researcher has worked with Hispanic students for several years. The strength of parent influence on an adolescent Hispanic immigrant is one of the main findings of this chapter, but that influence is not always in the direction of achieving a good education. Many times, depending on the family's financial situation, education and work are pitted against each other. Demonstrations of both are detailed in this section. All of the participants in this study included some level of family and parent influence. Some did not live with their parents, but with other family members, and even they commented on family involvement. They also commented on ways their parents in their country of origin influenced them.

Encouraging Education. As was identified in Chapter 2, there are three different cultural forms of parent involvement – "sacrificios" (sacrifices), consejos (advice), and apoyo (support) – common among Hispanic mothers. As a reminder, "sacrificios" refers to sacrifices made for the educational and developmental wellbeing of others; "consejos" refers to advice given specifically to promote resiliency, perseverance, and respect; and "apoyo" refers to emotional support and encouragement. While the participants overwhelmingly credited their mother with their motivation to succeed and their support from home, it is important to note that the researcher found these to be demonstrated by others in the family as well. Additionally, these forms of parent and family involvement are often intertwined. Therefore, this section will focus on participants individually. Information about each participant's education is also included to provide the reader with further context. Furthermore, the participant's parents' level of education is included because most studies identify a strong correlation between parental education and their child's success in school, how long they attend school, and their success later in life (Egalite, 2016).

Alejandro said his mother was his motivation to pursue a good education. "It was she who said that she preferred a thousand times to see me in an office rather than picking up shovels of dirt of something." To support him, Alejandro said "she always focused on my going to school, that I sleep my normal schedules to be able to go to school, doing homework and all that." This demonstrates "apoyo" and "consejos". Alejandro graduated from high school and is pursuing a four-year degree at a local university. Alejandro's mother finished the equivalent of high school in Mexico. His father did not.

Edgar said his parents supported him in every way, financially and pushing him to finish school. Edgar graduated from high school and completed a two-year degree at a local technical college and owns his own business. Neither of Edgar’s parents went to high school or college.

Shea, who lived with her father as her mother lived in Mexico, said her father always wanted her to stay in school (“consejos”), but she added, “I didn’t really have too much help. Even…well even if he did wanna help me, he couldn’t…because he doesn’t know a lot of English…” Shea graduated from high school and is studying to become a nurse. Shea’s father has an elementary education only, and her mother studied accounting and is studying to become a teacher.

Fátima said she did not really care about graduating from high school, but her mother told her, “You need to get it (diploma).” Her mother also supported her through “sacrificios.” “Well, my mom, when I told her that they were being racist to me in the middle school, she switched to another school, so we basically have to, like, move to another house…” She also reported that her mother took some English classes to help support her, but “they were not helpful at all but…she still tried.” Fátima graduated from high school and is working. She did not pursue further education because she believed pursuing post-secondary education was out of reach for her. “…Like if you aren’t born here, you know that after school you’re gonna work…You can’t go to college. You can’t do anything like that.” The researcher understood this to be the opinion of other Hispanic adolescents as well. Fátima’s parents have a high school education.

Paloma and Daniel are siblings from Columbia. Their stepfather is American. Daniel said his family supported him by teaching him about the culture here. “So, they told me like, how things will work, what to expect.” Their stepfather also helped them learn English.

> So, like with him I couldn't communicate in Spanish. So that's when I lost like, "what would I care what people say." Because with him, he also, I would say things to him, and he'd say to me like, "I understand what you mean but you don't say it like that." So, he also taught me a lot. So, I was learning English at school and at home…because I was living with him, so I also had to communicate…It would be like strange to live with someone or to talk or, so that also motivated me to learn faster.

His sister, Paloma, also reflected on the support of their stepfather. "Like I would write stories, and he, like, would go over it with me, and be like, 'Okay, this is what you need to say instead', and like, kinda help me out through that". She said her mother always tried to help, and she could help with math, but her stepdad was always there to support and help her with homework. This is a rich description of the "apoyo" Daniel and Paloma received at home. Daniel and Paloma both graduated from high school. Daniel attends a local two-year college and Paloma attends a four-year university. Their mother and stepfather both have a college education. Their father completed some college but did not finish a degree.

Aaron lives with his aunt and uncle and his parents live in Mexico. He said of his aunt and uncle, "They support me in everything I need for school, um, advice, mm, that's all." When asked to elaborate on "consejos", he included that he "[doesn't] get into any of those, like drugs…" Aaron is a freshman in high school. Aaron's parents only have an elementary education. His aunt and uncle went to school through middle school.

Regina said she remembered her mother telling her, "You have to graduate. You have to go to school" ("consejos"), but she elaborated on her interpretation of her mother's mindset regarding education: "…She didn't go to school…So she didn't really, she didn't really care…". She added that if parents did not go to college in Mexico, they think, "I made it in life. So, you

can make it without…without school…” Regina also included her older sisters in her support system:

> I remember my sisters telling me, my, my older sister, she was the first that came here. And the first week, um, she told me, “Do you know your ABCs now? By now?” I said, “No.” “Well, you come to study English and to, to go to school. You have to learn.”

Her sister also would make sure she and her siblings were doing their homework or trying their best. She also said her sister’s boyfriend at the time, who is now her brother-in-law, knew English and would help them translate and do their homework. Regina stayed in school through 12th grade but did not graduate. She recently completed her GED. Regina’s mother went to school only for two weeks, during which time she learned to read. Her father never went to school.

Sebastián specified how his father gave him “consejos”. “Well, my dad always gave me advice and that I had to study and that’s why they brought me here, so that I had a little, so that I had a better chance…” His dad would also advise him, “Set yourself to studying. Set yourself to reading books. Set yourself to watch videos in English to help you better.” He said his father always worried about him. Regarding “apoyo”, his parents sometimes take him to play soccer (he is on the school’s team) or where he needs to go. Sebastián said parent support is important because sometimes they (students) come home discouraged and need the encouragement of their parents. Sebastián is a senior and plans to attend a local private university.

Kimberly and Joel are siblings from Honduras. Joel has been here for nearly two years and Kimberly has been here for less than one year. They reported that their parents advise them to “behave, to listen to the teachers, to not have problems at school”. Kimberly and Joel are both

freshmen in high school. Their mother went to school through first grade. Their father's education is unknown.

Esdras lives with his aunt and uncle. His parents live in Mexico. He is only 17 but has dropped out of school and is working. When he was in school his aunt and uncle bought the school supplies he needed and advised him to finish school. "Because they said it was going to help me later". His parents have been trying to convince him to return to Mexico to continue studying, but he has not made a decision yet. "Yes, I would like to sometimes but sometimes I don't. Like here you have more opportunities." Esdras said his parents completed high school in Mexico.

Antonia lived with her grandparents. Her parents also lived in Mexico. She had an older cousin who could help her with homework who lived in the same household. Antonia said she had a very tough mother who always told her school was an obligation, not an option. "Your obligation is having good grades," she remembers her saying. She also reflected, "She has always said that it is like everyone has a role at home, in the family. So, she would say, 'you guys are studying…' …And even when we went to university she would go and ask for our grades." Her family's support is also evident in the fact that they listened to her when, upon returning to Mexico after one year in East Tennessee, she explained to her parents that school was difficult for her and it was better for her to stay in Mexico. They listened to her and allowed her to stay in Mexico, where she graduated and also completed university studies. Her parents both have a high school education.

Encouraging Work. Because of the collective nature of Hispanic families, when young people become old enough to contribute to the financial wellness of the family, they are sometimes pressured to work full-time. As detailed in the previous section, Regina's older

siblings often assumed the same type of support as parents, giving advice and encouraging younger participants to focus on school. When old enough to work, Regina also assumed these roles, requiring her to make sacrifices for the benefit of the family. She reported that she and her older siblings and mother all had to work to support the younger children in the family. They did not live with their father and there were 8 people in the household.

> It was like a family need in everybody. So, um, like everybody that come here at that time was not legal…So we all cross the border and everything. That's why we needed to. Or pay to the person that bring us to, to here. Or do something. But we had to work.

Regina worked at a factory. School ended at 3:00 pm and she would work from 3:30 to 11:00 at night. By the end of her senior year, she was working night shift. She would work until 6:30 am and go home. Regina's mother never wanted her to drop out of school. Before she left for work, she would tell Regina to go to school, but Regina was too tired and ultimately did not finish her senior year. Regina remembered this being a reason many Hispanics did not graduate. "…I remember when we, when I got here, like most of my friends were, the students, the Hispanic students, they all work… They never, most of them, they didn't graduate… Because of work. We had to work." She stated later that she thinks this has become less common, but it still occurs.

Other participants also commented that many of their peers dropped out of school to work. Sebastián commented that a few Hispanics he went to school with graduated and chose to work. Antonia, Kimberly, Edgar, and Fátima all said they knew peers who dropped out of school to work. Fátima specifically said some Hispanic students are not motivated to graduate because they are not going to college and do not think they need a diploma. According to Daniel,

…But the problem of many people who also come is that they come because of their need of money. ...So, they don't really pay attention to school, they leave, like they leave at the second they can leave, they leave to go to work. ...So not many finish school or go to college…. They [leave] work and help their parents, things like that.

When other participants were asked to reflect on why they thought adolescent Hispanic immigrants often drop out of school, they mentioned specifically that sometimes parents ask their children to drop out of school to work. Shea remembers a peer of hers: "…His dad wanted him to like get out of school as soon as possible, so he could start to work." Daniel also remembered parents influencing their child to drop out of school:

> But there are parents who did tell them, "stay in school." "We want you to finish." Things like that… But there are others who did say, "We need help." Then they would also tell them like, "Don't go to school" and like "Work". So, like it depends on the economic situation of the family."

Other times during the interviews, participants mentioned a lack of guidance or support from the parents of those who drop out. According to Sebastián,

> …They don't have the support of their parents sometimes. Because, sometimes, if parents don't give them advice or they don't tell him what they have to do here, and sometimes they get discouraged or don't feel like doing it anymore, keep studying like this.

Edgar also mentioned that students who drop out often do not have much support at home. Regina's personal reflection triangulates their reflections: "But most of the Hispanics parents that come here, they didn't go to college…So they don't really give us advice about school." Antonia said she thinks the parents should be stricter because encouraging a minor's education is the

responsibility of the parent. According to her, in order to correct this problem, "the mentality of the parents would have to change…"

Attitude and Motivation Encourage Perseverance

Lorenzo De La Fuente Manriquez was quoted in Mexican Cultural Code Words, saying, "Without motivation nothing can be achieved. No matter how many opportunities are presented to people who are economically and politically deprived, they will not take advantage of the opportunities if they are not motivated" (De Mente, 1996, p. 211). The question here is, what motivated the participants who succeeded academically? The findings reveal that, for many of them, their motivation was not separate from their parents' influence. When asked what motivated them to continue studying, Alejandro simply stated, "My mom." As a reminder, she told him she would rather see him in a professional career rather than working in manual labor. Sebastián stated, "Well, first…so that my parents are proud that, that, that it was worth bringing me here. So that they see that it was worth it what they did for me…" As previously stated, Antonia's mother was tough and always reinforced that school was her obligation, not an option. Paloma was intrinsically motivated because of values taught to her by her family. "Because it has always been like really enforced and encouraged in my family, to like get a, like, be well-educated. And… so I guess that's what like, drove me to it." She also said she was motivated socially. "Like, I wanna talk to people… I wanna hang out," she added.

Sports and other extracurricular activities were also mentioned as a common motivation, specifically soccer. Sebastián said his second motivation for doing well in school was so he could play soccer. He started playing for the school's team in eighth grade and continued throughout high school. Esdras, who dropped out of school at the age of 17 said,

> …I wanted to continue studying but uh like uh it's difficult for me. It got harder for me… And also, like I wanted to join the soccer team, but I didn't do it because of my low grades…So, I didn't want to continue anymore.

Regina commented on how she has seen sports motivate other adolescent Hispanic immigrants:

> They like sports…And that's what they keep…Yeah. I have one, he is really good, um, soccer and basketball, and baseball. He's really good at those three and he plays it the whole year. But he don't like school… He's like, "I don't like to study. But I have to so I can keep playing."

Edgar also played soccer, but specifically said he did not participate in other activities because he feared he would not fit in. Fátima, Paloma, and Daniel also played soccer and other sports in high school. Regina wanted to play soccer, tried out and made the team, but her family told her she could not participate because she had to work to help support the family. She regretted not being able to play soccer and be more involved in extracurricular activities. Lastly, Shea, who is studying to become a nurse, said during her junior year she joined a group called HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America). She and other HOSA students competed in medical innovations and won the regional competition.

Desire to Achieve a Goal. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) identified three attributes that define motivation. The first is the desire to achieve a goal. Several of the participants who were successful academically demonstrated this aspect. Edgar said he already knew what he wanted to do when he started school in the United States, so he knew what he had to do to get there. He owns his own business. Sebastián, who is a senior in high school this year and plans to attend a local private university, already knows he wants to be an electrical engineer. Shea is pursuing a

career in nursing and Paloma plans to go to medical school. Daniel is pursuing a career in business.

Effort Extended to Achieve Goals. The second attribute Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) included in their definition of motivation is the effort extended to achieve goals. Several participants gave specific information about their academic achievement and personal efforts to do well. Alejandro said he always did his part to learn. He reported staying in afterschool programs so teachers could help him understand the materials better. Sebastián also reported staying after school for extra tutorials from his teachers. "I always stayed after school… And that helped me." He also attended summer school the summer after his seventh grade year. Shea said she would watch YouTube videos to try and learn English better. "Especially like I would watch more like Southern YouTubers," she specified. Shea enrolled in honors classes and dual enrollment courses and graduated with honors, a CNA license, and an OSHA license. Shea is the student who began school in East Tennessee in ninth grade, spent 10th grade in school in Mexico, and then returned to East Tennessee to finish high school. It is important to note that she struggled academically when she first came to East Tennessee. Especially regarding math, she said, "I didn't understand anything, anything. Uh, I didn't even know my times table. I barely knew it." She said she would go to her teachers and ask for extra help. "I would even ask her for extra work if, 'cause I didn't understand something or like extra notes or something. And they would give it to me." Edgar reported being a member of the National Honors Society.

Several participants mentioned the importance of hard work and pushing through challenges, demonstrating self-motivation. Participants demonstrated this when responding to questions about advice they would give to other. Highlights will be included here, but more detailed responses regarding this advice will be included in a later section in this chapter. When

asked what advice they would give to other students like them, Alejandro said, "You also have to do your part. …Not everything will fall from the sky, as we say." Sebastián commented, "What matters is to dedicate yourself to what you're doing and push yourself." Shea said, "That the best teacher is gonna be yourself."

Personal Satisfaction. The third aspect Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) identified relating to motivation is satisfaction with the task. Edgar reported that he loved English 3 and U.S. History and even won the award for both of those classes his junior year. Regina, who did not graduate because she had to work, wanted to clearly communicate how much she loved school. "In Mexico, um, I [liked] everything. I was, I don't want to some, um, surprise, but I was the best in my classroom and in my whole grade. And I like everything…I didn't like to miss school." She also reported being invited to Washington for special recognition:

> They were inviting me because they were looking at my grades. When I was, um, sophomore… But not ELL grades. It was the other classes. I was doing a little better in English. So, they send me a letter to visit the White House… Because they were looking at my grades. And I got excited.

She was unable to accept the invitation, however, because her sister told her, "You have to work." Another participant, Daniel, reflected that personal satisfaction motivated him to continue studying.

> Uh, to have the satisfaction that I completed it, that I finished… Like to finish what I started… Like I thought about it like I, I already went to school all these years, so, why wouldn't I finish when I am lacking so little…if I can achieve something that is going to help me in life?

Finally, it is important to include here information participants included about

dissatisfaction regarding school among their adolescent Hispanic immigrant peers. As previously mentioned, Esdras, who was 17 at the time of the interview and had already dropped out of school, said that school was difficult for him and he was not eligible for soccer because of his low grades, so he did not want to go to school anymore. Regina, who stayed in school throughout her senior year but did not graduate due to work, reflected:

> It's a Hispanic thing. But a lot of Hispanics don't like school. They, how could I say? My husband don't like school. He came here when he was 14. And he did graduate. But he never liked school. He just went because he had to… And I have friends, like people that come to church, and they drop out because they didn't like it. I have a friend… he graduate. And he had a scholarship two years at UT… He didn't take it… And I said, "Why you didn't, why you didn't take the, the scholarship?" And he's like, "I don't like school. I hated school." "But you were, you were good at it. That's why, that's how you get your scholarship." And he's like, "I don't like it."

Kimberly also said she thinks some drop out because they do not like school. It may seem obvious that many students do not like school, regardless of their heritage or circumstances. However, the root of the dissatisfaction is likely very different for this group. Paloma recognized a lack of academic motivation as a factor leading other students to drop out of school:

> …Something that makes people, I guess, drop out is that…like they weren't motivated to get good grades. Like sometimes I remember when like my friend, one of them, they didn't do anything in the English classes, anything. The- I think those kids would just be sitting there watching the other people work. …And uh, like they were not motivated, and they didn't…either they- they didn't wanna do the work or couldn't…

Fátima also recognized that students dropped out because of poor academic performance, saying, "…A lot of them would just like, drop out, because they weren't doing good in classes." Sebastián said he knew several who dropped out because continuing did not motivate them anymore. He shared a story about a friend who has the opportunity to continue in his education but is not motivated to do so.

> I have a friend right now that, that we started together since the ninth grade, and he was born here but they moved him as a child to Mexico from, from two or three years old and then he came back at age 14 and he, and now he's having difficulties learning English… But he no longer plans to continue. He plans to work and return to Mexico.

He continued and commented on the difficulty of perseverance: "Yes, here you have to suffer a lot to keep going."

Environmental Factors

Teachers and Principals Shape the Learning Environment

The importance of cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching was discussed in Chapter 2. Teachers and principals must treat people from diverse backgrounds respectfully, recognizing, affirming, and valuing their worth, and protecting and preserving their dignity (López et al., 2017). Participant perceptions of teacher and principal attitudes towards students from diverse backgrounds were mixed. Alejandro recognized the important role teachers played in his experience: "…I think that without them I would not have made it here." He also remembered that all of his teachers loved Mexican culture. Paloma reflected:

> I mean, I think they were really open to it. Like, they were understanding of us, like if we couldn't speak English or didn't understand it. I remember like the times they would ask

> other, like, Spanish-speaking students, like, “Hey, can you translate this?” Like… I guess they weren’t, like, opposed to it, they were more helpful than anything.

Paloma’s brother, Daniel, said the teachers and principals were very understanding. Fátima, who moved schools because of negative attitudes, commented:

> Well, in [middle school name], they were pretty racist, all of them. And the m- mostly the principal. In [middle school name], it was different. They were pretty nice, all of them. The teachers were really helpful. The principal was really nice too. In [high school name], it was the same thing. They were pretty cool there.

Regina said her agriculture teacher never tried to talk to her in English or Spanish. Edgar said he does not remember if there were any different treatments or attitudes because he had no idea what was going on when he first came to East Tennessee. He commented that, if there were differences, he probably assumed it was normal. Antonia said her school brought in a bilingual student from a local college to help her one hour a day in addition to her time with her ESL teacher, which reflects principal support.

When asked to describe teachers who helped them, many of the participants commented that some of their teachers were patient, that they tried to help, and took the time to explain carefully. Alejandro said his teachers never grew tired of explaining. Alejandro entered 6th grade upon immigrating to East Tennessee. He remembered specific teachers that helped him:

> Uh, one, my first, my first English teacher, language arts, um [name], in the three years I was there she always, she always gave extra support to me. I also had my ELL teachers. Um, I also had a Special Ed teacher that spoke a little Spanish, but he always tried to talk to me and I am never going to forget that because, they are extra things that seem minor, but to me it meant a lot and helped me to arrive [here] from there.

Many others also included positive reflections of their ESL teachers, saying they were nice and helpful. Shea said her ESL teacher was very supportive.

Sometimes participants reflected on times their teachers were not as helpful, however. Shea said, “Sometimes…they wouldn’t understand that I didn’t understand…” She also said, “I guess like sometimes I wouldn’t understand something (laughs), and I would ask [for help] always, but they didn’t really…help me a lot.” Daniel described the relationships between teachers and students to be less personal. “Teachers don’t get so much into personal life, for one it’s more like teaching.” He also said:

> In high school it’s more like, in middle school they do have more focus, like they focus more on, on the student… like the student is doing what he should, that he’s learning. In high school like it’s bigger, not as much, like go to class and that’s it.

He later identified this as an area where teachers can improve:

> I think that having a more personal relationship with them, not like being friends but like it’s like if you understood well, what do you need, like what are you having problems with, or what you need help with. Things like that. But there are teachers who do that but there are some who always teach you the class and that's it. Like you only have to learn and "Here is the test". "And how did it go?" But there are others who do, like they make sure that the students understood like if they have problems with something or what do you need to learn more. Things like that.

According to Flynn and Hill (2005), there are several ways teachers can support linguistically and culturally diverse students. Among other suggestions, teachers should respect and incorporate students’ first languages. In addition to the examples previously mentioned in this chapter, several of the participants included examples of this demonstration by their

teachers. Shea said she remembered a teacher giving work in Spanish and English to a peer, “So, he could compare it and then mark his answers on the other [paper]”. She elaborated, “…I think that helps a lot because you can see the words”. Fátima, Sebastián, and Joel also said their teachers would give them papers in English and Spanish. Paloma said her 8th grade English teacher knew Spanish and would try to help her and give her instructions in Spanish. Kimberly said her ESL teacher goes with her to classes she does not understand and helps her. Several of the participants, including Sebastián, Shea, and Alejandro, remembered teachers helping them after school.

Another way teachers supported participants was by making content comprehensible. Aaron said of his teachers,

> They…explain to you well. If you didn’t understand they will explain it, or they show you, they show you how to do it… They will explain it but…drawing like this…to see that we understand. If not, they will try to talk in a way so we can understand more.

Sebastián said his teachers would sometimes give him less complicated papers and have him translate some words. Edgar said he remembers teachers who took the time to explain very carefully. Antonia stated, “Well, they tried to talk a little slower so I could understand what they were saying…” Regina, however, remembered the difficulty one of her teacher’s speech caused her: “And I didn't pass that class. Because the teacher would speak too fast. And I couldn't pay atten- I couldn't understand it so I didn't pass the class.” Shea also included this as a difficulty she has with understanding English: “Uh, sometimes people that talk very, very fast… Or sometimes an accent… I didn’t understand that… I can’t- it’s not very clear… People that talk fast.”

Some participants remembered specifically being included with the rest of the class, which helps lower the affective filter and create a more welcoming classroom environment. Edgar said in his favorite classes the teachers made the whole class participate and work together, which is a comfortable environment for someone from a collectivist background. Kimberly remembers being paired with other students who could help her. Regina described one of her teacher's efforts to include her:

> …She'll make, um, groups of three or four. And she would always include me. …She would, I was the first one. She'll say, "Regina, you will be in this team." … "And you have to help her." That's how, um, I was in everybody's team. She will put me in this team, or the next day on this team, or the next day on this team. …She would include me with everybody. …She was not racist.

Several participants also included in their experience that there were bilingual students who could help them. Sebastián remembered that there was one bilingual student he could communicate with. Edgar, Fátima, Joel, Aaron, and Paloma all mentioned bilingual peers helping them in class. Some of these instances were voluntary on the part of their peers, but others were intentional efforts made by the teachers. Fátima said teachers would assign a bilingual peer to each ELL in class. Daniel said,

> "…Since they only give instruction in English and [ESL students] don't understand, they really don't know what to do then just follow like other people...So they would make sure somebody told him, "Explain to him what we have to do."

Regina recounted:

> Uh, my geography teacher, she'll, she'll bring one student that speak Spanish. …So she can translate me the whole class. …Or help me with the test or with the questions. …I

> mean she knew when we were going to have a quiz or a test soon, she'll find [student]. She was the one helping us. Everybody. Like I don't think she had classes. …She was translating everyone. …She was another student who she wasn't born here. But she knew English. …So she'll bring [student] to the class and let her sit with me. So, she can explain me. And, and prepare me for the test. …So I can do better. …That's, I, I think that's how I, I passed the class. …Not, um getting exactly the answers but trying to, to…tell me more about the class.

This practice demonstrates how bilingual students can be overused for the purposes of translating and helping Spanish-speaking ELLs. The researcher assumes, based on Regina's statements, that Regina's bilingual peer's education was compromised. It must also be noted that not all participants had bilingual peers available to them, which is the case for many Spanish-speaking ELLs in rural schools in East Tennessee. Antonia specifically said she was the only Spanish-speaker in her entire school. She mentioned one student, however, that tried to help her even though she was not bilingual. Fátima also brought attention to the fact that bilingual peers cannot help students on tests and other certain assignments. This was echoed by Paloma: "Like during tests, the tutor can't be there." Later she added, "…During tests, I just wouldn't understand, like, what a single word was saying, and it would throw me off."

Deficit Thinking. It is difficult to determine deficit thinking among teachers and adults in the participants' schools without talking specifically to them, but Esdras, who dropped out of school, recognized this perception from teachers in his school.

> …A lot of them get upset because they think they [students] don't want to work hard but sometimes it's not that, but when one enters [school] it's very difficult with the language. And sometimes one does not know how to do it."

Alejandro had the opposite experience, however, regarding repeating a grade, which sometimes is misunderstood to be helpful. He reported that his mother wanted him to repeat a grade for the sake of learning English. "But the, my teachers, well, the principal of, of the middle school said, 'No, it is not necessary to hold him back', and they let me be in sixth [grade]."

Language Anxiety Impedes Participation and Interaction

All but one participant, Daniel, reported negative feelings and experiences surrounding situations where they had to speak English. Aaron, who is a freshman in high school, said he feels nervous about speaking English, about making mistakes and pronouncing words well. Edgar said he was nervous and hesitant to speak. Shea said she was always very shy because her accent was very bad, and she would not say some words correctly. Fátima recounted:

> Well, you panic a lot. I- I mean, whenever you're with people that you know, I mean it's okay 'cause they know you're gonna mess up a lot… But whenever you're with people that you, they don't know you don't speak English that good, it's frustrating… And it's, you…avoid a lot of things. Like, you don't do that many things because you're like, "No, 'cause I have to talk, and if I talk, I'm gonna get nervous. Nah, I won't do that."

Alejandro shared similar feelings. "I have always tried to ignore those kinds of awkward situations", he commented. Sebastián also remembered feeling uncomfortable: "Uh, when I was in class, I always felt, I felt embarrassed, and I didn't know what to say to them or how to say it to them. Yes, sometimes yes, I always felt uncomfortable in class."

Some participants' language anxiety stemmed from interactions with other students. Fátima remembered being made fun of a lot: "I didn't really wanna go to school because, like, kids make fun of you whenever you can't speak English". Regina gave a detailed account of a situation she experienced in her math class:

> And one girl that was there, she look at me and say, “What are you look at me?” … I knew by what she said, but I wasn’t looking at her. She was racist. She didn’t like me. And then she asked the teacher, “Can you move her to back?” I don’t want her to my side, by my side.” Then the teacher said, “No. I’m not going to move her.” “Then I’m going to, I’m going to leave the class.” “You can leave the class.” She didn’t leave the class. But she was racist. She didn’t like me at all. I didn’t do anything to her… I didn’t even speak. (laughs) …So, I think she was the one that made me not to talk to anyone.

Alejandro also reported instances of teasing but did not appear to be deeply affected by them.

Shea and Fátima both detailed instances in which a teacher specifically made them anxious. Shea’s experience occurred during her first year in the school system.

> I remember my freshman year, I had US history, and my teacher, uh, he’d tell me, “Oh, we’re gonna present something in front of the whole class.” I was very, very scared. I was like, “Oh no, everybody’s gonna laugh at me.” And I asked the teacher, I was like, “Is there any possible uh way if I could do like make something else instead of presentations?” And he was like, “No, uh, you have to present that.” He said, “I’m not here to teach English. I’m here to teach History.” …It like made me hate that class. …Right now, presenting I’m still nervous about it… I feel like it would make me more nervous about me speaking English and I would see their faces like, “What is she saying?” …So, more, um, vergüenza? …Embarrassed? …about speaking it to other people like, “Oh, it’s going to happen to- it’s going to happen again.”

Fátima shared a similar experience:

> And whenever, whenever they, the teacher knows we don’t speak English that well, and you cannot do something, and they put us on the board to do something, you panic a

> lot… First, you don't know the language. Then, you know everybody's gonna laugh at you' cause you don't know what's going on… And some teachers used to do that a lot, used to be like, be like, "Oh, get on the board." Like, I don't even understand what you were saying before, and now you want me to do that.

Shea also demonstrated language anxiety and negative self-talk regarding participating in a HOSA competition. "I tried to do [the competition] the second time too, but I felt very nervous when I was having to be able to teach, but I think I messed everything up, and we didn't win the second time." Shea is very self-motivated and also described how she has learned to adapt to presenting in front of others:

> …I write everything down, like the I have my presentation, and then over here, I have the notes I'm gonna say and before presenting it, uh, speak it aloud. …And aloud and again and again. And so, I would know how to pronounce it really well. I'll know the words…that way I won't be as nervous.

Daniel and Regina both elaborated on experiences that demonstrated how low levels of language anxiety correspond with learning more English. Regina remembered that her younger sister was never nervous about speaking English, which could also be due to the fact that she was younger when she first came to East Tennessee.

> Like we are eight in my family. And only one can speak a lot fluently. Only one. Because she didn't care. She was little. She was eight I think… She didn't care anything. She didn't care if she will say it like wrong. The word wrong. Or anything. She didn't care. One time she came home and she say, um, "Hellody." And we said, "What are you saying?" She said, "Hellody. That's the name of one my friends." And it was only, we, we were here for only like, like a week or two. And she have friends already. American

> friend. And that was her name. And my friend laughing. And she said, "Is it Hillary?" "No. It's Hellody." Then the next day she came home and she say, "Oh yeah. It's Hillary." (laughs) …She didn't care. And but this, she's the only one that speaks fluently English… But we were ashamed. We didn't, we did care. And the rest of that, the rest of us didn't make it. (laughs) …We still working on it.

Daniel was the only participant that said he never experienced language anxiety.

> To me it was more important that people knew what I wanted to say. So, I didn't care how it came out or how it sounded. I knew it didn't sound good and I knew I was saying it wrong, but people understood me (laughs)."

When asked to clarify that he was never anxious, he responded,

> No, not really, like I always just, if you don't understand me, I tried to say it another way. Sometimes it was frustrating because I would try to say something and it didn't come out, but I wasn't frustrated by the part that, "Oh, they are going to think something about me." It frustrated me that they didn't, they didn't know what I wanted to say.

Specifically regarding acquiring more English, Daniel said:

> I was never an ashamed person. So, like many people have that problem that they're ashamed to talk. Like for example, they've already learned a lot, but they're afraid of like starting to talk to people to communicate and things like that. So, I think that if people aren't afraid it's going to help them a lot too. Because if, if I tell you something and even better translate it to you on the internet, you're going to understand and you're going to respond to me through the internet. But if I tell you something like in my voice, you will understand me and also, you're going to correct me. So, you're going to tell me, "This is how it's said." Or most people will do that. There are people who understand and don't

> care, but most people, "Oh, it's said like this, or like this." So, I believe when talking, at the same time you're going to learn more.

His sister, Paloma, reflected on her brother's perspective as well. "My brother was more outgoing… Like he knew he was like saying stuff wrong. …But he knew that, like, the more he practiced it, the faster he would pick up on it."

Participants reported less language anxiety in their ESL classes. According to Edgar, learning with other ESL students helped because they spoke slower than native English speakers and students were not afraid to make mistakes with each other. For many of the participants, they felt more comfortable because they were with other students from similar backgrounds.

Social Connections Limited Mostly to Other Hispanics

Participants were asked to elaborate on their relationships with their peers, specifically friendships. Alejandro said making more friends helped him adjust to his new school environment. "…Even until now I am still friends with many people I met there." Some of them specifically mentioned being closer friends with other Hispanics. Shea said most of her friends were Hispanic but had lived here their whole life. She stated, "…They talked Spanish, too. Even a little bit like sometimes if I couldn't say it completely, I would switch to Spanish…and switch back to English." This is a phenomenon known as code-switching, where someone switches between different languages. Antonia said she did not have many friends, but she was only in the United States for one year. Fátima said she has never been one to have a lot of friends but did make some friends after she started to learn more English. Regina said there were not many Hispanics in the first high school she attended, but remembered having one close friend:

> So I remember being friend with one that was taking ELL... So that's how we became friends. We go to the same classes. She had math right next to my agriculture class. And

so I can talk to her. And we have the same lunch at the same time. And, but that was my only one… Until I was like, um, not senior, but junior. I made more friends…because I move to the, to [high school]. And in this high school there were more Hispanics...

Regina did not specify that she moved schools because of the school environment, but because her family moved to a different house, rezoning her to a different school in the district. Paloma also said most of her friends were Spanish speakers from ESL. As previously mentioned, Paloma's desire to make friends motivated her to learn English. Edgar and Sebastián reported making friends through playing on their school's soccer team. Sebastián began making friends through soccer as early as 8th grade. He also said he has friends through church, which is a local Hispanic congregation.

Final Participant Reflections

As part of the interviews, participants were asked to share what advice they would give to similar students and to educators or politicians based on their experiences and perspectives. In addition, the researcher asked students who had already left high school if they had any regrets or if there were things they wish they had done differently or that had occurred differently. Participant thoughts are shared below in three sections: advice for other students, advice for educators and politicians, and regrets.

Advice for Other Students

Some highlights of these reflections were shared earlier in the section on student motivation. Although they were recommendations for others, they also demonstrated personal motivation. They may be included again here or expounded in this section.

Perseverance and Personal Responsibility are Essential

One theme in the participants' suggestions was regarding perseverance and personal responsibility. Edgar said it was important not to give up, to finish high school, and pursue education after high school. Antonia advised students to continue and to work hard. Fátima said it is a difficult experience, "but eventually you will get there. It will come easier with time." Alejandro stated:

> …You also have to do your part. Not, not, not everything will fall from the sky, as we say. You have to, you have to focus on what you want and then work hard, because that is something that is earned by hand.

Alejandro was also the only participant to suggest the importance of trusting the teachers: "…you have to let them help you to get ahead." Sebastián advised:

> When you get here, it won't be that easy for you. You're always going to, to, to suffer or even the teachers will not please you, or the classmates, but if your dream is to continue here, then just do it however you can. It doesn't matter what they say… What matters is to dedicate yourself to what you're doing and push yourself.

Shea was very self-motivated. She replied,

> …The best teacher is gonna be yourself. If you want to study. If you want to kno- learn English and speak to others, you have to do it by yourse- well, there's all different people that are gonna help you, but you have to help yourself too.

Paloma suggested,

> Um…I guess…honestly, like, power through it. Like at first, it's tough. Because like, it's a new environment, new language, new culture, new everything. But the more you

> practice English, the more you learn, the more… you like try to be out there, and like, I guess, go through with it, the easier it gets…

Daniel gave specific advice for those considering dropping out of school. He advised that they should finish because it will help them more in the future, regardless of whether they came legally or illegally.

> …If for example someone from migration sees that, they are going to say, "He went to school and finished." Then they're going to want to put more initiative into doing something good. So, I think it can help you a lot at the end of the day.

Students Must Seek Opportunities for English Language Development

Some participants gave advice specifically to encourage focusing on English language acquisition. Aaron, a freshman in high school, advised that others work hard to learn English and in all their studies to be able to achieve their goals. Kimberly suggested that they specifically work hard to speak English, which is helpful because many of the students recalled that they did not do much speaking practice in their ESL classes. Esdras, who dropped out of school, advised others, "Well, the main thing is that they study, and they work hard to learn English since it's the most useful in this country, English. And also, that, that they finish school because you don't know later in what it would be useful, the studies." This statement is significant to the researcher because it demonstrates that even though Esdras dropped out of school, he still understands the value of finishing school. Daniel recommended that students be more outgoing with speaking English:

> Don't be embarrassed…like you want to learn, don't be afraid like, like be outspoken, you know? …Don't be afraid to talk. Don't be afraid of communicating or what people

> think. They're going to make fun of you whether you know how to speak English well or not.

Regina commented, "I would tell them to get involved in the English, um, world. I mean, to learn it. To learn English as a second language like good."

Advice for Schools and Teachers

Teachers Must Be Patient and Understanding

Some participants' suggestions for teachers were brief. Kimberly, when asked what teachers could do to help students be more successful, simply stated with a laugh, "Speak Spanish." While this response might seem flippant, it highlights the need for more bilingual teachers. The most common suggestion for teachers was that they have much patience and be more understanding with adolescent newcomer ELLs. Esdras, who dropped out of school, wanted teachers to be more understanding because the language barrier is difficult for them and sometimes the students do not know how to do the work. This was shared previously in the section on teacher influence. He shared that he experienced teachers who became angry with newcomer ELLs because they assumed the students did not want to do the work. Alejandro also implored teachers to be patient but not to give up on students:

> Well, to the teachers that, that they have patience because patience is very important, but at the same time…don't give up either because there are many things that sometimes in the beginning don't matter to us, but in other times, we will value them and we want to learn more… You have to be patient. That is what I saw from my teachers, that they were very patient. They never grew tired of explaining. Even if they didn't understand, explain, explain, explain.

In addition to Alejandro's and Esdras's reflections, Paloma also highlighted that the students do not always have the background knowledge needed upon entering school: "…A lot of them like, didn't have, like, basic math knowledge." She also said she knew a lot of ELLs who dropped out of school because they weren't doing well in their classes. Shea also said she knew fellow ELLs who dropped out of school, some because they were not motivated to do the work, but that others could not do the work. Antonia suggested teachers have more patience, but she associated their lack of patience with how well the education system in East Tennessee has prepared them to work with adolescent newcomer ELLs: "Maybe a little more patience, but it is not the educators, it is the system, right? Because maybe they don't know how to work with students like that."

Students Need Extra Opportunities for Learning

More specific recommendations related to including students more in class and offering more tutoring or extra classes to help them, which would help students and teachers close the gap between background knowledge upon entering schools and background knowledge needed for academic success. Sebastián suggested schools offer an extra class (besides ESL and their other classes) where students can receive help with content knowledge.

> Well. Well, that they, I think that, that they give them an extra class so that they could learn more, because when I was taking classes I always had to, I had questions. I had difficulty understanding, and sometimes I didn't understand what was going on, but, I spent time on translators translating things like that, so, yes I think like an extra class for them…because in ESL…the teacher can't help you with everything. He just focused on teaching you English and he could hardly, because when I was there I would say, "I need

help on this, in this class," but he had little time because he, his focus is here to teacher English to everybody else.

Shea recommended allowing students to complete different types of assignments they may be more comfortable with, which also sheds light onto the fact that ELLs often express themselves better in different ways. This information is available to teachers through their WIDA test results and should be provided to them by their ESL teachers. Shea, as a reminder, was the student who would ask for more work so she could understand the material better. She warned that teachers should not be so compassionate that they give less work to ELLs. "[Don't] be compassionate about us and give us a lot of work. …Like some students that don't know English…they can maybe, do other kinds of work, the same work…but…another kind of assignment or work, maybe." Earlier in the section on language anxiety, the researcher shared Shea's experience about being made to present in a class. She suggested, "…I could have maybe wrote an essay about it or…maybe done even…more research about it." Fátima also shared anxiety about being made to work on the board in front of the class, which was included earlier as well. This may seem to contradict Antonia's statement about including students, but based on Regina's positive reflection of being included in groups, perhaps the lesson is for teachers to include students within groups or as a class, but without drawing attention to the individual student, which caused Shea and Fátima anxiety in the classroom.

Paloma's reflections cautioned against grouping Spanish-speakers for too long during the day: "…It wasn't as enforced, like, to learn English, everyone speaking Spanish. …It just doesn't help. Because like, you're just with people…that speak Spanish, and you're trying to learn English." This, in conjunction with previous findings, indicates that there is a fine line between

students finding comfort in being with their Spanish-speaking peers and being with Spanish-speaking peers too much.

Some of the participants' suggestions involved more personal efforts, rather than pedagogical. Antonia stated,

> …I believe that, if there are migrant students, that in reality they, well, they are not the ones choosing to be here then. …So…try to include them and give them the same opportunities because in the end they are growing up here. ...So, it can be a good thing for the country.

Reflections from Daniel and Esdras, as shared previously in the findings, reveal that if educators had more personal relationships with these students and were more understanding of their background and their situation, it would help students who are considering dropping out of school. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Edgar and Regina reflected on connecting with students who may lack parent support at home, or with parents who may encourage work more than school. Edgar said schools and teachers should find a way to better support the students that do not have a lot of support at home to encourage them to finish school and seek postsecondary opportunities. He reflected that he occasionally sees friends or fellow ELLs who dropped out of school and are working in construction or restaurants and said they did not seem very happy to him. Regina, who did not graduate because of work, quickly responded that educators should speak to parents. Her reflection will be covered more in depth in the next section on participant regrets. Educators may question how they can connect with parents who only speak Spanish, but there are districts and schools that have been successful regardless of the language barrier, like some of the successful schools profiled in the literature review. This will be discussed under recommendations in Chapter 5.

Advice for Politicians and Policymakers

Three participants had specific advice for politicians. Fátima's response reflected the hopelessness she felt as an undocumented recent high school graduate:

> I don't know, I mean... You really can't work in any place even if you graduate as something...Because you are not from here, you don't have a social, you don't have anything. So, I mean, I don't think there is something that they can do. I mean, probably, so they make jobs for people that they can, they are not born here...They give them chances to work, I mean, that would be fine. That way people be like, okay, so if I study this, they might give me a job at a decent place.

Because questions about citizenship and documents were not asked at any point when interacting with the participants, the researcher cannot accurately report a connection between their academic achievement and goals for themselves and their citizenship status. Some participants reported that they were born in the United States, however. Of those participants, excluding the one who is a freshman in high school, all of them graduated and either already completed postsecondary degrees or are currently studying in a university.

Alejandro and Antonia also commented with advice for politicians. Antonia stated that "everything starts with education and they should work harder on that side". She also suggested providing more incentives for teachers, "so that they work harder at the job". Alejandro stated:

> As for politicians, they should put on our shoes before, before making a law that affects millions of children, families, parents. …They should put on our shoes and think about how they would be affected if they were part of…of a group of migrants.

Participant Regrets

When asked to share if they had any regrets, a few participants were happy with their experiences, which reflects back to the satisfaction of achieving goals described earlier in the findings. However, some participants did have thoughts to share. Several of the participants would have liked to be more involved with sports or other extracurricular activities earlier on in their time in school. Edgar said he wished he had participated in activities besides soccer. His first year he focused on learning English and doing schoolwork. Enjoying high school was second to that. Fátima expressed the desire to have participated in clubs in addition to soccer. Shea, who attended one East Tennessee high school for 9th, 11th, and 12th grades, returning to Mexico for 10th grade, wished she had not returned to Mexico and would have attended the same high school all four years. She also wished she had participated in some kind of sport. Paloma would have liked to be more outgoing with speaking English, like her brother, Daniel. Daniel wished he had paid more attention to his studies:

> Um, pay more attention to studying…because when I arrived in the United States, like, what I was learning in Columbia in 5th grade, they were teaching me here in 8th grade. …So…I wasn't so into like my classes. …I wasn't very attracted to my classes because I felt like I already knew it, only in different languages. …But…when I arrived at high school, after starting to teach other things like that I didn't know. Then I also had like trouble… And it wasn't going well, and it always went well for me. I'm still good at school, but I was never very interested.

Daniel also commented on being apprehended with drugs: "…I would have liked not to have ever gotten into trouble because that also brings a bad image and things like that."

Regina and Esdras, the only two participants who did not graduate from high school (excluding the participants still in school), reflected on their regrets. Esdras wished he had put more effort into his studies and would have like to finish school online. Regina clearly and quickly shared her feelings and explained why speaking to parents is crucial.

> …Now that I…I'm 30 years. Now I look back and I'll say, uh, "We didn't really, really, really needed the money. We have to pay the person that brought us. But we could have do it in a different way. Work on the weekend maybe. So, we can do our work, our, at school…or get involved. Or do something because maybe we didn't speak, um, English. But we, maybe we could get a, um, scholarship to go to college… Like if they would have talked to my mom and my sister, I think it, it would have been different for me. …But nobody did…and I was working. And I thought that was the only thing. Work and some school…

The researcher found Regina's reflection to be very meaningful, even though she immigrated to East Tennessee 15 years prior, because her life experiences since high school, including working, completing her GED, and raising children of her own, have deeply impacted her perspective of her time in East Tennessee public schools and their effect on her life since.

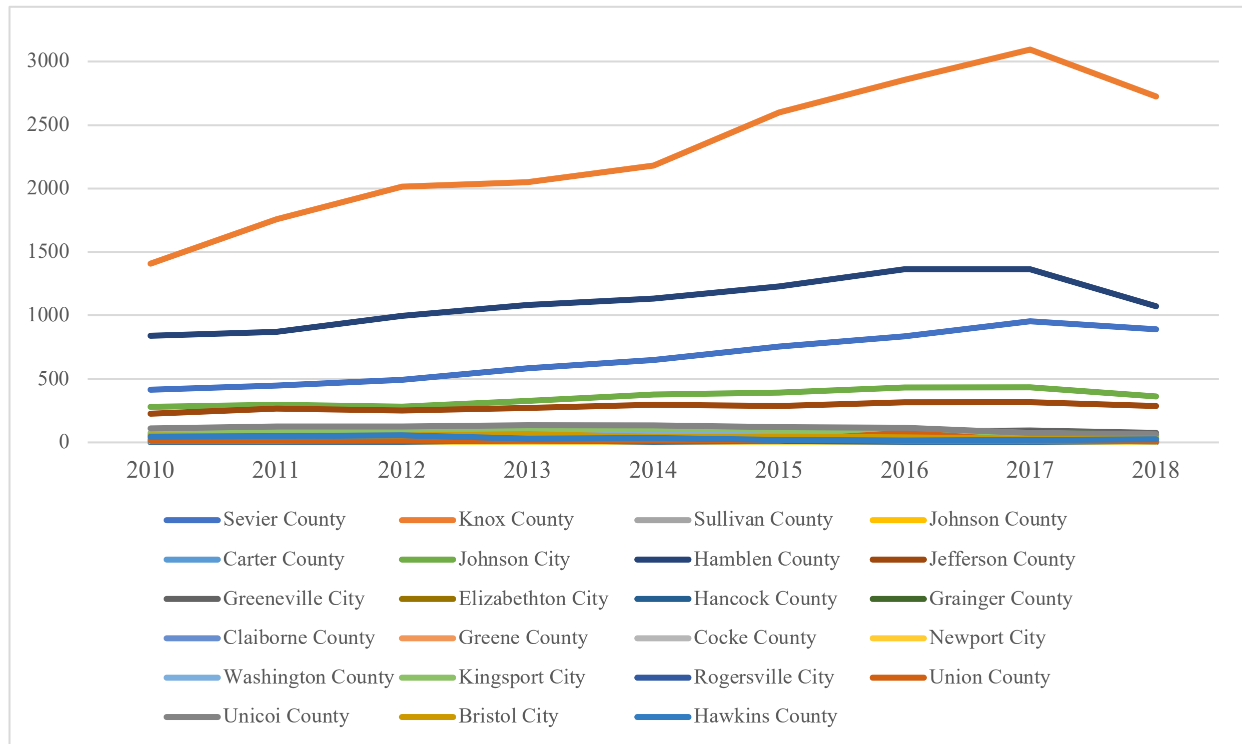
ELL Growth in East Tennessee

Most educators are aware that the ELL population is rapidly growing across the United States, as presented in Chapters 1 and 2. However, since this study focused on the experiences of adolescent Hispanic immigrants in East Tennessee, the researcher analyzed demographic data available to the public on the Tennessee Department of Education's website. Detailed demographics for the 2018-2019 school year were not available on the website at the time of the research, and attempts to receive these data via the TDOE Data Requests tool were unanswered.

Figure 1 shows the change in ELL numbers (all grades) between the 2010-2011 and 2017-2018 school years.

Figure 1

Change in ELL Numbers



Note. Based on data from the TDOE Data Download site regarding district data profiles between the 2009-2010 and 2017-2018 school years.

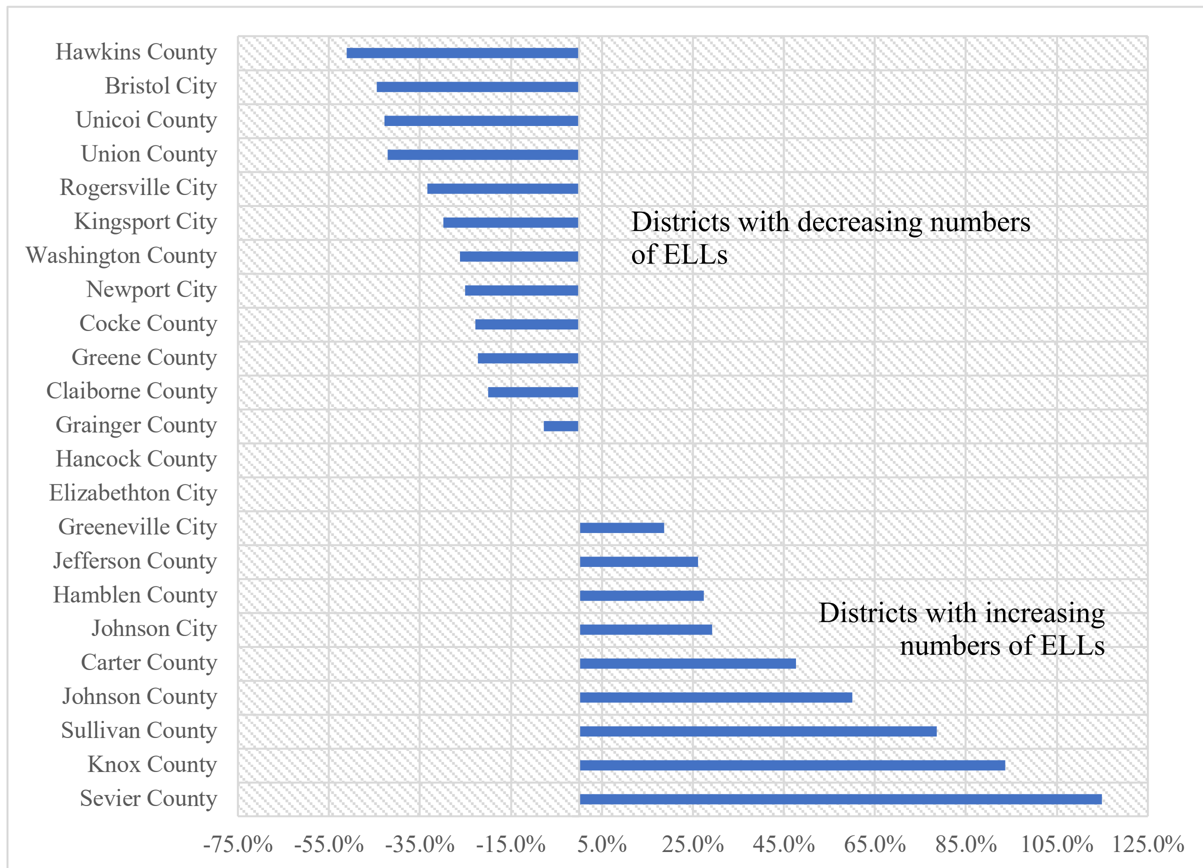
Figure 1 reveals that there has been high growth in the numbers of ELLs in East Tennessee in several districts. Although a decline in numbers was consistent across many districts in 2017, it is still evident that the beginning and ending points of the chart show growth.

The researcher analyzed the data further to compare the change in ELL numbers across the districts. While the literature reveals that there has been growth across all parts of the nation, the data reveal that in East Tennessee, some district numbers are actually declining. The data set

used for Figure 2 is the same data set used for Figure 1, including ELL numbers between the 2009-2010 and 2017-2018 school years.

Figure 2

Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time



Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site report the 2009-2010 through 2017-2018 school years.

The change in ELL numbers is represented by percentages and was calculated by comparing the number of ELLs in 2009-2010 to the number of ELLs reported in 2017-2018. For example, in the 2009-2010 school year, Sevier County reported serving 415 ELLs. In the 2017-2018 school year, they reported serving 819 ELLs, which shows a growth of 114.9%. Hawkins County, on the other hand, declined from 47 students to 23 students, reducing the ELL population by slightly

more than 50%. Numbers for each district and school year are shown in a table in Appendix B. Districts that showed an increase are included in Table 5 below. Careful examination of the data reveals that most district numbers continually grew over the years and then declined in the last year, as represented in Figure 1 above.

Table 5

Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time

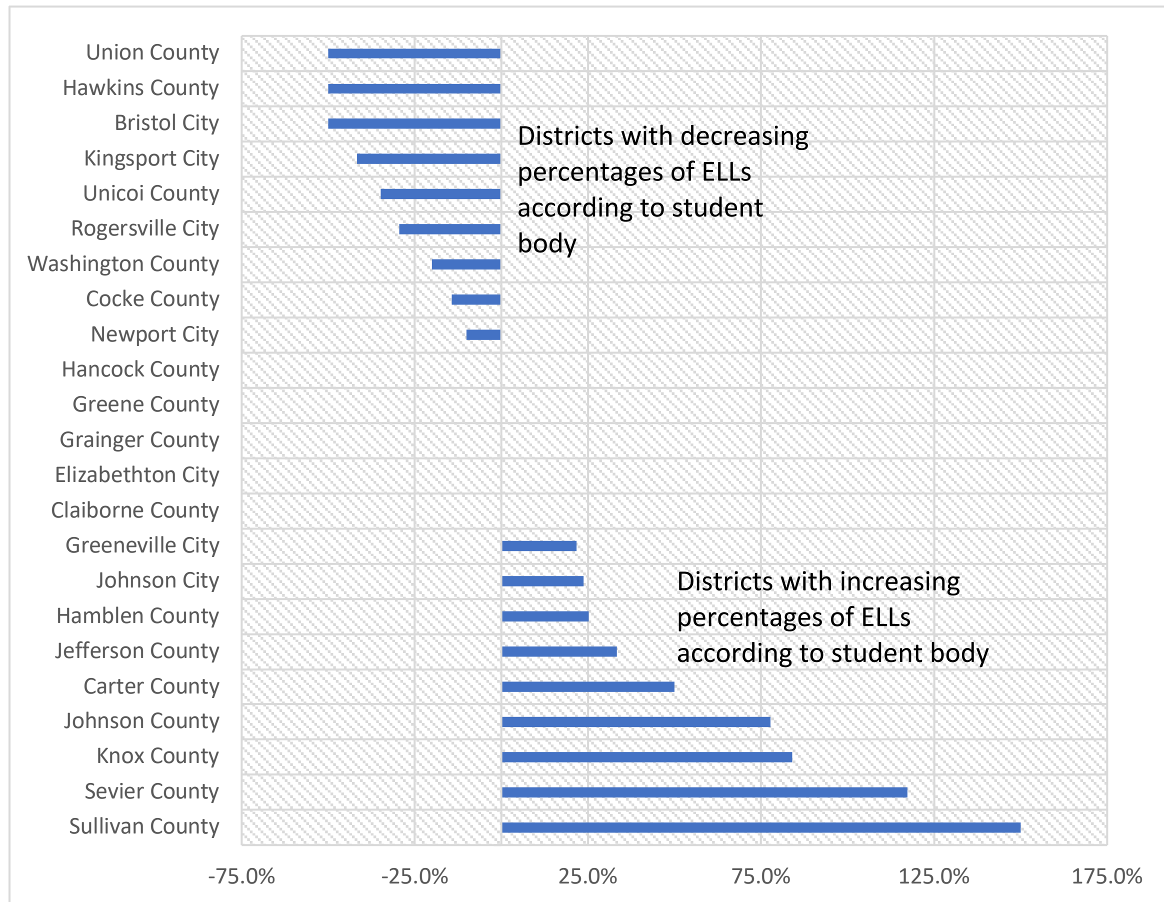
District/School Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change
Sevier County	415	450	495	584	647	756	834	954	892	114.9%
Knox County	1408	1757	2016	2051	2179	2597	2858	3094	2727	93.7%
Sullivan County	28	29	34	37	38	27	36	59	50	78.6%
Johnson County	20	18	12	35	34	30	38	38	32	60.0%
Carter County	21	17	19	29	39	26	28	35	31	47.6%
Johnson City	280	296	282	327	377	391	431	434	362	29.3%
Hamblen County	840	870	995	1080	1134	1227	1364	1364	1070	27.4%
Jefferson County	226	264	252	269	295	289	316	315	285	26.1%
Greeneville City	64	65	73	73	93	86	85	94	76	18.8%

Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site. Percent change was calculated by comparing number of ELLs for the first and last school years in the table. This is a portion of the table available in Appendix B, which shows the same data for all public school districts referenced in this study including and East of Knox County.

Finally, the same set of data were reorganized to show the change in ELL percentage when compared to the rest of the student body. This analysis was important because it is necessary to view the proportion of ELLs in the context of the student body. Only looking at increased numbers of ELLs might reveal growth, but it is important to know if the entire student body grew, or if only the ELL population increased. Likewise, a decline in ELLs might be consistent with an overall decline in student numbers and might not reveal significant findings related to ELL trends. Figure 3 shows the change in ELL portion of the student body.

Figure 3

Change in Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time



Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site report the 2009-2010 through 2017-2018 school years.

As an example, Sullivan County reported serving 28 ELLs during the 2009-2010 school year and 50 during the 2018-2019 school year. ELLs represented .2% of the Sullivan County student body at the beginning of the time period and .3% at the end of the time period, which may seem insignificant at first glance. The number of ELLs grew by nearly 79%, but the change in the student body percentage of ELLs was much higher, increasing by 150%. This layer of analysis also reveals that Sullivan County's proportion of ELLs grew more than any other district in East Tennessee. While the numbers are smaller and may not be alarming when considering all of East

Tennessee, is does indicate that educators, districts, and the state should make sure resources are in place to support this change. Table 6 below shows a portion of the data that was used to calculate this change, as well as the data for all school years in between. Appendix C includes this information, as well as the same information for the rest of the districts included in this study.

Table 6

Change in Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time

District/School Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change	% Change
Sullivan County	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.3	150.0%
Sevier County	2.9	3	3.4	4	4.4	5.2	5.7	6.5	6.3	3.4	117.2%
Knox County	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.3	4.7	5.1	4.6	2.1	84.0%
Johnson County	0.9	0.8	0.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.8	1.6	0.7	77.8%
Carter County	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.2	50.0%
Jefferson County	3	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.3	4	1	33.3%
Hamblen County	8.3	8.5	10.1	10.5	11.1	11.9	13.2	13.1	10.4	2.1	25.3%
Johnson City	3.8	6.8	3.8	4.2	4.8	4.9	5.4	5.4	4.7	0.9	23.7%
Greeneville City	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.6	3.3	3	2.9	3.3	2.8	0.5	21.7%

Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site. Percent change was calculated by comparing percentage for the first and last school years in the table. This is a portion of the table available in Appendix C, which shows the same data for all public school districts referenced in this study including and East of Knox County.

Regardless of which set of data studied (change in ELL numbers versus change in student body percentage of ELLs), it is clear that there are nine school districts with consistent growth: Greeneville City, Johnson City, Hamblen County, Jefferson County, Carter County, Johnson County, Knox County, Sevier County, and Sullivan County. While some of these districts have been known for their larger populations of ELLs, others are surprising, at least to the researcher. The researcher especially found the growth in Sullivan County interesting. At the same time, it is intriguing to reflect on the decline in ELLs, especially in Bristol City and Kingsport City, and even Unicoi County, which is known to have a large population of Hispanics. It should also be noted that there are districts where ELL populations have remained more or less stable. They are

represented in Figures 2 and 3 where there are no blue lines. Hancock County and Elizabethton City, for example, remained stable on both figures. Lastly, it is important to observe the shifts in ELL data geographically. While Kingsport City and Bristol City numbers and percentages declined, for example, Sullivan County (in which the two cities are seated), grew. Hawkins County, which also showed decline, is also near Sullivan County's boundaries. Likewise, while Greene County's ELL data declined, Greeneville City's data increased. Washington County's numbers decreased and Johnson City's grew, and while Elizabethton's data has remained stable, Carter County's numbers have grown.

A final analysis was completed to look more closely at growth in middle and high schools, since this study focused specifically on adolescent immigrant students. Table 7 includes this data for the last five school years. Data for school years before this time period were not included in the data downloads available on the TDOE website. This information does not include demographics in K-12 or K-8 schools, or any other grouping of schools that would not reveal specific information about ELL growth in grades 6 through 12. Studying this information is crucial because, as revealed in the literature, and has been the topic of this entire study, the experience for these students is very different from the experience of elementary ELLs as they have more time to adjust, learn English, and master content area classes. Recognizing this area of growth is also necessary to make this study and the data meaningful for readers and local educators and policymakers, revealing that this problem is not a figment of the researcher's imagination.

Table 7

ELLs in East Tennessee Middle and High Schools

District/School Year	2012-2013	2017-2018
Bristol City		8
Carter County		7
Claiborne County		1
Cocke County		10
Elizabethton City		1
Grainger County	12	14
Greene County	10	16
Greeneville City		24
Hamblen County	206	290
Hancock County		
Hawkins County		11
Jefferson County	51	55
Johnson City	94	138
Johnson County		8
Kingsport City	16	18
Knox County	383	896
Newport City[1]		
Rogersville City[2]		
Sevier County	134	334
Sullivan County		11
Unicoi County	45	33
Union County		3
Washington County		11

Note. Based on school demographic data from the TDOE Data Downloads page.

Only nine of the 23 districts reported serving ELLs in East Tennessee middle and high schools in the 2012-2013 school year. However, by the 2017-2018 school year, 20 of the 23 districts served ELL students in grades 6 through 12. Unicoi County is the only district that

[1] PK-8 only; feeds into Cocke County Schools
[2] PK-8 only; feeds into Hawkins County Schools

showed a decrease in the number of ELLs served during these grades. Newport City and Rogersville City appear to show no ELLs served in middle or high schools, but these districts each have one school serving students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grades. These schools feed into other districts. Public data for ELLs in grades 6 through 8 are not available for comparison. Hancock County is the only district without ELLs in the years represented in the table. It is also important to draw attention to the districts with very low numbers of ELLs served in these grades, because their experiences will be different from students in schools with larger numbers of ELLS. Consider, for example, there is only one adolescent ELL student in Claiborne County. This student will be more likely to feel lonely and suffer from social isolation than ELLs in Hamblen or Knox County.

Conclusion

The researcher conducted interviews using a set of semi-structured interview questions with the purpose of gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of adolescent Hispanic immigrant students in East Tennessee schools. The research questions of the study guided the formulation of the interview questions as well as the analysis of the interviews. In this chapter, the researcher introduced the participants and gave background information to help the reader connect with them. In addition, their experiences were detailed with thick description through quotes from the participants relating to aspects they carried with them to their new setting, as well as circumstances that shaped their experiences. As the interviews unfolded, experiences, perspectives, and themes were triangulated among subsequent interviews and through follow-up questions with previous participants. Data from the interviews were coded according to themes and categories, though throughout the process of analysis, the researcher often revisited the data and reorganized them slightly as the researcher interpreted varied

connections between experiences and observations. Finally, the researcher explained a second level of analysis that focused on growth and shifts in the ELL population as a whole and of adolescent newcomer ELL students specifically.

The researcher was surprised to learn about the power the role of the parents played in the stories of the participants and their peers. Additionally, the researcher did not presume before analysis that there was recently a decline in local numbers of ELL students across districts or that there has been a steady decline in ELLs in certain school districts, including some cities, because the literature indicated a blanket of ELL growth across the nation. Findings in this chapter may not be generalizable to a larger population, but the researcher hopes readers will be able to apply the findings to contexts similar to those presented here. Lastly, it is important to note that, although assuming TDOE data available to the public are accurate, the researcher was concerned about the accuracy of some of the data. For example, data included 101 ELLs in Grainger County during the 2014-2015 school year, while only reporting one ELL student the next school year.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences and challenges of Spanish-speaking immigrant or newcomer youth who entered U.S. public schools during middle or high school, specifically in upper East Tennessee. Chapters 1 and 2 presented the introduction to the topic and the review of literature. Chapter 3 presented the qualitative phenomenological methodology used to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of adolescent Hispanic newcomer students. Chapter 4 reviewed the themes identified through analysis of the interviews, as well as findings related to population change and shifts in East Tennessee over the past several years. The conclusions presented in Chapter 5 are based on knowledge gained from the literature review, as well as the researcher's interpretations of themes synthesized through analysis of the data collected from the interviews, as presented with rich description in Chapter 4. The researcher also included personal observations made during her time as a high school Spanish teacher who has worked with adolescent ELLs in the classroom. These conclusions will be organized by research question.

Conclusions

Research Question 1: What factors affect ELL student success in East Tennessee?

Some of the requirement for adolescent ELL student success identified by the literature are instruction that addresses English language development and content knowledge; sufficient and appropriate family support; professional support for teachers regarding the teaching of ELL students; a positive school climate; and attitude and motivation (Garner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horsford & Sampson, 2013). The findings of this study support the conclusions of the literature. However, the researcher of this study perceived participant attitude and motivation to be

influenced by parent and family “consejos” and by school climate. Therefore, conclusions of attitude and motivation will be included under the four categories presented by Horsford and Sampson. Three of the participants were freshmen in high school at the time of the interviews and had been in the United States for less than a year. For those reasons, conclusions regarding factors that foster academic success for Hispanic newcomer ELLs are limited to the remaining participants who are 18 or older and have graduated or will graduate during the current school year, or who have chosen to drop out of school.

Instruction

The participants acknowledged the language barrier as the most challenging aspect of their transition, but they also acknowledged the need for academic support for themselves and for future adolescent ELLs in content knowledge. Several participants specifically referenced a gap in content knowledge upon entering East Tennessee schools, whether it was their own gap or a gap they recognized among their peers, or both. Participants who were academically successful reported attending summer school, afterschool programs, and tutoring after school. They also suggested academic support for adolescent ELLs to help them understand the content knowledge better.

Family Influence

As presented in the literature review, the family is one of the most important values among Latinos and can help young people cope with adversity and be successful (Marrero, 2016; Murphey et al., 2014). The findings of this study confirm the researcher’s belief and findings presented in previous research, that the family is the most influential factor determining the path of an adolescent ELL student. The researcher identified two factors regarding family influence

that determined the academic success achieved among the participants – influence based on the parent perceptions of education, and parent support of educational endeavors.

Parent Perceptions of Education. Panferov (2010) found that the way parents perceive their role in their child's education and of school processes and policies is based on the experiences they had in school, which causes ELL parents to struggle to navigate the educational system in the United States for two reasons – the differences between the two educational systems and the amount of education they completed themselves. While this study did not cover differences between the educational systems between the U.S. and the participants' countries of origin, the researcher did acquire information regarding their parents' levels of education. Two of the participants did not complete high school – Regina and Esdras. Based on data from their interviews, the researcher believes the principal causes of their outcomes were different. Regina's outcomes were influenced by her parents' understanding, or lack thereof, of the benefits of completing school. While it can be argued that her family's socioeconomic status was an influential determiner, Regina believed firmly that her family could have adjusted their work schedules, allowing her to focus her attention to her studies during the week, if only the school had communicated with her parents regarding the importance of finishing school. She also believed there was a strong correlation between Hispanic parents' levels of education and their understanding and support of academic endeavors. Her beliefs coincide with Panferov's findings. While her parents' views of education cannot be determined with complete accuracy without their input, it can be deduced that her parents valued work more than education based on her statements. The researcher concluded that Regina represents adolescent Hispanic newcomer ELLs from low socioeconomic households whose parents' own educational experiences shape their belief that young people must eventually choose between education and work. This

conclusion is based not only on Regina's testimony, but also on the other participants' understandings of the decisions their peers made to leave school, and also based on the literature. Furthermore, adolescent newcomer ELLs with at least one parent who completed high school are more likely to graduate from high school and pursue postsecondary education.

Parent Support of Educational Endeavors. Parents' perceptions of education determine how they encourage their child's future paths. Parent support of educational endeavors includes deliberate actions like those represented in this study and in Ramos's findings by "consejos" – advice given that reinforces resiliency and perseverance; "sacrificios" – sacrifices made for the betterment of others; and "apoyo" – emotional and moral support. Most of the participants who were soon completing or who had previously completed their high school education were encouraged by their family to persevere through the trials of adjusting to a new culture, learning a new language, and completing academic requirements in order to graduate. Most of them were also encouraged to pursue postsecondary education. The participants overwhelmingly shared accounts of their parents' support. While manifestations of "consejos", "sacrificios", and "apoyo" were evident across participant testimonies, the researcher found "consejos" to be more prevalent. The "consejos" were given to instill and reiterate the value of education and the future a good education can bring, just as Ramos reported. Participants also specifically mentioned the "sacrificios" their parents made by coming to the United States or even moving somewhere else in East Tennessee to remove the participant from a perceived racist environment. Parents also supported participants through "apoyo", encouraging them after a difficult day at school, or simply by providing the materials needed for school or transportation to and from afterschool tutoring or soccer practice and games, and by encouraging studying and sleep. It is important to note that the researcher believes these types of support must be viewed

contextually and are determined by the parents' academic backgrounds and perceptions of education and work. The researcher adds, however, that this influence is not bound only to the parents. In the cases of the participants, extended family members and siblings with whom some of the participants lived provided the same supports. They, therefore, included accounts of how their aunts and uncles or grandparents supported them through "consejos", "sacrificios", and "apoyo", in addition to how their parents supported them from abroad, mostly through "consejos". Participants and their siblings also demonstrated personal ownership of the value of these three elements of support. Regina, for example, sacrificed education and participation in clubs and soccer as was expected of her so she could support her family financially, as did her older siblings. She also shared stories of her older sister giving her advice about school, and of giving the same support to her younger siblings. Regarding "consejos", the researcher was surprised at how carefully and thoughtfully the participants considered advice they would give to others, and how important it seemed to them to share their advice so others may benefit from their experiences. They demonstrated a profound desire to help others in their reflections, as observed by the researcher. Several participants also included strong opinions that the lack of parental support for education influenced the decision some of their peers made to drop out of school and work.

Finally, most of the participants credited their parents' influence as their motivation to do well in school, either through advice given directly to them or through values instilled in them from an early age. When crediting a specific family member with their motivation, participants reported their mother as the one who pushed and encouraged them, some saying their mothers were strict or tough, which supports claims made by Ramos (2014). This leads the researcher to conclude that Hispanic adolescent newcomer ELLs are motivated according to their parents'

values and perceptions of education, which are determined in part by the parents' level of education obtained. While this may seem to be common knowledge among educators, this may only be common knowledge regarding their beliefs about students from majority populations and nonELLs due to biases they may hold about students from different cultural backgrounds or with limited English proficiency. It is also important to understand that, in the countries in which their parents were educated, education may not be as equitable and accessible as it is here in the United States and compulsory education may not even exist or be enforced, as was presented in the literature. The researcher also concludes that, while understanding this group of students and their background is important, it is also important to understand the educational background of their parents.

School Climate

Blanco-Vega et al. (2008) reported that positive school climates help Latino youths achieve their goals and succeed academically, while also providing students from varying backgrounds opportunities to socialize and interact with each other, teaching them to do so in a tolerant and accepting manner. These attributes also decrease the likelihood that they will drop out of school. The literature indicates that Hispanic and Latino youths are highly likely to drop out of school and that those born outside of the United States, especially those without legal documentation, are even more likely to drop out than those born in the United States (Blanco-Vega et al., 2008; López, 2010; NCES, 2017). This held true for the participants among this study. Furthermore, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) found that there was a reciprocal relationship between attitude and motivation and second language achievement. Motivation and attitude influence language achievement and the individual's desire to interact with others in the target language. Likewise, language achievement and experiences while interacting in the target

language affect their motivation to use the language and attitude towards native speakers of the language. This was certainly the case with Regina, who recounted a specific story of a student who treated her poorly in class who made her not want to talk to anyone. While she did not correlate this event with being less outgoing with the language, she did communicate that she was not very outgoing with English.

The researcher of this study believes that the reciprocal relationship posited by Gardner and MacIntyre not only pertains to second language achievement but also to academic achievement, based on the experiences of the participants and on the literature. Participant motivation regarding their futures either pushed them to be successful academically or to leave education behind in order to work. At the same time, experiences in school, whether regarding their learning or their social experiences, either positively or negatively affected their motivation and attitudes towards educational aspirations and others in the learning environment. This conclusion is in alignment with Barajas-López (2014), who found that early positive experiences have positive effects on student motivation, while early negative experiences negatively affect student motivation. It also coincides with Marrero (2016), who posited that students will become motivated to "rise to the academic pursuits before them" when in a positive learning environment rich in caring, trusting relationships (p. 182). The next sections of this chapter will include discussion regarding the ways the participant interactions and experiences inside of their schools affected their educational outcomes, including the influence of principals and teachers as well as interactions with their peers.

The Principal is Key. Wrigley (2000) said the principal sets the tone of acceptance and encourages others to welcome minority students and their families, thereby establishing a positive school climate. While most of the participants could not remember negative attitudes

towards them during their experiences, three participants did remember negative attitudes and specifically mentioned perceiving racist treatment. While their recollections were only snapshots and did not provide an absolute representation of teacher and principal attitudes, it is clear that these three participants remembered negative feelings towards them from the general population. Fátima was very clear that the principal of her first school was especially racist, as were many others in the school with whom she interacted. The school climate affected her enough to push her mother to make the decision to move across the district so her daughter could attend a school that was more accepting of Hispanic immigrant students. While the other two participants who perceived racist and negative attitudes did not reference the principals, it is still clear that the school climate was not a warm, welcoming environment, for which the principal is responsible. It is the researcher's observation that the three participants who perceived negative attitudes from within their learning environment had the least successful outcomes of all of the participants who are 18 and older. They include Regina and Esdras, both of whom did not finish high school, and Fátima, who stated she did not care if she graduated or not, but she did because her parents wanted her to. She also maintained a very negative, hopeless position regarding opportunities for work and postsecondary opportunities for her and for other Hispanic adolescent students who were not born in the United States and are undocumented. While there are certainly other factors that contributed to their outcomes, the researcher believes there is a strong relationship between these participants' perceptions of negative attitudes and their disengagement from school.

Relationships with Teachers. While principals set the tone for creating positive school climate, teachers set the tone for creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom. This is not to say that principals do not influence classroom climate and that teachers do not contribute to creating an overall positive school climate beyond their own classrooms. Teachers and principals

work together to create a warm, welcoming learning environment. However, students spend more time with their teachers than their principals, and evaluating the relationships students have with their teachers also illuminates the condition of a school's climate.

The literature indicates that a positive school climate usually includes nurturing, trusting relationships between Hispanic and Latino adolescent ELLs and their teachers, which are essential in order for these students to feel valued and included (DeCapua and Marshall, 2011; Marrero, 2016). These relationships are established through sincere interest in the student's success, efforts to understand the student, and attention to their unique needs (Marrero, 2016). While this, again, sounds like common knowledge among educators, this is especially important for students from collectivist cultures, which are characterized by strong, caring relationships and attention to the wellbeing of the entire group. In fact, DeCapua and Marshall (2011) reported that this interconnectedness is one of the two most important conditions for their academic success. This explains why feelings of loneliness and of social isolation are commonly expressed by adolescent Hispanic and Latino immigrant newcomers as well as among the participants in this study, as was discussed in Chapter 4 and will be discussed in the conclusions pertaining to the second research question.

In DeCapua and Marshall's (2011) study, Latino students emphasized the importance of relationships with their peers and with their teachers. Likewise, participants in this study either specifically referenced an absence of meaningful relationships with teachers or indicated that teachers made intentional efforts to include them in the group. Participants also suggested, when asked to give advice for teachers working with this group of students, that teachers try harder to include these students. The researcher also noted that none of the participants referenced individual teachers with whom they shared a meaningful bond and who made a significant

impact in their educational experience in East Tennessee schools, which is a substantial recognition considering the fact that teachers are often viewed as part of the extended group in collectivist cultures (DeCapue and Marshall, 2011). The absence of these relationships did not noticeably impact all of the participants, but all of the participants who were successful academically had strong support networks at home that could help them cope with the challenges they faced at school. Esdras, on the other hand, was living with his aunt and uncle at the time of the interview because his parents lived in Mexico, but obtaining the consent of his aunt and uncle was a difficult task because Esdras indicated he did not see them very often. Similarly, Regina had family support at home, but she stated that her mother and siblings were all working different schedules and were rarely together. Furthermore, she said they did not pay attention to school matters. Several participants also referenced the fact that they believe their peers who chose to drop out of school did not have the necessary support from their parents. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the absence of strong, caring relationships with teachers does not necessarily negatively affect an adolescent Hispanic newcomer ELL's academic success, provided that they have a strong support network at home. However, for those who do not have a strong support network at home, the absence of these relationships further exacerbates the challenges they face in achieving academic success.

Finally, the researcher views deficit thinking as a symptom of a negative school climate, one that greatly prevents teachers from building trust and sincere, caring relationships with students. There was evidence of deficit thinking among teachers regarding the scholastic aptitude of this population of students, although it was not a common occurrence in this study's participants' experiences. Deficit thinking on the part of some of Esdras's teachers seemed to significantly impact his experience, possibly causing him to become disengaged from school,

which was a result of deficit thinking presented by Barajas-López (2014). Villegas and Lucas (2007) also found these low academic expectations to repress student learning and negatively affect their experiences. The researcher concludes that Esdras's experiences with teachers who demonstrated deficit thinking influenced his decision to drop out of school, agreeing with current literature. The researcher also believes that, while it may not always be obvious to students, deficit thinking commonly exists among teachers in East Tennessee. This belief is based on participant statements made, encouraging teachers not to give up on these students, as well as on personal observations made as an educator in East Tennessee.

Relationships with Peers. As previously mentioned, strong, caring relationships and interconnectedness are important for adolescent Hispanic newcomer ELLs, but this is not limited to relationships with teachers. It is also necessary that these students develop these types of relationships with their peers. Time with their peers, social support, a sense of belonging, and caring relationships are all factors that serve as supports for adolescent immigrants (Bartlett & Ramos-Olazagasti, 2018; Murphey, 2016). Interaction with peers inside the classroom was important to the participants because they felt a sense of belonging when teachers intentionally facilitated relationships in the classroom, either through pairing students together or by making sure the participants had a group to work with. If participants did not experience this inside the classroom, they included this as a suggestion for teachers. Participants also expressed comfort when there were bilingual peers in the classroom that could help them when they needed it.

Participants also reflected on social support outside of the classroom. Most of the participants longed for deeper social connections with their peers, which they communicated in several ways. Some participants specifically reported that they did not have friends in school, which also contributed to their feelings of loneliness and not fitting in. Even participants who

said they had at least a few friends said that, in the end, they wish they had been more socially active and had participated in clubs or sports. Many of the participants said all of their friends were Hispanic, reflecting a lack of cohesion among different groups in their schools. This may be less of a concern in schools where there are more Hispanics, like Morristown and Knoxville, but it is very concerning for students from schools with very few or even no other Hispanic students. Several participants specifically referenced friendships formed through soccer or other extracurricular activities. This was not an option for all of the participants, however. Esdras wanted to play soccer but could not due to his low grades, and Regina wanted to play soccer and even tried out and made the team, but her family did not allow her to play because they needed her to work.

The researcher concluded through the study that participant experiences with their peers affected their motivation and their attitude towards their peers and the learning environment either positively or negatively, circling back to the reciprocal relationship between language and academic achievement and attitude and motivation. Negative experiences with their peers caused some of them to experience language anxiety when talking with their nonELL peers, or even to make the decision not to talk to their English-speaking peers. This, therefore, affected English language acquisition and also their ability to comprehend content knowledge in English, since they were not developing language skills as quickly as participants who had more positive social experiences or who were more socially outgoing, like Daniel. Fátima and Regina especially expressed how treatment from racist students caused them to not want to talk to their English-speaking peers. Positive experiences with their peers, which usually included other Hispanic students, provided social support and gave participants comfort in their learning environment and a greater sense of personal enjoyment during their time in school. On the other hand, the desire

to establish relationships with peers was a factor that motivated some of them to be more involved in school and even to do well in classes, since good grades were required in order for them to participate in extracurricular activities.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of ELL student educational experiences in East Tennessee?

Participant experiences were varied with commonalities across the reflections. Whether they finished school or not, participants were mostly thankful for the opportunity to attend schools here in East Tennessee, either because they were able to learn English or because of the opportunities it gave them or both. Their initial experiences were characterized by feelings of loneliness, confusion, and anxiety. Teacher and principal cultural competence was problematic for several of them. Some shared particular points in their experiences that negatively impacted them, stemming largely from attitudes of racism and negative classroom or school climates. Some also referenced teacher competence, saying teachers may not have known how to work with ELLs. This was especially noticeable in schools with few ELLs. Some participants expressed the hopelessness undocumented ELLs feel towards education, since this limits their opportunities for the future. The researcher concludes that these experiences either caused them to disengage from their learning or prevented them from making positive connections with their teachers and learning.

All of the participants either reported that their experience was lonely or that they wish they had focused more on participating in extracurricular activities or becoming involved in ways besides just classes. They also indicated a lack of more personal relationships with their teachers, either directly or indirectly, even though most of them remembered at least some teachers who were helpful. For most of the participants, their support system was limited to their

family, who encouraged them and served as their primary source of motivation. Their language barrier made learning required content knowledge more difficult and required them to spend more time making sense out of the language and the content at the same time. This contributed to their lack of time for social endeavors. The language barrier, along with some of the negative experiences they had while interacting with their nonELLs and while in class (presenting in front of the class and other class activities that drew individual attention to them), caused most of them language anxiety, which inhibited their courage to use the English language, further preventing them from socializing with their peers. Participants who attended schools with few or no other Hispanics or ELLs were especially lonely during their time in school. Participants who were involved in extracurricular activities, especially soccer, were happier with their social support system, but still said their friends were mostly all Hispanic. Participants found comfort in and were grateful for bilingual classmates who could help them. In conclusion, the relationships participants had with their peers and teachers were not as rewarding as they would have liked for them to be or as they needed them to be for their personal satisfaction, which is determined by their cultural background.

Research Question 3: What do ELL students perceive to be the characteristics of teachers who influenced their success?

When asked to describe teachers who were helpful, the primary characteristic participants reported was that they were patient. Teachers took the time to repeat themselves and answer their questions. Some of them specifically said teachers would use drawings or say things in a different way so they could understand them better. Some participants fondly remembered teachers who made sure they were included in class or who assigned them a peer in the class to work with. If there were bilingual students, they asked them to help translate for them.

Participants also said teachers who were bilingual were able to help them more, and one even said all of his teachers loved Mexican culture. Participants found it helpful for teachers to offer alternative assignments, adjusted to their abilities with the language. Even participants who did not say their teachers offered alternatives suggested that teachers do so. Teachers who were understanding were also highlighted.

Recommendations for Practice

Growth over the past several years in East Tennessee has carried middle and high schools and districts that had no adolescent ELLs five years ago to serving several or many within a relatively short period of time. Wrigley's findings tell us that there have been many students, due to this growth, that have experienced negative interactions with people who fear and misunderstand their differences because of negative stereotypes they believe. Current data also tell us this will continue to happen as the ELL population in East Tennessee continues to grow and shift since there are still districts with very few or even no ELL students, as is the case in Hancock County.

Recommendations for practice include suggestions for teachers, administrators, and district or state-level officials who influence policies and practice. While teachers make decisions about student learning and directly influence classroom situations that influence student outcomes, administrators, district and state-level officials influence policies and practice that ensure teachers, schools and districts have access to the resources needed to fully and appropriately serve adolescent newcomer ELLs and their families. Examples of these resources include bilingual personnel and access to professional translating and interpreting services, the absence of which limits parent involvement in the decision-making process.

Increasing Diversity and Cultural Competence Among School Personnel

1) States and districts should create a more diverse population of district and school personnel that is representative of the student body by providing incentives for certified bilingual teachers; recruiting minority, administrators, counselors, and teachers, especially in content areas, not just limited to foreign language and ESL teachers; create positions for bilingual teacher's aides to help ELLs transition and succeed; and provide temporary emergency teaching certificates for people who are bilingual and have content knowledge, but lack content certification. Allow time for these individuals to meet certification requirements.
2) District and school personnel (administrators, teachers and counselors) should be educated about growth and shifts in ELL population, factors that contribute to their success, factors that exacerbate their challenges, and the strength of the Hispanic parent's influence on their child's education.
3) Teachers and schools should be watchful for negative attitudes or racist behavior directed at ELLs and discipline students who exhibit this behavior in the same way you would a student who bullies another. Racist behavior and derogatory comments by adults and students should not be ignored.

Encouraging Relationships with Students

1) Principals should ask Spanish teachers or other bilingual staff to teach basic Spanish phrases and vocabulary (and how to pronounce their names correctly) to school personnel and encourage them to communicate with ELLs, even if only a little (greetings, etc.), for the purpose of establishing relationships with ELLs and making them feel welcome and included.

2) School personnel should be intentional about establishing a close, caring relationship with ELLs and their families. Examples include knowing and acknowledging important personal events like birthdays and using apps and other interactive technology to communicate directly with student and their parents.

Encouraging Relationships Among Peers

1) Principals and teachers should create a collaborative, cooperative atmosphere in the school and in classrooms that encourages relationships between peers, especially between ELLs and nonELLs. School personnel should be sure ELLs are aware of special events and opportunities in the school, such as sports tryouts, concerts, prom, homecoming, sporting events, parent/teacher conferences, etc. and encourage them to participate, which will help them build relationships with their peers and to feel included.
2) Schools should make efforts to schedule ELLs in classes with bilingual peers that may be able to help them. If there are bilingual students in the same class as an ELL, teachers should seat them close together and assign the bilingual student as a peer helper in the classroom. If there are no bilingual students, teachers should find a kind, caring, socially outgoing student who would be good to help the ELL, allowing them to use apps like Google Translate to communicate.
3) Provide regular times when students can socialize during the school day. When monitoring the cafeteria during lunches or other times when students have time to socialize, school personnel should try to communicate with ELLs and make sure they are not alone. Adults set the example for students and they need to see adults interact with these students in a positive way despite language barriers and cultural differences.

Building Relationships with Parents

1) Schools (or districts, if numbers are low) should schedule events specifically for ELL families with the goal of orienting parents to American schools and educating parents about the need for their child to graduate school, resources available to them, and ways their children can receive help when struggling with classwork. Provide a certified translator for these and other events, like parent/teacher conferences, instead of placing the responsibility on parents and their family and friends.
2) Use multiple methods of communicating specifically with Spanish speaking parents in Spanish and follow up with them regularly. Make sure mass letters and announcements include Spanish translations so they are well-informed about services provided for students. This highlights the need for bilingual staff and access to translators.

Increasing Access to Content While Building English Language Skills

1) Districts and schools should ensure (and require) ongoing (not just one-time) training for teachers regarding the differences between collectivist and individualist cultures, culturally responsive teaching, overcoming language barriers, limiting language anxiety, differentiation for ELLs, and how to create warm, welcoming classroom environments that enhance relationships between ELLs and their nonELL peers. State-level personnel should ensure teacher preparation programs include this training as well. Training should specifically focus on the unique needs of adolescent newcomer ELLs.
2) Districts and schools should allow regular opportunities for teachers to connect and collaborate with ESL teachers and content-area teachers who have experience serving newcomer ELLs.

3) Teachers should encourage students to communicate in English, read newspapers and magazines in English, and to participate in class as much as possible. They should pay attention to the student's individual interests and help them find reading and listening sources in English related to their interests. Parents and students must also have access to reading materials in English at home, as well as Spanish-English dictionaries and other tools that help them connect with and understand English.
4) Schools and teachers should provide support for students who do not have the required background knowledge for the course and seek out people and resources that can help them. Teachers should connect with ESL teachers and other content-area teachers who have worked with ELLs in similar contexts through school and district networks and even groups on social media, and by working with principals to find and provide bilingual tutors in the area.
5) Teachers should provide copies of classroom papers and assessments in Spanish and English, if possible, so ELLs can compare the languages side-by-side. They should also simplify or modify materials and assignments, making content more comprehensible and attainable for ELLs, and assign different types of tasks to ELLs when requiring students to present or do other individual tasks that draw attention to them if they are uncomfortable doing the original assignment.

Motivating and Supporting Academic Achievement

1) Districts and schools should collaborate with local colleges and universities to create a mentoring and tutoring program for adolescent newcomer ELLs. Previous newcomer ELLs who successfully completed school and pursued postsecondary educational opportunities are ideal candidates.

2) Principals should work with ESL teachers, content area teachers, and counselors to create a program for supporting ELLs during their first two years in school since this is such a critical time for establishing relationships and a positive attitude towards the learning environment, which increase their chances of academic success. Interventions should pay attention to individual factors and contextual factors (school environment, relationships, community environment, parent academic background, etc.) that could negatively affect their outcomes and cause them to drop out of school or develop other maladaptive behaviors.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the results of this study have provided the researcher with more of an understanding of the lived experiences of Hispanic adolescent newcomer ELLs, there is much more to be uncovered. Because of the small sample size of this qualitative study, it is important to remember that the findings are not generalizable to the whole population. As presented in this study, there is an incredible amount of diversity among this nation's immigrant population. Newcomer experiences vary greatly depending on their own background and the background of their parents. There is more information to be gleaned regarding the experiences of adolescent newcomer ELLs who are in different stages of their experience and who are still students. Participants who were nearing high school graduation and participants who had already exited high school had more to share than the participants who were younger and had only been in the country for less than two years. Further research is needed to understand their initial experience (two years or less of residence) in more depth. Building trust with these individuals is more difficult, however, because they are so new to the country, they do not know who they can trust. This research would need to include observations or journal entries or even should be conducted

for a prolonged period, which is described by Creswell and Miller (2000) as a methodology good for revealing the experience through the participant's lens.

Further research is also needed to understand the experience of adolescent newcomer ELLs who arrived as unaccompanied minors. Many unaccompanied minors are released to extended family and do not have a very strong home support system like other newcomer ELLs might have. Additionally, they may be homeless or may not live consistently in one place. Therefore, it may be challenging to obtain guardian consent, and they may also be less likely to trust outsiders, which leaves a significant portion of this population not only as undocumented residents, but also as undocumented in educational research.

REFERENCES

Arthur, A. R. (2019, April 1). Unaccompanied Alien Children and the Crisis at the Border. https://cis.org/Report/Unaccompanied-Alien-Children-and-Crisis-Border

Barabasch, A. (2018). The narrative approach in research and its use for policy advice [Abstract]. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 37*(4), 468.

Barajas-López, F. (2014). Mexican immigrant students' schooling experiences and the construction of disengagement in mathematics learning contexts. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *13*(1), 14-32. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274175860_Mexican_Immigrant_Students'_Schooling_Experiences_and_the_Construction_of_Disengagement_in_Mathematics_Learning_Contexts

Bartlett, J. D., & Ramos-Olazagasti, M. A. (2018, June 22). Supporting children and parents affected by the trauma of separation. *Child Trends.* https://www.childtrends.org/publications/supporting-children-parents-affected-trauma-separation

Batt, E. G. (2008). Teachers' perceptions of ELL education: Potential solutions to overcome the greatest challenges. *Multicultural Education.*

Blanco-Vega, C. O., Castro-Olivo, S. M., & Merrell, K. W. (2008). Social–emotional needs of Latino immigrant adolescents: A sociocultural model for development and implementation of culturally specific interventions. *Journal of Latinos and Education,7*(1), 43-61. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430701693390

Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2016). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map*

from beginning to end. Los Angeles: SAGE.
https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/47686_ch_1.pdf

Cole, M. W. (2013). *Rompiendo el silencio*: Meta-analysis of the effectiveness of peer-mediated learning at improving language outcomes for ELLs. *Bilingual Research Journal, (36)* 146-166.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271938514_Rompiendo_el_Silencio_Meta-Analysis_of_the_Effectiveness_of_Peer-Mediated_Learning_at_Improving_Language_Outcomes_for_ELLs

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1993). *A concern about…Limited English Proficient students in intermediate schools and in high schools.* 40, 1-7.

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Plano, V. L. C., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative Research Designs. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *35*(2), 236–264.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390

CST Editorial Board. (December, 2019). When Chicago schools meet immigrant families halfway, kids learn. *Chicago Sun Times.* https://www.chicago.suntimes.com

DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2011). Reaching ELLs at Risk: Instruction for Students With Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education forChildren and Youth, 55*(1), 35-41.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254347313_Reaching_ELLs_at_Risk_Instruction_for_Students_With_Limited_or_Interrupted_Formal_Education

De Mente, B. L. (1996). *NTCs dictionary of Mexican cultural code words*. Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing Group.

Egalite, A. J. (2016). How Family Background Influences Student Achievement. *EducationNext*, *16*(2). https://www.educationnext.org/how-family-background-influences-student-achievement/

Flynn, K., & Hill, J. (2005, December). English language learners: A growing population.

Fredricks, D. E., & Warriner, D. S. (2016). *"We speak English in here and English only!"*: Teacher and ELL youth perspectives on restrictive language education. *Bilingual Research Journal, 39*(3-4), 309-323. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15235882.2016.1230565

Gardner, R., & MacIntyre, P. (1993). A student's contributions to second-language learning. Part II: Affective variables. *Language Teaching, 26*(1), 1-11. https://www.academia.edu/5307268/A_students_contribution_to_Second_Language_Learning_Part_II_Affective_Factors

González, M. S., Plata, O., García, E., Torres, M., & Urrieta, L. (2003). Testimonios de inmigrantes: Students educating future teachers. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 2*(4), 233-243.

Henry, P. (2015). Rigor in Qualitative Research: Promoting Quality in Social Science Research. *Research Journal of Recent Sciences*, *4*, 25–28. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282253479_Rigor_in_Qualitative_research_Promoting_quality_in_Social_Science_Research

Hernandez, D. J., & Napierala, J. S. (2012, June 12). *Children in immigrant families: Essential to America's future*. https://www.fcd-us.org/children-in-immigrant-families-essential-to-americas-future/

Horsford, S., & Sampson, C. (2013). High-ELL-growth states: Expanding funding equity and

opportunity for English language learners. *Voices in Urban Education, 37*(24).

Kirp, D. L. (2013). *Improbable scholars: The rebirth of a great American school system and a strategy for America's schools*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kreck, C. (2014, November 4). *Learning English in rural America* (Publication). Retrieved August 19, 2018, from Education Commission of the States website: https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/15/59/11559.pdf

Lester, Stan. (1999). An introduction to phenomenological research. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255647619_An_introduction_to_phenomenological_research

López, F. (2010). Identity and motivation among Hispanic English language learners in disparate educational contexts. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 18 (*16). Retrieved August 19, 2018 from http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/717

López, M., Hofer, K., Bumgarner, E., & Taylor, D. (2017). *Developing culturally responsive approaches to service diverse populations: A resource for community-based organizations.* National Research Center for Hispanic Children & Families. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/developing-culturally-responsive-approaches-serving-diverse-populations-resource-guide-community-based-organizations

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Macdonald, W. L. (1998). *English-speaking migrant children in educational and cultural*

transition (Unpublished master's thesis). Curtin University of Technology. https://espace.curtin.edu.au/bitstream/handle/20.500.11937/1322/10503_Macdonald, Winifred 1998.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

Mancilla, L., Blair, A., & Cuéllar, D. (2016). *ABCs of family engagement: Key considerations for building relationships with families and strengthening family engagement practices* (United States, WIDA). https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/ABCs-Family-Engagement.pdf

Marrero, F. (2016). Barriers to school success for Latino students. *Journal of Education and Learning, 5*(2), 180-186. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1097395.pdf

Marx, S., & Larson, L. (2012). Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(2), 259-303. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11421923

Miller, K. (2003). English language learners and the No Child Left Behind Act. *Changing Schools, Fall*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Mitchell, C. (2018, January 17). Rising number of ESL students poses challenges for U.S. schools [Blog post]. http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning-the-language/2018/01/rising_number_of_esl_students_pose_challenges_for_schools.html

Murphey, D. (2014). *The academic achievement of English language learners: Data for the U.S. and each of the States* (Issue brief No. 2014-62). Bethesda, MD: Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/the-academic-achievement-of-english-language-learners

Murphey, D. (2016, September 7). *Moving beyond trauma: Child migrants and refugees in the*

United States. Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/moving-beyond-trauma-child-migrants-and-refugees-in-the-united-states

Murphey, D., Guzman, L., & Torres, A. (2014, September 24). *America's Hispanic children: Gaining ground, looking forward*. Child Trends Hispanic Institute. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-38AmericaHispanicChildren.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coj.asp

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2013). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *42*(5), 533–544. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24193818

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice,49*(2), 106-112. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841003626551

Patel, S. G., Barrera, A. Z., Strambler, M. J., Muñoz, R. F., & Macciomei, E. (2016) The achievement gap among newcomer immigrant adolescents: Life stressors hinder Latina/o academic success. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 15*(2), 121-133. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2015.1099529

Peralta, C. (2013, September 05). Fractured memories, mended lives: The schooling experiences of Latinas/os in rural areas. *Bilingual Research Journal, 36*(2), 228-243.

Plata-Potter, S. I., & Guzman, M. R. (2012). Mexican immigrant families crossing the

education border: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Latinos and Education,11*(2), 94-106. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2012.659563

Portes, P., & Salas, S. (2010). In the shadow of Stone Mountain: Identity development, structured inequality, and the education of Spanish-speaking children. *Bilingual Research Journal, 33*(2), 241-248.

Rahman, M. S. (2017). The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches and Methods in Language "Testing and Assessment" Research: A Literature Review. *Journal of Education and Learning,6*(1), 102-112. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v6n1p102

Raja, W. B., & Selvi, K. (2011, October-December). Causes of problems in learning English as a second language as perceived by higher secondary students. *Journal on English Language Teaching, 1*(4), 40-45.

Ramos, M. (June, 2014). *The strengths of Latina mothers in supporting their children's education: A cultural perspective* (pp. 1-7, Publication No. 2014-29). Bethesda, MD: Child Trends Hispanic Institute.

Ramos-Olazagasti, M. A., Guzman, L., Alvira-Hammond, M., Miller, E., Padilla, C., Ryberg, R., & Vega, C. (2018, June 20). How well do national surveys measure Hispanic families and households? *Child Trends.* http://www.hispanicresearchcenter.org/publications/family-data-scan/

Salerno, A. (1991). *Migrant students who leave school early: Strategies for retrieval. ERIC Digest.*

Sha, M., McAvinchey, G., Quiroz, R., & Moncada, J. (2017). Successful Techniques to Recruit Hispanic and Latino Research Participants. *Survey Practice*, *10*(3), 1–9.

https://www.surveypractice.org/article/2778-successful-techniques-to-recruit-hispanic-and-latino-research-participants

Spagat, E. (2019, October 25). Tally of children split at border tops 5,400 in new count. *Associated Press.* https://www.pbs.org/newshour/

Sugarman, J. (2018, June). *A matter of design: English learner program models in K-12 education* (pp. 1-20, Issue brief No. 2). Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/english-learner-program-models-k-12-education

Sugarman, J., & Lee, K. (2017, March). *Facts about English learners and the NCLB/ESSA transition in Tennessee*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

State of Tennessee Report Card. (n.d.). https://reportcard.tnk12.gov/districts/0/page/DistrictOverall

Takanishi, R., & Menestrel, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Promoting the educational success of children and youth learning English: Promising futures*. https://doi.org/10.17226/24677

Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d. -a). English as a Second Language. https://www.tn.gov/education/instruction/academic-standards/english-as-a-second-language.html

Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d. -b). 2018-2019 State Report Card. Retrieved 2020, from https://reportcard.tnk12.gov/

Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d. -c). Data Downloads and Requests. Retrieved 2020, from https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html

Tennessee Department of Education. (2018a). *Supporting all English language learners across Tennessee*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/cpm/EL_Framework.pdf

Tennessee Department of Education. (2018b). *Supporting long-term English learners.* https://eplan.tn.gov/documentlibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentKey=1401665&inline=true

Tennessee Department of Education. (2018c). *TDOE releases 2018 English learner assessment results*. https://www.tn.gov/education/news/2018/10/3/tdoe-releases-2018-english-learner-assessment-results.html

Tennessee Department of Education. (2018d). *English as a Second Language Manual*. https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/cpm/ESL_Manual.pdf

Tennessee Department of Education. (2018e). *Teacher and Administrator Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Tennessee.* *https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reports/rpt_teacher_admin_diversity.pdf*

United States Census Bureau. (2018, March 7). About Hispanic Origin. https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html

United States of America, Department of Education. (2012). U.S. Department of Education policy directive to ensure meaningful access to federally conducted services, programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency [PDF]. https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/foia/acsocroco1102.pdf

United States of America, Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2017a). *English learners (ELs): Absenteeism, retention, and suspension.* https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/05-19-2017/ELsAbsenteeismRetentionSuspension_FastFacts.pdf

United States of America, Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition.

(2017b). *Profiles of English learners (ELs)*. https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/05-19-2017/ProfilesOfELs_FastFacts.pdf

United States of America, Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2018a). *English learner (EL) populations by local education agency.* https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/LEAs_Fact_Sheet_2018_Final.pdf

United States of America, Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2018b). *English learners (ELs) who are Hispanic/Latino*. https://www.ncela.us/files/fast_facts/FastFacts-HispanicELs-2018.pdf

United States of America, Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2018c). *National and state-level high school graduation rates for English learners.* https://ncela.ed.gov/files/fast_facts/GraduationRatesFactSheet.pdf

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2007, March). The culturally responsive teacher. *Educational Leadership,* 28-33.

Wisniewski, R., Ryan, S., & Goodwin, B. (2015). Changing Schools: Focus on diverse learners (H. Hein, Ed.) [Editorial]. https://issuu.com/mcrel/docs/20150318_cs_edits_8db9a525e046bb

Wrigley, P. (2000). The challenge of educating English language learners in rural areas. *NABE News*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. How long did you live in that country?
4. What was your first language? What language did you and your family speak at home?
5. Did you go to school in that country? How long or until what grade?
6. Describe your school experience in your country of origin.
7. Did you enjoy going to school in your country of origin?
8. What did you like the most about school in your country of origin?
9. Did you study English or any other second language in your country of origin?
10. How old were you when you came to the United States?
11. When did you first enter public school in Tennessee?
12. How many schools did you attend in East Tennessee? Did you transfer to other schools, or did you stay in the school you entered in Tennessee?
13. Were there other students like you (who spoke Spanish and little or no English) in the school(s) you attended in East Tennessee?
14. Describe your experience when you first started school in East Tennessee.
15. In your opinion, what did the teachers and principals think about students from diverse backgrounds?
16. What was the most difficult part about going to school in East Tennessee?
17. Who in the schools helped you adjust to school when you first came to Tennessee?
18. In what specific ways did teachers in Tennessee help you learn and be successful?
19. Describe someone in the school who helped you.
20. What were common characteristics of people who helped you be successful in schools in East Tennessee?
21. How did your family support you as a student here in East Tennessee?
22. How did other students in school treat you?
23. Did you have many friends in school?

24. Did other students help you in school? How?
25. How much were you able to interact with English-speaking students in school? When and where?
26. What was the most difficult part of learning to speak English?
27. What motivated you to learn English?
28. Did you graduate from high school?
29. Did you progress through the grades with your peers at a regular pace, or did you need more time than usual to pass the courses you needed to graduate?
30. How long did it take you to learn enough English to be confident in your classes?
31. How did you feel when you were in a situation where you had to speak English outside of your English class? (Ex: in math class, with your peers in the cafeteria, outside of school, etc.)
32. What did you do when you were struggling with a class in school?
33. If you graduated, what motivated you to stay in school?
34. If you did not graduate, why did you decide to leave school?
35. What did you do after you graduated or left school?
36. What advice would you give others who immigrate to the US and enter public schools in middle school or high school in East Tennessee knowing little or no English?
37. Is there anything you wish you had done differently?
38. If you had a chance to talk to educators in public schools in East Tennessee about helping young people like you to be successful, what would you tell them? What would you want them to know?

APPENDIX B

Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time

Table 5

Change in Numbers of ELLs Over Time

District/School Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	% Change
Sevier County	415	450	495	584	647	756	834	954	892	114.9%
Knox County	1408	1757	2016	2051	2179	2597	2858	3094	2727	93.7%
Sullivan County	28	29	34	37	38	27	36	59	50	78.6%
Johnson County	20	18	12	35	34	30	38	38	32	60.0%
Carter County	21	17	19	29	39	26	28	35	31	47.6%
Johnson City	280	296	282	327	377	391	431	434	362	29.3%
Hamblen County	840	870	995	1080	1134	1227	1364	1364	1070	27.4%
Jefferson County	226	264	252	269	295	289	316	315	285	26.1%
Greeneville City	64	65	73	73	93	86	85	94	76	18.8%
Elizabethton City	9	16	15	16	24	27	22	14	9	0.0%
Hancock County	0	0	1	0	1	4	4	2	0	0.0%
Grainger County	65	83	92	102	101	1	48	80	60	-7.7%
Claiborne County	10	17	13	12	11	7	14	15	8	-20.0%
Greene County	63	72	59	66	76	66	54	71	49	-22.2%
Cocke County	35	40	48	51	37	26	20	29	27	-22.9%
Newport City	8	8	8	0	8	6	7	10	6	-25.0%
Washington County	42	65	75	82	84	52	40	41	31	-26.2%
Kingsport City	77	82	95	101	111	98	82	75	54	-29.9%
Rogersville City	12	12	11	15	9	11	13	13	8	-33.3%
Union County	19	15	13	17	14	16	75	11	11	-42.1%
Unicoi County	112	123	124	133	134	121	113	77	64	-42.9%
Bristol City	54	50	56	65	47	44	39	32	30	-44.4%
Hawkins County	47	52	56	28	35	20	15	22	23	-51.1%

Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site. Percent change was calculated by comparing numbers for the first and last school years in the table.

APPENDIX C

Change of Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time

Table 6

Change in Student Body Percentage of ELLs Over Time

District/School Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Change	% Change
Sullivan County	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.3	150.0%
Sevier County	2.9	3	3.4	4	4.4	5.2	5.7	6.5	6.3	3.4	117.2%
Knox County	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.5	3.7	4.3	4.7	5.1	4.6	2.1	84.0%
Johnson County	0.9	0.8	0.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.8	1.6	0.7	77.8%
Carter County	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.2	50.0%
Jefferson County	3	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.9	3.8	4.2	4.3	4	1	33.3%
Hamblen County	8.3	8.5	10.1	10.5	11.1	11.9	13.2	13.1	10.4	2.1	25.3%
Johnson City	3.8	6.8	3.8	4.2	4.8	4.9	5.4	5.4	4.7	0.9	23.7%
Greeneville City	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.6	3.3	3	2.9	3.3	2.8	0.5	21.7%
Claiborne County	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0	0.0%
Elizabethton City	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.6	1	1	0.9	0.5	0.4	0	0.0%
Grainger County	1.8	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.8	0	1.3	2.3	1.8	0	0.0%
Greene County	0.8	1	0.8	0.9	1	0.9	0.8	1	0.8	0	0.0%
Hancock County	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.2	0	0	0.0%
Newport City	1	3.7	1.1	0	1	0.8	0.9	1.4	0.9	-0.1	-10.0%
Cocke County	0.7	0.8	1	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.6	-0.1	-14.3%
Washington County	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4	-0.1	-20.0%
Rogersville City	1.7	1.7	1.6	2.2	1.3	1.7	2	1.9	1.2	-0.5	-29.4%
Unicoi County	4.3	4.6	4.7	5.1	5.2	4.8	4.7	3.3	2.8	1.5	-34.9%
Kingsport City	1.2	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.1	1	0.7	-0.5	-41.7%
Bristol City	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.7	-0.7	-50.0%
Hawkins County	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	-0.3	-50.0%
Union County	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	4.6	0.3	0.3	-0.3	-50.0%

Note. Based on district demographic data from the TDOE Data Download site. Percent change was calculated by comparing percentages for the first and last school years in the table.

VITA

SARAH M. MOULD

Education:	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN Ed.D. Educational Leadership, 2020
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN M.A. Teaching, 2006
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN B.A. Foreign Language, 2004
Professional Experience:	9-12 Spanish Teacher, 2019 – Present Sullivan County Schools, TN
	Quillen Scholar, 2016-2018 East Tennessee State University, TN
	9-12 Spanish Teacher, 2013-2019 Greene County Schools, TN
	Learning Leader, 2014-2019 Greene County Schools, TN
	Spanish Adjunct Instructor, 2010-2013 East Tennessee State University, TN Milligan College, TN Northeast State Community College, TN
	9-12 Spanish Teacher, 2009-2010 Johnson City Schools, TN
	9-10 Spanish Teacher, 2006-2009 Plano Independent School District, TX
Professional Presentations:	Personalized Learning through Language Lab Tech., Presenter, 2015 Niswonger Symposium, Greeneville, TN
	Hands-on Workshop: Language Lab Technology, Presenter, 2015 Niswonger Foundation, Greeneville, TN