

THE EDUCATIONAL STRUGGLES OF THREE EMERGENT BILINGUALS: A CRITICAL
ETHNOGRAPHY

by

Venancio V. Saldaña

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a major in School Improvement
May 2023

Committee Members:

Miguel Angel Guajardo, Co-Chair

Khalid Arar, Co-Chair

Melissa A. Martinez

James W. Koschoreck

Benjamin Grijalva

COPYRIGHT

by

Venancio V. Saldaña

2023

DEDICATION

I dedicate the work and efforts of this study to my wife, Dolores, and my children, Diego and Karina, who were an inspiration and motivation for me to accomplish this lifetime goal of earning a doctoral degree. I will forever be grateful for the sacrifices made throughout this journey. Los Amo!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with great appreciation and gratitude that I acknowledge the many who have helped me through this journey. I began this journey so many years ago with the goal in mind of finding ways how I could contribute to the educational and life experiences of English learners. I knew this journey would take me through different routes that would challenge and test my dedication and commitment to the work. I could not have been able to take on the challenges by myself.

As I reflect on the journey, I think about what it might have been like for my parents to leave their country (Mexico) and immigrate to the United States in search of a better life and future. Perhaps my experiences with immigrant parents throughout my educational career as a teacher and school leader influenced me to embark on this journey. Every time I met with them, I saw my parents in them as they advocated for their children. Their educational values and beliefs mirrored those my parents instilled in me. Maybe it was the injustices and inequities I saw my students experience. Maybe it was my own injustices and inequities I experienced as a teacher.

To my committee, Dr. James Koschoreck, Dr. Melissa Martinez, Dr. Khalid Arar, Dr. Benjamin Grijalva, and Dr. Miguel Angel Guajardo. Thank you for encouraging me and guiding me through this important journey. Dr. Grijalva, thank you for your friendship and commitment to helping me through this journey. I appreciate the time you spent with me to ensure I made it through. The time sacrificed away from your family so you could help me push through is greatly appreciated. You have always been there when I needed some guidance. Dr. Valadez, thank you for your friendship and willingness to help me at times when I needed the reassurance that I had the capability to do the work. To my writing group, Yolanda Grijalva, Eulogia Martinez, Mark Cantu, Luciano Castro, and Lupita Narvaez, thank you for your camaraderie throughout.

Dr. Guajardo, thank you for being my mentor and friend throughout this long journey. I value and admire your level of commitment and dedication to ensuring I accomplished my goal. Your belief in me never wavered. Your continued support and advocacy have been an inspiration and motivation for me all along. You showed me how to be vulnerable in such a way that made me think critically about the importance of the work. I thank you for the countless hours you spent with me, whether it was over a cup of coffee, over the phone, a Zoom meeting, or a group plática. The time spent away from your family shows your level of commitment and dedication to your work. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story and to challenge myself to stay grounded with the values and beliefs my parents taught me.

To my children, Diego and Karina, thank you for being an inspiration throughout this journey. Both of you have been a blessing and have brought great happiness into my life. And last, to my wife, partner, friend, and love of my life, Dolores. You have been my Rock and the beacon of life every single day. You were the greatest inspiration and motivation throughout this journey. You kept me focused and grounded through the toughest times of our lives together. I admire your commitment and dedication in always supporting me every step of the way. You never stopped believing in me regardless of the challenges we faced together. The sacrifices endured were immense and for that, I love you so much. Te Amo con todo mi corazón!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Conversations and Experiences With Emergent Bilingual Parents and Students	4
Schooling Challenges Emergent Bilinguals Face Involving Graduation Requirements	6
Linguistic Challenges Emergent Bilinguals Face	9
Teacher (My Experiences as a Teacher of Newcomers)	11
Instructional Leader and Advocate for Emergent Bilinguals	15
Problem Statement	22
Purpose and Scope of the Study	23
Research Questions	25
Road Map	25
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	30
Language Policy and Bilingual Education	31
The Americanization Movement	32
Education and the Role of the U.S. Government	35
The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965	37
No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)	39
Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)	42
Chapter 89 of the Texas Education Code Subchapter BB	44
Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) Chair Guidelines	44
Prior Schooling and How it Affects Second Language Acquisition	45
Immigrant/Refugee Status	46
Assessments of the Texas Accountability System	46
Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)	46
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)	47
State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)	47
III. METHODOLOGY	48
Context of the Study	48
Research Participants	52

Data Collection	54
Open-Ended Questions Guiding the Individual (one-on-one)	
Pláticas	56
Life Maps	58
The Dichotomy of Living in the World of the In-between.....	58
Data Analysis	59
Trustworthiness.....	61
Ethical Considerations	62
 IV. PROFILES OF HOPES AND DREAMS	 63
Journey Through Rio Bravo From an Emergent Bilingual Experience.....	64
Introduction to the Research Participants	66
Jasmine’s Introductory Story	66
Hilario’s Introductory Story.....	71
Venancio’s Introductory Story.....	77
Jasmine’s School Life at CHS (Policies and Practices That	
Influenced her Journey)	80
Hilario’s School Life at CHS (Policies and Practices That	
Influenced his Journey).....	86
Venancio’s Life in Schools (Policies and Practices That Were	
Impactful).....	92
A Transition to Another Environment	94
Findings.....	96
Tying it all Together	97
Making Connections and Meaning to the Stories	98
Crossing the Border (Immigration).....	99
The Reception by Host Country	100
The Welcome	100
Post Migration.....	101
 V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	 103
Recommendations.....	106
Recommendation 1	106
Recommendation 2	108
Recommendation 3	109
Recommendation 4	109
Recommendation 5	110
Recommendation 6	111
The Next Story	113
Conclusion and What Next.....	114
 REFERENCES	 115

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. EL growth in Texas schools.....	4
Table 2. Percentage of growth for emergent bilinguals at CHS from 2003–2021.	6
Table 3. Demographic information of participants.....	54
Table 4. Schooling and assessment information for each participant.....	54

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. My drawing of the Rio Bravo with the turbulent currents of policy, practice, lived experiences, new space, new language, and assessments.	65
Figure 2. Life map Jasmine used to explain her immigration to the United States (Austin).....	69
Figure 3. Life map Hilario used to explain his immigration to the United States (Austin).....	74
Figure 4. Life map I used to explain my life story.....	80
Figure 5. Four main pillars reflected in the findings.	99

ABSTRACT

This study was a critical ethnography of the educational struggles of emergent bilinguals. Emergent bilingual newcomers who immigrate to the United States and enroll in U.S. schools at the secondary level struggle to meet the necessary requirements to graduate from high school. The focus was on finding what structures, policies, and practices affect emergent bilinguals' completion of the necessary requirements to graduate. More specifically, the following research questions guided the study: What structures, policies, and practices hinder the completion of school graduation for emergent bilinguals? How do pedagogical practices limit the attainment of graduation requirements for emergent bilingual students? Where and what are the points of promise and opportunities for emergent bilingual students to complete their high school education? The personal stories and experiences of the researcher were embedded in the study to introduce the topic, inform the analysis, and make meaning of the findings and recommendations. The study involved an analysis of the current literature on policy, practice, and theory and the authentic information shared by each research participant about their schooling and life experiences. Pláticas and life maps were used as methodologies to collect the data and a qualitative inductive research approach was used to analyze the data from the stories shared by each participant. The analysis revealed how the implementation of policies and practices proved to be detrimental to the lives and schooling experiences of the three emergent bilinguals. More specifically, the main themes, or pillars revolving around (a) crossing the borders, (b) reception into a new country, (c) the welcome into a new learning environment and community, and (d) post migration, identified the main causes of why each emergent bilingual struggled to complete the requirements to graduate. In addition, the lack of support systems and awareness of the assets that each emergent bilingual possessed caused social, emotional, and

academic distress. Results can be used to contribute to improvements in the implementation and interpretation of bilingual education program policies and practices that inform the way we meet the needs of emergent bilinguals who navigate through the realities of two distinct worlds and the challenges they face as they seek a better future. The implications and recommendations of this work will raise the level of agency required to support emergent bilinguals who are born in the United States and emergent bilingual newcomers who immigrate to the United States in search of a better life and an opportunity to continue and further their education.

Keywords: emergent bilingual, crossing-border, reception policy, post migration, policy, praxis

I. INTRODUCTION

The American dream continues to be an illusion for many immigrants who desire to one day live in the land of opportunity and prosperity. It is an illusion because many immigrants perceive the American dream as being one that includes owning a house, having a good job, being part of a community, and having equal opportunities as any other person. The reality of the American dream for many immigrants becomes one that includes working two or three jobs just to make ends meet, living in apartments that are run down and expensive, feeling unwelcome in the community, and being overlooked for some jobs because of language. For many who embark on a long journey to get to the United States, the American dream may be to arrive in the United States and find a haven, a job, and a place to call their own and allow their children to one day have a career and become successful. Those who “make it” or arrive in the United States often face many challenges that have the potential to derail their American dream. One of the challenges for students who migrate from another country to the United States is the different educational system. For example, in Guatemala, the school year begins in February whereas in the United States the typical school year begins in August.

Throughout the last 31 years of my career in education as a teacher and school leader, I have been fortunate to engage in many conversations with immigrant students and their parents about their hopes and dreams as they venture into their educational experience. There have been instances in my role as a school leader when meeting with families from different countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador that I found parents and students were surprised and confused about the differences between when a school year begins in their country and when it begins here in the United States. Emergent bilinguals, in particular students from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico, also have to adjust to a system of acquiring credits and

taking state assessments to obtain a high school diploma. The transition from a different educational system can be stressful and frustrating for emergent bilinguals and their families.

Housing is another factor that can cause stress and present as an economic burden to families. There have been times during conversations with emergent bilingual families that I have learned multiple families live in the same house or apartment for economic reasons. Emergent bilinguals often tell me it is difficult to study or have any privacy because of the limited space. Another issue I have seen throughout my years of working with emergent bilinguals is that some begin to work to help out their parents and thus it becomes difficult to keep up with their schooling. Despite these challenges, the public education system offers immigrants and their children a path to success many have read or heard about from others.

The public education system in the United States is free to any who enrolls. According to Vera et al. (2021), emergent bilingual learners (EBLs) are students who were formerly known as English learners (ELs). In most instances, children who come from abroad and enroll in the U.S. education system are considered EBLs. I use the terms EBLs and ELs interchangeably in this dissertation based on context and period. Emergent bilinguals are students who have the potential of becoming bilingual, or proficient in English and another language, which is considered to be an asset (Vera et al., 2021). Federal law requires school districts to have procedures in place to assess and identify students whose primary or home language is one other than English (Education Commission of the States, 2020). In Texas, when parents enroll their children in school, they are asked to complete a home language survey (HLS) that contains questions about the language spoken at home the majority of the time and what language the student speaks the majority of the time. If the parent identifies a language other than English, the student is assessed with a language test to determine their English language proficiency (Education Commission of

the States, 2020) and is considered an emergent bilingual if they score a 3 or lower on the language test. If the student scores a 4 or a 5 on the language test, they are not considered to be an emergent bilingual. This classification is one of the most influential decisions affecting the educational experience and success of EBLs as they navigate throughout the public-school system. This classification is important because it will determine whether the student will receive language support and other interventions if they are classified as an emergent bilingual. In addition, they will be offered classes such as English as a second language (ESL) and sheltered instruction classes depending on the type of program the school offers.

The emergent bilingual population has increased drastically over the past 2 decades. According to Vera et al. (2021), EBLs comprise 10% of the student population in U.S. schools. In Texas, the population of EBLs has continued to increase in elementary and secondary public schools since the beginning of the 21st century (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Table 1 depicts the continuous growth of ELs in elementary and secondary public schools in Texas.

Table 1. EL growth in Texas schools.

Year	Number of English learners (ELs)	Percentage
2000	570,473	14.1
2005	711,737	16.7
2010	738,663	16.8
2015	892,082	17.6
2018	966,594	18.7
2020	1,113,536	20.3

Conversations and Experiences With Emergent Bilingual Parents and Students

It has been a gift of time and memory to recall the many conversations I have had with families about how they would love to fulfill their American dream. It is quite an honor and surreal to think that I am part of their American dream. I have been their caretaker of the public education system, a leader in many facets, and an advocate. These conversations have been and continue to be about immigrant parents wanting their students to have a chance to get an education that was not affordable in their home countries because of socioeconomic factors and other reasons. These immigrant parents chose to uproot their families and take great risks by immigrating to the United States with the hope of a better life and a chance for their children to continue their education (Arar et al., 2019).

Some of these families have disclosed that they fled their country for economic reasons whereas others fled because of violence in their communities. The rapid globalization and the fear immigrants face have increased both voluntary and forced interstate flows of migration due to wars and crises. At least 79.5 million people around the world have been forced to leave their homes and 26 million of them are refugees (Arar et al., 2019). At least half of these 26 million refugees are under the age of 18 years old. An example of forced migration is seeking refuge in

another country due to wars, disasters, and violence in the home country. The most vulnerable of this population are children and unaccompanied youth (Arar et al., 2019).

These families have faced economic and socioemotional challenges that have affected their way of life and their students' educational experiences. In some of my conversations during meetings with emergent bilingual students and their parents about grades, credits, and attendance, parents have mentioned that they leave early to go to work and sometimes work two jobs and thus their children are on their own. Parents depend on their children to get up and go to school on their own. Some phrases parents often say are “yo lo mando a la escuela todos los dias” (I send him to school every day) or “yo lo deajo en frente de la escuela todas las mañanas” (I drop him off at the front of the school every day). These phrases have become very common among some of our parents.

Moving to a community where English is the language spoken creates some additional challenges for families in being able to communicate with neighbors. Families struggle to find ways to feel as though they belong in their community. Their children struggle at school because of the language. Both parents and students strive to find ways of becoming part of the community. Community members should find ways to welcome families from different countries and make them feel like members of the community. School personnel should ensure emergent bilinguals feel as though they belong and are members of the student body. Teachers should be provided with teaching strategies and learning opportunities that will ensure emergent bilinguals learn English but also maintain and keep learning their native language. It is equally important that teachers get to know their emergent bilinguals' cultures, values, beliefs, and traditions. If teachers and school personnel get to know the emergent bilinguals and their families, perhaps some of the challenges emergent bilinguals face when it comes to their education can be

addressed and resolved. Emergent bilinguals need support in finding ways to deal with the transition from schooling in their country to schooling in the United States. There is a need to understand the emotional and academic challenges emergent bilinguals face to better address their needs in our schools. There is also a need to identify ways to support teachers with teaching methodologies to meet and address the academic and emotional challenges emergent bilinguals face (Allman & Slavin, 2018).

Schooling Challenges Emergent Bilinguals Face Involving Graduation Requirements

The emergent bilingual population at Central High School (CHS; a pseudonym), the school where I work and where my research participants attended high school, has been steadily growing since the beginning of the 21st century. Table 2 depicts the percentage of growth from the 2003–2004 school year to the 2020–2021 school year at CHS (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022e).

Table 2. Percentage of growth for emergent bilinguals at CHS from 2003–2021.

School year	Percentage of emergent bilinguals	Number of emergent bilinguals
2003–2004	23.1	374
2008–2009	26.8	377
2017–2018	27.6	339
2018–2019	30.1	375
2020–2021	40.6	504

Emergent bilinguals, and in particular newcomer ELs, face challenges in graduating and obtaining a diploma because of their language proficiency and the academic requirements they must meet to graduate. The barriers or challenges newcomers encounter stem from language of usage. What I mean by language of usage is that English is the language used by teachers to teach the content. Newcomer ELs are students who have recently arrived in their host country as

immigrants, refugees, or asylum-seekers (López et al., 2019). Newcomer ELs do not have the English language proficiency to understand the content being taught in English. They also cannot communicate with teachers to ask questions because they do not have the language proficiency to do so. It takes an immigrant student 2 years to acquire basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and 5 to 7 years to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency (CALPS; Cummins, 2000).

Newcomer ELs at CHS come from different countries, such as Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Cuba, Peru, and Afghanistan. Some of these students have a solid foundation in their schooling and others have gaps. Students who have a solid educational foundation can transition well and perform well, whereas students with gaps in their schooling have a much harder time transitioning and performing well. Parents are optimistic about their children obtaining an education, learning the English language, and fulfilling the requirements to graduate and earn a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, despite their parents' hopes, some EBLs who enrolled at CHS during the past 4 years (i.e., from 2017 to 2021) did not graduate. The graduating classes of 2018, 2019, and 2020 at CHS had EL dropout rates of 1.9%, 6.5%, and 3.9%, respectively, as reported in the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 Texas Academic Performance Reports. Some of these students did not graduate because they did not meet the required state standards on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Others did not graduate because they did not obtain the number of credits specified in the graduation plans required by the state. In the case of my research participants, both had difficulty with their STAAR assessments. Some of the reasons why my research participants did not meet the state assessments were because they still had difficulty with their academic language proficiency or they could not attend tutoring sessions

after school because they had to work to help their family financially. State assessments are barriers that make it difficult for emergent bilinguals to overcome because of language and thus make it difficult for them to meet all requirements for graduation. The challenges state assessments present to emergent bilinguals are based on content and language. Academic language is a challenge because of the level of understanding needed to fully comprehend the context of the questions on the assessments. The content is written with a higher level of proficiency, which makes it difficult for emergent bilinguals to fully comprehend. Therefore, I chose to focus my research on the challenges emergent bilinguals experience throughout their high school years.

Regardless of the reason why emergent bilinguals have difficulty with content or language, it is disheartening to have conferences with parents and their students to notify them that their son or daughter will not graduate with their class because of certain conditions. Equally disturbing and discouraging is having conferences with parents and students to notify them that their son or daughter failed several classes, fell behind on credits, and is in jeopardy of not graduating at the end of the year as was expected. Emergent bilinguals need a support system in schools to ensure their academic and social/emotional needs are being addressed and met. Families can provide some of the needed social/emotional support at home but it is equally important for school personnel such as counselors and social workers to provide that support as well. In addition, emergent bilinguals need academic support that sometimes their families cannot provide for them to succeed (E. R. Crawford, 2018). Research shows emergent bilinguals are often enrolled in low-performing schools (Orfield & Lee, 2006), are not enrolled in small learning environments, and are not given opportunities to enroll in higher-level courses (Gonzales, 2010). Sometimes it is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the institution's

structure that causes emergent bilinguals to be unable to negotiate courses of interest that might motivate and encourage them to remain in school and not drop out (E. R. Crawford, 2018). These conversations are dispiriting and unpleasant because these are the families who have taken great risks in fleeing their countries because of economic or violent reasons with the hope of a better life and a better education for their children. These are the families who sought an opportunity for their children to continue their education and have a chance of living a better life than they did when they were the same age.

Academic and social/emotional support are important for emergent bilinguals to have a greater possibility of succeeding in their schooling (E. R. Crawford, 2018). Equally important is to provide emergent bilinguals with the structures that will support their acquisition of a second language. In the next section, I provide some information about the amount of time it takes to acquire the academic and conversational proficiency levels of a second language. This is important because it gives the perspective of why some emergent bilinguals struggle with coursework, acquiring credits, and state assessments.

Linguistic Challenges Emergent Bilinguals Face

One challenge emergent bilinguals face in transitioning to a different educational system is learning a different language. Acquiring a different language takes a certain amount of time. There are two levels of language proficiency that are relevant to language acquisition: BICS and CALP. According to Cummins (2000), it takes about 2 years of exposure to the second language for an immigrant student to reach a peer-appropriate level of language proficiency in BICS and about 5 to 7 years of exposure to the second language for an immigrant student to reach an academic level of proficiency to attain CALP. In addition to BICS and CALP, Krashen (1996) stated that for an EL to acquire a second language, the information must be comprehensible. This

means it is important for ELs to comprehend the information to be able to understand and acquire the second language. For newcomers to understand the content, develop the knowledge and skills of the content, and acquire language proficiency, it is beneficial to provide the content in their native language (August, 2018). Acquiring a second language is critical for an EL as will be explained and demonstrated in different examples of ELs who attended CHS. Both BICS and CALP play a critical role in the educational experiences of ELs.

Learning another language takes effort and exposure to the language whether it is through listening to the language or reading some content in the language being acquired. When ELs are exposed to grade-level course content, they are given the access to language they need to achieve academic success and become fully proficient in English. Teaching newcomers requires using different methodologies to engage students in acquiring a second language. Providing newcomers in the upper grades core content in their home language will help them develop knowledge and skills while also supporting their acquisition of English proficiency (August, 2019). Teachers need to be offered opportunities to engage in methodologies that focus on second language acquisition. Teachers need to understand how a second language is acquired and also have the knowledge and skills to teach a second language.

Throughout my educational career, I have had the opportunity to teach newcomers at the secondary level. These experiences were both rewarding and challenging at the same time. They were challenging because I worked with students who had gaps in their schooling and a beginning level of language proficiency. These experiences were significant and rewarding because by the time these students completed their middle school or high school years, their academic and language proficiency levels had improved. In the following section, I give a

summary of how I became interested in teaching and also highlight my experiences as a teacher of newcomers.

Teacher (My Experiences as a Teacher of Newcomers)

As I was finishing up my high school years as a student in 1979–1980, one of my older brothers had already graduated from the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) where he earned a bachelor of science degree in education. He was about to enter the profession of teaching. I remember thinking to myself that I too may go into the field of education. In the years after my graduation from Taft High School (THS) in 1980, I enrolled at Del Mar Junior College in South Texas in 1983 and signed up to take basic courses as most everyone does when they begin college. I began to take courses in education after my first year at Del Mar Junior College and later began to take physical education (PE) courses because I liked playing sports and had the idea of perhaps someday becoming a coach. By this time my older brother was coaching and teaching math at Carrizo Springs High School in South Texas.

After finishing my second year at Del Mar Junior College, I transferred to UT Austin in central Texas. By this time I already had made up my mind that I was going to get a degree in education and look for a job as a teacher in the Central Texas Independent School District (CTISD; a pseudonym). After I completed my courses in education at UT Austin, I had to complete a student teaching course where I would work alongside a teacher and get some experience in teaching. I did my student teaching at a high school in CTISD and taught some classes in PE and health. When I graduated from UT Austin with a bachelor of science degree in education, I began to look for a teaching position within CTISD.

In reflecting on my journey in the field of education in the early 1990s in CTISD, I began to notice some of the struggles our immigrant students faced in school. I began my career in

teaching as an ESL permanent substitute in 1990 at Star Middle School (SMS; a pseudonym) in CTISD teaching math to sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade ELs. During the very short time I spent at SMS, I began to witness the struggles of immigrant students who had just enrolled in U.S. schools. My students had left their countries of Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador. Their parents had brought their families to the United States to seek a better life and an opportunity for their children to get an education. My students were hungry for an education and I could sense their desire to learn English. They wanted to learn English because their parents and society during this time made it very clear that learning English was a way of getting ahead and having a successful future. The struggles of learning the English language included, but were not limited to, linguistic, cognitive, and other factors affecting their affective filter. Their linguistic struggles were due to English being the language of instruction. Most of my students had arrived in the country a few months before the school year started and others had been in the country for no more than a year, so they were just beginning the process of acquiring a second language. Though my students did not know English, they had assets that made me proud to be their teacher, such as their work ethic, resiliency, and desire to learn. The cognitive struggles my students faced were not only because of language, they were also due to gaps in their previous schooling experiences. Some students had gaps in their schooling from their home country because of socio-cultural reasons and others because they lived in rural areas where there was a shortage of teachers and educational infrastructure. As I asked some of my students about their schooling in their home country, they revealed to me that there were times when teachers would only show up once a week to teach. Some students revealed that their parents did not have the economic means to send their children to school or to buy the necessary materials for their schooling. The experiences that affected emergent bilinguals at the time were related to

navigating through different social environments, cultural differences, and new educational systems. These children possessed great character, pride, and a culture rich in language, values, and beliefs instilled in them by their parents who wanted a better life and education for them. From my perspective, my colleagues who worked with newcomers also experienced the lack of resources, materials, curriculum, and professional development opportunities to justly serve these students. The fact that I was assigned to a portable made it seem as though my students were being segregated from the general population. As I reflect on my experience at SMS, I think of the times of inclement weather when my students and I had to walk to the main building to eat in the cafeteria. Seeing my students' faces as they shivered in the cold and damp conditions made me think of how humble my students were and how it did not matter to them that most of their classes were in the portables. My students were just happy they were allowed to obtain an education.

My journey continued as an ESL assistant at Karina High School (KHS; a pseudonym) in CTISD for a year and a half from 1991 to 1993. At KHS I had the opportunity to work alongside a veteran ESL teacher who had been teaching ninth- and 10th-grade immigrant students for more than a decade. Similar conditions existed at KHS concerning the curriculum afforded to ELs. There were very few resources and training opportunities to develop my skills for teaching ESL. I remember using paperback ESL booklets that had texts written at different levels of proficiency. Students were assigned to different groups based on their level of English proficiency as determined by language tests developed by the teacher. The only difference between the ELs at KHS and SMS was that students at KHS had their classes inside the building.

For the next 5 years, from 1993–1998, I served as an ESL teacher at Diego Middle School (DMS; a pseudonym) and taught the four core content areas in Grades 6–8. I felt

privileged to teach immigrant students who had a great will and determination to obtain an education. My students at DMS were from Mexico, Honduras, Venezuela, and El Salvador. Some of their families fled their country because of violence and others fled to look for jobs and opportunities for their children to have a better life. Some of these students had to walk through dangerous terrain with hardly anything to eat or drink. They shared their stories of how it took every ounce of resiliency to make it across to the United States. Once they made it across they were guided by someone in the group who had already experienced coming across different borders and knew how to make the transition to the United States.

As I settled in at DMS, I found myself facing a lack of resources and training again, so I took it upon myself to seek out professional development opportunities and began to collaborate with other teachers to learn pedagogical strategies to effectively teach the four content areas to ELs. I also began to build my library of resources, such as textbooks in Spanish, dictionaries, and software programs, so I could create and deliver engaging lessons to prepare my students to be successful in their education and language acquisition. It was during the years I spent at DMS that I began to see a pattern of the inequities in schooling afforded to ELs. To begin, I was a novice teacher and most of the time had to travel from classroom to classroom carrying my briefcase with my materials and lesson plans for every content area. The fact that I had to prepare lessons for four different subjects was quite overwhelming. These experiences as an ESL teacher were the catalyst for my decision to pursue a degree in educational administration. Part of this decision was based on my belief that being in an administrative role would enable me to be the voice for my students and teachers who were experiencing the same inequities I had encountered as an ESL teacher.

Instructional Leader and Advocate for Emergent Bilinguals

As the administrator overseeing the ESL program at CHS for the last 2 decades, I experienced some of the difficulties and struggles teachers faced with newcomers in their classes, such as not being able to communicate with them. This posed a challenge and led to difficulty when it came to planning activities or lessons to meet the different academic needs of newcomers and other students. Other struggles included not being able to communicate with parents. Teachers new to the profession had more difficulty teaching newcomers compared to veteran teachers because of their lack of experience and a lack of pedagogical strategies concerning second language acquisition.

I established relationships with newcomers in different capacities such as translator, test administrator, role model, and advocate. As newcomers and their parents arrived at CHS to enroll, I would be called to the registrar's office to meet the families and give them an orientation on our school and the ESL program. Once I gave them the orientation, I then helped parents complete the registration forms to begin the process of enrollment. I ensured students were given a tour of the school and I accompanied the students to their respective counselors to obtain their schedule of classes.

There were times when newcomers were double-blocked in certain classes such as English and math. The reason behind double-blocking newcomers and other emergent bilinguals was to ensure they spent more time learning English and also spent more time in math to improve their chances of doing well on the state assessments. However, double-blocking newcomers and other emergent bilinguals in English and math limited their opportunities to participate in electives. Though I wanted to advocate for newcomers and other emergent bilinguals to have more options in their schedules, the pressure of meeting accountability

standards outweighed my requests. The decision to double-block newcomers stemmed from the section of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) that mandated the acquisition of the English language as the prime objective of instructional programming for ELL students. NCLB held schools accountable for producing gains in language acquisition for ELLs and schools that did not meet this objective were threatened by a reduction in state and federal funding. This type of pressure led to prioritizing language acquisition and not addressing other needs of ELLs that are equally important (Hanna, 2013). The challenges of meeting state mandates, addressing the language development of ELs, and providing the necessary resources for teachers were present throughout several of my personal experiences as an instructional leader at CHS for the past 19 years.

In my role at CHS, I have experienced and witnessed disheartening stories of recently arrived immigrant students. Some of the experiences have been about immigrant families struggling to make ends meet and, because of this, students had to find jobs to help support their family. Other experiences have been about recent immigrant students living with an aunt, uncle, or grandparents because their parents had been deported. I recently met with a family from Honduras, as the aunt was enrolling her niece who had just turned 17 years old. I introduced myself to Judith (a pseudonym) and began to ask her questions about her schooling in Honduras. I noticed Judith's aunt had written that Judith's last grade in Honduras was sixth grade. I asked Judith why she had not been to school since sixth grade and what she had been doing for the past 3 years. Judith told me with great sadness and almost embarrassment that her parents could not afford to send her to school. When I asked her what she had been doing for the past 3 years, she told me she was at home helping her mom with household chores and taking care of her younger siblings. Similar experiences have been reported in studies with war-torn students whose

education was disrupted both while being home and throughout their transition to their new destiny (Arar, 2020).

There have been occasions where ELs have dropped out because of failing a Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAKS) exam or failing more than two of the STAAR exams, lacking credits, or experiencing economic challenges. In the graduating class of 2017 alone, 8.1% of students dropped out of CHS because they failed to fulfill the graduation requirements set by the State of Texas (TEA, 2022a).

One of my saddest experiences at CHS involved our Burmese students and their parents. On one occasion, my principal asked me to call our Burmese parents whose students were not going to graduate because they had failed more than two of the STAAR exams and were lacking credits. Not only did my principal want me to meet with all the Burmese parents and their students to notify them that their students were not going to graduate, but also to tell them that they had to find another school to enroll in for the following school year.

These times were difficult because losing any student because of the pressures and injustice of the accountability system is hard to bear, but an educational leader pushing families out of their school is unethical. My principal in this case was the primary “sense maker” of the accountability policy put forth by the state. Leaders’ identities and beliefs regarding the understanding of a certain policy influence their sense making and interpretation of a policy (E. R. Crawford, 2018). His rationale to implement this type of response based on accountability measures established by the state was not received well by me or other school personnel. This experience alone went against my values and beliefs as an educator and a person.

After my principal asked me to set up a meeting with the Burmese parents and their students, I met with the parents and their students to explain the status of their students and how

we would support each student to ensure they would recover their credits. I also explained how we would provide tutorials and classes that would help the students meet the standards on the state assessments. I always advocated for our emergent bilingual students and, in this scenario, I was able to ensure our Burmese students remained on our campus.

All of our ELs were provided the academic and social and emotional support to have a transition that met their needs. ELs had the opportunity to be scheduled in sheltered classes that focused on second language acquisition. Teachers who taught sheltered classes used strategies that engaged students in learning activities that addressed the linguistic, affective, and cognitive domains.

As new students arrived from different countries, I met with every student and their parents to welcome them to their new school. During these meetings, I explained the school structure, support systems, and programs, and also made it very clear that students would be supported academically, socially, and emotionally. I listened to their needs and concerns about the transition to a new environment. I made it a point to extend an invitation to come at any time to visit or talk about any concerns they might have about their students' education. There were times when former students came by to ask for help and support.

I remember when Sylvia (a pseudonym), a former student, came by to ask about tutoring sessions to help her prepare for the Science TAKS exam she had previously failed while at CHS. The Science TAKS exam had kept her from graduating and obtaining her diploma. At the time, students were required to pass four state assessments (English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies). This requirement was part of the federal legislation of the NCLB Act enacted in 2001. Sylvia decided to drop out at the time but now was trying to prepare to retake the exam. Sylvia had already been out of school for at least 5 years. I asked her what she had

been doing after she left CHS. Sylvia replied, “I have been working at a clinic as an assistant.” Five years after leaving school, Sylvia had not given up her dream of graduating from high school. The Science TAKS exam was the only requirement she still had pending toward graduation. She told me she was not being paid very well, but if she could earn her diploma it would help her earn more money at her job. She said, “If I can pass my Science TAKS, I can get my diploma and graduate. This could also help me earn more money to pay for college. I want to become a nurse.” Sylvia was a second language learner who struggled throughout her years at CHS. She struggled to comprehend the academic language and therefore had difficulty passing her TAKS exams.

Sylvia was not the only student with this kind of story. I remember once when I was sitting at my son’s barber shop waiting for him to get a haircut. I looked toward the door and noticed a young man wearing a bandana on his head. He opened the door and took a glance inside. He went back outside to his car to lock it and returned. One of the barbers asked him if he was ready for a haircut, and I noticed he was not too sure about what the barber asked. After a few more questions from the barber, he understood and replied in broken English. He took a seat and the barber asked how he wanted his hair done, and again I noticed the young man having difficulty understanding and communicating with the barber. Another barber also noticed that both his colleague and his customer were having difficulty understanding each other and asked the customer in Spanish how he wanted his hair done. The young man suddenly appeared to feel more comfortable and his face lit up as he explained in Spanish how he wanted his hair done. Finally, both the barber and the customer understood each other.

As I observed this interaction play out, I thought there was something familiar about the young man in the chair. I suddenly realized the young man was Ricardo (a pseudonym), a former

student who had attended CHS. I asked him what he had been doing as I had not seen him in quite some time. He said he was working in construction and that other students who had attended CHS were also working at the same place. I asked him if he had finished school (i.e., graduated) and he told me he had not. I asked him what he still needed, and he said he still needed to pass some of his STAAR exams and some courses. I told him to come by the school so we could review his transcript and STAAR exams. As I left the barber shop, I reminded Ricardo to go by the school so I could talk to him about returning to school to obtain his diploma and graduate.

Reflecting on Sylvia's and Ricardo's situations, there is a common theme of some emergent bilinguals not meeting the requirements on state assessments or completing the coursework to obtain a diploma and graduate. Some systems and interventions should have been in place to ensure these emergent bilinguals met both requirements, such as monitoring grades on each progress report and meeting with the students and their families to brainstorm ways to help the students advocate for themselves. In addition, scheduling parent/student/teacher conferences to discuss the students' progress and teachers creating individualized student interventions to address the areas of need for each emergent bilingual should be expectations.

Ricardo and Sylvia are examples of ELs who attended CHS and did not graduate for different reasons. These are only two stories I share but they represent similar experiences of many ELs who fell short of fulfilling their family's dreams. In my 19 years at CHS, many more EL students have experienced the same outcome of dropping out.

There are ways for us to better serve and monitor each emergent bilingual's progress throughout the year. The reason we would want to do this is to establish relationships with emergent bilinguals and their parents to meet their needs and along with that to create systems

that will address academic concerns as they occur. In addition to academic concerns, we can address social and emotional concerns as needed. A way we can accomplish this is the following. Every emergent bilingual would be assigned a case manager or an advocate who would monitor their progress throughout the year. The case manager would also communicate with each emergent bilingual teacher to develop and implement an academic, social, and emotional plan. The plan would be collaboratively developed with each student based on teacher input. Case managers would also include counselors to meet with each emergent bilingual who is not on track to pass at each progress report grading period. Parents would also be part of the team to monitor their student's progress. Parents would be invited to attend sessions on how to access their student's grades, attendance, and credits throughout the year. In addition, parents would be invited to complete a survey throughout the year to identify different session topics that would be beneficial to support them and their students. Sessions would be scheduled throughout the year.

Reflecting upon the different scenarios of each student leads me to think about my own experiences as an EL. Almost 4 decades have gone by since I graduated from THS in Taft, Texas, a small rural town in South Texas. Unlike me, Sylvia, Ricardo, and other ELs at CHS did not graduate. I graduated but my students did not. But why? What is the difference between them and me? These were some of the questions that led me to conduct this research.

In this work, I explored the reasons why some ELLs who attended CHS did not meet the standards of the state assessments and also had difficulty acquiring the necessary credits to graduate and obtain a diploma. I also explored the impact of these outcomes on their lives and their futures. I reviewed and analyzed the findings of this research to make recommendations on how to better serve emergent bilinguals' needs, such as implementing and creating methodologies that address second language acquisition. It is my hope that the findings can serve

as a catalyst to address and meet the needs of emergent bilinguals as they transition from their home countries to a new country with a different culture, different educational system, and a new language.

Problem Statement

Few ELs in general graduate and this is especially true for ELs who immigrate to the United States and enter U.S. schools at the secondary level. In California and Texas, both of which are states with high populations of ELs, the graduation rates for ELs are not very high compared to the rates for other students (McFarland et al., 2019). Emergent bilinguals and newcomers possess assets that are sometimes overlooked, such as language, culture, traditions, beliefs, and values. According to Roe (2019), the funds of knowledge framework and the invitational education theory and practice indicate teachers should be invited to learn about their students' families, interests, cultures, languages, worldviews, dialects, and other factors that are all recognized as assets. By doing this, teachers can leverage this knowledge to engage students in learning. These assets are personal and represent the knowledge students gained from their families, culture, community, language, and religion. When students notice their teachers are interested in their assets, they feel they are part of the community and classroom (Roe, 2019). Sometimes these assets are overlooked because school personnel are too focused on accountability and second language acquisition to ensure students learn English as fast as possible. Recent immigrants have several linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors to face aside from trying to acquire another language. These factors include, but are not limited to, living in a different country and at times a hostile environment, as well as entering a new school setting. These factors and the barrier of having to negotiate in an unfamiliar language are enough to create anxiety. Aside from struggling to pass their classes and making sure they earn the required

credits, students must meet the standards on standardized tests specified by the state to graduate (McNeil et al., 2008). Many newcomers are refugees and some of their languages are unfamiliar to teachers, administrators, and other school personnel, which causes refugee newcomers to experience linguistic isolation from the general population. Difficulty communicating with refugee newcomer students and their parents sometimes causes misunderstandings about how to deal with the trauma and violence some students have experienced in their home countries. Some refugee newcomers have mental and physical needs that at times school personnel are not equipped to address (Koyama & Kasper, 2021).

In this research, I captured the oral histories of two immigrant students who attended CHS in CTISD, an urban school district in central Texas. I used story to weave their schooling experiences in the United States as we painted the picture of their struggles, challenges, and frustrations in an educational system based on White middle-class values and beliefs. These values and informing practices have created a misalignment of values, awareness, and unintended consequences for immigrant students who are ELs. As the stories of each research partner unfolded, I made note of the trends in their schooling experiences and how each trend affected their lives.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

It is often perceived that schools with high populations of ELs face the challenges of not meeting these students' social and cultural needs. One of the challenges for teachers who teach ELs is not being able to communicate with their students and parents. Another challenge is that teachers have difficulty understanding why some parents and students have difficulty asking for help. These challenges often relate to misunderstandings, misconceptions, and ingrained assumptions of teaching, learning, and classroom management based on their cultural

backgrounds, education, and socialization beliefs. Teachers need to recognize that their expectations and those of their diverse student populations may not align because of the different beliefs about education, work, and social life (Myles, 2019). Another significant challenge school personnel encounter is providing a sound curriculum that will address second language acquisition and prepare students to acquire the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) they need to pass state assessments in English. According to Luster (2012), many teachers of ELLs are not prepared to design lessons and assessments that make the academic content comprehensible for ELLs. Very few teachers of ELLs are prepared by their education or teacher training programs to teach literacy or content-area literacy to secondary ELLs in the areas of science, math, or reading (Luster, 2012).

These challenges are opportunities to rethink our learning environments to encompass different beliefs, values, cultures, and knowledge sets to create a system of alignment to best meet the needs of EL students. Addressing these challenges in educating ELs is important for creating the possibility of imagining new modalities for teaching and learning and enhancing their integration in schools and communities.

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of the information gathered from stories shared by emergent bilinguals about their struggles with completing the necessary requirements to graduate. The focus was on pedagogical practices and policies that negatively affect the learning experiences of emergent bilinguals and impede their growth. By conducting this research into how the implementation of pedagogy, policy, and practice shaped the experiences of emergent bilinguals, I was able to make recommendations for changes that will influence teaching and learning for the betterment of emergent bilinguals' success in acquiring the academic language that will propel them to be successful in their schooling. The findings of

the research revealed pedagogical practices that can address the social, cultural, and academic needs of emergent bilinguals. In addition, I explored recommendations and suggestions to amend policies that negatively affect emergent bilinguals. I present factors such as graduation requirements, exit criteria in language development, administrative directives, assessment tools, curriculum, and instructional practices from the perspectives of two emergent bilinguals who attended CHS in CTISD and had difficulty meeting the requirements to graduate. I documented and analyzed the challenges and struggles each faced within their schooling experiences to inform the inquiry set forth by the articulated research questions. I completed an analysis of their experiences at CHS and how those experiences have affected their current livelihood, and looked for any trends in the results. In addition, I used my experiences as a teacher and school leader over the last 31 years to reflect on and inform the research and findings. I also reflected on my own experiences as an EL to inform the research and findings.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my doctoral research:

1. What structures, policies, and practices hinder the completion of school graduation for emergent bilinguals?
2. How do pedagogical practices limit the attainment of graduation requirements for emergent bilingual students?
3. Where and what are the points of promise and opportunities for emergent bilingual students to complete their high school education?

Road Map

This study moved from the macro forces influencing the lives of immigrant families, including policies that affect practice, to the micro level as I worked to paint the picture of the

impact of such policies on immigrant students who were second language learners. To do this, I requested the help of two research partners who were affected by these educational policies in multiple ways. To organize their stories, I developed the road map outlined below. Before I outline the road map, I present my ontological position as an individual, educator, and researcher weaving these stories together. I share my beliefs in general and about education. In the process, I explain what I have been doing during my career as an educator. As an individual, I believe every person should be treated with dignity and respect at all times. As an educator, I believe every student has the right to an education regardless of their race, color, language, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, values, or beliefs. I designed this study to surface possibilities to inform policy and practices, and to help policymakers and school-level actors understand the actions we can take to facilitate the hopes and dreams of immigrant families and their children as we support students as they move through the learning process in public schools. The following is the road map of this qualitative research.

In Chapter I, I provided the context of the study by giving a brief description of conversations and experiences I have had with immigrant parents and their students. I presented a succinct picture of their hopes and dreams for their students and how at times disappointment has been the outcome of multiple factors such as pedagogy, policy, and practice. As an instructional leader, I am much more than a researcher, and to be fully transparent with my positionality, I now include some details of my educational journey that spans 3 decades as a teacher and instructional leader. I am the son of Mexican parents who emigrated from Mexico during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. I was born in a small town in South Texas where the railroad tracks were physical markers of the different ethnic groups. My native language is Spanish and during my initial school years I had to learn English as it was the language used to

teach at the schools I attended. There were no bilingual programs or teachers who knew Spanish to help me, so I relied on my older siblings to help me with my education. Neither of my parents spoke English and could not help me with my schoolwork. My dad had a second-grade education in Mexico and my mom did not have a formal education. My parents believed education was a high priority and that we were to be respectful to teachers and other school personnel, and we were to carry ourselves with dignity and respect. Though I learned English at school, I still maintained my native language because it was important to me and because I saw it as an asset. Because I am an inductive scholar, emergent bilingual, and a first-generation graduate of high school and college and have experienced the inequities as a student, teacher, and instructional leader, I strongly advocate for emergent bilinguals and any student who is not being treated justly and being afforded the required education mandated by the U.S. government. My work with emergent bilingual students has provided me opportunities to better understand their struggles, challenges, and accomplishments. These experiences have deepened the scope of my analysis and informed my research.

The problem statement, purpose, and scope of the study led to the research questions I used to guide the research. I chose to focus on ELs and their experiences in an educational system that is full of challenges about policy, pedagogy, and theory. Chapter II contains a review of the literature with a focus on educational topics, including policy, pedagogy, theory, and lived experiences about ELs. The review includes research on the conditions and challenges ELs face as they navigate through a foreign educational system with a different language, culture, and environment. In Chapter III, I explain the context of the research and describe the district and the urban high school where the study took place and the research participants attended. My primary and secondary conceptual frameworks are introduced and described as a method of analysis and

to make meaning of the participants' experiences. I also describe and identify the use of oral histories and pláticas as the methods of collecting data. The oral histories were from one 60-minute group plática (with all research partners as a group) and two 45-minute individual pláticas (with each research partner individually). I recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and coded the pláticas to inform the findings, conclusion, and recommendations. The oral histories were informed by using open-ended questions to serve as filters for research data. In addition, the oral histories were facilitated by using guiding questions informed by the literature review developed on practice, policy, theory, and life histories. This chapter also includes a description of my research partners, including their age, their first enrollment in U.S. schools, when their families came to the United States, their initial identification as ELs, what kind of curriculum they went through, and other issues that surfaced to inform this study.

In Chapter IV, I include each participant's lived experiences in school and life in general as shared by each participant during the individual and group pláticas. I provide examples of how policy and practice affected each participant and how I could have advocated more for each participant had I known what I know now regarding their experiences. I also give an example of how policy and practice affected my own experiences in school and life in general. I use the four pillars of immigration (i.e., crossing border, reception, welcome, and post migration) as a secondary framework of analysis to make connections and meaning to each participant's stories and to give a more insightful meaning to each participant's experience through their journey.

In Chapter V, I give a summary of the research to include the problem (why this research was necessary), the purpose of the research, a review of the methodology used to conduct the research, and how I analyzed the data. I also include an explanation of how I weaved my story and experiences to make meaning of the findings. The chapter includes recommendations based

on the findings, review of the literature, and my experiences working with emergent bilinguals and their parents as a teacher and a school leader for the last 3 decades. The chapter concludes with the implications that will occur if we as a nation do not address and meet the needs of the growing emergent bilingual population in our schools.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In working as a Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) chair and instructional leader, I have addressed different areas of education that have an impact on ELs. These different areas include, but are not limited to, policy, pedagogy, theory, and lived experiences. These areas all play a significant role in the educational opportunities afforded to students in general and particularly ELs. The focus in this review of literature is on education theory, policy, and practice at the federal, state, and local levels as they relate to ELs. Education policy includes bilingual education. In discussing bilingual education, I include language policy as a critical component that addresses the educational needs that contribute to the success of ELs. As I review the literature on the different policies, I also make some connections to how the policies shape the landscape of the practice afforded to ELs at the state and local levels. In my role as an instructional leader and an advocate for ELs, I have the responsibility to ensure teachers at CHS in CTISD have the necessary professional development, training, and resources to teach our ELs the same curriculum at the same level of rigor taught to the general student population. I advocate for ELs and their education first and foremost because of my commitment to education and second because I was an EL when I began my formal education in the mid-1960s. There must be a critical consciousness to ensure the priority of an educational institution is to meet the needs of every single student and teacher. This must be done in a way that will ensure each component of the policies is implemented without compromising best pedagogical practices. I begin this chapter by providing a historiography of education policy spanning from the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st century. According to Yilmaz (2008), historiography can be defined as the study of the different modes of historical writing over time. In this body of work, I include the historical research conducted by different scholars on education policy. The

historiography includes language policy and bilingual education and how both evolve and play a role in the education of ELs. Have teachers changed their mindset and how they teach because of the policies? Has this had an impact on ELs and their education? I used this review of the literature to analyze and determine whether the laws have affected ELs in general and particularly the teaching and learning of ELs at CHS in CTISD.

Language Policy and Bilingual Education

Bilingual education has existed in some form since the nation's founding (San Miguel, 2004). According to research by Sinclair (2018), bilingual education was common throughout the United States until the end of the 19th century, as locally run schools offered languages such as German, French, Norwegian, Chinese, and Spanish (see also Blanton, 2007; Kloss, 1997). Languages other than English had been used to teach academic content at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels for centuries. According to San Miguel (2004), bilingual education and the use of the native language for speakers of other languages have been accepted by public and parochial school officials since the 1600s. During the 1600s, local and state officials made the decisions regarding the languages to be used to teach the content. Officials were cognizant that the best way for language learners to learn content and language was by using their native language for instruction. Though the federal government did not legislate language choice at the time of the nation's founding, it did discourage the use of languages other than English in some territories where certain immigrant and racial minority groups resided (García & Sung, 2018; San Miguel, 2004). Before the 1960s, non-English languages and Spanish were excluded from public schools and were devalued (San Miguel, 2013).

The Americanization Movement

Early in the 1900s, the Americanization movement was initiated in response to native-born residents' fear of the rate of immigration and immigrants' inability to assimilate to the dominant culture (San Miguel, 2015). This movement was characterized by different themes of assimilation such as being politically loyal to the nation by committing to assimilate instead of acculturating; the denationalization of ethnic groups, thus privileging individual identity instead of group identity; and defining national unity based on culture and linguistics, recognizing the English language as the primary symbol of national identity, and characterizing non-English languages and non-Anglo cultures as foreign and alien to the nation (San Miguel, 2004). In addition, during this era, restrictionist language policies were enforced that prohibited the use of languages other than English to educate immigrants (Galindo, 2011). During these times, English-only laws and no-Spanish speaking rules were part of the practices used to discourage the use of native languages. There was a belief that bilingualism would slow the progress of learning English and that language learners would not do well in general. San Miguel (2004) stated that during the 1920s, research based on intelligence and achievement indicated bilingualism to be an obstacle to success. Students who did not speak or understand English were thought to be incapable of being successful in academics and acquiring English. ELs were also seen as being negative to the success of education in general.

Though ELs were thought to be unable to learn English by using their primary language, language researchers and teacher educators believe there are productive ways to use students' primary languages in the classroom (Auerbach, 2016). Auerbach (2016) further argued that bilingual education develops native language proficiency and thus produces fully bilingual

citizens. Furthermore, during the latter part of the 20th century, U.S. educational policy had recognized minority languages as a “right” and a “resource” (Serafini et al., 2022).

The use of different strategies and curricula to meet the needs of ELs has also been controversial, especially around the 1960s. Bilingual education was considered controversial because of the belief that teaching students in a language other than English did not promote the American way of teaching and learning. The use of non-English languages in public schools was thought to be un-American (J. Crawford, 2004; Hakuta, 2020). There is a general tendency on the part of policymakers, educators, and citizens to view minority languages as a problem and as an obstacle to overcome, as they pose a threat to national unity (Flores & García, 2017). The idea of ELs being a burden and a negative to education in general, however, began to change during the early 1960s.

Because bilingual education had been believed to be detrimental to learning for ELs, Senator Yarborough introduced the Bilingual American Education Act (BAEA) to the U.S. Senate in 1967 to support the use of the Spanish language to teach content to Mexican Americans who did not speak or understand English. The Act was intended to eliminate discrimination against Mexican Americans and to promote bilingual education as a way of teaching the Spanish language and culture to students who knew how to speak Spanish but did not know how to read it. Senator Yarborough emphasized the importance of getting rid of English-only policies and no-Spanish speaking rules because these policies and rules were discriminatory and psychologically damaging to non-English speakers. Senator Yarborough further argued that Mexican American children had been victims of the cruelest form of discrimination in schools (San Miguel, 2004), as they were prohibited from using Spanish in schools. If Mexican American students used Spanish in school, they were punished.

During the mid-20th century as migration continued to increase, U.S. politicians wanted to ensure the enforcement of English in the classroom was present and that the Spanish language and Mexican culture were annihilated (García & Sung, 2018; Gonzalez, 2001; Gutiérrez, 1995). Also during this time, students with Mexican ancestry and who spoke Spanish, which at the time was considered and perceived to be a “language deficiency,” were segregated into separate classrooms and schools that focused on Americanization to maintain the socioeconomic order (Berta-Ávila et al., 2011; García & Sung, 2018; Ochoa, 2016). These policies and rules not only hurt Mexican Americans, they also hurt ELs and others. The federal government’s lack of action on language policies in general and in schools ended with the passing of the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 (San Miguel, 2004).

Throughout the 1960s and to the present time, the importance of the use of languages other than English to teach academic content to ELs has been at the forefront of education in general. Research in the area of bilingualism has shown using other languages to teach content to ELs is an asset to learning and especially for intelligence (San Miguel, 2004). The use of the first language in a second-language classroom has been found to help emergent bilinguals make connections to the existing knowledge of their native language and thus help the process of learning. The use of the native language should not be banned but encouraged (Salmona Madriñan, 2014), as it lays the foundation for establishing proficiency in other languages, making it essential in learning a second language (Tomak, 2021). There is also evidence that bilingual students perform better on intelligence tests and in other areas where a second language is used (San Miguel, 2004). Studies have shown the use of native language instruction improves rather than delays student achievement. In addition, bilingualism has been found to be beneficial to second language acquisition (San Miguel, 2004). A study was conducted in the 1960s that

focused on Spanish-speaking students being taught in their native language. What the study revealed was that Spanish-speaking students performed as well in acquiring English skills and in the content areas compared to students who were taught only in English (San Miguel, 2004). The findings of research on dual language learners conducted by Serafini et al. (2011) further align with other empirical research that showed there are more academic and linguistic benefits of bilingual education compared to more traditional forms of English-only language and content instruction. As more research was done on bilingualism, assimilation became a topic of discussion. There was a belief that ethnic minority cultures and languages and ethnicity, in general, would eventually disappear as a result of ethnic group assimilation into American life (San Miguel, 2004). Minority groups maintained their language and cultural identity. The work of Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan in the areas of cultural identity and ethnicity among immigrant groups debunked the myth of declining ethnicity and the melting pot theory of assimilation (San Miguel, 2004).

Education and the Role of the U.S. Government

One of the important facts regarding education and the U.S. federal government's involvement with education is that for the first 176 years of the nation's existence, the federal government was not involved in K–12 education. The responsibility of educating the nation's children fell to state and local governments (Casalapi, 2017). Historically, within the U.S. educational system, schools have been considered community institutions controlled by elected school boards and funded by the taxes raised within the school districts. There is no mention of education or schools in the U.S. Constitution and the tenth Amendment states “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” Because of this clause and since the founding of the

Republic, states have been given the power to decide how to educate their citizens within their respective districts (Caldas & Bankston, 2005; Hirschland & Steinmo, 2003). How were state and local governments able to address the educational needs of all students? Before the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, some obstacles prevented the federal government's involvement in funding educational programs at the local and state levels. Casalaspi (2017) stated part of the reason bills that favored federal aid legislation to local and state governments were not passed by Congress during the 1940s through the early 1960s was because of the three Rs (religion, race, and Reds). Reds referred to "federal control." Some groups opposed federal aid to education to preserve federalism and then there were those who supported federal aid but only for public schools. Some groups sought an "equal share" of federal aid to private and parochial schools. There was also the education-race issue that Northerners and Southerners were a part of during this time. White Southerners opposed the federal government making any changes to how things were in their districts to keep other races from receiving an education. The Northerners, such as the civil rights proponents, did not support the idea of segregated school districts receiving federal aid (Casalaspi, 2017). In addition to the three Rs, there were two institutional entities that blocked any federal aid legislation from being approved. One of these institutional entities was the House of Representatives and particularly the House Education and Labor Committee (HEL), which was chaired during the 1950s by Graham Barden, a conservative democrat from North Carolina. Barden opposed federal aid legislation. Education bills had to go through the HEL, and because Barden opposed federal aid legislation, the bills were dead on arrival. The other entity was the House Rules Committee (HRC), which was overseen by Howard W. "Judge" Smith, a conservative democrat from Virginia. Smith was against big government and because the HRC was the gatekeeper of

education legislation that made it to the House floor, any federal legislation was blocked from reaching the House floor for a vote. All these obstacles would come to a halt during the Lyndon Baines Johnson presidency when the ESEA of 1965 was passed into law.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965

The ESEA of 1965 caused a shift in American federalism and paved the way for the federal government to be involved in public education in the areas of school funding and policy (Casalaspì, 2017). The main premise of the ESEA was to allow the federal government to improve public education without making any changes to the existing structure of public education (Nelson, 2016). The ESEA of 1965 was part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" to make sure students who came from poor families were provided an education that met their needs (Menken, 2009). One of the main arguments President Johnson laid out was that in order to fight poverty and break away from the "chains of ignorance," a clear focus on providing the best education possible for all children needed to be established (Casalaspì, 2017). President Johnson's educational package that was delivered to Congress in 1965 was entitled, "Toward Full Educational Opportunity," and outlined how the U.S. educational system was failing in the areas of dropout rates, college matriculation, and employment rates for those who did not have an advanced education. This package ensured federal aid would be made available to support school districts with the necessary funding to address the needs of all children. The law would pledge a billion dollars every year to provide quality and equality for the schooling of disadvantaged students. The federal government would provide federal aid to improve school libraries, state departments of education, and education research, and other amendments would later provide federal aid for bilingual education and students with disabilities. According to research by Gross and Hill (2016), the ESEA focused on the inputs needed for improving public

education. These inputs were the allocation of federal aid to support the improvement of the structures in public education.

The ESEA's framework was based on five titles. President Johnson would propose over one billion dollars for Title I. Title I would focus on equalizing spending between rich school districts and poor school districts based on a formula that would guarantee that over 90% of school districts nationwide would qualify for some federal aid. Title II would guarantee over one million dollars for the purchase of textbooks and library materials as 70% of the nation's schools in 1965 did not have a library. Realizing that the nation's schools needed quality improvements and innovation, President Johnson proposed 100 million dollars for Title III for the development of local supplementary educational centers to address the nation's quality of education. Title IV would have 45 million dollars to develop regional education research laboratories. Title V would have 10 million dollars to help strengthen state education departments. These five titles were part of President Johnson's plan to address the nation's educational platform and to ensure every child received a quality education. Up to this point, emphasis was placed on how the federal government could improve public education (Nelson, 2016). The ESEA also placed emphasis on educating marginalized children. This emphasis ensured school districts provided education to low-income and migrant students. What was happening during this time was devastating to poor children and, in turn, was having an impact on the nation's ability to provide equal opportunities for all students, particularly poor students. The law established the standard that every child had the right to a high-quality education and providing such an education meant it was in the best interest of the nation (Nelson, 2016).

With the passage of the ESEA in 1965 came other laws that would address ELs. One of the laws U.S. Congress passed in 1968 was Title VII of the ESEA of 1965. This act was named

the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 and was sponsored by Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas. Senator Yarborough's main charge was to ensure poor students acquired English quickly. The BEA was enacted to specifically address the education of "children of limited English-speaking ability" (Wiese & Garcia, 1998, p. 1), which was thought to be a huge problem in education during this time. The issue was that ELs were not doing well in their schooling and were dropping out. The dropout rates for Chicanos during this time were increasing and a small percentage of Chicanos were enrolling in college. The Act's main purpose was to ensure ELs became literate in English while not disrupting or keeping them from maintaining their dominance in their mother tongue (García, 2009).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)

NCLB was passed into law by U.S. Congress in 2001 (Menken, 2009). One of the main components of NCLB was high-stakes testing, which the federal government used to hold each school, district, and state accountable for student performance (Menken, 2009). According to this law, each student was expected to be tested annually in Grades 3–8 and once in high school in the areas of reading and math (Ladd, 2017). The expectation embedded within the law was that every student would reach proficiency in the areas of reading and math by the 2014 school year (Ladd, 2017). In addition, Title III of NCLB required that ELs participate in statewide assessments to include the same academic content tests as native English speakers (Menken, 2010). The content-based tests included math, science, social studies, and English language arts (Menken, 2010). Under Title III of NCLB, ELs were required to take tests of English language proficiency to measure their acquisition of English (Menken, 2010). This was critical because what this meant was that ELs needed to make annual progress in English language proficiency and academic content. What would this mean for an EL who had just entered schools in the

United States for the first time and did not speak English? Take, for example, Julissa (a pseudonym), who does not speak English and enters as a ninth grader. Because reading and math are tested at the end of 10th grade in high school, Julissa only has 2 years to learn English in general and the academic language in reading and math before she is expected to take the reading and math tests in English. Not only is Julissa expected to learn another language, she is also expected to adapt to a new educational system and a new environment. Julissa is already at a disadvantage because of her language proficiency in English, which is at the beginner level. Research in second language acquisition indicates it takes a minimum of 4 to 8 years to acquire a higher academic level of language proficiency (DelliCarpini et al., 2010; Sandberg & Reschly, 2011). Under NCLB, students needed to pass the four content area tests (i.e., English language arts, math, science, and social studies) to meet the graduation requirement in state assessments. In Texas, students must take the TAKS as part of the requirement to meet the adequate yearly progress (AYP) and assessment expectations of the law. In high school, students take exit-level assessments during their junior year in the areas of science, math, social studies, and English language arts. Again, if we take Julissa's case, we see that she only has 4 years to acquire English at the cognitive academic level to even have a chance of passing the assessments. One of the intended purposes of the law was to give the federal government more control of the educational system in the United States by appropriating funds to states to improve instruction, thereby improving student performance. The law was intended to support all students who attended government-supported schools in the United States (Menken, 2009). Because the law focused on high-stakes testing and the tests used were administered in English, ELs were seriously affected because of their unsatisfactory performance on the tests, thus causing setbacks in fulfilling graduation requirements (Menken, 2009). Not only were ELs affected by poor

performance on tests, schools and districts with high EL populations were also affected with respect to accountability. According to this law, every school needed to meet AYP toward student performance goals and if the school did not it was subject to sanctions from the federal government (Menken, 2009) that could include the loss of federal funding or school closure.

Title III of NCLB specified that students who had limited English proficiency, including immigrant students, needed to acquire English proficiency (Menken, 2009). Part of the idea behind Title III was to focus on English proficiency and thus not put emphasis on bilingual education. Unlike Title VII of the ESEA, which did promote bilingualism and students using their native language to learn, Title III of NCLB did the opposite. Though NCLB did not completely deemphasize bilingualism, it did stress the acquisition of the English language.

One of the components of the law that was not equitable was that it made it very clear that ELs who were in their first year in U.S. schools would be included in the accountability system for each school and would also be expected to follow the same testing regiment as native-English speakers (Menken, 2009). In my opinion, it is not equitable and is actually unjust for ELs who have just entered high schools in the United States for the first time to take state assessments at the end of their first year. Take, for example, a student from Guatemala who is entering U.S. schools for the first time at 17 years old with gaps in schooling and who has scored the lowest proficiency level of English on an English proficiency test and is expected to take the same state assessments as any other student. Though this student is limited in their English proficiency, they are still expected to take and pass the same tests as native English speakers. This law caused some teachers to teach to the test by focusing on certain student expectations related to the standards of the different tests. Teachers at CHS also developed lessons that included activities such as analyzing study questions that mirrored questions on “practice state

assessments.” This law also affected the “master schedule” because sections of TAKS “prep” classes had to be added because some students, including ELs, were not successful on some of the TAKS. A TAKS prep class is a class that strictly focuses on strategies that give students a better chance of passing the TAKS assessments if they attend and participate in the activities and interventions developed by teachers. Teachers who teach the prep classes are assigned based on their students’ success rate on TAKS. After the NCLB era ended, a new law (i.e., the Every Student Succeeds Act) was enacted to focus on supporting schools that were “low performing,” meaning students struggled to do well in their academics.

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on December 10, 2015 (Nuñez Cardenas, 2017). This new law reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 and focused on continuing the work to address the needs of students in low-performing schools. ESSA was Congress’s way of responding to the growing diverse populations, the low performance of ELs, and the significant academic gaps that were caused by NCLB (Nuñez Cardenas, 2017). In addition, the ESSA represented a significant commitment to ensure all students would be prepared to be successful in college or in any career by requiring that all students in the United States be afforded the highest academic standard level of education to prepare them to be college and career ready (Nuñez Cardenas, 2017). A critical piece and major component of the ESSA is that it brought about changes with respect to ELs and accountability. One of these changes is that it gave states the opportunity to set their own goals for student performance and develop a uniform accountability system. The critical areas addressed within the ESSA include proficiency on tests, English language proficiency, and graduation rates. Under ESSA, states have more freedom to create their own goals based on the specific needs of ELs, and thus can also take

advantage of the law's delegation of power to create accountability systems tailored to school systems' strengths instead of focusing on the struggles, which is typically the standard of any school system (Nuñez Cardenas, 2017). Though states have the opportunity to set their own goals, they are required to implement "standardized statewide entrance and exit procedures" to be able to identify ELs and include them in the general student population reports. Not only is the identification of ELs critical, the resources, programs, supports, curriculum, policies, and practices are equally critical to addressing the needs of every EL.

As with NCLB, teachers were also critical of their teaching and learning. Teachers of the core subjects (Math, English, Social Studies, and Science), in particular Algebra I, Biology, English I and II, and U.S. History, all felt the pressure to prepare their students for the state assessments. Again, teachers would create individualized interventions tailored to the needs of each student with respect to the STAAR. The master schedule was also affected because many students, including ELs, did not do well on STAAR assessments. Sections of Algebra I, Biology, English, and U.S. History STAAR prep classes were built to support students who did not do well on the STAAR assessments. This created a problem for students who did not pass a STAAR assessment because they were assigned a STAAR prep class and thus their elective courses were limited. When a teacher teaches a prep class and specifically prepares lessons to address areas in which students need improvement, it is an example of how the ESSA influences ELs and teachers regarding teaching and learning. Teachers who teach a STAAR assessment course such as Algebra I, English I and English II, Biology, and U.S. History feel pressured to prepare their students for each STAAR assessment. I have had conversations with teachers at CHS about how they feel overwhelmed and pressured to deliver lessons that will prepare their students for the STAAR assessments. In some cases, teachers have shared that their freedom to be creative has

been stifled by the STAAR assessments. Students who are identified as ELs are affected by different policies and different laws. The next section addresses the policy related to affording a student whose home language is one other than English participation in a bilingual program or an ESL program.

Chapter 89 of the Texas Education Code Subchapter BB

This policy addresses students who have been identified as ELs based on their home language and other criteria established by the State of Texas. The policy states that every district in the state that has a student who has a home language other than English and has been identified as an EL based on criteria established by the state shall provide the student a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education program or an ESL program. These programs shall ensure each EL is afforded an equal educational opportunity as required by the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 29, Subchapter B. Students will be provided the necessary support to support learning. The policy also addresses districts finding certified personnel to ensure ELs have an opportunity to master the essential knowledge and skills required by the state.

Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) Chair Guidelines

An LPAC chair has responsibilities that address ELs and their education. As an educational leader and LPAC chair at CHS, I have met with many families and students who have immigrated to the United States with the hope of obtaining a better life and education. I have engaged in conversations with students and their parents about their education in their home countries. In some cases, students reported their education in their home country fell short. At times students did not have consistent days of schooling because teachers did not make it to their assigned schools. Part of my responsibility as the LPAC chair is to identify members for the

LPAC. In high school, an LPAC committee needs to be established to identify, place, and monitor ELs' progress and accommodations for assessments and to reclassify ELs based on exit criteria (TEA, 2020). Another responsibility is to ensure the LPAC follows the guidelines for the identification of ELs set forth by the state. There are four main components for the LPAC committee to use as a guide to identifying potential ELs and therefore offering support. The first component is to administer the HLS to identify the home language. If the parent identifies a language other than English, then the student is administered a language proficiency assessment screening to confirm their EL status and determine instructional placement (second component). The next component is the monitoring of language progress based on language-based assessments. The fourth component is the reclassification of ELs as English-proficient based on exit criteria established by the state and local district (Bailey & Carroll, 2015).

Prior Schooling and How it Affects Second Language Acquisition

In this section, I focus on how ELs' prior schooling in their home countries plays an important role in determining whether some of the coursework completed in their home country will be accepted as credits to be included in their graduation requirements. As an instructional leader of a campus with 20% ELs, second language acquisition and instruction become critical components of an ESL program. We must ask ourselves if ELs who come from different countries have an educational foundation. If so, we must determine whether there are gaps in their learning. This is important because it will help teachers and staff determine the resources and supports that will facilitate teaching and learning with regard to ELs. Coursework completed in their home country might have a bearing on whether an EL student will have to take an end-of-course (EOC) state assessment or not. An example of this would be an EL not having to take

the Algebra I EOC exam because the student was awarded credit for Algebra I from their home country.

Immigrant/Refugee Status

In this section, I focus on how a student is identified as an immigrant or a refugee. This is important because it might mean a student will qualify for some support on state assessments such as special provisions for the English I EOC exam. The special provision would allow an EL to opt out of retaking the English I EOC exam if they failed the assessment but passed the course. An immigrant is a person who leaves their country for different reasons, such as the search for work, family unification, or study, and is still protected by their native government despite being in another country (Arar & Örucü, 2020). A refugee is a person who is living outside their home country and unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of fear of persecution due to religion, ethnicity, nationality, membership in a social group, or a particular political opinion (Arar, 2020).

Assessments of the Texas Accountability System

In this section, I identify and define the assessments that are part of the Texas Accountability System. According to Polson (2018), the United States has a history of using standardized assessments to evaluate student knowledge. The use of “exit exams” imposed as standardized assessment requirements to obtain a diploma is one example of how educators in the United States evaluate students’ knowledge. These assessments can also affect students’ ability to obtain a high school diploma if they are unsuccessful.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

According to Polson (2018), the TAKS exams were statewide standardized tests administered in high school during a student’s junior year. These exit exams were initially

implemented in 2003 and were replaced in 2011 by the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The exams were administered for the subjects of English, mathematics, science, and social studies. The minimum standard passing scale score was 2100. If a student did not receive a passing score, they would be allowed to retake the exam as many times as necessary to meet the standard.

Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)

The TEA designed the TELPAS and TELPAS Alternate as assessments to evaluate the progress ELs make in acquiring the English language. Each year, every EL is assessed on listening, speaking, reading, and writing using the TELPAS. Each domain is assessed to determine the level of proficiency in the English language. An EL student must score an advanced high rating in each of the four domains (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) if they want to be considered to exit EL status (TEA, 2022f). For example, if a student scores advanced high on listening, speaking, and writing but scores advanced in reading, the student must retake the assessment in all domains.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

The STAAR is a criterion-referenced state assessment that was introduced in the 2011–2012 school year. It replaced the TAKS and is directly linked to the standards of an assessed curriculum (Davis & Willson, 2015). It is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in the four core content areas (i.e., math, English, science, and social studies). The assessments are Algebra I, Biology, English I and English II, and U.S. History.

III. METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The context of this study was an urban school district, CTISD, in central Texas. According to the 2021 Texas Academic Performance Report, CTISD had 74,871 students enrolled in the primary and secondary grades in the 2020–2021 school year. Of the over 74,000 students enrolled in CTISD, 28.2% were identified as ELs.

CHS is a traditional comprehensive high school within CTISD with about 1,243 students, of whom 83.4% are Hispanic, 8.5% are African American, 5.3% are White, 1.7% are Asian, and .2% are American Indian, as shown in the 2021 Texas Academic Performance Report. The population is composed of 81.4% economically disadvantaged, 40.7% EBLs, and about 17.5% special education students.

The focus of this study was to present the narratives of two immigrant ELs who attended CHS to determine how policy, pedagogy, and theory, including life experiences, affected their schooling and lives. One of the research participants enrolled at CHS in 2019 and the other enrolled in 2014. One participant was born in the United States and the other participant was born in El Salvador. Both participants enrolled in U.S. schools as ninth graders and were native Spanish speakers with no gaps in their schooling. Upon enrolling in U.S. public schools, the participants faced several challenges adapting to their new learning environments and social structures. Both participants faced the challenges of learning a new language, adapting to a different educational system, and navigating through new social environments inside and outside of the school setting. These challenges proved to be some of the factors that contributed to the participants' feelings of incompetence, frustration, and discouragement. I faced these familiar experiences as a student in U.S. public schools. Therefore, it was relevant and critically

important that I be part of the study as a participant–observer. My personal experiences shed light on and better informed the study, added clarity to the research findings, and enabled me to develop adequate and meaningful recommendations.

I have worked at CHS for the last 19 years and one of my main responsibilities as a school leader is to guide, inform, and oversee the learning of our emergent bilingual students within the ESL bilingual program. Part of my responsibility in overseeing the ESL program is to ensure ELs are identified and placed in the correct courses so they can acquire a good, equitable, and viable education while acquiring a second language. The responsibility I consider to be most important as an educator is being able to support, motivate, and inspire students to learn the social and academic skills they need to graduate and they can use in the future. Developing genuine rapport with students and their parents is also critical to nurturing a supportive and caring environment that will facilitate healthy partnerships. My experiences with the ESL program and ELs at CHS have caused me to reflect on how the accountability system has influenced the lives and schooling of ELs. In addition, my experiences have encouraged me to reflect on decisions made regarding the education of ELs at CTISD. I also included my experiences as a school leader at CHS in the study, such as some anecdotal scenarios that involved the educational accountability requirements that challenged my personal beliefs and values in educating ELs. Some of these decisions were made in order to not compromise the risk of not meeting accountability requirements at CHS. In addition, I included my own educational experiences as an EL during a different time than that of the other two participants.

As a leader at CHS, I have experienced the pressure of ensuring accountability is not compromised. As I began to reflect on the experiences I have had with ELs and especially recent immigrants, I noticed I was negotiating my cultural values and educational beliefs each time a

new EL or recent immigrant EL wanted to enroll at CHS. I was not the only school leader who was having difficulty negotiating cultural values and educational beliefs with respect to ELs and recent immigrants. There were two other colleagues who found themselves in a similar situation. The other colleagues were an assistant principal and an attendance clerk. Both were knowledgeable of the registration process and all it entailed. For example, they were knowledgeable about graduation requirements and policies regarding assessments, credits, attendance, transcripts, and graduation plans. I collaborated with them every time a new student from a different country was attempting to enroll. All three of us had the same educational belief that every student deserves an opportunity to obtain an education regardless of age, ethnicity, race, or any other factor.

In this research, I used a qualitative inductive research approach. This type of approach is systematic because it enables a researcher to analyze qualitative data in such a way that the analysis is guided by specific evaluation objectives. The premise of the inductive approach is to allow the research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes found in the raw data, without the limitations or restraints of structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). As the researcher, I adopted this method of research because it allowed me to use authentic data gathered from the research participants. I incorporated different methods of research. I positioned myself as a participant–observer and included my experiences as a student and as an educator throughout the study. I used participant observation because it allowed me to be an observer and a participant. Using these two methods of collecting data strengthened the findings, as I was able to capitalize on each stance and look at the big picture and ask comparative and analytical questions while also being able to use firsthand experiences and understandings of the experience of a participant in the research (Murchison, 2010). This was critical because it

allowed me to reflect on the experiences of the participants as well as my own. I included data from informal conversations held with colleagues throughout my years at CHS related to the enrollment, graduation, completion, and attendance of recent immigrants.

I used purposeful sampling to identify the two participants. In purposeful sampling, the researcher can focus on specific participants who can provide rich and in-depth information that will justify the importance and purpose of the study based on their experiences (Patton, 2002). These two individuals were able to provide insight and perspective on why it is important to provide support systems and resources to meet the needs of ELs who experience difficulty learning in a foreign and different educational system. The two ELs also provided insight into being able to view the educational systems of policy, theory, and practices through the lens of an EL. The two participants reached different paths within their educational experiences at CHS. Hilario (a pseudonym) graduated from CHS through the Individual Graduation Committee (IGC) process. According to the Senate Bill 149 passed by the 84th Legislature in 2015, a student who is enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade and who failed an EOC assessment in no more than two of the five courses could still graduate and receive a diploma if an IGC determined they were qualified to graduate. Jasmine (a pseudonym) did not graduate from CHS and has yet to obtain her diploma. She has received all her credits and is hopeful to pass at least one more STAAR exam to go through the IGC process.

I collected data through pláticas guided by open-ended questions. Pláticas are an expressive cultural form shaped by listening, inquiring, storytelling, and story making (Guajardo et al., 2016). They are conversations told in native languages. I also asked each participant to create a life map of their immigration experiences and point of entry into the United States. I used a map of North and South America to document events representing their life history. I

created a life history of my own schooling years in the United States as an EL. Life history research allows people's stories to be told in their own words and thus creates a human experience of the lives of individuals to be interpreted by readers to make meaning and form judgments of the texts as seen through their own realities. Life histories also give voice to those whose voices have been ignored or suppressed (Labaree, 2006). In essence, these life maps helped document critical events in the participants' lives and points of tension where the participants represented the dichotomy of lived experiences on both sides of the border separated by the river. The different perspectives and experiences are presented metaphorically by two similar perspectives like those who recognize the river as the Rio Grande (the big river) or Rio Bravo (the wild river).

In addition, questions were focused on the attainment of course credits, acquiring a second language, state assessments, graduation requirements, and job-related questions based on how the participants' lives would be affected if they did not complete the necessary requirements to obtain a high school diploma and thus not graduate from high school.

Research Participants

Jasmine is a 20-year-old student who is presently working at a supermarket. Her parents are from Mexico and emigrated to the United States in 1997 to start their lives together as a married couple in search of a better life and a better future for their children. Jasmine was born in the United States in the State of California in 2002. When Jasmine was 5 years old in 2007, her mom returned back to Mexico with Jasmine and her brother to reunite with her husband who had been deported in 2003. Jasmine attended school in Mexico from the age of 5 to 17 years old (first through ninth grade). Jasmine and her parents decided for her to return to the United States and finalize her studies and have a better life. She entered U.S. schools as a ninth grader at the age of

17 years old and attended CHS for 3.5 years before transferring to an Academy in CTISD. Jasmine has acquired all her credits, but has had difficulty passing the state assessments. She is presently pursuing a way to perhaps take the state assessments she lacks with the hope of obtaining her diploma.

Hilario is a 24-year-old former EL who attended CHS all 4 years. Hilario entered U.S. schools as a ninth grader. He is from El Salvador and is presently working in the air conditioning field with his uncle. Hilario shared that he emigrated to the United States because he wanted to come to live with his mother who had emigrated to the United States when Hilario was 2 years old. Hilario's mother had left Hilario with his uncles in El Salvador when she emigrated to the United States in search of a way to support her family because she was a single mother. Hilario shared that it had taken him about a month and a half to make his way to the United States. He said the journey from El Salvador was difficult because he was on his own and depended on others to get him safely across the borders and into the United States. He stated he traveled by foot, car, train, and bus and that the days were long.

The third participant was myself, the researcher, Venancio Saldaña, a 60-year-old educator who recently retired after serving 31 years in education and 21 years as a leader in CTISD. I worked in CHS for the last 19 years. I started my education in the United States as a kindergartner in 1966 at Taft Independent School District in South Texas. I was an EL who struggled with acquiring a second language. My education occurred at a different time period but I had similar experiences as the other participants. Table 3 provides a snapshot of the demographic information for each participant, including myself.

Table 3. Demographic information of participants.

Name	Gender	Birth year	Age	Ethnicity	Country of origin	Entered U.S. public schools
Jasmine	Female	2002	20	Hispanic / Latinx	United States	2019
Hilario	Male	1997	24	Hispanic / Latinx	El Salvador	2014
Venancio	Male	1962	60	Hispanic / Latinx	United States	1967

Table 4 shows an overview of the participants' years in U.S. schools and the assessments each participant was required to take as part of the requirements for graduation. It also shows whether the participant completed the coursework required to graduate.

Table 4. Schooling and assessment information for each participant.

Name	Years in U.S. schools	Core course completion	Electives	State assessments
Jasmine	4	Yes	Completed	STAAR
Hilario	4	Yes	Completed	STAAR
Venancio	13	Yes	Completed	None

Data Collection

I used pláticas as a method to collect authentic information from each research participant. Pláticas are a cultural form of expression shaped by listening, inquiring, storytelling, and story making that is predicated on multi-dimensional conversations. Pláticas are meaningful and are told in native languages to capture culturally relevant traditions (Guajardo et al., 2016). I

used open-ended questions to guide the pláticas. The purpose of using open-ended questions was to obtain authentic responses that would provide a true description of what the participant experienced. I conducted one 60-minute group plática (with all research partners as a group) and two 45-minute individual pláticas (with all research partners individually) in a setting that was conducive to eliciting authentic data. The one-on-one pláticas with Jasmine were done in Spanish and at CHS. The one-on-one pláticas with Hilario were done in Spanish at a public library in Austin. The group pláticas were also done in Spanish at CHS. All data collection activities and pláticas were conducted after I received approval from the Texas State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The one-on-one pláticas with each participant were conducted first. Each one-on-one plática was organized when convenient to my research partners. The group plática was conducted after I completed the one-on-one pláticas at a later date. During the group plática, I used “circle” as a critical pedagogy to create a space in which each participant felt comfortable enough to share their life story without any reservations. During “circle,” everyone sits in a circle waiting to participate as speaker or listener (Guajardo et al., 2016). Circle is used to tap into ancient practices and modern processes to create trust, good-will, and reciprocity (Guajardo et al., 2016). I used a ruler with the phrase “The gift of knowledge has no measure...” as a talking piece so each time a participant wanted to respond to a question, they would get the talking piece. This meant that whoever had the talking piece would share their response while others listened respectfully without interrupting. I recorded each plática to capture every piece of detailed information. I asked guiding questions of and also provided opportunities for the participants to be able to add their own accounts of their experiences at CHS.

One of the reasons I incorporated pláticas is because they allow for a much more natural dialogue to unfold. Pláticas are common within the Latino culture and occur within a setting that

is relaxed and informal. Pláticas are a form of storytelling that is used to express oneself in a way that is comfortable and natural. This type of dialogue is what I grew up listening to with my father, uncles, and friends, whether it was my father reminiscing about the experiences of traveling to the northern parts of the United States to work the different types of crops in the different states or reminiscing about starting the journey from Mexico to the United States back in the early 1900s. Storytelling is a way in which we are able to practice the craft of reflective practitioners through the process of engaging in meaningful conversations that allow us to place ourselves in the middle of the text (Guajardo et al., 2008). The pláticas were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to reveal critical information and experiences.

Prior to conducting the pláticas, I met with each participant individually and explained the objective and nature of the study. I explained that anonymity would be of utmost importance when conducting the pláticas and collecting the data. The following are the questions used for guiding the individual (one-on-one) pláticas.

Open-Ended Questions Guiding the Individual (one-on-one) Pláticas

The pláticas were guided by the following main questions:

1. Why did your parents decide to immigrate to Texas?
2. What was your journey like when you immigrated to the United States?
3. How did you feel when you arrived and entered your first year in a U.S. school?
4. What challenges did you encounter as you progressed in school in the United States?
5. Did you have to work while you attended CHS? If so, why? How did working affect your schooling?
6. What support systems were available throughout your schooling journey?

7. How did you feel when you were informed that you would not graduate because of not meeting certain requirements?
8. How did not graduating affect your life?
9. What have you been doing since you left school?
10. How has being bilingual influenced your life?

The group plática was done in a similar way as the individual pláticas with a minor adjustment that included group activities. This activity invited every participant to create their life map that included their journey north, their lived experiences in schools, and other selective critical moments in their life. Each participant also had to present their life map to the group by sharing critical events and lived experiences as they navigated through a different educational system and environment. Additionally, each participant provided details of how they and their parents immigrated to the United States. The following are the first set of questions that guided and helped open up the circle session in the group plática.

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. Where is home?
4. Why did you accept today's invitation to the group plática?

The following were the second set of questions that guided the group plática to collect information of each participant's personal journey.

1. What were some impactful or important events that impacted your schooling experiences?
2. What are your values and beliefs that have helped you through this journey?
3. What are your thoughts about learning another language?

4. What resonated with you today and what will you take with you that will have a positive impact on you and the way you work in your community?
5. What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

Life Maps

Another method I used to collect data and information about each participant's life events was life maps (map of North and South America). Life maps are a timeline of an individual's journey in life. The focus of the life maps was to paint a picture of any events the participants experienced in their home country related to schooling and their schooling experiences in the United States. I explained life maps to each participant by showing them some examples and also having conversations about my own schooling experiences. I also created my own life map to serve as a guide and example. I was available to guide each participant with the creation of their life maps. The life maps were created and discussed during the group plática. As conversations took place, I recorded them to further analyze the data collected from our experiences. I identified and explained different significant events in a detailed manner. I incorporated life maps because they provided each participant an opportunity to express themselves using different types of artifacts such as pictures and words. This method of collecting data was non-threatening and allowed the participants to reflect on different events in their lives both in their home country and the United States.

The Dichotomy of Living in the World of the In-between

Children who immigrate to the United States have a particular experience as they and their families establish themselves in their new communities and navigate through the school system. These experiences vary depending on what initiated the departure from their home country, the age of the children when they traveled, the location where they found entry, and the

political conditions at the time they entered the United States. All these variables create different experiences for those who would be categorized as emergent bilinguals in the public education system.

In this study, I used a particular dichotomy to represent the varied challenges emergent bilinguals experience in our educational system. I used the river that separates the United States and Mexico as a conceptual framework that helped frame the differences in their experiences and realities as documented in this study. The river separating both countries has two names and is perceived differently depending on what side on which someone lives. Those who live in the south recognize the river as the Rio Bravo (the wild river) and those who live north of the river recognize it as the Rio Grande (the big river). The dichotomy of these two labels helps frame the experiences of people who navigate through the realities of two worlds and the challenges they face as they seek a better future.

The metaphor of the Rio Grande and Rio Bravo frame the life experiences of the two participants and myself. The river that expands for miles separating the two countries represented a different reality and unique experience of the participants depending on their points of entry into the United States. The stories of the participants flowed down the river documenting the critical events of their lives that shaped their realities in navigating through their communities and school experiences. These life maps unveiled the policies and practices that educators implement to address the needs of emergent bilinguals as they navigate through the public educational system (the Rio Grande or the Rio Bravo experience).

Data Analysis

Qualitative research allows a researcher to use different types of methods to collect data. Collecting the data is one component of what a researcher embarks on to conduct a study. The

other component is to develop a thorough explanation of the data collected. One of the methods I used to analyze the data was coding. According to Saldaña (2009), a code in qualitative inquiry is a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a summative, salient, essence-capturing, or attribute for language-based or visual data. I used different types of coding to identify themes, topics, ideas, and beliefs that resonated with each participant. I used descriptive coding to identify the basic topics, emotion coding to identify each participant's emotions about their perspectives of the worldview and life conditions, and values coding to explore each participant's intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences (Saldaña, 2009).

Each plática was simultaneously translated from Spanish to English. I was able to do this because I am fluent in reading, writing, and speaking in both Spanish and English. The process I used to translate each plática was spending hours listening to each plática and translating it word for word. This was critical because I was able to capture each participant's feelings, nuances, and emphasis on particular events that allowed me to make meaning of their personal journeys. I was able to create a synthesis that blended the different layers of the individual stories of each participant. The first layer of the synthesis was the basic biography and background of each participant during the individual pláticas. The second layer was the analysis of each participant's transitions and experiences they navigated through the challenges they faced in their journey to reach the United States. The third layer was my ability to synthesize the narratives depicted on each participant's life map that was collected during and after the last group plática. The final layer to this data analysis was my ability to weave their individual pláticas, group plática, and life maps to make meaning of their stories. This data analysis process unveiled a genuine interpretation of participants' stories captured in my conceptual framework of the turbulent waters of the Rio Bravo.

A secondary framework of analysis was used by applying the four pillars of immigration (crossing border, reception, welcome, and post-migration). The utility of the four pillars of immigration recognizes the similarities of their experiences as they emigrated to the United States. Despite taking different paths to the United States, the participants experienced similar challenges as newcomers to communities, social structures, and spaces that ultimately ended up in CHS. The similarities of their experiences were part of the data analysis that helped make meaning and informed my recommendations in the study.

I analyzed the transcriptions of each plática by highlighting keywords and phrases I thought had special meanings to each research participant. I reviewed the transcription of each plática question by question and listed each participant's name and their responses to each question. Once I highlighted each plática, I created a table for each question that included each participant's name and their responses. I then used the highlighted keywords from each participant's responses as the information that I recorded on the table. I used the table as a visual to help me analyze the data in an efficient manner.

Trustworthiness

One of the concerns that must be addressed in conducting research that involves interviews is trust. One of the responsibilities of a researcher is to ensure the validity of the research. According to Patton (2002), validity in qualitative research depends on the skills and competence of the researcher to conduct the research in such a way that it ensures credibility. To enhance the credibility and authenticity of the data, the stories underwent three stages of member check. In the first stage, the data were checked with participants and school practitioners (i.e., school administrators). In the second stage the data were cross-checked with some of my committee members. The third stage was the triangulation between the two facets of the stages of

the data to further enrich the credibility, authenticity, and internal and external validity of the data (Arar & Oplatka, 2018, p. 179).

Ethical Considerations

It is important to be transparent with the research participants in relation to seeking their collaboration to conduct qualitative research that will be published. To ensure the research participants were informed about the invitation to participate in providing authentic and personal data, I explained to each the objective of the research. Additionally, I provided each participant with a consent form to sign stating they understood the purpose of the study and the implications of their participation. I also explained to each participant that their names would be replaced with pseudonyms.

IV. PROFILES OF HOPES AND DREAMS

Emergent bilinguals who immigrate to the United States and enroll in schools at the high school level as their initial point of entry face challenges that affect their chances of completing the necessary requirements to graduate high school and earn their diplomas. The most significant challenge is the expectation of learning another language (i.e., English) in such a short time to be able to be successful in their classes and state assessments. These expectations are theoretically incongruent with language learning theory of acquiring a second language. According to Cummins (2000), it takes an immigrant student 2 years to acquire BICS and 5 to 7 years to acquire CALPS.

In this chapter, I map out the landscape of the journey across the Rio Bravo by using a picture to depict the Rio Bravo and its turbulent currents that represent challenges in the likes of policy, practice, lived experiences, new environment, new language, and assessments that emergent bilinguals have to overcome to meet the necessary requirements to graduate and earn their diplomas from high school. I then organize the chapter in sections that include data from the one-on-one and group pláticas. The first section includes an introduction to each research participant and their introductory story, which includes data from the one-on-one and group pláticas. It also includes a picture of each participant's life map that they used during the group plática to explain their immigration journey to the United States, points of entry, and impactful events as they traveled across the Rio Bravo. The section also includes lived experiences from the different currents encountered in the Rio Bravo. The second section includes each research participant's school lived experiences related to policies and practices that affected their schooling and life experiences. The section is organized in subsections that include examples of policy in context and policy as practice. In the policy in context subsection, I identify a policy

that affected the research participant in a negative way. In the policy as practice subsection, I include explanations of ways I could have advocated for each research participant had I known what I know now about their experiences in school and life in general. The format described above was used for each research participant. The third section includes the findings that identify the emergent and recurring themes from the one-on-one and group pláticas that included stories shared by each research participant related to life in and out of high school. I conclude the chapter by using the four pillars of immigration to make connections and meaning to the stories shared by each research participant during the one-on-one and group pláticas.

Journey Through Rio Bravo From an Emergent Bilingual Experience

I used the metaphor of a journey through the “Rio Bravo” to explain the struggles of three emergent bilinguals as they navigated through the turbulent waters that formed currents depicted by educational practices, policies, theories, and lived experiences in the Texas educational system (see Figure 1). Each current had the power to deliver a devastating blow to each emergent bilingual’s educational experience.

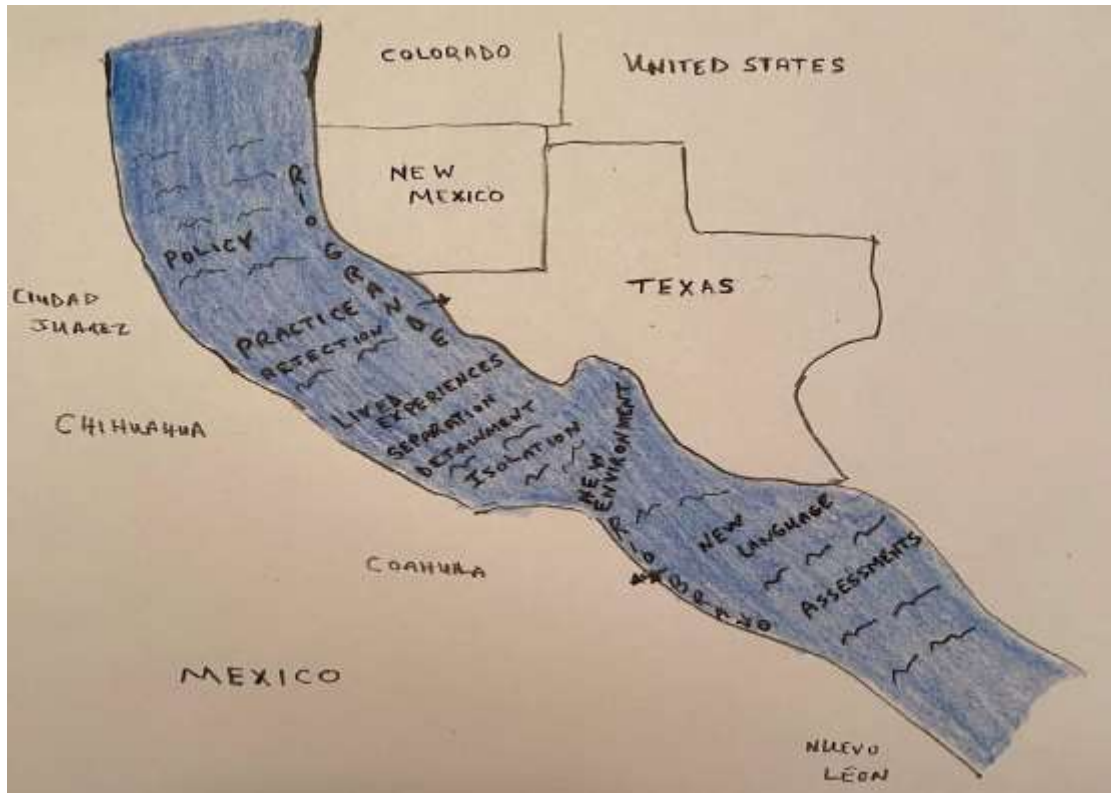


Figure 1. My drawing of the Rio Bravo with the turbulent currents of policy, practice, lived experiences, new space, new language, and assessments.

I use the Rio Bravo as a metaphor to describe two points of view. In the United States the river is known as the Rio Grande and is a more tamed river than in the borders of Mexico. In Mexico the river is called the Rio Bravo and is widely known as a furious river along the borders of Mexico. I also see it as a division of two worlds as perceived through the lens of someone who lives in Mexico. The perception from someone who lives in the South (Latin America) is that in the United States, things are much calmer and there are more opportunities for someone to prosper so to speak. In the South, a person who lives in Mexico or Latin American countries and is barely making it goes through rough times of surviving the turbulent waters to cross over to the United States.

In the next section, I use data from both the one-on-one pláticas and the group plática to give meaning to the stories of each participant. I introduce each research participant and tell their

story of their life and journey through some challenging times in their home country and in the United States. As I tell each story, I sometimes use their own words or phrases that resonated during the pláticas.

Introduction to the Research Participants

Jasmine's Introductory Story

Jasmine is an emergent bilingual who presently works in a supermarket in East Austin. Jasmine shared that she enjoys working at the supermarket because it helps her with her emotions about being away from her parents. “Me gusta a trabajar en la tienda porque me ha ayudado con mis emociones de no vivir con mis padres [I like to work at the store because it has helped me with my emotions of not living with my parents].” Jasmine’s parents live in Mexico and she lives with her aunt in Austin. Jasmine also shared that she likes working at the supermarket because it helps her meet people and make new friends. “Me gusta trabajar en la tienda porque me ha ayudado conocer gente y hacer nuevos amigos.” Jasmine shared that it was difficult when she first moved in with her aunt. It was hard not being able to talk to her parents in person and also difficult not seeing them when she arrived home from work or school. She shared that her life in Austin for the past 3 years has been somewhat of a routine. During the group plática, Jasmine shared the following: “He estado viviendo una vida rutinaria de escuela y trabajo los últimos tres años en Austin [I have been living a routine life of school and work for the past 3 years in Austin].” She mentioned that before she used to go play soccer, but now she is focused on obtaining her diploma by preparing for her STAAR exams and working to earn money to buy herself things she wants and to save money to pay for a trip for her parents to come and visit.

She has earned all the credits required to graduate but has not been successful in her STAAR exams. She attends a graduation preparation academy in Austin where she has enrolled in a medical-vocational program that will help her find a job after she completes the program. Jasmine also attends STAAR tutoring sessions to help her prepare for the STAAR assessments. One of her dreams is to graduate and obtain her high school diploma. She has taken the STAAR exams multiple times and has not met the standards in any of them. Her fear of not meeting the standards in the STAAR exams is real and present every time she is scheduled to take them. She shared that she is afraid of disappointing her parents and family if she does not pass the STAAR exams.

Jasmine was born in California in 2002 to Mexican parents who had immigrated to the United States in 1997. After being married for 3 weeks, Jasmine's parents decided to immigrate to California in search of a better life as they had just gotten married and the job situation in Mexico was not very stable. Jasmine mentioned that her parents wanted to start their new life in the United States with the hopes of finding jobs and at some point starting a family in a place where they could give their children a better future. Her parents were willing to take a risk and make the long journey from San Luis de La Paz to California. They immigrated to the United States through Mexico and via the border of Baja, California. They spent 2 weeks at the border of Baja, California, with little to no food. After 2 weeks and very little food and energy, they finally crossed over to California. Both began working in the fields picking strawberries. They worked long hours, the work was back breaking, and the pay was not very good. After about a year and a half in California, they had Jasmine's brother. Two years later they had Jasmine.

A year after Jasmine was born, her dad began to get in trouble and was incarcerated by the border patrol. While he was detained, Jasmine's mom would take him clothes and money.

She would place the money in the pant pockets so the guards would not find out she was taking him money. After about 2 weeks of being incarcerated, Jasmine's father was deported back to Mexico and was dropped off in Tijuana. Jasmine's mom was left alone with her two children and continued working to save enough money to return to Mexico. She continued to work in the fields picking strawberries to support her family. Two years after Jasmine's dad was deported, her mom had finally saved enough money to buy bus tickets for the family to return to Mexico and join Jasmine's dad.

Jasmine was 5 years old when they immigrated back to San Luis de La Paz. At the age of 5 years old, Jasmine began her formal schooling. Jasmine went to school in Mexico from the time she was 5 years old up until she was 17 years old. Jasmine shared that she finished preschool, elementary, middle school, and the equivalent of the first year of high school (ninth grade) in San Luis de La Paz. "Terminé preescolar o prekinder, primaria, y secundaria en me pueblo." She also shared that when she finished middle school, she started to work.

In 2018, a year prior to turning 17 years of age, Jasmine obtained her passport with the hope of immigrating to the United States to live with her aunt in Austin, Texas. Her parents had begun the conversations with her aunt about bringing Jasmine to Austin to live with her. Her parents wanted Jasmine to have an opportunity to continue her education and have an opportunity to graduate and obtain her diploma. Their hopes and dreams were for Jasmine to have the opportunity to look for a career after graduation and begin her life in the United States. It was a tough decision for her parents to let Jasmine come live with her aunt but they saw it as something well worth the sacrifice for Jasmine's best interest.

When Jasmine turned 17 years of age in 2019, her parents had asked her aunt, who was visiting at the time, to take Jasmine to live with her in Austin. Jasmine shared that she had not

attempted to immigrate to the United States since she was 4 years old. Jasmine and her aunt traveled by car through Mexico and went through Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, and crossed over in Laredo, Texas. The point of entry for Jasmine to the United States was Laredo, Texas. Jasmine and her aunt were nervous when they went through the checkpoint. After successfully crossing the checkpoint, both Jasmine and her aunt breathed a sigh of relief.

During the group plática, Jasmine presented the map shown in Figure 2 depicting her journey to the United States. She drew arrows and added comments and dates on the map to depict when and where her journey began and ended.

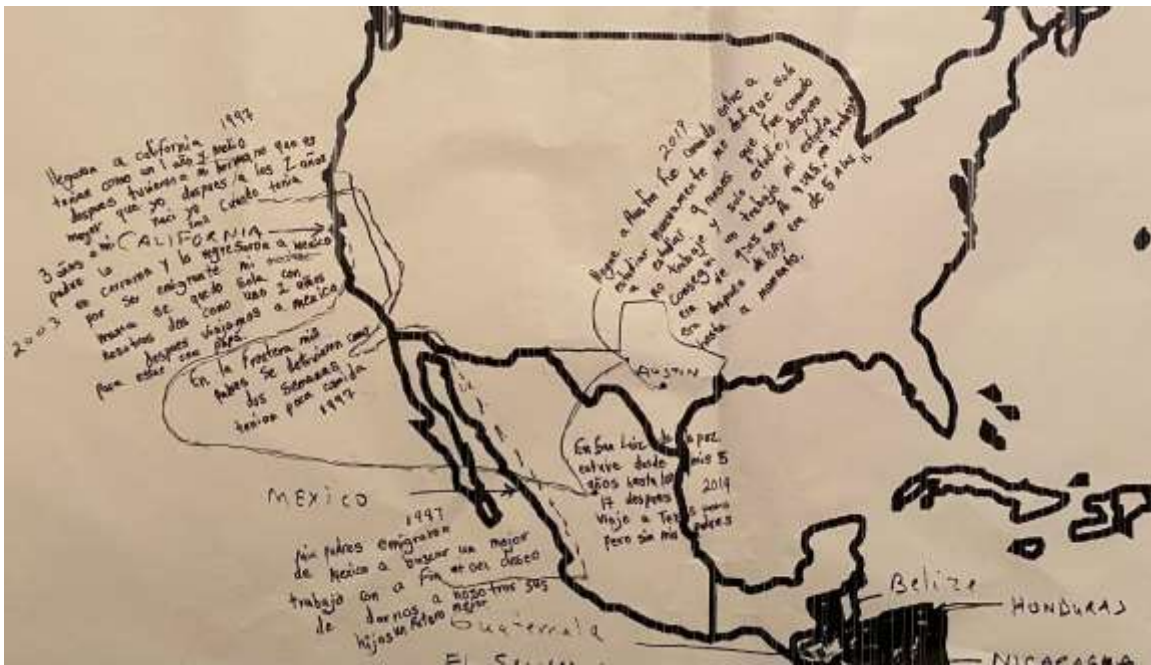


Figure 2. Life map Jasmine used to explain her immigration to the United States (Austin).

After arriving in Austin and settling in her aunt's house, 2 weeks later Jasmine's aunt took her to enroll her at CHS that same year. Jasmine shared that when her aunt took her to enroll at CHS, they were greeted by staff members at the front door and directed to the registrar's office. Both Jasmine and her aunt felt welcomed when they were initially greeted. When they introduced themselves to the registrar, they were treated with respect and patience. Because the

registrar did not speak Spanish, she asked for help to translate. I was called to the registrar's office because I was the administrator who oversaw the ESL program and initially met every student who was enrolling and was from a different country. I remember Jasmine's facial expression changed when she heard me speak Spanish and welcome her and her aunt. She no longer had a look of nervousness; instead, she seemed comfortable and excited to be there. I introduced myself and explained the enrollment process and also described the ESL program. I asked Jasmine if she had any documentation from her last school in San Luis de La Paz. I explained why it was important to obtain any records from her schools in Mexico to see if some of the courses taken at the secondary level would count as credits in Texas. I explained to her and her aunt that this would determine what grade she would be assigned. After her aunt finished completing the enrollment forms, I took them back to the registrar to get enrolled. Once the registrar finished enrolling Jasmine, I called for the ninth-grade administrator, who also spoke Spanish, to meet us at the registrar's office. The ninth-grade administrator took Jasmine and her aunt to the counselor to give Jasmine a schedule for her classes. During all this time the ninth-grade administrator translated for Jasmine and her aunt. After the counselor finished with Jasmine's schedule, the administrator showed Jasmine where every class was and explained the transitions from one class to another. He also gave her a tour of the campus. During one of the one-on-one pláticas, Jasmine shared she felt good when she first enrolled at CHS.

Jasmine also shared some of moments when she felt rejected and sad. During one of the one-on-one pláticas, she shared that most of her teachers did not speak Spanish and she felt bad because some of her classmates would avoid sitting next to her because she did not speak English. She said that would occur when one of her teachers would ask students to work in groups. She also felt sad and frustrated because she could not communicate with her classmates

and teachers because of the language. As time passed and Jasmine began to acquire English and made friends in her ESL classes, she felt better and more comfortable. Jasmine shared that all in all her experience at CHS was more positive than negative.

Hilario's Introductory Story

Hilario is an emergent bilingual who presently is working in a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) company in Austin. Hilario shared that he likes working for the HVAC company and has been learning more about the work and about the business. “Me gusta trabajar en la compañía porque estoy aprendiendo mas del trabajo y del negocio,” said Hilario during one of our one-on-one pláticas. He also shared that he has acquired more English while he has been working in the company (“He adquirido más ingles mientras trabajo en esta compañía”). In addition, he mentioned that he has maintained his native language (Spanish) by speaking to fellow workers who only know Spanish. “He mantenido mi idioma natal [español] hablando con mis compañeros de trabajo que solo saben español.” He said he uses both English and Spanish in his job and it has earned him more trust and importance from his supervisor. He translates for his supervisor whenever his supervisor wants to communicate with the workers who only know Spanish. He also translates for his fellow workers whenever they want to communicate with their supervisors.

Hilario was born in in 1997 on the east side of El Salvador known as “El Departamento de la Unión” in the town of Olomega. His parents are Salvadorian and have lived there all of their lives. During the group plática, Hilario shared that when his mom became pregnant with him, his biological father left his mom to raise Hilario on her own. Hilario shared that his biological father never assumed responsibility for him. As Hilario shared this information with the group, I noticed his facial expression changed. The look changed from a person being

comfortable sharing information to one that expressed sadness and resentment. Hilario also shared that after his biological father left his mom, she met another man whom he considers his dad. In 1999, two years after Hilario was born, his mom immigrated to Austin in search of a better life. Her brother had been asking her to come for quite some time and she finally decided to take a risk. A couple of weeks after Hilario's mom arrived in Austin, she found work at a cleaners and has worked there ever since. When Hilario's mom decided to immigrate to the United States, she left Hilario with his stepfather. Hilario was raised and supported by his stepfather for 1 year after his mom left him. During the time that he lived with his stepfather, Hilario shared that he did not have much of a recollection of when his mom left to go to Austin. He did mention that as he got older, he would communicate with his mom via phone, but did not really know her very well. In 2000, his stepfather decided to immigrate to Austin also in search of a better life and perhaps opportunities to work in construction because he worked as a construction worker in El Salvador. Hilario's stepfather left Hilario with an aunt and uncle. Once again Hilario was left in the care of another person to raise and support him. Hilario's aunt and uncle raised him until he was 15 years old.

In 2013, Hilario made his first attempt to immigrate to Austin to be with his mom. He said his mom wanted him to come live with her in Austin after so many years being separated from him. He shared that during his first journey to Austin he came by foot and walked through dangerous terrain. He was traveling with others who were also trying to immigrate to the United States. There were times when there was hardly anything to eat or drink during this journey. He shared that after traveling for several weeks, he was captured and detained in Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, in the northern part of Mexico. He also shared that because he was a minor, the staff at the detention center in Guadalupe contacted his biological dad to come for him. His biological dad

did not go for him and take him out of the detention center. Hilario said his biological dad could have taken him out but chose not to and instead left him there. This was difficult and hard for Hilario to accept. During his detainment in Guadalupe, Hilario said it was a time of feeling abandoned by his father and also a time of helplessness knowing he could not do anything about being there. After 3 months of being detained in Guadalupe, Hilario was deported back to El Salvador.

At the beginning of 2014, Hilario attempted his second journey to Austin and arrived in Guatemala. He remembered getting on “La Bestia,” which is a freight train commonly used to get to Mexico. He shared that he rode on “La Bestia” for about 20 hours and got off in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. He then went to Reynosa, Mexico, and stayed there for about 2 weeks waiting to cross over to the United States. Hilario shared that he made many attempts to cross to the United States from Reynosa but there were too many immigration patrol guards patrolling the border. He finally crossed to McAllen, Texas, and stayed there for about a week before trying to go through Houston, Texas, to get to Austin. Unfortunately, he was detained in Harlingen, Texas, at a detention center and spent 3 weeks in before he was released to his mom.

During the group plática, Hilario used the map shown in Figure 3 to explain his journey to the United States. He used arrows to depict the routes taken and added comments and dates to depict the journey’s point of entry and the final destination.

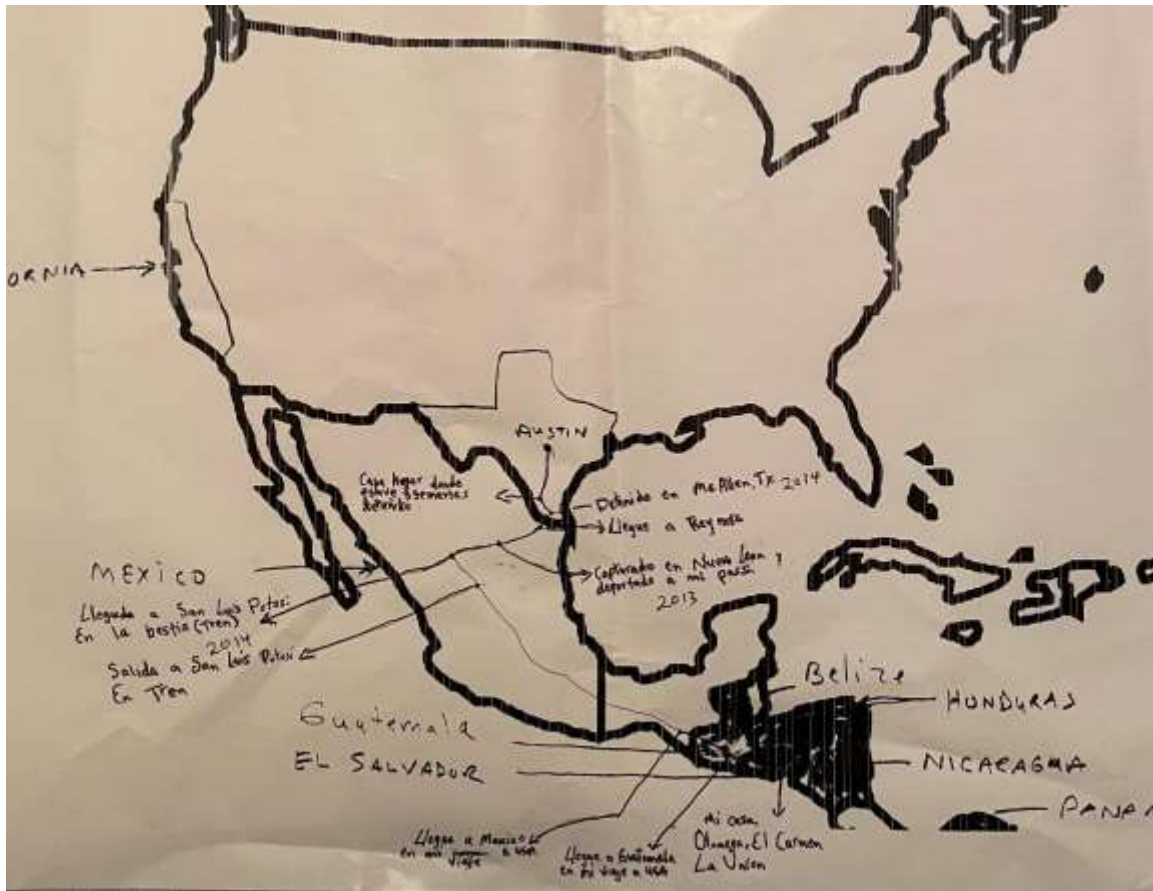


Figure 3. Life map Hilario used to explain his immigration to the United States (Austin).

Hilario arrived in Austin in March of 2014 with his mom by way of car. He had been through a lot of tough times during both attempts to cross over to the United States to join his mom in Austin. His mom wanted him to come and live with her in Austin to continue his education and obtain his high school diploma so he could have better opportunities to find a job and start a career. These were the hopes and dreams that Hilario’s mom had for him.

Three weeks after Hilario arrived in Austin, his mom went to enroll him in CHS because it was the school closet to where they lived. When Hilario and his mom arrived at CHS, they were greeted by a staff member in the front office who spoke Spanish. The staff member directed them to Carlos (a pseudonym), who spoke Spanish and also assisted the registrar with translating to parents and students who wanted to enroll in CHS. Carlos introduced himself to Hilario and

his mom and began to ask them questions about Hilario's educational history and his age. As Carlos obtained more information about Hilario and his schooling, he recommended that his mom enroll Hilario at another school (Newcomer High School [NHS]; a pseudonym) that CTISD had established for newcomer emergent bilinguals. Carlos told Hilario's mom that it would be better to enroll Hilario at NHS to give Hilario some time to acclimate to a different educational system and a new language of instruction. Hilario mentioned that when his mom was told to enroll him at NHS, his mom was frustrated and not happy. Hilario also felt rejected and unwelcomed at CHS. The day after meeting with Carlos at CHS, Hilario and his mom went to NHS to enroll.

Hilario shared that he and his mom were greeted by staff members who spoke Spanish. He also said the registrar spoke Spanish and they felt welcomed and comfortable about enrolling at NHS. After about 2 weeks at NHS, Hilario noticed many of the students and teachers at NHS spoke Spanish. Hilario said he felt comfortable at NHS, but he wanted to learn English so he asked his mom to unenroll him from NHS and retry enrolling him at CHS. Hilario asked his uncle to go with his mom to try to enroll him at CHS again. Hilario asked his uncle to accompany his mom because he was familiar with the enrollment process, the educational system, and CHS because he had attended CHS himself. Hilario's uncle knew it would be better for Hilario to attend CHS because he would have a better chance of learning English based on his own experience.

The second attempt to enroll Hilario at CHS was a more positive experience for Hilario and his mom than the first attempt. This time they were accompanied by his uncle and they were able to convince Carlos to help them enroll him. Carlos helped them with the enrollment paperwork and also asked them for any school transcripts from Hilario's last school in El

Salvador. Carlos explained to Hilario, his mom, and his uncle the process of sending his transcripts to an agency contracted by the district that specialized in determining whether courses taken and passed in El Salvador could be counted as credits in CHS. This information was important because it would determine Hilario's assigned grade level. It would also determine whether he would have to take some of the STAAR assessments.

Once Carlos helped them with the paperwork and asked the registrar to enroll Hilario, he called for an administrator to meet Hilario and his mom. The administrator just so happened to be me. I introduced myself and gave them an orientation about CHS and the programs available such as the ESL program, dual language program, career and technology program, and the Hospitality and Business Institute. After I finished explaining the programs, I took Hilario, his mom, and his uncle to meet Hilario's counselor. I helped translate for the counselor because he did not speak Spanish. After the counselor created a schedule for Hilario, I asked Hilario's mom if she had any questions and informed her that I was going to give Hilario a tour of the school and show him his classrooms. I asked Hilario's mom and uncle if they wanted to accompany us on the tour and both of them said they were fine if I gave Hilario a tour without them. I asked his mom and uncle if they had any questions and they did not. We all went to the front entrance of the school and I assured Hilario's mom and uncle that I would take care of Hilario. They left happy and excited that Hilario was going to attend CHS. As soon as they left, I gave Hilario a tour of the campus and showed him his classrooms. I took him to his class and told him I would be available any time he had any concerns or questions. Hilario felt comfortable and excited to start attending CHS.

Jasmine's and Hilario's journeys to the United States were different in that their points of entry were distinctly different and Hilario had a much more difficult time crossing the borders.

His journey included several attempts of crossing at different borders at different times. It also included occasions where he was detained for weeks in different cities along the border. The journey was much more difficult because at times he was walking with others through dangerous terrain with hardly any food or drink and at times he was on a freight train called “La Bestia” for almost 20 hours. Jasmine’s journey was much easier as her aunt picked her up from her home in San Luis de La Paz and they traveled by car and crossed through the Laredo border. In the next section, I give a description of who I am and how being a son of immigrant parents relates to both Hilario’s and Jasmine’s stories.

Venancio’s Introductory Story

I was the third participant in this dissertation. I was a participant–observer and the weaver of the stories presented throughout. I was born in 1962 in Taft, a small town in South Texas about 160 miles from Austin, Texas. It was known as “The Friendliest Cotton-Pickin Town in Texas.” My parents were from Mexico and their families immigrated to the United States during the Mexican Revolution in search of a better life and a safe haven. I did not have the experiences Jasmine and Hilario had with regard to immigrating to the United States but my parents did before I was born. There was a crossing of the political boundaries and a clear demarcation of what my parents experienced when they crossed the borders to immigrate to the United States. I experienced some of the same challenges that both Hilario and Jasmine experienced, such as learning another language, not being able to communicate with my teachers during my elementary years, and struggling to do my school work because my parents could not help me. My struggles occurred when I was younger, so I had more time than Hilario and Jasmine did to learn the language before I got to high school.

Though I did not have to immigrate to the United States, both my parents did. They fled Mexico because of the Mexican Revolution that was taking place at the time. My oldest uncle Eligio took the responsibility of taking care of my dad and my other aunts and uncles. Both my grandparents on my dad's side of the family were already deceased. Because the Mexican Revolution was still in full force, in 1917 my uncle Eligio decided to take a risk to flee Mexico to save his life and the lives of his brothers and sisters. They immigrated to the United States and settled in Taft, which at the time was mostly farmland.

My grandparents on my mom's side immigrated to the United States just as the Mexican Revolution was ending in 1920. My grandfather decided to take a risk and make the journey from Mexico to the United States in search of a better life and a safe haven. My grandfather brought his family and settled in Taft just like my dad and my other aunts and uncles on my dad's side.

Growing up in Taft in the 1960s and starting my formal schooling years in the late 1960s proved to be challenging. Like Hilario and Jasmine, my native language is Spanish and both of my parents only spoke Spanish. During my elementary years, I struggled the same way that Jasmine and Hilario struggled when they first enrolled in U.S. schools as ninth graders. A major difference between my first years of schooling in the United States and Jasmine's and Hilario's first year in U.S. schools is that there were not any bilingual programs in Taft as there were in CHS where they both attended.

I graduated from THS in 1980. After high school, I began working in a department store and worked there for a year. I enrolled at Texas A&I University in the Fall of 1981 and only attended that semester. After deciding not to go back to Texas A&I in the Spring, I decided to work at a landscaping company in Taft. After working at the landscaping company for over a

year, I decided I wanted to go back to college. In the Fall of 1983, I enrolled in Del Mar Junior College in Corpus Christi, Texas, and made a commitment to myself not to stop attending college until I obtained my degree. After spending 2 years at Del Mar Junior College, I decided to transfer and enroll at the UT Austin in the Fall of 1985 and again kept with my commitment to keep attending until I obtained my bachelor of science in education from the University of Texas. I obtained my degree in the Spring of 1989 and fulfilled my commitment.

During my years at Del Mar Junior College and at UT Austin, I worked part-time just as Jasmine and Hilario did while attending CHS. I had to learn how to organize my time to make sure working did not interfere with my education. There were certainly times that were challenging, but I would always go back to the commitment I had made to myself. Being the only one from my family living in Austin made it difficult because family is the most important thing in my life.

I have spent 31 years in education and during all those years I have advocated for emergent bilinguals. My life journey down the Rio Grande is almost a mirror reflection of both Jasmine's and Hilario's journey down the Rio Bravo. Though I did not have to immigrate to a foreign country, I did have to learn English. When I think back on the struggles I went through as a teacher and instructional leader, I cannot dismiss the fact that I experienced inequities as an ESL teacher. I also cannot overlook the inequities emergent bilinguals had to endure over years and now in this the 21st century.

The life map in figure 4 is what I used during the group plática to explain my journey in the United States. I used lines, comments, and dates to paint the picture of my life journey.



Figure 4. Life map I used to explain my life story.

Jasmine’s School Life at CHS (Policies and Practices That Influenced her Journey)

Jasmine enrolled at CHS in the Spring semester of 2019 as a ninth grader. Prior to enrolling at CHS, Jasmine had attended schools in San Luis de La Paz, Mexico. She had just completed ninth grade and had taken a year off and started to work. When Jasmine’s aunt went to enroll Jasmine at CHS in the Spring semester of 2019, she was greeted with a warm welcome as shared by Jasmine in one of the one-on-one pláticas. Jasmine seemed excited to begin school at CHS.

As is state policy, every parent or guardian who enrolls a student new to the school district is asked to complete an HLS to identify the language spoken at home the majority of the time and to see if the district needs to provide a bilingual or ESL program. Jasmine’s aunt was asked to complete a HLS. The HLS her aunt completed identified a language other than English (Spanish) as the language spoken at home and by the student most of the time. Because another language was identified in the HLS, Jasmine’s language proficiency in English was assessed. Jasmine was administered the language proficiency assessment and scored at the beginning level of language proficiency in English. She was identified as an emergent bilingual.

Because Jasmine was identified as an emergent bilingual, she was assigned ESL and sheltered classes as it was common practice to do for newcomers. This also meant she would be assigned a reading class to reinforce her acquisition of English much faster. Though Jasmine shared that she was allowed to choose some of her electives, her choices were very limited. She was only allowed to choose soccer to meet the requirement of her PE credit. “Me dejaron escoger futbol como mi elective de educacion fisica.” Other classes that were offered at CHS were locked in such as ESL, Sheltered Science, and Sheltered Math. Because of these limitations in her schedule, it would take her much longer to complete the 26 credits required to graduate. She was already 17 years old and still a freshman.

Jasmine also shared that language was the most impactful thing in her journey. She recalled how she felt when she could not understand anything her teachers were saying in the majority of her classes. “Siempre asistia a clases pero la mayoria de las veces no le entendia a los maestros. A veces intentaba a preguntarle a los maestros pero no muy bien sabia como preguntarles [I would always attend my classes but the majority of the time I didn’t understand the teachers. Sometimes I would try to ask my teachers questions but I really didn’t know how to ask].” Sometimes during some of her classes she felt isolated because she felt none of her classmates wanted to sit by her because she did not speak English. “A veces sentia que nadie se quieria sentarce conmigo porque no sabia ingles . . . Eso me hacia sentir poco triste [That would make me feel a little sad].” Jasmine would also feel lonely because she could not communicate with her classmates and with the majority of her teachers. She shared that at home she also felt lonely when she got back from school because her aunt and uncle worked. She missed her parents and she said it was not the same as it was in Mexico, where she lived with her parents. She missed her parents.

Se que tengo a mis padres, pero no estan aqui para hablar con ellos en persona. Hablo con ellos por telefono pero no es igual como si los tuviera aqui conmigo. En Mexico, podia hablar con ellos en persona y me sentia feliz. Aqui es diferente con mi tia y tio.

Language would cause the greatest impact at CHS in terms of Jasmine's classes, emotional well-being, and with her state assessments.

It is common practice at CHS for the registrar to ask parents or guardians for any school transcripts from the last school attended to check if there is a possibility of awarding credits to the student. There is a district and state policy that schools and districts must follow where school transcripts from other countries are sent to an agency to conduct a course equivalency evaluation to possibly award credits to students for courses taken in their home country. Such courses include, but are not limited to, the following: foreign language, art, PE, technology, algebra, biology, and geography. Because Jasmine did not have any documentation from her previous school, she had to retake some courses she had already taken in Mexico. Jasmine's aunt and Jasmine did not provide the registrar any transcripts from her previous school in Mexico and therefore no credits could possibly be awarded to Jasmine. Though Jasmine completed ninth grade in Mexico, she was still considered a ninth grader at CHS. In essence, Jasmine was set back a year.

Policy in Context. In the above scenario, the policy in Chapter 74 Rule 74.26 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) took effect. The policy states a school district must ensure records or transcripts from an out-of-country transfer student be evaluated to be awarded credit for courses completed outside of Texas. Before Jasmine could be awarded credits for any courses taken in Mexico, an evaluation of the transcript for course equivalency needed to be completed.

Policy as Practice. The policy at CHS is to send transcripts from out-of-country transfer students to an agency contracted by the district to perform a course equivalency audit before credit can be given for any course taken outside of Texas. In retrospect, knowing what I know

now and if I were to be placed in the same situation, there are some actions I could have taken to negotiate the situation to prevent Jasmine from being placed in the predicament. One of the actions I could have taken would have been to call Jasmine's school and ask to speak to the registrar to get confirmation of the credits earned for courses taken. Once the registrar confirmed the courses, I would ask for a copy of the transcript to be sent to me by mail or by fax. Once I received the transcript, I would ask our registrar to award credits to Jasmine that had been confirmed by her school registrar in Mexico. In addition, I would have sent her transcripts to the agency contracted by the district to conduct a course equivalency audit to check if there were other courses that could be counted as credits. Once I received the audit from the agency, I would meet with the registrar to enter any other credits in Jasmine's school record that were identified by the agency.

Another action I could have taken to advocate for Jasmine would have been to ask department chairs from each content area to create exams in Spanish based on the TEKS that could measure Jasmine's mastery of the content. I would then ask Jasmine which courses she received credit for in Mexico and give her the exams for those courses. If she demonstrated mastery on the exam for any of the courses, then she would be awarded credit for that course.

Though Jasmine informed the registrar that she had taken and passed biology and algebra in Mexico, she did not have any proof. It has been my experience over the 19 years I spent at CHS helping with the enrollment of emergent bilinguals from Mexico who have completed the first year of high school that they usually have passed and received credit for algebra and biology, among other classes. Because Jasmine did not have any proof she had taken and passed algebra and biology, she had to take both STAAR assessments in the respective courses.

Policy in Context. In the above scenario, the policy that influenced Jasmine's experience with EOC exams was TAC 101.3021, which states that if a district/school accepts full credit for a course in which there is an associated EOC exam based on the student's instruction prior to enrolling in a Texas public school, the student is not required to take that EOC. Had Jasmine been awarded credit for algebra and biology, she would not have to take either of the EOC exams for the respective courses.

Policy as Practice. In retrospect, knowing what I know now, I could have advocated more for Jasmine. I could have called Jasmine's school in Mexico and confirmed with the registrar that Jasmine had indeed received credit for algebra and biology. I could have then asked the registrar to send me a copy of Jasmine's transcript by mail or any other means available. Once the transcript was received, then I would meet with our registrar and ask for the credits to be entered in Jasmine's school record as proof of credit. This entire process would be documented and filed in Jasmine's cumulative folder.

In both scenarios, once I received the course equivalency audit from the agency, I would have met with Jasmine and her aunt to inform them of the credits Jasmine was being awarded based on the transcripts received from Jasmine's school in Mexico. I would have had conversations about her opportunities to select any classes she was interested in but could not choose because she was starting with zero credits. During these conversations, I would also let Jasmine and her aunt know that I would act as an advocate for them.

Another action I could have taken would have been to create a step-by-step guide of the enrollment process and train our registrar on the entire process. Training our registrar on the entire enrollment process would create a systemic change that would be sustainable. This process

would also create a holistic approach to the arrival of new students in a similar situation as Jasmine.

Jasmine struggled with the EOC exams because of her language proficiency. She had scored at the beginner level on the English proficiency assessment when she first enrolled at CHS in 2019. Because the assessments were administered in English and it takes an emergent bilingual 5 to 7 years to acquire CALP, it is no wonder that Jasmine struggled to pass these assessments. She worried that she would not graduate because of the STAAR assessments. She said it would make her feel sad if she did not pass the STAAR assessments. She felt all the hard work and effort she had put in attending school and passing all her courses would be for nothing. During one of the pláticas, Jasmine said,

Siento que todo el esfuerzo que e puesto de asistir a todas mis clases y de sacar las mejores calificaciones seria para nada. Me hiciera sentirme triste si no puedo pasar los exámenes de STAAR. Siento que si no me graduo seria todo para nada.

Jasmine took all the STAAR assessments and did not pass any of them on her first attempt. Because Jasmine did not pass any of her STAAR assessments the first time, she was assigned a STAAR advisory teacher. During the advisory time, the teacher focused on teaching students the standards that were not mastered. Usually, an advisory class is for students to receive support with whatever they need, whether it is academic, emotional, or social. Jasmine was not afforded the typical advisory class because she did not pass her STAAR exams. “En advisory, la maestra nos enseñaba estrategias y conceptos en los cuales no logramos pasar en el STAAR Tambien ofrecian tutorias de STAAR despues de escuela que podia asistir para mejorar la calificacion de los STAAR exámenes.” Though Jasmine needed some emotional support during these difficult times, she had to focus on her STAAR assessments. Jasmine has taken all STAAR assessments more than once and still has not managed to pass any of them. This created

stress for Jasmine because the STAAR assessments are part of the graduation requirement. Jasmine fears she is going to let everybody down if she does not pass the STAAR and graduate.

Because Jasmine was identified as an emergent bilingual, she also had to take the TELPAS. The TELPAS includes assessments in four domains (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Jasmine was required to take TELPAS every year if she was still identified as an emergent bilingual and did not score advanced high in all the domains. The goal for every emergent bilingual is to make progress in every domain each year. The school's accountability responsibility is to ensure every emergent bilingual makes progress in every domain of the TELPAS assessment. This means, for example, if an emergent bilingual student scores a beginner level in the listening domain in 2023, then the following year the student should score an intermediate level in listening. The TELPAS does not keep an emergent bilingual from graduating, though it does create some level of emotional and academic stress.

These are some of the policies and practices that Jasmine lived through as a student at CHS. By no means are these the only obstacles or barriers that caused the turbulent currents on her journey down the Rio Bravo. Jasmine not only had to deal with the academic stress of not passing the STAAR exams or having to retake some courses, she also had to endure the emotional stress of being away from her parents.

Hilario's School Life at CHS (Policies and Practices That Influenced his Journey)

Hilario immigrated to Austin, Texas, in March of 2014 from El Salvador. He attended schools in El Salvador up to the ninth grade. Hilario immigrated to Austin mainly because his mom wanted him to live with her and the rest of the family. Hilario's mom immigrated to Austin in 2000 in search of a better life and better opportunities for employment. She left Hilario with his stepfather when Hilario was 2 years old. When Hilario was 4 years old, his stepfather

immigrated to Austin for the same reasons—a better life and better opportunities for employment. Hilario would be raised by his stepfather’s brother and sister-in-law until he was 17 years old.

Two weeks after Hilario arrived in Austin, his mom decided she would enroll him at CHS because it was the closest school to where they lived. They lived in an apartment complex not too far from CHS. When Hilario and his mom arrived at CHS, they were greeted by the front office staff and directed to the registrar’s office to begin the enrollment process. Because the registrar did not speak Spanish, she asked for assistance from Carlos, who spoke Spanish and would help with the enrollment process when there were Spanish-speaking parents and students.

Carlos introduced himself and began to ask questions about Hilario, such as his age and prior schooling. Carlos also asked for any transcripts from Hilario’s last school attended in El Salvador. When Hilario and his mom informed Carlos that they did not have any transcripts from El Salvador, Carlos began to talk to them about another school in the district that would be better for Hilario because he was already 17 years old and did not know English. This was a common practice that occurred when students from other countries were older and did not have any transcripts from the last school attended in their home country. Hilario’s mom respected what Carlos was recommending and took Hilario to the other school and enrolled him. When I asked Hilario about this experience, he said he felt rejected, especially knowing CHS was his home school. “Me senti rechazado porque le dijeron a mi mama que fuera mejor de matricularme en la otra escuela. Mi mama como nunca asistio a la escuelas en El Salvador acepto la recomendacion.” This rejection Hilario mentioned was just another emotional challenge he had to live with throughout his journey down the Rio Bravo.

When Hilario enrolled at NHS, he filled out the HLS and identified Spanish as the language spoken at home the majority of the time. He was administered the language proficiency test and identified as an emergent bilingual based on his beginner-level proficiency in English. After 3 weeks at NHS, Hilario asked his mom to withdraw him from NHS because he was not learning any English. “Despues de tres semanas en NHS mi di cuenta que no estaba aprendiendo ingles y le pedi a mi mama que me sacara y que matriculada en CHS.” Hilario’s mom was successful in enrolling Hilario at CHS on the second attempt.

Because Hilario was identified as an emergent bilingual, he was scheduled into ESL and sheltered classes. He was also assigned a reading class to speed up his acquisition of English because he was already 17 years old. Though Hilario had completed ninth grade in El Salvador, he was initially assigned as a ninth grader because he did not have any transcripts from his last school attended in El Salvador. It was common practice at CHS to assign a newcomer emergent bilingual to ninth grade and not allow any opportunities to choose any classes because of age and language proficiency. Hilario did not have a choice of selecting classes he was interested in because he was already behind on credits. “Nunca tuve la oportunidad de escoger ninguna clase que me interesaba porque ya iba atrasado con mis creditos por decir.” Hilario was always playing catch up with his credits. This was yet another challenge he experienced as his journey continued down the Rio Bravo.

Hilario mentioned in one of the pláticas that language caused the greatest impact at CHS. “Para mi el idioma siempre fue lo mas impactante en la escuela. El idioma siempre trae problemas y tambien puede traer beneficios.” Not being able to communicate with teachers and other students in his classes was a problem. Hilario did not understand what was going on in his classes. He said he skipped at times to get away from school because he did not understand

anything in class. “A veces no iba a la escuela para no sentirme mal en clase de no poder entender nada.” There were times that he wanted to talk to his counselor about problems he was having with his mother but could not because the counselor did not speak Spanish. Other times he wanted to speak to someone about how he felt being in a new environment, new school, and not being able to speak English.

A veces queria hablar con mi consejera sobre los problemas que estaba teniendo con mi mama pero no podia porque la consejera no hablaba español. Habia veces que queria hablar con alguien sobre mis sentimientos de estar en un nuevo ambiente, una nueva escuela, y no poder entender o hablar ingles.

Not knowing English caused Hilario academic, social, and emotional challenges. Because English is the language of instruction and also the language used in assessments, it had a huge impact in Hilario’s journey down the turbulent Rio Bravo.

The state assessments (i.e., STAAR) that Hilario had to take during his years at CHS were all administered in English. These assessments posed huge challenges for Hilario because he had scored at the beginner level in the language proficiency assessment when he entered as a 17 year old. He had the most difficulty with the English I and English II STAAR assessments. “Los exámenes mas difíciles fueron los de inglés I y inglés II. Nunca pude pasar ninguno de los dos.” He took both tests multiple times and was unsuccessful in passing either one. He said he would be sad if he did not graduate because of the STAAR because he had put forth much effort in obtaining all his credits. “Me sentiria triste si no podria graduarme por no haber pasado los STAAR. Con todo el esfuerzo que le habia puesto de obtener todo los creditos, y no poder graduarme seria muy triste.” The STAAR assessments were a challenge Hilario encountered as his journey continued.

Because Hilario was identified as an emergent bilingual, he had to take the TELPAS assessments each year. The TELPAS includes assessments in listening, speaking, reading, and

writing domains. Hilario never scored advanced high in all domains the years he attended CHS. Not scoring advanced high did not keep Hilario from graduating, but it did cause him emotional stress. Hilario was still identified as an emergent bilingual even after he graduated from CHS. The TELPAS were just another set of assessments Hilario had to take every year and were considered to be impactful through his journey.

Policy Into Context. In the above scenarios, there were multiple policies that affected Hilario's schooling experience at CHS. The policy in Chapter 74 Rule 74.26 of the TAC states a school district must ensure records or transcripts from an out-of-country transfer student be evaluated to be awarded credit for courses completed outside of Texas. This policy came into play when Hilario could not provide a transcript and thus had to retake courses he had already taken in El Salvador.

The other policy that affected Hilario's schooling experience at CHS relates to EOC exams. The TAC 101.3021 policy states that if a district/school accepts full credit for a course in which there is an associated EOC exam based on the student's instruction prior to enrolling in a Texas public school, the student is not required to take that EOC exam. Had Hilario been awarded credit for Algebra I and Biology, which were courses he had received credit for in El Salvador, then he would not have to take the EOC exams for both subjects.

These two policies were the ones implemented and followed that placed Hilario in the predicaments. These were the policies that caused Hilario social, emotional, and academic distress.

Policy as Practice. In retrospect, knowing what I know now and if I would be placed in the same situation, there are things I could have done to negotiate the situations that could have prevented Hilario from being placed in such predicaments. There are actions I could have taken

that would not have violated the policies but reimagined the policies in such a way that was student centered.

One of the actions I could have taken to advocate for Hilario regarding credits would have been to ask the department chairs from the courses Hilario had said he had received credit for in El Salvador to create exams in Spanish based on the TEKS. Hilario would be administered the exams for the courses identified and for each exam he passed he would then be awarded credit for that course. This action would have prevented Hilario from retaking courses he had already taken in El Salvador. In addition, it could have given him opportunities to choose courses he was interested in taking because he was not starting with zero credits.

With respect to the Algebra I and Biology EOC exams, I could have called Hilario's school in El Salvador to get verbal confirmation from the registrar that he had indeed taken and passed both subjects. Once I received verbal confirmation from the registrar, I would request that a copy of the transcript be sent to me by mail or whatever means available. After receiving the transcripts, I would then meet with our registrar and ask for the credits to be entered into Hilario's school record as proof of credit.

Another action I could have taken after receiving the transcripts would have been to send them to the agency contracted by the district to conduct a course equivalency audit. The audit could identify other courses that could be counted as credits for Hilario. Once I received the course equivalency audit from the agency, I would then meet with the register to enter the credits into Hilario's school record as proof of credit.

After receiving the evaluation of the transcripts from the agency, I would have met with Hilario and his mom to inform them of the credits Hilario was being credited for based on the course equivalency audit completed by the agency. During my meeting with Hilario and his

mom, I would explain that because Hilario was receiving credits from courses he had taken in El Salvador, he now would have opportunities to select classes of interest because he would not be starting with zero credits. I would also let them know that I was their advocate.

In retrospect, like in Jasmine's situation, creating a step-by-step guide on the enrollment procedures and training our registrar on the entire process would give Hilario, Jasmine, and any new student coming from abroad a better and more genuine experience as they come into our public education system. The training of our registrar on the entire enrollment process would create a sustainable systemic approach in addressing the critical decision-making process that could determine life-changing events for emergent bilingual students. In essence, the step-by-step process would create a more holistic approach to the arrival of new students who are in a similar situation as Hilario.

Venancio's Life in Schools (Policies and Practices That Were Impactful)

My formal schooling began in pre-kindergarten just like that of my research partners. The difference between my research partners' elementary schooling experience and mine was the language of instruction. My research partners' language of instruction was their native language (i.e., Spanish) and in my case the language of instruction was English. My native language was Spanish and because the language of instruction was English, I went through some challenging times when I attended school for the first time. There were no bilingual programs in Taft during that time that I can recall. It was a "sink or swim" type of setting through the Rio Bravo. In reflecting on my initial enrollment in school in pre-kindergarten, it becomes clear the school system in Taft did not value my language. I say this because there were not any classes taught in Spanish.

Throughout my elementary years at South Elementary, I was placed in regular classes with the rest of the general population and expected to learn the content in English with no regard to my native language. I felt frustrated and isolated because I did not know English. The only way I got by was through the help of some of my older brothers and sisters. As I completed each elementary grade, I began to slowly acquire English. By the time I completed my elementary years in fourth grade, I was already speaking, reading, and writing English. Because South Elementary only had grades through fourth grade, I had to transition to East Elementary to attend fifth grade.

Policy in Context. In the scenarios above, the BEA of 1968 came into play. Though the federal policy of the BEA of 1968 was to provide bilingual programs that would address the special educational needs of limited English-speaking children, it did not mandate any particular curriculum for bilingual education. Participation in bilingual education programs was on a voluntary basis as there was no requirement for implementing bilingual education (San Miguel, 2004). The curriculum provided was a “sink or swim” policy as the main method of instruction for limited English-speaking students.

Policy in Practice. The “sink or swim” curriculum was implemented because there were no mandates to provide bilingual programs to meet the needs of ELs. What should have happened during these times to address and meet the needs of limited English-speaking students was to offer bilingual programs that used native language instruction as a method of instruction. Had this been the case, perhaps I would have learned English much faster and at the same time maintained and reinforced my native language (i.e., Spanish). If it was not for my siblings assisting me through the acquisition of a new language, my journey through the Rio Bravo likely would have been different.

A Transition to Another Environment

I remember when I started to attend East Elementary how different it felt because it was the first time I had met White students. I felt somewhat unwelcome by the White students because it seemed as if they did not want to talk to me. I remember at first how some of my friends from South Elementary and I competed against the White students during PE. It was us versus them. I remember there would be fights between us just because we had come from another school and were seen as different. As time went by, my friends from South Elementary and I began to make friends with the White students and we began to get along. By the time I finished fifth grade, I had made friends with some of the White students who were in my classes and saw them as good friends. As the school year ended and fifth grade was completed, everyone would transition to the sixth-grade campus, which was next to the junior high.

My sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade years were exciting because they were a time of being able to participate in individual and team sports. By this time, language was really not an issue. I had completed at least 7 years of schooling and had learned and developed a good understanding of the English language. I still spoke Spanish at home with my parents and spoke both English and Spanish with my brothers and sisters.

I remember in eighth grade how we used to read passages from the Science Research Associate (SRA) reading cards in English class. The SRA Program was a reading program used by English teachers to improve our reading comprehension and vocabulary. The teacher would assign students particular color-coded reading materials based on their reading comprehension. I always felt I was behind with reading because of the reading materials assigned. The reading levels were designated by colors and initially I was always assigned the lowest level (brown). I felt embarrassed and ashamed of the level assigned. I remember being determined to get to the

highest level (purple). As the year progressed, my reading comprehension kept improving. I finally had made it to the highest level and that made me feel good. As I think back on the times sitting in my English class reading the SRA cards, I think about how my research participants must have felt during their first English class at CHS not knowing English. How awful they must have felt. As I transitioned to high school, I began to understand more and more the importance of education.

During high school, I noticed some of the courses were getting more difficult than others. I especially noticed that my English classes were more challenging than any other classes. I felt it was difficult to express myself in English because Spanish was my first language. I remember I would struggle to write because I could not relate to the topics selected by my teachers. I even struggled to ask for help because I did not know if the teachers had any tutoring times available. I usually worked on the essays by myself at home because by the time I started high school my brothers and sisters were already done with high school except for Roman, who was a junior at the time I began ninth grade. Like my research participants, I struggled with English even though the language of instruction had been English throughout all my years in school.

During high school, I faced the challenge of not being able to talk to anyone at school and in particular my counselor about matters I was struggling to overcome. I do not know if my counselor met with other students or not. What I do know is that I never met with my counselor for anything. I did not have an advocate in high school to whom I could turn for support or guidance and I lacked the confidence and trust to seek out my counselor. This challenge was similar to Hilario's in that he did not have anyone to talk to about the problems he was having with his mom not trusting him. My challenge was different from Hilario's and Jasmine's because

it was not about language. I knew English and could communicate with my teachers, students, counselor, and other staff.

My high school years were a blur in a sense because I never felt I had any opportunities to select any classes that were of interest other than the classes I was assigned by my counselor. My counselor never met with me to ask me what classes I wanted to take and I never questioned it. Thinking back, I would have liked to have taken welding and the building trades (i.e., shop) class. Though my parents instilled in us that education was the highest priority, they never met with my counselor or teachers because they did not know English and there was not anyone at school who reached out to them. I knew I wanted to go to college after I graduated because of my older brothers' college experiences and accomplishments. My counselor never met with me to discuss my plans after graduating high school. I feel that had I had the confidence and trust to seek out my counselor or any of my teachers, it would have helped me with the struggles I was experiencing in high school.

Though I was born in the United States and Spanish is my native language, I faced similar and different challenges than Hilario and Jasmine. In my initial years, language was a challenge because I did not know English. When I started high school the challenges were the lack of academic, social, and emotional support from school personnel, including my school counselor. I felt my school counselor did not have a keen awareness of who I was and what I was going through during high school. I experienced cultural challenges and a feeling of being invisible.

Findings

These are the experiences each research participant encountered as they traveled down the Rio Bravo. Each participant gave accounts of their struggles that they experienced regarding

their life in high school and life in general as they each navigated an educational system that proved to be impactful and detrimental. The recurrent themes from the one-on-one and group pláticas and the stories each participant shared focused on academic needs, emotional needs, social needs, policies, and practices that each research participant lived through their schooling experiences and life in general.

Tying it all Together

These are the findings from the individual and group pláticas. I interpreted the findings using storytelling as a means to make meaning of the stories told by my research participants. I used the metaphor of the Rio Bravo to paint the picture of how the river flowed through the lived experiences of each participant. The challenges were the turbulent currents my research participants encountered as they traveled down the Rio Bravo. Though I did not immigrate to the United States as my research participants did, I feel I still embarked on the journey down the Rio Bravo.

The journey down the Rio Bravo goes through some rough waters and dangerous currents. There are undercurrents that catch you by surprise as you try to navigate down the river. My research partners experienced some of the rough waters and dangerous currents during their schooling experiences at CHS. As I interpreted my research partners' experiences and stories, I used my experiences throughout my educational career to make meaning and sense of the challenges each of us faced during our schooling journeys.

When my research partners enrolled in CHS, they were both 17 years old. Both Hilario and Jasmine had already completed their elementary and secondary schooling in their home countries. Both were identified as emergent bilinguals based on a language proficiency test

administered to any student whose parents identified any language other than English as being the language spoken at home by the student and the family.

My research partners and I experienced a common thread during our years in high school. When I was a junior and senior at THS, there was not anyone at school who even mentioned or talked to me about my plans after graduating. There were no words of motivation or encouragement from my counselor about going to college. It seems I was just going through the motions of graduating and my counselor was oblivious of what I needed and deserved. The same was true for my research participants who attended CHS. As Hilario mentioned in one plática about the STAAR exams, “Every time the STAAR exams were about to happen, they would remind me that I had to pass them if I wanted to graduate.” Jasmine also mentioned the nervousness she felt about not passing the STAAR exams. She never mentioned anyone talking to her about going to college. It seems the most important thing conveyed to my research partners was to pass the STAAR exams. From 1980 when I graduated high school to 2023, some emergent bilinguals are still struggling to graduate high school.

Making Connections and Meaning to the Stories

The three stories center on the four pillars of immigration. Each research participant experienced going through each pillar as was evident through the information I gathered from the individual and group pláticas. The pillars included (a) crossing the border (immigration), (b) reception (by the host country), (c) welcome (what does it look like), and (d) post migration and are presented in Figure 5.

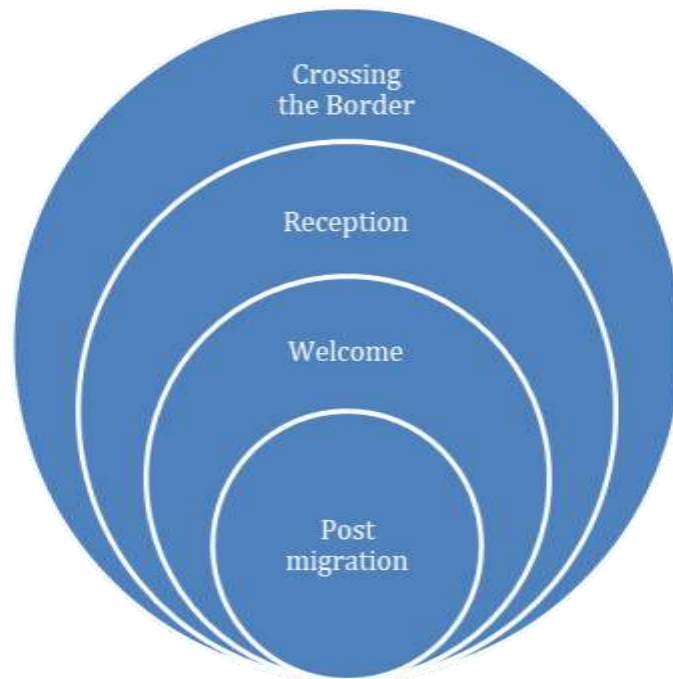


Figure 5. Four main pillars reflected in the findings.

Crossing the Border (Immigration)

Immigrating to the United States in search of a better life and opportunities was a common theme in each participant's story. There were some challenges that were more difficult than others in each participant's journey. Hilario talked about his two attempts of immigrating to the United States to reconnect with his mom after 15 years. Jasmine talked about leaving her parents in Mexico to come live with her aunt in Austin. Then I told my parents' story about immigrating to the United States during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. All three stories have their own accounts of the challenges each participant went through to cross over to the United States. Though I did not immigrate to the United States, I am the son of immigrant parents who fled their country. I make a connection through my parents' experiences. There will continue to be more families who will immigrate to the United States for the same reasons. There will be similar stories about the challenges encountered and risks taken.

The Reception by Host Country

As families make their way through different pathways to immigrate to the United States, they experience some resistance. There is resistance from the host country to allow immigrants to cross over. Some of the resistance comes from the idea that immigrants are coming to the United States to take over jobs. This was the case in a Midwestern town in the United States after the presidential elections of 2016, where some townspeople made comments to the effect of “those immigrants taking jobs from local community members who pay taxes” (E. R. Crawford & Hairston, 2018, p. 3). Families are detained in detention centers until they are cleared to be released to family members who are citizens or have completed the process of becoming U.S. citizens. In Hilario’s case, he was detained in a detention center for 3 weeks before being released to his mom with certain expectations. In Jasmine’s case, she had to get a passport before she made the attempt to immigrate to the United States. Jasmine was fearful of being detained if she did not have her passport.

The Welcome

As was stated in the literature review regarding immigration, there was a fear that immigrants would not assimilate into the American way of life. Other languages were not seen as American and at times were not allowed in our schools. In my situation, when I began my formal schooling in Taft, Texas, there were not any bilingual programs and I felt my native language was not valued. The use of non-English languages was thought to be un-American (J. Crawford, 2004; Hakuta, 2020). This was my situation when I attended South Elementary in Taft. In both Jasmine’s and Hilario’s schooling experiences, they were faced with the challenge of learning English in such a short time to be able to be successful with their classes and state assessments.

When I asked Jasmine and Hilario if they socialized with other people in their community, the response I got was that they felt unwelcome in their community.

Post Migration

Families who have immigrated to the United States are still dealing with the same challenges and issues they faced when they initially immigrated to the United States. Jasmine and Hilario are still facing the challenge of learning English to fulfill their dreams of “making it” and fulfilling their parents’ hopes and dreams. They are still trying to cope with the mental and social effects of living in a new country. The separation from their home country and family members. The isolation from being in classrooms where English is the language of instruction. The sense of not feeling as though they are part of the community remains intact. I still think of the inequities I lived in as a teacher and as a student during my elementary years in a school district where bilingual programs did not exist.

Emergent bilingual newcomers and their parents need support to confront the challenges of living in a new country, learning a new language, and simply trying to survive. School and district personnel should listen to emergent bilingual newcomers and their parents to understand their struggles and how to provide support. Arar and Örucü (2022) emphasized that best practices to support emergent bilingual newcomers and their parents include targeted support, parental involvement, a multi-agency approach, and community involvement.

The four pillars represent four stages immigrants from other countries go through as they embark on their journey to the United States in search of a better life and future for their family. Each stage is just as critical as the other. If we were to pay close attention to the struggles of each immigrant family through each stage of their journey, we would be able to offer and create support systems that would make the journey more humane and welcoming.

In the next chapter, I lay out my recommendations based on my findings. I also use my experience of working with immigrant families and their children to make a difference in how we receive our families in our communities. We must take responsibility to ensure everyone is welcome and knows they are important to make the world a better place. We must create a culture that is asset-based and positive in nature for all students.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the opening paragraph of this dissertation, I wrote about the American dream as it is perceived through the lens of immigrant parents who are willing to embark on a dangerous journey of immigrating to the United States in search of a better life for their family. I used the conversations I had with immigrant parents and students throughout the years at CHS to give real meaning to the challenges they faced as they struggled to make their hopes and dreams a reality. I embarked on this journey to research and explore the struggles of emergent bilinguals as they navigate through an educational system based on White middle-class values and beliefs. As I navigated through the journey with the help of my research participants, I attempted to use my experiences as a teacher and school leader to give insight to the importance of this dissertation. As the population of emergent bilinguals continues to increase in schools throughout the United States and in Texas, we have a responsibility to address and meet the needs of every student who seeks to get an education regardless of their language, ethnicity, race, or religion. Emergent bilinguals comprise 10% of the population in U.S. schools (Vera et al., 2021). Though there are policies and systems in place in schools, some emergent bilinguals continue to struggle to meet the necessary requirements to graduate from high school. It is the policy of the State of Texas to provide any student who has a home language other than English and has been identified as an emergent bilingual an opportunity to participate in a bilingual education or ESL program as required by the TEC Chapter 29, Subchapter B. In addition, each school district shall seek certified teachers to ensure emergent bilinguals are provided the full opportunity to master the TEKS required by the state (TEC, Chapter 89 Subchapter BB).

The purpose of the study was to explore and research the factors that hinder emergent bilinguals' successful completion of high school requirements to graduate and earn their

diplomas. In California and Texas, which are states with high populations of emergent bilinguals, the graduation rate of emergent bilinguals is much lower as compared to the graduation rates of other students (McFarland et al., 2019). There must be a sense of urgency to evaluate the practices and policies used in our current educational systems that affect teaching and learning for all students and in particular emergent bilinguals. The findings from the previous chapter make it evident that there exist reasons to improve or modify policies and practices that affect the schooling experiences of emergent bilinguals.

Through this critical ethnography, I provided authentic information about the struggles of two emergent bilinguals who immigrated to the United States after completing the majority of their education in their home countries. I, as the researcher, participant, and son of immigrant parents, included my own stories of the struggles I faced as an emergent bilingual during the 1960s and late 1970s. As a participant–observer, emergent bilingual, teacher, and school leader, I used storytelling to weave together my own struggles and the information collected from my research partners to create stories that highlighted our challenges and struggles. In addition, I included conversations I have had with emergent bilinguals and their parents to add meaning and purpose to the findings.

I used the qualitative inductive approach and *pláticas* as methods of collecting data to ensure I collected rich and authentic data from each participant as they shared their lived experiences in school, home, and their working environment. The qualitative inductive approach allowed me as the researcher to analyze the data as they emerged from the dominant themes (Thomas, 2006). I used *pláticas* because they are a cultural form of expression that are shaped by listening, inquiring, storytelling, and story making that are told in native languages (Guajardo et al., 2016). Other methods included participant-observer, life histories, and life maps. I used

purposeful sampling to ensure specific participants could provide rich and in-depth experiences that would justify the significance and purpose of the study. I used “circle” as critical pedagogy to create a space that allowed the participants to feel comfortable enough to establish a relationship and trust with one another. By creating this space, each participant shared their life story in such a way that emotions and feelings were openly expressed with each word spoken.

I reflected extensively on how I would analyze the data collected from my research participants to include myself as a participant–observer. I organized each plática paying close attention to each detail to ensure there was a flow in the conversations and stories being shared by each participant. This allowed for transitions from each question to another to be easily identified. I recorded the pláticas using a digital recorder. As I recorded the pláticas, I made note of any observable feelings and emotions from each participant. I transcribed each plática word for word by spending many hours listening to each one to make sure each word was in written format. Once each plática was transcribed verbatim, I reviewed them to make sure the transcription was accurate.

After spending hours analyzing each plática using tables, I was able to use my experiences to make meaning of the data. The data revealed information that highlighted each participant’s struggles and lived experiences from their time spent at CHS, at work, and in their living environment. My research partners’ journeys down the Rio Bravo took them through some rough waters and dangerous currents as they tried to fulfill their parents’ hopes and dreams of them graduating and being successful in a career. At times the river seems tame on the surface but there are undercurrents depicted as policies, practice, lived experiences, and pedagogy that cause distress as you are swept underneath almost to a point of suffocating. My research partners experienced some of the rough waters and dangerous currents during their schooling experience

at CHS. As I interpreted my research partners' experiences and stories, I used my experiences throughout my educational career to make meaning and sense of the challenges each research partner, including myself, had during our schooling journeys.

The analysis of the data, the literature review, and my extensive experience working with emergent bilinguals enabled me to propose some recommendations in the areas of policy and practice that would fully support emergent bilinguals as they struggle to learn a new language and a new educational system in a foreign environment. The next section includes recommendations derived and delineated from my findings.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Establish a system that will allow emergent bilingual newcomers whose parents cannot provide school transcripts from the last school attended in their home country to receive credits for courses already taken and passed in their home countries.

Every year as emergent bilingual newcomers seek to enroll in schools in the United States, they are asked if they have any school records that list the courses they have passed and received credit for in their home country. Some families can provide school records because they went to the last school attended by their students and requested documents to include immunizations, report cards, transcripts, certificates, and other records that were on file. Other families were not able to go to the last school their students attended because they were fleeing the country for safety reasons.

For students whose families provide transcripts of courses taken and passed, transcripts are sent to agencies to evaluate and determine if any courses taken in their home countries can be counted as credits in the receiving school. At the high school level, students who provide

transcripts of courses completed the first year, second year, or third year of high school in their home countries usually receive credits for some courses depending on grades. The credits are awarded based on the recommendation of agencies contracted by districts to evaluate course equivalency. There have been occasions where some emergent bilingual newcomers received credits for biology, algebra, art, PE, computer, and foreign language. These emergent bilingual newcomers at least are not starting at zero credits. In Texas, an emergent bilingual does not have to take the STAAR assessments for Algebra I and Biology if they received credit for Algebra I and Biology from their home country. This is critical because otherwise they would have to take them in English.

Emergent bilingual newcomers whose parents cannot provide transcripts of courses taken and passed in their home countries will have to retake courses already completed. Even if a student says they have completed the first year, second year, or third year of high school in their home country, they will start as a ninth grader. This is critical because they will have to retake courses already completed and also take all the STAAR assessments in English.

At the high school level, my recommendation is for different departments to create assessments in the emergent bilingual newcomer's native language for every course offered. The departments would collaborate with district personnel to create these assessments based on the TEKS. If an emergent bilingual newcomer passes the assessment for a particular course already taken in their home country, then they can be awarded credit for that course. This would allow an emergent bilingual newcomer to receive credit even if they cannot provide proof they have taken and passed the course in their home country. This is significant because they will not have to start with zero credits. It is also critical for the STAAR assessments. Take, for example, an emergent bilingual newcomer who says they have already taken and passed algebra in their home

country but cannot provide proof. If they take the Algebra I assessment created by the school's math department in collaboration with the district's math specialists in their native language and pass it, then they would receive credit for Algebra I and thus would not have to take the Algebra I STAAR assessment in English. I have witnessed too many scenarios where emergent bilingual newcomers have stated they have already taken and passed a certain course in their home but cannot provide proof. This leads to the student retaking the course in English. Sometimes they will not pass the course because of their English language proficiency. It is not that they do not know the content, it is that they did not know the language.

Recommendation 2

Allow high school emergent bilingual newcomers to take the state assessment in their native language.

One of the requirements to graduate from high school is to take and pass state assessments. Both of my research partners had difficulty passing the STAAR assessments and in particular the English I and English II assessments. One of the main reasons they both mentioned having difficulty was because of the proficiency level of English necessary to fully understand the content. Acquiring a second language is a process that takes commitment, dedication, time, and effort. It takes at least 5 to 7 years to acquire the CALP of a language (Cummins, 2000). Though both research participants had a solid educational foundation from their home country, they still had difficulty learning English. Some emergent bilingual newcomers enroll in high school at the age of 17 or older at times. In addition to enrolling at age 17 or older, some are assigned as ninth graders and thus do not have much time to fulfill all the necessary requirements to graduate within 4 years. Another critical issue is that they are expected to take state assessments in English. How can an emergent bilingual newcomer who has scored a beginner

proficiency level in English be expected to take and pass a state assessment in English during their first year in U.S. schools? This scenario plays out too many times with the same result. Often times emergent bilingual students get so discouraged after so many attempts at taking the state assessments and being unsuccessful that they stop attending school. For this reason, I recommend emergent bilingual newcomers to be allowed to take the state assessment in their native language. Perhaps this will produce positive results for our emergent bilinguals.

Recommendation 3

Limit the number of times emergent bilinguals participate in the TELPAS.

Students from another country who have identified a language other than English as the language spoken at home the majority of the time are tested even before they are identified as emergent bilinguals. Every year, emergent bilinguals must participate in TELPAS if they have not met the criteria to be exited from EBL status. The TELPAS assessment includes the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An emergent bilingual will have to participate in TELPAS every year if they do not score advanced high on every domain for that school year. I recommend that an emergent bilingual who scores advanced high on any of the domains should not have to retake that TELPAS domain even if they have not met exit status. For example, a student who scores advanced high on listening and speaking but scores advanced on reading and writing would not have to retake the listening and speaking portions of TELPAS for that year. The following year the student would only have to take the reading and writing assessments.

Recommendation 4

Create a mentor program for emergent bilinguals.

One of the challenges for emergent bilinguals who are newcomers is feeling frustrated, lonely, and helpless in a new learning environment. We need to understand and acknowledge

that not all emergent bilingual newcomers have had previous educational experiences in their home countries. Establishing and implementing a mentor program for every emergent bilingual newcomer would establish trust and a sense of belonging. The school principal and the leadership team would interview and select a program director from a pool of candidates based on a specific criteria set forth by the principal and the leadership team. The program director's main focus would be to create a mentor program that will facilitate a welcoming learning environment for every emergent bilingual newcomer enrollee. The program director would ensure there is a sufficient pool of student mentors to assign to each emergent bilingual newcomer. The student mentors would receive mentor training that focuses on establishing positive learning experiences. In addition, the program director in collaboration with the student mentor leadership team would create the "Emergent Bilingual Newcomer Mentor Program" based on the school's mission and vision. I learned from my research partners that not being able to communicate with teachers and other students brought about feelings of frustration, isolation, and loneliness. My research partners also expressed a need to be able to talk to someone about their feelings and emotions. At times just knowing that there is someone to turn to for help is a huge benefit.

Recommendation 5

We need to rethink leadership for the best interest of students.

As educators and leaders in our school community, we have a responsibility to ensure we do what is in the best interest of our students and families. We must ensure we are familiar with the federal, state, and local policies that affect all students. My recommendation is to put the policies that affect enrollment into practice by training administrators, teachers, and office staff on how enrollment policies are reimagined to be student centered.

To ensure there is a system in place to put policies that affect the enrollment of all students into practice, the administrative team (AT), to include the principal, assistant principals, counselors, registrar, and office staff, should create a sustainable process to create a welcoming culture for any family and student who seeks enrollment. Every member of the AT will be expected to know each policy and how to interpret it for the best interest of the student. To ensure the process is followed for every student, the AT will collaboratively create a step-by-step guide and a presentation of the enrollment process to include different scenarios and the policies applicable to each scenario. The scenarios will address all students, to include out-of-state, out-of-country, and foreign exchange students. Every member of the AT will have a copy of the step-by-step guide to reference whenever a new family seeks to enroll their student. Each grade-level assistant principal and counselor will ensure the enrollment of every student is done correctly and in the best interest of the student.

The principal of the campus will designate an assistant principal as the person responsible to ensure the enrollment process is done correctly. The designee will ensure the AT meets before the beginning of each school year to review the enrollment process and to train new staff who will be involved in the enrollment process.

Recommendation 6

Create a support group for emergent bilingual newcomer parents.

During the 19 years I oversaw the ESL program at CHS, I engaged in many conversations with immigrant parents who wanted to enroll their son or daughter at CHS. As I began each conversation by introducing myself to the parents, I was reminded of the values and beliefs my parents taught us growing up. As I met each parent, I saw my parents in them. Though my parents taught us that getting an education was a high priority and it would shape our

future, I do not remember them ever going to any of my schools to attend special events such as back to school night, meetings with the principal, or any other events. It could have been that those events did not exist when I attended schools in the mid 1960s and late 1970s. It could have been that school staff did not reach out to my parents because they did not speak English. I remember the conversations I had with my parents as I embarked each day to school with a goal in mind of learning as much as I could each day. I know education was the most important thing in my parents' eyes.

During one of our pláticas, Hilario made reference to his mom not understanding the enrollment process and getting frustrated and mad because a staff member was asking her to enroll Hilario in another school because of his age and language. Hilario also stated it would be helpful for someone at school to be appointed as a designee to help emergent bilingual newcomer parents.

It would be beneficial for schools to establish a support group for emergent bilingual newcomer parents. The support group would be created by each school and would include an administrator, counselor, parent support specialist, teachers, and parents. The support group would meet each year before school starts to create a plan to support our emergent bilingual newcomer parents and all other parents with anything they need. The support group would include activities throughout the year that address different topics such as enrollment, scheduling, attendance, grades, college, health, and others. This would be beneficial to every parent but in particular for our emergent bilingual newcomer parents from different countries. Like every parent who wants the best for their student, so do our emergent bilingual newcomer parents. It is our responsibility as an institution to welcome every parent into our schools regardless of their race, language, beliefs, or education. It is also our responsibility to provide

social and emotional support to our emergent bilingual parents as they embark on a journey in a different country not knowing the language, environment, or educational systems, and as they try to support their student with the same.

The Next Story

This critical ethnography touched upon the lives of three emergent bilinguals who embarked on a journey through the turbulent currents of the Rio Bravo and sometimes the tame currents of the Rio Grande. These rivers are one and the same. The Rio Bravo is the mirror image of the Rio Grande. For people who live in Mexico and other countries south of Mexico, the river is seen as a dangerous body of water full of undercurrents and debris that could be a barrier or a vessel that can help immigrants cross over to the United States in search of a better life and at times a safe haven.

There is much more work to do if we want to ensure policies, practice, pedagogy, and theories in education positively affect the lives of emergent bilinguals for future generations. We must advocate and give voice to those immigrants who choose to leave their home countries. As we look into the future knowing that our immigrant population continues to increase each year, so too does the emergent bilingual population in our schools.

Our next story should be about how the voices of our emergent bilinguals and their parents changed the landscape in our schools and created a learning environment that challenges the status quo and provides social, emotional, and academic support for emergent bilinguals. Creating this learning environment and giving voice to our emergent bilinguals and their parents sends a clear message to every immigrant that they belong and are welcome regardless of their race, language, beliefs, education, or economic status.

Conclusion and What Next

Upon reflecting on this work and how policies are put into practice or not, there are changes that need to be made that will affect the lives of emergent bilinguals and all students in a positive manner. There needs to be a critical consciousness and urgent effort within every school to create social, emotional, and academic support systems to meet the needs of every student who enrolls. Students should feel welcome and that they have a voice and agency. We need to create a culture that is inviting and welcoming to every student regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, or religion.

We must also create collaborative partnerships with parents and the community at large to meet the needs of every family. Parents should feel welcome and know their concerns and needs are important. We need to invite parents to our schools to talk about their needs and join in on conversations on how to address their needs and concerns. By inviting parents to be part of the solutions, we will begin to establish trust and give value to their voices.

Our emergent bilingual newcomer population will continue to grow and we must make sure we have systems in place that will address their every need. Addressing each pillar of immigration (i.e., crossing borders, reception, welcome, and post migration) for every emergent bilingual newcomer should be a top priority if we want to ensure their hopes and dreams become a reality. If we do not create and implement social, emotional, and academic systems to address these pillars, our emergent bilingual newcomers will continue to struggle in our schools.

REFERENCES

- Allman, K. R., & Slavin, R. E. (2018). Immigration in 2018: What is a teacher educator to do? *Teacher Educator*, 53(3), 236–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2018.1458363>
- Arar, K. (2020). *School leadership for refugees' education: Social justice leadership for immigrant, migrants and refugees*. Routledge.
- Arar, K., Brooks, J. S., & Bogotch, I. (2019). Education, immigration and migration: Policy, leadership and praxis for a changing world. In K. Arar, J. S. Brooks, & I. Bogotch (Eds.), *Education, immigration and migration* (pp. 1–12). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Arar, K., & Oplatka, I. (2018). Emotion display and suppression among Arab and Jewish assistant principals in Israel: The key role of culture, gender and ethnicity. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 3(3), 173–191. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-12-2017-0030>
- Arar, K., & Örüçü, D. (2020). Education policies and leadership challenged by a global crisis: Refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. In L. Zysberg & N. Schwabsky (Eds.), *The next big thing in education* (pp. 307–329). Nova Science.
- Arar, K., & Örüçü, D. (2022). Post-migration ecology in educational leadership and policy for social justice: Welcoming refugee students in two distinct national contexts. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221136404>
- Auerbach, E. R. (2016). Reflections on Auerbach (1993), “Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom”. *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(4), 936–939. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44984724>
- August, D. (2018). Educating English language learners: A review of the latest research. *American Educator*, 42(3), 4–9.
- August, D. (2019). Educating English language learners. *Education Digest*, 84(8), 12–20.

- Bailey, A. L., & Carroll, P. E. (2015). Assessment of English language learners in the era of new academic content standards. *Review of Research in Education*, 39(1), 253–294.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X14556074>
- Berta-Ávila, M., Tijerina-Revilla, A., & Figueroa, J. (2011). *Marching students: Chicana and Chicano activism in education, 1968 to the present*. University of Nevada Press.
- Blanton, C. K. (2007). *The strange career of bilingual education in Texas, 1836-1981* (Vol. 2). Texas A&M University Press.
- Caldas, S. J., & Bankston, C. L. (2005). Federal involvement in local school districts. *Society*, 42(4), 49–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687433>
- Casalaspi, D. (2017). The making of a “legislative miracle”: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. *History of Education Quarterly*, 57(2), 247–277.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/heq.2017.4>
- Crawford, E. R. (2018). When boundaries around the “secret” are tested: A school community response to the policing of undocumented immigrants. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(2), 155–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517690227>
- Crawford, E. R., & Hairston, S. L. (2018). He could be undocumented: Striving to be sensitive to student documentation status in a rural community. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 21(1), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917718008>
- Crawford, J. (2004). *Educating English learners: Language diversity in the classroom*. Bilingual Education Services.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Cromwell Press.

- Davis, D. S., & Willson, A. (2015). Practices and commitments of test-centric literacy instruction: Lessons from a testing transition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 50(3), 357–379. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.103>
- DelliCarpini, M., Ortiz-Marrero, F. W., & Sumaryono, K. (2010). Success with ELLs: ELLs at the center: Rethinking high-stakes testing. *The English Journal*, 99(6), 93–96. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20787677>
- Education Commission of the States. (2020, May). *50-state comparison: English learner policies: How does the state identify English learners?* <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/50-state-comparison-english-learner-policies-06>
- Flores, N., & García, O. (2017). A critical review of bilingual education in the United States: From basements and pride to boutiques and profit. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 37, 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190517000162>
- Galindo, R. (2011). The nativistic legacy of the Americanization era in the education of Mexican immigrant students. *Educational Studies*, 47(4), 323–346.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., & Sung, K. K. (2018). Critically assessing the 1968 Bilingual Education Act at 50 years: Taming tongues and Latinx communities. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 41(4), 318–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2018.1529642>
- Gonzales, R. G. (2010). On the wrong side of the tracks: Understanding the effects of school structure and social capital in the educational pursuits of undocumented immigrant students. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(4), 469–485. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25759044>

- Gonzalez, G. G. (2001). The “Mexican problem”: Empire, public policy, and the education of Mexican immigrants, 1880-1930. *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 26(2), 199–207.
- Gross, B., & Hill, P. T. (2016). The state role in K-12 education: From issuing mandates to experimentation. *Harvard Law & Policy Review*, 10, 299–326.
- Guajardo, M., Guajardo, F., & Del Carmen Casaperalta, E. (2008). Transformative education: Chronicling a pedagogy for social change. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39(1), 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2008.00002.x>
- Guajardo, M. A., Guajardo, F., Janson, C., & Militello, M. (2016). *Reframing community partnerships in education: Uniting the power of place and wisdom of people*. Routledge.
- Gutiérrez, D. G. (1995). *Walls and mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the politics of ethnicity*. University of California Press.
- Hakuta, K. (2020). A policy history of leadership dilemmas in English learner education. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 19(1), 6–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1714665>
- Hanna, P. L. (2013). Conflicts of interest: A case study exploring constraints on educational leaders’ agency as representatives of refugee interests. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 12(2), 146–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2013.815783>
- Hirschland, M. J., & Steinmo, S. (2003). Correcting the record: Understanding the history of federal intervention and failure in securing US educational reform. *Educational Policy*, 17(3), 343–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904803017003003>
- Kloss, H. (1997). *The American bilingual tradition*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center.

- Koyama, J., & Kasper, J. (2021). Pushing the boundaries: Education leaders, mentors, and refugee students. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *57*(1), 49–81.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X20914703>
- Krashen, S. D. (1996). *Under attack: The case against bilingual education*. Language Education Associates.
- Labaree, R. V. (2006). Encounters with the library: Understanding experience using the life history method. *Library Trends*, *55*(1), 121–139. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2006.0048>
- Ladd, H. F. (2017). No Child Left Behind: A deeply flawed federal policy. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *36*(2), 461–469. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21978>
- López, R. M., Lee, J. J., & Tung, R. (2019). Implementing a summer enrichment program for secondary newcomer students in a New England community. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *23*(1), 86–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1629629>
- Luster, J. (2012). Using state assessments for teaching English language learners. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, *18*.
- McFarland, J., Cui, J., Holmes, J., & Wang, X. (2019). *Trends in high school dropout and completion rates in the United States: 2019* (NCES 2020-117). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020117.pdf>
- McNeil, L. M., Coppola, E., Radigan, J., & Heilig, J. V. (2008). Avoidable losses: High-stakes accountability and the dropout crisis. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, *16*(3), 1–48.
<https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v16n3.2008>
- Menken, K. (2009). No Child Left Behind and its effects on language policy. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *29*, 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190509090096>

- Menken, K. (2010). NCLB and English language learners: Challenges and consequences. *Theory Into Practice*, 49(2), 121–128. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40650725>
- Murchison, J. (2010). *Ethnography essentials: Designing, conducting, and presenting your research*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Myles, J. M. (2019). *Developing intercultural competence: A shift in thinking*. Education Canada.
- Nelson, A. R. (2016). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act at fifty: A changing federal role in American education. *History of Education Quarterly*, 56(2), 358–361. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26356305>
- Núñez Cardenas, A. A. (2017). Every English learner succeeds: The need for uniform entry and exit requirements. *Brooklyn Law Review*, 83(2), 755–775. <https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/blr/vol83/iss2/19>
- Ochoa, A. M. (2016). Recognizing inequality and the pursuit of equity: A legal and social equity framework. In A. Colon-Muñiz & M. Lavademz (Eds.), *Latino civil rights in education: La lucha sigue* (pp. 24–46). Routledge.
- Orfield, G., & Lee, C. (2006, January). *Racial transformation and the changing nature of segregation*. The Civil Rights Project.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Polson, C. (2018). TAKS-ing students? Texas exit exam effects on human capital formation. *Economics of Education Review*, 62, 129–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.09.009>
- Roe, K. (2019). Supporting student assets and demonstrating respect for funds of knowledge. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice*, 25, 5–13.

- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.
- Salmona Madriñan, M. (2014). The use of first language in the second-language classroom: A support for second language acquisition. *GiST Education and Learning Research Journal*, 9, 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.26817/16925777.143>
- Sandberg, K. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2011). English learners: Challenges in assessment and the promise of curriculum-based measurement. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(2), 144–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932510361260>
- San Miguel, G. (2004). *Contested policy: The rise and fall of federal bilingual education in the United States, 1960-2001*. University of North Texas Press.
- San Miguel, G. (2013). *Chicana/o struggles for education: Activism in the community*. Texas A&M University Press.
- San Miguel, G. (2015). Ethnicity, religion, and education in the new American Southwest: The case of ethnic Mexicans, 1848-1912. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 8(3), 1–15.
- Serafini, E. J., Rozell, N., & Winsler, A. (2022). Academic and English language outcomes for DLLs as a function of school bilingual education model: The role of two-way immersion and home language support. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(2), 552–570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2019.1707477>
- Sinclair, J. (2018). ‘Starving and suffocating’: Evaluation policies and practices during the first 10 years of the U.S. Bilingual Education Act. *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, 21(6), 710–728. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1210565>

- Texas Education Agency. (2020, April). *Chapter 89. Adaptations for special populations. Subchapter BB. Commissioner's rules concerning state plan for educating English learners*. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ch089bb.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency. (2022a). *2003-2004 Academic Excellence Indicator System: CHS-CTISD*.
- Texas Education Agency. (2022b). *2008-2009 Academic Excellence Indicator System: CHS-CTISD*.
- Texas Education Agency. (2022c). *2017-2018 school report card: CHS-CTISD*.
- Texas Education Agency. (2022d). *2018-2019 school report card: CHS-CTISD*.
- Texas Education Agency. (2022e). *2020-2021 school report card: CHS-CTISD*.
- Texas Education Agency. (2022f). *TELPAS resources*. <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/telpas-telpas-alternate-educator-guide.pdf>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(2), 237–246.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>
- Tomak, B. (2021). The reasons for L1 use by English teaching Turkish teachers in Turkish schools. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 94, 125–145.
<https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2021.94.6>
- Vera, E., Heineke, A., Daskalova, P., Schultes, A. K., Pantoja-Patiño, J., Duncan, B., Yanuaria, C., & Furtado, C. (2021). Emergent bilingual high school students' social and emotional experiences. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(10), 1932–1961.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22559>

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2021). *Table 204.20.*

English learner (EL) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2019.

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_204.20.asp

Wiese, A. M., & García, E. E. (1998). The Bilingual Education Act: Language minority students

and equal educational opportunity. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and*

Bilingualism, 4(4), 229–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050108667730>

Yilmaz, K. (2008). Social studies teachers' conceptions of history: Calling on historiography.

The Journal of Educational Research, 101(3), 158–175.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27548231>