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# Long Term English Learners: Success for Some

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Jacqueline Casillas

September 2018

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Begoña Echeverria, Co-Chairperson
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The Dissertation of Jacqueline Casillas is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgement

The journey of obtaining an education requires not just dedication from the student but the family as well. I want to acknowledge and thank my best friend and number one cheerleader, my husband George who has endured my educational adventures since the beginning. I want to thank my children Melinda, Heather, and George for their patience, understanding, and support. My father and my mother who always encouraged me to "*hacer lo que yo se lo que tenia que hacer*".

I want to thank Begoña, Louie, and Margaret for their support, direction, and patience. I am truly honored you took me under your wings and guided me through this journey.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Long Term English Learners: Success for Some

by

Jacqueline Casillas
Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, September 2018
Dr. Begoña Echeverria, Co-Chairperson
Dr. Louie F. Rodríguez, Co-Chairperson

Many factors influence the schooling experience of a student. This research explores the influence of the school structure, the family, as well as policy and practice in the school setting as it relates to Long Term English Learners. I use Social Reproduction Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, and Student Voice as the theoretical frameworks to examine how former Long Term English Learners experienced school and exited the English Learner program.

I present three arguments in this research to examine and explain the educational journey of a student identified as a former Long Term English Learner. First, I argue that school personnel, programs, and the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) emerged as key to the ability for these students to exit the EL program and pursue a college education at a four-year university. I also argue that Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as a vehicle for the students in this study to become college bound. Finally, I argue that if schools are to enhance schooling experiences for English Learners, schools must practice

"listening to student voice and their perspective" to inform decisions that impact this marginalized student population (Mitra, 2006, p. 7).

I conducted interviews, observations, and analyzed pertinent documents to explain the schooling experience of the participants in this study These students were driven to become college bound that resulted in their ability to exit the English Learner program, which was not an identified goal by most participants. The students in this study embraced the opportunity to select courses that fulfilled the A-G college entrance requirements and pursue enrollment in a California State University or University of California upon graduation. The results of this study indicate that the influence, direction, and motivation of parents, the school, students, and Spanish shaped how the students experienced and succeed in high school. The drive to become college bound and enroll in a four-year university upon graduation was their primary goal, not exiting the EL program.

## Table of Contents

## List of Figures

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The educational journey of a student identified as a former Long Term English Learner (LTEL) highlights the adverse results of well-intentioned policy and programs. Lau v. Nichols (1974) was to create programs that would accelerate the acquisition of the English language and was envisioned as a temporary scaffold for English Learners. Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) was to monitor and ensure that programs developed for English Learners (ELs) allowed students to develop fluency in the English language through sheltered instruction or English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. These policies were intended to provide ELs access to the language necessary to develop the fluency in English necessary to succeed in mainstream classes as their peers who were native English speakers. However, based on current data provided by the California Department of Education this is not the case for 22.4% of English learners in grades K-12 and more so for the 62.6% identified as LTELs in grades 6-12(CDE, 2016a).

To understand the trajectory of reclassified LTELs in the United States public school system I first provide an overview of the labeling process that explains how a student becomes identified as LTEL. In accordance with Lau v. Nichols (1975), which required states to establish a survey to determine if a student should be classified as English Only (EO) or English Learner (EL), the state of California established Education Code § 52164.1, according to which, the school is to determine the language fluency of each student in English upon enrollment. The student then becomes permanently labeled as EO or EL once they enter the public school system. The EL label is not removed until the student meets the local school district criteria to become reclassified and remove the

EL label. The method used by the public school system to determine the language designation for a student is through a home language survey. The parent or guardian indicates the language spoken in the home at the time of enrollment. If the home language survey identifies a language other than English the student is required to be assessed in order to determine their language proficiency in English. Once the school district determines a student to be EO or EL, the manufactured label will impact their schooling trajectory (Kibler et al., 2017). That is, the label that the public school system has created of EO or EL will determine the access to coursework a student will be provided. An EL student will be required to enter coursework (programs) that a school has identified as a mode to develop English language fluency until the EL student is determined to meet criteria for reclassification.

Lau v. Nichols (1974) states that if a student is identified as EL the student must be placed in coursework designed to accelerate the acquisition of English. According to California Education Code § 313, after five to six years of English as a Second Language (ESL) coursework or program, the EL student should qualify to become reclassified to fluent English proficient if the student meets the local school district criteria. California Education Code § 313 states English Learners are to be assessed to determine language fluency, the current teacher is to evaluate and provide a review of students' progress, parent opinion and consultation is to be obtained, and use of an assessment that compares the performance of the EL student to students the same age and grade to determine if a student meets reclassification criteria. While California Education Code § 313 provides guidelines for reclassification, it is important to note that the reclassification criteria and

process to exit the EL program varies across districts within California and across the United States (Linquanti & Cook, 2015). California Education Code § 313.1 states that students who do not reclassify within the five to six year time frame earn the additional label of LTEL. This qualitative case study I examine the schooling experience of former LTELs in a California high school that exited the EL trajectory during the first semester of their freshman year.

## The Problem

English Language Learners continue to struggle in the public school system. According to the United States Department Office of English Language Acquisition, in the 2012 to 2013 school year approximately 4.5 million or 9% of the student population in public schools were English Learners (2015a). Of these 4.5 million students 57% of the identified English Learners (ELs) were born in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2015a). This statistic contradicts the misperception that all ELs are immigrants (Olsen, 2010, p. 6). To put this into perspective the graduation rate nationwide for all students was 82.3%; Asian/Pacific Islander 89.4%; White 87.2%; Hispanic 76.3%; Economically Disadvantaged 74.6%; African American 72.5%; and Students with Disabilities 63.1%. The graduation rate for ELs was 62.6% in 2014 (United States Department of Education, 2015b).

English Learners, in general, are not making the academic gains in comparison to the overall student and significant group population in the public school system (United States Department of Education, 2015b). For example, policies such as Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), were passed to create equality in learning have

instead marginalized ELs, limiting their access and equity to coursework outside the English as a Second Language (ESL) trajectory (Olsen, 2010). In addition, although California established Education Code § 313 to exit students from the EL trajectory, the local education agency practices vary from district to district and become barriers that further limit the ability to exit the EL program (Linquanti & Cook, 2015). As a result, within the EL population, an overlooked population has now become acknowledged and labeled as Long Term English Learners (LTELs) (Lara, 2012). Policies and programs do not meet the needs of LTELs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016).

The research on LTELs requires further analysis of policy and program effectiveness. In addition, it is important to consider that previous statistics and policies do not address the differentiated needs of LTELs (Olsen, 2010). In this research, I use "student voice" (Mitra, 2006; 2003; 2001) to further analyze in order to inform and enhance programs for ELs. I pay specific attention to the forms of aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) proven successful for former LTELs that allowed them to exit the ESL trajectory. By listening directly to former LTELs I was able to pinpoint areas of difficulty and strength that can be used to construct programs based on the capital (Yosso, 2005) most valued to reshape schooling experiences comprised of access and equity. "Student voice" (Mitra, 2006; 2003; 2001) allowed me to understand how students once identified as LTELs exited the EL program and became college bound.

## Research Questions

In this research I used student voices of former LTELs to contextualize their schooling experiences to identify and understand how they perceived and experienced the EL program and practices established by Fender Unified School District (pseudonym) in accordance to California Education Code § 313. Through student voice (Mitra, 2006; 2003; 2001) I sought to understand how the process of schooling affected the participants' educational trajectory.

The following questions framed my study:

- How does the structure of the school shape the schooling experience for Long Term English Learners?
- What experiences and processes contribute to Long Term English Learners' abilities to exit the English Learner program?
- In what ways can "student voice" reshape current policy and practices that increase the likelihood of exiting the English Learner program?

Through the use of student voice I obtained insights as to how different forms of capital provided students with access and equity in learning. Specifically, the student narrative allowed me to understand how aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital affects the educational trajectory for LTELs to exit or become confined to EL programs (Bourdieu, 1987; Yosso, 2006; Mitra, 2004). It is my hope that Local Education Agencies may use this research to inform practices and policies that redefine the educational trajectory for LTELs.

According to the research I reviewed, ELs comprise many research studies as minority groups and as ELs; but, LTELs are rarely differentiated as a separate subgroup (Menken & Kleyn, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela 1999). In California, until the passage of Assembly Bill 2193 in 2012, LTEL identification criteria varied across local education agencies. California Assembly Bill 2193 defines an LTEL as a student enrolled in a public school in grades six to twelve, who attended school in the United States for six years or more, and who has remained at the same language proficiency level for two or more consecutive years, without scoring proficient in the local English language arts standards-based achievement test identified by the local education agency (Lara, 2012).

This research focuses on former LTELs who were born in the United States; who identified Spanish as their primary language; attended public school in the United States since kindergarten within the same school district; who were labeled up until their freshman year as LTELs; and exited the English as a Second Language (ESL) trajectory in grade nine as a reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) student. Through examining student voice of this specific population I sought to explain the forms of capital unveiled and identified as necessary for LTELs to access academic equity (Bourdieu, 1987; Yosso 2006; Mitra, 2004).

## The Study

To understand the impact of policy and programs such as Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), my research sought to analyze the schooling experiences of students that were initially identified as EL when they enrolled in

kindergarten at Fender Unified School District (pseudonym), eventually became labeled as LTEL upon entering middle school, and were reclassified as fluent English speakers their freshmen year. The students also earned the additional label of LTEL during their middle school attendance because they did not exit the EL program within the five to six years of continuous enrollment in a public school (Lara, 2012). During their middle school attendance these students were confined to the programs supposedly designated to accelerate their English language acquisition.

Once the students entered high school they were identified as LTEL until they were reclassified in October of their freshman year. In this research the LTEL label becomes significant because the labeled students allowed me to analyze their schooling experiences based on the local implementation of programs and policy. The LTELs in this study were able to explain the conditions that allowed them to exit the EL trajectory. Specifically, this research turns to student voice to understand how a student once identified as LTEL exits the EL program and is positioned to pursue a college education at a four-year university. This is significant because these typical LTELs became atypical, as they had declared that a four-year university meant acceptance to a California State University or University of California. The goal for these students was to go to college not necessarily to remove the LTEL label.

## Overview of Dissertation

In "Chapter Two: Literature Review", I provide an analysis of policies, programs, and research that highlight the marginalization of English Learners that attest to the barriers encountered to exit the ESL trajectory. I specifically review Lau v. Nichols

(1974), Castaneda v. Pickard (1981), Assembly Bill 2193 (Lara 2012), and California Education Code §313. I review these policies because they directly impact how programs are implemented at the school level for ELs. I include research relevant to ELs and LTELs as they relate to schooling experiences.

"Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework", provides a description of the theories I used in my study. To collect and analyze my data, I used Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006), and Student Voice (Mitra, 2001, 2003, 2006). These theories assisted me to understand how reclassified LTELs experienced school.

In "Chapter Four: Methods", I detail the site and sample of my study, and the methods I used to collect data to explain the former LTEL educational trajectory. I provide details on a significant element present at the high school, which was open access to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate program.

"Chapter Five: School Structure and LTELs", I present the findings from my study and connect the conceptual framework with the data analysis specific to how the school as a structure influenced the participants schooling experience. Specifically, I show how in high school these students exceled and became atypical LTELs through open access to rigorous coursework, counselors, and parent involvement through use of technology.

"Chapter Six: Experiences Contributing to LTELs ability to exit the EL Program", I analyze the factors the students identified as contributors to their ability to become college bound. For these students exiting the EL program was not a priority but rather the

opportunity to become prepared to enter a California State University or University of California upon graduation.

Finally, in "Chapter Seven: Implications for Policy and Practice", I discuss the implications of my findings and suggest future areas of research to pursue. For example, I make recommendation with regard to: how students identified as EL and LTEL must be informed on what the label means and how to exit the EL program: how reclassified students should be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure they are successful once they become reclassified and be provided the necessary supports; and the opportunity that should be provided to parents so that they can be contributors instead of mere receivers of information. In this study it was evident that parents provided multiple layers of support contributing to these students' success in high school and becoming college bound. Future research could entail the analysis of the schooling experiences of LTELs that did not achieve reclassification and examining how or if keeping the LTEL label affected their ability to pursue higher education upon high school.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks I use in this research are Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005, 2006), and Student Voice (Mitra, 2001, 2003, 2006) to explain the learning trajectory of Long Term English Learners (LTELs). This framework intersects at different points during the research and elucidates key schooling experiences that contributed to the success of the six participants. Specifically, through the use of student voice (Mitra, 2001, 2003, 2006) I was able to explain how these six students positioned themselves to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation, which was a significant accomplishment for a student who entered high school labeled as a Long Term English Learner (LTEL).

### Social Reproduction Theory

Social Reproduction Theory argues that social inequalities among classes are reproduced over time through cultural, linguistic, social, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1986). That is, an individual from the middle class does not possess the same cultural, linguistic, social, or economic capital as the elite. An individual born into the elite possess a higher value of capital than an individual in the middle class. This is significant because through the varied forms of capital the elite ensure that social hierarchy remains in place, thus contributing to social reproduction. Although Bourdieu's theory focused on the interactions between the elite and middle class, it also allows me to understand how several components influence the behaviors and interactions with individuals from different classes that reproduce social inequalities. Specifically, for

LTELs Social Reproduction Theory may explain why the language and culture possessed by the student is viewed as a liability versus an asset in the public school system thereby limiting LTELs access to coursework outside the ESL trajectory.

Bourdieu states that cultural capital exists in three forms: embodied, institutionalized and objectified (1986). The embodied state refers to the subconscious behaviors or habits one displays as a result of the class one is born into (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). This means that an individual displays the behaviors and habits reflective of the class one is born into because of the interactions and experiences within the class. For example, an individual of the elite class would know the behaviors expected when one attends an opera performance versus an individual from the middle class because those are regular experiences for the elite.

The institutionalized form of cultural capital refers to the education or certification an individual achieves. An individual from the middle class can pursue a college education and obtain the education or certification as the elite that would provide the middle class individual a form of cultural capital. However, the middle class does not possess the embodied state of capital that limits their ability to move in the social hierarchy. The objectified state of cultural capital refers to the cultural goods such as pictures, books, dictionaries, etc. an individual acquires (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

Bourdieu argues that although an individual can acquire institutional and objectified capital it is not possible to acquire the embodied cultural capital to be admitted in the elite social group because of the subconscious dispositions the individual brings from their social class that will give away they are not from the elite class (1986).

For example, although an individual may acquire the education or certification gain entrance to the world of the elite one will subconsciously use behaviors or habits of the class they are born into giving away that they do not possess the embodied state of the elite. Through the display of these behaviors or habits the individual gives away their class which results in the elite treating the individual according to the class the elite perceive the individual belongs to resulting in social reproduction.

Social capital is another form of capital that maintains the social hierarchy and reproduction of inequalities (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu (1986),

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition-or in other words, to membership in a group-which provides each of its members with the backing of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the world (p. 248-249).

That is, the class an individual belongs to provide certain social capital through the relationships but only within the same class. The services or access an individual gains to certain clubs or organizations are a result of the position the individual holds in society.

Additionally, cultural capital puts limits on the extent to which middle or lower class obtain access to services, clubs, or organizations within the world of the elite (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, an individual can enter the university setting that results in interaction with the elite but the individual is always linked to their place in the social hierarchy due to behaviors displayed as a result of the embodied state. That is, an individual from the middle class does not possess the experiences of the social class and at times although one may learn about golf but may not understand the social interactions that occur in the process of playing golf. The middle class individual may understand the

rules of the game and how to play the game but the process of going to the country club and the social event that occurs in the process is not part of the embodied state for the middle class individual.

According to Bourdieu, an individual may be able to "disguise and transform" economic capital into cultural or social capital to gain access to a higher social class (p. 252). However, an individual must possess the financial ability to enter, afford, and interact in the elite social class. If individuals are unable to sustain the monetary means to access the elite social class their ability to acquire cultural and social capital limits their social mobility (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural, social, and economic capital may overlap at times but Bourdieu states that "habitus"-- the habits and tastes of a particular individual--influences the individual's position in society and whether or not they can pass into another group (1984). Furthermore, Bourdieu argues that despite an individual's ability to gain social mobility into a higher class through economic capital the individual can never fully pass as a member of the elite class because of the individual's habitus.

Linguistic capital is another form of capital that reproduces social inequalities. Bourdieu argues that the social class the individual is born into determines the experience and awareness with language that results in the value given in society (1977, p. 646). That is, the elite access vocabulary and language through regular leisure activities, family interactions and expectations with language use, and social networking that maintain the position of the top hierarchy. On the other hand, members of the middle class may access some of the same vocabulary but it may not include the refined language an individual in

the elite would access daily. For example, a middle class individual may understand what the sport of golf is and possess a general understanding of what the game entails. However, it is the elite that experience the sport of golf inclusive of performing the ritual of going to a country club and the language used to express the enjoyment and understanding of the sport that includes how to talk business while golfing. As a result, the middle class and the elite gain different forms of linguistic capital that do not possess the same value.

Bourdieu acknowledges that an individual may perhaps move up in the social hierarchy but because of their habitus they will not be fully accepted into the elite class (1984). He further argues that society perpetuates the social hierarchy "as an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function; the scope of the educational system tends to increase; and together with this increase is the unification of the marker in social qualifications which gives right to occupy rare positions" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 254-255). An individual may secure economic capital that can transform into cultural and social capital to enter the elite class; however, their embodied state will give their class away (Bourdieu, 1984).

In this dissertation, I use Social Reproduction Theory to understand how the school structure unintentionally perpetuates the social hierarchy. Specifically, I show how most LTELs are marginalized by the school structure despite policies and program that was established to create equality and access. This study demonstrates that when a school structure aimed to embrace the success of all students, marginalized students can exit the course tracks they were once confined to. In addition, it is evident that within the

structure the students in this study learned through the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) how to become a student that could activate different forms of capital to access AP and IB coursework that positioned them to become college bound.

**Community Cultural Wealth**

Critical to understand the learning experiences of LTELs in the public school system is the concept of Community Cultural Wealth as proposed by Tara Yosso (2005). Yosso builds on the work of Bourdieu and provides an expanded lens to understand the wealth a student possesses that may assist in restructuring learning and improving educational outcomes for students of color (2005). Yosso extends Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory by including six forms of capital that are valued within communities of color yet ignored by society at large or individuals in power (2005, p. 78).

Yosso identifies six forms of capital as aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant (2005). She defines "aspirational capital" as the ability of an individual to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers. Linguistic capital refers to the ability to communicate in different interactions through the use of the required intellectual and social skills for that specific interaction. In Yosso's framework linguistic capital acknowledges that students of color arrive to school with more than one language (2005, p. 78). For example, switching to Spanish or using a familiar register when interacting with friends versus the register required for the school setting. In this form linguistic capital enhances the student's ability to engage successfully in different school or social interactions. "Familial capital" refers to the

social resources one possesses as part of the immediate or extended family through culture, knowledge, history, memory, and intuition. That is, "the how individuals are connected to their family and use each other to care, cope, and provide for each other to inform the emotional, moral, education, and occupational consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). This means that for example parents and students turn to each other to guide and navigate institutions such as education. "Social capital" according to Yosso is the networks an individual establishes with people and community to navigate societies institutions not meant for people of color (2005). Yosso counters Bourdieu's definition of social capital in that people of color are able to activate and use social capital to navigate society and gain access to institutions and services that are outside their social class (2005). "Navigational capital" refers to the ability to navigate through the social institutions not created for students of color such as universities and "sustain high levels of achievement" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). For example, this means that students are able to navigate the university structure to gain access to the necessary courses to obtain a degree and succeed at high levels by earning the necessary grades to complete their program. Finally, "resistant capital" refers to oppositional behavior inclusive of knowledge and skills used to challenge inequality (Yosso, 2005, p. 77-81). That is, the individual uses their knowledge of racism and oppressive structures to drive their resistance to fight inequality (Yosso, 2005, p. 81).

In the process of analyzing the data for my dissertation it became evident that for the six participants Community Cultural Wealth was key to their ability to exit the English Learner program and positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon

graduation. The student data highlights different forms of capital as essential to their ability to succeed in high school despite the fact they were initially identified as LTELs upon enrollment at Puedes High School.

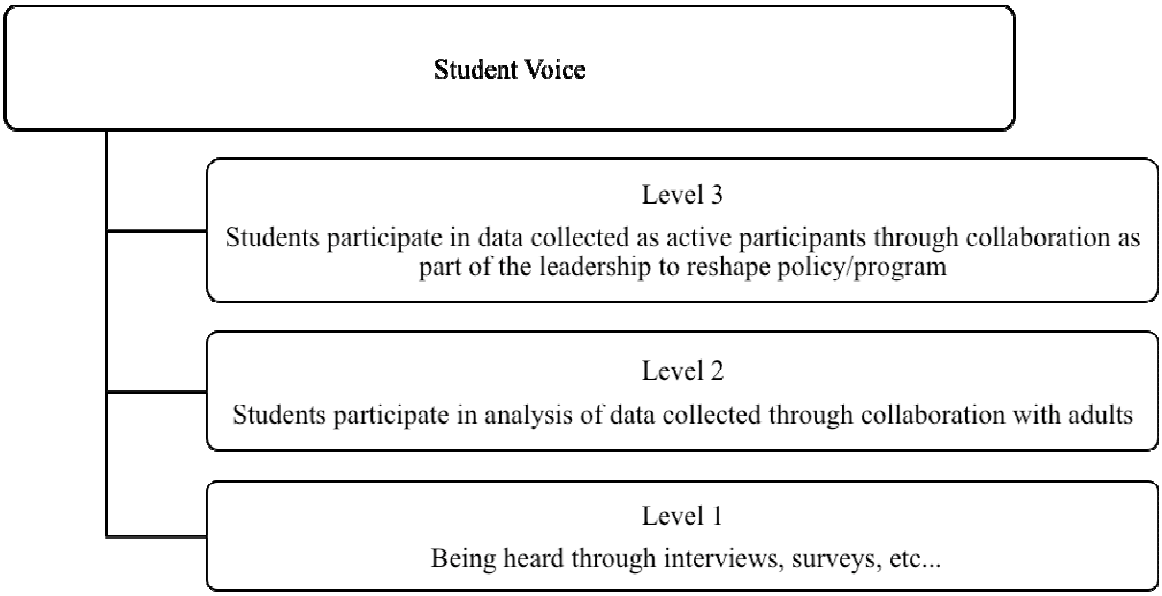
**Student Voice**

Dana Mitra's research, "Student Voice in School Reform: Reframing Student-Teacher Relationships" (2003) found that "students have the potential to contribute their opinions on a variety of levels, that include their views on problems and potential solution in their schools" (p. 289). Mitra stresses that through collaboration between students, teachers, and the school, adults may develop an understanding for student knowledge and perspective through the student lens which often is ignored in education (2003, p. 290). Student voice functions as a vehicle to "reengage alienated" or marginalized students and helps them develop ownership of schooling by not just listening to student views but engaging students in necessary decisions to reform schooling experiences (Mitra, 2003; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009).

Mitra identifies three levels one may use in the pursuit of student voice: listening, collaborating, and building capacity for leadership (2006, p. 7). The first level pursues student voice to obtain information on a specific topic in the form of surveys and questionnaires. Student voice is pursued to obtain insights from students; however, students are not involved in the analysis and collaboration to reform movements (Mitra, 2003, 2006). This is the first level of student voice and is used as a method to begin the analysis and discussion specific topics or concerns that assists in understanding how to support student needs based on the data collected.

The next level of student voice involves collaboration which pursues student voice but includes the student in the process of analyzing and interpreting the data collected to inform reform efforts (Mitra 2003, 2006). The third level pursues student voice to build capacity for leadership at all levels of the school organization from the student, teacher, to administration. For the purposes of this research I utilized the first level of student voice to understand how these students that represent the LTEL marginalized student population were able to exit the EL program in high school and become positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation.

**Figure 2.1**




Adapted from Mitra 2006

According to Mitra's research, in the process of building student capacity in leadership "youth development occurs" (2004). That is, students develop agency because they are given power over their schooling situation. In addition, student sense of belonging increases as well as the building of meaningful relationships with peers and the

school. Students develop competence because of their new ability to inform school practices and become involved in school reform as active agents (Mitra, 2004, p. 655). These finding in Mitra's work are significant because as I apply the second level of student voice through relationship building with LTELs in my research, I pursued to obtain an insight to key experiences ELs must experience in order to exit the EL trajectory. Students explained certain school structures and experiences that empowered them to exit the EL program at the secondary level, which may perhaps be of significance for further research and assist to reshape policy at the LEA level.

Student voice in this research is applied to explain and understand the educational experiences of former LTELs. Student voice is a research practice that obtains the perspective of the student on learning, teaching, and schooling to reshape the learning experiences of students based on their respective stance (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 359). Student voice provides youth the opportunity to become participants in school decisions that "shape their lives and the lives of their peers" (Mitra, 2006, p. 7; Rodríguez & Brown, 2009).

**Application in this Research**

In this research I used Mitra's first level of "student voice" (2003, 2006) to explain and understand the schooling trajectory LTELs experience. That is, I used each participant's narrative to ensure I accurately interpreted the data collected. By collaborating with the students I ensured their narrative was described depicting their school experiences. Through the students' schooling experience, as described by them, I

obtained data through documents, observations, and interviews to identify the forms of capital that activated equity and access.

Social Reproduction Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, and Student Voice were essential to explain how students experienced school and were able to exit the EL program despite their label of LTEL. Based on my research review this theoretical framework has not been used to explain or understand the schooling trajectory of this marginalized student population. The six participants in this research were able activate different forms of capital to navigate the school system and become positioned to enroll in a California State University or University of California which is not a typical outcome for this student population. It is important to explore and use the student narratives to perhaps inform how more LTELs can experience academic success these students were able to accomplish.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the main policies that affect ELs and LTELs. In this research I use Lau v. Nichols (1974), Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), Assembly Bill 2193 (Lara, 2012), and California Education Code § 313 because they have served as guides for local education agencies to develop the programs and policies that directly impact how ELs and LTELs experience schools. I also discuss specific studies that are relevant to English leaners, Long Term English Learners, and program practices relevant to my research.

### Relevant Policy on English Learners

In 1974 the United States Supreme Court ruled in Lau v. Nichols that students who did not understand English needed more than the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum provided to native English-speaking students. The Supreme Court found that students learning a new language required explicit teaching of the English language rather than simply more access to already existing facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum (Garcia, 2005). Lau v. Nichols (1974) required the public school system to provide equal and equitable access to learning. This meant instruction would be provided through the establishment of programs such as bilingual education or sheltered coursework. That is, primary language support or research based methods on language acquisition would be used to assist English Learners in accelerating the acquisition of the English Language. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs or coursework was

not intended to become a life sentence for ELs. Lau v. Nichols (1974) was to establish a pathway in the learning of English and provide access to mainstream coursework once students developed fluency. However, based on the current data, 27% of ELs enrolled in California public schools are at the secondary level and placed in ESL coursework (CDE, 2016a).

To clarify the implications for instruction for ELs initiated by Lau v. Nichols (1974) the court established a three-pronged test to ensure students equal access to programs that accelerate the learning of English through Castañeda v. Pickard (1981). Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) called for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to utilize programs based on sound educational theory, adequate implementation, and after a period of implementation demonstrate that the programs met the linguistic and academic needs of ELs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016, p. 464). Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) required LEAs to report the progress of ELs in language acquisition through accountability processes, which pointed to the fact that ELs did not acquire the English language required to exit the ESL coursework trajectory. Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) becomes significant because the subsequent close monitoring of ELs through program analysis sheds light on the invisible subpopulation of LTELs whose linguistic and academic needs were not met.

In 2012 the State of California adopted Assembly Bill 2193 that defined criteria to identify LTELs (Lara, 2012). AB 2193 defines LTELs as students in grades 6-12, enrolled in U.S. schools for six or more years, and whose English proficiency did not increase based on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) administered annually for two consecutive years (Lara, 2012). The significance of AB

2193 is that it acknowledged that EL programs continue to create LTELs confined to the ESL coursework trajectory. AB 2193 became part of the accountability measure that required LEAs to monitor and report the academic progress of LTELs, no longer condemning them to as the overlooked population within the EL subgroup (Lara, 2012).

California Education Code § 313 addresses the state criteria for reclassification of English learners which calls for the use of an objective assessment, teacher evaluation, parent opinion, comparison to English proficient students based on same age and skill level, and opportunity by school district to assess English learners more than once a year if they chose to do so. However, it is important to note that districts across the state of California and the entire United States use varied criteria to determine when students can exit the EL program. For example, an EL student in New Mexico is only required to demonstrate proficiency in the state English Language Proficiency Test to become reclassified. The same student in the state of Iowa is required to demonstrate proficiency in the state English Language Proficiency Test and academic content test to be reclassified. On the other hand, a student attending school in California is required to demonstrate proficiency in the state English Language Proficiency Test, academic content test in English Language Arts, requires teacher input/evaluation, and parent notification to become reclassified (Linquanti & Cook, 2015). This is significant because as the measures used to determine student acquisition of the English language vary so does the number of students reclassified from state to state and district to district (CDE, 2016; Linquanti & Cook, 2015).

**Impact of Policy**

Lau v. Nichols (1974), Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), Assembly Bill 2193 (Lara, 2012), and California Education Code § 313 have shaped the learning for ELs. That is, as parents sought equity in access for their children to learn the English language necessary to succeed in school, policy makers did not foresee how their recommendations would be implemented at the school level that would result in the further marginalization of English Learners. In an effort to comply with these policies, LEAs prioritize the "letter rather than the spirit of the law" (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016, p. 470). That is, LEAs focus primarily on compliance instead of increasing the proficiency of ELs via the best practice. The fact that LEA policies and criteria to exit the EL program vary within and across the United States become an additional barrier for students to exit (Linquanti & Cook, 2015). Ultimately, these policies sacrifice the culture and first language of the ELs at the altar of acquisition of English proficiency necessary to exit the EL program (Valenzuela, 1999; Lau v. Nichols (1974); Castañeda v. Pickard (1981)). The well-intentioned policies and practices support Bourdieu's perception of the educational system and how the school reproduces the social hierarchy. The unequal recognition of cultural and social capital needed to succeed in the public school system confines LTELs to access differing educational trajectories (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 488).

Most LTELs have not benefited from the social, cultural, and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977,1986) valued by the school system to gain access to coursework outside the EL program. Despite Lau v. Nichols (1974), Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), and recently passed Assembly Bill 2193 (Lara, 2012) established policy to ensure EL

acquisition and access to mainstream coursework has not accelerated learning for most LTELs. In 2015, California public schools were comprised of 1.3 million ELs, roughly 22.4% of the student population. Of the 22.4% ELs 62.6% were identified as LTELs (CDE, 2016a). Additionally, 11% of ELs were in grade twelve and 72.3% of those grade twelve students were LTELs for the 2015 school year (CDE, 2016b). The data for the United States and California Department of Education indicates most LTELs have not acquired the proficiency in the English language necessary to exit the EL program (2016b, 2016a).

In an effort to move from equality toward equity one must now turn toward the "spirit rather than the letter of EL policy to prioritize access and achievement for all" (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016, p. 489). According to Callahan and Shifrer, the school should determine the specific instructional needs for EL students instead of ensuring they are all given the same amount of instructional minutes or courses (2016). For example, LTELs require a different instructional program to accelerate their fluency in English versus a student that is at the beginning phases of English language acquisition. The local education agency should implement policy via programs to meet the different linguistic and academic needs of LTELs that provides specific instruction this group of students needs to access and succeed in mainstream or college coursework (Olsen, 2010).

One can find a wealth of research on policy and practice from the school, teacher, and English learner perspective. However, until recently LTELs were grouped with the overall EL subgroup. In fact, LTELs are homogeneously grouped with ELs without regard to the fact that LTELs require different instruction than recent immigrants (Olsen,

2010). The practices and policies confine LTELs to the EL program trajectory. In essence, most LTELs that do not exit the EL program upon enrolling at the high school level often are placed in a form of sheltered coursework with limited access to mainstream, honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Callahan and Shifrer suggest that if we listen to the students identified as LTELs the students may assist us in identifying actions the LEAs may utilize to avoid the equity trap or low academic expectations based on the perception that LTELs are language deficient rather than the need to accelerate learning in content (2016, p. 467). That is, instead of providing all students with the same program LTELs should be seen as individual cohorts. LTEL's specific instructional needs should be targeted so that they can accelerate their learning instead of viewing the fact that they have not exited the EL program as a deficit. This means that instead of compliance and equal access to programs for ELs, schools need to focus on equity or differentiated instruction that LTELs need to exit the program. Callahan and Shifrer argue that by looking beyond the data but also utilizing student input schools or LEAs may differentiate their programs to meet the EL and LTEL population they service (2016). English learners do require an English language development program to accelerate the acquisition of the English language necessary to succeed in coursework like their English only classmates. However, as students are in their sixth or seventh year of schooling the linguistic needs they have differ from a student that has just arrived from another country with limited English fluency (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016).

**EL Schooling Experiences**

Many studies illuminate the schooling experiences of ELs from elementary through higher education with regard to academic language acquisition, instructional practices, program, and policy implications. The following studies highlight learning experiences of ELs in the public school system and the fact that student voice is not capitalized upon to enhance student learning. Seldom do schools or teachers turn to students to inform and shape instructional programs.

*Learning and Not Learning English* (2001) by Guadalupe Valdés illustrates the inequities in accessing academic content for students in ESL and sheltered coursework. She conducted her research for two years in a California middle school. In her case study, she focused on four immigrant children that arrived to the United States at the age of twelve to thirteen, who were in middle school, and possessed varied levels of literacy in their primary language of Spanish (2001). Valdés study unveiled a the disconnect between policy and practice at the classroom level.

Valdés (2001) provides a lens to the practices in ESL coursework through the observations of the four focal students in the study. Students were placed in ESL coursework because they were sometimes inaccurately identified as recent arrivals with little or no regard to their level of fluency in English or primary language of Spanish (Valdés, 2001, p. 37). In her study she provides examples that demonstrates how teachers viewed the newcomer's abilities through a deficit lens (2001). For example, although students interacted with teachers and classmates in English, demonstrated quiet behavior, and conformed to classroom routines, the actions did not transfer behaviors valued by the

school to exit the ESL program (Valdés, 2001). Additionally, the language fluency the students possessed in their primary language and limited English was not used to inform instruction or access English needed to succeed outside the ESL trajectory (Valdés, 2001, p. 47-71).

Valdés provides evidence that policies set forth by Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) assist in the marginalization of ELs through the practice of tracking thereby limiting equity and access to succeed outside the ESL trajectory. For example, although one student had demonstrated fluency in English she was required to remain in the same program because she had not completed the last book in her English as a second language class (Valdés, 2001, p. 107). This illustrates of subtractive schooling practices (Valenzuela, 1999) and how instructional practices observed did not address the academic needs of ELs or value the assets the students possessed despite the fact they were not all newcomers to the United States educational system. That is, the teachers in this study did not value the language and culture the students brought to the classroom. Students were expected to conform to teacher expectations and follow routines that did not prepare or meet the language needed to succeed in coursework outside the English as a second language courses.

*Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* by Angela Valenzuela (1999) is an ethnographic study at a public high school in Texas conducted over the course of three years. In the study, she provides a lens on the academic achievement and schooling orientations of Mexican descent students through

her observations and interviews of recent immigrants, what she terms the 1.5, and the U.S. descent Mexican born students (1999).

In this study Valenzuela found that most teachers valued what she identified as "aesthetic caring" about school whereas the students valued authentic caring that aligned to the practices of *"educación"*. That is, the teachers valued conformity to their expectations without regard to knowing what their students needed or who their students were as individuals. The students valued "*educación*" which included the respect and social relationships (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 23)

Teachers at Seguín "expected students to demonstrate caring about schooling with an abstract, or aesthetic commitment to ideas or practices that purportedly lead to achievement based on their perception. Immigrant and U.S.-born youth, on the other hand, were committed to authentic form of caring that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 61). Through the lens of aesthetic caring the perception by the majority of the staff was that the Latino students did not "take school seriously or value education" and teacher comments such as "I try to help these Hispanic kids" were common within staff at Seguín (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 75). Due to the behaviors demonstrated by teachers students internalized a lack of caring for them or their learning resulting in their attitude toward achieving or not because it did not relate to their lens of authentic form of caring that is part of "*educación*" (Valenzuela, 1999 p. 23).

Valenzuela did find pockets of teachers that were willing to embrace the concept of '"*educación*". For example, the Cooperative Education counselor was willing to assist

a student that did not fit the program criteria once she knew her story and placed her in the program stating "students come first for me and letting a few squeak through the program is a small price to pay if we can keep them from dropping out" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 81). Another teacher that clearly valued students and demonstrated caring and respect, which are key elements for the concept of "educación", was the ESL teacher who established a relationship with students as a class as well as individually and demonstrated "fairness, openness for communication, and a safe learning environment" (Valenzuela, 1999 p. 100). These teachers understood that an environment that was "authentic" for learning was far more valuable than an "aesthetic" environment (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 22).

**Tracking**

All students should have access to rigorous academic content that prepares them for college preparatory coursework, not just high school graduation (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). However, schools utilize a "sorting system" that results in poor and minority student enrollment in the lowest level coursework (Oakes, 2005, p. 67). Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality (2005) by Jeannie Oakes examines tracking across twenty-five schools and explores the influence of social class and student race on coursework assignment (Oakes, 2005, p. 65).

Oakes demonstrates how tracking perpetuates social inequalities and reproduces the social structure through the academic hierarchal system. Oakes defines "tracking" as the process schools use to divide students into categories and assign coursework based on

their group cluster (2005, p. 3). The sorting of students assists in the continued differential achievement students experience in the educational system.

*Tracking and High School English Learners: Limiting Opportunity to Learn* (2005) by Rebecca M. Callahan focused on ELs at a high school in California that applied tracking in coursework. The study distinguished the data collected for ELs as, recent immigrants with consistent prior schooling, and recent immigrants with little prior schooling (Callahan, 2005, p. 313).

Callahan found that the track assigned to ELs regardless of their fluency in English demonstrated a significant predictor for academic success (2005, p. 316). Teacher perceptions of student language ability in English influenced performance expectations. For example, teachers that taught ELs identified as "beginners" expected and accepted low performance (Callahan, 2005, p. 318). In these instances the teacher accepted simple responses oral responses from students as well as completion of repetitive tasks such as chanting responses or completing simple worksheets. However, regardless of language fluency students placed in high-tracks experienced high quality instruction and content that prepared them for higher education (Callahan, 2005, p. 321). The students were expected to participate orally in class as well as complete group projects or writing assignments that pushed ELs to develop their fluency in English that would prepare them for higher education.

Callahan's study stresses that teachers must provide rigorous instruction to students in order to access mainstream coursework (2005, p. 323). Callahan's study suggest that although language fluency matters in the amount of content a student may

access in core subjects, of significance in the achievement ELs experience in exposure to rigorous instruction coupled with high expectations (2005).

*A Curriculum of Effort: Tracking Students in a Catholic High School* by Reba Page and Linda Valli demonstrates a successful tracking system informed by the school, parents, and students (1990). The study included low-income students with a third comprised of minority students, mostly African Americans attending the private Catholic school (Page & Valli, 1990, p. 48). A significant finding uncovered in this work was how student were allowed to express their educational needs to excel in school and build meaningful relationships between all stakeholders (Page & Valli, 1990). The school established an environment focused on reshaping programs to differentiate for specific student needs and ensure successful completion of coursework through relationships and trust (Page & Valli, 1990). Page and Valli highlight how students could impact programs and collaborate with administration, parents and teachers to guide their learning experience and experience academic success (1990).

**LTELS**

Menken and Kleyn conducted a study in three New York City high schools serving a large number of LTELs (2010). Menken and Kleyn found U.S. schools assist in the creation of learning gaps for LTELs by creating a "subtractive learning" environment (2010). According to Menken and Kleyn, "subtractive learning" occurs as defined by Valenzuela (1999) because the school values only English and does not use the student's primary language or culture to assist in learning new content. The subtractive learning results because the student's primary language is not fully developed and the expectation

is to learn English when ELs do not possess fluency in their primary language (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 400). Essential to the success or failure of the student depends on how they are schooled (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 401). This meant that the school's attitude toward the LTEL influences academic success or failure. The perception of LTELs affects the effectiveness and strength of the English language development program (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). For the LTELs in this study Menken and Kleyn found that an additional gap in learning resulted because the students did not have fluency in their primary language and were being introduced to new content they did not have any prior knowledge to make connections to the new learning (2010). ELs were required to learn English and simultaneously master academic content (Hakuta, 2011, p. 170). Menken and Kleyn stated that instead of viewing the LTELs primary language as an asset, the English-only approach resulted in subtractive schooling creating a student to become limited in both their primary language and English (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 404; Valenzuela, 1999).

LTEL voices were silenced and did not inform the instruction needed to continue to increase language fluency in English. The instruction LTELs received did not match their linguistic needs and the school did not use student input to inform program needs (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 407). The students identified as LTELs in this study were between 3 and 3.5 years behind in literacy in both their primary language and English that resulted in poor academic performance (Menken & Kleyn, 2010, p. 412). LTELs that did not make academic gains dropped out of school because of the limited access to coursework and academic language to succeed in other content areas (Menken & Kleyn,

2010, p. 404). The school did not provide LTELs access to instruction that would develop their fluency in English perceived necessary to succeed in coursework outside the ESL trajectory. The LEAs did not value the language and culture possessed by the LTELs that resulted in continued marginalization to coursework access and equity.

Laurie Olsen's *Reparable Harm* (2010) analyzed the EL programs in 40 California school districts. Olsen found that "one in three ELs were at the secondary level, the majority of the students identified as LTELs were enrolled in U.S. schools since kindergarten, and most were born in the U.S." (2010, p. 6). This meant that most ELs and LTELs are found in grades six to twelve. At the time of this study the state had not established criteria to distinguish ELs versus LTELs was not in place officially in place by the state of California (Lara, 2012). These findings are significant because the data supports the fact that within the EL subgroups LTELs until now were invisible (Olsen, 2010, p. 7). Olsen's report was the first to address the fact that not all ELs were the same and that ELs who had been in the EL program for over five years required a different form of instruction than the traditional English as a second language coursework.

According to Lau v. Nichols the goal of EL programs should be a vehicle to assist students in English language acquisition and return the student to the regular program as soon as possible "not operate as an educational dead-end or permanent track" (1974). Unfortunately, tracking at the secondary level continues to place LTELs in programs for EL students that do not differentiate for LTEL academic needs (Olsen, 2010). Olsen calls for an academic continuum that provides instruction to LTELs based on where students are "stuck" at a proficiency level (2010, p. 12). This means that LTEL's instruction

requires differentiation based on proficiency level that takes into account each of the domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) for language acquisition and addresses their specific academic and linguistic needs.

Olsen's research becomes significant because it addresses that teaching practices for LTELs must be differentiated and policies must allow for differentiated programs. How LTELs access academic language to succeed across the content areas requires schools to monitor coursework assigned and address specific supports based on their academic needs (2010, p. 27). Olsen states that in order for LTELs to exit "ESL ghettos" teachers must obtain training in appropriate ELD instruction that goes beyond EL certification to teach ELs (2010, p. 28).

*"It's Like a Script": Long-Term English Learners' Experiences with and Ideas About Academic Reading* by Maneka Deanna Brooks attempts to obtain insight to the reading practices LTELs engaged in and out of class (2015). This research analyzes the "in-school experiences with and ideas about academic reading" based on five case studies of LTELs in the ninth grade (Brooks, 2015, p. 386). Brooks found through her observations that learning opportunities for LTELs that the teacher structured and controlled "doing literacy" (2015, p. 387). The teacher determined the in-school reading experiences which revolved around three rules: it involved more than one person, entailed making meaning aloud, and the teacher provided the official interpretation (Brooks, 2015, p. 394). The teachers did not prepare LTELs for the necessary literacy skills needed to increase proficiency as measured by the California English Development Test or state testing (Brooks, 2015). Brooks' work highlights the fact that although

LTELs were placed in specific programs to increase language proficiency the practices in instruction did not provide LTELs access to literacy skills necessary to increase English proficiency (2015).

In Stephen Krashen's *"Do Libraries and Teacher Librarians Have the Solution to the Long-Term English Learner Problem?"* he reviews theory and research to propose the concept of "self-selected pleasure in reading in English" (2018, p. 16). Krashen argues that a focus on direct instruction on academic language is not sufficient to increase LTEL acquisition of the English language. In his research, Krashen further hypothesizes that there are three essential stages to acquire language through the encouragement of reading for pleasure.

The first stage uses storytelling and read-alouds that include direct explanations of vocabulary and words or phrases necessary to understand the themes presented by the teacher. The goal in the use of storytelling and read-alouds is to develop student interest to further read stories connected to the theme presented. The second stage calls for self-directed free voluntary reading. In this stage the English learners is given ample opportunities to explore literature of their interest without focusing on "reports, quizzes, or other forms of accountability" (2018, p. 17). Krashen stresses that in the second stage of sustained silent reading students must set time daily to read what interests them and the teacher allows students to practice English daily. The third stage in Krashen's paper indicates that self-directed reading should encourage the "area of special interest" to increase student interest in reading (2018, p. 18). That is, the students should not be

limited to access only certain levels of books but rather be given unlimited access to literature that interests them.

The most significant recommendation by Krashen calls for the development of promoting students habits for reading and access to vast reading materials. Students learning English should be given time to read books of interest without accountability. In this way, English learners are given freedom to explore the language through the lens of their topic of interest. Krashen states that habits inclusive of self-directed reading allow English learners to acquire the English language fluency in the forms of language required necessary to succeed in school (2018).

Callahan and Shifrer conducted a review of policy and practice the public school system enacts to create "inequity or segregation" in their research, "Equitable Access for Secondary English Learner Students: Course Taking as Evidence of EL Program Effectiveness" (2016, p. 463). This research reviewed the placement of ELs in high school coursework and the shifts that must occur to provide access to academic courses that prepare students for college coursework not just a high school diploma (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). The study found that most students identified as LTEL in high school were placed in courses without discussing with the student what their goals for the future were whether it was going to college, career technical school, or the work force. This study brings to the forefront that poorly implemented programs and policy result in the byproduct of students identified as LTELs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016, p. 486).

Callahan and Shifrer call on LEAs to identify and develop programs to meet the needs of the local EL population (2016, p. 465). Specifically, they call for schools to

determine what works at their specific site to guide programs for ELs that may improve academic access and equity to content (Callahan, & Shifrer, 2016, p. 466). Furthermore, Callahan and Shifrer stress that the three-prong test defined in Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) must work together in order to ensure programs and academic access for ELs are grounded in theory, pedagogy, and practice to ensure equity (2016, p. 467). Access and equity to core content must move beyond access and exposure to English. Callahan and Shifrer argue that LEAs should consider preparing ELs not just for a high school diploma but also the opportunity to pursue a college education if they choose to do so by providing access to rigorous coursework outside the EL trajectory (2016).

**Community Cultural Wealth Applied**

Yosso's (2005, 2006) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework has been utilized in many studies to explain the educational experiences of Latinx youth, EL youth, low-income youth, and immigrant youth. Lindsay Pérez Huber (2009) applied CCW to explain the educational trajectories of undocumented Chicana students in college. She found that through forms of capital such as familial, resistance, and navigational the female students were able to succeed in top-tier universities and challenged racist nativist framing (2009). That is, they were able to challenge the false perception about people of color that was held because they did not adapt to the "monolithic American identity" (Huber, 2011, p. 382). The Chicana's succeeded academically despite the fact they were considered to be marginalized students that did not possess the necessary academic assets to succeed in their program.

Another study conducted by Nora A. Luna and Magdalena Martinez utilized CCW to explain how Latinx in college were able to succeed and the fact that if this framework was applied in the process of schooling more students could be positioned to attend and succeed in college (2013). The Latinx in this study demonstrated that CCW was essential to thrive in college. The students identified aspirational, familial, social, and navigational capital as key to their ability to succeed at the university level. Their ability to activate CCW as Latinx was essential to provide each other support in the navigation of higher education and ensuring their academic success. The Latinx used CCW to ensure they enrolled in the appropriate coursework to obtain a Bachelor's degree.

Louie F. Rodríguez utilizes CCW as a "pedagogical approach to reshape the educational pipeline" (2016, p. 68). Rodríguez proposes the use of communities to become the part of the active curriculum used in the school setting. He calls on connecting the "theory to the realities on the ground" by capitalizing on the assets the students bring with them at all levels of the educational pipeline (2016, p. 69). Rodríguez's research calls on educators to not just understand the community that schools service but to actively seek the assets such as story telling, community relevant issues, historical perspectives to name a few that drive student achievement toward educational equity.

P. Antonio Cuevas utilized CCW in his research to demonstrate how "counter-stories or *"testimonios"* [testimonies] can reengage latinx students (p. 47, 2016). In his research he explores how student counter-stories can provide educators an opportunity to address academic disparities (2016, p. 48). In his research he states that the current

"educational pipeline demonstrates that Latinx do not navigate, or are unable to navigate the educational system, exhibit grave academic disparities. Only 44 out of 100 Latinx graduate high school, seven will obtain a bachelor degree, and less than one will receive a Doctorate" (p. 49, 2016). In his research, Cuevas applied CCW at his school site and utilized counter-storytelling to examine the impact of student stories in relation to: motivation towards education, racial cultural identity, relationship with family, and own self-confidence (p. 54, 2016). CCW was utilized as the key component to leverage instruction and accelerate student learning.

Although these studies utilized CCW with marginalized students, few if any studies apply CCW to English Learners, LTEL, or former LTELS that were reclassified.

**Student Voice Applied**

Several studies that emphasized the impact student voice may have when students become part of the research was illustrated in *From Voice to Agency: Guiding Principles for Participatory Action Research with Youth* by Louie F. Rodríguez and Tara M. Brown (2009). That is, the researcher does not just seek the marginalized student to obtain insights but rather shares the power with students to use their voice as change agents (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 22). Rodríguez and Brown identify participatory action research (PAR) as a method that "repositions students from informants to experts with authority and decision making" (2009, p 23). PAR is utilized as an asset based approach to confront issues and obtain the voice of traditionally marginalized youth (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 24).

The research conducted by Rodríguez and Brown emphasizes that PAR provides youth the opportunity to engage in the examination of school inequities of which they are not usually included (2009, p. 26). Students provide us with the knowledge necessary to understand aspects of schooling through analysis of their lived situation and include use of theories to further analyze their lived experiences (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 26). Additionally, students in this study were allowed use of "their knowledge to influence the nature of the research and its outcomes" (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 27). Another element of PAR was "sharing power with students in building relationships, collaborating, and engaging in inquiry based learning" (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 28). That is, power was shared with the students instead of exerting power over them in the research project. As part of the process students in PAR focus on utilizing the knowledge obtained to transform the lives of marginalized youth through the reflection of their own lived experiences (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009, p. 30). As indicated in this research student voice requires the researcher to turn to the experts in order to truly transform schooling experiences (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009; Oldfather, 1995).

Penny Oldfather indicates that students should participate in the construction of their learning environment as partners in research in the examination and response to the questions one may have on student learning (1995). "Students are the experts on their own perceptions and experiences as learners" therefore students should be part of any research that looks to reshape their learning experiences through the application of student voice (Oldfather, 1995, p. 131). Additionally, if schools look to reform school practices for students to succeed the narrative and dialogue must come from students.

Students are the experts that may explain how they make sense of their lives and schooling experience (Giroux, 1986).

In *Radical Pedagogy and the Politics of Student Voice* Giroux (1986) states "both radical and conservative ideologies fail to engage the politics of voice and representation" from the school site level (p. 49). Specifically, Giroux calls for dialogue centered on student voice to understand how they make sense of their lives and school. Giroux argues that it is only through student voice that we can be given an understanding of their lived reality and impact school reform. Student voice is not used to "other them" that is, stating deficiencies but rather use the explained experiences to understand how to reshape learning that is inclusive of student feelings, beliefs, and thoughts relevant to their community and culture (1986, p. 51).

The research conducted by Allison Cook-Sather calls on the use of student voice that allows students to speak as informants (2002, 2006). That is, the student voice is pursued that provides them the right to speak, respects their thinking, and listens to their perspective. Student voice does not only allows students to critique and provide input on how to reform education but also includes their unique perspective on how they experience school. Student voice requires the researcher to listen and understand student perspective through their lived schooling experiences. Cook-Sather states that "student voice is a process that takes time" and begins with the interview as a first step to inform and guide school reform (2006, p. 377).

## Conclusion

The studies in this review indicate that although research exists on ELs there is a need to further study the LTEL subgroup population and former LTELs. Research on reclassified students exists. However, most research on reclassified students considers policy and instructional practices that seldom bring student voice to the forefront. Few studies take student voice and contextualized current or former LTELs schooling experiences through an additive lens that informs policy and programs. This research pursues former LTEL student voice to fill that gap.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

### Introduction

Based on the literature review conducted policies and practices, despite well intended, continue to perpetuate differential outcomes for ELs. Specifically, Long Term English Learners (LTELs) are a direct result of programs and policies that do not differentiate for their needs but serve as an umbrella of services for the EL population.

### Research Questions

I use LTELs "student voice" to identify forms of capital to contextualize their schooling experiences to identify and understand how they perceived and experienced the EL program and practices (Bourdieu, 2977; Yosso, 2005; Mitra, 2003, 2004, 2006).

The questions that frame my study are:

- How does the structure of the school shape the schooling experiences for Long Term English Learners?
- What experiences and processes contribute to Long Term English Learners' abilities to exit the English Learner program?
- In what ways can "student voice" reshape current policy and practices that increase the likelihood of exiting the English learner program?

## Research Design

In this research I use a case study approach to understand the learning experiences of former LTELs "through triangulating the descriptions and interpretation" of their school experiences (Stake, 2000, p. 443). A case study requires me to apply reflexivity based on what I observed, heard, and how the interpretation of the events were representative of the context and experience of those observed (Stake, 2000, p. 453; Yin, 2014). Callahan and Shifrer indicate that in order for schools to serve the specific needs of their English Learner (EL) population Local education agencies (LEAs) must determine locally the needs of ELs (2016, p. 466). Through the use of the case study provided in this research I may perhaps assist the LEA to inform local policies and programs that may increase the number of students that exit the EL trajectory.

The case study allowed me to interact with former LTELs and obtain a perspective interpreted by students through their voice essential to inform policy and programs at the local level. Student voice in this research allowed the collection of data through the lens of the student and connect the data to potential forms of capital that were essential to exit the EL program. More importantly, through student voice I was provided the information necessary to triangulate data (Stake, 2000) to illustrate how these specific participants exited the EL trajectory, removed the LTEL label, and become A-G ready to enter a four-year university upon graduation.

## Selection of Site

Currently, 27% of ELs in California were enrolled at the secondary level (CDE, 2016a). Additionally, 11% of ELs were enrolled in grade twelve and 72.3% of those in

grade twelve were identified as LTELs (CDE, 2016b). To understand the educational experiences of LTELs I sought the participation of the students in grade twelve to provide insight to the impact of policy and programs.

To conduct my research I approached a school district located in the Southern California. The district I selected is located approximately sixty miles outside Los Angeles to the east. At Fender Unified School District (pseudonym) the total student population is approximately (in raw numbers) 20,000 in grades Transitional Kindergarten to twelve (CDE, 2017). Of those students 700 are African American; 40 American Indian or Alaska Native; 700 are Asian; 300 Filipino; 15,870 Hispanic; 90 Pacific Islander; 2,000 white; and 300 identified as other (CDE, 2017). Of the high schools available at Fender Unified School District I selected the high school that represented closest to the district overall population was Puedes High School. The student population (in raw numbers) at Puedes High School consisted of 40 African Americans; 10 American Indian or Alaska Native; 30 Asian; 10 Filipino; 2,000 Hispanic; 10 Pacific Islander; 120 White; and 130 identified as other for a total of 2,500 students (CDE, 2017). Of the 2,500 students make up the overall student population at Puedes High School 90% of the students are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and the English learner population consisted of 900 students or 36% (CDE, 2017).

**Puedes High School**

I must provide significant details that made Puedes High School a unique site to conduct my research. In 2010 Puedes High School was identified by the State of California as "persisting low performing" through the accountability process (CDE,

2010). This meant that the Fender Unified School District had to apply a corrective action in order to continue the receipt of federal funds. The district selected to implement a "turnaround model" as the corrective action (CDE, 2010). Part of the corrective action required Puedes High School to become re-staffed from classified to certificated positions. Every employee that wanted to work at the school had to reapply for their position. In the process of re-staffing, the school received a new administration, a mixture of clerical staff, custodial, campus supervisors, and teachers that had worked previously at Puedes or were new to the school. Additionally, the school was mandated to establish programs to increase the number of students graduating high school and pursuing a college education.

**Programs**

The administration established key programs to create a parent to student partnership that included counseling staff accessibility to assist in guiding students and providing academic support, emotional support, and direction to students that decided to enroll in Advance Placement, International Baccalaureate (IB), and academy programs.

**Counselors**

Another detail to note is the fact that an IB coordinator position was created to ensure IB students were provided additional guidance to ensure their success in the program. In addition, four of the five counselors at Puedes are Latinx and fluent Spanish speakers. This is an important feature at Puedes because these counselors also had the ability to understand the power of "educación" which was embedded in how they interacted with

students, parents, and teachers therefore impacting the school's culture (Valenzuela, 1999).

A key practice implemented by the counseling staff was that they visited the feeder middle schools to recruit students to enroll in the programs at Puedes. They explained and made themselves available to discuss the options the students had to access coursework even if they did not commit to a program. By visiting the sites during the spring, future freshmen could meet and talk to counselors to determine the courses they chose to pursue upon entering Puedes High School. The counselors at Puedes made themselves available to the incoming students and parents.

**AP and IB Programs**

Puedes High School advertises an open enrollment policy for all students to participate in the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. All students at Puedes High School were given access to enroll in AP or IB courses at any point during their educational trajectory. The following are the AP and IB course options:

**Figure 4.1**

| Advanced Placement Coursework Options | International Baccalaureate Coursework Options (HL= Higher Level 2 year course SL= Standard Level 1 year course) |
|---|---|
| AP English<br>AP US History<br>AP American Government<br>AP Economics<br>AP European History<br>AP Calculus AB and BC<br>AP Statistics | IB English (HL)<br>IB Biology (HL/SL)<br>IB Physics (SL)<br>IB Visual Arts (HL/SL)<br>IB Spanish (HL/SL)<br>IB French (HL)<br>IB Math (HL/SL)<br>IB Geography (SL)<br>IB History of the Americas (HL)<br>IB Theory of Knowledge (Required for Diploma Candidates) |

The open access to all programs is a significant aspect of Puedes High School because as Callahan (2005) as well as Page and Valli (1990) found in their research, access to rigorous coursework affects the overall student performance and teacher expectations regardless of the label assigned to the student. The former LTEL students in this study enrolled in AP and IB courses from their freshman to senior year.

**AP Readiness at UCR**

Once students enrolled in AP coursework they were encouraged to take part in the opportunity to attend AP Readiness once a month at the University of California Riverside. The teachers and counselors promoted this opportunity throughout the school year. The district provided bus transportation for these students to attend the classes. All students regardless of socioeconomic status were encouraged and provided access to these prep courses held once a month on a Saturday. To drive the importance of attending these opportunities AP teachers served as the chaperones.

**AERIES Information System**

Another practice that Puedes High School adopted was the daily use of the districts AERIES Information System. This online database was accessible to parents and students online to review daily attendance and teacher grade books that provided real time academic standing. Students at Puedes were required to log in daily and if a student was not passing a class the counselors were tasked with meeting with students to determine how to support their ability to pass a class. Parents were encouraged to access AERIES via various workshops throughout the school year provided in English and Spanish. The use of AERIES was encouraged at the middle school level as well as high

school as a way to be informed of their child's academic progress and daily attendance. According to Fender Unified, Puedes High School had 100% student use of the system and almost 70% parent use of the AERIES database.

**Selection of Participants**

I conducted my research at Puedes High School over the course of six months. In order to select a representative sample of former LTELs for the case study I utilized case selection as defined by Stake (2000, p. 450). That is, case selection was representative of LTELs that fit the criteria of the LTEL definition in order "to select a case of some typicality but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn" (Stake, 2000, p. 451). I applied the California definition for LTELs according to AB 2193 (Lara, 2012). AB 2193 defines LTELs as students in grades 6-12, enrolled in U.S. schools for six or more years, and whose English proficiency did not increase based on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) administered annually for two consecutive years (Lara, 2012). In addition, I sought students who were identified in eighth grade as LTELs, in attendance since Kindergarten within the same school district, who were reclassified in grades nine, and currently in grade twelve. The former LTELs selected were of Spanish speaking origin since they are identified as the most significant population within the LTEL subgroup and the lowest academic performance (California Department of Education, 2015a; Olsen 2010). According to the California Department of Education, in grade twelve for the 2016 school year the female enrollment of LTELs was 11,878 females in comparison to 16,780 male students (2016c). In the initial selection of focal students I pursued an equal number of male and female participants to

capture the schooling trajectory representative of former LTELs to include no more than twelve participants (Valdés, 2001; Matute-Bianchi, 2008). However, I was only able to secure six participants because of their coursework demands and availability. I had four female and two male participants in this study.

To identify the appropriate students I utilized the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) utilized by Fender Unified School District to capture student demographic data. Through the use of this database I was able to query and identify viable potential candidates for my research. The initial search identified a total of thirty-seven students that were reclassified as fluent English proficient during their freshman year in 2014. The students initially identified met the LTEL criteria. All students had attended Fender Unified School District since Kindergarten and were currently in their senior year of high school. Of the thirty-seven students twelve had a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or above, eight had a GPA between 2.5 and 2.9, and 17 of the students identified as potential candidates had a GPA of 2.4 or lower. For this research I only selected students who had identified Spanish as their first language when enrolling in Kindergarten because in California the majority of students identified as LTEL are identified as Spanish speakers (Olsen, 2010). To further identify viable candidates I also reviewed individual student cumulative records to ensure the database records were in accordance to the written documents in order to obtain a sample of students that met the criteria for my research.

I first contacted the site administration with the list of potential students. The guidance department facilitated access to the potential students and teachers. I initially

met with two teachers that taught Advanced Placement courses (AP) in mathematics as twenty of the potential student participants had these teachers at some point during their day. When I met with the teachers it was evident that the candidates for my research were students that excelled in coursework as they were enrolled in either AP Calculus or AP Statistics during their senior year. The teachers referred to the students as "smart, intelligent, and hard workers" (Teacher Interviews, 2018). The students selected as potential participants were still enrolled in demanding coursework despite the fact all students had fulfilled the district math course requirements for graduation. When the teachers and I discussed each of the potential students both teachers, despite their student course load, knew the students individually.

I worked closely with the school guidance department to schedule and arrange for a place to meet with each of the potential candidates. I utilized a conference room located in the guidance office to ensure student confidentiality. Our meeting room was only accessible through a hallway that did not experience high traffic and was closed at all times.

During my first meeting with the participants I provided a brief overview of my research and an option to opt out of participating. Each student was given a parent consent and student consent form prior to beginning my research. I explained the consent form that required parent signature and the student consent form to each potential candidate. If students indicated they wanted to participate in the study I provided a more in depth explanation of my proposed research and answered any questions prior to their commitment. A key question that arose with each of the groups I met was the amount of

time out of the classroom and the length of the research to be conducted. The students also questioned how often I would be in their classroom or observing them on campus. I clarified the methods I would use to collect data to the potential participants.

I provided each student with the required forms to participate in the research and collected signed forms via the guidance office prior to meeting with each student. Once students returned the parent consent and student consent form I began meeting with the students. To minimize interruptions to student learning I met with students at times and on days that were convenient to the students. The students selected the days and times during the week they could meet. I did not interfere with any class assignment conflicts such as exams, projects, presentations, or other class requirements. In addition, at the beginning of each meeting I would verify with the students it was a good day to meet and schedule our follow up meeting.

I then began meeting with students individually because of the variation in their time availability. Our meetings were usually one on one or with no more than two students present at a time for the interviews. I also observed students during passing periods and lunch. I made notes of my observations at the conclusion of passing periods or lunch. I did not engage the students in conversation during lunch or passing period. The six participants in this study usually used their time to meet with teachers, complete assignments, work with peers on projects, participate in club activities, or socialize with peers.

## The Researcher

When I met with the students during our initial meeting I disclosed to them I had served as a teacher at Fender Unified School District and was currently an administrator at another site within the district. The students asked how long I had worked at Fender Unified as well as the schools sites I had served. I shared with the students that I was in my nineteenth year at Fender Unified School District and had worked at three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school (not Puedes High School) within the school district. The students asked if I spoke Spanish and tested my ability to respond by asking questions such as, "Where are you from?" I responded I was born in the United States but my parents were from Mexico. The students then asked in Spanish if I visited Mexico and I shared the places I had visited as well as where I spent time visiting with my family. Upon demonstrating fluency in Spanish, the students would switch from English to Spanish in our conversations. At times the switching was what Zentella (1997) refers to as "code-switching", using words to explain a certain idea that was better understood within a Spanish context. I believe that the ability to demonstrate my Spanish fluency, my roles within Fender Unified, and my own experience as an English Learner provided me the ability to access data and develop a deeper understanding and connection to these participants narrative.

## The Students

The following are biographies of each of the participants in this study. The information was gathered through my initial interview with each participant.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra was a seventeen-year-old senior enrolled at Puedes High School. She attended Kindergarten to grade twelve at Fender Unified School District. She was born in the United States and her first language learned was Spanish, which led to her classification as an English learner upon enrollment at the local school district. She was the oldest of three children and would be the first to attend college. Since her freshman year at Puedes High School she enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. She had enrolled in a total of four AP courses and six IB courses total from her freshman to senior year. In her initial survey she indicated that she spent most of her time reading for pleasure and talking with her parents. She had earned 205 of the 220 credits needed to graduate prior to the first semester of her senior year. Her grade point average at that time was 3.19 and in pursuit of enrolling in a four-year university as she had completed the majority of the A-G requirements.

**Manuel**

Another participant in my research was Manuel, a seventeen-year-old senior at Puedes High School. He was born in the United States and attended Fender Unified School District from Kindergarten to grade twelve. As an incoming student in Kindergarten, he was identified as an English learner upon enrollment in Fender Unified because his first language was Spanish as well as the language spoken in the home. He was the oldest of two children aspired to be the first in his family to attend college. Currently, he had enrolled in a total of five AP, six IB courses, and was in pursuit of an IB diploma candidate upon graduation. By becoming an IB diploma candidate he was

able to demonstrate he enrolled and succeeded in rigorous coursework that would ensure his success in college (International Baccalaureate, 2005). Additionally, he was an active athlete participating in sports such as Cross Country, Soccer, and Track. At the beginning of his senior year he had completed 195 of the 220 credits required to graduate. He had earned an overall grade point average of 3.0. He had also completed the A-G course requirements to enroll in college upon graduation.

**Gloria**

Gloria was a seventeen-year-old female participant in this research. She attended Puedes High School and was enrolled in AP and IB courses. She had completed four AP and five IB classes. She was enrolled at Fender Unified School District since Kindergarten. She was born in the United States and at the time of enrollment designated her first language as Spanish, which led to designating her as an EL. She was the middle child with one older brother and a younger sister. She was involved in school clubs and enjoyed horseback riding on her free time. She had a grade point average of 3.55 and had completed 195 credits prior to starting her senior year. She had also fulfilled the A-G requirements to enroll in a California State University or University of California upon graduation.

**Rocio**

Rocio was a seventeen-year-old senior at Puedes High School. She was born in the United States and only attended schools in Fender Unified School District. She had one older brother. She was the only participant that indicted her mother had been involved in different official roles in school committees such as School Site Council

(SSC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC). She had completed 225 credits prior to the start of her senior year and earned a grade point average of 3.55. She was an active athlete involved in multiple sports since freshmen year such as swim, water polo, cross country, and track. She had taken six AP and six IB courses and was a declared IB diploma candidate. By being a declared IB diploma candidate she had been identified by colleges as student likely to succeed in college coursework at a four-year university (IB, 2005).

**Betty**

Betty was a seventeen-year-old female currently attending Puedes High School participated in this study. Like the other participants she was born in the United States, she only attended schools at Fender Unified School District, and was labeled EL because her first language was Spanish. At the beginning of her senior year she had already completed 225 credits. She stated she spent most of her time studying in the library or attending tutoring sessions provided by her teachers. Her overall grade point average was 3.48. She had enrolled in five AP and six IB classes. She was seeking to pursue an IB certificate.

**Pedro**

Pedro was an eighteen-year-old attending Puedes High School. He was born in the United States and had only attended schools in Fender Unified School District. As Pedro entered Kindergarten he was identified as EL because his first language was Spanish. He would be the first of his siblings to attend college. He was involved in sports but had to take on a part-time job at a local restaurant to help his family out financially.

As he entered his senior year of high school he had completed 200 credits. At the time of his interview he had earned a grade point average was 3.04 and was positioned to enroll in a four-year university. Since his freshmen year at Puedes High School, he had enrolled in a total of six AP and six IB courses.

## The Data

Data in this research consisted of documents, observations, and interviews. As I considered the data sources I kept my research questions at the forefront. As I reviewed documents, conducted observations and interviews the focus of this research was driven to explain the LTELs educational trajectory, the ability to exit the EL program in high school, and become eligible to enter a four-year university upon graduation. Essential to understand the LTEL schooling experience was to incorporate how the student viewed school, parents, and themselves in shaping their educational trajectory.

### Documents

To understand District adopted policies for EL programs and services I analyzed the District Master Plan for English Learners, Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and the site master schedule process for course assignment. These documents were essential to understand how the Fender Unified School District put policy and programs in place for ELs at the site level.

The District Plan for English Learners obtained input from the parents, community, support staff that worked with EL students, teachers, and administration. Student voice was not incorporated in the District Master Plan for English Learners. The

purpose of analyzing these documents was to understand how or if the LEA utilizes student voice to inform the implementation of policy and programs. The District Plan for English Learners had not been updated since 2008.

The LEA revised the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) annually. The LCAP sought student, parent, community, support staff, teacher, and administration input. All stakeholders were asked for input on how to allocate the funding for EL students and determine instructional program adjustments and modifications.

Document analysis provided me an insight to the forms of capital were valued by the school system (Bourdieu, 1986). That is, what student's academic levels had to be according to the district to demonstrate their ability to exit the EL program. In addition, the analysis of the documents assisted in the explanation of the educational trajectory of LTELs.

A secondary purpose of the documents cited above assisted me to understand how the policy and practices at Fender Unified School District affected the ESL trajectory for LTELs at the high school level. Student documents that include reclassification documentation, California English Development Test (CELDT), California Standards Test (CST), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), and California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores as well as attendance were essential to ensure the students selected for the study fell within the focal groups for this study. In addition, the documents assisted to form part of the case study essential for the narrative of each individual students schooling trajectory.

In the document analysis process I turned to key documents that provided a historical perspective of the schooling experience for the participants in this study. I reviewed student cumulative records that included California English Language Development Test scores (CELDT), California Standard Test results (CST), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test results (PSAT), California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress results (CAASPP), report cards, and attendance records to explain their trajectory as an EL student. As I reviewed the cumulative record for students I noted that during the elementary school years most parents attended parent conferences and the students at one point during their elementary trajectory had attended academic tutoring.

I began collecting data in June that consisted of documents that described the EL program within Fender Unified School District and Puedes High School. The documents collected were significant to understand student designation of services and also ensure that the definition of LTEL was in alignment with Assembly Bill 2193 (Lara, 2012) for the students selected as potential participants. I also utilized the districts California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) to review participant records and ensure the cumulative records were accurate with the reclassification data in both locations. This accuracy was important as the participants in my research were students that had been labeled as LTEL and were reclassified their freshmen year of high school.

## Observations

In coordination with the counseling staff at Puedes High school I observed the students during passing periods and lunch. At the request of the students I did not observe them in class. I refrained from following students during passing period and lunch so that

the observations would be authentic of what actually occurred in their daily lives. I was positioned in the path the students would take to travel from class to class. I would also visit the library, quad, and club activities during lunch. As I conducted my observations I noted the activities the students engaged in and where they spent their time during their passing periods and lunch. In this research I observed a total of six participants. In order to accurately observe all participants I would ensure I observed at least two students per day when I was on campus. Since most of the students in this study traveled to the same classes, that allowed me to observe them in clusters as they moved from class to class as well as their activities during lunch.

## Interviews

### Individual

The primary data utilized in this research were interviews. I used a structured and unstructured interview process with the focal students to identify the forms of capital LTELs identified as critical in shaping their schooling experiences. Structured interview in this study meant all students were asked the same set of questions, in the same order centered on forms of capital (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 701-702). I did ask clarifying questions during our interviews. After observing the focal students for a period of three to six weeks I used the observations to assist in the development of the structured interview questions. The interview questions centered on the different forms of capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005, 2006). The questions presented and asked to all participants were:

1. What is your favorite subject/activity? Why?

[Social Capital]

2. How do you interacts with the school, teacher, counselor, and peers?
   [Linguistic, Familial, Social, and Navigational Capital]

3. Do you control your learning and how do you know this?
   [Aspirational, Familial, and Resistant Capital]

4. How do would you explain your schooling experience as an English Learner?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

5. What moment/incident do you identify as key, from grade eight to the present, which influenced your schooling experience?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

6. What does it mean to be Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

7. What does being RFEP mean to you?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

8. What is a Long Term English Learner?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

9. How was your middle school educational experience?
   [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

10. What kind of grades did you earn prior to entering high school? If things changed why?
    [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

11. How does your family influence your decisions? Why?
    [Aspirational, Linguistic, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

12. When do you believe you became fluent in English? How did that moment influence/affect you?
    [Aspirational, Linguistic, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

13. What have you done to prepare for college? How have peers, teachers, counselors, and family done?
    [Aspirational, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

14. What advice would you give an eighth grade student before entering high school?
    [Aspirational, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

15. When did you know you were identified an English Learner? What did that mean?
    [Aspirational, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

16. Who would you identify as the most influential person that affected/informed your decisions in school? What decisions? Why?
    [Aspirational, Linguistic, Familial, Social, Navigational, and Resistant Capital]

I used these questions to understand how the student interacted with school, staff, peers, and family. As indicated by Fontana and Frey the structured interview ensured that all students responded to the same questions that developed their individual narrative (2005, p. 702).

**Group Interview**

I also conducted group interviews when possible with the focal students to understand how they as a group explained and interpreted capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso 2005). Through the dialogue with the students I was able to understand how they understood the school structure and eventually exited the EL program. The group was asked the same questions they were asked individually and included additional questions that aligned to the recurring patterns of capital unveiled in the initial structured interview. For example, in their individual interview students spoke about the involvement of their family in their schooling experience and how this support drove them to become "better students to become someone" (Interviews, 2018). The group interview allowed the triangulation of data collected in the form of notes and audiotape to interpret what was and wasn't said (Stake, 2005). The group interview was important because as a group student voice spoke to access and equity to coursework outside the ESL trajectory. In

addition, the group interview assisted in the recollection of schooling experiences as a group with insights that were not addressed in the structured interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 705).

The observations and notes from the structured and group interview were used to form the unstructured individual interviews. In this research the unstructured interview attempted to understand the schooling experiences of LTELs through open-ended questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). One question posed to the participants was:

Describe your schooling experience.

During this unstructured interview I focused on the forms of capital the LTELs most valued as essential to access and equity (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). I pursued student interpretation of their schooling experience to provide a voice to their educational trajectory. It was through memory and recollection of the LTELs schooling experience I sought to obtain further insight on how policy and practice affected their access and equity to coursework outside the ESL trajectory (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 709). Furthermore, it was through the collaboration in the interpretation of data with the students that I was able to provide an accurate narrative of their schooling experience and recommendations for the LEAs program practices (Mitra, 2004). It was through their schooling experiences that themes emerged that aligned with Social Reproduction Theory (Bourdieu, 1977) and Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).

**The Interviews**

As previously indicated I met with students individually and as a group. We met in a conference room located in the school guidance center that was private. As allowed

by each student's course schedule we would meet between thirty and forty-five minutes depending on what was occurring in class at the time. The participants determined the day and time that best worked with their schedule. I refrained from taking notes and recorded our conversations with a tape recorder when we met. I chose to take notes after we met because I wanted to engage the participants in the questions and probe to gain as much insight to understand their schooling experience. It was evident that if I was not writing the students appeared more engaged and willing to elaborate their explanations.

I transcribed the audio recordings from each interview verbatim. I used a variation of Ochs (2004) symbols to transcribe the data. I noted participant behaviors such as repeating "mmm", (laugh), or … to indicate a pause (Interviews, 2018). In the transcription process of the interview data collected I included verbatim what the participant said, what I said, and any nonverbal responses such as facial or hand gestures that I noted after each session. To ensure accuracy of data transcription I reviewed the data along with the transcription script to correct any errors or omitted words. In addition, I provided the participants the opportunity to review the transcription to ensure I captured their voice accurately.

**Data Analysis**

I categorized the data by identifying codes for Parent, School, Student, and Spanish instances that were then connected to Social Reproduction Theory, Community Cultural Wealth as illustrated through Student Voice (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005; Mitra, 2004). In the process of data collection I sought to explain the forms of capital

most valued by students and those that provided them access to coursework outside the ESL trajectory.

These observations and interviews served as an opportunity to collect data on the different forms of capital students used to gain access and equity currently, as well as in past schooling experiences. The observation of the six students were representative of former LTELs who were reclassified in grade nine and highlight their ability to exit the ESL trajectory granting access to coursework necessary to pursue higher education (Valdés, 2001; Callahan & Shifrer, 2016).

In the analysis of data collected through observations, interviews, and documents I applied triangulation as defined by Stake (2005). Through the use of multiple LTEL voices I used the narrative they told to clarify their interpretation of the schooling they experienced. I applied triangulation to interpret the data collected and ensure accurate representation of the phenomena (Stake, 2005, p. 453). To ensure validity I utilized "the trustworthiness of inference drawn from the data" collected (Freeman, deMarrais, et al., 2007, p. 27). The data collected served as evidence that identified LTEL student voice and the forms of capital they most valued.

In this research I collaborated with the students in the interpretation of the data collected to ensure their perspective was accurately represented in this research as I conducted each individual interview (Mitra, 2006). Collaboration in this research meant that students assisted in clarifying and explaining their answers further to ensure that the LTEL narrative described their schooling experiences accurately and illustrated the forms of capital necessary to activate access to coursework outside the ESL trajectory.

In the data analysis I looked for patterns that allowed for the examination of "how talk define and position" the LTELs (Johnstone, 2004, p. 111). Specifically, I looked for patterns in the data that indicate how capital provided LTELs power and solidarity to illustrate schooling experiences. For example, in the individual student interviews the concept of parent direction surfaced and when students were in a group setting they provided additional insights as to how parent direction was seen as an asset to their academic success. The responses to the questions posed in the structured, group, and open-ended interviews were analyzed for patterns in their description of schooling experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Johnstone, 2004). In other words, how power and solidarity form capital that leverages access to coursework outside the ESL trajectory and how becoming "good students" provided to access to coursework outside the ESL trajectory (Alejandra, 2018).

The data I gathered through the structured, group, and open-ended individual interview provided student voice that illustrated the LTEL educational trajectory. The audiotape and notes collected of the structured, group, and open-ended individual I transcribed and analyzed for the nonverbal data to provide an accurate narrative of LTELs voice. As indicated by Ochs the transcript should reflect the hypothesis examined which in this case is the differential access and equity LTELs are provided through the varied implementation of policies and programs (2004, p. 168). In addition, the pitch, tone, and volume to the responses I obtained from the participants in this study I noted to identify schooling experiences and valued forms of capital (Ochs, 2004) The nonverbal data was necessary in my analysis to accurately reflect the LTELs schooling experiences

(Ochs, 2004, p. 174). The analysis of the discussions that occurred with the students required triangulation to ensure accurate generalizations of these six participants and the forms of capital most valued (Stake, 2000, p. 453-454). By transcribing what was audiotaped before analyzing the notes taken I applied triangulation to ensure the data represented the discourse accurately. The data represented what was said as well as the nonverbal cues essential to accurately describe the discourse in the different settings. To capture the verbal and nonverbal discourse I adapted transcription conventions (Ochs, 2004, p. 177-181). This data collection method allowed me to look for recurring patterns of verbal and nonverbal discourse that identified forms of capital by students, which was key to understand and explain how they intersect with access and equity within the school setting (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso 2005). In addition, through the incorporation of student collaboration I ensured accurate interpretation of data and recommendations for LEAs to reform policies and practices that affect LTELs (Mitra, 2004). Through student collaboration I identified specific forms of capital that were present in their schooling experience and how those became embedded in their own practices to assist them across content areas. For example, students indicated they started to take notes as expected to demonstrate they were "good students" (Alejandra, 2018). The participants identified how parents, school, student, and Spanish provided the necessary influence, direction, and motivation to guide their academic success.

## Chapter 5: School Structure and LTELs

In this chapter I present the findings from my study that answer my first research question: How does the structure of the school shape the schooling experiences for Long Term English Learners? I examine how school policies and practices structure student placement in coursework. Specifically, for a student identified as an English Learner the school experience differs due to the policy, programs, and practices that are determined by the local education agency. By examining "student voice(s)" (Giroux, 1986), I show LTELs' expertise of their own perception and experiences as learners, that I use to illustrate, how school shaped them as students (Oldfather, 1995). In answering my research question I explain how the multi-layered school structure shaped the students. In this chapter, I explore several structural features of the school that contributed to the students' ability to exit the EL program including: the AP and IB program, AP readiness, IB counselor, school counselors, reading opportunities, tracking, and the hidden curriculum. I argue that school personnel, programs, and the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) emerged, in some ways more than others, as key to the ability for these students to exit the EL program and pursue a college education at a four-year university upon graduation.

### Why LTELs Matter

According to the United States Department Office of English Language Acquisition, in the 2012 school year approximately 4.5 million or 9% of the student population in public schools were English Learners (2015a). Of these 4.5 million students

57% of the identified English Learners (ELs) were born in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2015a). This statistic highlights an important misperception that all ELs are immigrants (Olsen, 2010, p. 6). To put the success of English Language Learners (ELLs) in perspective the graduation rate nationwide for all students was 82.3%, Asian/Pacific Islander 89.4%, White 87.2%, Hispanic 76.3%, African American 72.5%, Economically Disadvantaged 74.6%, and Students with Disabilities 63.1% while the rate for ELs was 62.6% in 2014 (United States Department of Education, 2015b).

In California 27% of ELs were enrolled at the secondary level (CDE, 2016a). Additionally, 11% of ELs were enrolled in grade twelve and 72.3% of those in grade twelve were identified as Long Term English Learners (LTELs) (CDE, 2016b). The data indicates that as students remain in the EL program once they enter high school the likelihood of reclassification becomes a difficult task to accomplish.

**The District: Fender Unified School District**

The school district described in this research is located in Southern California. Fender Unified School District is located east of Los Angeles, with an approximate student population of 20,000 in grades Transitional Kindergarten to twelve (CDE, 2017). The racial composition (in raw numbers) of the district is school: 700 African American; 40 American Indian or Alaska Native; 700 are Asian; 300 Filipino; 15, 870 Hispanic; 90 Pacific Islander; 2,000 white; and 300 identified as other (CDE, 2017).

**The Site: Puedes High School**

Of the high schools available at Fender Unified School District I selected Puedes High School as it represented closest to the district overall population. The student body at Puedes High School consisted of approximately 40 African Americans; 10 American Indian or Alaska Native; 30 Asian; 10 Filipino, 10; 2,000 Hispanic; 10 Pacific Islander; 120 White; and 130 identified as other for a total of 2,500 students (CDE, 2017). At Puedes High School, of the 2,500 approximate student population 90% of the students are identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and the English Learner population consisted of approximately 900 students or 36% (CDE, 2017).

A key feature at Puedes High School is the open enrollment policy that allows all students to participate in different academies with specific emphasis on Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. Puedes High School allows students to enter the AP or IB courses at any point during their educational trajectory. The students' English language fluency level is not part of the criteria to participate in these programs. This aspect of Puedes High School is significant because as indicated in the research conducted by Callahan (2005) as well as Page and Valli (1990), access to rigorous coursework affects the overall student performance and teacher expectations regardless of the label assigned to the student. The six participants in this study enrolled in AP and IB coursework that held them to high expectations, which contributed to their high student academic performance overall.

## Data Analysis

I used a cross-case analysis to identify themes that surfaced through each of the participants' interviews. That is, I conducted a thematic analysis of the six students' interview data to further understand their schooling experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I examined each transcript for common patterns that surfaced within the data where the students used similar words to describe their schooling experience. For example, I looked for phrases or words in each transcript that was used in their recollection of being a student identified as an English Learner and contributing factors that allowed them to access classes outside the English as a Second Language trajectory. To triangulate this data analysis (Stake 2000, p. 453), I also reviewed my observation notes and documents in student cumulative records. I analyzed and coded the observations and documents in conjunction with the student interviews to verify the repeated themes were in fact present. In the following section, I argue that the school through its Influence, Course Type, Direction, Expectation, and Motivation structures the schooling experiences of LTELs in ways that allows some students to exit the EL program.

## School

The data I collected from the six participants indicates that the school as an institution shaped them and their school experiences. They became a certain type of student based on the habits they perceived to be valued by the school in order to gain access to coursework outside the EL trajectory. The students learned through their daily school interactions and observations what Jackson (1968) refers to as the "hidden curriculum" which he defines as the behaviors and habits that are not explicitly taught or

talked about by the school. These students learned how to "do school" through the structure of School Influence, Course Type, Direction, Expectation, and Motivation. By "doing school" I mean they learned how to become the student that was considered a good student that earned good grades and accessed the programs that were identified as necessary to become positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation. The students believed that earning grades of B or A were good grades. The school did not explicitly state this belief but the students had internalized this as the criteria to become a good student. The students viewed school not just as an institution they attended but also as a place that held the key to their ability to pursue a college education. By "doing school" in a way that was valued by the institution was essential to make their aspirations a reality. These students learned how to use the school structure at Puedes to their advantage because they were no longer marginalized to only EL or LTEL coursework.

**School Influence**

School Influence in this study means how the school affected the character, habits, and behaviors of the students. That is, the behaviors students exhibit or their attitudes toward schooling are influenced either positively or negatively because of how they experience school. In addition, the habits students develop in and toward school are influenced by their daily interactions with the personnel, programs, and "hidden curriculum". More specifically, the students learned to interpret the "hidden curriculum", which Jackson (1968) states is not explicitly acknowledged or taught, to become viewed as a student that should exit the EL program and demonstrate they could succeed in AP and IB coursework. The students learned that certain behaviors were expected to be

viewed as a "good student" such as: earning grades of A's and B's because they were necessary to be better positioned to enroll in a four-year university; they had to behave and engage in class as requested by the teacher such as taking notes a certain way, participating in group work; attend after-school tutoring opportunities even though they may not believe they were in need of the additional support; and engage in conversations with their teachers and counselors. The AP and IB coursework, as a structural feature of the school in terms of access to the program and their actual experiences in the AP/IB program, facilitated the students' abilities to successfully navigate school. Four of the six participants in this study were able to explain how School Influence shaped their schooling experiences. However, it is important to note that the goal for these participants was enrolling in a four-year university upon graduation not just becoming RFEP. Exiting the EL program was a by-product of the open enrollment opportunity offered at Puedes.

**Pedro**

Pedro is a senior who had completed 200 credits prior to his senior year, earned a GPA of 3.04, and although he was playing sports had to take on a part-time job to assist his family financially. For Pedro School Influence played a larger part in shaping him as a student than Parent Influence, which will be discussed in the next chapter. He states the following when I asked, "Who was the most influential person that affected you the most in school?" He responded, "My counselor because he always wanted me to do my best". I asked him to elaborate on what he meant with this comment and he stated:

Text 5.19

> My counselor doesn't let me give up on me. My parents don't always understand that when I say I want to give up I don't need to be told to think about it. I need to encouragement and my counselor gets it. He will

> talk me through my options and ask me to reconsider my urges to quit because IB is not easy.

The high school counselor was partly responsible for Pedro's academic performance because he influenced the decisions he made in terms of his course selection and remaining in the rigorous program. At Puedes High School a key component for students that enrolled in IB courses is having an IB counselor constantly check-in with students and ensure they succeed in coursework. Success according to the students, meant earning grades of B or better because the higher their GPA the better college acceptance they would have according to the advice they received from their counselors. Since these students were identified as IB students they gained not only access to the IB coordinator or lead counselor but also regular meetings during the school year that provided reminders of not only A-G requirements but reviewed the criteria that included the significance of GPA, SAT scores, IB and AP scores. This was another structural feature of the school and the student experience, for the students in this study. The counselors not only served as academic advisors but provided the emotional support a student like him needed to ensure he was not only earning the grades but was also taught how to persevere in a rigorous program. This is an example of how Pedro benefited from "navigational capital" (Yosso, 2005). Puedes High School had established a school structure that provided students the resources to navigate the school institution and benefit from the programs.

As our interview continued I asked Pedro, if he could provide any other examples of how the school structure influenced him. He stated:

Text 5.20

> I also still keep in touch with my elementary teacher who helped me like science. He was the one that made me want to learn more. He knew I was shy but he always wanted me to try to be better…he made me want to do better in the subject.

In elementary school he experienced a teacher that shaped him as a student. In this excerpt it is evident that Pedro established a positive connection with that teacher because of the effect he had on him and stimulated his want to learn new content. He valued School Influence because he believed the school personnel knew him and responded to his needs in order to succeed. He was able to effectively activate what Yosso (2005) refers to as "navigational capital". That is, he adapted his behaviors in school and accepted the direction he was given to show he wanted to do well in school. He learned how to maneuver the school structure based on school direction. In essence, he adapted to the expectations set by the school in order to obtain the grades necessary to eventually exit the EL trajectory and pursue a college education upon graduating from high school. In order to exit the EL program he had to earn a grade of C or better in English Language Arts for two years as that was the districts set criteria. As indicated by Cook-Sather (2002), obtaining student perspectives is essential to understanding how the school influenced their schooling experience. In this case, through Pedro's' voice I am able to understand how he perceived the school structure that directly influenced the decisions he made by remaining in a program he felt at times was difficult.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra is a senior who had completed 205 credits prior to her senior year, earned a GPA of 3.19, and was the oldest sibling who would be the first to attend college

in her family. She also identified School Influence as key to her academic success. However, she connected her pleasure for reading to assist her in becoming a better student. During her elementary school years she recalled what she identified as "speed reading" as a regular reading routine that required students to read a certain amount of words within a minute. It was not until she entered middle school that she experienced free choice reading. The middle school had established this reading opportunity as a school structure that allowed her to flourish as a reader. In her transition to middle school she stated she was able to choose books she was interested in without the "speed reading requirement". Krashen (2018) found that LTELs increase English language fluency when they experience free choice in pleasure reading that does not include accountability to the teacher. As Krashen found in his research, Alejandra was able to increase her English language acquisition through the act of reading for pleasure. In addition, she was able to use this behavior of reading to demonstrate a "good student" behavior valued by her teachers and the overall school structure. As I reviewed her student survey responses she indicated she enjoyed reading. I asked her, "Why do you enjoy reading?" She shared the following:

Text 5.21

> I like to read because I like to learn about different people not so much history but how different people experience things. Like how they became who they became. Reading has also made me understand English better.

The school directly influenced this practice because she considered the opportunity to read as a task of pleasure versus an assignment to complete. Prior to entering middle school she shared that she had not experienced free choice reading. The teacher always selected the passages and books read in class during her elementary school years. She

shared she visited the school library but those books were to be read at home not during the school day. Upon entering middle school, her teachers provided opportunities to "free read" when she was done with her assignments. The school also used a reading incentive program to recognize students that increased their reading level. Alejandra learned that as she read more her reading level increased because she eventually transitioned to longer novels that she had not been able to finish or initially understand.

By demonstrating she was motivated to increase her reading level she engaged in the literacy behaviors valued by her school and in turn provided her with positive recognition from teachers. This was evident when I asked her what her teachers said about her constant habit of reading and she stated, "They ask me what I'm reading and then we talk about the different people I learn about. Sometimes I am able to share information about people they had no clue about." Through her display of reading for pleasure she was able to activate her "navigational capital" that allowed her to maneuver the school structure (Yosso, 2005). Her ability to engage in conversations with her teachers centered on literature proved to be key to her academic success. Alejandra was influenced to engage in the habit of reading because her middle school had established the structure to encourage free reading which resulted in her ability to increase her fluency in English, exit the EL program, and succeed in the IB program.

**Manuel**

Manuel is a senior who has been active in sports all four-years in high school, completed 195 credits upon entering his senior year, and had earned a 3.0 GPA. In my analysis of interview and observational data for this student I identified School Influence

as a theme that contributed to shaping him as a student. Through his schooling experience he had come to understand what Jackson (1968) refers to as the "hidden curriculum". That is Manuel somehow "learned the norms and values of schooling that are implicitly taught and not talked about in school" (Jackson, 1968, p. 3-37). For example, I asked how he interacted with school he provided this statement, "…The classes I am in I have to work with other students. Like sometimes I don't have a choice who to work with but we do it because we want a good grade". He understood that even if he preferred working alone he had to comply with the learning or activity structure his teacher dictated was necessary for a specific assignment. In this example, despite the fact he did not enjoy collaborative work he demonstrates that he understands the unwritten norms his teachers expected. The school structure established how school should be done and he was able to activate his "navigational capital" in order to become viewed as a good student (Yosso, 2005). This means that he was able to use the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) the school as a structure valued that shaped the behaviors, attitudes, and habits they identified to do school well and become viewed as a good or successful student.

Cook-Sather states that a key component to the use of "student voice" is the unique perspective students provide on what happens in schools (2002). I pursued Manuel's perspective to further understand how he perceived the school structure in shaping him as a successful student. As I reviewed my notes from our discussions he added the following when I asked him to explain further how he saw the school influencing him:

Text 5.22

> I like have to do things a certain way. I learned that each teacher has a way they like things done. To get the grades I want I have to change it up for each teacher. *"Es porque aquí a si son las cosas"*[It's because here that's how things are].

Through this lens I was able to further understand how he had propelled himself to be viewed as a "good student who earned good grades". In speaking to the math teachers they referred to him as a hard worker who had taken all the math courses they had taught within the AP and IB coursework. His counselor also indicated he was a "bright" student because of the courses he had taken, credits completed, and four-year universities he chose to apply to. Through the schooling process he had learned that the key to earning the grades he wanted entailed performing according to each teacher's criteria. Although he did not name this ability as "navigational capital" (Yosso, 2005), by learning how the school structure functioned he was able to shift his own opinion of how to complete an assignment to the process valued by a particular teacher. It was through this adaptive behavior that he was able to demonstrate he could succeed in coursework outside the EL trajectory. His activation of navigational capital allowed him to be positioned to not only access the AP and IB coursework but also to be perceived as a college bound student (Yosso, 2005). For Manuel, the school structure that seemed to influence him the most was the interpretation of the "hidden curriculum" that resulted in his ability to succeed in the IB program (Jackson, 1968).

**Betty**

Out of the four students Betty provided me with the most profound statement in her interview that connected to School Influence. I asked her what it meant to be RFEP

and she stated, “It means I am like everyone else that my English is good enough. Like I am a real student like everyone else”. Through her schooling experience she had internalized what Oakes (2005) found in her research that placing students in certain tracks, in this case the EL track, not only influences how teachers perceive the students but also how students perceive themselves. In the process of our discussion she elaborated:

Text 5.23

> Being an English Learner means you can’t have hard classes like honors. In middle school I couldn’t have harder classes. My mom would go to meetings and would tell me I had to do what the teachers asked me to do if I was going to get reclassified. I understood that I had to show I was good in English so I could get real classes. If I don’t I will stay in the EL classes.

Her mother attended parent meetings the school held and understood that her daughter needed to be Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP). As part of those parent meetings she understood that a key piece to reclassification was to obtain passing grades in English. The school structure, in this case I mean how EL students are assigned to a EL track, influenced how Betty perceived the EL label. She viewed the label as a barrier during her middle school experience because she was not able to enroll in more difficult coursework. Mitra (2006) states that a component of “student voice” is student interpretation of school experiences. In this example, I was able to further understand her description of tracking and how being placed in different classes affected how she perceived herself as an incomplete student (Oakes, 2005).

Although Betty did not say the school or her teachers stated she was not “a real student or good enough” she had somehow developed this perception of herself through

her coursework assignment. The school through the established course tracking placed EL students who were identified as EL or LTELs in Sheltered or Accelerated Academic Language (AALD) courses. The students perceived these courses as remedial because only certain students were placed in these classes. Students learned that there were Sheltered, Intervention, Regular, and Honors coursework that not all students had access to in middle school. The opportunity to move out of the Sheltered or AALD coursework required teacher recommendation. However, she possessed what Yosso (2005) calls "aspirational, navigational, and resistance capital". By her mother attending parent meetings she was able to access information on how to navigate the school structure and exit the EL program. She aspired to access what the school had identified as harder classes. Her resistance to remain labeled as an English Learner resulted in her ability to become a reclassified, exit the EL program, and position her to become college bound. During her schooling trajectory Betty understood that the school structure positioned certain students into coursework based on the EL label, which influenced how she performed as a student. She understood that the school structured EL learning experiences that would not prepare them for college which was what drove her "resistance capital" to accept coursework in high school that would not position her to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation (Yosso, 2005). She opposed the inequalities she perceived the school structure created through tracking and was determined to challenge the status quo by demonstrating her ability to succeed in courses she had not experienced prior to enrolling at Puedes.

**Course Type**

My analysis of the interview data showed that Course Type was another part of the school structure that shaped my focal students' schooling experiences. I use Course Type to refer to the classes the students were placed in such as "low, regular, or Honors" as well as "AP and IB" courses. In some instances the courses the participants were assigned prior to entering high school created a social hierarchy within the school structure (Oakes, 2005). That is, based on their perceived linguistic ability students were placed in coursework that did not always match their academic performance. This aligns to Valdés' (2001) research in that students who were identified as EL are not always placed in the coursework that aligns to their fluency level in English but rather schools instead place students based on the EL label not necessarily their academic ability. The students had to demonstrate based on teacher expectations and performance that they were proficient in English if they were to earn the grades necessary to exit the EL trajectory. In order to demonstrate proficiency identified students had to earn a grade of C or better for two years, meet state testing criteria, and score Early Advanced or Advanced on the CELDT if they were to become reclassified in Fender Unified School District.

In this section, I will show that the students understood how Course Type was significant in their schooling experience. Although they did not name "tracking" per se (Oakes, 2005), they provided an explanation as to why they wanted to be enrolled in "harder classes or Honors" (Alejandra, 2018; Rocio, 2018). They were aware that they needed to access difficult coursework to pursue their future goals, which was attending a four-year university upon graduation. Recall that the students attending Puedes High

School could enter AP or IB courses as long as they expressed interest because that was part of the open enrollment structure that had been put in place during the state mandated Turnaround (as discussed in Chapter 4). The students understood that the Course Type they took in high school would impact their opportunity to "go to college" (Manuel, 2018).

**Pedro**

Pedro was influenced and motivated by the school structure of open enrollment and as a result he expressed the following about the courses he was enrolled in: "Junior year I was in IB and I was stressed wondering if I was smart enough or meant for the classes... I felt like I didn't belong in the IB classes". I asked why he felt that way and he stated:

Text 5.24

> Like everyone that goes into IB and AP is smart. The classes are challenging and in middle school I never took Honors so I felt like I had to catch up to their level. I didn't know some of the stuff the other kids knew because I didn't have harder classes before I came here.

Prior to entering Puedes High School Pedro had been enrolled in Accelerated Acquisition of English Development (AALD), which consists of courses for students identified as LTELs are placed in as an intervention. The goal of these classes is to increase student proficiency so that they may exit the EL program. However, to exit ELD coursework the student must earn a score of early advanced or advanced on the annual CELDT summative assessment. Pedro did not consider himself as a student that was "smart enough" for IB coursework because he had experienced tracking that placed him in Sheltered and ELD coursework until his enrollment at Puedes High School (Oakes,

2005). In addition, the school structure based on his experienced reality (Oldfather, 1995) had positioned certain students within the school hierarchy through coursework to access certain habits of learning (Bourdieu, 1986).

Bourdieu (1986) defines capital as,

> accumulated labor (in its materialized forms or its "incorporated," embodied form: which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive basis by agent or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita,* a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insita,* the principle underlying the immanent regularizes of the social world. It is what makes the games of society- not least, the economic game- something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle" (p. 242).

In this research I reference the "games of society" to explain the school structure and how the structure has permanent implications for students that enter different coursework (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

Bourdieu identifies three forms of cultural capital that are the embodied, institutionalized, and objective. I reference the embodied form of cultural capital that refers to the subconscious behaviors or habits one displays as a result of the class one is born into (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). The school structure promotes this concept of the embodied state of cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu (1986) in that within the school structure students that had obtained access to Honors coursework in middle school were given the opportunity to experience a learning environment that stressed preparation for AP and IB coursework. In those courses teachers engaged students in higher order thinking that involved reading, writing, listening, and speaking that used the academic language to obtain scores on the PSAT that met or exceeded the national average. This

instructional focus was not in place in EL coursework therefore ensuring the social hierarchy was intact.

I also connect Bourdieu's (1986) institutionalized capital in my analysis. According to Bourdieu (1986), "institutionalized state refers to the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications as one way of neutralizing some of the properties it derives form the fact, being embodied, it has some biological limits as its bearer" (p. 247). As indicated by Bourdieu (1986) not all institutionalized form of capital have the same cultural value or signal the same capital. For example, although all students may graduate from high school not all diplomas carry the same exchange value. The students in this study learned that entering the IB program not only positioned them as more likely to enter a four-year university but the fact they became labeled as an IB student provided them an increased likeliness to become accepted to a four-year university. Although all students that graduated from high school earned a high school diploma the coursework the English Only versus the English Learner student transcript possessed did not have the same value in order to enter a four-year university. Students labeled as an EL were tracked to enroll in a junior college or vocational school because of the coursework they accessed. Therefore, the act of going to school to obtain an education in high school did not yield the same cultural capital through the institution because not all students despite graduating from high school were provided the same access to habits and skills necessary to prepare for college. It was clear Pedro understood the significance of coursework and all though he did not name capital he understood that different coursework positioned students toward different paths toward their future.

I asked Pedro how he coped with his perception of himself not being smart enough for IB and AP courses. He stated: "If I had a C I felt I failed and would just try harder". Although neither his teacher's nor his counselor stated a grade of C would result in exiting the IB or AP coursework he believed that a grade of C was not worthy despite the fact it was a weighted class. I asked, " What do you do to improve your grades?" He responded:

Text: 5.25

> Well I will ask some of my smarter friends like how did they do to compare our grades. I will also try and study with some of my friends...well not my friends but kids I have in the same classes they are like my friends. When I get frustrated and feel like giving up I will either go to my counselor or the IB counselor for like moral support. It's scary because the classes are really hard but they said if I could do good in those classes I will do well in college.

Pedro explained that enrolling in difficult coursework was stressful but understood that by taking these courses he positioned himself to attend college. The feeling of not belonging strengthened his pursuit to become college bound. He resisted remaining in coursework that would not assist him in his goal to pursue enrolling in a four-year university upon graduating from high school. For this student using his resistance capital, which Yosso (2005) defines as "the knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior to challenge inequalities" (p. 89), he continued to enroll in AP or IB courses and was determined to demonstrate he was "smart enough". He was able maneuver through the school structure of tracking and understood that enrolling in coursework outside the EL program was necessary to ensure he was prepared to go to college. Despite the fact he questioned his own level of intelligence he used his determination to oppose the thought of dropping AP or IB courses and persevere.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra understood early on in school that different students were assigned different courses. For example, when asked about her schooling experience as an EL student she responded, "I didn't know I was a English Learner. I just knew I had some different classes but no one told me why". I asked her what she meant and she stated:

Text 5.26

> In middle school we had different classes. Some kids were in Sheltered, others Regular, and others Honors. I was in Sheltered classes and I didn't understand like why. I just knew I took some test that other kids didn't. I wanted to be in Honors and I couldn't get into those classes.

As indicated by Giroux (1986), it is through this lived experience that I was able to understand how Alejandra viewed the school structure and her lived reality as I captured her student voice. Even though she did not understand why she had different classes she learned she was not like everyone else. Through her lived experience of being in different courses and taking different tests she viewed herself as different but didn't understand why. Despite the fact she was in assigned courses she developed what Giroux (1986) states results of the lived experience, which shapes attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about school. That is, she developed a perception of herself as a student that was not worthy of Honors courses. Tracking was applied at her middle school and through her own observations she knew she wanted to be in "harder courses" (Oakes, 2005). Upon entering high school she pursued what she considered difficult coursework. She describes her course selection experience when I asked her, "How was high school different than middle school?" She stated:

Text 5.27

> …being in harder classes makes me work harder. I think that is what really pushed me to be ready for college, taking AP and IB classes. When I got to high school I was able to choose the classes I wanted. No one said I couldn't take a class. I could choose and they gave me the hard classes I wanted.

In high school she was able to activate her navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). According to Yosso, "navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions not created for communities of color, acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but also connects social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools" (2005, p. 80). Prior to entering high school Alejandra did not have a choice in her coursework or understood how a student could gain access to classes. However, upon entering high school she took advantage of the open enrollment policy within the school structure to steer toward coursework that positioned her to become college bound. By attending information sessions prior to and once she entered high school she used that knowledge to ensure she took the "harder classes". She had come to understand that at the middle school level certain students gained access to certain courses but did not understand the criteria for entry, Puedes High School changed her opportunities significantly. She did not state the concept of "educación" per se but based on our interview she believed that by demonstrating she valued school, was respectful, earned good grades, and completed all assignments she was requested to do she could succeed in AP and IB coursework which would full fill her personal responsibility to her family to obtain a college education (Valenzuela, 1999).

**Manuel**

Manuel also identified Course Type as a significant component to his academic success. When I asked if he controlled his learning he responded, "I also pick the classes I want to take like AP instead of regular classes". I asked him what was the difference and he stated:

Text 5.28

> In AP and IB classes you have kids that are serious about their future. It's like we have the same goal to go to college and not just graduate from high school. In regular classes you have to deal with kids that are not always serious about learning.

This comment correlates to what Cook-Sather (2006) states is key in capturing student voice in order to understand the students' unique perspective of what happens in the school and classroom communities. Manuel understood that Course Type corresponds to the type of students that are in the different courses. Additionally, it becomes evident that in his perception AP and IB courses were likely to prepare him for college rather than "regular" classes.

Although Manuel states he controls his learning he was aware that certain courses such as AP and IB would better prepare him for college. For example, when I asked him what had he done to prepare for college he stated:

Text 5.29

> Well I took AP and IB classes because I want to go to college. When the counselors came to my middle school they explained that these classes were harder and if we took them we were supposed to be able to succeed in college. My counselor recommends what classes I should take when and I check with him to decide if it's the right class for me.

Through the school structure established by Puedes, which was providing incoming middle school students information about the IB program provided by the high school

counselors, they were given for the first time Course Type options. Additionally, the students were given initial access to the counselors to understand that all students could enter the IB program as long as they were interested. Manuel was able activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital in order to access certain Course Type he viewed as necessary for his college journey. He used the school structure inclusive of his counselor to ensure he took the correct courses to prepare for college. This is significant because although the school had established a structure for IB students to obtain additional support and ensure they were passing their coursework not all students took advantage of the resource or advice provided to navigate their high school years.

Manuel viewed Course Type as key to excel in school and become positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation. He understood that Course Type provided him social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) by interacting with certain students within the school structure that were also college bound. According to Bourdieu, "the social capital an individual possesses is determined by the size of the network and the connections acquired within the network to increase individuals profits" (1986, p. 249). Since students in the IB program were essentially grouped or tracked into similar courses Manuel increased the number of classmates he built relationships with that were within this grouping. This was done because they were often working in collaborative groups, attended afterschool tutorials, or study sessions the students created to support their success within the IB program which was encouraged by the school structure.

Additionally, Manuel learned to use his navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to ensure he accomplished his goal. That is, he took the courses the school perceived as

necessary to be considered college bound. He used his understanding of "harder coursework" to assist him in navigating school and ensure that he took the "right" classes such as AP, IB, and Honors coursework to be considered college bound. Through his interaction with school he deciphered that by taking certain courses students could also obtain additional guidance from the school if they were part of the IB program that promoted students to pursue a four-year university upon graduation. He learned that by navigating the school structure and accessing the AP, IB, and Honors coursework he could obtain assistance to ensure he became a college bound student.

**Gloria**

According to Mitra (2006), interview data are to be used as evidence for student perspective in capturing student voice. As I analyzed the interview with Gloria, Course Type was also a significant theme that explained her schooling experience perspective. Although she did not name tracking (Oakes, 2005), she described how tracking was implemented within the school structure at her middle school and her early understanding that in order to exit the "low and average courses" she needed to adapt and do things as expected by her teachers. As Giroux (1986) states student voice is to be used to explain student beliefs and feelings. This is important because Gloria provides significant details on how the school structure influenced her beliefs and feelings when enrolled in certain Course Type. The following is an excerpt where she provided a profound statement about her middle school educational experience:

Text 5.30

| | |
|---|---|
| Researcher: | Can you describe how you experienced middle school? |
| Gloria: | Well like when I first went to middle school I didn't have Honors classes. I think it was like in 8th grade when I got to Honors |

| | |
|---|---|
| | classes. Like we knew if we were in low, average, or honors classes. But in middle school I learned about like why I should take notes a certain way and how to study better so that I could get higher grades like so the work I did was what the teachers wanted. |
| Researcher: | Take notes a certain way and study better? |
| Gloria: | Well take notes how the teachers liked them and study what they said was going to be on a test. Like even if I thought something else was important I only wrote and studied what the teachers talked about because that was what was on the test. |

According to Gloria, during her middle school experience in Sheltered coursework students were exposed to a simplified form of Cornell Notes as she described the note-taking format. Walter Puak (1940) created Cornell Notes; in the format the students create a column for key concepts or questions, the larger part is where students take notes, and at the end provide a summary to reference the notes they take. She was not in AVID courses but the middle school had promoted school wide note-taking regardless of whether or not a student was in the program. She was not explicitly taught the process but rather learned to copy the notes provided by her teacher. Gloria explains her ability to connect the expectations of teachers to the behaviors she needed to demonstrate in order to access Honors coursework and exit the EL trajectory. She was also able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as "navigational capital", by exhibiting the teacher valued attitudes and habits that comprised of a good student in order to access Honors coursework, despite her disagreement with the expectations as she stated, "Even if I thought something else was important I only wrote down what the teacher said". That is, she learned to act like a student that was compliant and completed tasks as requested by the teacher.

As Gloria entered high school she understood the significance of accessing AP and IB classes. She states stated:

> Text 5.31
>
> …In middle school I figured out I needed higher classes. When I got to high school before I started the counselors came to speak to us about IB and I knew I wanted the diploma. So I have taken AP and IB classes to get ready for college. I go to AP Readiness at UCR once a month since sophomore year. I also talk to my counselor to make sure that the classes I take meet the requirements to go to a four-year college.

She took the information shared with her by the school in terms of the IB program and was determined to take those courses. She was focused on her pursuit of a college education and took advantage of the resources available to succeed in AP and IB courses. She was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as "navigational capital" to ensure that the classes she took met the A-G requirements. She met with her counselor to ensure she enrolled in appropriate coursework that would ensure she would be college bound upon graduation. Although the school structure at Puedes created opportunities for students to access their counselors and attend AP readiness, it was up to the student to follow-up with additional appointments outside the monthly check-in with the IB coordinator as well as attend AP readiness opportunities. For Gloria, understanding how the school structure functioned was key in order to ensure she enrolled in the correct coursework.

**Rocio**

In Rocio's data I also found evidence that she understood the impact Course Type had on her educational trajectory. Her narrative provides context to elements Giroux (1986) identifies as essential to explain through the use of "student voice" how she

experienced school and the impact Course Type had on how she "felt and perceived" herself as a student. Giroux (1986) states as you capture students voice you use their explanations to understand how students make sense of their lives in school and develop their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about themselves within the school structure. Rocio alluded to tracking and the fact that not every student was on the same track (Oakes, 2005). She made the following comment when I asked her how she interacted with her peers: "…well because I'm in sports I still talk to people that are in regular classes because mine are mostly IB or AP". I then asked her what she meant when she said regular classes and she stated:

Text 5.32

> Most of the kids in IB and AP are in the same classes. Not like same periods but we take the harder classes. Regular classes are students that can't make it in IB and AP or don't want to do the hard work because they aren't easy A's. If you are in IB and AP you have a better chance of getting into a better college.

Although Rocio does not explicitly say "IB" or "AP", she had identified those other courses as "regular" which provided evidence of her understanding that social stratification existed within the school structure. Callahan (2005) found that despite language fluency teacher expectation despite the course a student was enrolled influenced student performance. The school structure through the open enrollment policy to enroll in AP and IB coursework at Puedes provided all students that participated in the program with high expectations as the goal was to encourage the pursuit of a college education. However, Rocio believed prior to entering high school that students were placed in different courses based on their ability to succeed in different courses and desire to not

work hard. She had developed this perception based her own experience of being tracked to the EL trajectory in middle school.

Rocio reiterated her understanding of how social hierarchy in schools work when I asked about her middle school educational experience. She stated, "It was okay. I wasn't in advanced classes but I always did well…" It is evident that she understood early on that she was not in the course type she needed in order to pursue her goal of going to college prior to entering Puedes High School. When I asked her what she had done to prepare for college she responded, "Taking the IB and AP classes have helped me because I know college will be hard but I think I'm like ready for college classes. I also attended the AP Readiness classes at UCR." Again through this response it became evident she understood the concept of tracking and how Course Type could affect her future (Oakes, 2005). She was able to use her navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to understand and access the AP and IB courses as well as attend AP readiness opportunities. This means she was able to use her knowledge about what it meant to be in certain types of courses to ensure she positioned herself in coursework that prepared her for college. Her ability to activate her navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) was evident in her attendance of AP readiness courses that was monitored closely by her AP and IB teachers as well as her counselor. Rocio demonstrated through her actions that she was serious about pursuing a college education. Although she was eager to enter advanced coursework she had to learn how to navigate the school structure that required her to interact with her peers, teachers, and counselors that had not been part of her school

experience prior to entering high school. She adapted to the school structure based on what she perceived was necessary to become college bound upon graduation.

**School Direction**

I also found that School Direction was a theme among five of the six participants. I use School Direction to mean how the school institution directed the schooling experiences of the former LTELs. By this I mean how the school structure served as a guide to explicitly and implicitly form them as students through the programs and resources that varied from elementary, middle, and high school. This concept also explains how comments or behaviors by school representatives (teachers, counselors, support staff, or administration) shaped the learning experiences of the former LTEL students.

**Pedro**

Pedro did not view School Direction in a positive manner. Oldfather (1995) found that to explain how students perceive their own abilities you should pursue student voice as a process to explain their own perceptions and experiences as learners. According to Oldfather (1995), as students describe their perception they provide you the opportunity to make sense of how they perceive their abilities. Through this portion of the interview I was able to understand how a single traumatic schooling experience could impact a student long-term and understand why he perceived School Direction in a negative manner as well as question his academic abilities. I asked him how he interacted with school and he stated:

Text 5.33

> Teachers they all tend to scare me since elementary because in elementary I asked my teacher a question and she got mad and ever since then I am scared to ask a question because I don't want to get yelled at.

I then asked him how did this interaction affect the amount of direction he received from the school in terms of classes and support. He responded:

Text 5.34

> I feel like if I ask questions I'm showing I am not smart. So I keep to myself. I will talk to counselors but not for advice about personal problems but about the classes I should take. I turn to my close friends for help but only a few of them. I don't always feel like I can just talk to a teacher. I want to show them I can go to college. I will go to college.

The negative interaction with a teacher early in his schooling trajectory created doubt in his ability to do well in school, despite the fact he was RFEP and taking AP as well as IB courses. This single negative school experience motivated him to succeed academically; he resisted pursuing resources within the school structure such as guidance from teachers and counselors. He used what Yosso (2005) identifies as resistance capital to direct himself toward a college bound future.

As our interview continued Pedro provided additional insights that helped me understand how he viewed his school experience and why he did not utilize the school resources such as peers, counselors, teachers, or tutorial opportunities. He shared the following:

Text 5.35

> One of my teachers in elementary did show me how cool science was but I was always afraid to ask questions. I didn't want to get yelled at and I didn't want them to think I didn't understand. I think there were some teachers that tried to like help me but I was too scared so I kept to myself. Like I only spoke when necessary. I've been kind of withdrawn and avoid contact with the adults in school. I know I have to get over it but I feel like I just need to do what I need to do and get good grades to go to college.

Pedro was not able to capitalize on navigational or social capital despite the fact he was enrolled in AP and IB courses (Yosso, 2005). That is, when it came time to apply for college he did not seek adult assistance but completed the task on his own. He had identified the colleges he was interested in applying to and began the application process independently instead of attending the application workshops provided by the IB coordinator and counselors to assist him in the navigating the process. Although he was academically successful School Direction did not prove to be of assistance for him to view himself as a success. He turned to his resistance to the school structure as the fuel to pursue a college education.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra identified how she used what I identify as School Direction as a way to obtain the grades she necessary to pursue her goal of going to college. That is, she learned how to use the resources within the school structure such as peers, teachers, counselors, and tutorials to assist in passing her classes with a grade of B or better. Her perception of how she experienced school aligns to what Giroux (1986) states is essential to explain how she "lived, felt, believed, and thought" she needed to interact with the school structure. The following is her response when I asked her how she interacted with school staff and navigated school:

Text 5.36

| | |
|---|---|
| Alejandra: | um.. I do talk to my teachers just when I know I'm failing I really don't have a deep conversation with them. I talk to them but it's not always easy but I do it because it can be awkward. |
| Researcher: | Like when you know you're failing? |

Alejandra: …like when I know I didn't pass something I talk to them when I have concerns that's the only time I talk to them. I usually come to my counselor or go to my teacher. I ask how can I do better or get my grade up but that's about it.

Researcher: A teacher or any teacher?

Alejandra: My specific teacher. Like the class I didn't do well in.

Researcher: So do you feel comfortable having a conversation with a teacher?

Alejandra: …yeah I do. At times …I sometimes don't want to because it's like I said awkward. I feel like they are judging me based on the questions or things I ask. I'm afraid they are going to think I'm not smart enough.

Alejandra understood that in order to improve her academic performance she required School Direction. She used what Yosso (2005) calls "navigational capital" in order to access her teachers and counselors so that she could succeed academically. She understood that the school structure required School Direction in order to demonstrate she valued their feedback. Additionally, she understood the behaviors she needed to exhibit in order to demonstrate she was what the teacher considered a student that was engaged. Through these actions she was able to access the learning experiences that allowed her to exit the EL program and succeed in AP and IB coursework.

Despite feeling "awkward" Alejandra used School Direction in a way that allowed her to develop relationships with her teachers and counselor to demonstrate she was interested in their input to succeed in school. That is, she went to them for direction in order to become positioned as a student that was viewed as successful and college bound because those interactions directly influenced the grades she earned. Alejandra learned how to use the interactions with the school to assist her in navigating the institution in order to access the courses she needed to become college bound.

**Betty**

Betty viewed School Direction as a vehicle to assist her in navigating high school and the program options available at Puedes. Oldfather (1995) states that students are the experts of their own perceptions and experiences as learners. In addition, Oldfather (1995) stresses that student voice allows one to understand a student's motivation to learn. In this portion of the interview I was able to understand Betty's motivation to not just learn but also how she used the school structure to pursue coursework that would prepare her for college. For example, in the interview I asked her to describe a key moment that influenced her schooling experience and she responded:

Text 5.37

> Well in 8th grade the counselors from Puedes came to our school to talk about the IB and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs. I knew I wanted to go to college but I didn't know like what classes or what I needed to do. I think meeting my counselor first helped because then I could go and ask her questions.

I asked her what type of questions she asked the counselor and how did she access the counselor at Puedes. She stated:

Text 5.38

> When the counselors came to my middle school they said we could email them and ask questions. So I did that because I wasn't sure like what was what. Before at middle school I didn't really have a choice for classes like honors. But in high school it was different I could take what I wanted and that was different. It was weird because the counselors were different in high school like they focus on getting us to figure out our future. I knew I wanted to go to college I just needed to know like how.

Betty was able to connect with her counselor prior to entering high school. Although all students attended the presentation by the Puedes High School counselors she had the courage to reach out to her counselor and develop a relationship with her counselor that

would serve as key her becoming successful. In this instance she demonstrates what Yosso (2005) calls navigational capital because she was able to "maneuver through the school institution" (p. 80). Prior to entering Puedes she was not able to select her coursework or even considered pursuing her counselor as a resource to obtain coursework outside the EL trajectory. Once she entered high school she understood Puedes had a structure she needed to follow in order to obtain the necessary support to understand how to become college bound. School Direction proved pivotal for her as she reflected on how she had prepared for college she stated:

Text 5.39

> Well like I said when the counselors came to my middle school they talked to us about the programs at Puedes so I knew I wanted to take hard classes. So I think my AP and IB classes have helped me. I want to go maybe into nursing so I talk to my counselor so that I take the right classes. I use the list they gave us to make sure I am taking the right classes.

As she entered high school she activated School Direction to ensure she could reach her goal of becoming a nurse by communicating regularly with her counselor in person or via email. She not only spoke to her counselor but also utilized documents such as a "list", which were the college entrance course requirements; to monitor the course type she took and turned to School Direction to ensure she was interpreting the "list" accurately. She understood that School Direction was a necessity for her to be positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation. Betty developed the ability to use aspirational and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to shape her schooling experiences that enabled her to exit the EL trajectory, become RFEP, and pursue a college education. Her aspiration to not only become a nurse but fulfill her families dreams of having a child pursue a college

education served instrumental in how she navigated high school to ensure she made their dream a reality.

**Gloria**

In the analysis of my interview data I noticed Gloria's responses aligned to the theme of what I call School Direction. According to Giroux (1986), it is important when capturing student voice to form dialogue around which students make sense of their lives and school to understand their reality. I use her narrative to explain her schooling experience and understand the influence of School Direction that allowed her to access components of the school structure to become college bound. For her, the guidance she obtained from the school was key to obtain what she considered to be good grades and created opportunities for her to interact with her teachers and her counselor necessary to succeed in school. She reiterates this understanding when I asked how she interacted with school, teachers, counselors, and peers as she responded, "Well I am quiet but I know that to get good grades I have to talk to my teachers and counselor so I do when I have to." I asked her what she meant by her final comment and she stated:

Text 5.40

> I can't be shy toward teachers. I have to talk to them, ask questions, and if I don't' understand something I need to ask. The teachers like it when you ask questions or ask to meet with them after class or after school. Like if they say they are offering a study session before or after school you need to show up because even though they say that doesn't affect your grade it does because they see you different. You talk to your teachers to get good grades and talk to your counselor to make sure you take the right classes. For me that is important because I want to go to college.

She learned through the school structure that in order to obtain the classes and grades she sought she needed to engage in regular school interactions with teachers and counselors

to demonstrate she was what she perceived to be a "good student" deserving of "good grades". She identified grades of a B or an A as good grades that according to her good students earned. She activated what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital because she learned to "maneuver the spaces within the school setting" upon entering Puedes (p. 80). That is, she learned to use the school resources such as counselors, teachers, and tutorials to access coursework that would allow her to achieve her goal of going to college.

Another instance where Gloria provided context to how she believed she needed to behave in school in order to be perceived as a good student was when she reflected on her middle school educational experience. I asked her, "What did you do to become a good student?" She stated:

> Text 5.41
>
> But in middle school I learned about like why I should take notes a certain way and how to study better so that I could get higher grades like so the work I did was what the teachers wanted.

I asked her what she meant by doing the work the way teachers wanted and she responded:

> Text 5.42
>
> Like teachers want things done a certain way. If they say something is important you need to know that because it will be on a test. You can't say I don't agree because if you do that means you are challenging them. My mom says you do what the teacher asks.

She understood how to use a concept such as taking notes to assist in her studies and completing the work as expected by the teacher. She was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital. That is, she learned how to maneuver through

the school structure by demonstrating the style of work her teachers valued that resulted in obtaining the grades that would eventually lead to her ability to become RFEP.

**Rocio**

School Direction was an early influence for Rocio's road to college. Oldfather (1995) states that through student voice one can capture how students become deeply engaged in learning. That is, Oldfather also indicates that as one is capturing student voice the focus is to use their reflections to understand how they make sense of their abilities that can in turn make a difference for others (1995). In the following reflections, I was able to describe how according to Rocio she became "engaged in learning" based on her schooling experiences. She reflected on how she interacted with school when she stated, "well I always try my best and if I don't understand something I ask ... I only see my counselor for like picking my classes but mostly the IB counselor". I asked her to elaborate further on how she interacted with teachers and counselors. She stated:

Text 5.43

> Well if I don't understand something in class I ask the teacher after or before class. I also go to any tutoring or workshops they offer because sometimes when you go to those classes you get more information than when you are in the regular class. I think it's because it's less of us and the more serious students that want better grades. I talk to my counselor but only to make sure I take the classes I need to go to college. I go to the IB counselor more because he not only tells you what you need to do but he seems to care what you think and what your goals are. I don't know but it's like the direction he gives me is not just do this but why I should do it.

She had learned that to demonstrate her understanding of content or how to correct her mistakes she needed direction from her teachers. She also understood that in order to take the courses that would prepare her for college she had to seek direction from her counselor.

Rocio had internalized that a key element to demonstrate her understanding or want to learn was to approach her teachers, regardless of her comfort level. Additionally, she learned that she needed to seek her high school counselor's advice regularly to demonstrate she was a serious student that was in pursuit of going to college upon graduation. According to her, she believed that students who pursued advice from counselors and teachers were viewed as good students. She was able to use what Yosso (2005) calls navigational capital because she learned how to navigate the school structure at Puedes. Although all students had access to the same school structure not all students took advantage of the resources that provided School Direction to support students in becoming college bound. Rocio learned that the by interacting with the school resources such as teachers and counselors she could ensure she accessed the coursework to position her as a college bound student.

**School Expectations**

The theme of School Expectations surfaced in the analysis of the interviews held with all six of the participants. In this research School Expectations refers to what the students interpreted the school expected from them as students. These expectations ranged from how to behave in class and adapt to the school routines in order to exit the EL trajectory and access coursework that was not within the EL trajectory. These School Expectations were inclusive of what Jackson (1968) refers to as the "hidden curriculum that are the norms and values implicitly taught in school that are not necessarily talked about" (p. 3-37). The students through their school interactions and the school structure developed their own perception of the makeup of a good student that included the habits

as students, how they engaged in school, and the grades perceived as necessary to demonstrate they were indeed good students.

**Pedro**

Pedro stated that in order to advance in coursework he needed to do well. I asked Pedro if he always earned good grades and he responded, "I always earned good grades. After freshman year I figured out what I needed to do and my GPA was always above a 3.0". I asked, "What do you mean by figure out what you needed to do?" He answered:

Text 5.44

> You know you` want a certain GPA. I learned how to calculate my grades and that AP and IB grades were weighed differently. I understood that I needed to get my work done, turned in, and make it the way the teacher said they wanted. Like you study what they spend time on and you learn how to use the tutorials. If you go to tutorials they not only help you but you get extra credit that helps your grade. It takes time but I do it because it's what I have to do to make sure I don't go below a 3.0.

This statement is powerful because we gain the context to understand what Oldfather (1995) states is essential to understand a student's motivation for learning. That, is student voice allows one to further explain how a student becomes deeply engaged in learning as they reflect on themselves as students (Oldfather, 1995). For Pedro understanding the grades he needed were part of the School Expectation for him to see himself as a successful student and fuel his motivation for learning.

As I analyzed Pedro's interview further it was evident he had learned how to do what was valued by his teachers through his ability to decipher the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) in order to obtain the grades and access to the coursework that was promoted for college bound students. Navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) also became an

asset for him. That is, he learned how to maneuver within the school institution (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) by utilizing his ability to interpret the behaviors the school valued to access the AP and IB coursework. Consequently, he was now a senior positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation.

**Alejandra**

In Alejandra's interview she provides what Giroux (1986) states is necessary to understand a students' lived experiences in school to understand how she felt, thought and viewed herself as a student as well as how School Expectations influenced her schooling trajectory. His research found that as students explain how they develop their schooling perception one can make sense of how they experienced school (Giroux, 1986). Alejandra's reflections in this interview are essential to understand how her self-perception evolved from viewing herself as a marginalized LTEL prior to entering high school to a college bound senior through the influence of school structure. For example, as she reflected on a key moment that influenced her schooling trajectory she stated, "… I had to get my work done and do what the teachers expected of me so I did". She figured out in middle school that she had to display the student behaviors valued by the teacher if she was to obtain the grades she wanted. That meant completing her assignments to earn what she considered passing grades which were a B or an A. Alejandra not only did the work expected in class but also changed her behaviors to shape herself as what she described was a good student as she stated, "I knew teachers wanted good students that did their work so that is what I did". I then asked her what was a good student and she responded:

Text 5.45

> You do what the teacher asks. Like you are quiet if they say you need to be. You are helpful but not too much because not all teachers like that. You write neatly and show you are organized in your work. Like you do your job well and quietly. You turn in all your work and your never late with anything.

However, although Alejandra demonstrated the behaviors of what she described were that of a "good student" during her middle school years, it was evident she was not viewed as a proficient student in English because she did not exit the EL program until she entered high school. According to the school district criteria for reclassification, she did not earn a grade of C or better for two consecutive years in English Language Arts in middle school. Her ability to activate what Yosso (2005) calls "navigational capital" did not yield results for her until she entered Puedes High School. That is, she could not maneuver through the middle school structure to gain access outside of the EL trajectory. Once she entered Puedes she learned how to navigate and gain access to AP and IB coursework and was no longer marginalized to the EL program. Even though she demonstrated what she believed were good student behaviors, it was not until high school that Alejandra was able to use the school structure to access the necessary coursework that would allow her to pursue her dream of going to college.

**Manuel**

Manuel identified School Expectation in relation to how he perceived himself as an English Learner. This is a significant perspective because as indicated by Cook-Sather (2002) it is through this lens that one can truly capture student voice to make visible student difficulties. It is through this process of reflection that one can obtain a student's unique perspective to understand their schooling experience as they speak on their own

behalf (Cook-Sather, 2006). Manuel developed an internal awareness that he had a difficulty in his use of English and that it needed to be used in a certain way when speaking and writing. As he reflected on his schooling experience as an English Learner he stated:

Text 5.46

> …like in elementary they teach you rules but you don't understand them well like when to use certain spellings or how to say something. I understood it in middle school…

He recalled learning rules for spelling but did not understand how to apply the rules until he entered middle school. It is important to acknowledge that he had enrolled in a California public school within Fender Unified School District since Kindergarten. He recalled being told to speak or restate his statements in elementary school but did not understand why his grammatical structure was incorrect. He was aware of the expectation to use English in a certain manner but was unable to apply this expectation until he entered middle school.

Once Manuel understood how to use the rules in English he was able to demonstrate his fluency in English, a requirement to exit the EL program. As he reflected on his evolution as a fluent English speaker he stated:

Text 5.47

> I was able to understand how to use English, which became important in high school. In AP and IB classes you are expected to not only write a lot but to write well. To use words that you don't use in regular classes so that you show you are not just smart but college material.

He demonstrated his ability to utilize what Yosso (2005) calls "navigational capital" that yielded a positive impact to his schooling trajectory. He learned how to "maneuver within the school structure" by applying the rules of how to use English to obtaining the

opportunity to access coursework that was not within the EL trajectory upon entering high school (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). In addition, his awareness of how to use English strengthened his ability to demonstrate to his teachers that he was prepared to exit the EL program and become RFEP. A final result of his ability to navigate the school structure and demonstrate his fluency in English was how he applied this knowledge in his AP and IB coursework that allowed him to become prepared for college.

**Betty**

Betty understood School Expectation as a way of being a student. This way of being a student is significant to understand what Cook-Sather (2006) states is important in the process of capturing "student voice" that elucidates the unique perspective of what happens in classroom and school setting. Cook-Sather (2006) found that when a student critiques their school experience they provide context to what they perceived as their struggles within the school structure. The following excerpt aligns to how student perception of school difficulties was influenced by perceived School Expectations. I asked Betty, "How do you connect or communicate with school?" She responded, "I think I get along well with my teachers I do what they ask of me…" As I reviewed my notes in this conversation Betty elaborated and stated:

Text 5.48

> If you want good grades you have to do what the teachers want. You do the work the way they say they want it done and you turn it in. You try not to make mistakes to show you are smart. You go to class prepared with your materials to do the work the teachers want done you don't question the assignment. Good students do things the way teachers want it done with no questions asked. You don't talk or become a distraction.

She further explained that she believed that in order to be a "good student" she had to earn grades that were a B or an A. Through her school experience she developed the perspective that the school expected good students to earn good grades.

Betty viewed School Expectation as a way of being a student. That is, she believed she had to decide if she was going to be a good student to become RFEP because in order to be reclassified she had to earn what she defined as good grades. As I continued to interview her she indicated that although she did not always agree with how to do assignments or their relevance she did what she had to do in order to ensure she maintained good grades. She understood that she needed good grades to exit the EL program and become RFEP. She was driven to meet school expectations because she knew that conformity was necessary to enroll in the coursework she needed to be positioned to pursue a college education upon graduation. Her mother had provided her with the knowledge of needing to become RFEP because she attended school information meetings. Additionally, Betty believed that she had to exit the EL trajectory in order to gain access to coursework outside the EL program despite Puedes' open enrollment policy to enter AP or IB coursework. She learned through her resources within her family and school structure how to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital, to eventually exit the EL program and become successful in accessing AP and IB coursework upon entering Puedes High School.

**Gloria**

Mitra (2006) states that in capturing students voice students become part of discussing their realities of school based on specific incidents. As student voice is

captured the researcher must listen to students and their perspective (Mitra, 2006). This example provided by Gloria, allows me to understand her schooling perspectives and how School Expectation shaped her schooling experience. That is, through Gloria's narrative I am able to understand how she determined it was necessary to adapt her behaviors to School Expectations. She was never explicitly told she had to change her behaviors but it was what Jackson (1968) identifies as the "hidden curriculum" that alerted her to engage in certain student unspoken student behaviors. She came to understand "there were norms and values teachers expected but did not explicitly explain" (Jackson, 1968, p. 3-37). As she reflected on her middle school educational experience she stated:

> Text 5.49
>
> > But in middle school I learned about like why I should take notes a certain way and how to study better so that I could get higher grades like so the work I did was what the teachers wanted. You had to do the work the way the teacher wanted to get higher grades.

In this example, she is able to clearly articulate that School Expectation was key to obtaining "higher grades". Her middle school had established a structure for note-taking school wide. Although she was not in the AVID program the middle school had adopted Cornell note-taking school wide. However, she was not explicitly taught how to take notes or transition the strategy to coursework outside her AALD class. This description is similar to the research conducted by Valdés (2001) where she found students in EL programs were given tasks to complete that did not create opportunities to develop skills necessary to succeed in coursework outside the EL trajectory. Gloria may not have

understood why a certain way of taking notes were the expectation but she was able to connect the expected behavior to securing the grades she considered as "higher".

The school structure had influenced how she behaved and performed in school. She considered what her teachers expected as essential to earning the grades that would eventually assist her in entering coursework that was not within the EL trajectory upon enrolling at Puedes High School. She understood that although she may not agree with the expected output of certain work it was the quality that was valued by her school. She knew she wanted to pursue college upon graduating from high school. She was able to activate her navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to yield mobility in coursework. She learned how to not only navigate how she was placed in coursework once she entered high school but used what she had learned to do school in a manner that ensured she became college bound. Once she adhered to School Expectations she was able to take advantage of the school structure and shape her schooling experience that resulted in coursework outside the EL trajectory such as AP and IB to ensure was positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation.

**Rocio**

Similar to the other participants in this research Rocio developed the understanding that she had to adjust to School Expectations in order to access advanced coursework within the school structure. Cook-Sather (2006) found that when one captures student voice they are to be given the authority to explain and critique their perspective of school in order to inform how school practices and policies shapes them as learners. In this excerpt Rocio explains her schooling experiences and critiqued the

school structure as her voice was captured. As Rocio reflected on her middle school educational experience she stated, "…it was okay. I wasn't in advanced classes but I always did well. Like I did what the teachers expected to get good grades". I then asked, "What do you mean by doing what teachers expect to get good grades?" She responded:

Text 5.50

> You have to do things the way the teacher says to do them. Like projects, writing assignments. The teacher says they want an assignment done a certain way or on a certain topic and you do it that way because if you do it that way you are more likely to get better grades. You can't just be creative.

She understood that what she perceived as the teachers expected was key to obtain the grades necessary to position herself as a college bound student. Yosso (2005) defines navigational capital as the ability to maneuver social institutions not created for marginalized populations. In this case this student was able to activate her navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) to maneuver herself within the school structure that resulted in her ability to exit the EL program and succeed in the AP and IB coursework. She learned how to navigate the school structure that resulted in her favor.

**School Motivation**

School Motivation surfaced as another theme in my data analysis. Three of the six participants identified School Motivation as a significant contributor that also shaped their schooling experience. In this research School Motivation refers to how the school encouraged or discouraged the participants to take certain educational paths. School Motivation in turn influenced these students to activate different forms of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) that allowed them to navigate the school structure. That is,

they were able to use resources within their community that included their home and school to pursue coursework that positioned them to become college bound despite the fact that prior to entering high school they had been marginalized to the EL trajectory.

**Pedro**

As Pedro reflected on his favorite school subject he viewed School Motivation as a key contributor to his educational path. This reflection is significant because as Cook-Sather (2002) found it is through these reflections that we can understand how students perceive motivation in shaping them as students. I proceeded to ask him what did he see as a key motivator in his school experience and he stated: "… when I took biology and learned about science like in fifth grade my teacher made it all interesting and fun and I wanted to keep learning more and more about that…" This early experience in school stimulated his curiosity in science. He then shared the following:

> Text 5.51
>
> When I was born I had to have surgery even as a little kid. There was something wrong with my bladder. My fifth grade teacher taught us about the human body. But we just didn't learn about parts he like made it really interesting about the important functions of the organs. Even though I was shy I was very interested in this subject because early on I decided I wanted to become a doctor so that I could help others the way the doctor's helped me.

As he considered his future goal he was determined and encouraged by this early experience to become a pediatrician.

Pedro also indicated that once he entered high school he followed the AP and IB coursework to prepare for college. However, he developed doubt due to the amount of competition and pressure within the students in the program. As I captured his voice this portion of his interview provided details Cook-Sather (2006) states is necessary to

understand how students make their learning difficulties visible. In this case School Motivation also created doubt in his own ability to succeed as he stated: "Junior year I was in IB and I was stressed wondering if I was smart enough or meant for the classes". I proceeded to ask him what did he do and he stated:

Text 5.52

> Well I stayed in the classes because I knew that AP and IB would get me to college but it wasn't easy. There is so much competition to not just be the top student but to get good grades like everyone else. If you get a C you are like it's an F. I wasn't going to drop out because I needed the classes to be ready for college.

The structure established at Puedes High School encouraged all students to participate in the AP and IB coursework regardless of language fluency. According to Pedro, he was interested and wanted to be part of the IB program because he viewed it as key to his goal of becoming a pediatrician. However, upon entering the program a key factor that affected his motivation was the competitiveness of the IB program and in turn that affected his overall motivation because he questioned if he was smart enough for the program.

Pedro was able to use his interactions with his teacher to develop the interest and demonstrate his engagement in the content as valued by the school institution. As he entered high school he was able to use his interest in science to ensure he took the appropriate coursework to pursue his aspiration to become a pediatrician. Although he did not identify his actions as what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational capital, his goal of becoming a pediatrician proved essential to create motivation within him to enroll in AP and IB coursework. His future dreams fueled his determination to remain in the AP and IB coursework regardless of the level of difficulty. Additionally, he used questioning

his ability to succeed in the IB program as a motivator to continue and succeed academically and resisted taking coursework that according to him would not put him in the best position to pursue a college education upon graduation.

**Betty**

School Motivation was a significant contributor in Betty's ability to become comfortable with the English language. As she reflected on her schooling experience as an English learner she stated, "I think when I was younger I was shy. But in fourth grade I had a teacher that really pushed me and I started talking more". By her becoming more talkative she was able to demonstrate her fluency and understanding in English. The push to speak more became a valuable resource for her as she considered her future goal to become a nurse.

Betty responded to being pushed in a positive manner that resulted in accepting the encouragement from her teacher. These actions allowed Betty to activate navigational capital (Yosso, 2005), which was key to her academic success in high school. That is, she learned how to maneuver the school structure resources to assist in her ability in accessing coursework outside the EL program upon entering high school. She accepted and responded to School Motivation that influenced her schooling experiences that resulted in her ability to exit the EL program trajectory.

**Gloria**

As indicated by Giroux (1986) student perspective differs due to how they perceive they experience school that results in shaping their thoughts and beliefs. For Gloria, her early schooling experiences shaped her thoughts and beliefs of how she came

to view higher education. The following captures her explanation of how she believed the school structure influenced her motivation. She recalled:

Text 5.53

> Well in elementary we had colleges for each of our classes and I remember at one college rally there were kids from different universities. I think it was when I saw the PowerPoint and the girl talking about Cal State Fullerton that I decided I needed to get ready for college.

She attended an elementary school that provided a school structure that created opportunities for students to learn about college. She explained that there were "college rallies" and provided different presentations about college from actual college students. The encouragement that she experienced through these college rallies helped her internalize early in her schooling trajectory that she wanted to go to college.

As Gloria continued her schooling trajectory she turned to the early School Motivation experience that assisted her to navigate the classes necessary to position herself for college upon graduation. School Motivation shaped the schooling experiences for her that eventually assisted in her ability to exit the EL program.

## Conclusion

As stated by Mitra (2006) student voice allows the researcher to interpret the schooling experience when capturing the voice of the specific marginalized student population. Although the six students in this research experienced school differently, they all illustrated schooling experiences that explain the critical role Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) played in how they accessed the school structure. It was evident that "the various forms of capital that comprise Community Cultural Wealth were not mutually exclusive or static, but rather built upon one another" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77) to

ensure they were positioned to go to college upon graduation. The students also learned the "hidden curriculum"(Jackson, 1968) necessary to gain acceptance as a good student. They were able to adapt and perform according to what their teachers wanted without questioning why assignments had to be completed in a certain manner.

Once the students exited middle school and entered Puedes High School they found that school experiences could change dramatically. Puedes had established a school structure that created opportunities for the students to become prepared for college and for the first time there were no limitations to the classes they could choose to enroll in. The school allowed open enrollment in their programs with no minimum criteria to participate other than the commitment. The six students were eager to access challenging coursework as they expressed during their middle school years they had to conform to coursework they did not perceive as difficult. As the students continued their educational trajectory at Puedes they were able to activate their Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) to navigate the school system and ensure they would be prepared to pursue a college education at a four-year institution upon graduation.

Mitra (2006) indicates student voice is essential to obtain data to understand the student's schooling perspective. More importantly, the students in this chapter provided key information that explains not only their lived experiences in the school structure but key details Giroux (1985) states are necessary to understand how their schooling experience shaped their "lives, feelings, and beliefs" (p. 49). They developed a perception of the characteristics of a successful student. They used this understanding to navigate the school structure that lead to their enrollment to a four-year university upon graduation.

## Chapter 6: Experiences Contributing to LTELs ability to exit the EL Program

The data in this chapter answers the second research question posed in this study: What experiences and processes contribute to Long Term English Learner abilities' to exit the English Learner program? The ELs in this study were labeled as LTELs upon entering high school because they had not met the school district reclassification criteria. I used Mitra's (2003) "student voice(s)" framework which allowed me to understand how students "view problems and potential solutions in their schools" (p. 289). Despite the fact these students were labeled LTELs they were able to exit the EL program during their freshmen year of high school. Exiting the EL program was an accomplishment in itself because LTELs at the secondary level are less likely to exit the program (CDE, 2016a). As I sought to understand how these LTELs exited the EL program I used their "perceptions and experiences as learners" to explain their schooling trajectory (Oldfather, 1995, p. 131). In this chapter, I argue that Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as the vehicle for the students to become college bound. Going to college for these students meant they would fulfill their parents' aspirations and meet the expectations of "*educación*" (Valenzuela, 1999). For these students their primary goal was to attend a four-year university; exiting the EL program was a byproduct of their determination.

### Parents

As I reviewed and coded the data collected from the six participants in this research they identified their Parents as key players in shaping them as students and their schooling experiences. According to Yosso (2005), "Community Cultural Wealth is an

array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 77). The EL label had, unbeknownst to these students tracked them in their early schooling trajectory to limited courses, which became a form of unknown oppression (Olsen, 2010). However, their parents used their ability to influence, direct, and motivate their children to pursue the dream of going to college by providing various forms of capital (Yosso, 2005).

For example, in the interviews I conducted the students recalled that even when they had not yet exited the EL program they had aspirations to go to college and used that goal as a motivator. Their parents had instilled in them the idea that graduating from high school was not enough but rather that they needed to pursue a college education. In another instance a student connected his ability to translate and teach the English language to his mother as part what allowed him to exit the EL program and become college bound. He stated, "When my mom was learning English I had to teach her not just English but explain to her in Spanish the rules and why certain things are said a certain way in English. It didn't always make sense because Spanish and English can be so different" (Manuel, 2018). It is evident that the student was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as linguistic capital which she defines as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (p. 78). In the interviews I conducted the students provided instances where they attributed their academic success to their parents and the strong relationship that was inclusive of viewing their parent as a guide, confidant, friend, and teacher. The participants provided

specific examples of how parent influence, direction, and motivation directly shaped their schooling trajectory.

Parents provided invaluable resources that allowed these students to excel in school and exit the EL program as they were driven toward the goal of "making their family proud and going to college" (Alejandra, 2018; Betty, 2018; Manuel, 2018). What the students described to me was more than their parents being involved in their schooling experience; rather they talked to their parents and viewed their parents' struggles as an influence to resist the standard educational trajectory. That is, the students took the concept of "making their parents proud" to guide how they performed in school and more importantly the type of classes they pursued upon enrolling at Puedes High School (Alejandra, 2018; Betty, 2018; Manuel, 2018). The parents in this study were not on campus regularly or involved in parent groups at the high school level and during middle school years. They recalled their parents attended parent conferences or performances during the students' elementary schooling years. The district identified the families in my research as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Despite the fact the parents did not know the language, school system, or how to prepare their student for college the students identified their parents as an asset in that parent's used their ability to develop trust, regular conversations, and engagement in the struggles and accomplishments of their children to assist in guiding them toward academic success. This finding was similar to Lareau's (2000) in that parents regardless of socioeconomic status believe education was important and supported their student's educational success (p. 184).

## Parent Influence

I use the term Parent Influence to refer how the parents affected the decisions the students made in terms of being a student (how they behaved in class to demonstrate they were a "good student"), courses they enrolled in, and their academic standing throughout their schooling trajectory. I define "good student" to mean a student that earned a GPA of 3.0 or above, was an engaged student that used school resources regularly, who was on track to graduate from high school. I developed this definition based on the interviews conducted with the six participants and the characteristics they identified as those that made up a "good student". Five of the six students identified their parents' guidance and direction as a significant contributor to shaping their schooling experience. This concept shaped their behaviors as individuals and students that would result in "making their family proud" (Alejandra, 2018; Betty, 2018; Manuel, 2018).

As indicated by Mitra (2006) a key element in the use of student voice provides evidence to support their perspectives. Consequently, as I interviewed the students they not only provided examples to support their perception of the significance of Parent Influence but also indicated that their parents did not need to be present to influence their decisions. That is, the students would reflect on the expectations and guidance over the years that their parents had provided into their decisions about school and academics. The students at times referred to their Parent Influence as a type of guardian angel designed to ensure their actions in school would please their parents. The students internalized what they were told daily by their parents to shape how they behaved and performed in school.

Although the students did not name "educación" it became evident in our

interviews the connection that Parent Influence had to Valenzuela's (1999) concept. "Respect, discipline, and social responsibility" were inculcated throughout their school years by their parents because it was through these actions that the students believed they could achieve the family dream of going to college (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 23). For these students the primary goal was going to college, not exiting the EL program. The coursework they enrolled in upon entering high school positioned them to become college bound and exit the EL trajectory.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra described how Parent Influence played a key role in her becoming a "good student" and succeeding in school. She defined a good student as one who earned grades of B or above, turned in all their work, didn't get in trouble in class, and took advantage of tutoring or study groups. For example, when I asked about her education and the learning she experienced she responded the following:

Text 6.1

> …I think I became a good student but my mom also pushed me to make sure I graduated. She always said I had to get good grades. She wanted me to go to college so she always checked to see my grades and would talk to me about school and my future. She expected me to graduate and go to college.

For Alejandra what Yosso (2005) identifies as familial capital influenced how she behaved, performed academically, and pursued her goal of higher education in school. As Yosso indicates familial capital includes "lessons of caring, coping, and providing *educación*, which inform our emotional, moral, education, and occupational consciousness" (2005, p. 79). For Alejandra, her mother's influence affected how she behaved as a student in school and her aspiration to obtain the grades that would satisfy

her family in what she envisioned meant to be a "good student". In the following she described what she meant by "good student":

Text 6.2

> To be a good student you have to behave how the teacher wants you to behave. You do what the teacher wants to get good grades. You don't cause trouble, get your work done, sit quietly, and talk to the teacher.

Cook-Sather (2006) states that in capturing student voice the student is able to provide their perspective of what happens in school and classroom communities (p.359). Alejandra, through her schooling experience, developed the habits of what she perceived to be the behaviors the school valued in students which also fulfilled her mother's request to become a "good student" which translated in earning good grades. The school did not state these were the behaviors of a "good student;" however; at some point through her school interactions she developed what Giroux (1986) states forms a student's reality, which were developed through her lived experienced.

Another example that highlighted Parent Influence during my interview was her response to how family influences her decisions. She stated:

Text 6.3

> When I have to decide to do something I usually talk to my mom because she is the one that motivates me...like "*me guía"* [she guides me]. She talks me through the things I have to decide and think like what will benefit me. The classes I take we talk about it but she says I need to take classes that will help me get to college.

Parent Influence served as her guide to determine the decisions she made in school. She understood that in order to not just be a "good student" in the eyes of her mother she had to behave and perform the way the school expected in order to eventually access

coursework outside the English Learner trajectory. The following describes the moment she entered Puedes High School:

Text 6.4

> When I got to Puedes it was like I had so many choices. My mom said I had to take the classes that would help me in college. So even though I talked to my counselor about what I should take I talked with my mom to figure out if I wanted a IB certificate or diploma. She said I needed to take the classes that would get me to college. She said college but she meant a university.

This excerpt aligns to Page and Valli's (1990) research finding in that when students, parents, and the school are actively involved in the instructional program for a student, the student experiences greater success. For Alejandra, her mother's influence was an asset in selecting the classes she chose to pursue; despite the fact she discussed her course options with her counselor she used the advice her mother provided as the deciding factor in terms of her educational trajectory.

According to Alejandra, Parent Influence played a significant role in shaping her schooling experiences. She turned to her familial capital (Yosso, 2005) to assist her in navigating school as well as inform her decisions on how she became a "good student" and the courses she enrolled in. That is, she used the lessons she had learned from her mother about "educación, which informed her emotional, moral, and educational consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Parent influence directed how she demonstrated respect and manners in school despite the fact she did not agree with the coursework or assignments, it informed her "educational consciousness" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). She could not challenge or question why she was placed in the EL track but instead developed the belief that if she became a "good student" with good grades she could become

reclassified out of the EL program. This is an example of what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital that she defines as "the skills of maneuvering through social institutions" (p. 80). Parent Influence shaped how Alejandra experienced school and became college bound to navigate and access coursework necessary to pursue her goal of going to college.

**Manuel**

Manuel was one of the participants that provided me with the most data highlighting Parent Influence and how that influence affected him as a student and person. This data speaks to what Mitra (2006) states are necessary to explain student perspective. For example, when I asked him to explain his schooling experience as an English Learner he indicated he became better at English in middle school, which is significant because although he was never told by the school his English was not at the appropriate level through his schooling experiences he developed this perception. He added the following to explain that perspective:

Text 6.5

> Like in elementary they teach you rules but you don't understand them well like when to use certain spellings or how to say something. I understood it in middle school but that is also when my mom started taking English classes and I helped her so I got better in English when I helped her.

He took the challenge of helping his mother to learn English that influenced his own use of the English language. This example speaks to what Yosso (2005) identifies as resistance capital. According to Yosso (2005), "resistance capital becomes activated as an individual develops those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80). Manuel did not state he was in marginalized

coursework but through his schooling experience he developed the perception that he needed to increase his ability to use English if he was to access different coursework. He went on to share the following:

Text 6.6

> Helping my mom with English made me aware that sometimes I didn't say or write things down correctly. When I figured out that I needed to write what I say I think I was able to show that I did understand English and I mom didn't make mistakes. I had to do it like my teacher did so I could get good grades. That helped me in class because I could show like I knew how to speak and write good English.

Through the support he provided his mother Manuel realized that he also had to demonstrate he "knew" English in order to show his teachers he was proficient and earn the grades necessary to exit the EL program. That is, he understood how to use the oral and written language that were parallel to the product as modeled by his teacher. He used his mother's aspiration to learn English as a driver for him to succeed in school and demonstrate the behaviors his teachers expected of a fluent English speaker in order to gain access to courses outside the EL program. He was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital because he learned how to maneuver the school system by demonstrating the habits of a fluent English speaker in order to access and succeed in AP and IB coursework at Puedes High School.

As my interview continued Manuel connected Parent Influence to his schooling experience. I asked him to identify a key moment or incident that influenced him from elementary to high school. He stated:

Text 6.7

> I think when I was in middle school like I don't remember what grade but my mom started taking English classes and she wanted to do good so I helped her. I saw how hard she worked so I wanted to show her I could do

> good in school like her. It was hard to see her upset because it was hard for her to learn English. I figured out that to get good grades you did what the teachers wanted. Well like the work the way they said needed to be done. That's how good kids would get good grades. You might not agree with them but you had to do it because it was the way to get good grades.

He used his mother's struggles to positively affect how he performed academically in middle school. That is, he began to do what his teachers expected of him in order to obtain the necessary grades and position him to eventually become a reclassified fluent speaker his freshman year of high school.

As I continued my interview I asked Manuel to describe his middle school learning experience. He stated the following:

Text 6.8

> It was okay. I didn't get to take honors classes because I was in like an extra Language class in middle school. It was supposed to help with get good at English. I wanted harder classes but you don't have a choice. I did good I got good grades but it was in high school that like I really had a choice in the classes I took.

He knew he was in EL coursework that did not allow him to take honors courses; however, because he was so involved in helping his mother succeed in her English as a Second Language courses he was "okay" with being in classes Fender Unified identified as Accelerated Acquisition of English Development (AALD) coursework. This meant that during middle school he was enrolled in an English class that was created for students identified as LTELs with the ideal goal of increasing English language fluency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking that would result in reclassification. He attributed his progress to the fact that his mother was now a student as well as indicated by his comment, "I think I became a better student because I was helping my mom pass

her English classes". He was able to use his mother's experience as a tool to assist him in navigating his own school experiences.

Manuel also connected becoming a better student to what he perceived were the expected classroom behaviors his teachers valued and academic performance of a good student. I then asked him what he meant by "good student" and he stated, "You complete assignments on time, participate in classroom discussions, and talk to the teacher to see how I'm doing in class". As he became a tutor and teacher for his mother he was able to use those experiences for his own academic success and activated his resistance capital. Yosso (2005) defines resistance capital as "knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" (p. 80). He used his mother's drive to become fluent in English as his own resistance to continue in the EL program.

Another question I posed to Manuel was to explain how his family influenced his decisions and he responded, "I want to do good so my parents will be proud. I want to not only graduate from high school but also go to college. I want to make them proud". This excerpt speaks to Yosso's (2005) "familial capital and how kin are used to inform educational consciousness" (p. 79). His parents informed his educational consciousness by the constant reminder of why he needed to pursue a college education, which was key in accessing more employment opportunities. In discussing the word "proud" he understood that his parents equated pride with not just graduating from high school but by him pursuing a college education. In analyzing how he perceived making his parents proud it appeared to me that his schooling experiences were largely shaped by the

concept of "educación" in that he exerted "respect, discipline, and social responsibility" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 23).

As I continued the interview with Manuel I asked, "Who had influenced you to become fluent in English? He responded:

Text 6.9

> In middle school because I had to help my mom learn English. I had to explain to her in Spanish why we say things different in English. I think helping her helped me understand English better and get better grades.

In middle school he developed multiple roles that were student, son, teacher, and mentor. His close connection to his mother and seeing her struggles to learn a new language affected how he viewed himself as a learner and student. In fact, this experience fueled his resistance to accept the label of English Learner. He was able to activate what Yosso (2005) refers to resistance capital to access coursework not normally accessible to him prior to entering Puedes High School. He used his mother's struggle to influence how he performed as a student to demonstrate he was fluent in English which resulted in his reclassification as an English Learner his freshman year of high school.

A final question I posed to Manuel required him to identify the most influential person that affected his decisions in school and he responded, "My parents but mostly my mom because helping her learn English showed me I can teach others. If I could help my mom learn English I can help others". He was able to use his mother's experience as a student herself to directly influence his drive to succeed in school. The resistance to remain in EL coursework upon entering high school was key to how he was able to demonstrate his proficiency in English and exit the EL program (Yosso, 2005).

Manuel's example demonstrates his ability to use his own understanding of the English language that became a resource for his family. He activated what Yosso (2005) identifies as Community Cultural Wealth to overcome his mother's struggle and ensure he became college bound because he challenged remaining in an "oppressive condition" that would marginalize his future opportunities (p. 77). He was able to activate what Yosso (2005) defines as navigational capital in that he was able to "maneuver through the school institution" by adapting to the student behaviors his teachers expected that were necessary to obtain the grades needed to exit the EL trajectory (p. 80). In the process he did not lose focus of his aspirations to ensure he reached his goal of attending a four-year university upon graduation.

**Gloria**

As I interviewed Gloria it was evident that Parent Influence had shaped her as a student. Cook-Sather (2006) states that students' pasts should be used to inform policy and practice. As I sought to understand the schooling experiences that allowed Gloria to remove the LTEL label and exit the EL program I used the following data to explain her schooling perspective. I asked her how her family influenced her decisions and she responded the following:

Text 6.10

> Like I said my mom has always looked at my grades and how I do. I'm not afraid to show her because we talk about why I got a certain grade both good grades and bad grades. My mom thinks anything below a B is a bad grade. She I think has made me a better student by looking at everything I do.

For her, Parent Influence had shaped a relationship that allowed for a flow of communication that created trust and support to become a "better student". She and her

mother had developed a communication channel that centered on her daily accomplishments. Familial capital served as "the lessons in caring, coping and providing guidance in e*ducación*" (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). The open channel of communication allowed her to use her mother's suggestions to excel in school. In her eyes earning good grades meant a grade of B or better because that was what her mother requested of her.

When I asked Gloria who was the most influential person that affects and informs her decisions in school she stated:

Text 6.11

| | |
|---|---|
| Gloria: | Well my mom because she has always like been on me and when I was deciding if I would get either the diploma or certificate for IB she let me think about it. She didn't pressure me she said I had to do what would help me get ahead. Like she never worked because she has always taken us to school and stayed home but she wants us especially the girls to have careers like not just a secretary job. That's not a bad job but she wants us to be someone to help others like us. |
| Researcher: | Like you? |
| Gloria: | well like I didn't know English and we aren't rich. Like I never went to an amusement park until my school in elementary took me but you had to earn it. I want my kids to have a better life than me. Like now we have a car but before we rode the bus and if you go to college you can have more choices that's what my mom says. |

In the examples above Gloria highlights how her mother's influence affected her decisions in school. Of greater significance is how she reflects on her parents' struggles to address why she excels in school that resulted in her ability to exit the EL program and become college bound. The influence to plan for the future that her parents provided had given her the clarity to establish goals inclusive of a college education and her own family.

Gloria was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as Community Cultural Wealth to assist her to navigate the school system. In these examples it is evident that as Yosso states "the various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic process that build upon one another as part of Community Cultural Wealth" (2005, p. 77). That is, as Gloria learned to navigate the school structure she used her family's struggles to become part of her resistance to remain an English Learner that did not have access to coursework outside the EL trajectory. She viewed the struggles of her family as key to unlocking her own future and in turn providing her family a "better life". Her resistance to accept an education that did not include the pursuit of a college education was not an option for her. She used what Yosso (2005) calls aspirational and resistant capital to fuel her ability to do well in school and become college bound.

**Rocio**

Cook-Sather (2002) states that in the process of capturing student voice, students must be allowed to speak on own behalf to explain their perspective of what occurs in school and classroom communities. In the process of capturing Rocio's data I focused on understanding the experiences that contributed to her ability to exit the EL program. As I coded her interview Parent Influence surfaced as a significant theme that explained her ability to exit the EL trajectory. For example, when I asked about her favorite activity she responded:

Text 6.12

> I think I like the writing because every time I go to Mexico I write down stories about my family like the things I learn about them. I listen to the stories my family shares and I journal them. I did it at first because I wanted to practice my writing but then it's like I can keep my own family history. I understand why my parents went to the U.S. and why I need to

> make them proud and go to college. When they were young it was hard to live in Mexico and now we can help our family.

She wrote about the things she learned on her visits to Mexico which helped her become an avid writer. She wrote what she learned in English and these stories in turn helped her fluency necessary to exit the EL program. She used the stories she learned about her family to drive her goal of pursuing a college education. Through this example Rocio provides evidence of the role linguistic capital played in her ability to flourish in school (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) defines linguistic capital as "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (p. 78). Rocio used the stories she learned about her own family's struggles to influence how she performed as a student.

In another portion of my interview I asked Rocio how her family influenced her and she stated:

Text 6.13

> Well everyone knows my mom because she has always been involved like with meetings and stuff. She will ask teachers how I am doing and I want to make her proud. Like when I go to college I will be the first one and it's a big deal because I will be able to help my family. My dad is a truck driver and we don't get to see him always so this way I can help so he doesn't have to go away for so long.

She states her mother's involvement in school and the fact that everyone knows her mother drives her to make her proud. She also connects the fact that being the first to go to college in her family will allow her to help her family.

Rocio provides another example of Parent Influence when I asked her who would be the person she identifies as the most influential person that affects or informs her decisions in school. She responded:

Text 6.14

> I think my mom because she motivates me. She never gives up on me and like she is strict but she is fair. She doesn't want to see any missing assignments and if I get a bad grade I need to improve. She doesn't understand the work I have to do but she can see if I don't understand something. She asks to see my work if she notices I'm not doing good in a class. Like when I wasn't reclassified she would look or ask how I could do better so I could be reclassified. In high school my mom still came to meetings and every time they talked about going to college she would tell me about it and what to do. I think it helped that some counselors spoke Spanish and went to parent meetings. That's how I learned about like A-G, when to apply for college, and going to AP readiness because she got the information for me.

She identified her mother's involvement in school and their daily discussions as key to her success in school. Both she and her mother understood what it meant to be classified as EL. Due to her mother's involvement in school committees Rocio understood early on the need to work hard in order to be reclassified fluent English proficient and exit the EL program. By her mother being involved in school committees she was able to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital to ensure she would eventually exit the EL program. That is, she learned how to maneuver through the school structure as she activated navigational capital (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

The excerpts of Rocio's interview demonstrate how Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) became key to her ability to succeed in the school system. It is evident that the various forms of capital contributed to her ability to exit the EL program. For example, she used her family's struggles and her mother's involvement as essential tools to pursue her college goal. She was able to activate navigational capital and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) because her mother's involvement allowed her to access the coursework necessary to become college bound. That is, although she did not fully

understand what going to college entailed her mother was able to access information so that she could navigate high school and inquire with her counselor so that she enrolled in the appropriate coursework. She was able to use her mother's involvement in school to assist and influence her decisions that shaped how she performed as a student and the types of classes she decided to enroll in at Puedes High School. This perspective is significant because as Giroux (1986) states it is these lived experiences that must be used if a school truly wants to change the structure which in this case could result in providing the schooling experiences necessary for more students to exit the EL program and increase the likelihood of becoming college bound.

**Betty**

Giroux (1986) states that as student voice is captured you can explain the lived experiences of students that include their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. In the analysis of Betty's data I was able to capture how her perception of school was influenced by her feelings, beliefs, and thoughts that explained the experiences that contributed to her ability to exit the EL program. Parent Influence was a significant contributor that shaped her schooling experience. In Betty's case she states her mother was involved in her schooling by attending meetings that would help her understand how to guide her children to succeed in school. She provides several examples of how her mother's involvement in her schooling directly shaped her as a student and contributed to her ability to exit the EL program. In addition, she states that seeing the struggles of her family had directly influenced her in school. For example, when I asked her if she controlled her learning she responded the following:

Text 6.15

> I think I do but my parents also check to see that I am doing well. Like my dad he's a gardener and he always tells us we need to be better than him so I always try hard in school because I want to help them. We lost our house when I was younger and I want to help them get another one. So I have to do well…

In this instance although she states she controls her learning she provides context to her reasoning and connects her academic success to Parent Influence. By this I mean that she was able to develop "the knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior to challenge inequality" as she activated her resistance capital (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). She viewed her family's struggles and internalized her resistance to accept any outcome for herself that did not involve going to college upon graduating from Puedes High School. As my interview continued with Betty I asked the following:

Text 6.16

Researcher: What does it mean to be RFEP?

Betty: To be reclassified and not have to take the CELDT test anymore. My mom was happy when that finally happened because she said now I would be okay in school. She was worried that if I didn't get reclassified I would not be able to get into harder classes when I got to high school. I didn't want to be in low or regular classes.

In this example, Betty's mother told her she would be okay in school because she had exited the EL program. The statement her mother made "now I would be okay" directly influenced her own perception of herself as a student and more importantly her ability to succeed was directly influenced by the statement her mother made. For her, as Giroux (1986) states, the lived experiences created a belief that being labeled as an EL was not positive. Removing the EL label influenced how she perceived herself as a student that could now succeed in the school institution.

As a final interview question I asked her who was the most influential person that affected her decisions in school and she responded:

Text 6.17

> I think my parents. My dad is a gardener and he always says we have to do better than him. I do well to make them proud because I want to help my family. He works hard so we can have what we need and my job is to go to school so I can go to college.

She connected her drive to do well in school because she wants to make her parents proud and clearly states Parent Influence as key to her determination to go to college. Her behaviors in school were those desired by her parents. For Betty, Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as the key to her ability to exit the EL program. The combination of several kinds of capital served essential to shaping her schooling experiences. Familial, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) were responsible for shaping her as a student that could exit the EL trajectory and position herself to be college bound upon graduation. Her close connection to her family as well as her resistance to remaining in the EL program were the key drivers to shape how she became a "good student".

Five of the six participants identified Parent Influence as key to their academic success. The students were driven to do well by the things their parents did and said to them throughout their schooling trajectory. For these students their parents served as counselors, teachers, and peers that directly influenced their schooling trajectory. The aspirational, familial, social, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) had a direct impact on their learning experiences and ability to exit the EL program. The daily interactions with

their family not only shaped their schooling experiences but influenced how they interacted with the school structure.

My analysis showed that Parent Influence did not shape the students overnight. Rather, Parent Influence served as a key foundational schooling experience for these students. By this I mean that the constant conversations went beyond doing well in school but rather obtaining a better occupation than their parents. The parents did not retreat from being involved in their children's schooling education once they entered high school but rather remained involved and questioned as well as counseled their children to do well in school. The students saw their parents as pillars to how they were shaped as students and performed academically.

## Parent Direction

The data I collected from the six participants in this research indicated that Parent Direction was a significant influencer in students' abilities to exit the EL program and succeed in school. This student perspective is significant to explain what Oldfather (1995) indicates is necessary to understand student motivation to learn. Furthermore, through their student voice they describe their lived experiences which as Giroux (1986) states is necessary to explain their beliefs and thoughts that describe the school structure as they experienced it daily.

In this study Parent Direction refers to how the students used the advice given by their parents to determine their schooling trajectory. The direction given by parents served as clear directives on what was expected of them as students. It is important to note that only two of the six students had parents that were directly involved in school

groups or committees during their schooling trajectory. All parents were informed of their students' academic progress and had given them a clear directive that did not end with graduating from high school but to pursue a college education. In the analysis of the participant's data it appeared that although they did not name "educación" they referred to what Valenzuela states make up this concept. That is, the participants spoke to "respect, discipline, and social responsibility" that would achieve their family's dream (1999, p. 23). As I analyzed the data it appeared making their family proud was often described in the context of not only being a "good student" but a "good child" which connected to realizing the dream for their future based on their family's expectations.

**Pedro**

As Pedro described his schooling experience he explained his lived schooling experience that was inclusive of how his feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about school were shaped (Giroux, 1986). He stated Parent Direction was key in guiding him through his schooling experience. For him doing well in school was a directive given by his parents as he stated:

> Text 6.18
>
> > They want me to work and not slack off. They want me to do work that will benefit me. They expect me to do well in school. My parents work but they check on me to make sure I take classes that will help me reach my goal of going to college. Going to college is not an option for me. They say for me to decide what to do but if I don't do what I need to do to make sure I am prepared for college it's not okay with them.

As indicated by the research conducted by Lareau (2000) regardless of socioeconomic status or level of parent involvement "all parents express the belief that education is important" (p. 99). Pedro's parents expected him to do well in school and told him he

needed to put his future in perspective as he decided the type of courses he took at Puedes High School. His parents were not physically involved in school by attending meetings or trainings but monitored his academic progress by accessing Aeries regularly. For Pedro, aspirational capital was key in how he performed in school so that he could be positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduating from high school (Yosso, 2005). That is, he "maintained hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" which had been the confinement to the EL trajectory (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

**Alejandra**

As I sought to explain the schooling experiences that contributed to Alejandra's ability to exit the EL trajectory I viewed her student voice through the lens of Oldfather (1995). That is, I sought to understand her motivation to learn to explain her schooling experiences as a learner. My analysis of my interview data with Alejandra indicated that Parent Direction was significant in shaping her schooling experiences as they provided the guidance she needed to exit the EL program and take "harder coursework" upon enrolling at Puedes High School. Alejandra defined "harder coursework" as classes that were not within the EL program such as AP and IB upon entering high school. She was determined to pursue AP and IB coursework as she entered high school.

As Alejandra reflected on how she became a successful student she provided the following example on how she sought clarification on her performance in coursework during high school. For Alejandra, successful meant entering AP and IB coursework. She stated:

Text 6.19

> Because my mom always told me to. She says if you failed ask… to go and ask them if I could retake it again and I've had that my whole years of high school and middle school. When I got to Puedes taking AP and IB was not an option because those were the classes that would get me ready for college.

Alejandra's mother had established a directive for her to follow when she wasn't doing well in school. More importantly, the conversations they had about why she earned a certain grade provided direction for her to pursue questioning or seeking help from her teachers. As a result, this expectation from her mother resulted in Alejandra activating her navigational capital that was necessary to achieve the expectations her teachers had established to succeed in coursework (Yosso, 2005).

When I asked Alejandra who had influenced her decision-making she responded her mother had because she had made the following statement to her more than once which was:

Text 6.20

> I want you to go to college you know I came to the U.S. for I can graduate and all that. Coming to the U.S. she had to learn like how things are done here. She struggled because she didn't speak English she still doesn't speak it well but she understands. She doesn't want me to struggle. Like she wants me to get a good job where I can work good hours and get paid well.

This statement resonated with her because knowing that her mother had come to the United States so that she would have a better future provided the direction she needed to ensure she succeeded academically. She provided additional context indicating that her mother had left Mexico so that her children could have a better life and that included going to college. Her mother stressed that a high school diploma was not enough.

Alejandra also attributed becoming a good student in middle school due to Parent Direction as she stated, "… I think at the end I became a good student but my mom also pushed me to make sure I graduated and was ready for college". For her becoming a good student, graduating from high school, and pursuing a college education were attributed to Parent Direction. In these instances it was a combination of what Yosso (2005) identifies as Community Cultural Wealth that directed her pursuit of a four-year university education. She used the linguistic and aspiration capital to influence her academic performance (Yosso, 2005). That is, she was influenced by the stories her mother shared of her families struggles to influence directly her goal of going to college. She aspired to not just becoming a good student based on teachers' expectations but more importantly earning the necessary grades to be positioned to go to college upon graduation in order to meet the family's goal of having a college graduate.

**Manuel**

For Manuel Parent Direction was the second most significant theme he identified as affecting his schooling experience and educational trajectory as an EL. He explained his perceptions and experiences as a learner that Oldfather (1995) identifies as essential to explain a student's motivation for learning. At the beginning of my interview with Manuel I asked how he connected to school he stated the following:

Text 6.21

> Well, I come to school because if I want to go to college that is what I have to do and my mom says so. She says that the way I can get a better future is by going to school. Staying home or taking classes that won't get me ready for college are not okay. She expects me to go to college.

The direction he was given served as directive and expectation. Through his regular conversations with his mother he had internalized that school was a stepping-stone toward becoming prepared for college. These interactions activated what Yosso (2005) identifies as familial capital. That is, he was committed to meeting his mother's expectations because that was what he had learned early on was necessary to obtain a "better future".

As the interview continued I asked Manuel if he controlled his learning and he responded, "…but my mom also tells me it's up to me to do well nobody else. But she always asks how is it going so I make sure I do well so I show her my grades". In this example, Manuel's mother states it's up to him to do well but her close monitoring of his grades directs him to do well in school. Yosso (2005) states, "familial capital engages a commitment to community well being" (p. 79). As a result, for this student the familial capital within the family transferred to the school site as he performed as expected by his teacher's in order to exit the EL trajectory and navigated the school structure to ensure he would become college bound (Yosso, 2005).

When I ask Manuel what he had done to prepare for college he states, "well my mom always told me I had to go to college so I have to do it. I want to go to UCR". He indicated that his mother did not make attending college an option but rather a directive. This was reiterated through this statement: "…High school is hard but my mom says it's my job". He was told in many instances as he shared that college was the expectation as he provided the following closing remark in our interview, "My mom always told me to work hard so I can go to college. That is what I am doing".

In Manuel's interview it was evident that the direction he received from his parents, in many instances his mother, were what drove him to pursue a college education. For him this directive to become a "good student" had a direct impact on him becoming RFEP and exiting the EL program. He was able to use his close-knit family to influence how he performed and navigated to school. The impact of familial capital (Yosso, 2005) resulted in his ability to navigate school and become college bound upon graduation. It was familial capital that contributed to his ability to exit the EL trajectory.

**Gloria**

Out of the six participants Gloria indicated Parent Direction most influenced her schooling trajectory. In the coding process of her interview I found a total of fifteen instances that identified Parent Direction as key to her academic success. Parent Direction had shaped her "feeling, beliefs, and thoughts" as she explained her schooling experiences that contributed to her ability to exit the EL trajectory (Giroux, 1986, p. 48).

As indicated in Lareau's (2000) parents regardless of socioeconomic status "support their children's educational success" (p. 184). Lareau's finding aligns to my findings in that Gloria's mother supported and guided her path toward a college bound future despite the fact her mother only spoke Spanish and had learned how to navigate the school system through her daughter. For example, her mother was involved in her schooling by use of technology that kept her informed of her progress. Fender Unified offered parents access to student attendance, current grades, and information on any missing assignments through an online program called Aeries Information System. The information on the system is available to parents in English and Spanish. Her mother

regularly checked her academic standing and attendance which she had done since she was in middle school. As I asked Gloria how she interacted with the school, teacher, counselor and peers she offered the following response:

Text 6.22

> Well I am quiet but I know that to get good grades I have to talk to my teachers and counselors so I do when I have to. My mom looks at my grades on Aeries and if I don't do it on my own she will nag me until I do. She says I can't improve if I don't ask how. It's awkward but I do it because I want to be able to tell her yeah I took care of it and tell her how.

By holding her accountable for her academic performance her mother pushed her to interact with the school staff closely. She was fully aware that if she did not question her poor performance her mother would require that she figure out what is needed to obtain a "good grade". According to Gloria, her mother considered the grade of A or B to be "good" and anything below was not acceptable. Of interest in this discussion was how the perception of the grade of A or B was considered good and not anything else despite the type of classes she was enrolled in such as AP or IB. Her mother had learned through her school interactions that those were the grades the school valued to demonstrate students were "good" and were also necessary to exit the EL program.

In the interview I asked Gloria if she controlled her learning. She provided the following response:

Text 6.23

> [laugh] Well it's up to me to get good grades and if I don't my mom will ask me what is going on. She is okay with A's and B's nothing else. She wants me to go to college and I have to work hard to go there. I think I control how I perform but because my mother has a high standard I know I need to work hard to meet her expectations. She says teachers like good students and good students get good grades. I need good grades to go to college.

Her mother had set an expectation to achieve certain grades. In addition, her mother believed that if she obtained certain grades her teachers would view her as a good student. By attending parent information meetings her mother became aware of the grades necessary to ensure her daughter would be positioned to go to college upon graduation.

As I continued to interview Gloria I asked again if she controlled her learning. She responded, "…I always did well my mom made sure I did well in elementary, middle school, and now in high school she's still on me". She states her mother is "on her" because she regularly checks her academic standing and questions any missing assignments or grades she receives below a B. Her mother held her accountable and expected an explanation of poor grades as she stated the following:

Text 6.24

> Well at my middle school my mom learned how to go into Aeries and check my grades and make sure I turned in all my work. So I knew I had to make sure I never had anything missing and had good grades because my mom would ask me why a grade was low like even in my assignments. But I think her checking on me like that helped me become more focused and organized because she would want to see like why did I get a low grade. We would talk about my assignments and even if she didn't understand them I had to explain like why or what I did wrong so I learned to really look at my work.

Her mother also served as a counselor that provided her the direction necessary to become college bound. Her mother required her to look at her work critically; this habit ensured her academic success. By understanding how teachers held her accountable for her academic performance her mother was able to use that information to assist her daughter in navigating the school system and obtain the necessary grades to exit the EL

program and demonstrate she could succeed in AP and IB coursework. The following interview excerpt provides evidence of these actions:

> Text 6.25
> …My mom has really helped me with the organization and looking at my work carefully to understand my mistakes and how I do well on assignments. My counselors check in on me but honestly I think I rely on my mom because she has always helped guide me because she wants the best for me.

She attributed her academic success to the guidance she received from her mother throughout her educational trajectory. For her, parent direction not only guided and ensured her academic success, the direction given by her parents (mostly her mother) became the compass she used to navigate school and pursue a college education.

Through these examples it becomes evident how Community Cultural Wealth served as the key contributor for Gloria to exit the EL program and become college bound Yosso (2005). In these examples it is evident that the capitals that form Community Cultural Wealth "are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather a dynamic process that build on one another" (2005, p. 77). Her ability to activate navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) allowed her to learn how to maneuver through the school structure and ensure she became college bound, exiting the EL program occurred because of her drive to earn the necessary grades to pursue enrollment in a four-year university. Her mother's direction activated her aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) in that she did not allow her prior tracking experience to dictate the courses she took upon entering Puedes High School. Rather Gloria used her aspirations to ensure she positioned herself to become college bound.

**Rocio**

Oldfather (1995) states that as researchers capture student voice we can understand their motivation to learn. According to Oldfather (1995), in the analysis of the data one can use student expertise to explain how they perceive their experiences as learners. In my analysis of the data provided through my interviews with Rocio the theme of Parent Direction affected her performance as a learner in school. For example, when I asked her how she interacted with school she provided the following response:

Text 6.26

> Well I always try my best and if I don't understand something I ask because if I don't my mom will ask me how come I didn't ask. She says the only way I can get better at anything is by asking questions and listening. Asking questions has helped me become a better student because when I get things wrong I can understand my mistakes. I am also able to understand what teachers want in certain assignments and what I need to study to get better.

Rocio's mother had established the expectation of pursuing clarification so that she could become better in the areas she did not do well in. This behavior served as an asset for her because by her mother prompting her to question and reflect on her abilities she was able to demonstrate to her teachers that she valued their input and direction. The following excerpt further demonstrates how errors in her work served as an asset as she stated:

Text 6.27

> My mom would tell me to look and see when I got things marked wrong. She would see my paper because she would ask to see my work and she would ask me why I got things wrong. I learned to look at my work and when I asked questions I really tried to understand my mistakes so next time I could do better. I became careful on how I did my work because I didn't want to ask questions. I just wanted to show my mom I did good. I tried harder and studied so that I could get good grades.

Although her mother did not understand the content she would question the mistakes she made which were inclusive of grades earned below an A or B. Her mother established the expectation of reviewing her work and going to her teachers for clarification that resulted in her demonstrating the student behaviors that were valued by the school. Once again this finding aligns to Lareau's in that regardless of "social class does not determine parents' actions but rather the social practices parents put in place to provide their children resources" (2000, p. 145). That is, Rocio's mother did not allow language or not fully understanding the United States public school system to become a barrier to ensure her daughter would become college bound.

The fact that Rocio's mother did not understand the school structure did not limit her ability to teach her daughter the skills that would prove to her advantage. The prompting she received from her mother allowed her to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital that would result in obtaining the grades to eventually exit the EL program. Her mother's expectations influenced her performance in school. Rocio was able to use her mother as a resource to navigate the school system that proved essential to her ability to activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational capital and become positioned to be college bound. That is, her mother's dreams for her daughter became Rocio's goal that was to attend a four-year university upon graduation. The fact that her mother was so involved in directing her daughter proved to serve as the guidance to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation and become RFEP.

**Betty**

As stated in Mitra's (2006) research, it is in the process of capturing student voice that researches may understand how they experienced school. In the process of analyzing Betty's data it was evident that Parent Direction for was a significant contributor to her schooling experience and ability to become college bound. In the interview I asked her how her parents influence her desire to go to college bound and she stated:

> Text 6.28
>
> …Like my dad he's a gardener and he always tells us we need to be better than him so I always try hard in school because I want to help them. He says he doesn't want to see us working like him. I mean it's a good job but we can get a job that is not hard and outdoors. By doing well in school and going to college I can have a better choice of what career I can choose. He says *'se abren las puertas'* [doors will open] with an education.

The type of employment her father had was used as a tool to promote the reason why she should go to college. This is an example of what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational capital that "refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). Her parents wanted Betty to pursue a college education. Her parents viewed the pursuit of a college education as a way for her to obtain better employment despite the fact they understood what it meant to be labeled EL.

Betty's mother attended school meetings where she obtained information of the importance for EL students to become RFEP: "…I wasn't reclassified and she knew that was important because she went to meetings and they told her". The direction her mother gave her ensured she became RFEP and enrolled in the necessary coursework to become college bound as she indicated in the excerpt below:

Text 6.29

> … She goes to any meetings and then tells me about it because she wants to make sure I do what I need to do to go to college...I talk to her about the classes I take because even though she doesn't know like about the class she tells me to take classes that will help me with my future. She knew like the grades and test I needed to pass so that I could become reclassified. She went to meetings even in high school and she always looked for the information I needed to make sure I was taking the classes to go to college.

Betty states that her mother attended school meetings such as English Learner Advisory Committee and Coffee with the Counselors since her elementary years. Her mother was involved in committees and groups that provided her the necessary information to directly influence her daughter's academic gains. Her mother provided her the navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) by directing her schooling and assisted her in understanding the school system that resulted in her ability to exit the EL program. That is, her mother learned how to navigate the school institution in order to ensure her daughter enrolled in coursework outside the EL trajectory upon entering high school. Her mother directly influenced her educational path, as the primary goal was to ensure she was college bound.

## Parent Motivation

Yosso (2005) states that Community Cultural Wealth consists of different forms of capital that do not exist individually but rather build upon each other. Parent Motivation was identified as a significant theme by four of the six participants. In this research Parent Motivation refers to how parents directly affect their student outcome and also provide the drive to succeed in school and become college bound through different "forms of capital" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). For these students they viewed success as going

to college. Their parents became their counselor, guide, and cheerleader to pursue a future that included going to college.

**Alejandra**

Oldfather (1995) states that as researchers capture "student voice" we can understand student motivation to learn. In Alejandra's interview it was apparent that Parent Motivation was key in shaping her schooling experiences and motivation to learn. In our interview I asked, "Who has had the most impact on you?" She responded:

Text 6.30

> … My mom just kind of motivated me and she said you know I want you to go to college you know I came to the U.S. for I can graduate and all that… I want to be somebody like my mom says. I want to go to college so I have to do good. I can't let her down. She sacrificed a lot coming to the U.S. She left our family so we could have a better life. She tells me like how she struggled and was poor and I listen to what she says and that makes me want to do better. She works hard so I have to work hard. Going to college can give us a better life.

For Alejandra having her mother remind her that she came to the United States motivates her to pursue a college education. This is an example of what Yosso (2005) refers to "aspirational capital that refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (p. 77). The impact of the statement made by her mother was not a one-time conversation but was part of their regular conversations when they talked about school, her future, and aspirations. When I asked how her family influenced her decisions she stated:

Text 6.31

> Yeah umm they just tell me that whatever I want to do is okay but my parents expect me to apply to colleges above beyond my will but its alright because they have really high expectations my mom says *"ponte las pilas"* [put your thinking cap on]. When I have to decide to do something I usually talk to my mom because she is the one that motivates

> me…like *"me guía"* [she guides me]. She talks me through when I am struggling or want to give up. She helps me figure out how to handle the stress and ways I can get help when I struggle. Like she will say have you checked with so and so because she knows who I study with.

She indicates her parents gave her choice in her decisions but then refers to how her mother motivates her to decide her future. For her, Parent Motivation served as an additional source that influenced her academic performance. Aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) became a catalyst in Alejandra's overall academic performance. That is, the aspirations of obtaining a better future that had been instilled in her ensured she was positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation, which served as the key to her ability to exit the EL program.

**Gloria**

Giroux (1986) indicates that as you capture student voice you are able to explain the lived experiences within the school and how feelings, beliefs, and thoughts are shaped. In Gloria's interview it became apparent that her mother influenced how she experienced school. As she reflected on the type of student she was prior to entering high school, she indicated that her mother provided the necessary motivation to become a better student as she stated:

Text 6.33

> … But I think her checking on me like that helped me become more focused and organized because she would want to see like why did I get a low grade. Like when I showed her my work she would see where I would take it out from. She showed me that putting things in order helped me. Like not just being neat but knowing where what was. She didn't get to go to high school but she knew that organization was important. Good grades she said will get me into college. I get to go to high school so I have to do well and by going to college I can show her motivation will get me a better life.

As Gloria describes her schooling experience it is evident that navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) contributed to her ability to exit the EL program. Yosso defines navigational capital as "the skills of maneuvering through social institutions" which in this case was the school system (2005, p. 80). Her mother understood that the grades she earned mattered in order for her to demonstrate her proficiency in English and exit the EL trajectory upon enrolling at Puedes High School. More importantly, her mother used her ability to motivate her daughter to navigate the school system and ensure she would be positioned to pursue a college education upon graduation.

**Rocio**

In the analysis of Rocio's interview I applied Mitra's (2006) approach to understand how school experiences shaped her as students. I sought to understand the schooling experiences that resulted in her ability to exit the EL program. In her interview Parent Motivation was also identified as key to exiting the EL program and being positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation from Puedes High School. When I asked her who was the most influential person that affected or informed her decisions in school she responded the following:

Text 6.34

> I think my mom because she motivates me. She never gives up on me and like she is strict but she is fair. She says I have to always give it my best and I know the decisions I make will affect my education and I want to go to college so she helps me by like thinking through what I should do. She says I have to do the work but I can't be lazy like take an easy class because I don't want to do the work.

In this example it is evident that navigational capital served as key to her ability to become positioned toward a college future. Yosso (2005) defines navigational capital as

"the skills to maneuver through social institutions" which in this case was the school system (p. 80). Parent Motivation served as a method to navigate her educational trajectory. Parent Motivation proved to provide the necessary encouragement she needed to directly impact her academic performance that resulted in her ability to excel in school.

For Rocio the motivation she received from her mother was more than encouragement but rather a constant reminder of the path to her future goal of going to college. The expectations her mother had of her and the courses she took directly affected how she navigated high school. She was able activate her familial and navigational capital to ensure she accessed the coursework necessary to become college bound (Yosso, 2005). That is, "familial capital served as the model lessons for caring, coping, and providing *educación*" as "navigational capital provided her the skills to maneuver the social institution" which in this case was the school (Yosso, 2005, p. 79-80). For this student Parent Motivation contributed to her ability to exit the EL program.

**Betty**

As I sought to understand how Parent Motivation influenced Betty's schooling trajectory I applied student voice according to Oldfather (1995). That is, as I analyzed Betty's data I sought to understand her motivation to learn based on her own perceptions and experiences as a learner (Oldfather, 1995). She indicated that Parent Motivation contributed to her academic ability to be positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation. Her mother provided her not only direction on what she should do but also became the key person to motivate her to succeed, which meant going to college. When I asked how her family influenced her decisions she responded:

Text 6.35

> My mom is always involved like since I was little. She goes to any meetings and then tells me about it because she wants to make sure I do what I need to do to go to college. I guess she motivates me the most. I talk to her about the classes I take because even though she doesn't know like about the class she tells me to take classes that will help me with my future. If I have questions she goes to meetings so we can figure out what I need to do so I can go to college.

In this example it becomes evident that navigational capital which Yosso (2005) indicates, "is the ability to maneuver through social institutions" was key to exiting the EL trajectory (p. 80). For Betty her mother's involvement in school provided the necessary information for her to become college bound. The navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) her mother was able to acquire was key to how she was able to exit the EL trajectory and understand the steps she needed to take while in high school to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation. She stated that her mother motivated her and used that encouragement to make sure she enrolled in the correct courses to pursue higher education.

## Student

As I interviewed the students in this research the theme of Student surfaced. I identified the theme Student as the internal element that drove their academic success. However, within the theme of Student I identified two additional sub-themes, which were direction and motivation. The students provided an explanation to what Giroux (1986) states is necessary to understand their lived experience within the school structure; they provided details to their lives, feelings, and beliefs regarding their schooling experience. In the interviews the students spoke and reflected on their schooling trajectory that

explained how they perceived they shaped their experiences and ability to exit the EL program. In the process of capturing student voice as indicated by Mitra (2006), the evidence the students provide is essential to explain their perspective. As I sought to identify the key experiences that contributed to these LTELs ability to exit the EL program I used their student voices to explain how they viewed themselves as the key to their academic success. The participants in this study used their own direction to assist them in navigating school that positioned them to become college bound which in many instances referenced to different forms of capital that comprise Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005).

**Student Direction**

Cook-Sather (2006) indicates that as you capture student voice you provide students the opportunity to provide their unique perspective on what happens in school and classroom communities. As I analyzed the following student interviews it was evident that Student Direction surfaced as a theme in this research that explained their perspective on how they experienced school and were able to exit the EL program. In this research I defined Student Direction to mean how the student used their own guidance to contribute to their experience as an EL student and ability to exit the EL program. These four participants all had different experiences that proved key to their ability to succeed academically, which in this research means being positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation.

**Pedro**

In this student interview it is evident that aspirational capital was key to his ability to be positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation (Yosso, 2005). Yosso defines "aspirational capital as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (2005, p. 77). For Pedro, Student Direction served as key to his ability to activate his aspirational capital. For him the concept of direction and determining his final destination was clear as he reflected on his favorite subject in school. He stated:

Text 6.36

> My favorite subject is biology because ever since I was little like I was born with a kidney infection and I had to get a surgery when I was three weeks old so I wanted to help kids like the surgeon helped me like not so much that there is a chance of death. I always wanted to help kids and I want to be a pediatrician and then when I took biology and learned about science like in fifth grade my teacher made it all interesting and fun and I wanted to keep learning more and more about that. So I decided I wanted to be a pediatrician.

As he went through his schooling trajectory he related what he experienced in school to help guide him in his ultimate goal of going to college to become a pediatrician. This student was able to use his health difficulties as a form of what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational capital and that in turn fueled his to exit the EL program.

Pedro understood that in order to go to a four-year university he had to pursue coursework in high school that included AP and IB coursework as he made the following comment:

Text 6.37

> When I came to high school I knew I had to take AP and IB courses. I listened to the counselors when they made presentations. I know that to get into a good college I have to have good grades and take the right

> classes. I sometimes struggle and want to give up but if I want to really be a doctor I have to keep going. I usually look at like the handouts and what classes I need to get into the UC I want to go to. I get worried sometimes because I think I am not smart enough.

Although at times Pedro questioned his smartness and ability to succeed in the IB program, he was able to successfully use his own direction to navigate school and successfully exit the EL trajectory. His drive to pursue a college education in order to become a pediatrician allowed him to actively use what Yosso (2005) identifies as navigational capital. That is, AP and IB courses served as a resource that he was able to use to "maneuver the school institution" (Yosso, 2005, p. 80).

**Manuel**

Manuel identified Student Direction as key to his ability to exit the EL program and be positioned to pursue a college education at a four-year university upon graduation. For him navigational capital served as a key component to his ability to use his self-direction to become college bound (Yosso, 2005). That is, he used what he learned about the school structure to ensure he was able to maneuver the school structure in order to enroll in the correct classes. He viewed the school decision making as up to him as he stated:

Text 6.38

> I also pick the classes I want to take like AP instead of regular classes. Like I said to get to a good college like a Cal State or UC you need to take the right classes. Regular classes are okay but I don't think they prepare you as well because they aren't as hard because those classes are for regular kids. I talk to my mom about my classes and will meet with the counselor but I look at the classes that will get me to a UC. I want to go to UCR.

Although he could turn to his counselor or parents he saw the direction in terms of what courses he was to take as a decision he needed to make in order to pursue his goal of going to college. This was evident when I asked him what had he done to prepare for college and he responded, "Well I took AP and IB classes because I want to go to college". As he progressed through high school he understood he needed to decide the direction he took and how to navigate that process of schooling.

In Manuel's interview it becomes evident he understood the importance of how he navigated school but more importantly utilized what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational capital to ensure he took the correct courses. Yosso defines aspirational capital as "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (2005, p. 77). Early in his school experience he developed the perception that his ability to speak English was not at the appropriate level. He used his aspiration for a better future, which included going to college as a driver for the type of classes he chose to enroll in upon entering high school. Based on his interactions with his counselors he believed that by enrolling in AP and IB classes he increased the likeliness to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation.

**Betty**

In my interviews with Betty Student Direction was a significant theme in her responses. I analyzed her data according to Oldfather's (1995) theory of student voice. That is, I sought use the student's perception and experiences as learners to understand how this participant was able to exit the EL program. Betty viewed herself as the key to her academic success, that meant her ability to become RFEP and positioned to enroll in

a four-year university upon graduation. As I sought to understand how she viewed herself as a student and her application of Student Direction I proceeded to ask what was her favorite subject she responded:

Text 6.39

> I like math and science. It's sometimes hard but I want to become a nurse so I have to learn as much about it as I can. I think I like science more than math. I know that to become a nurse I have to be really good at math and science. I think I have done well because they are my favorite subjects and I need to know the stuff so that I can become a good nurse. I don't take regular math and science classes because they don't prepare you as well as the AP and IB classes. I know that if I take the AP and IB classes I have a better chance of getting into a good college.

She identified her career goal and understood the content areas she needed to succeed. Although the school encouraged enrollment in AP and IB courses, they did not state regular classes were less challenging at some point during her schooling experience she developed this opinion. This developed opinion speaks to Oldfather's (1995) research in that students develop their own perceptions and experiences as learners based on their schooling experiences.

In Betty's case she held herself accountable for "learning as much as she could" as the science and math content areas were key to becoming a nurse. This became evident in her response when I asked if she controlled her learning and responded:

Text 6.40

> …I guess I control how well I do in school. I am responsible for how much I learn and the grades I get. I have to decide the classes that will help me achieve my goal. I want to be a registered nurse and I know that is not a easy career so I have to learn as much as I can so that when I go to college I don't have to catch up or struggle as much.

She mentioned that her parents did monitor how she did in school. Ultimately, the responsibility for taking the direction to succeed in school was due to her decisions.

Student Direction was evident as Betty reflected on the types of classes she took at Puedes High School in the following statement:

Text 6.41

> Well like I said when the counselors came to my middle school they talked to us about the programs at Puedes so I knew I wanted to take hard classes. I couldn't choose my classes in middle school but I knew that in high school I could take hard classes because the counselor told us that.

As she entered Puedes High School she saw the opportunity to take "hard classes" so that she could pursue her goal of becoming a nurse that required going to college.

Betty's example demonstrates her ability to actively use what Yosso (2005) identifies as aspirational and navigational capital to ensure she could become a nurse. She understood that her ability to navigate the types of classes she took would require direction from herself as well as how well she did in school. She used the information she accessed about classes and college to guide her decisions and enter courses that would assist developing the knowledge she needed to enter a nursing program. Despite the fact she entered high school labeled as an LTEL, she was determined to take the coursework necessary to increase the likeliness of her ability to enroll in a four-year university upon graduating from Puedes High School.

**Gloria**

Gloria viewed Student Direction as key to ensure she succeeded in school. For this student a combination of capital that forms Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as contributors to her ability to exit the LTEL program and become positioned become college bound. She understood that to navigate school successfully

she needed to initiate the direction she would take in high school. As she reflected on her learning she stated:

> Text 6.42
>
> (laugh) well it's up to me to get good grades. It's also up to me the classes I chose to take. Some people just want to take a bunch of IB and AP classes but I take the ones that interest me because I have to figure out my future. I know I have to talk to my teachers and counselors because they need to know I am serious about my classes. It's not easy but talking to them helps me figure out like what I need to do to better my grades.

She connected her ability to speak to her teachers and counselors as a way to obtain the grades she needed to become college bound upon graduation. She developed the ability to activate her navigational and aspirational capital to succeed in school (Yosso, 2005). The direction she gave herself through her grades and coursework allowed her to exit the EL program and succeed in high school.

**Student Motivation**

As stated by Oldfather (1995) another essential component that helps us understand a students schooling experience is how they perceive their motivation to learn by capturing their student voice. In the review of my data I noticed that for all six participants Student Motivation was a significant contributor to shaping their educational experiences and trajectory. Student Motivation in this research refers to how the students were able to influence their ambitions resulting indirectly in their ability to exit the EL program and become positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation.

**Pedro**

As I analyzed Pedro's data, Student Motivation was a significant contributor to his schooling experience and ability to exit the EL trajectory. Community Cultural

Wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as the main vehicle to exit the EL program. Specifically, aspirational and navigational capital was the key to his ability to exit the EL program. That is, he turned to his early childhood experiences to drive his aspirations of becoming a pediatrician in the future. This was evident when he spoke about his favorite subject in school and commented:

Text 6.43

> … I wanted to help kids like the surgeon helped me like not so much that there is a chance of death. When you are a kid you are scared. I want to help kids. I have to go to college if I want to become a pediatrician. So I take classes that will give me a better chance to go to college. I have to earn grades to get into a good school.

This motivation in turn required Pedro to develop fluency in English and earn "good grades" as he reflected on his grades in high school he stated, "If I had a C I felt I failed and would just try harder. I can't be average if I want to be a doctor because it's a hard career." In this example it is evident he had developed his own expectation of the grades he considered acceptable as well as a plan to improve his academic performance.

Although Pedro did acknowledge School Motivation for him Student Motivation was a greater force. He looked to himself to earn the grades he needed to increase his grade point average. I proceeded to ask him where did he get his courage to navigate school and he responded, "I get it from myself because I want to do what I want to do but do it well. I have to prove it to myself". He viewed himself as the key to how he shaped his schooling experiences.

Pedro attributed his internal motivation as the key to exit the EL program and succeed in AP and IB courses. I asked Pedro to reflect on who had influenced him in school and he answered, "I feel that family can play a role in what you do but its up to

you your own *'ganas'* [want/desire]. You do what you want". For him navigational and aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005) proved to contribute to his ability to become RFEP and access coursework that would allow him to become positioned to pursue his goal of going to college.

**Alejandra**

Alejandra identified Student Motivation as a contributor to her academic achievements. As she explained her schooling experience and her ability to become positioned to enroll in a four-year university it became apparent that navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) served as the key contributor to her ability to exit the EL program. According to Yosso, "navigational capital is the ability to maneuver social structures not created for people of color" (p. 80). Through Student Motivation this student was able to provide her own motivation daily to maneuver the school structure as she shared the following:

> Text 6.44
>
> …so I have made a painting out of a motivational quote so I just sort of like to make them on my free time. Because when I see them they help motivate me on the things I want to do. Sometimes they are short sometimes a little longer. But I like read them to help me and like how different people have said different things to get them through hard times.

She identified inspirational quotes that would help motivate her throughout her schooling experience in high school. For example, "push yourself because no one else is doing it for you" which she found on Instagram by Andrea Leyden. The quotes not only served as a motivator but also as a tool to assist her in navigating the school structure.

Alejandra also understood that she needed to earn the necessary grades to pursue college as she stated:

Text 6.45

> I want to go to college so I have to do good. My counselor reminds me that I have to keep a certain GPA if I want to get into college. I know that if I take AP and IB classes they help my GPA because the grades are worth more. I want a good GPA so I can go to college.

She used her motivation to drive her want for better grades and become prepared for college. Navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) proved essential in order for her to become college bound. Alejandra understood she needed to perform academically at a certain level to demonstrate she could succeed in AP and IB courses necessary to position herself eligible to enroll in a four-year university upon graduating from Puedes.

**Manuel**

Student Motivation in Manuel's reflection also assisted in contributing to his ability to exit the EL program. For this student Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) was influenced how he experienced school that resulted in becoming college bound. Manuel was eager to become college bound because of his own mother's struggle to learn English. He used what he saw in his mother as a student to drive the type of courses he took upon entering Puedes High School as he stated:

Text 6.46

> I also pick the classes I want to take like AP instead of regular classes. I want to go to college and I know that AP and IB classes will help me. The classes can be hard but I want to do well. I saw how my mom struggled to learn English and I'm lucky I know English and can go to college.

He used his motivation to succeed in school and connected that want to the types of classes he decided to enroll in at Puedes.

In the interview I asked him what advice would he give to an incoming freshman and he responded, "...to work hard always and get good grades. Try AP and IB classes

because you won't know what you can do if you don't try hard". He understood that the type of classes he took were important so that he could be positioned to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation.

Manuel benefited from what Yosso identifies as Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) throughout his educational trajectory. Familial, aspirational, and navigational capital (Yosso, 2005) proved to be key to his ability to exit the EL program and succeed in school. He used his mother's struggle and his want to for a college education as the aspirations he needed to do well in school. He also looked to his family as a resource and reminder as to why he needed to succeed in school. He learned how to navigate the school structure so that he could be positioned to pursue a college education upon graduation. Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) contributed to his ability to become college bound, exiting the EL program was not his focus but resulted because of his ability to activate the different forms of capital.

**Betty**

Betty identified Student Motivation as a contributor to her academic success. In the analysis of applying student voice I applied Giroux (1986) method to understand how the student explained her lived schooling experiences that shaped her feelings, beliefs, and thoughts as a student. This student indicates that in middle school she began to transform as a student. As she reflected on her middle school educational experience she shared the following:

Text 6.47

> I just started to work harder so that I could get better classes in high school. I knew I had to get the grades to be reclassified. I didn't want to go to high school and not take hard classes. When the counselors came to

> speak to us and they said we could pick our classes I was excited. I could take classes and challenge myself. I wanted to take the hard classes because they said those would prepare you for college and I wanted to go to college.

For Betty, working hard also meant fluency in English, access to rigorous coursework, and exiting the EL program. This perception was developed because of her schooling experiences and not because the school had explicitly made this statement. This was evident as she described her experience in school as an English Learner:

Text 6.48

> I think in middle school. I knew I had to get better in my English to take harder classes so I just started reading more to get better. I read different kinds of books some were stories others were facts. I wanted to learn more about things that interested me and I found the more I read different kinds of books the more I understood in my classes. In elementary we didn't have much choice in what we read I just remember a lot of speed reading. When I got to middle school. I had more choices and I started to just read.

She used her motivation to become "better in English" by increasing the amount of time she spent reading. This statement is significant because it aligns with Krashen's (2018) finding in that a key component necessary to increase fluency in English for EL students is to provide opportunities to explore reading in an environment that does not include student accountability for reading.

According to Betty, "better English" meant "harder classes". As I asked her what advice would she give incoming freshmen and she stated:

Text 6.49

> To challenge yourself because if you just take regular classes you won't know what you can really do. I think I am better prepared to go to college because now my English is where it needs to be. I think a student coming to Puedes can't lose their motivation because things are hard. If you want to go to college I think you should take hard classes to be prepared. Just because your English isn't where it needs to be at the beginning doesn't mean it can't get better.

In this example it becomes evident that for this student resistance capital was activated and served as the contributor to her ability to exit the EL program. Yosso (2005) defines resistance capital as "the knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality" (p. 80). Her goal to become fluent in English became her fuel to resist the traditional high school courses and enroll in "harder classes" that ensured her ability to not only exit the EL program but also be positioned to attend a four-year university upon graduation.

**Gloria**

Oldfather (1995) states that as you capture student voice you are able understand how they develop their perceptions and experiences of school. In the following example I am able to understand how this student developed her goal of becoming college bound early in her schooling trajectory. Gloria attended an elementary school that created an opportunity for her to think about her college future. In the process of reflecting on a key schooling experience that influenced her she stated:

Text 6.50

> I think it was when I saw the PowerPoint and the girl talking about Cal State Fullerton that I decided I needed to get ready for college. She I inspired me to go to college. She was a young girl like me and she talked about not just going to college but what she wanted to do with her future. That motivated me because if she could go to college I could go to college.

Although she did not maintain a relationship with the student presenter she connected with the student because she was a Latinx like her and made the concept of going to college attainable.

Gloria was also self-motivated to do well in school as she stated:

Text 6.51

> I never knew I wasn't fluent in English but like I said in middle school I decided I wanted to be in honors classes so I started working hard because I wanted to be in honors. I guess you could say getting into honors was my goal so I worked to get in those classes. I was motivated to get into the class.

Her self-motivation to be in "honors" were key in creating schooling experiences that would assist her to pursue her goal of college. She reiterated her goal as I ask her what had she done to prepare for college she stated:

Text 6.52

> Like I said in elementary I knew I wanted to go to college. In middle school I figured out I needed higher classes. When I got to high school before I started the counselors came to speak to us about IB and I knew I wanted the diploma. So I have taken AP and IB classes to get ready for college. I go to AP readiness at UCR once a month since sophomore year. I have also gone to visit colleges with my school.

Gloria developed the desire to attend college early during her schooling trajectory. For her the structure and culture of her schools, from elementary to high school, motivated her to exit "regular classes" and be positioned for college. She used her schooling experiences to develop internal motivation and be a successful student. In this example, I found Gloria equated success to making her aspirations of going to college a reality. Aspirational, navigational, and resistant capital were key components of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) that she successfully activated to achieve her goal upon graduation from high school.

**Rocio**

Cook-Sather (2006) states that as you capture student voice you listen to understand the unique perspective of what happens in school and classroom communities. For this student, Student Motivation served as a key contributor to how she experienced

but also how she developed the perspective of those schooling experiences. As I asked Rocio to if she controlled her learning she responded:

Text 6.53

> My mom has always told me it's up to me to get good grades so if I want good grades I have to do well. It's up to me how well I do in school. I control he grades I do it's sounds cliché but my future is in me. I mean like the classes I take and how I do in them…I push myself because I want to do well so I go to college.

According to her perception, she took responsibility for her education despite the parent and school support available. She used her aspiration for a better future that included college as a motivator to do well academically.

As Rocio identified a key experience that influenced her schooling trajectory she stated:

Text 6.54

> Well I think when the counselors came to speak to us at the middle school I knew I wanted to join IB. I saw the presentations from students that were in college and I wanted to be like them in a good college. I think the kids talking to us helped inspire me. I was also motivated to join harder classes because in middle school I couldn't get them.

Although she acknowledged the presence of counselors she viewed other students as key to developing her motivation to pursue college. In this case other students served as motivators and she viewed their experiences as attainable.

Rocio developed the perception early in her schooling trajectory that her English was not strong. When I was asked her to reflect on what it means to be an RFEP student she responded, "Well in elementary I knew my English wasn't good because I was learning and like I said in fifth grade I got that book and just studied so that I could be a

better speller". She used her own motivation to become fluent in English to drive her independent studying of the English language.

In these examples it is evident that the various form of capital that comprise Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) were activated. Yosso (2005) states that capital at can build upon each other to access and navigate structures such as the school setting (p. 77). For Rocio her awareness of the early exposure to college, understanding the different types of classes (Honors, regular, IB), and knowing her English was not "good" were components that motivated her to access the courses she needed to pursue a college education. She used her awareness of the different experiences to motivate her to succeed in school. Her aspirational, navigational, and resistant capital (Yosso, 2005) became the key to her ability to exit the EL trajectory.

## Conclusion

In this research Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) contributed to these LTELs ability to exit the EL program. I found that parents played an important role in these students' abilities to exit the EL program. Despite the fact the parents did not speak the English language or attend the United States public school system they used their direction and ability to motivate their children to ensure they succeeded in school. Success for these students meant pursuing a college education at a four-year institute, exiting the EL program was not necessarily a priority.

In this chapter I used student voice (Mitra, 2006) to describe the different experiences and resources that proved essential to their success. Success for these students meant not only graduating from high school but also being prepared and

positioned to enter a four-year university upon graduation. Through their perspective of how they explained their lived experiences (Giroux 1986) in school it became evident that they and their parents influenced their schooling experience. Although their parents may not have understood the school system they inculcated the habits such as questioning, studying, and analyzing through their daily interactions with their students. Many of the students did not strive to eliminate the EL label because upon entering Puedes High School open access to coursework allowed them to demonstrate their abilities.

## Chapter 7: Implications for Policy and Practice

This data in this chapter answers the last question posed in my research: In what ways can "student voice" reshape current policy and practice in ways that increase the likelihood of students exiting English Learner programs? Callahan and Shifrer (2016) state schools should determine the needs of their specific EL population to determine how policy and programs are implemented. In this research I pursued the use of former LTEL student voice(s) to explain their schooling experiences and their ability to exit the EL program. For these students exiting the EL program was not the priority; rather, they wanted to be prepared to pursue a university degree, for which their EL program would not suffice. In this chapter, I argue that if schools are to enhance the schooling experiences for EL students the practice of "listening to student voice and their perspective" should be used to inform decisions that impact this marginalized population (Mitra, 2006, p7). I use student voice(s) from my research to discuss possible implications for policy and practice that will increase the likelihood of other ELs and LTELs to exit EL programs.

### Primary Language Support

Lau v. Nichols (1974) required the public school system to establish programs that would result in fluency in English for ELs. In the process of implementing Lau v. Nichols (1974) an instructional practice that resulted was the use of primary language support to assist students in developing the understanding of the English language.

However, according to the participants in this research, they believe they could NOT use their primary language during their elementary school years.

Two of the six participants in my study explained how Spanish assisted or influenced them in school. These students considered the use of Spanish to be an asset. Two other participants used Spanish to explain their responses in the interview but did not provide instances of viewing the use of Spanish as a strength within the school setting. The participants seemed to flow between English and Spanish flawlessly.

**Spanish Use a Strength**

Mitra (2004) states that as researchers capture student voice we obtain their opinion as well as insights to possible solutions to problems within the school (p. 651). In this section I sought to understand how the students experienced the use of Spanish in the school setting. Two of the six participants articulated that they perceived Spanish as an asset and key to their academic success.

**Alejandra**

Giroux (1986) found that students are capable of using their historical experiences within the school setting to explain how they develop their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. As I captured Alejandra's voice it was evident that she had developed her own perception of the acceptable use of Spanish in the school setting. She proceeds to explain her schooling experience as an EL from elementary to middle school:

Text 7.1

> Ummm… well it was difficult to talk to some of my friends who didn't speak Spanish because I would use Spanish and English both and they really didn't understand… so it was hard for me in elementary. In elementary I used Spanish with some of my classmates because I didn't

> understand what we were supposed to do. Like what book to take out. I learned to look around in class to figure out what we were doing or a student sitting near me. Like in elementary I wasn't able to get the help I needed. My friends helped me a lot. That's what I remember. I felt like in middle school I felt more comfortable talking in Spanish more to my friends than in English. I felt like it was okay to use both languages in middle school. I didn't know I was a English learner I just knew I had some different classes but no one told me why.

Based on her elementary schooling experience Alejandra felt that the use of Spanish was not encouraged. She did not indicate she was told explicitly not to use Spanish; however, she felt the use of Spanish was not acceptable. In contrast, as she transitioned to middle school she felt comfortable to use both English and Spanish openly in and out of class. This perspective is significant because as Giroux (1986) indicates student perception and beliefs develop through their lived experiences. For this student her lived experience created a perception that the use of Spanish was not acceptable until she entered middle school.

In middle school Alejandra developed the view of Spanish as an asset. In her schooling experience something occurred to allow her to become comfortable "code switching" (Zentella, 1997). She could not elaborate on exactly what had occurred that gave her the comfort to use English and Spanish within the school structure at the middle school level. According to Zentella (1997), code switching is "a creative style of bilingual communication that accomplishes important cultural and conversational work" (p. 113). Zentella states "code-switching is a way of saying you belong to both worlds, and should not be forced to give up one for the other" (1997, p 114). Alejandra viewed her ability to switch from English to Spanish as a strength in her communication skills. I

asked: " Do you consider the ability to speak in English and Spanish a strength?" She stated:

Text 7.2

> It does strengthen my communication yeah because if I don't know a word in English I can use Spanish to figure it out. I can also understand like words that are harder because they usually translate in Spanish. I think being in IB and AP classes helped me because I learned like…my vocabulary increased because I could connect to the words in Spanish.

As Yosso (2005) might argue, because Alejandra was able to communicate and apply both languages she was able to use her linguistic capital and demonstrate her intellectual ability to succeed in school. As a senior in high school she demonstrated great confidence in both languages as she expressed herself about advice her mother would give her when she would tell her to *"ponte las pilas"* [think hard and work hard]. Despite the fact she could not articulate the events that led to her confidence, this description allowed me to understand that the school as well as her mother had helped her to become a confident bilingual student.

Alejandra's ability to use Spanish was key to her confidence and her success in school and her pursuit of a college education upon graduation. Although she did not learn Spanish in a school setting she did speak Spanish at home and with her friends. Regardless of the fact that she did not enter school with fluency in English, her primary language served as an asset that she used to learn and explain herself to others. She was able to use her linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005) to successfully adjust to and perform in school.

**Manuel**

Oldfather (1995) found that in the process of obtaining "student voice" the researcher must treat their perspective as that of an expert who can explain their own perceptions and experiences as learners. As I analyzed Manuel's data I found the theme of Spanish and use the data to explain how he perceived the use of Spanish. Manuel did not initially view Spanish as an asset:

Text 7.3

> I didn't know my English was good in elementary but I think in middle school I got better because I was helping my mom learn English. Before she started taking English classes I really didn't try learning Spanish.

Although Manuel spoke Spanish at home he did not receive academic instruction to increase his ability to read and write in Spanish because the school structure did not provide that option as an instructional program. Manuel spoke Spanish with his mother but did not have the experience of translating academic English to Spanish. He learned how to use dictionaries and online resources to teach his mother English and develop his ability to understand and use academic Spanish. According to him, his mother pursued English as a Second Language classes and that is when he developed his fluency in both languages. He stated:

Text 7.4

> In middle school because I had to help my mom learn English. I had to explain to her in Spanish why we say things different in English. I think helping her helped me understand English better and get better grades. I also started to speak more Spanish. I wasn't embarrassed to use it.

This student was able to also activate what Yosso (2005) identifies as linguistic capital. His ability to communicate in English and Spanish was an asset that benefited both him

and his mother. He was able to develop his intellectual and social skills by communicating in two languages (Yosso, 2005).

The data that I captured through these student interviews assist us in explaining their perspectives Mitra (2006). Giroux (1986) states that lived experiences assist in further explaining how students develop their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings (p. 49). These students initially perceived Spanish use as negative but through their transition to middle school the perception changed. Perhaps the school structure changed in middle school that allowed for their newfound freedom of "code-switching" (Zentella, 1997). Since the students in this study were now seniors in high school it would be of interest to research further how students at the elementary level perceive the use of their primary language.

**Spanish Inserts**

Mitra (2003, 2006) states that as you capture student voice you must allow them to use their own language as you explain their perspective. The data analyzed demonstrate that the students turned to Spanish to assist as they explained their schooling experience. Three of the six participants inserted Spanish words or phrases in their interview responses. What I coded as "Spanish inserts" Zentella (1997) refers to as "code-switching". According to Zentella (1997), code switching is "a creative style of bilingual communication that accomplishes important cultural and conversational work" (p. 113). Zentella states "code-switching is a way of saying you belong to both worlds, and should not be forced to give up one for the other" (1997, p 114). These participants used Spanish as a way to express their pride of their parents and accomplishments.

**Pedro**

Oldfather (1995) indicates that as student voice is captured the researcher is to use the students' perceptions and experiences as learners to explain their trajectory. Pedro did not use Spanish as the main language of our interview but he turned to Spanish when I asked him who influenced his schooling experiences. He stated, "I feel that family can play a role in what you do but its up to you your own *"ganas"*. As I analyzed my notes the way he phrased *"ganas"* explained his determination to resist the EL trajectory and become college bound. As he explained his *"ganas"* in how he performed in school he made sure I was aware he didn't use all the school resources because in his perception the school structure had suppressed him to the EL coursework prior to entering high school. Pedro learned through the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) that if he was to enter a four-year university upon graduation he had to have an internal drive, which in this case was his *"ganas"*. By inserting this simple word in our conversation he was able to convey his emotions as well as determination to achieve his goal of going to college.

**Rocio**

Giroux (1986) indicates that in the process of capturing student voice you can obtain data to explain their lived experiences and how those shape their lives, feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. Rocio shared how her regular trips to Mexico influenced her as a student and child. She was proud of her background and her strong bond with her mother. As she reflected on her goal of going to college she stated:

Text 7.5

> … I think knowing I can help my family and my mom always cheering me on she's a *"gritona"* but she means well like not in a bad way. She

> motivates me because she says I'm going to help my other cousins by showing them we can go to college.

She referred to her mother as a *"gritona"* which translates to "screamer. "However, she viewed her mother being a *"gritona"* to describe how she cheered her on and motivated her to do well in school. For her calling her mother a *"gritona"* proved to be a cultural asset that assisted her in succeeding in school. She used the term in Spanish to not only describe her mother but also as a term of endearment because of the strong bond they had. For her the ability to insert the Spanish term in our interview was to assist in explaining her connection to family.

**Betty**

Cook-Sather (2006) states that in the process of capturing student voice the data collected will allow one to understand the unique student perspective. Betty's was one of the most descriptive and emotional of my focal students when she described how she viewed herself as a student. She also inserted Spanish in our interview to not only convey a message that her father consistently shared with her but also the emotions she displayed as to why becoming college bound was a family obligation. She stated, "By doing well in school and going to college I can have a better choice of what career I can choose. He says *"se abren las puertas"* [doors will open] with an education". The "code-switch" (Zentella, 1997) is significant because the statement she heard from her father conveyed a strong and constant reminder of the opportunities obtaining a college education would provide her The concept of *"se abren las puertas"* may seem like a simple phrase but in the context of our emotionally charged conversations we had about her future, the phrase was loaded with family expectations and obligations.

For these students Spanish served as what Yosso (2005) identifies as linguistic capital. That is, the students demonstrated "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language" (Yosso, 2005, p. 78). The examples provide evidence that the students were able to use two languages effectively to influence not just their self-perception but to fuel their aspiration of going to college.

I found it interesting that the students did not feel comfortable using Spanish during their years in elementary. As a teacher and administrator at the elementary school level I experienced first hand the use of primary language support. Unfortunately, it is apparent that not all school settings use this instructional practice. According to policy such as Lau v. Nichols (1974), Castañeda v. Pickard (1981), primary language support is supposed to be provided in order to accelerate the acquisition of the English language. The student voices captured primarily negative perspectives on the use of Spanish in school. They did not state they were ever told explicitly they could not use Spanish in the school setting. Perhaps anti-bilingual education legislation such as Proposition 227, which was approved by California voters in 1998, and the English only instruction movement resulted in these students experiencing a "hidden curriculum" discouraging them from using Spanish in the classroom.

California has had a complicated past with bilingual education policy and practice for decades despite standing federal rulings like Lau v. Nichols (1974). In 2017 Proposition 58 came into law, which repealed Proposition 227. Proposition 58 replaced the English only instruction for English Learners with multilingual pathways to literacy skills for all students such as offering dual immersion programs (CDE, 2017). The

students in this study experienced school during the Proposition 227 era. Future studies may perhaps revisit these policy trends to explain if students' schooling experiences have changed since the implementation of Proposition 58 and revisit primary language support at the elementary level to explore if the change in policy is now applied. Additionally, I believe another component that may be pursued in the future is to consider how language in the classroom is used to support English Learners and obtain elementary student perspective on the use of Spanish while currently at that level. Pursuing this research would be significant because as indicated by Giroux (1986) through student voice we may obtain their perspective to understand how they perceive the implementation of policy and practice. Policy and practice have changed since the students in this study were in elementary school; perhaps these shifts will provide data that explain the impact of policy and practice.

## The Label of EL

In my research I found that students did not understand or were even aware of the fact they were identified as English Learners, much less the consequences this would likely have on their educational trajectories When I explained the process of how the label of English Learner (EL), Long Term English Learner (LTEL), and Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) was acquired the students were not familiar with the labels or process. The EL label is obtained when each student enrolled in school and completed a home language survey that required an assessment be administered because their parent had indicated a language other than English was spoken in the home. The LTEL label is acquired after a student is enrolled in a California public school for five or

more years and did not increase their English language proficiency at least one level per year. The RFEP label is acquired when it is determined the student met local district criteria that could included state test scores on summative assessments in grade level content, performed at the district determined level in the English language acquisition summative test, and earned passing grades in English Language Arts. The only recollection they provided in their schooling trajectory was "not being good in English until middle school" (Manuel, 2018). The students did not recall the process they experienced when they became Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) their freshman year or the significance of this milestone.

The data in this research demonstrates a need for the school system to inform students of their standing as an English Learner, what the label means, and the process to exit the EL program. The information sessions must be revisited throughout the school year especially when grades and state testing nears so that not only students understand the importance of these events but also teacher awareness is increased. At the school site level I have experienced the practice of "data chats". Data chats refer to meeting with students one to three times per year with the purpose of informing them of their academic standing and establishing goals for the new school year. The frequency the school personnel meets with students should be as often as possible to not only discuss data but get to know each students' strengths and weaknesses to provide support them in the classroom. Based on the students in this study and how they accessed their counselor regularly a similar model should be applied by all grade levels if the number of students that exit the EL program is to increase.

Mitra (2003) indicates that using student experiences can inform and shape school reform. I also suggest schools use student voice to explore how students perceive instruction. One way to do this is by engaging students from varied levels in English fluency to discuss how they experience school, for example, with regard to the instructional practices used in class that have increased their fluency in English. Teachers often employ different student engagement opportunities; it would be interesting to obtain from the students' perspective which practices they not only enjoy but those which transfer to other content areas. The student forum must be conducted with great caution, care, and respect of the students' voice that may assist in reshaping the learning environment.

Giroux (1986) states students are experts of their own learning. As student voice is captured to understand their schooling perspective the discussions must be orchestrated through a fluid two-way communication that focuses on the specific student population need. For example, as Long Term English Learner voices are captured, the focus should center on why they are labeled LTELs and the criteria required to exit the program. In addition, the criteria to exit the EL program must be shared on an ongoing basis to not only inform students but identify specific criteria that needs to be met as part of the reclassification process. Each district has developed their own reclassification criteria; students need to know the criteria and how they can meet the goals throughout the school year. The school site would benefit from small group discussions with LTELs to determine not only how they perceive school but also how they perceive themselves as students. As indicated earlier in this research the students in this study were not aware

they were LTELs or the story of success they had written for themselves by becoming RFEP and exiting the EL program to position themselves as college bound students. This information must be actively shared in order to not only celebrate RFEP students but maintain an awareness of what it means to exit the EL program in terms of their future beyond high school.

In the State of California, all school district establish their own reclassification criteria. The frequency to reclassify students varies from district to district. At Fender students are reclassified in the fall and in the spring. Students can be identified as eligible candidates once state testing scores become available and this information should be shared with the teacher of record who influences the students English Language Arts grade, since it is part of the criteria at Fender. This is important because according to the documents I reviewed at Fender, the majority of students that did not meet reclassification criteria prior to their freshmen year did so due to their grades, not achievement on state testing. Students that are candidates for reclassification must obtain a grade of C or better as part of the criteria at Fender despite the fact they may obtain an acceptable meeting or exceeding standard score on summative assessments. Meeting or exceeding standard on the state assessments means that the student has achieved at grade level in English and Math level content.

Prior to the implementation of the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) was used to determine the acquisition of English. In the review of the documents for the students in this study it was evident that the annual CELDT score was used to determine

the ELD grade on the report card. ELD grades are important because for students at the elementary level a passing grade in ELD is also required for reclassification. In many instances the students performed at or above grade level on the California Standards Test (CST) but the grades they earned in ELD during the actual year did not reflect an increase in English proficiency. It has been my experience that teachers often rely on the summative English language fluency score to include in their report card versus actual current student performance in class. This is a key area to shift that would require additional professional development for teachers in what the summative scores mean in the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to align English Language Development grades accordingly.

I propose providing not only an overview of what the test scores mean but using the revised English Language Development Standards in conjunction with the English Language Arts Standards to drive and inform professional development. Professional development for teachers is required within the federal and state guidelines for funding. The next step must be to revise the ongoing professional development based on the current students and their needs. In order to determine the student need I propose using student voice as part of policy shifts that occur at the site level. The same program cannot meet the needs of students as their need changes year after year. As indicated by Callahan and Shifrer (2016) the school must listen to their current student needs in order to determine how programs are implemented. A single test administered once a year should not be seen as indicative of a student's overall performance in a content area necessary for reclassification, which based on the students at Fender, was the standard practice.

**Policy and Programs**

The students in this research provided me with important data that calls for reconsideration of policy and practice. Students' voices call for attention to all district policy established for reclassification, as criteria varies from district to district and state to state (Linquanti & Cook, 2015). If a district establishes policy and programs they must remain current with legislation such as Proposition 58 that was passed and adopted in 2016 as well as changes in state testing criteria that was implemented in 2016 (CDE, 2016). Updating policy and programs is necessary especially for the EL population served at the district level because these changes impact the students' ability to become reclassified.

All districts must have an EL Master Plan for English Learners in the State of California that describes their application of policy and programs. The EL Master Plan for English Learners developed by Fender was last revised in 2008. This means that the policy the district has in place is not current with updated policy and program requirements that directly impact the EL program and the number of students that are reclassified. Students are no longer administered the California State Test (CST) in grades 2-11 but instead are given the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) in grades 3-8 and 11 as the summative assessment. This is a critical shift in two ways. First, since Fender requires state test results to identify students eligible for reclassification, students are not eligible for reclassification until they enter grade four since that is when scores become available from the state. Then since there is no state assessment data for students in grades 9-10 the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test

(PSAT) scores are used to determine eligibility for those students. This means that students in grades 9-10 are expected to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency on a college preparation exam. If this is the case, the question posed to Fender Unified School District would be how are students identified as EL or LTEL provided the instructional supports as indicated in policies such as Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) that prepare students for such high stakes testing? An interest would be to pursue further research to determine how the changes in assessments for English Learners impact the reclassification rates for districts in California that use similar criteria.

The EL Master Plan developed by school districts provides the school sites guidance on how to implement policy and programs for the English Learners. For example, the State of California calls for the plans to explain the programs that are to be implemented that include instructional resources and personnel. Additionally, within the plan specific funding allocations are assigned to programs at the site level. The funds allocated to the site are in the form of what is called Local Control Funding Formula for English Learners (LCFF-EL), which is based on the number of English Learners enrolled at the school site. This funding allocation is used by the sites based on what they determine is needed to supplement the instructional program for English Learners. For example, sites may decide to purchase materials or provide tutoring.

At Fender the District determines the number of bilingual assistants allocated to the sites. These positions are important especially at the secondary level because they provide primary language support in core content subjects such as math, science, history, or English. As I reviewed the EL Master Plan for Fender I could not identify specific

criteria used to determine how many Bilingual Assistants are assigned to each site within the district. If the district considered the number of English Learners at each site and since these numbers shift so should the number of personnel at the different grade levels. For example, as demographics change, increase or decrease of English Learners, so should the allocated site resources, which currently is not the case. I suggest a review of the EL policy and practice at the district level in order to determine how to adequately serve the EL population. In addition, as policy is reviewed the actual number of EL students at each school site should determine how resources are allocated. By this I mean a shift in staffing based on the number of students at a specific grade level. If program and implementation are to be effectively implemented the school district must ensure that all levels have the capacity to equitably serve the EL population.

These are just a few of the components that if adjusted could impact the number of ELs and LTELs that may perhaps exit the EL program. Perhaps future research could pursue how restructured plans become actionable.

**English Learner Summative Assessments Administration**

As a teacher and site administrator for the past twenty years, I have often reflected on how Summative Assessments are administered at the site level. By this I mean how state mandated tests were given to students each fall or spring. In the past, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) was administered in the early fall of each school year to determine the fluency of EL students. Currently, we are now administering the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) in the spring. In addition, the schools are required to administer California Assessment of Student

Performance and Progress (CAASPP), Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Advanced Placement Exams (AP), and International Baccalaureate Exams (IB) all within the spring semester. The administration of these assessments matter because prior to 2016, EL students were given the CELDT summative test a few months into the school year, which did not measure the growth in language acquisition that occurs at the end of the school year.

As a teacher and site administrator at the Elementary, Middle, and High School level it is evident that based on my experience the summative assessments for EL students are not always given the same level of respect when administered. For example, students who are required to take the EL summative assessment are often tested in a setting different from their regular classroom or not with their teacher of record for Language Arts. However, the students who are identified as English Only or reclassified remain with their Language Arts teacher and instruction for them continues. This means that instruction moves forward and the EL students return to their class and experiences an instructional disconnect because they missed key information. The test administration of CELDT or ELPAC reproduces inferior educational opportunities as compared to English Only or reclassified students because the learning for English Learners is interrupted due to testing. Other times EL students experience testing in a gymnasium or multi-purpose room, which may not be the best test setting. On the other hand test such as CAASPP, PSAT, SAT, AP, and IB receive what I call a “serious administration”. For example, for these tests the school site ensures students are in smaller groupings, the test

is administered in a regular classroom setting, and no interruptions occur while these tests are administered.

How tests are administered matters. If EL students are expected to meet specific levels of achievement on summative assessments I suggest reconsideration of how the tests are administered so that these procedures do not reproduce inferior learning opportunities for this marginalized student population.

**Professional Development**

Professional Development is provided to teachers and support staff throughout the school year. Often school districts contract professional developers or what is perceived as cutting edge training to further or enhance instructional practices. However, the lens is often centered from the school's point of view. I propose that instead we use the insights provided by the students in this research and provide a platform for "student voice" (Mitra, 2006).

The students in this research provided evidence indicating the significance of parent influence on their schooling trajectory. As school sites create parent involvement opportunities I suggest schools create an opportunity for open dialogue to determine their local EL population needs that is inclusive of parent input. This means having conversations with parents regularly to obtain their opinion and suggestions on the different ways they interact and motivate their children. The collaboration needs to become a shared conversation, not a meeting with an agenda driving each minute. Clearly, the parents in this study were involved in their child's education but were not always present at the school to obtain information, guidance, or training. Students are

usually very in tune with technology. One way to reach more parents could be the creation of online infomercials that are created by students to inform parents of key information they need to be aware of to ensure their child's academic success.

Parent involvement needs to transform from morning, afternoon, and evening meetings where information is given to adapt to what parents need for their specific child. Based on this research schools need to move away from a top down approach to parent training. Instead information needs to not only be shared, but also discussed, and framed as to how the parents see the school supporting their student. This approach would allow for parents to drive a more fluid agenda based on parent direction.

**Impact of Mentors**

The students in this research did not indicate they connected with other LTELs or students that had been reclassified prior to entering Puedes High School. Students have powerful stories. In this research, when I initially met with these students they did not realize the significant success story they had written for themselves by becoming reclassified in high school.

Peer pressure is a common concept at any school level. That is, students are influenced by other students. School sites could capitalize on this natural phenomenon that occurs within students and encourage former LTELs to mentor other LTELs, therefore activating positive peer pressure. Connecting students with others that they may perhaps never cross paths could prove to become a form of what Yosso (2005) identifies as Community Cultural Wealth by activating peer pressure to overcome their struggles and goals within the school structure. For example, by sharing their aspirations and how

they navigate school they not only inform how their peers maneuver the school structure but use each other as a resource to "maintain their hopes and reams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). The activation of positive peer pressure can produce positive outcomes for the marginalized LTELs and serve as a resource to increase the number of students that exit the EL trajectory.

**Celebrations**

In the school setting we often celebrate student achievement. Unfortunately, the celebration of those achievements often centers on summative assessments that do not include the ones administered for English language fluency. Students need to not only understand why they are taking the EL summative assessment but also understand what the scores mean and how those scores impact their educational trajectory. A simple method to address this would be to celebrate student performance on this exam as is done with others.

Since the students in this study were reclassified Puedes High School has established what they call a "Reclassification Celebration" where students are recognized in a ceremony and presented with a certificate in the presence of their LTEL peers and family. Reclassification at Puedes is now viewed as part of an honor. The practice of a Reclassification Celebration is unique to Puedes High School as this is not the practice at all sites within Fender Unified. Perhaps creating opportunities for these celebrations within a school district would increase the number of EL reclassifications because this act could create awareness of why the EL summative exam is significant and the role it plays in their future. Specifically, the system needs to inform EL and LTEL students in high

school that exiting the EL program positions a student to enter coursework that prepares them for college as an option.

## Conclusion

This research used "student voice" (Mitra, 2006) to understand EL students' educational journey and their perspective based on their lived experiences in school (Giroux, 1986). The participants were both typical and atypical; they fit the definition of LTEL but they selected courses in high school that positioned them to enroll in a four-year university upon graduation. However, as I reviewed possible participants it was apparent that only twelve of the thirty-seven reclassified students were potentially college bound by their senior year. This raises several questions: why do not all the others achieve at the same level as the twelve that were college bound? How can policy and programs better support reclassified English Learners to ensure they succeed in the mainstream coursework? I am left with questions as to what narratives would those students provide to inform and reshape the school structure.

"Student voice" is essential and must be used as an authority to participate, critique, and reform education based on student lived experiences (Cook-Sather, 2006) if we are looking to reform policy and practice. Puedes High School featured unique school structures that resulted from policy changes because they were required to implement the Turnaround Model due to the fact they were identified by the State of California as persistently low-achieving (CDE, 2010). In the process of changing the school structure the school was able to demonstrate as Page and Valli (1990) found, that when schools

include parents, students, and school staff the school can impact student learning and increase student success.

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