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Sí Se Puede, Sí Se Pudo, Sí Se Va a Poder: The Narrative Experience of Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students in Obtaining a High School Diploma

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Sí Se Puede, Sí Se Pudo, Sí Se Va a Poder:  
The Narrative Experience of Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students in  
Obtaining a High School Diploma

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction for the degree of Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

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2021

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University of California San Diego  
California State University, San Marcos

2021

## DEDICATION

¡Hasta La Victoria Siempre!

I have been very lucky in this life for so many reasons. Haber venido de una madre que tiene un corazón de amor y compasión, un padre que su inteligencia e impulso para ser el mejor padre posible es inspirador. Gracias Viejo por el cafecito y siempre estar a mi lado en compartir estos eventos and Ricky the endless love and joy I see in your eyes through all my achievements is empowering. You have truly loved me as your daughter and for that I am thankful for you.

Mario: I look up to you in so many ways for the love you have for life and the love you have for me. Thank you for always being there to tell me i'm overreacting and loving me the way you do.

Rick: I know that I can count on you for absolutely anything and you are the peacemaker between us three, I love you. A mi suegro Don Fabián el día que le dije que iba regresar a la escuela se emocionó y me dijo un que un día me llamarán Dra; Solano- Humerez. Yo se que él está con nosotros y sonriendo de los cielos igual con mi Abuelita Aurora y Nati y abuelos Ricardo y Daniel- nosotros somos el sueño de nuestros ancestors:

We are our ancestors' wildest dreams- so dream big dream fierce and dream endless!

Mateo: you have been that sunshine in my life that reminds me of how beautiful it is to be a child, to laugh, snuggle, play with Legos and not have a care in the world. The way you caress my face and check up on me melts my heart. I love you for that son and thank you for the boy that you are NEVER change that heart that you have sweet boy. You will always be my littlest one.

Idalis, your resilience, personality and smile is truly contagious. You are fierce! You are the most organized self-driven person that I know and, in many ways, little one I thrive to be like you. You are the one that reminds me that I am a mother before anything else and that truly is my very best title. Thank you and I love you. Always remember your worth. I am so proud to call you my daughter.

Rubencito, when you left to San Francisco I truly felt a piece of me died, it truly was one of the hardest times in my life but to see what you have accomplished and the responsible, kind, loving, young man you have become makes me realize you made the right decision and I thank you for that, Thank you for always just wanting to be in the same room with me and the mom.... Texts you send me Thank you and I love you. Always remember you have what it takes to achieve all that you dream off. I am so proud to call you my son.

Little Efren, my entire life I worried if the decision of having you at the age of 14 would have a negative effect on who you are and who you become and time and time again you show me that it has not and will not. The day you received your master's degree was a day I will forever hold in my heart. You did this on your own and no matter how difficult it was to get to where you have. You did it and for that we are all very proud and honored to call you, our son. You are always the first one to say good morning and the last one today good night and for that I thank

you and I love you. Always remember you are meant for greatness. You were my first inspiration.

Big Efren, I have been lucky enough to call you my best friend. You are in every way incredible, kind, intelligent, loving, patient, loyal, honest, an understanding man!

Efren, Words will never be enough to thank you for your love and friendship you have given me since the age of 12 years old. I want to thank you for the way you look at me and the father that you are. You have been my number 1 cheerleader from day 1. You supported me leaving our continuation school to graduate with my class in Oceanside while raising our 3-year-old son to wanting to go back to school to get my doctorate degree.

On the days I said, “maybe I can’t”- you let me know that I will. At times when I have to be a daughter first you let me know that you had everything under control. At times when some have hurt me - you have shown me the mirror of my worth- it’s hard to explain the love and respect I have for you and will forever be thankful for your kindness and love, your dedication to us. I am here because of your support and belief in me. I hope you know how much I love you and am thankful for your existence.

When we were young, we walked the beach collecting cans to feed our family but today together we rejoice that our hard work and dedication to our dreams have come true. We did it, we raised the family we envisioned and today we celebrate our sons receiving their degrees and starting a new chapter in their lives.

And as we move to the next chapters of our lives there is no way that I cannot recognize the one person that had the vision to bring us to this country to achieve our American dream that each one of us is doing in their own special way.

Tio Franz, Tio Franz, Espero que sepa que su visión de traernos a este país ha sido la semilla de todos nuestros logros. Estamos aquí por ti y hemos logrado nuestros sueños y metas gracias a tu visión y amor. Has dado mucho de ti mismo para cuidar de los demás y realmente espero que sepas que eres amado y que nuestros logros son también los tuyos.

In the doctoral program at UCSD you honor your degree to that special person that has helped you achieve your goal, and I would like to honor Efren, Efrencito, Ruben, Idalis, and Mateo with the award of UCSD Alumni Special Recognition Award.

Thank you to my beautiful aunts, uncles, cousins, friends thank you to every single person here that has been the light in my life as you have played such a beautiful role in these achievements with your love and friendship and together, we can say

**¡Si Se Pudo!**

EPIGRAPH

**Just because a student doesn't language in English, it doesn't diminish their brilliance.**

**Dr. José Medina**

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## VITA

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sí Se Puede, Sí Se Pudo, Sí Se Va a Poder:  
The Narrative Experience of Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students in  
Obtaining a High School Diploma

by

Carola Cristina Solano-Humerez

Doctor of Education in Education Leadership

University of California San Diego 2021

California State University San Marcos, 2021

Professor Brooke Soles, Chair

School districts across the country are responsible for providing a fair and equitable education to all students who enter its doors. The current flows of immigration have created a challenge for educational agencies to meet the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students. As unique members of the education system, these students enter not knowing the language, academic structures, educational requirements, or social norms of their new academic home. As families continue to migrate, their children often struggle to find a successful path in the American education system. For newcomer immigrant adolescent students, the first step in achieving their American dream is to earn their high school diploma. This study explored the

lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they pursued their high school diplomas.

Moving forward, I utilize newcomer immigrant adolescent students to identify RAIELs (Recently Arrived Immigrant English Learners Students) to define the group of students I study. The literature review presented explored research on English Language Learner students (ELLs) with a focus on RAIEL students, current academic structures serving ELLs, and the importance of a student's voice. Research indicated that to ensure academic success for newcomer immigrant adolescent students, it is imperative to have strong and purposeful academic structures that meet the social-emotional needs of these students. In addition to strong and purposeful structures, it is essential to clearly articulate the importance of a leadership role to ensure all agencies and decision-making entities are coordinated with an understanding of the academic, linguistic, social, and emotional needs of this special population. This population, often marginalized by so much more than just the inability to speak English; social justice and leadership implications are also discussed. This narrative inquiry study used qualitative methods to explore the nature of the questions based on the participants' views and experiences. This narrative inquiry study used qualitative methods to understand participants views based on the questions asked by the researcher. explore the nature of the questions based on the participants' views. Narrative inquiry describes a collaboration between participants and researchers during the collection of stories in which both gain valuable insight because of the process (Creswell, 2012). Allowing newcomer immigrant adolescent students to tell their stories was best suited through narrative inquiry. From my data analysis, three themes emerged from using the cultural proficiency essential element assessing culture and cultural proficiency essential element valuing diversity: historical context, family, and community programs. The importance of

understandings students lived experiences, the importance of family inclusion, and the importance of community programs that connect students to resources. Student expression played a key role in this analysis, allowing them to describe their experiences through their own voice. The essential elements that this study focused on was assessing culture and valuing diversity. Through this analysis, I address the following research questions: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and, Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Empowering and providing support to foster positive experiences for newcomer adolescent students is a collective task of parents, educational leaders, and community. Newcomer adolescent immigrants continue to arrive at schools in hopes of achieving their American dream. Ensuring structures are in place to support their academic and social emotional well-being will likely benefit society. As these students acclimate themselves into the communities where they live, it is important they integrate in a manner that positively impacts society.



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

"... Because inequalities at all levels of education still exist, educational equity is the civil rights issue of our generation" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 6).

This study aimed to address the research question: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Newcomer immigrant adolescent students come into the educational system with so much to offer yet often placed in structures where failure is inevitable (Olsen, 2020). For most of these students, English is a language they do not speak or understand with fluency so, their ability to voice their needs is non-existent. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting as they pursue their high school diplomas. Students shared their experiences with me via interview. Recently arrived English learners (RAELs) are a specific group of newcomer immigrant adolescent students. RAELs is a term currently used in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized by the 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arriving in their high school years tend to have difficulty completing the requirements necessary to earn their high school diplomas. This research intends to bring urgency to the needs of these students.

### **Statement of Problem**

In 2014, the dropout rate for immigrant students (seven percent) almost doubled that for U.S.-born students (3.8 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive with a lack of English language proficiency, a key predictor

for student adjustment and academic success (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). In contrast, research on newcomer immigrant adolescent students aiming to earn a high school diploma remains largely unanswered prior to this study.

Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive with educational, literacy and linguistic capabilities that vary greatly (Silva & Kucer, 2016). When newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive at the mid-way point of their education, the obstacles hindering their success increases due to a lack of English proficiency (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). A student's level of education upon arrival reflects their socio-economic status, hometown, age, and gender. An effective educational program that meets the linguistic and social-emotional needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students can reconcile these gaps and discrepancies (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Regardless of the age of arrival of newcomer immigrant adolescent students into their new educational system, they are accountable for meeting the same high academic standards as students born and raised in this country. They must meet school benchmarks, complete state assessments, and pass proficiency tests before having an opportunity to experiment with the language (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). The accountability and assessments placed on students at arrival is overwhelming and many times disillusioning.

In addition to educational barriers, newcomer immigrant adolescent students face social and cultural dislocation brought upon by the process of migration and the challenges of language acquisition (Suarez & Orozco, 2001). As the number of newcomer immigrant adolescent students continues to grow throughout the nation, so does the sense of urgency in creating and providing structures that allow these students to acquire academic English in the least amount of time. In fact, during the 2012-2013 academic year, ELLs numbered 4.4 million and constituted

nearly ten percent of all U.S. public students (Castellon et al., 2015). This urgency is felt by districts, teachers, parents, and students.

Although newcomer immigrant adolescent students are not a new phenomenon there is a new urgency to meet their educational needs (Kinsella, 2018; Olsen, 2010). As more accountability systems are created, underserved populations and their needs are identified as needing the most support (Olsen, 2018). Their needs are being highlighted through different accountability measures making it more difficult to hide the needs of these students and their progress. Understanding their academic needs will allow districts to build structures that will meet the needs to ensure academic growth.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The proposed study addressed the research question: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Cultural Proficiency provides educators with a framework to assess and change school policies and practices that will better serve the needs of students. To understand newcomer immigrant adolescent students, it is necessary to understand their experiences through their voices. This collective voice will serve to guide leaders, teachers, and community members to better support newcomer immigrant adolescent students' journeys in their new educational homes. This understanding is crucial to begin addressing issues of social justice, equity, and educational access. Social justice was discussed throughout this research, highlighting structures that permitted students to acclimate into their new schools and communities and begin to close the achievement gap facing newcomer immigrant adolescent students.

## **Research Question**

The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Educational Practices (Framework) embraces the examination of inner strengths and capabilities as well as the organization to better understand supportive structures for our students. In this research, I examine the impact these structures or lack of structures have on our newcomer immigrant adolescent students. In the Framework, there are Five Essential Elements: Assessing Cultural Knowledge, Valuing Diversity, Managing the Dynamics of Difference, Adapting to Diversity, and Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge. In this research, I utilize the following Elements to analyze my data and produce findings: Assessing Culture and Valuing Diversity. I connect to the following research questions to illuminate my findings: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and What experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere towards graduation?

## **Cultural Proficiency**

Cultural Proficiency refers to the values and behaviors of an individual that enable that person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment (Lindsey, 2017). A sense of privilege and entitlement arises from indifference to benefits that occur solely by one's membership in gender, race, or another cultural group (Lindsey, 2017). This barrier encapsulates the practice of denying one group's social benefits while awarding those same benefits to others (Lindsey, 2017). Utilizing the Cultural Proficiency Continuum, one of the Four Tools in the Framework, allows for a way to explain values and beliefs associated with actions that manifest in an individual's everyday actions. This Continuum allows for the framing of conversations within the interviews carried out for this dissertation. Cultural Proficiency takes a journey of

open engagement and conversation that allows us to best understand individuals' deeper thinking. Cultural Proficiency is not a plea for political correctness or inoffensive language. Its very purpose is to challenge assumptions that have created the current inequitable and discriminatory systems (Estrada, 2017). It is with this context I embarked on my study to understand the experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students through their lens of cultural proficiency and their unique student voice.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

To understand the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting, I implemented an asset-based narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2008). This type of inquiry is a way a researcher can examine and attempt to understand the meaning that an individual or a group of people give to a singular human or societal issue to develop their identity (Creswell, 2012). I completed a narrative inquiry to understand the experiences through their voices (Pagnucci, 2004). The inclusion criteria used supported the selection of five participant newcomer immigrant adolescent students enrolled in a high school setting, in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th, and have lived in the country for at least six months. These five students, classified as ELLs, and attend Southern California public schools. I conducted individual video conference interviews aiming to gather in-depth descriptions of their unique experiences. The interviews followed a semi-structured format that allowed for probing when necessary (Patton, 2015). The reason I chose this methodology was to amplify the voice of newcomer immigrant adolescent students to describe their experiences as they navigate towards obtaining a high school diploma. In narrative inquiry, the researcher explores an educational problem by understanding the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012), and the researcher investigates how humans experience the world.

Using the Framework (Quezada et al., 2012) this study aimed to analyze multiple aspects of Cultural Proficiency through the experiences of immigrant newcomer adolescent students. The ten semi-structures interview questions created align with the two essential elements from the Framework 1) Assessing Cultural Knowledge and 2) Valuing Diversity as follows:

- Assessing Cultural Knowledge: Identify the cultural groups present in the system.
- Valuing Diversity: Develop an appreciation for the differences among and between groups.

### **Definition of Terms**

I utilize newcomer immigrant adolescent students to identify RAIELs (Recently Arrived Immigrant English Learners Students) to define the group of students I studied. Little research exists on the experiences and needs of this subgroup of students. To be clear on the students in my research, these RAIELs students fall under the criteria of interest. The criteria included students who recently arrived into the U.S school system within the past 36 calendar months. These students are classified by schools as English Learners when they arrive in the U.S., a particularly crucial factor as some may already have proficiency in English due to it being the main language of their country. RAIELs students in this study are foreign-born students who have been in U.S. schools for up to three academic years and classified as English Learners upon arrival. Staying with this specific focus allowed me to narrow my study to a group of students where little research currently exists.

For clarity, I will briefly describe the classification of several types of ELLs. The following definitions arrive from the federal ELLs Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (ESSA, 2015).

- **Recently Arrived English Learners (RAIEL):** students new to the country within 12 calendar months and classified as English Learners.
- **Immigrant Children and Youth:** a term in ESSA (2015) to refer to individuals aged 3-21 who were born outside the U.S. and who have not been in the U.S for more than three academic years. A newcomer is commonly used to describe newly arrived immigrant students.
- **Newcomers:** The U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) defines newcomers as “any foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States” (U.S.DOE, 2016).
- **English Language Learners Students (ELLs):** students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.
- **Long Term English Learner Students (LTELs):** a formal educational classification given to students enrolled in American schools for more than six years, who are not progressing toward English proficiency, and struggling academically due to their limited English skills. States, districts, and schools determine the criteria and student characteristics used to identify long-term English learners. These students are typically identified after six or more years of enrollment in formal education and are most commonly enrolled in middle schools and high schools.

The following are the Five Essential Elements and definitions of the Framework (Quezada et al., 2012).

- **Assessing Cultural Knowledge:** Identification of cultural groups present in the system.

- **Valuing Diversity:** Developing an appreciation for the differences among and between groups.
- **Managing the Dynamics of Difference:** Learning to respond appropriately and effectively to the issues that arise in a diverse environment.
- **Adapting to Diversity:** Changing and adopting new policies and practices that support diversity and inclusion.
- **Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge:** Driving the changes into the systems of the organization.

In this study I focused on the following two elements:

- **Assessing Cultural Knowledge:** Identification of cultural groups present in the system.
- **Valuing Diversity:** Developing an appreciation for the differences among and between groups.

*Instrumentation.* This study utilized one on one interviews with newcomer immigrant adolescent students. The qualitative research interview sought to describe the meanings of central themes in the lives of the subjects (Creswell, 2012). Interviews are a practical form of collecting data (Creswell, 2012). The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees want to convey through their own voice and story. Creswell, 2012 states Interview questions developed aimed to allow newcomer immigrant adolescent students to vividly describe their experiences in their new school setting while trying to obtain a high school diploma. To keep the uniformity of semi-structured questions, I utilized the general interview guide approach for each interviewee; this provided a focus but still allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee (Kvale,1996). Utilizing individual interviews allow students to speak freely in sharing their experiences in a space where



it is only the researcher and participant (Creswell, 2012). I conducted all interviews via Zoom video conference. At the time of this research, this medium was chosen to ensure student safety and well-being due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I wanted to ensure students felt safe and comfortable speaking about their experiences.

A semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. Semi-structured interviews are often underutilized yet have remarkable potential (Creswell, 2012). This approach allowed for the utilization of a semi-structured set of questions with the flexibility to explore certain topics. The goal was to understand each participant's perspective at all levels of their unique experience.

Through this interview protocol, students had an opportunity to voice their lived experiences and shed light on their current experience obtaining their high school diploma. Interviews were scheduled for 60-90 minutes in duration. The utilization of the lens of Cultural Proficiency throughout the interview helped me to gain an understanding of each student's experience. Specifically, I explore what experiences contribute or detract them from obtaining a high school diploma.

For this study, I developed a set of questions aligned to gain information about students' backgrounds and past educational experiences. Additional questions asked helped me learn more about each student's experience as they navigated their way to obtaining a high school diploma. Although there are semi-structured interview questions pre-written for students, I utilized probing questions as needed (Appendix A). With parents' permission, interviews were video-audio-recorded for later transcription. For accuracy, I provided both the video audio recording and transcription to all participants. I explained the purpose of the interview and addressed the terms of confidentiality. Additionally, I verbally outlined the format and general timeframe of

the interview and provided continual opportunities for the student to ask questions and provide clarification if needed.

### **Significance of the Study**

As the influx of newcomer immigrant adolescent students continues to flow through borders, so does the need to ensure their academic, social, emotional, and linguistic needs are met. In my career as an educator for newcomer adolescent students the consistent equity gap newcomer immigrant adolescent students face is one known by many but addressed by few. For many, the American Dream is the driving force of immigration to the United States of America. As economies fall and dictatorships take over in Latin American countries, families continue to risk their lives to cross the border into a country they see holds a chance of a better life and future for their children (Santos, 2018). Immigrants drawn to the U.S. hope to achieve the American dream of seeking success while contributing to the social and economic vitality of our nation (Hernandez, 2012). Lack of access to academic and social-emotional systematic structures is what builds the equity gap (Olson, 2010). It is through understanding each student needs and building systemic structure to address those needs we can begin to address and narrow the equity gap.

During the 2012-2013 academic year, English language learners (ELLs) numbered 4.4 million and constituted nearly ten percent of all U.S. public students (Castellon et al., 2015). To address the changing demographics of these students, researchers focus on systemic structures enabling students to obtain resources and experiences to ensure inclusion in all aspects of education (Suarez & Orozco, 2015). Ample evidence exists regarding the abundant growth of newcomer immigrant adolescent students into the education system in the United States; this urgency is more apparent than ever affirmed (Castellon et al., 2015). The growth of these

numbers highlights the necessity for implementing research-based structures that are purposeful and data-driven and may assist newcomer immigrant adolescent students academically and emotionally.

Based on country of origin and socio-economic status, newcomer immigrant adolescent students often decline in educational performance (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). While many newcomer immigrant adolescent students put in double the work and effort, they will continue to experience a pattern of decline in academic achievement based on GPA and test score data within a few years of coming to the U.S (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). This downward trajectory continues as the academic load in secondary schools becomes more demanding, the linguistic and content knowledge required of them grows increasingly out of reach, and students receive fewer instructional interventions to support their learning (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). The lack of skills in teaching foundation literacy skills held by secondary teachers also serves as a disconnect with students needs and what can be provided to them.

Once newcomer students arrive onto the high school campus, A-G requirements and state testing becomes their new reality. These requirements completely ignore students' time of arrival, literacy in their native language and social-emotional trauma. As well as the trauma and emotions that come with leaving a country, they call home into a country that politically does not want them (Castellon et al., 2015; Olson, 2010). Hence, creating a structured system for newcomer immigrant adolescent students arriving in their secondary school years is crucial, because meeting the needs of these students are the goals laid out in the federal policy (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, & U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights

Division, 2015). The Federal policy lays out the legal requirements for serving newcomer students at all levels and should be of importance to all educational leaders.

Leaders and educators of children cannot ignore or neglect the enforcement of social justice. Understanding and making every decision with the belief that all students, regardless of circumstances, deserve a world-class education is paramount (Castellon et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Low English proficiency levels of newcomer immigrant adolescent students pose a challenge for schools and districts, particularly in providing students access to core academic content. As leaders and equalizers of education, we can bring forward for our students and community what is needed to ensure equity is at the forefront of every decision we make. And with this notion, students and families can begin seeing us as opportunity givers of hope (Santos, 2018). It is unacceptable to be at peace with children's quality of education and learning environment, knowing opportunities to succeed are determined by their race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, and/or zip code (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). It is of the upmost importance for all students to feel like members of our society, we need to ensure all students with limited English have access to content needs by approaching the issue systematically. The future of our nation depends on the ability of them to be active participants in our society. it is paramount to know and understand the historical context of these students.

Cultural Proficiency in education is the level of knowledge-based skills and understanding that are required to successfully teach and interact with students, as well to work effectively with colleagues from a variety of cultures holding all forms of cultural difference in high esteem (Lindsey et al., 2009). It is a continuing self-assessment of one's values, beliefs, and biases grounded in cultural humility (Lindsey et al., 2009). It is an ongoing vigilance toward the dynamics of diversity, difference, and power, and the expansion of knowledge of cultural

practices that recognize cultural bridges as going both ways (Lindsey et al., 2009). In this sense, cultural expectations shape social pathways, which in turn shape competence beliefs, often influencing beliefs in ways that reinforce stereotypes. While this process may seem like a vicious cycle, it is crucial to recognize that each step is susceptible to teachable moments that can shift beliefs and assumptions toward more positive and productive ends both for the newcomer immigrant adolescent student and educators.

## **Conclusion**

The primary goal of my research was to understand newcomer immigrant adolescent students' experiences through their own voices as they navigated their journeys in their new school home and pursue a high school diploma. As well to specifically identify the experiences that contribute or detract from obtaining their high school diploma. These experiences come directly from the voices of our students as they narrate their unique stories.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to present an overview of related literature highlighting numerous aspects and structures that affect newcomer adolescent immigrant students. This literature review begins by examining the historical background of English language learners, the classification of newcomer immigrant adolescent students, and highlights the linguistic barriers they face as they come into the United States school system. Second is the review of Cultural Proficiency as an essential lens to view students' experiences as they navigate their way in their new school system (Figure 1). Lastly, I explore the literature regarding the importance of a student's voice in understanding their journey and experience.

Historically, many viewed the United States of America as the land of opportunity. Today this mindset remains prevalent. Throughout history entire families migrated to the United States for these exact opportunities. While this still occurs, the United States has also seen an influx of accompanied youth arrive to this land for the same opportunities. Over two million foreign- born children ages five to seventeen are enrolled in school, roughly 4.1 percent of the total student population (Brown & Stepler, 2016). The 2014 dropout rate for immigrant students (7.0 percent) is almost double that for U.S. born students (3.8 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The understanding of specific needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students is limited (Umansky et al., 2018). Currently schools collect minimal information regarding students' background, leaving education entities with little knowledge of individual needs or experiences of these students (Umansky et al., 2018).

## **The History of Educational Law Affecting the Classification of English Language Learners**

“One of the most critical ‘affirmative steps’ and ‘appropriate action[s]’ school districts must take to open instructional programs for ELLs students and to address their limited English proficiency is to identify ELLs students requiring language assistance services in a timely manner” (Education, U. S., & Justice, U. D. of., 2015, p.10).

In 1986, the English only initiative followed by Prop 227 a year later, set structured English immersion as the default program for all ELLs. Years later, in 2001, No Child Left Behind was created along with the ideals of an English-only curriculum, assessments, and pedagogy. In California, bilingual education disappeared. In the 21st century, educational policies aim to have a direct and lasting effect on all students, and in particular students new to the United States. The fight for equity has been tumultuous, spearheaded by numerous leaders. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2015), newcomer immigrant adolescent student support programs are educational interventions designed to meet the academic and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. The one-size-fits-all model does not, in any way, solve the problem of any student, immigrant or not (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Tuchman, 2010; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Understanding the historical context of each student will allow us to provide the specific supports to students meeting their specific need.

The California English learner roadmap (Roadmap) implemented on July 12, 2017, aims to ensure the needs of all English learners, including immigrant youth are met. The Roadmap supersedes the old Proposition 227, which focused on the stripping of one’s culture and identity by forcing an English-only pedagogy. The four principles of the Roadmap goal are the following: strengthening comprehensive education, policies, programs, and practices for English learners. Every aspect of the Roadmap is research-based, now adopted by the California

Department of Education (Kinsella, 2018). The four principles are based on the importance of asset-oriented and need-responsive schools, the intellectual quality of instruction and meaningful access, systems of support, alignment, and articulation with these systems. English learner's programs, curriculum, and instructions must be responsive to different EL student characteristics and experiences (Kinsella, 2018). English learners engage in intellectually rich and developmentally appropriate learning experiences, as well as foster elevated levels of English proficiency in a safe learning environment. The California Roadmap ensured educators follow the vision and mission in every decision made for these students; not at the convenience of the adults but for the livelihood of the students' education (U. S., & Justice, U. D. of., 2015). The California Roadmap highlights the need of our students as they arrive into their new school setting.

### **The Classification of English Language Learners**

The California Department of Education defines English learners as "... those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on a state-approved, home language survey and who, based on the state-approved oral language assessment procedures and literacy, have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs.

Over the years, researchers devoted considerable time to learning more about Long Term English Language Students (LTELS), those primarily born in this country and still labeled English learners. The lack of focus on newcomer immigrant adolescent students is apparent in the limited amount of literature available. Through my literature review, I gained a deeper understanding of what has not worked for students, and the inconsistencies across the nation in



serving this population. These inconsistencies have widened the achievement gap in obtaining a high school diploma for newcomer immigrant adolescent students. The cumulative effects of growing up without quality formal education in low-income countries of origin, combined with the failure of secondary schools to address their academic needs, negatively impact the academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant adolescent students. Most of the research on English language learners are that of LTELs. For example, researchers believe effective educational programs can remedy the education discrepancies of newcomer immigrant adolescent students (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Research specifically states the needs of LTELs are different than those of newcomer immigrant adolescent students (Suarez & Orozco, 2015). Understanding the historical context of students is crucial in providing structural support that best meet the needs of students.

### ***Classification of Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students by the Federal Government***

Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arriving in later years of their education tend to struggle more than those who arrived earlier. Umansky et al., (2018) states "... between 40 and 70 percent of RAIELs arrived in their high school-age years and enrolled in school did not graduate from high school. Increasing secondary school-aged RAIELs' ability to graduate is of urgent concern" (p. 6). In connection with previous research the importance of understanding the historical context of our students and building structured systems to best support their needs is of utmost importance.

Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive with educational backgrounds that vary significantly (Silva & Kucer, 2016). The obstacles newcomer immigrant adolescent students face doubles in intensity when they arrive at the mid-way point of their education (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Regardless of their age of arrival into their new educational system, newcomer

immigrant adolescent students must achieve the same academic standards as those that have attended since Kindergarten. They must meet school benchmarks, take state assessments and proficiency tests before they have an opportunity to experiment with the language (Castellon et al., 2015; Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015).

Additionally, newcomer immigrant adolescent students face social and cultural dislocation brought upon by the process of migration and the challenges of language acquisition (Suarez & Orozco, 2001). Stakeholders, decision-makers, and leaders should advocate for successful program structures to eliminate negative implications for newcomer immigrant adolescent students. Not only is it laid out by federal policy, but it is the moral thing to do. Being able to meet the academic, linguistic, social emotional support of all students is crucial for the benefit of all students and society at large.

### ***Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students in California***

The California Department of Education (CDE) defines English learners: "...those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English and have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills..." (Education, U. S., & Justice, U. D. of., 2015, p. 1), and a newcomer immigrant adolescent student is "any foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States" (Education, U. S., & Justice, U. D. of., 2015, p. 1). A newcomer immigrant adolescent student is classified as an English learner, enrolled in the district, who has been in U.S. schools for thirty-six months or less. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students are defined by what they do not have - a strong command of English - but in fact, these young people have at least five characteristics that prime them to be the best learners in schools. Ee,J., & Gandara (2020) noted that these students are often the most resilient, collaborative, optimistic, multilingual, and multicultural. On average,

newcomer immigrant adolescent students come from low-income households (Umansky et al., 2018). The largest number of newcomer students entering is in kindergarten and the smallest portion entering eleventh and twelfth grade (Umansky et al., 2018). Newcomer immigrant adolescent students' academic performance is like other ELLs subgroups as it is far below non-immigrant, English speaking students (Umansky et al., 2018). The same low trend is demonstrated in newcomer immigrant graduation rates between 30%-60% depending on state and time of arrival (Umansky et al., 2018). As newcomer immigrant adolescent students become members of their new education system, there is a web of factors that play a role in their academic success. Short and Boyson (2012) note the factors that contribute to newcomer immigrant adolescent student success are the ability to have flexible scheduling, purposeful active literacy development, specific content area instruction to fill gaps in education, extended time for instruction, connections with families and social services, and specific transition methods that ease them into their new academic setting.

Often the move into the United States is not done by choice of the student but out of necessity to survive. That necessity is usually a financial one. The lack of resources includes access to schooling and learning. That lack of access to formal education plays a role in the trajectory of their success in their new home of education (Short & Boyson, 2012). Although all ELL's share the desire to acquire English proficiency, newcomer adolescent students have additional needs, including mental, physical, and social support, stemming from dislocation and trauma (Umansky et al., 2018). Additionally, limited or interrupted schooling prior to arrival plays an important role when trying to acclimate to a new school setting (Short & Boyson, 2012). The lack of resources and opportunities in their homeland impedes youth to progress and accelerate the movement to a country of opportunity.

The foreign-born population in the United States continues to grow and has reached an all-time high (Umansky et al., 2018). With over 40 million immigrants living in the country, classrooms are increasingly growing with diverse cultures and needs (Umansky et al., 2018). From these 40 million immigrants, over 2 million are ages 5-17 enrolled in U.S. schools (Brown & Stepler, 2016). These new immigrants bring tremendous assets and strengths to U.S. classrooms, yet little is known of their experience and the structure that ensures their academic success (Umansky et al., 2018). The following section describes successful structures that support newcomer immigrant adolescent students in California.

### ***Structures Supporting Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students in California***

Short and Boyson (2012), as well as Silva and Kucer (2016), contend that high-quality education for newcomer immigrant adolescent students builds on their unique strengths and supports their development. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students who need to develop English proficiency require instruction that simultaneously addresses their development of English proficiency and grade-level concepts and skills (Short & Boyson, 2012). The placement of newcomer immigrant adolescent students depends greatly on the time of arrival (Umansky et al., 2018). The best placement is when a child arrives during the elementary years in a general setting with an EL-certified teacher. High school settings tend to be more specialized and separated, sometimes in the form of a specific program or center, other times by clustering newcomer immigrant adolescent students in particular neighborhood schools. The balance is delicate, aiming to ensure newcomer immigrant adolescent students are receiving competing core needs that include academic, social, psychological, linguistic, and career readiness (Umansky et al., 2018). Ongoing research continues to debate the best programs to implement to ensure ELLs academic success.

A case study of six high-performing high schools meeting the needs of ELLs shared values highlighted in these schools (Castellon et al., 2015). This case study of six high-performing high schools, meeting the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students-shared values highlighted in these schools. These values include that the schools put forth an ambitious mission focused on preparing all students for college and career success, the school mission guides all decisions, the school holds a mindset of continuous improvement, the entire school shares responsibility for students' success, the school is highly attuned to students' needs and capacities, there is a strong sense of pride in and respect towards all cultures. The following are these shared values:

- a) The school puts forth an ambitious mission focused on preparing all students for college and career success.
- b) The school mission guides all decisions.
- c) The school holds a mindset of continuous improvement.
- d) The entire school shares responsibility for students' success.
- e) The school is highly attuned to students' needs and capacities.
- f) There is an intense sense of pride and respect for all cultures.

Researchers agree on the importance of creating an instructional program that takes state policy, student needs, and staff capacity into consideration for a successful newcomer program (Castellon et al., 2015 & Sugarman, 2015). As districts create and implement these programs and structures for newcomer immigrant adolescent students, it is paramount that appropriate data are gathered and analyzed to measure the programs' efficacy for the students it serves (Carnock, 2017). Research implies that weak or non-existent structures lead to not only students' disengagement with education but the consideration of replacing school with a job to help

financially support the family (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). The need to financially support their families and the lack of progressing is an issue to address when setting structure to serve these students. School districts often struggle with supporting newcomer immigrant adolescent students achieve graduation. As students arrive to a structure where credits attained directly connect to obtaining a high school diploma, the path to graduation becomes increasingly difficult (Umansky et al., 2018). Districts struggle in their attempt to help students meet all graduation requirements in less than the typical four-year timeline (Umansky et al., 2018). This sense of urgency is not only met by school districts but by the students themselves.

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010) describes not being able to serve the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students as detrimental to their success. These settings can create a volatile feeling of segregation within their campus with low teacher expectations and a variety of negative school characteristics leading to students' inability to concentrate, insufficient sense of security, and ability to learn (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). The last barrier a newcomer student must overcome is reclassification. Slama (2014) explains that the inconsistencies within the reclassification process nationwide inhibits the ability for students to reclassify. Reclassification is the final step to overcome and remove the label of English Language Learner.

Academic and social emotional programs must attempt to develop students' English language skills while also supporting their acclimation to U.S. schools. Researchers also indicate that positive school adjustment is important for several reasons including grades, graduation rates, mental health, and child welfare (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Research on the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students is almost non-existent and it is this urgency that guided my study to identify the structures needed to successfully serve these students. The needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students are often overlooked and a struggle faced by districts

across the nation (Umansky et al., 2018). In order to best meet the needs of this often-marginalized group we need to understand their needs at different levels and in different context.

### ***Factors Impacting Academic Achievement of Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students***

Throughout history, families have migrated into this country searching for opportunities not available or attainable in their homeland. Many parents search for opportunities for their children and even more for an opportunity for their children to receive an education. The systematic structures in foreign countries, specifically in rural areas, make it difficult for children to attend school. That constant interrupted formal education affects the ability to have developed content knowledge in various core subjects (Short & Boyson, 2012). As students enter their new school setting in the U.S they are unfamiliar with the structured sequence of prior teachings and mastery of objectives required to ensure new content success. Schools structure the K-12 continuum in a way where teachers reinforce mastered content to support learning in the grade level to follow.

**Institutional Barriers.** Equally important in this review is a discussion of current policies ensuring these students are receiving equal access to academics. For some newcomer immigrant adolescent students, their native language is fully based on oral fluency, and they lack the literacy skills to transfer into their new language, increasing the difficulty of grasping the highly structured language of English. Research shows that students need to have developed strong enough fluency in their native language to meaningfully transfer their heritage language practices to learning a new language (Monroy, 2004; Olsen 2010). The predominant language spoken by most newcomer immigrant adolescent students is Spanish (Umansky et al., 2018). Some of these barriers include the lack of systematic structures to meet their linguistic needs, as well as social and emotional needs (Kinsella, 2018; Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer,

2016). For newcomer immigrant adolescent students to succeed, these systemic structures need to be in tandem and purposefully created. The one size fits all model does not support any student let alone newcomer immigrant adolescent students. Understanding their historical context will allow educators to know the exact skills students are arriving with and to better support them.

**Socio-Economic Status.** Newcomer immigrant adolescent students' socio-economic status in their homeland impacts their literacy level. Challenged by the task of integrating newcomer immigrant adolescent students, schools feel compelled to speedily catch students up from their mediocre quality education, often a consequence of poverty in the countries of origin (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Some of these challenges include having to pay for books, uniforms, and school materials. When many of these families live in poverty, access to education becomes almost impossible. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students' lack of linguistic foundation in their home country plays a significant role in the amount of intervention they will need in their new educational setting. Moreover, research states that most newcomer immigrant adolescent students live in low-income households upon arrival to the United States (Umansky et al., 2018). Understanding the make up of these students is important to understand their specific needs.

**Native Literacy.** Newcomer immigrant adolescent students who need to develop English proficiency require instruction that simultaneously addresses the development of English proficiency and grade-level concepts and skills (Kinsella, 2018; Olsen, 2010; Short & Boyson, 2012; Tuchman, 2010). High-quality education for newcomer immigrant adolescent students that builds on their unique strengths and supports their development in ways that enable them to



reach their full potential is paramount for their success (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016).

### **Pedagogical Structures Serving Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students.**

Constantly changing the curriculum without sufficient time to show growth is one of the biggest educational downfalls impacting newcomer immigrant adolescent students (Kinsella, 2018).

Curriculum with pedagogical practices is researched based and proven to best meet the needs of our immigrant newcomer adolescent students (Kinsella, 2018). Ongoing intentional assessment

allows leaders to constantly analyze the programs currently serving students and describes the need to make proper adaptations to ensure continuous growth. Intentional social-emotional

growth is as important as ensuring the right curriculum is in place (Castellon et al., 2015;

Umansky et al., 2018). If students are dealing with social-emotional trauma they will not be

ready or able to learn in any environment. These pedagogical structures have a direct impact on student success and obtaining a high school diploma. Graduation possesses a very difficult

challenge for districts serving students arriving in the midpoint of their high school years

(Umansky et al., 2018). Umansky et al., (2018) analyzed the graduation rate of two states and

found a drop between one third and two thirds by comparison with other English proficient

students. In both states, between 40%-70% of newcomer immigrant adolescent students who

arrived in their high school-age years did not graduate from high school (Umansky et al., 2018).

Increasing the graduation of this specific group is of urgent concern and should be at the

forefront of all decision making when serving these students.

**Individual Language Acquisition.** The delicate relationship between a child and the development of a language is crucial in every stage of a child's life. Relocating during an adolescent's teenage years not only affects their social-emotional growth but halts the continual development of their home language (Short & Boyson, 2012). As they come into this new system of schooling, they struggle to find the time and appropriate opportunity to develop the language of their new home. Due to the mostly subtractive schooling practices in U.S. schools, adolescent immigrants rarely have opportunities to continue linguistic development in their home language (Valenzuela, 1999). The development of academic English and proficiency is one of the most significant factors to gauge academic success in high school years, yet the need to learn English as soon as possible is not parallel with the natural development of the language (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). The demand for adolescent immigrant students to achieve conversational and academic language fluence within four years or less is unreasonable, especially if schools lack adequate resources, comprehensive interventions, and instructional structures to benefit these students.

**Academic and Cognitive Development in Relation to Migration.** Students with low to non-existing linguistic needs benefit from instruction that has a foundation on the development of the language. Unfortunately, students placed in high school courses will encounter teachers that do not possess these literacy and linguistic teaching abilities most frequently taught in elementary schools (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). The urgency to learn English, achieve academic success and acclimate socially brings great tension to these students (Short & Boyson, 2012). Short and Boyson, (2012) and Silva and Kucer (2015) highlight the call for action from districts, states, and education departments to ensure systems and structures are in place to ensure newcomer immigrant adolescent students' success in their new school setting.

**The Impact of Migration.** For young adults, adolescent years are a combination of neural, physical, and social-emotional changes, causing an elevation in the inability to make sound, long-term decisions. An already challenging time becomes increasingly demanding when being placed in a setting without having the ability to effectively communicate. The linguistic and academic barriers, the need to recreate a sense of belonging in a new world, and the challenge of managing a bicultural identity become almost unbearable for adolescent newcomer immigrant students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). The post-traumatic impact migration has on adolescent years can be debilitating and even more so if the experience of migrating is coupled with sexual assault, assault, corruption, and human smugglers. These experiences can have a forever lasting effect on the development of these students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Understanding students' historical context and social- emotional health will allow for succinct structures to be put in place to meet the needs of all students.

(Ee, J., & Gándara, P., 2020) conducted research on the impact migration played on social-emotional behavior of adolescents. The research carried included surveys from teachers, administrators, and other certificated personnel from more than 730 schools in 24 school districts in 12 states. Two-thirds of initial respondents reported that immigration enforcement had an impact on the students enrolled in their schools; 3,500 individuals completed the survey. Ninety percent of administrators in this study observed behavioral or emotional problems in their immigrant students. Seventy percent of administrators from across the country reported academic decline among their immigrant students. As newcomer immigrant adolescent students continue to enter their new educational world, it is crucial to allow them ample time to be successful and achieve the dream they forsee in achieving (Short & Boyson, 2012). As well as understand the

historical context they bring with them to best meet their needs in academics and social emotional realm.

### **Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice**

Newcomer immigrant adolescent students' feedback on navigating their high school setting was the vehicle to understanding their experiences. Cultural Proficiency was the lens used to understand this experience, and the main framework of this study. The Framework is grounded in the Five Essential Elements as follows: 1) Assessing Cultural Knowledge, 2) Valuing Diversity, 3) Managing the Dynamics of Difference, 4) Adapting to Diversity, and 5) Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge (Lindsey, 2017). Utilizing student voices on their experience guided my understanding of the structures needed to build systems of academic support for this marginalized population. My focus in this study will be the following two Essential Elements:

- Assessing Cultural Knowledge: Identification of cultural groups present in the system.
- Valuing Diversity: Developing an appreciation for the differences among and between groups.

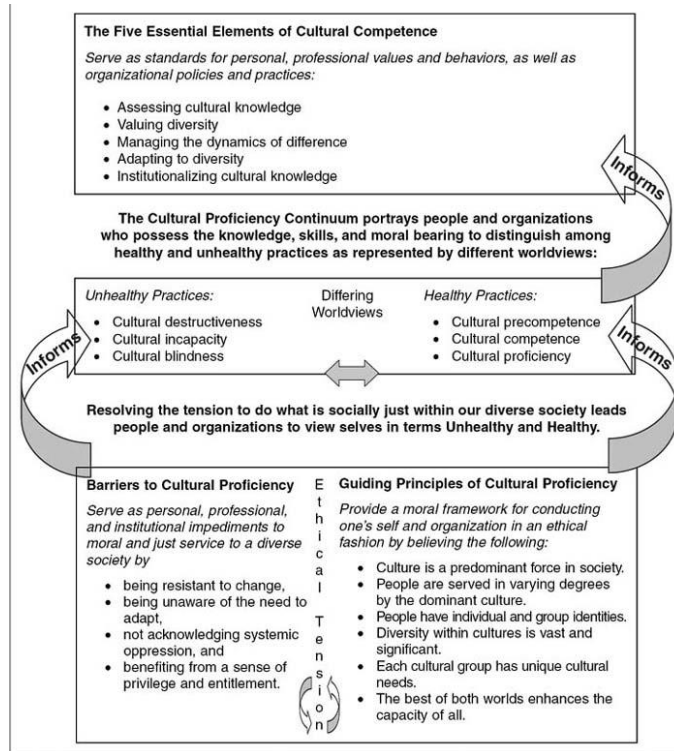


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Educational Practices

## Review of The Framework

### *Essential Element: Assessing Culture*

The first Cultural Proficiency element is Assessing Culture. As the researcher, I dove deep into this element by beginning to understand the need for educators, administrators, and stakeholders to hear students' voices as they described themselves, their feelings, and goals. This element is defined by (Quezada et al., 2012), understanding the students' history as a principal factor in understanding the student. Cultural Proficiency refers to the values and behaviors of an individual that enable that person to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment (Quezada et al., 2012). Utilizing the Cultural Proficiency Continuum allows for a way to explain one's values and beliefs associated with actions that manifest in everyday actions. This Continuum allows for the framing of conversations within interviews and open engagement to

understand individuals' deeper thinking. Using the Framework (Quezada et al., 2012) this study aimed to analyze multiple aspects of Cultural Proficiency through the experiences of immigrant newcomer adolescent students. The Framework states that the school system must incorporate cultural knowledge into practice in policy to support students that arrive with a variety of academic foundations and needs (Quezada et al., 2012). The decisive role in class placement should incorporate the historical context of each student. Blindly placing students in classes or courses is not conducive to ensuring student success (Olsen, 2021). Ensuring students historical context is analyzed to ensure proper placement is achieved is crucial as all students come in with different experiences and academic levels.

### ***Essential Element: Valuing Diversity***

The second Essential Element of Cultural Proficiency is Valuing Diversity. As the researcher, I highlighted this element by beginning to understand the need for students' voices to be heard by educational leaders as they described who they were and what they are about. Not only how they come into their new school setting but the specific supports they need to be successful and obtain their high school diploma. This element is defined by understanding the students' culture as a vital factor in understanding them (Quezada et al., 2012). The Framework acknowledges the incorporation of cultural knowledge as well as valuing students' diversity and culture. Allowing students to share with their peers and in their schools their culture and diversity will in return allow them to feel welcomed just as who and how they are. A classroom where inclusion is at the forefront of all actions increases the likelihood of newcomer students to feel part of the school instead of an outsider. Not valuing students' unique culture is not conducive to ensuring student success. The Framework aims to provide school leaders with a continued redesign of school. In their interviews each student has stated they are here for this

opportunity and opportunity not given in their homeland but one they respect greatly. All five students specified the reason for migration was due to having access to better education and better opportunities that would improve their future lives. All five students also stated that since their first day of arrival, students, teachers, and administrators have not asked about their educational background, past course completion, or academic strengths and weaknesses. Cultural Blindness, a point on the Continuum, refers to not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures within the school (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). Not asking these pertinent questions at or near the time of arrival eliminates the opportunity for educational professionals to genuinely understanding the complete landscape of the students they serve, including culture, policies, and practices inclusive for all diverse students (Nuri- Robins et al., 2012). The diverse composition of today's classroom demands schools and educators to be culturally proficient (Guerra, 2007). This narrative built itself on student experiences, woven into the research questions and framework, allowing the student voice to amplify needs and experiences that may impact the outcome on students' academic outcomes.

### **The American Dream**

The promise of the American Dream has inspired immigrants around the world to leave their countries of birth in search of a better future, not only for themselves but also for the generations to come. For decades, immigrants continue their plight to have an opportunity to achieve this dream (Kinsella, 2018; Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016). They bring important assets, great optimism, ethics, and faith in the virtues of work, family, and education. As families arrive in this new land, their children become active participants in the education system. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students begin their journey through an educational system that looks different from the one in their native home. This new system requires steps for

achieving the American dream, including a high school diploma and skills to be successful after graduation. Therefore, it is imperative that leaders examine the academic, social, emotional, linguistic, and leadership structures that hold the livelihood of these students' futures and their ability to achieve their American dream.

### **The Importance of Student Voice for Marginalized Student Populations**

Children's voices have been silenced in decisions about the way their education was provided (Fielding, 2004, Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Smyth, 2006). In the case of newcomer immigrant adolescent students, this silencing remains, as many are undocumented and do not legally exist in this country. The United Nations has stated that it is a child's legal right to participate in decisions that affect their lives (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989). It is crucial for a student to participate in the creation and implementation of their learning. Personalizing education can have a positive impact on student engagement, as it provides opportunities for students to develop greater influence and control over their learning (Quinn & Owen, 2014; Roberts & Owen, 2011). Engaging students in their education builds the sense of responsibility and ownership.

### **Challenges When Entering a New Academic Setting**

As newcomer immigrant adolescent students enter their high school home, many are often faced with an incompatibly sized school compared to what they are used to in their native land. The lack of structures in these high schools range from having an inclusive setting to a setting of segregation when receiving content. These experiences of alienation often result in disengagement and the formation of racial enclaves (Mitra, 2008; Olsen, 2010). This alienation often serves as the driving force for newcomer immigrant adolescent students to leave school



before obtaining their high school diplomas. Through these semi-structured student interviews carried out during this study, I began to understand the students' experiences through their own voices. The power of a student's voice is seen as beneficial for students, schools, and communities (Quinn & Owen, 2016). In a climate where newcomer immigrant adolescent students are non-existent it is imperative to allow for platforms where they can voice their needs and be heard.

According to a 2006 survey, disengagement is a key reason for students dropping out of school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Disengaged students attend school less frequently and are more likely to drop out of school (Fullan, 2001). In 2017, 74.7% of English language learners graduated high school, a stark comparison to the 94.9% graduation rate of white students (McFarland et al., 2018). Data on graduation rate of newcomer immigrant students is not available but can see the discrepancies of high school graduation among English language learners and their counterparts. These statistics demonstrate the difference between English language learners and white students and the urgent need to address the discrepancies when attempting to earn a high school diploma.

Mitra (2007) examines the emergence of the student voice as an avenue for fostering youth development and a broader conception of school leadership aimed at achieving meaningful school change. The goal of my interviews is to obtain the narrative experience of our students through their voices. There is little research on newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they navigate through their high school experience. This research aimed to amplify newcomer immigrant adolescent students' voices to best meet their academic and social emotional needs.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting as they pursue their high school diploma as recent arrivals. I obtained these experiences through student interviews in a narrative study. Cultural Proficiency provides educators with the framework to assess and change one's values and behaviors and a school's policies and practices. Through interviewing newcomer immigrant adolescent students, I gained an understanding of their experiences and their stories through their voices. I intend to use their voices to guide leaders, teachers, and community members to better support newcomer immigrant adolescent students' journeys in their new homes. This understanding is crucial to address issues of social justice, equity, and educational access. I discuss social justice throughout this research, highlighting structures allowing students to call their new school and community their new home and begin to close the achievement gap faced by newcomer immigrant adolescent students.

### **Research Question**

The purpose of this study was to use the student voice, as evident in the responses to interview questions. The following questions guided the investigation: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Guide in the understanding of the specific needs of these students and their specific experiences that contribute or detract to them obtaining a high school diploma.

## **Research Design**

### *Narrative inquiry*

Narrative inquiry allows participants to be the author of their story, and the researcher becomes the consumer of that story (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). This narrative inquiry study used qualitative methods to explore the nature of the questions based on the participants' views. Narrative inquiry describes a collaboration between participants and researchers during the collection of stories in which both gain valuable insight because of the process (Creswell, 2012). Allowing newcomer immigrant adolescent students to tell their stories was best suited through narrative inquiry. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students have stories to share not only of their journey to come to the United States but as well as their hopes, dreams, and aspirations they bring with them (Wilcox, 2019). Providing a podium for these students to verbalize their stories will guide leaders to meet their needs at all levels. Narrative inquiry and research allow these stories to come alive through purposeful interviews.

Narrative research involves collecting extensive information from participants where the researcher explores a problem in education by understanding and retelling the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012). Narrative research allows the researcher to retell the story of participants who share their story as it happens within the context of everyday life, and narrative research allows the voice of participants to be heard (Creswell, 2012). Narrative research emerged out of a literary storytelling tradition, frequently used in many social science disciplines as well as diverse cultures around the world (Creswell, 2012). This study sought to understand and amplify the voices of newcomer immigrant adolescent students and their educational experiences in obtaining their high school diplomas. To achieve this result, I chose a narrative inquiry for this study with semi structured questions. The questions are aligned to understand and

make meaning of the participants' story (Barry, 2017). The best way to learn of students need is from the specific voice they carry, a voice that is painted through the vast majority of experiences they hold.

During student interviews, five newcomer immigrant adolescent students shared their experiences while pursuing their high school diploma. Each student participated in one interview. The first interview was based on ten questions and averaged ninety minutes in length. The questions asked pertained to the specific experiences that contributed or detracted them from obtaining a high school diploma. Appendix A lists the question of the interview.

The researcher's interview protocol guided the approach to data analysis based on the conceptual framework aligned in the methodology section. The cultural proficiency framework used in this study aligned with this specific population as they experienced their journeys in obtaining a high school diploma. The goal was to develop a clear picture of the experiences of these students as they navigated their new world in education in pursuit of their high school diplomas. Lack of research and studies on this specific population allowed for me as the researcher to venture into a new world of knowledge to better understand the complexity of their experiences. The methodology was adapted to conceptualize the findings as they fit into this framework.

The methodology utilizes semi-structured one-on-one interviews, which allowed for educators, administrators, and stakeholders to hear student voices. Once I completed all five interviews via zoom, each interview was transcribed using Happy Scribe™ for this study. Upon transcription completion, I reviewed each interview while listening to the audio recording to ensure accuracy. I repeated this step twice for each interview to ensure accuracy of the transcription. Once I completed all transcription review, I began with the open coding and

conceptualization of student interviews (Urquhart, 2013). I then reviewed all transcriptions and began pulling out different themes that emerged and placed specific excerpts from the interviews that aligned with that specific theme.

The open coding process began with a thorough examination of each transcription. I read each line and placed notes as needed. This line-by-line analysis allowed me to focus on identifying and highlighting specific patterns that emerged. Each step prompted me to examine a narrower analysis of the data to highlight key concepts that were developing. To ensure accuracy, I completed this step twice, as not to miss any code, concept, or idea. Next, I grouped highlighted and written codes under a larger overarching idea. Additionally, I utilized my framework allowing me to further my coding into clear ideas and themes. I reviewed transcriptions again and aligned them to the codes that previously emerged. Following this, I connected and aligned to the codes that I created based on the variables of my conceptual framework. I took note that I highlighted many of the codes during the transcription review, while many other codes emerged as new. Through this thorough, ongoing process, a massive list of connections emerged in the experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students obtaining their high school diplomas. I then organized these variables into larger themes, utilizing them to guide this study. I present all imperative findings in the reporting of data.

Aligned to the research questions for this study I divided the findings into two major groups. The first section highlighted newcomer immigrant adolescent students' experiences through their high school journey. The second major section highlights the specific experiences that contributed to and detracted from their ability to persevere toward graduation. In addition to these two major sections, I highlight further prominent data that transpired throughout the interviews.

## **Introduction of Findings**

From my data analysis, three themes emerged from using the cultural proficiency essential element assessing culture and cultural proficiency essential element valuing diversity: historical context, family, and community programs. Student voices played a key role in this analysis, allowing students to describe their experiences through their own voice. The Essential Elements analyzed included Assessing Culture and Valuing Diversity of the total five. Through this analysis, I address the following research questions: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and, Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Understanding their historical context, family, and community programs through their own voice allows one to see the specific gaps that need to be filled to strengthen schools in order to leverage specific supports for newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they start their new journey.

### ***Participants***

The focus of this study was to understand the high school experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students. Specifically, the experiences that contributed to and detracted from their ability to persevere toward graduation. This study aimed to understand these specific experiences and criteria that have an impact on their academic success and social-emotional well-being. The purpose was to understand the collective voice of these students and their experiences, to better recognize what specific contributors support their academic success. There is minimal research information regarding this specific group of students. I selected participants in this study by the following criteria: students enrolled in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th in a United States high school for less than 36 months. Participants in this study were born and

attended schooling in Mexico or Guatemala before arriving in the United States. All interviews were audio and video recorded and transcribed verbatim. I excluded students exceeding the 36-month mark from this research. The principal reason for this was because this study aimed to understand the experience of newly arrived immigrant adolescent students as they navigated through their new academic setting in obtaining a high school diploma.

Table 1. A breakdown of the profile of the participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Months in the USA</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Program</b>
Mario	Guatemala	M	Q'anjob'al	17	12	11	Newcomer
Benny	Mexico	M	Spanish	16	10	10	Newcomer
Dayanara	Mexico	F	Spanish	17	8	11	Newcomer
Cristina	Mexico	F	Spanish	17	15	12	English Only
Jose	Mexico	M	Spanish	16	12	10	English Only

The participants' primary language is Spanish except for one student whose main language is Q'anjob'al, a language from Guatemala. Participants were born and raised in Mexico and Guatemala. For all participants traveling outside of their native land was to immigrate to the United States. All participants, except for two, attended school regularly. All participants lived with their parents, except for one participant whose mother was recently deported and lives with

their guardian. Participants resided in the cities of Vista and Fallbrook, California. It is important to paint the portrait of the participants to understand their context and perception in the experiences they shared within this research study, as well as understanding the diversity within the newcomer adolescent immigrant population. This included their educational background; reasons for migration; experiences as recent arrival; support systems for success, barriers, and outlook on future goals.

### ***Qualitative Methodology***

To understand the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting, I implemented an asset-based narrative inquiry qualitative case study to understand these experiences through their voice. I define asset-based narrative inquiry as when a researcher explores an educational problem by understanding the experiences of the participants, and the researcher investigates ways humans experience the world (Creswell, 2012). This specific way allows the researcher to relive these experiences to understand students' perspectives. Participants included five newcomer immigrant adolescent students enrolled in a high school setting, in grades 10th, 11th, or 12th, and have lived in the country for at least six months. These five students are all classified as English language learners. I conducted individual video conference interviews and gathered in-depth descriptions of their unique experiences. The interview followed a semi-structured format that allowed for probing when necessary (Patton, 2015). I used interviewing to bring to light the interpretations, thoughts, and feelings of newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they worked to obtain a high school diploma. In narrative inquiry, the researcher explores an educational problem by understanding the experiences of the participants, and the researcher investigates ways humans experience the world (Creswell, 2012). This specific way allows the researcher to relive these experiences to



understand students' perspectives.

This study used the lens of conceptual framework for culturally proficient educational practices. I created ten questions to align with the two essential elements from the framework: Assessing Cultural Knowledge and Valuing Diversity.

### ***Instrumentation***

I conducted this study through one-on-one interviews with newcomer immigrant adolescent students. The qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of the central themes in the life world of the subjects (Creswell, 2012). Interviews are a practical form of collecting data (Creswell, 2012). The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees want to convey (Kvale, 1996). Interview questions aimed to allow newcomer immigrant adolescent students to vividly describe their experiences in their new school setting while trying to obtain a high school diploma. To keep the questions structured, I asked the same questions to each participant to maintain the information uniformed as collected from each interviewee; this provided more focus than the conversational approach but still allowed a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee (Kvale, 1996). One main reason for individual interviews was to allow students to speak more freely in sharing their experiences in a space where it was only the researcher and participant (Creswell, 2012). The reasons for this medium were to ensure newcomer immigrant adolescent students were in a familiar welcoming safe place. I wanted to ensure students feel comfortable speaking freely.

A semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. Semi-structured interviews are often underutilized yet have

remarkable potential (Creswell, 2012). This structure addressed specific dimensions of my research questions while also leaving space for participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study (Creswell, 2012). This approach allowed for me to create a semi-structured set of questions with the flexibility of going into the conversation to explore certain topics.

Interviews were 90 minutes in duration. The first 5-10 minutes of the interview were set aside to build trust and relationships with each student. Students discussed their schooling, everyday life, and family structure in their homeland, giving them an opportunity to use their lived experiences as the starting point. Regardless of the allotted time, I wanted to ensure each student has sufficient time to voice their experience. As well for them to feel like this research is being done for them done to them.

For this study, I developed a set of questions for the participants to gain background information on their past educational experience as well as voice their current experiences as they navigate their way in obtaining a high school diploma. Although there are semi-structured interview questions pre-written for students, I also utilized probing questions based on the direction from participant responses (APPENDIX A). With parents' permission, interviews were audio and video recorded. I saved and properly secured the audio file. I explained the purpose of the interview and addressed the terms of confidentiality. I explained the format of the interview and indicated the likely length of the interview but reminded the participants that they were not bound to the time on the clock. All instruction and the interview were carried out in Spanish. I provided a copy of the audio recording and transcription to all participants for accuracy. Students spoke English as they felt comfortable, but it was apparent they felt more comfortable with their dominant language of Spanish.

## *Interviews*

Many newcomer immigrant adolescent students come from a background where their education system drastically differs from the one in the United States. In many Latin American countries, students' opinions and voices are not of importance. I told the students they were free to share anything they felt was important. Gaining trust with students is directly connected to the length of time and effort used to understand them (Bourgois, 1996). My interactions with students are crucial to understanding their lived experiences at a deeper level.

One-on-one interviews provide attention to the participants during the entire data collection process. Individualized time dedicated to the participant supports the understanding of their lived experiences. As a native Spanish speaker and fluent in the languages of English and Spanish I can communicate in a language student feel most comfortable in. Being able to communicate with students in Spanish allows me to dive into the opportunity to learn from newcomer immigrant adolescent students to understand their story and their needs in a language that they feel most comfortable in. The interview responses provided me with greater insight into how students felt regarding their experience as newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they navigated to obtain a high school diploma.

I conducted five student interviews. Interviews provide an exchange of information between two people (Creswell, 2012). Narratives are a basic model of understanding and sharing of experience, and one of the most constitutive genres of human linguistic communication. Interviews are a practical form of collecting data (Creswell, 2012). Retelling stories is a way of sharing and making sense of experiences in the recent or remote past, and of recounting important, emotional, or traumatic events of everyday life (De Fina, 2003). By utilizing semi-structured interviews, I aimed to describe the interaction between newcomer adolescent

immigrant students and their experiences in obtaining a high school diploma. The interview questions are in (APPENDIX A). Each of the semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour and a half and were audio/videotaped and transcribed from Spanish to English.

For this study, I developed a set of interview questions for immigrant adolescent students to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. In addition to these questions, I developed probing questions that allowed students to elaborate on their answers. These probing questions were used during the interview depending on the direction of student responses (Gubrium et. al, 2014). As a researcher, my goal was to be able to tell the story of the participant in his/her experiences and his/her own voice. Utilizing the research questions above the researcher understands and can amplify the participants' experience. The interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher. The transcripts were coded with labels and put together in larger themes. This ongoing process followed all safeguards and protocols to ensure student safety and confidentiality.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

To address risks and inconveniences, students received information before, during, and after the study on steps to follow if they decided to opt-out of this investigation. The option of different stop marks was available for students to take a break, collect their thoughts, or ask questions; this is a crucial factor for a successful interview (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2016). There is low potential risk for students participating in this study. I permitted students to continue the interview process at their time and comfort level. I asked participants to refrain from sharing their name or any identifying information during the interview (Gubrium et al., 2014). Due to the nature of the study all precautions and safety measures were taken to ensure student safety and autonomy.

As the primary researcher, I worked alone for the entirety of this study, limiting the risk of having any information accessible to others. All audio/video and data remain confidential and locked in a cabinet with passwords and codes needed to access any file. Once data are analyzed and the final dissertation completed and approved, I deleted all information from my computer and files permanently. I reminded students of the cautionary measures taken to minimize any concern related to unveiling their identity. Students and parents received my contact information, as well as the contact information of my chairperson who oversaw this study. This was to ensure they could contact either of us at any time during the study for any purpose.

### **Positionality of Researcher**

Positionality refers to the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study - the community, the organization, or the participant group (Coghlan et al., 2014). I personally have lived the experience of a newcomer immigrant adolescent student. As a researcher that has lived these experiences, my positionality can influence this study. As a researcher, it is my responsibility to be always aware of my own biases and positionality and ensure I provide the most completely honest representation of my study eliminating all self-biases. I am aware that as a researcher I constantly need to reflect and listen to understand my participants' story and ensure that in no way should it attach itself to that of my own.

When I immigrated from South America to the United States, I involuntarily entered this school system. I have experienced firsthand the impact poor structures played on the development of my academics. The lack of systems, structures, and a clear focus on how to serve newcomer immigrant adolescent students played a role in my academic struggles. As my family and I arrived in this country, I realized placement was as structured as a coin toss. Some of my

cousins attended certain classes, programs, and some even in special education programs. Within a few years, I completely shut myself out of any system that tried to teach me something. It was too fast, too much, too soon, and without structure. As a young child I felt lost, angry, defeated, and incapable of achieving the goals forced upon me. For this reason, as well as a myriad of others, I turned my back to the world and chose not to speak to anyone. Soon after the school placed me in a class for students with special needs but, all I needed was for them to understand my needs as a learner and a child. It was for these reason and others that I chose to dive into this research topic that has not changed for decades.

### ***Reflexivity***

Reflexivity is an awareness that the researcher and the object of study exist in a mutual relationship with one another; it is a constant that is to be carried out by the researcher to call for attention to how thinking comes to be, how it is shaped by preexisting knowledge, and how research claims are made (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019). Positionality and reflexivity are human traits expected to play an active role in the researcher's own experience. As the researcher, I took it upon my responsibility to honor the voices of the students and ensure the only voice being highlighted.

### ***Dual Role and Rigor***

As a leader in education, I feel and understand the urgency of systems that need to be in place to ensure the success of newcomer immigrant adolescent students at all levels. It is heartbreaking to know that more than 30 years have passed since my arrival and many children have come and will continue to come, entering weak programs that lack the structure necessary to support this marginalized student population. Through this study, I aimed to bring to light

newcomer immigrant adolescent students' experiences in accessing a high school diploma. I aimed to amplify their voice for what works, what does not, and what they need to be successful in the new place they call home.

Being a cultural insider has many advantages when researching newcomer immigrant adolescent students. The status of the insider-outsider is an important concept for cross-cultural and sensitive research topics (Manohr, 2017). I believe being and having the cultural background and lived experiences I hold will play a positive role in building trust and respect with my participants, as well as having the ability to communicate in both English and Spanish. Students will receive no monetary compensation for their participation. Students will receive a thank you card and an end of the year "survival" kit filled with nutritional snacks to help them start their academic year strong.

## **Summary**

Recent studies have found concrete evidence of a pattern of decline in educational performance for newcomer immigrant adolescent students, a pattern that is more severe for some immigrant groups than others, based on socio-economic status and country of origin (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). The research design for this study aimed to answer questions that would help the researcher find specific factors that ensured academic success for newcomer immigrant adolescent students. This qualitative research study aimed to give voice to newcomer immigrant adolescent students and their experience arriving in this country, placed in a new educational system, and finding ways to succeed by obtaining their high school diploma. Participants included five newcomer immigrant adolescent students enrolled in 10th, 11th, or 12th grade in a local high school. All data were drawn from one-on-one interviews with each newcomer immigrant adolescent student that will last

approximately one hour and a half. Safeguards were put in place and followed to ensure full compliance due to minors being involved (Creswell, 2012). The goal for this research was to empower newcomer immigrant adolescent students to speak on their experiences and their specific needs to ensure their success, so educational leaders can set up structures to meet these needs.



## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### **Introduction and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting as they pursue their high school diplomas. Students shared their experiences with me via interview. Cultural Proficiency begins by looking at the inner strengths and capabilities of the organization and how that strength can produce structures for students. In this research, I examined the impact these structures or lack of structures have on newcomer immigrant adolescent students. In Cultural Proficiency, there are Five Essential Elements: Assessing Cultural Knowledge, Valuing Diversity, Managing the Dynamics of Difference, Adapting to Diversity, and Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge. In this research, I explored and described cultural proficiency element: assessing culture and cultural proficiency element valuing diversity and connect to the following research questions: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere towards graduation? After I completed and transcribed interviews, the following themes emerged: historical context, family, and community programs. I conclude this chapter by summarizing the element connection to the themes as told from individual students.

### **Results**

#### ***Connection: Framework to Findings***

Mario was born in Guatemala. His native language is Q'anjob'al. He is the oldest of three children and the only male child. His mother relies on him heavily for tasks that need completion

around the house. The last Mario knew of his father was that he came to the United States. After he arrived, he stayed in close communication with the family until he completely stopped. The family does not know about his whereabouts as well as his friends living in the United States. Due to his father not sending money back home for his schooling and the illness of one of his sisters, Mario stopped attending school.

**Participant Overview: Mario.** Mario is seventeen years old and in eleventh grade. He has been in the United States for a total of twelve continuous months. He was placed in a newcomer program as he entered this school system. He has stayed in the same level as when he arrived. Throughout the interview it is apparent he does not feel his learning is progressing.

Mario recounts his first days

The night before my first day I could not sleep. My body was exhausted but my mind could not rest. I was up almost the entire night thinking of all that could go wrong. I made a list of Spanish words that I needed in an index card. Soon I had so much information in that card I could not use it anymore. One of my biggest fears was not being able to find a bathroom when I needed it. I kept thinking about that and made me so nervous. When I arrived at school, I knew no one. My Spanish also was not the best. I was taken to an office and given a list of classes and a map. I was terrified. I remember looking for the class B-106 but I think because of the nerves I went into B-109. The teacher assigned a student to take me to B-106. That was a very embarrassing moment because the girl was very pretty. When I arrived at my class, I realized everyone spoke Spanish. There was one student that was from Guatemala, and he as well spoke Q'anjob'al. All my fears and anxiety went away in that instant. I was amongst my people. I felt relieved.

The fear and anxiety felt by Mario is one shared by all participants in this study.

**Participant Overview: Benny.** Benny was born in Mexico. His native language is Spanish. He is an only child that lived in Mexico with his maternal grandmother. His maternal grandmother cared for him since his mother left Mexico to the United States. Mother is married and has two other children from her current relationship.

Benny is sixteen years old and in tenth grade. He has been in the United States for ten months. He was placed in a newcomer program at his school as he entered the school system. He feels he has not progressed in learning English and is currently in the same level as when he arrived. Benny recounts his first day of school

I was very nervous and scared. My new brother and sister were very excited for me. They are younger and get excited for everything. They bought me school supplies and walked me through how the day would go. I was still nervous. I remember them making a paper for me in case I got lost. I think that scared me the most (laughs). When I arrived, I was taken to the office then to my first class. That class I would be in for most of the day. In my class there were kids just like me that recently arrived in this country. I felt relieved. I quickly made friends and the teacher assigned two students to guide me for the first week. That was very helpful. When we went to lunch, I saw more people than we have in my entire pueblo. I had never seen people that looked so different. Yes, in movies but not in real life. There were people everywhere and they were loud. It took some getting used to but eventually I made friends with people that looked completely different than me and I enjoyed that.

**Participant Overview: Dayanara.** Dayanara was born in Mexico. Her native language is Spanish. She has one sibling, a sister close to her age. Both arrived in the United States together. She stated she is different from her sister as Dayanara is extremely quiet. She enjoys learning.

Dayanara is seventeen years old and in eleventh grade. She has been in the United States for a total of eight continuous months. She was placed in a newcomer program as she entered this school system. She is currently in the same level as when she arrived. Throughout the interview she shared that she felt she was progressing but wishes she could learn faster.

Dayanara recounts her first day of school

The night before school started, I felt very excited. I was ready to start. I did not sleep much. The morning of the first day was where I felt panicked. I felt scared. I felt really scared. My stomach began to hurt, and I felt like I was going to throw up. I felt scared and wanted to cry. When I arrived at school, I was surprised at the amount of people that were there. It was very loud. People were laughing, yelling,

screaming, fighting, and playing. I was guided by an adult to keep moving but I didn't know where I was going so, I walked around to find the class on my schedule. As I was trying to figure out the numbers on the doors with what I had on my paper when the loudest bell rang. I dropped everything I had in my hands. Kids started walking towards me and around me. Everyone seemed in a rush. It was very scary. It reminded me when animals stampede together. It was scary. A few minutes later another bell rang similar to the first one and everyone disappeared. A police officer came around the corner and let me know I was late and took me to the office. He kept talking to me, looking at me, talking to me and looked confused. I really did not understand what a police officer was doing in the school. Now thinking about it that scared me more than the bell. Probably because my mother told me whatever I do to stay away from police and immigration. Once we arrived at the office I was put in a room with other students. No one talked. We waited there until another bell rang almost an hour later and we were told to leave. I got up and left but I did not know where I was going so, I just walked. Another bell rang and the same officer picked me up and took me to the office again. Again, I was placed in the same room and waited until the bell rang but this time, I looked for a bathroom and sat there for about two hours until a group of girls came in the bathroom. That pretty much was my first day and it ended with my mom receiving a phone call that I did not attend school. That did not end well.

**Participant Overview: Cristina.** Cristina was born in Mexico. Her native language is Spanish. She is an only child. Cristina and her mother both migrated to the United States to join Cristina's father and his family. Christina's father immigrated to the United States approximately ten years ago. She struggles connecting to her father. Cristina states that she and her mother were very independent in Mexico and come into a home where her father makes the decision for everything in their lives. She has a large family here as all her father's family migrated together more than a decade ago.

Cristina is seventeen years old and in twelfth grade. She has been in the United States for a total of fifteenth continuous months. The school placed Cristina in an English only program as she entered this school system. She is on track to graduate but will not be meeting the requirements to go to a four-year college as she had hoped. Cristina recounts her first day of school:

I was very excited for the first day of school. I had spent about two weeks home until they registered me for school. I was able to hang out with my cousins that were born and raised here. Every time they returned from school, they seemed so happy. They were always going out and going to parties and school events. My cousins are very different. One is very studious and wants to fix the world and its problems and the other is very popular and overly worried about her appearance and social life. I really enjoyed listening to their stories and problems. My cousin Claudia, who had endless boyfriends, seemed to always have problems with one of them. It was very dramatic and almost like a real life novela. On the first day of school, I was supposed to go with her to back up a story that she was home all last night. I know she wasn't, but I truly hoped her boyfriend spoke no Spanish. When we arrived, we headed over to her boyfriend and my luck he spoke Spanish. He asked me a bunch of questions that I had to lie to them all. It was horrible. He seemed content. My cousin kissed me on the cheek and said thank you and left. I ended up asking one of my cousin's boyfriend's friends to help me find my class. He was very nice and walked me over to my class. He walked me in and let the teacher know I was new. The teacher spoke nothing of Spanish and asked me to find a seat. I started sweating and felt scared. My cousin's boyfriend's friend asked me if I was ok. I said, "yes, shaking" he then leaned over and told me he knew I had just lied about everything I said about my cousin. He smiled and said, "good luck". I had never felt so scared, lost, confused, and alone.

**Participant Overview: Jose.** Jose was born in Mexico. His native language is Spanish. He is the middle child of ten children. Jose and two other brothers are the only three of the ten siblings that migrated with their mother and father. The other seven children stayed in Mexico with the maternal grandmother. One of the three siblings has dropped out of school and began working.

Jose is sixteen years old and in tenth grade. He has been in the United States for twelve months. The school placed Jose in an English only program as he entered the school system. Jose recounts his first day of school:

The first day of school was interesting. I came on a day where they had some sort of celebration. There were tables out front before school started and during lunch that had different programs or clubs displayed. There was the Chess Club, Anime Club, Mexican Folkloric dancing club, Christian club, and other clubs. They were giving out candy and other gifts. The first day of school I was on my own. As I was walking into school and one of the members from the Christian club asked if I needed help. He was a white kid but miraculously knew perfect Spanish. I was

so very surprised and impressed. I let him know I just arrived from Mexico and was given this schedule. He asked if I was sure this was my schedule. I said, “yes, it is the one I was given” He nodded. I asked, “why, was there something wrong?”. He responded, “all the classes are in English”. I confirmed that was the schedule they gave me and that they knew I had just arrived from Mexico so I'm sure it's correct. He asked if he could show me to my room. We walked and spoke about ourselves. He let me know his name was Nicolas and if I ever needed anything to let him know. Every single one of my classes was in English. Only one of my teachers spoke little Spanish. That day and the following weeks were a blur. I really cannot remember what I learned. When people spoke, it gave me a headache. I copied what the teacher wrote on the board I turned in what I copied and miraculously passed those classes. I really don't know how but I did. It was a weird feeling to know I was passing my classes but not learning anything.

Students recount of their first day of school was very different. At times, students were not only navigating a new education system but a new family system as well. The world they knew was gone and replaced with one where they could not navigate it easily or communicate effectively. As I move forward in each students' story the three themes highlighted include: historical context, family, community programs.

### **Assessing Culture and Valuing Diversity Themes: Historical Context, Family, and Community Programs**

From my data analysis, three themes emerged from using the Cultural Proficiency Essential Element Assessing Culture and Valuing Diversity: historical context, family, and community programs. I defined historical context as a student's life before arriving in the United States of America. Historical context is crucial in assessing students' culture, including the way they lived, how they learned, what they read, and the stories they heard, as they play an influential role in the culture they embrace as individuals. Through my analysis, the second theme to emerge was the students' relationships with their families. I define family as any member of a student's immediate family, as well as anyone a student considers family. Through

my interviews it was apparent that students, specifically from Guatemala, called people from the same pueblo “primos” meaning cousins. Biologically, they are not blood related cousins but refer to each other as such. Also, through these interviews, students considered their godparents to be family and held to the highest regard. Students highlighted and valued their family in every part of their interviews. Family brings a high sense of pride and joy to these students. The goal for these students was to learn English and earn a high school diploma. I defined inspiration as coming from what brings students happiness, pride, and joy to continue pushing forward, believing in themselves and their success. The final theme I highlight is the importance of community programs. I define community programs as any program within the school system or within their community that provides support to students. These supports may be academic and/or social. Community programs play a significant role in students' ability to navigate their understanding of their new system. Classmates or friends often introduce students to community programs. Some of the community programs students spoke of were in the school, while others were resources found in the community. Some of the community programs cater specifically to farmworkers, a profession where many parents of these students seek employment. Students spoke about their utilization of these programs for their benefit both in and outside their school setting. Although not a theme, it is important to note the power of student voice and the role it had in this analysis as it allowed students to describe their specific experiences and the impact these programs have on their integration of their new school system.

### ***Overview of Theme: Historical Context***

All participants in this study attended school in an accredited high school in the United States, however only two of the five consistently attended school in their native land. I define consistently as a student attending school a minimum of three out of the five school days. Out of

the five students, two students did not attend school past fifth grade. However, they considered themselves able to read and write in their native language, regardless of the lack of formal schooling. Both students that did not attend formal schooling stated it was due to financial hardships. Schooling in the region was public, yet carried a monthly cost, therefore they could not afford to attend. In addition to financial hardships, political violence created broken academic structures, directly impacting schools being in session or too dangerous to attend due to the violence surrounding the schools. These specific scenarios help connect to the element of assessing culture and how these specific decisions impacted their education level.

### ***Connection of Student Voice to Historical Context***

The historical background of these students should signal an educational awareness to teachers as to whether the new student has any language and literacy skills. These skills are important to gauge, as it has a direct impact on how each student will experience their high school journey. The second reason for not attending school was due to the violence and climate of the students' homeland and the political instability. Participant, Cristina shared her mother received money from her father living in the U.S for her to attend school. Money was not the issue for her not to attend school but instead the political instability going on in her homeland causing constant school closures. Cristina recalled her love for learning,

I enjoyed attending school. It was a place where I could be a child and enjoy my friends, laugh, and play. For the most part, my family was able to afford my schooling for my earlier years but once we got into science and other subjects the requirements were a burden on my family, but they managed. The teacher in my pueblo went on strike for months and our schools closed down. We never knew when they would return. It was so unstable they never had another plan for us to attend. If the teachers decided not to teach, then the school was closed. They didn't have set substitutes like they do here. Sometimes person that was not a teacher tried to come in to help someone from our community. But that usually ended up bad. Our classmates were not angels and there was little patience for the kids. The older kids began to protest for teachers to come back and there would be



fights. The increase in instability and violence of our school gave my mother the reason to pull me out of school. Even though I wanted to go to school, school was not open consistently for me to attend.

Understanding the specific information of educational history is crucial to ensure the student is entering school and registering for courses that meet their specific educational needs. Their past experiences play a role in their view of schooling and the additional support they may need to contribute to their graduation (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Students' narratives vary and have a direct impact on the level of educational foundations they hold, directly impacting the support they will need.

Aligned to the Cultural Proficient Framework is the importance of understanding the complete landscape of the student population to build systems of support (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). Olsen (2020) posits all newcomers are not the same and unique circumstances play a significant role in providing support. Newcomer students arrive with diverse needs and believing a *one size fits all* model is the first problem these students face (Olsen, 2020). Understanding and valuing the diversity students arrive with allows education entities to build specific support structures that will meet the specific need of each student.

For many students, they arrive in this country financially destitute. As such, they frequently embrace any opportunity for advancement with motivation and pride. Participants Mario and Benny spoke of their similar experience with regard to their inability to attend school past fifth grade but their thirst to achieve greatness in this country. This is a perfect example of a student's educational background that plays a significant role in who they are and why assessing culture and understanding the student's historical context is so important. Both Mario and Benny raved about the love they had for learning and school. Mario boasts about how learning *fast before the rest of the students and (his) favorite part of the day was school*. For both boys,

government fees and changes in policy made it impossible to continue school past fifth grade.

Benito's shared he

Often felt guilty for taking away money that would pay for me to do something I loved so much to do. There was a point I told my mother I hated school and did not want to attend. It was one of the very few times that I lied to my mother. I could not see them struggle to buy food so I could go to school. Although I loved school and to learn, I learned to resent everything about it. Maybe it was a way to cope with not being able to go.

The responsibility laid on the family to pay all school related fees, making it impossible for parents to send their children to school. Mario stated there were times when the small amount of money he collected from work he did around the pueblo bought food for the family. Mario shared a specific incident regarding poverty and the need to make choices.

I looked for work around my pueblo as I knew the quarter fees would be coming soon for enrollment in my classes. In a small pueblo work is nonexistent but I was able to obtain work by picking up and burning old corn husks from the fields. I had worked enough to pay for the upcoming fees. I even had a little left over. I felt very accomplished. About 4 nights before school was to start my youngest sister fell ill. She was extremely sick with fever, throwing up, and could not stand up. My mother and I took her to the local doctor in the next pueblo. She needed to receive a few shots, "suero" and medication. In order for the medication to be administered all needed to be paid up front. The sadness in my mother's eyes changed me forever. I told myself then and there, I would never be put in that position as a parent. I gave my mother the money I collected. She asked me how and why I had so much money. I replied to her, in case of an emergency. The walk back home was the worst. I knew I would not be starting school and that just made my stomach hurt. My sister looked a little better and within a few weeks was back to normal.

Although Mario made sure I understood that he never regretted giving his savings to the doctor to save his sister, he quickly explained the difficulties associated with growing up poor and not having access to basic needs a child deserves. When the government imposed additional regulations and requirements that had financial implications, both boys knew they would likely

never return to school. This new reality shaped their hopes in achieving the life they desired and knew not much more could be achieved in their country.

All participants agreed that teachers would be better able to help guide them if they asked about their educational background and history. Dayanara said it best, “if they would have asked me from day one who I was, I would have told them everything and maybe they could have understood me better and helped me better.” Students are eager to share who they are and the skills or lack of skills they come with. They are ready to trust and make relationships. Throughout the interviews it was apparent that these missed opportunities at all levels were not offered to students and students were very aware of this.

Assessing Culture allows for educators to accurately place new students in courses that will support their academic success. Aligned with the research question of experiences that contribute or detract from being successful, prior education and background is important to adequately place students in courses and scenarios that will result in success. All students have the desire to be successful and thrive in their unfamiliar environment. Students arrive with various skills, strengths, abilities, and struggles, a beautiful portrait never as a blank slate. On average participants lived in their home country for 15 years before moving to the United States. Each of these years includes numerous memories and life experiences, making each student unique with their own narrative educators can utilize to see the complexity of each students. While all participants arrived in the United States for the very first time within the past 36 months, their reason for migration was uniform in looking for opportunities not available in their homeland.

The Framework highlights the importance of Valuing Diversity and inclusivity involving educators and schools embracing students and the assets they bring to their schools through

previous experiences. Moreover, Cultural Proficiency involves confronting individuals assumptions that limit our effectiveness with students from cultures different from ours. By understanding the student background and whole picture, educators can avoid, even eliminate these assumptions. These assumptions are “distributive” and limit effectiveness in serving students. It is imperative to use this lens when supporting our students at all levels. Seeing a student through a jaded view does not allow one to see them in their true potential.

Understanding the landscape of the students’ schools serve is an important value of being Culturally Proficient. Researchers believe by ensuring inclusivity, it becomes an act of expressively rejecting deficit-based approaches that try to fix others, regarding them as inferior (Nuri-Robins et al.,2012). Each participant shared they moved to the United States for the educational opportunities they could not receive in their homeland. All five students specified the reason for migration was due to having access to better education and opportunities that would improve their future lives. As I analyzed students' interviews, I noted the diversity within cultures and each group’s unique characteristics and cultural needs. Students also shared the lack of inclusivity in their schools as well as schools and teachers never asking about their culture to understand them.

Family, as defined within the culture, is the predominant force in a child's education and a reason to include students' families in decision making. All participants indicated they feel their culture and family are the most influential factors of their lives. Participants repeatedly spoke on the love for their family, inspiring them to believe in themselves. When I asked participants if they felt the school valued their culture, four out of the five students replied, no. After several probing questions asking students if they felt the school valued their culture, their response continued to be, no. They shared that learning of who they were was never a priority and none of

their teachers ever asked or seemed to care of their culture or beliefs, endless missed opportunities.

All five students stated that peers, teachers, and staff have never asked about their educational background, past course takings, or strengths or weaknesses. Cultural Blindness an element of cultural proficiency refers to not noticing or acknowledging the culture of others and ignoring the discrepant experiences of cultures within the school (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). Not asking these pertinent questions at time of arrival eliminates the opportunity for schools to understand the students it serves.

Findings revealed that keeping close to culture and beliefs was important for students. Equally important was for others to inquire about their culture. Parents are a child's first and most powerful teacher and they learn of their beliefs and culture through their lessons. A family provides the foundation for children to navigate their world. In these teachings, is the value of culture as a part of the fabric that makes a child (Olsen, 2020).

### ***Overview of Theme: Family***

The Essential Element of Valuing Diversity takes understanding historical context to the next level. What follows is the analysis of not only understanding but now Valuing Culture. Researchers believe by trying to be inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences differ will enrich conversations, decision-making, and problem solving (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). The connectedness of sharing that pride of their culture and valuing the uniqueness they bring into this system is important and viewed by some researchers as the apex point of any successful program for newcomer students (Olsen, 2021). Inclusivity is crucial for students to feel they belong. Inclusivity builds on valuing diversity and understanding what attributes and characteristics make people different. Students' educational history is part of their narrative.

Equally important to historical context is understanding specific factors that contribute to students' feeling of belonging. Research states the most important indicator of student success is school culture and the feeling of belonging (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012). Through these interviews, it became apparent that participants did not feel they belonged or even welcomed in their new school setting. Although several questions were asked regarding the inclusivity of each school, students could not produce any experiences. The lack of school personnel asking of students' culture left them feeling unimportant and disconnected. Students compared this disconnectedness to their schooling experience in their homeland. Many students migrated to the United States based on the governmental turmoil in their homeland. All participants indicated the main reason for migrating to the United States was for an opportunity for a better education that would improve their opportunity in achieving their full potential and goals. All students spoke of this move to be one of an opportunity to achieve not only their goals but the dreams of their family.

### ***Connection of Student Voice to Family***

Students highlighted their family as the main source for feeling inspired and hold their education in the highest regard. The parents of all participants were immigrants, also finding their way and navigating this new world. All participants explained how their parents never attended school and four out of the five stated their parents did not know how to read or write. Additionally, students stated that having their parents' participation in school events was almost impossible because of their inability to communicate effectively. Research states that parents' education level has an effect in accessing appropriate resources for their children (Olsen, 2021). Aligned to the research question *Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation, parents not being connected to obtain information in a manner they can understand detracts from their ability to understand specific information*

needed to support their child's academic success. Benny described this disconnect for parents and lack of opportunities to obtain information to support their children:

For the few months of our arrival my mother and I participated in as many school informational nights as we could. One in particular I was interested in was how to apply for scholarships or how to pay for college. My mother and I attended the first session. The session was in Spanish with someone that struggled speaking Spanish. The second was in Spanish. We understood maybe 20% of what was explained. There were many from Guatemala in that session that probably were feeling as we were. We didn't continue with session three or four but I did learn there is an application to fill out before you go to college.

Researchers' state, the one-size-fits-all model placement does not, in any way, solve the problem of any student, immigrant or not (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Tuchman, 2010; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Parent meetings might not be serving the needs of the current population. Some parents have lived in the United States for longer periods than their children, and others arrived with their children. Often, both parent and child find themselves navigating their new world together. Regardless of their educational status or social status, parents play an integral role in the development of their children. Participants explicitly stated their families are their inspiration to continue to move forward in their journey and what makes them feel valued. Aligned to research question number two: Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere towards graduation? Family is a contributing factor for student success. All participants have a laser like focus and understand they are here to accomplish two things, obtain an education and receive a high school diploma. Mario explains this opportunity,

Our parents sacrificed so much to get us here. We have left everything behind, all that we knew as being part of our life. I am not here to be a child or play games, I have to accomplish what I was brought here to do. Then, in the future, I will be able to help my entire family not only but as well in my country.

The aspirations of migration stemmed from the opportunity to attend a structured education system due to the broken structures in their homeland. Through the Assessing Culture Element, students' background, schooling, and social status played an important role in understanding how they arrived. Valuing Diversity is important and valued by these students as demonstrated by the quotes above. The absolutist mindset of only having success as the only option and anything else would be a complete failure is part of their culture, one that is unique to the diversity of who they are. This mindset and belief can serve one of the largest stakeholders for which this research aims, helping educators build onto this mindset of our students being opportunity seekers.

Creating conditions for personal and organizational change begins with an informed view of the landscape (Nuri-Robins et al., 2012), achievable by asking students pertinent questions about their historical context, culture, valuing their diversity and involving parents in ways that they can participate. Students arrive with numerous skills, strengths, abilities, and struggles. They arrive in a new world that does not resemble anything they have known. A new school that has systems, schedules, procedures, and protocols new to each student. For many, this is exactly why they chose to come to this country for a chance to obtain an education in a structured system. They are resilient, collaborative, optimistic, multilingual, and multicultural (Ee, J., & Gandara, 2018). For each of the participants, these structures are vastly different from schooling in their homeland. The consistency of school and the procedures while appreciated, were, at times, overwhelming. As Cristina stated, “school never stopped, it didn't wait for us, it kept going if we were there or not, if we understood or not it kept going. I could never catch up. I felt as if I was drowning every day no matter how hard I tried.” For many, the lack of being familiar with these structures and the fast pace of their new school felt overwhelming. Not



having the skills to catch up or even knowing what to do to catch up left students feeling alone and with no way to succeed. At the point where some students were finding ways to figure out the system, they began distant learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For some, this was debilitating but for others, it led to an urgency to find support and resources within their school and community. Findings revealed that community programs that supported the entire family are both important and necessary for student success. Students and families see community programs as their “lifeline”, essential for students and serve as a vehicle to feel connected to their new world.

### ***Overview of Theme: Community Programs***

Students arrive with skills, strengths, abilities, and struggles. They arrive to a new world that does not resemble anything that they are familiar with. A new school that has systems, schedules, procedures, and protocols new to each student. For many, this is exactly why they chose to come to this country for a chance of obtaining an education in a system that is structured. As stated by Cristina’s account of trying to keep up, many students' constant feeling as if they were “drowning” led many newcomer immigrant adolescent students to search for support within their school and community. Understanding what supports work for them and allows them to express their voice as a student ensures they have the support they need to succeed. This look into the systems of support students use to navigate through the new education setting and answer the first question: *How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey?* as well as question number two: *Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation?* Each participant had at least one parent work as a farmworker, allowing for enrollment into Migrant Education, also referred to as “El Programa Migrante ” by students. This program

served as their life source to understanding and obtaining support within the school system and in their community. Wilcox (2020) believes in the importance of ensuring strategic community partnerships outside the school setting to augment and improve the existing practices at the school and within the community. Each student held a special memory for this program. Some visited Disneyland through the program, others served in a speech debate competition, and many received food and supplies when COVID-19 occurred. The respect and care the students had for this program was apparent and highlighted as one specific aspect contributing to navigating their new school systems and connecting to the resources, they need to obtain their high school diploma. Interestingly, students did not associate Migrant Education as part or component of the school but rather an outside program. Migrant Education is a supplementary program. Students with low levels of literacy spoke highly of having the opportunity to learn literacy skills through Migrant Educations Newcomer program, available after school hours in the evenings. This program was in addition to their regular school day schedule and responsibilities. The newcomer program supports the building of literacy skills. Unfortunately, newcomer immigrant adolescent students placed in high school courses encounter teachers that do not attain the literacy and linguistic teaching abilities typically taught in elementary (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

### ***Connection of Student Voice to Programs***

In connection with valuing culture the importance of understanding students' culture to provide culturally responsive teaching is crucial to ensure student engagement and participation. Having the newcomer program as a foundational supplemental program was appreciated by the students. As Mario describes his participation in the program:

When I was invited to the program I really didn't want to attend because I was so behind with my work on the regular day that adding more work seemed impossible. My MEPA kept calling me, inviting me to the program and saying it

would benefit me. So I decided to attend. Before the program I received a large packet with materials, books, and a workbook. The items I received I actually needed for my regular classes so that was very helpful. When the class started there were many kids from my school and many from other schools but we all were new to the country and didn't know English. What I liked about this program was they began with the simplest words like numbers, colors, and shapes. Many people assume we know that but how could we know that. We know it in our language but not English. Another thing I enjoyed was that the teachers spoke mostly English and used very little Spanish to support. Also, we had lots of college students that supported our speaking that helped us practice. The feeling there was different; it felt like we were learning something and moving forward. We talked often about our homelands and even shared how to speak our language for the last 10 minutes of the class. We presented in English on our favorite traditional foods. The teachers were different.

Mario's view of this specific program highlighted the complexity of each student's need and the small gestures a teacher can take to make an impact on students feeling valued. In the past, children's voices have tended to be silenced by adults in decisions about the way their education was provided (Fielding, 2004, Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Smyth, 2006). The importance of belonging in a new setting can be achieved by assessing who the student is and valuing the unique traits they bring in with them. In the case of newcomer immigrant adolescent students, this was more prominent, as many are undocumented and do not legally exist in this country. The importance of Assessing their Culture and Valuing their Diversity may increase the likelihood of students feeling as they belong and connected to their new schooling.

### **Summary of Research**

In this research, I examined the impact the structures, or lack thereof had on newcomer immigrant adolescent students through their journey in obtaining a high school diploma. This research aimed to navigate through the cultural proficiency element: assessing culture and cultural proficiency element valuing diversity, connecting to the following research questions to understand and explore newcomer immigrant students' experience. These compelling narratives

guided finding the answers to the following questions: *How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere towards graduation?* The heart of these narratives was through the connections to the following themes, historical context, belonging, and community programs. I continued by summarizing the element connection to the themes as told from individual students. As referenced above, feeling valued was crucial for these students to feel as though they belong. To value a student's diversity, educators need to understand the culture that lives within each student. Additionally, it is important to not only understand and know the landscape of the students, but also value their culture as they acclimate themselves into the American school system. Understanding the historical context of each student is imperative to achieve inclusivity and understand what attributes make up each student, as their culture is part of their narrative. Culture is a predominant force. It is not possible to have a culture. If schools take the time to learn about these new students, they can more accurately provide structural support to ensure their success. Findings highlighted political instability and lack of financial resources as the main reasons for students being unable to obtain an education in their homeland. Also highlighted in the findings was the student mindset toward achieving their goals. Students come into the system filled with rich culture and traditions. Their culture has an impact on who they are, how they think, and how they feel.

The promise of the American dream has inspired immigrants around the world to leave their countries of birth in search of a better future, not only for themselves but also for the generations to come. As families arrive in this new land, their children become active participants in the education system. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students begin their journey through an educational system that looks different from the one in their native home.

This system requires steps for achieving the American dream, including a high school diploma and skills to be successful in this country. Therefore, it is imperative that leaders examine the academic, social, emotional, linguistic, and leadership structures that hold the livelihood of these students' futures and their ability to achieve their American dream. In Chapter 5, I discuss the lessons learned from this research and the implications on social justice and how to best meet the needs of these students.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The promise of the American Dream has inspired immigrants around the world to leave their countries of birth in search of a better future, not only for themselves, but also for their families. They bring important assets to this nation with great optimism, ethics, and faith in virtues of work, family, and education. As families arrive, their children become new members of the education system. These immigrant newcomer students begin their journey through an educational system that looks different from the one in their native home. A system that requires steps for achieving the American dream, including a high school diploma and skills to be successful in this country. It is imperative to examine the academic, social, emotional, and leadership structures that hold the livelihood of these students' futures and their ability to achieve their American dream.

Newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive with educational, literacy, and linguistic capabilities that vary greatly (Silva & Kucer, 2016). When newcomer immigrant adolescent students arrive at the mid-way point of their education, the obstacles hindering their success increases due to a lack of English proficiency (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). A student's level of education upon arrival reflects their socio-economic status, hometown, age, and gender. An effective educational program that meets the linguistic and social-emotional needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students can reconcile these gaps and discrepancies (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Regardless of the age of arrival of newcomer immigrant adolescent students into their new educational system, they are accountable for meeting the same high academic standards as students born and raised in this country. They must meet school benchmarks, complete state assessments, and pass proficiency tests before having an opportunity to experiment with the language (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer,

2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). Several students felt the accountability and assessments placed on students upon arrival is overwhelming and many times disillusioning. Finding specific manners to empower students to address these needs while valuing their culture is paramount for inclusivity.

In addition to educational barriers, newcomer immigrant adolescent students face social and cultural dislocation brought upon by the process of migration and the challenges of language acquisition (Suarez & Orozco, 2001). As the number of newcomer immigrant adolescent students continues to grow throughout the nation, so does the sense of urgency in creating and providing structures that allow these students to acquire academic English in the least amount of time. In fact, during the 2012-2013 academic year, ELLs numbered 4.4 million and constituted nearly ten percent of all U.S. public students (Castellon et al., 2015). Districts, teachers, parents, and students feel this urgency.

The problem addressed in this study was that for many newcomer immigrant adolescent students it is difficult to navigate their new school setting without being able to define who they are and what they value. This study focused on understanding the experience of these students as they navigate their way in their new school setting and path to obtain their high school diploma. Although participants shared the mutual feeling of not having their culture valued, it was also apparent the grit and dedication to succeed was a trait that enabled them to overcome many hurdles through their journey. The need for students to feel as they belong was a sentiment shared by many students throughout the interviewed. The missed opportunities from educational leaders to support these students' ability to belong by understanding who they are were several and played a role in the mistrust of the system.

## Major Research Findings

The study identified and explored the variables and factors that were present that either contributed or detracted students from obtaining their high school diploma. The finding in my data analysis resulted in the emergence of three themes: historical context, family, and community programs. The findings in this research concur with the cultural proficiency framework that highlights the importance of valuing diversity and inclusivity involving educators and schools to embrace students and the assets they bring to their schools through previous experiences. Using the conceptual framework for culturally proficient educational practices (Quezada et al., 2012) this study aimed to analyze multiple aspects of cultural proficiency through the experiences of immigrant newcomer adolescent students. The ten questions created aligned with the two essential elements from the Framework: 1) Assessing Cultural Knowledge (identify the cultural groups present in the system) and, 2) Valuing Diversity (develop an appreciation for the differences among and between groups).

Moreover, Cultural Proficiency involves confronting individuals' assumptions that limit effectiveness with students from diverse cultures. By understanding the students' background educators can avoid, even eliminate these assumptions. These assumptions are "distributive" and limit effectiveness in serving students. Through this study it was apparent that students felt the lack of inclusivity and appreciation of diversity and owned culture.

The findings in this research concur with culturally proficient voices and playing a key role in this analysis by allowing students to describe their experiences through their own voice. Through this analysis, I addressed the following research questions: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? and, Specifically, what



experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation?

Understanding their historical context, family, and community programs through their own voice allowed me to see the specific gaps that remain present, obstructing the possibility to strengthen schools to leverage specific supports for newcomer immigrant adolescent students as they start their new life journey.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study addressed the research question: How do newcomer immigrant adolescent students experience their high school journey? Specifically, what experiences contribute to and detract from their ability to persevere toward graduation? Cultural Proficiency provides educators with a framework to assess and change school policies and practices that will better serve the needs of students. This study examined the specific experiences newcomer adolescent students lived that either contributed or detracted them in obtaining their high school diploma. To understand newcomer immigrant adolescent students, it is necessary to understand their experiences through their voices. This collective voice may serve to guide leaders, teachers, and community members to better support newcomer immigrant adolescent students' journeys in their new educational homes. This understanding is crucial to begin addressing issues of social justice, equity, and educational access. Throughout this research, social justice highlighted structures that permitted students to acclimate into their new schools and communities and begin to close the achievement gap facing newcomer immigrant adolescent students. Students share their experiences in school, at home, and in the larger society in the attempt to help educators understand their experiences. Although many of the students' experiences contain countless obstacles, their ability to continue persevering and learning to be resourceful is crucial to not

only for educational leaders to understand but cultivate. This study aimed to provide stakeholders with a clear understanding and vision of the experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students and their needs to achieve their goals. To understand the lived experiences of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in a high school setting, I implemented an asset-based narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2012). I completed a narrative inquiry to understand their experiences through their voices (Pagnucci, 2004). The inclusion criteria used supported the selection of five participant newcomer immigrant adolescent students enrolled in a high school setting, in grades 10th, 11th, and 12th, and have lived in the United States for at least six months. These five students, classified as ELLs, attend Southern California public schools. I conducted individual video conference interviews aiming to gather in-depth descriptions of their unique experiences. The interviews followed a semi-structured format that allowed for probing when necessary (Patton, 2015). I chose this methodology to amplify the voice of newcomer immigrant adolescent students to describe their experiences as they navigate towards obtaining a high school diploma. In narrative inquiry, the researcher explores an educational problem by understanding the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2012), and the researcher investigates how humans experience the world. Giving the opportunities for newcomer adolescent students to speak on what specific experiences either contributed or detracted them in their path of obtaining a high school diploma is crucial. This opportunity allows students to be specific on what they need and how to best support them.

## **Limitations**

As the researcher, I must acknowledge the limitations of this study, including a small sample of participants that do not encompass the entire United States. Therefore, I cannot

generalize the experiences of all newcomer immigrant adolescent students trying to obtain their high school diplomas. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 pandemic, I replaced the original plan of face-to-face interviews with video conferencing interviews. Interviews are a powerful way of connecting with the participants and unfortunately, video conferencing frequently removes the humanistic value of face-to-face interviews. Due to our current pandemic, I considered all possible opportunities to build a relationship with participants. The students in this study shared their experiences, many that were difficult for them to speak about, but they emphasized the importance of ensuring “everyone knows so this does not happen to other kids that arrive” (Benito, 2020). Students’ eagerness to help support others through their story was apparent throughout the each interview carried out in this study.

### **Positionality**

As the author of this study, I once entered the educational school system of this country as a newcomer immigrant student. I personally lived the experience of a newcomer immigrant adolescent student and as such, my positionality can influence this study. As a researcher, it is my responsibility to always be aware of my own biases and positionality to ensure I provide the most honest representation of my study, eliminating all self-biases. I am aware that as a researcher I constantly need to reflect and listen to understand my participants' story and ensure that in no way should it attach itself to that of my own.

When I immigrated from South America to the United States, I involuntarily entered this school system. I have experienced firsthand the impact poor educational structures played on the development of my academics. The lack of systems, structures, and a clear focus on how to serve newcomer immigrant adolescent students played a role in my academic struggles. As my family

and I arrived in this country, I realized placement was as structured as a coin toss. Some of my cousins attended certain classes, programs, and some even in special education programs. Within a few years, I completely shut myself out of any system that tried to teach me something. It was too fast, too much, too soon, and without structure. As a young child I felt lost, angry, defeated, and incapable of achieving the goals forced upon me. For this reason, as well as a myriad of others, I turned my back to the world and chose not to speak to anyone. Soon after the school placed me in a class for students with special needs but, all I needed was for them to understand my needs as a learner and a child. It was for these reasons and others that I chose to immerse myself into this research topic that continues to affect so many students today.

### **Historical Context**

The findings concur that historical context plays a crucial role for inclusivity. Historical context is important in assessing students' culture, including the way they lived, how they learned, what they read, and the stories they heard, as they play an influential role in the culture they embrace as individuals. This knowledge is imperative in understanding the needs of the students as they arrive in the classroom. The historical background of these students should signal an educational awareness to teachers as to whether the new student has any language and literacy skills. Understanding the specific information of educational history is crucial to ensure the student is entering school and registering for courses that meet their specific academic needs. Their past experiences play a role in their view of schooling and the additional support they may need to contribute to their graduation (Short & Boyson, 2012; Silva & Kucer, 2016; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). These skills are important to gauge, as it has a direct impact on how each student will experience their high school journey. One reason for not attending school was due to

the violence and climate of the students' homeland and the political instability. Understanding these lived experiences of the students allows educational leaders to better prepare to support their social emotional needs and ensure their ongoing success.

Students' narratives vary and have a direct impact on the level of educational foundations they hold, directly impacting the support they may need. Assessing culture allows for educators to accurately place new students in courses that will support their academic success. Aligned with the research question of experiences that contribute or detract from being successful, prior education and background is important to adequately place students in courses and scenarios that will result in success. All students have the desire to be successful and thrive in their unfamiliar environment. Students arrive with various skills, strengths, abilities, and struggles, a beautiful portrait never as a blank slate. On average, participants lived in their home country for 15 years before moving to the United States. Each of these years includes numerous memories and life experiences, making each student unique with their own narrative. Educators should consider utilizing the complexity of each student to better equip themselves to meet their needs.

## **Family**

The findings concur that the family system plays the most significant role in feeling included and supported. It was clear that students relied heavily on their family for motivation to continue progressing forward. Although students could not rely on parents' support in academics (as many parents were not literate in their native language and did not speak English), they still saw them as a system of support and motivation. The more students understood the sacrifices parents made to bring them to this country the more motivation they had to persevere to their goals. The connectedness of sharing that pride of their culture and valuing the uniqueness they

bring into this system is important and viewed by some researchers as the apex point of any successful program for newcomer students (Olsen, 2021). Inclusivity is crucial for students to feel they belong. Inclusivity builds on valuing diversity and understanding what attributes and characteristics make people different. Students' educational history is part of their narrative.

The connectedness of students and their families is paramount to student success and one of the key factors that contribute to their success and reason to continue pushing forward. Students felt that the different opportunities to learn about programs and what was available at school was not accessible to their parents in a manner they could understand. Students felt a sense of resentment, as shared through their interviews, hoping that in the future, information would become available so their parents could better support them. Their hope to serve others was apparent throughout the interviews as well as their appreciation of the opportunity to be in this country and the opportunity to learn. That appreciation collided with frustration of slow progress in learning English due to lack of structure at all levels of the education system. Findings showed students believe inappropriate class placement and unstructured curriculum played a part in slow or no progress of learning English. The frustration felt by students led a few of them to consider job opportunities due to the desperation of not learning English at a pace where they felt successful. Many chose to reach out to community services for support and a feeling of belonging.

Through these interviews, it became apparent that participants did not feel they belonged or even welcomed in their new school setting. Although I asked several questions regarding the inclusivity of each school, students could not produce any experiences. The lack of school personnel asking of students' culture left them feeling unimportant and disconnected. Students compared this disconnectedness to their schooling experience in their homeland. Many students

migrated to the United States based on the governmental turmoil in their homeland. All participants indicated the main reason for migrating to the United States was for an opportunity for a better education that would improve their opportunity in achieving their full potential and goals. Inclusivity is paramount to take place not only within the family unit but as well within the school system. Students shared their confusion as to why teachers never asked them of their journey and most importantly who they were prior to arrival. Students did not share this valuable information at registration, during class placement or instruction. Students felt as their past experiences were not important and that built a sentiment of mistrust.

Another significant finding was the change in family dynamics as students arrived in this country. Students reunited with a parent that lived here often found themselves reunited with someone they did not know and let alone have any meaningful relationship. Opportunities to provide students with social emotional support are paramount for them to feel supported to be able to learn and progress. The students that felt this change in dynamic spent significant time experiencing feelings they described as “anxious” and “lost”. The sooner schools can support students to be healthy at all levels the sooner they can find their path to succeed.

## **Community**

Students arrive with a myriad of skills, strengths, abilities, and struggles. They arrive in a new world that does not resemble anything they know, including a school with systems, schedules, procedures, and protocols new to each student. For many, this is exactly why they chose to come to this country for a chance of obtaining an education in a structured system. Many researchers believe the constant fight to ensure social justice is paramount to every decision made for newcomer students (Kinsella, 2018; Olsen, 2010; Short & Boyson, 2012). As

the numbers of immigrant newcomer adolescent students continues to grow, research-based practices and structures will be paramount for their success in their new educational home, (Umansky et al., 2018). Students are not simply learning new vocabulary to describe the things around them but having to learn and conform to entirely new world views. Learning vocabulary for social and physical concepts that they have never been exposed to, but everyone around them performs as second nature. The importance of being able to change structures to ensure immigrant newcomer students are met is crucial. Being able to add or adapt staff positions and build teacher capacity to address the needs of immigrant newcomer students is of utmost importance for the success of a district meeting the needs of immigrant newcomer students.

Findings revealed students' search for outside community partners stemmed from not feeling as they were progressing in learning English. They reached out to their community and through those networks found programs that supported their learning. Programs that valued their identity and culture. These programs became their life line to experience and explore the new world to them. As well as support them, recover their credit and build a relationship with their school system. As COVID-19 impacted the world these specific programs supported students to understand their new world of distant learning as well as ensure their basic needs of food and shelter were met.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Leadership**

Empowering and providing support to foster positive experiences for newcomer adolescent students is a collective task of parents, educational leaders, and community. Newcomer adolescent immigrants continue to arrive at schools in hopes of achieving their American dream. Ensuring structures are in place to support their academic and social emotional



well-being will benefit society. As these students engage into the communities where they live, it is important they integrate in a manner that they can succeed and positively impact society. Both teachers and administrators need to continuously examine their structures and systems for inclusivity not only to welcome these students into their classroom but to ensure staff fully understand who they are and the skills they come in with to best support their needs. Ongoing intentional assessment of current programs with follow through allows leaders to continually analyze the programs currently serving students. Districts must ensure programs, meetings, and supports are in languages parents can access and understand. Parents of newcomer adolescent immigrant students are eager to participate and engage in learning the tools to best support their children succeed. Giving them the platform to access these tools to support their students creates an equitable system of accessing support. Leaders need to ensure safety networks are available where families can access wraparound information related to housing, food, security, employment, and community resources to ensure a successful transition to their new community. It is important that educational leaders utilize students' first native language (L1) to assist in the development of the English. Districts, and schools within the districts, need to build intentional, carefully orchestrated structures that are dynamic, creative, and flexible to meet the promise of student success. The creation of strategic community partnerships outside the school setting to augment and improve the existing practices at the school and within the community are essential. It is important to ensure leaders, teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers address the ethnic tension in their schools by responding to inappropriate comments made by students, as well as through group interventions and professional development that is purposeful and ongoing. Vargas (2018) states the impact leadership has on society starting with the youngest members saying, "Children will first understand the world then the word taught to them".

Understanding and honoring this will allow leaders to ensure every decision made is with good intention and purpose for the future of all children and each decision made is built on a platform that allows for families to participate.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Newcomer Adolescent Immigrant**

During this study, I asked participants several questions to relive and retell their experiences as newcomer adolescent students in a new country. Each student expressed their desire to feel welcomed and find a sense of belonging. They expressed that although they lacked connection and the sense of belonging in their schools it was alive and strong within their family unit. These relationships had the strongest impact on students' mindset to continue progressing. The clear understanding students had on the reason for being in this country and the goal they were destined to achieve served as the motivator to pursue through all obstacles to achieve that dream. Students were also clear that the lack of structures in the classroom and lack of curriculum pacing led to a slow pace of learning English. Additionally, students also noted the lack of accountability for tasks completed. This lack of progress in learning English led many students to consider their options of leaving school to earn money to better support their families. Similarly, students felt “hurt” by not being able to share their culture and background with other students. They found this to be a disservice not only to them as students but to the individuals teaching them.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Teachers**

Each participant shared that not one person asked about their culture, life before arriving, family, interest, or the best way they learned. In fact, they shared that many of the negative

experiences they had were due to teachers not setting structures in the classroom for curriculum, respect, and language growth. This lack of expectation and accountability from students created a sense of urgency to look for support outside of the school setting and/or to join the workforce. Moreover, participants shared stories highlighting teachers' inability to structure curriculum to meet their linguistic needs, leaving them with meaningless Google translating activities that did not help their acquisition of English. Classrooms filled with lack of structure, practice, and rich curriculum resulted in experiences students felt wasted their days. It is imperative that teachers build experiences for students filled with strong pedagogy, purposeful curriculum, activities, and constant checking in on their linguistic growth, as well as the ability to have a scope and sequence for movement and placement of students. For educational leaders to ensure students' needs are met an active sense of student learning is necessary. Having an intake form that asks about past schooling, family structure, culture, language, and literacy levels helps schools ensure an understanding of students' historical context. Equally important is ensuring the students culture and language is highlighted and integrated into their learning. Educators must structure classes where Spanish is used to support not drive instruction. Students need opportunities to practice English and it is imperative to find that delicate balance between their native language and practicing English. Time is crucial, making every interaction imperative to meet the needs of newcomer adolescent students to ensure growth in academics and stability in their social-emotional well-being.

### **Recommendations and Implications for Social Justice**

Education is a social justice issue. For many, the American dream is the driving force of immigration to the United States of America. This is more apparent today than ever before.

Families are risking their lives to cross the border into a country they see holds a chance of a better life and future for their children. As stated by Hernandez (2012), immigrants today, as in times past, are drawn to the U.S. by the promise of the American Dream, seeking success while they contribute to the social and economic vitality of the nation. A student's time is limited as graduation requirements follow a swift progression, ignoring students' time of arrival, literacy in their native language, social-emotional trauma, and experience with leaving a country they called home into a country that politically does not want them (Olsen, 2010). Hence, creating a structured system for immigrant newcomer adolescent students arriving in their secondary school years is crucial. Not only because it is morally responsible, but also because meeting the needs of these students are goals laid out in federal policy. As leaders and educators of students our role as social justice enforcers is one that educators cannot ignore. As educational leaders, making every decision with the idea and belief that all students, regardless of circumstances, deserve a world-class education is paramount (Castellon et al., 2015; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Low English proficiency levels of immigrant newcomer adolescent students pose a challenge for schools and districts, particularly in providing these students access to core academic content. As leaders and equalizers, educators can bring students forward to ensure equity is at the forefront of all educational decisions. And with this notion, students and families can begin seeing the United States as opportunity givers of hope (Santos, 2018). For all students to feel like members of our society that can contribute effectively, Olson, (2010) and Kinsella (2018) highlight the importance of ensuring all students with limited English have access to content as the future of this nation depends on the ability for them to be active participants of society. Ensuring access to content for all students is important to recognize students' heritage and language. It is unacceptable for anyone to be at peace with children's quality of education being determined by

race, ethnicity, national origin, age, sex, and or zip code (U.S. Department of education, 2014). Educational leaders must work together with parents and the community to build wrap around systems of support to best meet the needs of these students.

### **Areas for Future Research**

Empirical studies highlighting the importance of student voice are necessary to further the understanding of newcomer immigrant adolescent students and the factors that have a positive impact on their arrival and integration into this school system. Further research focusing on the structures that best serve the needs of newcomer immigrant adolescent students is imperative to implement these structures in schools serving this specific population. It is also important to investigate the trauma obtained by students and families migrating into this country. The social emotional effects and trauma is important to understand to best meet the needs of these students. There was a limited number of participants in this study, and it would be beneficial to expand the study to more participants, increasing the number of interviews. A case study would be beneficial to follow students throughout their entire educational career to gauge the outcome of obtaining a high school diploma. It would also benefit to hold focus groups with educational leaders as well as community members to collaboratively build structures to support these students. Taking this longitudinal approach may be beneficial to understand other factors that may impact these students and assist in meeting their specific needs. This would allow stakeholders to create a toolkit they can use to support these students.

## Conclusion

In the United States, California is the state with the largest number of English learners, many of which are newcomer immigrant adolescent students. As the numbers of newcomer students continue to grow throughout the nation, so does the sense of urgency in creating and providing structures that allow these students to acquire academic English, while also accessing content, in the least amount of time. Through my study, I hope to ignite a fire within the educational systems about this urgency and deepen the conversation of how to best support immigrant newcomer adolescent students in the context of the new standards and readiness to be productive members of our society. I embarked upon this work to support the wellbeing of others, and to ensure not one immigrant newcomer adolescent student gets left behind in the world of education. I want to build bridges not walls for students to ensure all students have access to every resource they need to achieve greatness. Real love means the ability to share the power. As leaders, it is imperative educators, parents, and communities share the power to build structures and become the champions to meet the needs of our students. The hope is to ensure a statewide and nationwide sense of urgency and importance set in educational structures to ensure language acquisition through content in all classrooms. The goal is to have a clear focus and action plan powerfully driven towards supporting immigrant newcomer adolescent students in the domain of academics, social-emotional health, college, and career readiness. As stated by Zamudio (2018) “A good theory that works to capture the underlying dynamics that produce racial inequality and sheds light on the process that obscures these dynamics serves the cause of justice. It moves us all closer to the truths that critical thinking produces, and the desire to right untruths” ( p.8). It gives districts and educators an opportunity to welcome students exactly as

they are and share with them the structure built to ensure their success of achieving the American dream in an environment that welcomes them, and that they belong.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<b>English Version Interview Guide</b>
<p><b>Introduction</b> <b>Introducción</b></p> <p><b>Time 5 minutes</b></p> <p>Welcome Appreciation of participation Goal of Interview Confidentiality Safeguards Introduction of researcher</p>
<p><b>Norms</b></p> <p><b>Question:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Do you have any questions about the process or anything you would like to add?</li></ol>
<p><b>Assessing Cultural Knowledge:</b> Identify the cultural groups present in the system</p> <p><b>Time: 10 Minutes</b></p> <p><b>Main Question:</b> Tell me about yourself and the important aspects of your life?</p> <p><b>Probing Questions:</b></p> <p><b>Question:</b> Tell me about your life in your country?</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Tell me about your typical day in your country?</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Tell me about the cultural norms or practices that you are part of?</p> <p><b>Question:</b> Tell me about your schooling in your country?</p> <p><b>Question:</b> What are the specific reasons why you/ your family chose to come to the United States?</p>
<p><b>Valuing Diversity:</b> Develop an appreciation for the differences among and between groups <b>School Culture Time: 10 Minutes</b></p> <p><b>Main Question:</b> What things or people inspire you?</p> <p><b>Probing Questions:</b></p> <p><b>Question:</b> Tell me about the community at your school?</p>

**Question:** Do you feel that the adults in your school support and appreciate different cultures?

**Adapting to Diversity:** Change and adopt new policies and practices that support diversity and inclusion: **Engagement Time: 10 Minutes**

**Main Question:** What factors do you have control of that will lead you to a success?

**Probing Questions:**

**Question:** Tell me about your transition coming into your new school?

**Question:** Who outside of school has provided you with support in your transition into this country?

**Question:** In what ways, if any do your peers influence your new educational experience?

**Question:** How do you feel your learning has continued from your native country?

**Question:** What actions by adults are taken that make you feel welcomed or unwelcomed in your new school setting?

**Question:** Do you feel like you are being equipped to be successful after high school in this new country?

**Question:** Do you feel you will be able to obtain your high school diploma?

**Managing the Dynamics of Difference:** Learn to respond appropriately and effectively to the issues that arise in a diverse environment. **Climate Time: 10 Minutes**

**Main Question:** How is your relationship with teachers and fellow classmates?

**Probing Questions:**

**Question:** How would you define the educational environment at this school?

**Question:** As a new student to this school setting how have you felt in regard to feeling welcomed?

**Question:** Describe the interactions you have experienced in this new school setting with teachers and classmates?

**Question:** Describe the interactions you have experienced in this new school setting with other school personnel?

**Question:** Describe the interactions you have experienced in this new school setting with support programs?

**Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge:** Drive the changes into the systems of the organization **Motivation Time: 10 Minutes**

**Main Question:** Are you ambitious?

**Probing Questions:**

**Question:** Tell me about the strategies you use to achieve your goals?

**Question:** Are there additional support programs offered by your school?

**Question:** How do they contribute to your success?

**Question:** What are some resources you have utilized that have benefited your transition into this new school setting and learning?

**Question:** What are some of the obstacles you face in completing your high school diploma?

**Question:** How do you overcome these obstacles?

**Question:** Five years from now where and how do you see yourself?

### **Closure**

**Clausura Time: 5 Minutes**

That concludes all the questions I had to allow me to have a better picture of your experience. Is there anything you would like to add or go into more detail? Are there any other topics that you would like to discuss further? If yes, please continue. If no, I truly appreciate your participation.

Con esto concluyen todas las preguntas que tuve para permitirme tener una mejor idea de su experiencia. ¿Hay algo que le gustaría agregar o detallar más? ¿Hay otros temas que le gustaría discutir más a fondo? En caso afirmativo, continúe. Si no, realmente aprecio su participación.

## Versión en Español

### Guía de Entrevista

#### **Introducción**

#### **Tiempo 5 minutos**

Bienvenidos  
Valoración de la participación  
Objetivo de la entrevista  
Confidencialidad  
Salvaguardias  
Introducción del investigador

#### **Normas**

#### **Pregunta:**

¿Tiene alguna pregunta sobre el proceso o algo que le gustaría agregar?

#### **Evaluación del conocimiento cultural: identificar los grupos culturales presentes en el sistema**

**Pregunta principal: Hábleme de usted y de los aspectos importantes de su vida.**

#### **Tiempo: 10 minutos**

Pregunta: ¿Cuénteme de su vida en su país?  
Pregunta: ¿Cuénteme sobre su día típico en su país?  
Pregunta: ¿Cuénteme sobre las normas o prácticas culturales de las que forma parte?  
Pregunta: ¿Cuénteme sobre su educación en su país?  
Pregunta: ¿Cuáles son las razones específicas por las que usted o su familia eligieron venir a los Estados Unidos?

**Valorar la diversidad:** desarrollar una apreciación de las diferencias entre los grupos y entre los grupos.

#### **Cultura escolar Tiempo: 10 minutos**

**Pregunta principal: ¿Qué cosas o personas te inspiran?**

Pregunta: ¿Cuénteme sobre la comunidad en su escuela?  
Pregunta: ¿Siente que los adultos de su escuela apoyan y aprecian las diferentes culturas?  
Pregunta: ¿Los adultos valoran tu identidad cultural específica en tu escuela? Si es así, dame algunos ejemplos.  
Pregunta: Cuénteme acerca de las interacciones que ha experimentado en este nuevo entorno escolar con maestros, adultos y administración.  
Pregunta: ¿Cómo describiría el entorno educativo ideal para los estudiantes inmigrantes recién llegados?  
Pregunta: ¿Sientes que ese ambiente está vivo aquí en esta escuela?

**Adaptación a la diversidad:** cambiar y adoptar nuevas políticas y prácticas que apoyen la diversidad y la inclusión:

**Tiempo de participación: 10 minutos**

**Pregunta principal: ¿Qué factores controlas que te llevarán al éxito?**

Pregunta: Cuénteme sobre su transición al ingresar a su nueva escuela.

Pregunta: ¿Quién fuera de la escuela le ha brindado apoyo en su transición a este país?

Pregunta: ¿De qué manera, si es que hay alguna, sus compañeros influyen en su nueva experiencia educativa?

Pregunta: ¿Cómo cree que ha continuado su aprendizaje desde su país de origen?

Pregunta: ¿Qué acciones toman los adultos que te hacen sentir bienvenido o no bienvenido en tu nuevo entorno escolar?

Pregunta: ¿Sientes que te están preparando para tener éxito después de la secundaria en este nuevo país?

Pregunta: ¿Cree que podrá obtener su diploma de escuela secundaria?

**Manejo de la dinámica de la diferencia:** Aprenda a responder de manera apropiada y efectiva a los problemas que surgen en un entorno diverso.

**Tiempo de clima: 10 minutos**

**Pregunta principal: ¿Cómo es tu relación con profesores y compañeros de clase?**

Pregunta: ¿Cómo definiría el entorno educativo en esta escuela?

Pregunta: Como estudiante nuevo en este entorno escolar, ¿cómo se ha sentido con respecto a sentirse bienvenido?

Pregunta: Describa las interacciones que ha experimentado en este nuevo entorno escolar con maestros y compañeros de clase.

Pregunta: Describa las interacciones que ha experimentado en este nuevo entorno escolar con otro personal escolar.

Pregunta: Describa las interacciones que ha experimentado en este nuevo entorno escolar con los programas de apoyo.

**Closure**

**Clausura Time: 5 Minutos**

Con esto concluyen todas las preguntas que tuve para permitirme tener una mejor idea de su experiencia.

¿Hay algo que le gustaría agregar o detallar más?

¿Hay otros temas que le gustaría discutir más a fondo?

En caso afirmativo, continúe. Si no, realmente aprecio su participación.





California State University  
SAN MARCOS

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**Sí Se Puede, Sí Se Pudo, Sí Se Va Poder, The Narrative Experience of Newcomer  
Immigrant Adolescent Students in Obtaining a High School Diploma**

Dear Participant,

My name is Carola Solano-Humerez. I go to school at California State University San Marcos and the University of California San Diego. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the experiences newcomer adolescent immigrants face while obtaining their high school diploma. Your parents know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether you want to take part in it.

**Why am I being invited to take part in this study?**

You are invited to take part in this study because you fall under the required criteria for participants, which includes:

- Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students
- In grades 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>
- Recent arrival student within 36 months

**What will I do if I agree to participate?**

If you decide to be in the study, you will take part in an interview where I will ask you questions about your experience in obtaining your high school diploma. Due to our current COVID-19 pandemic, the interview will be carried out via zoom or google meets. The interview will be divided up into several parts, each one focusing on your high school experience and path in obtaining your high school diploma. The interview will take approximately one hour and a half and will be video and audio recorded with your permission and the permission of your parents only. This recording will only be seen by me and will be kept in a secure place where nobody else can access it.

**What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate at any time, even after the study has started. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study, there will be no penalty, and you will be able to keep any incentives you have earned up to the point at which you withdraw.

**What are the benefits to me for being in this study?**

If you take part in this study, you might be able to reflect on your high school experience in a positive way. In addition, you will help contribute to my research that seeks to find the factors

and structures that would ensure success for our newcomer students in obtaining their high school diploma. Research on newcomer adolescent students is very limited and your participation in this study can help add to the research on this population and help school leaders build and implement structures that meet the needs of newcomer adolescent students. Although taking part in this study may not have direct benefits to you, it will help me learn how to guide school leaders to build structures to ensure newcomer adolescent academic success.

**What happens to the information collected for the study?**

Your responses will be anonymous and confidential. The data collected as well as the audio recordings will only be accessible to myself, the researcher. They will be kept on my private laptop, which is password protected and inaccessible to others. The laptop will be stored in a locked drawer in my home office. All interviews will take place in my private home office to ensure confidentiality and anonymity is secured. The data from this research will be retained for three years and will then be erased from the hard drive. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

**Is there any way of being in this study could be bad for me? Is there any risk to me by being in this study? If so, how will these risks be minimized?**

I do not expect anything bad happening to you but some students may become bored during the interview or feel apprehensive about answering certain questions. Therefore, if you become tired during the interview, let me know. We will take a short break. In addition, if you are uncomfortable answering any specific questions during, before or after the interview, please do not hesitate to let me know. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Moreover, I am prepared to stop the video recording at any time if you wish for me to do so. I am also prepared to delete any sections of the recording that you do not want me to keep.

**Who should I contact for questions?**

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at 760-613-1179 or e-mail me at [csolano@ucsd.edu](mailto:csolano@ucsd.edu). You may also contact my project advisor, Dr. Brooke Soles at [bsoles@csusm.edu](mailto:bsoles@csusm.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) or (760) 750-4029. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

**PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION SHEET FOR YOUR RECORDS**



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

Estimado participante,

Mi nombre es Carola Solano-Huméz. Voy a la escuela en la Universidad Estatal de California en San Marcos y la Universidad de California en San Diego. Los invito a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre las experiencias recién llegado adolescentes inmigrantes se enfrentan al obtener su diploma de preparatoria. Sus padres saben que estamos hablando con usted acerca del estudio. Esta forma le informará sobre el estudio para ayudar a decidir si desea o no tomar parte en ella.

### **¿Por qué estoy siendo invitado a participar en este estudio?**

Usted está invitado a participar en este estudio porque usted se cae en los criterios requeridos para los participantes, que incluye:

- Recién llegado inmigrantes adolescentes estudiantes
- En los grados 10<sup>a</sup>, 11<sup>a</sup>, 12<sup>a</sup>
- la llegada del estudiante reciente dentro de 36 meses

### **¿Qué voy a hacer si acepto participar?**

Si decide participar en el estudio, usted participará en una entrevista en la que voy a hacerle preguntas acerca de su experiencia en la obtención de su diploma de escuela secundaria. Debido a su actual pandemia de COVID-19, la entrevista se llevará a cabo a través de zoom o reuniones de google. La entrevista se dividirá en varias partes, cada una centrada en su experiencia en la escuela secundaria y en el camino para obtener su diploma de escuela secundaria. La entrevista durará aproximadamente una hora y media y se grabará en video y audio con su permiso y solo con el permiso de sus padres. Esta grabación solo la verá yo y se guardará en un lugar seguro donde nadie más pueda acceder.

### **¿Qué pasa si digo que sí, pero cambié de opinión más adelante?**

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Usted puede negarse a participar en cualquier momento, incluso después de que el estudio se ha iniciado. Si no opta por participar o de retirarse del estudio, no habrá penalización, y usted será capaz de mantener ningún tipo de incentivos que se han ganado hasta el punto en que se retira.

### **¿Cuáles son los beneficios para mí para participar en este estudio?**

Si participa en este estudio, es posible que pueda reflexionar sobre su experiencia en la escuela de una manera positiva. Además, ayudará a contribuir a la investigación que busca encontrar los factores y estructuras que garanticen el éxito de nuestros estudiantes recién llegados en la obtención de su diploma de preparatoria. La investigación sobre los estudiantes recién llegados adolescentes es muy limitada y su participación en este estudio pueden ayudar a añadir a la investigación sobre esta población y ayudar a los líderes escolares construir e implementar estructuras que satisfagan las necesidades de los recién llegados estudiantes adolescentes. A pesar de tomar parte en este estudio no puede tener beneficios directos para usted, que le ayudará a aprender cómo guiar a los líderes escolares estructuras de construcción para asegurar el éxito académico de los adolescentes recién llegado.

### **¿Qué ocurre con la información recogida para el estudio?**

Sus respuestas serán anónimas y confidenciales. Los datos recogidos, así como las grabaciones de audio serán accesibles sólo para mí mismo, el investigador. Ellos se mantendrán en privado en mi portátil, que está protegido por contraseña e inaccesible a los demás. El portátil se almacena en un cajón cerrado con llave en mi oficina en casa. Todas las entrevistas tendrán lugar en mi oficina en casa privada para asegurar la confidencialidad y el anonimato está garantizado. Los datos de esta investigación se conservarán durante tres años y entonces serán borrados del disco duro. Los resultados de este estudio pueden ser utilizados en informes, presentaciones o publicaciones, pero no se utilizarán su nombre.

**¿Hay en este estudio de ninguna manera podría ser malo para mí? ¿Hay algún riesgo a mí por participar en este estudio? Si es así, ¿cómo se pueden minimizar estos riesgos?**

No espero nada malo ocurra a usted, pero algunos estudiantes pueden llegar a ser aburrido durante la entrevista o sentir aprensión acerca de responder a ciertas preguntas. Por lo tanto, si se siente cansado durante la entrevista, que me haga saber. Vamos a tomar un breve descanso. Además, si no se siente cómodo respondiendo preguntas específicas durante, antes o después de la entrevista, por favor no dude en hacérmelo saber. Usted no tiene que responder a cualquier pregunta que no quiera contestar. Por otra parte, estoy preparado para detener la grabación de vídeo en cualquier momento si así lo desea para mí hacerlo. También estoy dispuesto a eliminar cualquier sección de la grabación que usted no quiere que me mantenga.

**A quién debo contactar para preguntas?**

Si tiene preguntas acerca del estudio, puede preguntarme ahora o en cualquier momento durante el estudio. También puede llamarme al 760-613-1179 o por correo electrónico a [csolano@ucsd.edu](mailto:csolano@ucsd.edu) mí. También puede comunicarse con mi asesor del proyecto, el Dr. Brooke Soles en [bsoles@csusm.edu](mailto:bsoles@csusm.edu). Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante en esta investigación o si usted siente que ha sido colocado en situación de riesgo, puede ponerse en contacto con la Oficina de IRB al [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) o (760) 750-4029. Usted recibirá una copia de este formulario para sus registros.

**Guardar estas INFORMACIÓN PARA SU ARCHIVO**



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

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**Sí Se Puede, Sí Se Pudo, Sí Se Va Poder, The Narrative Experience of Newcomer**

**Immigrant Adolescent Students in Obtaining a High School Diploma**

**Assent Form**

My name is Carola Solano-Humerez. I go to school at California State University San Marcos and the University of California San Diego. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the experiences newcomer adolescent immigrants face while obtaining their high school diploma. Your parents know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

**What am I being asked to do?**

If you decide to be in the study, you will take part in an interview where I will ask you questions about your experience in obtaining your high school diploma. The interview will be divided up into several parts, each one focusing on your high school experience and path in obtaining your high school diploma. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded with your permission and the permission of your parents only. This recording will only be seen by me and will be kept in a secure place where nobody else can access it.

**What are the benefits to me for taking part in the study?**

If you take part in this study, you might be able to reflect on your high school experience in a positive way. In addition, you will help contribute to my research that seeks to find the factors and structures that would ensure success for our newcomer students in obtaining their high school diploma. Research on newcomer adolescent students is very limited and your participation in this study can help add to the research on this population and help school leaders build and implement structures that meet the needs of newcomer adolescent students. Although taking part in this study may not have direct benefits to you, it will help me learn how to guide school leaders build structures to ensure newcomer adolescent academic success.

**Can anything bad happen if I am in this study?**

No, I do not expect anything happening to you but some kids may become bored during the interview or feel apprehensive about answering certain questions. You may become tired during the interview, let me know. We will take a short break. In addition, if you are uncomfortable answering any specific questions during, before or after the interview, please do not hesitate to let me know. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. I am prepared to stop at anytime the audio recording. I am also prepared to delete any sections of the recording that you do not want me to keep.

**Who will know that I am in the study?**

If you decide to be in the study, I will not tell anyone else how you respond or act as part of the study. No one will have access to obtain any information regarding your participation in this study. Even if your classmates or teachers ask, I will not tell them about what you say or do in the study.

**Do I have to be in the study?**

No, you don't as this is voluntary. The choice is yours. You can change your mind anytime if you decide you don't want to be in the study anymore. There is absolutely no obligation to participate.

**What if I have questions?**

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at 760-613-1179 or e-mail me at csolanoh@ucsd.edu. You may also contact my project advisor, Dr. Brooke Soles at bsoles@csusm.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) or (760) 750-4029. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

**Signing below means that you have read this form and that you are willing to be in this study:**

In accordance with the state's COVID-19 shelter-in-place order and guidance, verbal agreement was obtained from the interviewee in lieu of signatures.

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child to participate in the above study.

Please check the option that applies to you before signing" and the following options if video and/or audio recording:

- I give permission for my child to be video and audio recorded.
- I do not give permission for my child to be video and audio recorded

Your child's name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### **Formulario de asentimiento**

Mi nombre es Carola Solano-Humerez. Voy a la escuela en la Universidad Estatal de California en San Marcos y en la Universidad de California en San Diego. Los invito a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre las experiencias que enfrentan los inmigrantes adolescentes recién llegados mientras obtienen su diploma de escuela secundaria. Tus padres saben que estamos hablando contigo sobre el estudio. Este formulario le informará sobre el estudio para ayudarlo a decidir si desea o no participar en él.

#### **¿Qué se me pide que haga?**

Si decide participar en el estudio, participará en una entrevista donde le haré preguntas sobre su experiencia en la obtención de su diploma de escuela secundaria. La entrevista se dividirá en varias partes, cada una centrada en los su experiencia en obteniendo su diploma de la secundaria. La entrevista durará aproximadamente una hora y se grabará en audio con su permiso y solo con el permiso de sus padres. Esta grabación solo la veré yo y se guardará en un lugar seguro donde nadie más pueda acceder.

#### **¿Cuáles son los beneficios para mí por participar en el estudio?**

Si participa en este estudio, es posible que pueda reflexionar sobre su experiencia en la escuela secundaria de una manera positiva. Además, ayudará a contribuir a mi investigación que busca encontrar los factores y las estructuras que garantizarían el éxito de nuestros estudiantes recién llegados para obtener su diploma de escuela secundaria. La investigación sobre estudiantes adolescentes recién llegados es muy limitada y su participación en este estudio puede ayudar a aumentar la investigación sobre esta población y ayudar a los líderes escolares a construir e implementar estructuras que satisfagan las necesidades de los estudiantes adolescentes recién llegados. Aunque participar en este estudio puede no tener beneficios directos para usted, me ayudará a aprender cómo guiar a los líderes escolares a construir estructuras para garantizar el éxito académico de los adolescentes recién llegados.

#### **¿Puede pasar algo malo si estoy en este estudio?**

No, no espero que le pase nada, pero algunos niños pueden aburrirse durante la entrevista o sentir temor por responder ciertas preguntas. Puede cansarse durante la entrevista, avíseme.

Tomaremos un breve descanso. Además, si no se siente cómodo respondiendo preguntas específicas durante, antes o después de la entrevista, no dude en hacérmelo saber. No tiene que responder ninguna pregunta que no quiera responder. Estoy preparado para detener en cualquier momento la grabación de audio. También estoy preparado para eliminar cualquier sección de la grabación que no desee que conserve.

**¿Quién sabrá que estoy en el estudio?**

Si decide participar en el estudio, no le diré a nadie más cómo responde o actúa como parte del estudio. Nadie tendrá acceso para obtener información sobre su participación en este estudio. Incluso si sus compañeros de clase o maestros preguntan, no les contaré lo que usted dice o hace en el estudio.

**¿Tengo que estar en el estudio?**

No, no lo tienes que hacer, ya que esto es voluntario. La decisión es tuya. Puede cambiar de opinión en cualquier momento si decide que ya no desea participar en el estudio. No hay absolutamente ninguna obligación de participar.

**Firmar a continuación significa que ha leído este formulario y que está dispuesto a participar en este estudio:**

De acuerdo con la orden y orientación de refugio en el lugar COVID-19 del estado, se obtuvo un acuerdo verbal del entrevistado en lugar de las firmas.

Al firmar a continuación, usted está dando su consentimiento para que su hijo participe en el estudio anterior.

Nombre de su hijo/a: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de los padres: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_





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Si Se Puede, Si Se Pudo, Si Se Va Poder, Newcomer Immigrant Adolescent Students

Experience to Obtaining a High School Diploma

**Parental Consent**

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:**

Dear Parent,

My name is Carola Solano-Humerez. I go to school at California State University San Marcos and the University of California San Diego. I am inviting you to participate in a research study about the experiences newcomer adolescent immigrants face while obtaining their high school diploma. Your parents know we are talking with you about the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

**KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESEARCH STUDY:**

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether you want your child to be a part of this study. Information that is more detailed is listed later on in this form.

The purpose of this study is to uncover the positive factors that contribute to newcomer adolescent student success in their pathway to obtaining a high school diploma. Your child will be asked to take part in one interview and possibly a second follow-up interview remotely. I expect that your child will be in this research study for 3 months, however, they will not be asked to do anything except take part in one, possibly two interviews. The primary risk of participation is minimal and includes boredom and discomfort in answering specific questions. The main benefit is their contribution to the research on successful structures that support newcomer adolescent students to obtain a high school diploma.

**STUDY PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that positively contribute to the success of newcomer immigrant adolescent students obtaining a high school diploma. This study provides a voice to adolescent newcomer immigrant adolescent students trying to navigate and achieve a high school diploma. newcomer immigrant adolescent students come into our educational system with so much to offer yet are seen as having a huge deficit, as for most English is not spoken or understood. This research addresses the importance of understanding the

true experience of newcomer immigrant adolescent students as told in their own voice to build academic structures that will ensure their success.

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:**

If you agree to participate, your child will be one of 10 newcomer student participants who will be participating in this research. Participants will be both male and female ages 16-18. Participants will be enrolled in a local high school and have arrived in the United States with the past 36 months.

**PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

If you agree for your child to participate in the study, she or he will participate in a one on one interview with me, the researcher, in-person and audio recorded. The interview will last approximately one hour. The interview will take place in the local Migrant Education office after school, where only I will be present and the data will only be collected on my private, password-protected laptop. If needed, your child may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview which will last no more than one hour. These interviews will be scheduled in advance and will accommodate yours and your child's schedule. The study will take approximately 3 months to be completed. Any identifiable data collected during this research will be kept confidential and anonymous. Your child's data will not be used for future research but rather solely for this research study.

**RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES:**

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include:

- Your child may be uncomfortable answering the interview questions.
- Your child may become bored or tired during the interview.
- The time your child spends participating in the study might be considered an inconvenience.

**SAFEGUARDS:**

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

- Your child can skip any questions that he or she feels uncomfortable answering during the interview.
- Your child will be provided with resources for counseling or social support services if they require them.
- The interview may be scheduled at a time that is convenient to you and your child and at a place that is private.
- Your child can cancel or stop the interview at any point before or during the recording.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Your child's responses will be anonymous and confidential. The data collected as well as the video recordings will only be accessible to me, the researcher. They will be kept on my private laptop, which is password protected and inaccessible to others. The laptop will be stored in a locked drawer in my home office. All interviews will take place in a school office to ensure confidentiality and anonymity is secured. The data from this research will be retained for one year and will then be erased from the hard drive.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw your child from the study at any time; there will be no penalty. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

**BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:**

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child’s participation in the knowledge that will be gained regarding the factors that newcomer adolescent students view as powerful to ensure their success. This knowledge can also benefit parents and educators to understand how to best serve this marginalized population.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

If you have questions about the study, please call me at 760-613-1179 or e-mail me at [csolano@ucsd.edu](mailto:csolano@ucsd.edu). You may also contact my project advisor, Dr. Brooke Soles at [bsoles@csusm.edu](mailto:bsoles@csusm.edu). If you have any questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this research or if you feel your child has been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) or (760) 750-4029.

**PARENT’S CONSENT:**

In accordance with the state’s COVID-19 shelter-in-place order and guidance, verbal agreement was obtained from the interviewee in lieu of signatures.

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child to participate in the above study. Please check the option that applies to you before signing” and the following options if video and/or audio recording:

- I give permission for my child to be video and audio recorded.
- I do not give permission for my child to be video and audio recorded

Your child’s name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### Consentimiento de los Padres

#### **INVITACIÓN A PARTICIPAR:**

Estimado padre,

Mi nombre es Carola Solano-Humérez. Voy a la escuela en la Universidad Estatal de California en San Marcos y la Universidad de California en San Diego. Los invito a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre las experiencias recién llegado adolescentes inmigrantes se enfrentan al obtener su diploma de preparatoria. Sus padres saben que estamos hablando con usted acerca del estudio. Esta forma le informará sobre el estudio de ayuda

#### **INFORMACIÓN CLAVE SOBRE ESTE ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN:**

El siguiente es un breve resumen de este estudio para ayudarle a decidir si desea que su hijo sea parte de este estudio. La información que se detalla más información aparece más adelante en esta forma.

El propósito de este estudio es descubrir los factores positivos que contribuyen al éxito de los estudiantes recién llegada de los adolescentes en su camino hacia la obtención de un diploma de escuela secundaria. se le pedirá a su hijo a participar en una entrevista y posiblemente una segunda entrevista de seguimiento a distancia. Espero que su hijo estará en este estudio de investigación durante 3 meses, sin embargo, no se les pedirá que hacer nada más que participar en uno, posiblemente dos entrevistas. El riesgo principal de la participación es mínima e incluye el aburrimiento, y la incomodidad al responder a preguntas específicas. La ventaja principal es su contribución al éxito de la investigación sobre las estructuras de apoyo que los estudiantes adolescentes recién llegados obtienen un diploma de escuela secundaria.

#### **ESTUDIO OBJETIVO:**

El propósito de este estudio es explorar los factores que contribuyen positivamente al éxito del recién llegada de inmigrantes adolescentes estudiantes que obtienen un diploma de escuela secundaria. Este estudio proporciona una voz a los estudiantes recién llegados inmigrantes adolescentes que tratan de navegar y conseguir un diploma de escuela secundaria. Los estudiantes recién llegados inmigrantes adolescentes entran en nuestro sistema educativo con

mucho que ofrecer todavía se considera que tienen un gran déficit, como para la mayoría bahasa Inggeris no se habla o entiende. Esta investigación aborda la importancia de comprender la verdadera experiencia de los estudiantes recién llegados inmigrantes adolescentes según lo dicho en su propia voz con el fin de construir estructuras académicas que garanticen su éxito.

#### **NUMERO DE PARTICIPANTES:**

Si acepta participar, su hijo será uno de 10 estudiantes participantes recién llegado que van a participar en esta investigación. Los participantes serán tanto femeninos edades 16-18 y masculinos. Los participantes se inscribieron en una escuela secundaria local y han llegado a los Estados Unidos con los últimos 36 meses.

#### **PROCEDIMIENTOS PARA EL ESTUDIO:**

Si está de acuerdo para que su hijo participe en el estudio, él o ella va a participar en una entrevista uno a uno conmigo, el investigador, en persona y audio grabado. La entrevista tendrá una duración aproximada de una hora. La entrevista se llevará a cabo en la oficina local de educación migrante después de la escuela, donde sólo voy a estar presente y los datos sólo será recogido en mi portátil protegido por contraseña privada,. Si es necesario, su hijo se le puede pedir a participar en una entrevista de seguimiento, que tendrá una duración de no más de una hora. Estas entrevistas serán programadas de antemano y se adaptará a la suya y horario de su hijo. El estudio se llevará aproximadamente 3 meses para ser completado. Cualquier dato de identificación personal recopilada durante esta investigación serán confidenciales y anónimas. los datos de su hijo no serán utilizados para la investigación futura, sino únicamente para este estudio de investigación.

#### **RIESGOS e INCONVENIENTES:**

Hay riesgos mínimos e inconvenientes a participar en este estudio. Estos incluyen:

Su hijo puede ser incómodo responder a las preguntas de la entrevista.

Su hijo puede llegar a ser aburrido o cansado durante la entrevista.

El tiempo pasa su hijo por participar en el estudio podría considerarse un inconveniente.

#### **SALVAGUARDIAS:**

Para minimizar estos riesgos e inconvenientes, se tomarán las siguientes medidas:

Su niño puede saltarse cualquier pregunta que él o ella se siente incómodo contestador durante la entrevista.

Su hijo será dotado de recursos para los servicios de asesoramiento o de apoyo social si se les exigen.

La entrevista puede ser programada en un momento que sea conveniente para usted y su hijo y en un lugar que es privado.

Su hijo puede cancelar o detener la entrevista en cualquier momento antes o durante la grabación.

### **CONFIDENCIALIDAD:**

Respuestas de su hijo serán anónimas y confidenciales. Los datos recogidos, así como las grabaciones de vídeo serán accesibles sólo para mí mismo, el investigador. Ellos se mantendrán en privado en mi portátil, que está protegido por contraseña e inaccesible a los demás. El portátil se almacena en un cajón cerrado con llave en mi oficina en casa. Todas las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en una oficina de la escuela para asegurar la confidencialidad y el anonimato está garantizado. Los datos de esta investigación se conservarán durante un año y entonces serán borrados del disco duro.

### **PARTICIPACIÓN VOLUNTARIA:**

La participación de su hijo en este estudio es voluntaria. Su niño puede rechazar la participación en cualquier momento. También puede retirar a su hijo del estudio en cualquier momento; no habrá ninguna penalización. Del mismo modo, si su hijo decide no participar o retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento, no habrá ninguna penalización.

### **BENEFICIOS de PARTICIPAR EN EL ESTUDIO:**

Aunque puede haber ningún beneficio directo para su hijo, el posible beneficio de la participación de su hijo es el conocimiento que se ganará con respecto a los factores que recién llegados estudiantes adolescentes ven tan potente para asegurar su éxito. Este conocimiento también puede beneficiar a los padres y educadores a entender cómo servir mejor a esta población marginada.

### **INFORMACIÓN DE CONTACTO:**

Si tiene preguntas acerca del estudio, por favor llámeme al 760-613-1179 o por correo electrónico mí en [csolano@ucsd.edu](mailto:csolano@ucsd.edu). También puede comunicarse con mi asesor del proyecto, el Dr. Brooke Soles en [bsoles@csusm.edu](mailto:bsoles@csusm.edu). Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre los derechos de su hijo como participante en esta investigación o si cree que su hijo ha sido colocado en situación de riesgo, puede ponerse en contacto con la Oficina de IRB al [irb@csusm.edu](mailto:irb@csusm.edu) o (760) 750-4029. Padre del consentimiento:

De acuerdo con la orden y orientación de refugio en el lugar COVID-19 del estado, se obtuvo un acuerdo verbal del entrevistado en lugar de las firmas.

Al firmar a continuación, usted está dando su consentimiento para que su hijo participe en el estudio anterior.

Por favor marque la opción que le corresponda antes de la firma "y las siguientes opciones si el vídeo y / o audio:

Si, doy permiso para que mi hijo sea grabado en video y audio.

No, doy permiso para que mi hijo sea grabado en video y audio.

Nombre de su hijo/a: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de los padres: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

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APPENDIX E: INTRODUCTION FORM ENGLISH AND SPANISH



California State University  
SAN MARCOS

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Dear Participant,

My name is Carola Solano-Humerez and I am a student in the UCSD/CSUSM joint doctoral program. I am conducting research to explore the factors that positively contribute to understanding the experience of newcomer immigrant adolescent students in obtaining their high school diploma. I am currently looking for newcomer immigrant adolescent students who are willing to participate in my study. We are looking for students in 10th, 11th, and 12th grade that have been in the country and in a high school setting for at least 6 months. Newcomer immigrant adolescent students who choose to participate in this study will be asked to take part in one, or possibly two interviews that explore their experience in navigating their high school experience in hopes of obtaining a high school diploma.

The discussions that occur during the interview will not be shared with anyone else and will only be used for the purpose of this research. In addition, your name will be kept confidential as only pseudonyms will be used in the study.

This process is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. I do hope that you take some time to consider being a part of this important work. Please call me at 760-631-1179 with any questions you may have regarding the process. If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form.

Again, thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carola Solano-Humerez





Querido Participante,

Mi nombre es Carola Solano-Humerez y soy estudiante del programa de doctorado conjunto UCSD / CSUSM. Estoy realizando una investigación para explorar los factores que contribuyen positivamente a comprender la experiencia de los estudiantes adolescentes inmigrantes recién llegados para obtener su diploma de escuela secundaria. Actualmente estoy buscando estudiantes adolescentes inmigrantes recién llegados que estén dispuestos a participar en mi estudio. Estamos buscando estudiantes de 10º, 11º y 12º grado que hayan estado en el país y en un entorno de escuela secundaria durante al menos 6 meses. A los estudiantes adolescentes inmigrantes recién llegados que elijan participar en este estudio se les pedirá que participen en una o posiblemente dos entrevistas que exploren su experiencia al navegar su experiencia en la escuela secundaria con la esperanza de obtener un diploma de escuela secundaria.

Las discusiones que ocurran durante la entrevista no se compartirán con nadie más y solo se utilizarán con el propósito de esta investigación. Además, su nombre se mantendrá confidencial ya que solo se utilizarán seudónimos en el estudio. Este proceso es voluntario, anónimo y confidencial. Espero que se tome un tiempo para considerar ser parte de este importante trabajo. Llámeme al 760-631-1179 si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el proceso. Si acepta participar, firme el formulario de consentimiento. Otra vez, gracias por tu tiempo. Espero escuchar de usted.