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The Pedagogy of Belonging: The social, cultural, and academic lives of recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic, multilingual high school

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The Pedagogy of Belonging:
The social, cultural, and academic lives of recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic, multilingual high school

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

by

Christine Brigid Malsbary

2012
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Pedagogy of Belonging:

The social, cultural, and academic lives of recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic, multilingual high school

by

Christine Brigid Malsbary

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Carlos A. Torres, Chair

A pedagogy of belonging is the educational ethos permeating schools that work: it refers to those "kinds of things" that change a group of strangers into a successful, transcultural community of practice that supports youths' academic, social, and cultural participation and development. Such communities are critical to the success of newly arrived immigrant youth, called "overlooked and underserved" in U.S. high schools, vulnerable to transplant shock, language barriers and racism (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Olsen, 1997). This ethnography addresses how immigrant youth experienced belonging in a multiethnic, multilingual high school in Southern California, asking: what is the structure of belonging at a time of rapid cultural change and heightened immigration politics?
From 2009-2011, ethnography was conducted. Data were collected through participant observation in four classrooms, staff meetings, professional development sessions, school assemblies, and parent evenings. Thirty-three interviews were conducted with 9th-12th grade immigrant students, their teachers and administrators. Four key informants were interviewed three to four times each. The key informants were from Iran, Korea, Mexico and Pakistan; comparative analysis considered the intersectionality of national origin, language, gender, race, class and religion in the lives of adolescents and raised questions about commonalities among the experiences of immigrant students.

Informed by interdisciplinary theories of community and belonging (Wenger, 1998; King jr., 1967; Etzioni, 1996, 2000; Yosso, 2005), analysis revealed the following points: 1) Immigrant students' lives in school were shaped by a politics of belonging that indexed complex socio-political ideologies present in the Southern California landscape; 2) Immigrant youth live transcultural lives through which they achieved a sense of belonging through (a) language practices that forged community, and (b) multinational, multilingual, and intergenerational peer groups; 3) Immigrant students have myriad strengths and skills that germinate from their migration journeys and acculturation processes. These strengths and skills are valuable to communities grappling with the changing nature of schooling in a globalizing era. Education, as a vehicle of 21st century social integration and democracy, is undermined when the transcultural work of immigrant youth is overlooked.
The dissertation of Christine Brigid Malsbary is approved.

_________________________
Marjorie E. Orellana

_________________________
Frederick D. Erickson

_________________________
Thomas S. Weisner

_________________________
Douglas Kellner

_________________________
Carlos A. Torres, Chair

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012
Dedication

I dedicate this work to the courageous young people I have mentored and learned from over these past ten years.

Your opening up of your hearts and lives to me has been a treasured gift, and made this dissertation possible.
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- Youth, culture and language
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Sherman, L. & Malsbary, C. Rethinking belonging for marginalized youth in digital and transcultural contexts. *In preparation for submission to Youth & Society.*


Presentations


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**The Pedagogy of Belonging:**

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**INTRODUCTION**

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

--Jn 15. 12-13

Throwing caution to the winds/ Spurned by all around/ Come, my outcaste love,

O let us/ Travel, freedom-bound.

--Rabindranath Tagore, *Selected Poems*

When Hasanatu was 11 years old, she wanted to learn how to read. She was illiterate, living with her family in a French Guinean refugee camp on the border of her native country, Sierra Leone. She had learned to speak some French and some English, but communicated primarily in Krio. As Hasanatu later related to me, she would chase the other kids as they returned from school, asking them to teach her to read.

When I met her in New York City three years later, she was beginning the long struggle to become literate in English as a ninth grader in a U.S. public school. Unbeknownst to her, Hasanatu had arrived in a special place. She was enrolled in a school that was known for its work with recently-arrived immigrant and language minority youth. The educators and administrators at the high school were committed to educating their students, but also to creating a community that provided a sense of belonging and safety. Hasanatu flourished in this
environment. She was able to relax over the years, confident that her teachers and classmates had her best interests at heart. She was part of the mainstream educational program, taught at grade level by qualified ESL teachers. She also took special classes during the day to supplement her literacy and mathematical development. After school she joined a club for French-speakers, led by a teacher who had served in the Peace Corps in West Africa. On days when she was required to fast in accordance with her Muslim faith, her teachers showed awareness, and accommodated her occasional lack of focus. Her family was welcomed by the school, and frequent communication between her teachers, advisor, and mother supported Hasanatu's learning. It wasn't easy. There were hurdles-- notably the high stakes testing that had been put implemented several years before Hasanatu emigrated to New York City. Hasanatu had to advance from illiteracy to proficiency to pass these sophisticated exams in a matter of years. She fulfilled her own dreams by graduating from high school a mere four years after learning to read.

Hasanatu was incredibly fortunate. To be an immigrant high school student in the United States today typically means entering an impoverished school with unqualified teachers (C. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). In their five-year study of immigrant adolescents in seven school districts, the researchers found the following:

Strikingly, many of the schools that newly arrived immigrant students encounter are ugly, hostile, and dangerous... deep divisions cut every which way-- between the races; between immigrants and the native-born; between more acculturated immigrants and more recent arrivals; between students in bilingual programs and those in mainstream programs; between administrators and teachers; between teachers and parents;
between teachers and students. Anomie and isolation prevail. Most disturbingly, violence and a culture of fear pervade to many of these schools (2008, p. 366).

The researchers continue..."these failing schools are even less able to serve newcomers in transplant shock who must learn as new language and social ethos, as well as acquire the skills needed to navigate the electronic cultures of the digital age" (2008, p. 366). As Selma Cantor Berrol puts it, “growing up is not easy for any child, but for those without American roots, it is even harder” (1995, p. ix). For today’s newcomer children, poverty, language barriers, racism, poor schools and hostile nativism is largely the fabric of their everyday lives. Their worlds collide with a neoliberal schooling climate which privileges high test scores as the primary standard of achievement. For a young person to be able enter a place that is welcoming, where they feel understood, where they are secure in their ability to approach teachers and peers with questions, where they are given the latitude to make mistakes, experiment with intellectual problems, and grow creatively—these things, this sense of belonging-- can mean the difference between a child who graduates high school and a child who leaves school in the ninth grade.

Most schools do not have data on how many immigrant students they serve; rather, the designation "English Learner (EL)" serves as a proxy to understand immigrant student demographics. Currently, there are 5.3 million EL-designated students in K-12 public schools1, or 10.9 percent of the U.S. public school population (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). Approximately

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1 A note about terminology: while immigrant students are frequently also classified as “English language learners” (ELL) or “English as a Second language” (ESL) students, it is important to remember that all immigrant students are not classified as language learners—and all language minorities are not all immigrants. In fact, many EL-designated students were born in the United States. Because most of the available research on immigrant students designates the population as EL, ESL, or LEP, I also use such terms when citing research. When referring to my participants, I use the term "recently-arrived" immigrant youth or "EL-designated." I use the word "designated" to purposefully remind the reader that being an ELL is a label that schools place on youth. The label itself is not problematic, but the consequences of the label are--thus it is critical to interrogate naming practices.
one in four EL-designated students reside in California, the site of this dissertation study (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). Los Angeles County is the 6th largest immigrant county, with 36.2% of its total population foreign-born (Migration Policy Institute, 2009). The Los Angeles area is home to the largest proportion of immigrant students in the country and two of its largest school districts (LAUSD and Long Beach) serve more EL-designated students than any other school district in the country. Yet the United States lacks coherent, equitable immigration laws and social integration policies. Our social integration policy, as sardonically noted by Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, could be said to resemble an ostrich with its head stuck in the sand (Suarez-Orozco, Lecture notes, 01/30/2009). This is not new: even a cursory look at immigrant history reveals that despite a compulsive American tendency to romanticize its immigrant roots, most groups have had a difficult incorporation process that has been highly racialized and gendered, and have also been subjected to discrimination along socio-economic, linguistic, and religious lines.

Traditionally, the U.S. has followed an assimilationist model for immigrant incorporation, asking how to meld a singular unit from disparate components. Assimilation theory posits that social and cultural cohesion is necessary for economic and political stability. Problematically, social and cultural cohesion is normatively constructed as assimilation into a standardized American “mainstream”—historically white, Protestant and middle class—with prescribed cultural norms. Assimilation advocates the maintenance of American “values” and “ideals;” which all too frequently has led to discrimination across economic, political, and cultural domains. Accordingly, critics of the model deplore its implicit focus on coercing immigrants into the “notion of American society as a wholly self-contained unit of social processes” (Favell, 2003).
2005, p. 3). Rather, multiculturalism advocates for the permanent and historical nature of cultural, linguistic, and racial pluralism in the United States. Still, assimilationism informs the hidden curriculum underpinning many institutional practices that treat the cultural and discursive practices of non-Anglo groups as oppositional to an “American” ideal. Thus, a growing nativist climate has led to political battles and attendant media coverage over the dangers of “illegal” immigration, and calls for regulations concerning who is allowed access to social services such as education, health, and welfare, and policies which reify the English language.

As far back as the advent of the common school with its policy of “Americanization/assimilation” (Reese, 2011), public schooling has had a special relationship with immigration. The ethnic, religious, and linguistic character of schools has been the focus of countless policy battles and educational reform movements—like anti-bilingual impulses that saw the banning of German-English bilingual schools in the Midwest during World War I and Spanish-English bilingual programs in California and other states in the 1990s. Public schooling has afforded both opportunity and loss as immigrants have varied between maintaining and shedding their ethnic cultures as they move into the U.S. middle-class. Steinberg relates,

It is clear that the state, through its educational institutions, dealt a devastating blow to ethnic pluralism by refusing to organize the schools on a pluralistic basis. It is only now when ‘the destruction of memories’ is largely an accomplished fact that schools have been willing to introduce bilingual education and innocuous programs of “ethnic heritage” into their curricula (1981, p. 55).

Thirty years later, multicultural policies and curricula in schools are still debated, most contentiously through policies like Prop. 227 in California, which bans bilingual education in all
public schools, or HB 56 in Georgia which requires teachers to report students suspected of being undocumented. Still, the story of immigrant youth in schools is more complex than a few xenophobic policies might suggest. Hegemonic practices and deracination projects notwithstanding, generations of immigrant youth have passed through U.S. public schools to take their places on the economic ladder of society, living subversely transnational and transcultural lives that maintain a sense of connection to their homeland, to their ethnic communities, native languages and to the United States and English.

John Dewey tells us that society replicates itself through communication; schooling (or education broadly conceived) is the mechanism by which we communicate who we are to our young (1916). For immigrant youth, schools take on particular importance as they represent “the first sustained, meaningful, and enduring participation in an institution of the new society” (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008, p. 2). This is salient for a growing number of high school students.

As of 1997, high schools were receiving the majority of immigrant students. This was problematic as, unlike elementary schools, high schools traditionally operate from the assumption that students have already mastered the literacy and language skills necessary for higher level content work. Hence, high schools have often been unable to meet the needs of their foreign-born students in mainstream and content area classes (Callahan, 2005; Fix & Capps, 2005; C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). The tension inherent in how school communities negotiate their recently-arrived immigrant students’ educational trajectories was summed up succinctly in a recent New York Times article. Discussing the changing demographics in U.S. schools and the relationship between education and assimilation, a high
school teacher elaborates on the common practice of separating newly arrived students out from the rest of the schoolchildren and placing them into ESL classrooms:

'High schools have to make a pragmatic choice when it comes to these kids,' said Peter B. Bedford, a history teacher who supports the program. 'Are you going to focus on educating them, or socially integrating them?' (Thompson, 2009).

His question reflects a common crisis in high schools. The newcomer is assumed to be entering the system with deficits, which must be corrected before they may socially integrate, complete their education, and live the American dream. How newcomers should be educated has led to debates over bilingual vs. English only language schooling (Crawford, 2004), and integration vs. segregation both intra- and inter-school and district (Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2002). The racial and cultural identities of teachers and their ability to teach in pluralistic settings (e.g. Delpit 2002), culturally responsive vs. “canon” curriculum (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Moll, 1998), and increasing politicization and hostility along racial, cultural, and linguistic lines in schools and communities (Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995; Valenzuela, 1999) has complicated the search for solutions. The outcomes of these debates and reforms, as reflected by the deplorable high school graduation rates for minority and immigrant youth, can only lead us to one conclusion: that we are neither sufficiently educating these youth, nor are we socially incorporating our immigrant young people in a way that is conducive to upward mobility and college graduation.

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3 The terms “assimilation” and “integration” are highly politicized and mean different things to different communities at different times. Throughout the paper I will use the words “incorporation” or “inclusion” to address how newcomers enter into the pre-existing whole so that both the “mainstream” and the “minority” accommodate the other in ways that are socially cohesive, yet recognize the constant dynamism of culture. The particulars of such accommodation might include leveling barriers to association, creating equitable opportunity for groups along racial, national origin, class or religious lines, and the development of a pluralistic mainstream that draws on diverse traditions.
In a sense, the struggle over how to incorporate immigrants into society is a struggle for the cultural identity of America. As sociologists are prone to say, the question is not just how immigrants assimilate, but into what they assimilate. Our ideas about ourselves are shifting; the classic—and and now outmoded-- notion of the United States as possessing a Euro-American, Protestant, middle-class mainstream is slowly being challenged in academia, as well as in new social spaces and popular culture. A growing number of Americans embrace the perception that we are a multiethnic, multicultural, religiously and linguistically pluralistic society. Yet, the question of who we are provides challenges to schools. How should educators facilitate integration of recently-arrived immigrant youth at a time of intense cultural transformation? What does it mean to belong to a community during a time of super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007): of diversity within already diverse global cities? How does schooling reflect our choices, our struggles, and our aspirations?

This dissertation attempts to explore some of these questions. Here, the stories of a group of recently-arrived immigrant students attending a public high school in the greater Los Angeles area are presented. Several themes emerged: 1) The immigrant youth at the high school were viewed as having low motivation and therefore relegated to a low status by their high school teachers; 2) Despite hostility within the larger community, the immigrant youth built their own successful community of practice which enabled them to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance of their individual cultural and ethnic backgrounds and languages; and 3) The immigrant youth evinced extraordinary strength and skills that arose from their various migration journeys and integration processes; these skills helped them navigate transplant shock and integrate into a complicated high school peer culture and educational landscape.
These three themes lead me to conclude that a sense of belonging is fostered through relationships that we form in certain localities. This finding is critical at a time when politics seek to circumscribe the ways in which we are able to form safe communities. School leaders and teachers have the opportunity to create work that speaks back to the politics of alienation and isolation by creating school communities which recognize the strengths and skills of their immigrant students, and leverages individuals' strengths and skills in order to create 21st century learning environments that privilege and value transcultural skills and multilingualism.

These themes and findings thread through the rest of the dissertation. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to theoretical perspectives which frame the way I came to understand and analyze my data. Then, I introduce and review relevant studies on belonging, immigrant youth, culture and learning. Chapters Four, Five, and Six I present the data collected at the study site from 2009 to 2011. Chapter Seven offers concluding thoughts and formulates a model of transcultural belonging.

**Theoretical Framework**

Rowe (Summer 2005) argues that the belonging as articulated by a “politics of location” (i.e., “where are you from?”) establishes an individualized identity, and ignores our broader relation to the people in our community. She reconstitutes belonging as a “politics of relation” which aims to render transparent the political conditions and effects of our belonging (i.e., “who are you from?”). She writes,

The sites of our belong-ing constitute how we see the world, what we value, who we are (becoming). The meaning of self is never individual, but a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of, often without reflection.” ...Who we love, the communities that
we live in, who we expend our emotional energies building ties with—these connections are all functions of power. So the command of this “reverse interpellation” is to call attention to the politics at stake in our belonging, and to envision an alternative (p. 16).

In order to envision this set of shifting relations that constitute belonging, I have chosen theories of relationship in community which privilege the process of dynamic cultural change and cultural struggle, influenced by larger political schemas. These theories are particularly relevant to an educational study, because struggle, change, and reconciliation are at the heart of the learning process. Wenger tells us “learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming-- to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person” (1998, p. 215).

Many ethnographic studies of immigrant youth deploy cultural reproduction theories (see, for example, Ogbu and his critics), or theories of race (Carter, 2005; Lee, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999) and gender (Lopez, 2003) to frame their understanding of the experiences of immigrant youth. While the aforementioned ethnographers have provided appropriate and necessary lenses through which to view to the experiences of immigrant youth in high schools, we need broader theories to capture transnational and transcultural experiences. Here, I sought to understand how adolescent, immigrant youth culture and identity are produced through engaging and aligning with others in community; this framework allowed me to consider transnational and transcultural practices in local settings. In the following section, I explicate the theoretical lenses that inform the research.
Theories of community: Identity development, brokering boundaries, multi- and trans-culturalism, and responsivity.

Theories of community are a valuable lens when studying the practice of belonging in the everyday student lives at school. Here, I discuss the work of Wenger (1998) to frame this dissertation’s work on culture, identity and learning in community. I also consider Tara Yosso (D. G. Sólorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005)\(^4\) and Amitai Etzioni (1996, 2000, 2008, 2009) on community cultural wealth and community responsiveness respectively. Wenger discusses how a community of practice mediates social participation, and thus learning. Indeed, participation in a community of practice is the very act of creating meaning. He challenges the notion that “our institutions, to the extent that they address issues of learning explicitly, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities, and that it is the result of teaching,” (p. 3). In other words, a community of practice does not depend on reified tasks, but engages in joint learning and can linger after an official project has ended. Wenger writes that a community of practice is more than a team or a network. Rather, community can be defined as a mid-level category of sustained relationships that is operationalized through mutual engagement in activity (like community maintenance), a joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (like stories, history, and concepts).

Communities are also indigenous: “while developing in a larger historical, social, cultural, institutional context with particular resources and constraints, communities of practice can

\(^4\) Yosso’s inclusion here is representative of a tradition of scholars working on asset-based accounts of immigrant youth, and notions of social and cultural capital more generally (see Chapter Two: Literature Review). Her particular theory is useful but not unique, and should be read as part of a lineage and tradition.
respond to these in ways not determined by the institution” (p. 79). It is this very definition that qualifies community as an important unit of analysis in any discussion of migration. Cultural and structural incorporation for the immigrant is not a direct response to the nation-state, but rather a process that occurs in the local community, as shaped by global realities. As Wenger delineates, participation shapes communities and our experiences; thus, an important aspect of participation is democratic potential. Participation in a community both for the immigrant and the American born youth can forge new modes of belongingness for both. Wenger’s definition of a community of practice parallels Etzioni’s political economy of community. Etzioni writes,

Community is a combination of two elements: 1) A web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships); 2) A measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity—in short, to a particular culture (2000, p. 190).

In the following sections, I draw out specific themes from Wenger and Etzioni’s work to locate points of intersection and relevant which illuminate lived experiences of recently arrived immigrant youth.

**Theme 1: Identity trajectory.** Identity development is a functional component of any community. Wenger distances himself from thinkers who see the individual and the collective at odds, refusing to negate or minimize either the individual, or the community. He writes, “building our identity consists of negotiating the meaning of our experience of membership in social communities” (p. 145). With this reasoning, identity is a “pivot” between the individual and society, not a dichotomy. Wenger writes, “what narratives, categories, roles and positions
come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice” p. 151. Here he deserves to be quoted at length:

Identity is the locus of social selfhood and by the same token a locus of social power. On the one hand, it is the power to belong, to be a certain person, to claim a place with the legitimacy of membership; and on the other it is the vulnerability of belonging to, identifying with, and being part of some communities that contribute to defining who we are and thus have a hold on us. Rooted in our identities, power derives from belonging as well as from exercising control over what we belong to... (p. 207).

Trajectories help us to understand how identity is formed within community. Further, a trajectory maps out how membership in a community translates into an identity as a form of competence, defined as: being in familiar territory in a community of practice, experiencing competence and being recognized as competent, knowing how to engage with others, understanding the enterprise, and sharing resources used to communicate and going about activities (p. 152). For recent-arrival immigrant youth, competency in classrooms, extra-curricular spaces, and alternate school spaces might be constrained or enabled based on their relationships with teacher, peers, and other schooling staff, and possibly on how their trajectory is viewed by others or themselves. Wenger writes, “as we go through successive forms of participation, our identities form trajectories within and across communities of practice: identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories” (p. 154). As previously stated, trajectories are never straightforward paths. Thus, identity work also needs to be examined through the concept of the perimeters and overlaps of community, or the tension at boundaries and peripheries and its impact on the issue of belonging.
Theme 2: Brokering boundaries and peripheries. Brokering work—through language, or other forms of cultural sharing, is part of the landscape of migration. Wenger defines a broker as a person who is “able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and... open new possibilities for meaning” (p. 109). Brokering involves translating, coordinating and aligning between perspectives, addressing conflicting interests, and causing learning by introducing into a practice elements of another (p. 109). It may involve multimembership, or what Etzioni calls “layered loyalties,” or the ways in which inter/national and/or other local communities share commitments and affections (2008, p. 118). Multimembership may involve various trajectories (outlined below) and places heavy demands on the reconciliation of identity. Thus, a hyphenated (e.g., bi-, or tri-cultural identity), transnational, classically assimilated, or other form of identity making would influence the ways in which youth participate in their communities of practice. The roles students take as they form modes of belonging (e.g., newcomer, broker or multimember) are not static: as they go through successive forms of participation their identities form trajectories within and across communities of practice. Indeed, identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories (Wenger, 1998, p. 154).

Central to a consideration of culture within community, is Wenger’s discussion of the boundaries and peripheries in communities of practice and the role of newcomers (concepts that are particularly salient in a globalizing world). In a similar vein, the prose-poet Gloria Anzaldúa writes about the borderlands occupied by Mexican-Tejana-Americans. She discusses belonging and identity, and categorizes the in-between spaces, the gaps and silences. She describes the metaphysical experience of “not belonging to any culture at all” and “being an exile in all the different cultures,” recounting her own experience of feeling “all these gaps,
these cracks in the world” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 14). Political scientist Ray Rocco analyzes “new” and “old” migrants in Los Angeles, and “takes advantage of many of the cultural categories brought forward by postcolonial analysis—namely, hybridity, borders, margins, the “third space,” and the “in-between” (Torres, 1998).

Wenger characterizes boundaries as discontinuities and lines of distinction between membership and non-membership. Peripheries, on the other hand, are continuities, areas of overlap and connections, and organized and causal possibilities for participation offered to outsiders or newcomers (p. 120). Peripheries provide degrees of participation, and influence how we steer our trajectories. Wenger writes, “joining a community of practice involves entering not only its internal configuration but also its relations with the rest of the world” (p.103).

Participants in a community of practice can form close relationships and develop idiosyncratic ways of engaging which outsiders cannot easily enter, like having a detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise, and developing a repertoire of shared references (Wenger, 1998, p. 117). In this dissertation, ways of speaking and listening, peer relationships and the high value placed on performance through test scores, or on helping each other access learning through community were complex understandings and shared points of reference that recent arrival immigrants had to absorb in order to function at Faulkner High school. Wenger explains how newcomers achieve inclusion in the larger community of practice through a process of “legitimate peripheral participation”: newcomers must be granted legitimacy through their approximation of full participation that eventually gives exposure to full practice (p. 100). He writes, “note that peripherality and legitimacy are achievements that involve both a community and its newcomers and that do not presuppose a generation encounter free of
conflicts; on the contrary, this perspective integrates the generational encounter into the processes of negotiation by which a practice evolves” (p. 101). This concept is similar to the notion of traditional subtractive assimilation, where cultural legitimacy, English language, and particular forms of knowledge must be acquired before immigrants can become full members of a society.

Still, peripherality can be a place of strength and contribution, pushing the practice of full members to change and develop. Wenger writes, “the inclusion of new members can, as I described earlier, create a ripple of new opportunities for mutual engagement; these new relationships can awaken new interests that translate into a renegotiation of the enterprise; and the process can produce a whole generation of new elements in the repertoire” (p. 97).

Since changing and learning are at the heart of practice, recent arrival immigrant youth can bring practices to their host communities (i.e., as demonstrated in Chapter Five where students translated for each other and brokered cultural knowledge in order to support the learning of their peers), thus opening up an opportunity to push the evolvement of the community.

Replacing the concept of schooling as an assimilative process with the more useful examination of the kinds of processes occurring as a result of globalizing processes, rests on the assumption that culture is dynamic, and that contact between newcomer and native necessitates change and development by both parties. Similarly, the Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth paradigm is a useful lens with which to view empirical data and examine the ways in which different forms of social capital are accumulated by community members, thus revealing opportunities to reduce conflict and increase shared bonds and values.

**Theme 3: Multi- and transculturalism.** As Wenger writes, maintaining an identity across boundaries requires work. It is not merely a secondary process but rather is at the core of what
it means to be a person (1998, p. 161). He explains, “we know who we are by what is familiar and by what we can negotiate and make use of, and that we know who we are not by what is unfamiliar, unwieldy, and out of our purview” (p.164). Multiple trajectories and multimembership is one way of “living” the experience of boundaries and peripheries (p. 161). Thus, the work of reconciliation constantly creates bridges across those borderlands. Wenger writes, “the potentially difficult work of reconciliation can be facilitated by communities that endeavor to encompass, within their own practice, an increasing position of the nexus of multimembership of their members” (1998, p. 216). The notion of multimembership, especially for ethnic minorities, has been partially developed in work that addresses cultural identity and education (Lopez, 2003; Sarroub, 2005).

There is a decided trend in scholarship to analyze groups through singularized identities (D. G. Sólorzano & Yosso, 2001; Valencia, 2002). Ethnographic educational studies conducted in the United States can lack a global focus, which does not reflect the reality of people’s lives. While critical for analysis of how discrimination works along racial, class or gender lines, academic discussions around issues such as “Black teachers” or “Latino gangmembers” can also limit theoretical optics for understanding how identities shift and refocus, surface and submerge over time and through space. Immigrant youth live at the intersections of identity making; considering their cultural membership entails researchers to understand the ways that various aspects of one’s identity are foregrounded at different times across the social landscape. The challenge of finding suitable ways to talk about multimembership, transculturation, and the ecology of identity, requires not only new answers, but new questions and a new theoretical language.
**Theme 4: The responsive, social just community.** Etzioni theorizes that finding unity through markers of identity does not work to bring communities together but rather risks fragmentation on a larger social level. (One need only be reminded of the tragic course of events in the former Yugoslavia to take his point). He recommends that unity is created around the sharing of principles, not identity markers—reiterating his definition of community as a space created through shared bonds of affection and values. Shared bonds of affection and values are demonstrated by the discussion of achieving community through language work in Chapter Five. Etzioni recognizes that it is not desirable to “absorb fully members’ identities, energies, and commitments into the social realm” (1995, p. 15). Doing so, he writes, would only hurt the idiosyncratic aspect of individual selves that enable the development of new social patterns. Etzioni’s concept of the “responsive community” re-envisions the notion of reconciliation as a desirable conflict between individuals and their social embeddedness.

How school institutions can shape or enhance the experience of these modes of belonging for students draws on Etzioni’s concept of a “responsive community” as a set of methods by which the larger community mediates how individuals belong. He writes, “responsiveness is the cardinal feature of authentic communities. If the values the community fosters of the form of its structure do not reflect its members needs, or only reflect the needs of some, the community’s order will be ipso facto instead of truly supported” (1996, p. 2).

Etzioni acknowledges a fundamental contradiction between the needs of community members and the common good. Thus, the task of a community is to significantly reduce (but not eliminate) this contradiction by finding ways in which responsiveness can be enhanced. Thus, a *partial* community is one that is responsive to some members but not to all, and an *unauthentic* community responds to false, rather than true needs of their members.
A responsive community is formed through ways, or modes, of being. Wenger provides an excellent discussion of *modes* of belonging within a community of practice, a framework which is useful for descriptive research of complex processes of identity within the dialectic of the local and global. Moreover, examining how youth move across these modes of belonging enriches the concept of community as a place for personal and social transformation. He delineates three modes of belonging:

1) through *engagement*, or the actual activity or bounded practice

2) through *imagination*: such as recognizing our experience in others, defining a trajectory to an extended identity, seeing ourselves in new ways, conceiving of the multiple constellations that shape our practices, opening access to distant practices with excursions and fleeting contacts, generating possible scenarios, using history to see the present as only one of many possibilities

3) through *alignment*, or coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises like a creed, nation, sports team, or movement.

At a time of increasing politicization of immigration and oppressive social policies, a responsive community is also a community that foregrounds issues of social justice. Martin Luther King, Jr. warns against the chaos and conflict community members can engender socially. He writes that man lives in both the internal and the external, but that in contemporary society we have allowed the external to subsume the internal, or the purpose for which we live. This purpose, or the heart of King’s understanding of community, is brotherhood based on love. He writes,

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one’s tribe,
race, call and action is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all men. This often misunderstood and misinterpreted concept has now become an absolute necessity for the survival of man (p. 190).

Charles Marsh describes King’s vision of the ‘Beloved Community’ as the costly and outrageous risk of loving another person without conditions (2005, p. 2). The goal of King’s civil rights movement was not simply to find individual life purpose, but redress the sluggish struggle together towards reconciliation, redemption, and the creation of the beloved community. A redemptive society thus integrates differences, and heals social divisions and wounds. The importance of maintaining a focus on the healing of divisions in schools that perpetuate subtractive schooling practices is imperative.

Part of the social justice mission that schools need to embrace on behalf of immigrant youth is the creation of a space for their cultural knowledge and socio-familial histories and values. U.S. schools frequently ignore or repress how students’ formulate their cultural belongingness. In contrast, Yosso recommends a means for schools to bring students’ cultural experiences into the social and academic life of the classroom. Community Cultural Wealth is a useful theoretical tool to negotiate the cultural experiences of youth in public high schools. Drawing heavily from Bourdieu, Yosso explains how the concept of community cultural wealth challenges the entrenched notion that Students of Color are a drain on the normal resources and processes of schools. She identifies several kinds of capital that marginalized Students of Color offer to their schools (e.g., familial, aspirational, linguistic, and navigational).

Immigrants also bring other particular forms of capital with them into schools. They are initially rooted entirely in a particular racial, cultural, and national experience and then must
acquire another set of identities and repeat the same “rooting” process. This flexibility of identity and re-orienting selfhood to understand new norms, cultural practices and belief systems, requires empathy, reflectiveness and patience—yet research has yet to recognize these particular strengths as capital. Responsive schools must consider these human resources that new immigrants bring into our diverse communities.

Theories of community provide a necessary lens for viewing ways in which learning, identity and development are products of connectivity and intimacy. Accordingly, I now turn to a discussion of literature relevant to the topic of belonging, in order to provide an adequate survey of the landscape of educational studies concerned with this topic.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review of Studies on Belonging

Introduction

Migration is a kaleidoscopic process of loss—and gain. Belonging, culture, identity, and language are central to the process of migration. Addressing belonging is important for those studying youth identity in an era of globalization and its twin conditions, situatedness and flux (2009). A wealth of literature discusses the concept of belonging vis-a-vis migration: theoretical considerations of globalization and assimilation, historical research on how U.S. institutions engage with immigrant communities, research on systemic social interactions between native born and non-native communities, and memoirs, plays, and poetry. There is a growing body of literature on the education of recent-arrival immigrant youth in high schools which deals with the subject of belongingness (although more implicitly than explicitly). In this literature review, I will draw out the hidden thread—belonging—central to studies of immigrant youth. The changing demographics of U.S. schools demand that we understand how better to incorporate immigrant youth into our communities. Youth’s development of a sense of belonging to a school community, and the cultural practices inherent to that process, are a critical underpinning to our understanding of how research can inform reform; hence, a detailed and descriptive study of how belonging is instantiated in everyday cultural actions is timely and necessary. The underlying concern of all of my questions as I approach the literature is how schools can become a means of empowerment and self-determination for immigrant and refugee students, and how their rich cultural and linguistic traditions can be leveraged by
teachers\textsuperscript{5}. In my dissertation proposal, I asked two research questions, which are answered in this literature review in the following ways:

1) **What is the structure of belonging experienced by recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic high school?**

The patterns of belonging experienced by recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic high school are shaped by a) their relationships with their teachers and peers, and b) their position in the high school's ESL program, the major form of schooling for immigrant youth. Relationships with teachers and peers in a multiethnic high school can be influenced by the linguistic, citizenry, and ethno-cultural identities of immigrant youth. These relationships become concretized in school policy and organizational patterns, leading to linguistic and cultural segregation in ways that impact academic achievement. By way of contrast, research finds that ethno-linguistic identity and the relationships and programs that nurture that identity can draw out youth's cultural and academic assets, leading youth to experience a sense of belonging at school. Ethnographic and qualitative work on immigrant youth and ESL programs substantiate these findings.

2) **How do recently-arrived immigrant youth achieve a sense of social, cultural, and academic belonging at school?**

Having a sense of belonging at school is critical to psychological, socio-cultural, and academic well-being, as demonstrated by Osterman's research and other studies of how students experience belonging in post-secondary institutions. The institutional environment and

\textsuperscript{5} The second part of this concern only became salient after data collection; this is explained at length in *Chapter Three: Methods.*
culture—such as a supportive racial environment—is strongly correlated to whether or not students experience a sense of belonging and thus participate in positive academic behavior.

In the following review of the literature pertinent to belonging, present studies in two broad groups: first, academic and social belonging, by which I mean how belonging relates to academic achievement and is organized through social patterns, including organizational patterns; and secondly, cultural belonging, considered through the work of contemporary anthropologists on culture in schools. My divisions are rough: the academic, social, and cultural lives of immigrant youth in schools are overlapping and interlocking.

Previous studies on a sense of “belonging” in schools: mapping the field and identifying the gap

Osterman’s review of the research relates “belonging” to parallel concepts such as “relatedness, sense of community, sense of school or classroom membership, support and acceptance” (Osterman, 2000, p. 343). The construct of belonging has a long-standing history in psychological literature and is derived from Maslow’s hierarchical theory of motivation and personality based on a simulated pyramid of basic human needs (Booker, 2007, p. 302).
Figure 1: Maslow’s pyramid representing his theory of his hierarchy of human needs

More recently, the experience of belonging in educational settings has been positively correlated to: 1) development of basic psychological processes important to student success, 2) academic attitudes and motives, 3) social and personal attitudes, 4) engagement and participation, and 5) academic achievement (Osterman, 2000, p. 327). Across the wide range of studies on belonging, issues of identity, such as racial and social class identification, have been examined closely for their impact on students’ attitudes towards schooling. Educational researchers have paid less attention to language and belonging, which is a serious gap in the literature. And there are no studies to my knowledge of belonging and immigrants in school, marking this dissertation as filling a distinct and apparent gap in our understanding of how to serve a vulnerable population in the K-12 public school pipeline.

It is my intention throughout this review to decouple the thematic links that existing studies make, and re-link the conditions that support belonging to the needs of immigrant youth. To do so, I review studies that focus on high schools and colleges, schooling structure and integration, and multicultural education. Secondly, it is my intention to show the
importance of how inquiry is conducted, shifting analysis from large n’s to small n’s, and statistical inference to descriptive documentation of phenomena. Quantitative studies of belonging are generally concerned with measuring (a) how belonging relates to academic achievement, and (b) how schools can structure their culture and climate and encourage social participation and learning in order to scaffold a better sense of belonging among their entire student body. What these studies are unable to do because of their method of research is to descriptively explain how belonging is created and shaped by every day actions and decisions. Moreover, there have been no studies, neither qualitative nor quantitatively achieved, that examine linkages between belonging and academic achievement for immigrant students. While my study did not provide me with the right kind of information to adequately theorize this link, I do lay the groundwork for future work that considers this issue.

**Roadmap.** The structure of this literature review moves from a general discussion of issues concerning 1) belonging, and 2) immigrant youth through myriad genres of educational studies to a discussion of the specific tradition within which I locate this study: the educational anthropology of immigrant youth. I review descriptive studies that *indirectly* address belonging for immigrant youth by probing the nature of school culture and relationships that promote integration or incorporation. Towards this aim, I review work on (1) the relationships that promote a sense of belonging for youth in school communities, and (2) the ways in which schools facilitate or mediate belonging through their organizational practices, where I argue that high school reform for English Language Learners (ELLs) is desperately needed. As a corollary argument, I decouple organizational practices from belonging and academic achievement and re-link organizational practices to belonging, culture and immigrant youth. Throughout parts one and two of this literature review, I highlight issues pertinent to ELLs and
English as a Second Language (ESL) education, as almost all immigrant youth in the United States will be classified ELL or spend some time in an ESL program. Hence, issues concerning ELL and ESL education are central to questions about belonging.

Finally, I consider work within which belonging is not explicitly discussed, but which is topically the closest match to my work and intellectual interests, namely, (3) the educational anthropology of immigrant youth and position my study within this tradition. Throughout this literature review, I will highlight issues related to the concept of the multiethnic mainstream that I will continue to develop throughout the following chapters.

**Parts One and Two: Academic and Social belonging**

**Academic and social belonging as mediated by adult and peer relationships**

**The relationship between teachers and students.** Belonging and/or alienation can be mediated by the relationships between teachers and immigrant youth, a discussion I take up in my data analysis in *Chapter Four: The Architecture of Belonging* and *Chapter Five: Successful Communities of Practice*. A lengthy tradition of scholarship and educational work asserts how important teacher caring is for student development, and demonstrates the critical role of student-teacher relationships to student success in general (Conchas, 2006; Duncan, 2002; Freire, 2005; hooks, 2003; Noddings, 2005). Neoliberalism has led much of contemporary educational policy to divest emotion from the realm of teaching—teaching is sometimes divorced from a focus on interpersonal relationships as schools become more consumed with concocting the perfect formula to produce students' who achieve high scores on standardized testing. Moreover, educational research and practice have long suffered from an inferiority complex that has led to a hyperfocus on the tenets of scientific positivism—logic, universal law,
and neutrality in schooling. The argument, for example, for the appropriateness of a market efficiency model in public school reform, stems from this orientation. Freire is a key theorist who discusses the intersection of belonging (vis-a-vis relationships), and learning.

Freire believed that intuition and emotion were part of the process of knowing (Roberts, 2008). Importantly for teacher education, he argued that an exclusive and dominant focus on the intellect could yield incomplete understandings of humans and the world (Roberts, 2008). The interaction of feeling and reason as a dual part of intellect is both unpopular in today's intellectual climate, with its focus on scientific rationality, and in today's school climate, with its focus on testing. More and more, teachers focus only on the academic subjects necessary for testing; divorcing learning from affect/emotion (in this case the emotional field that creates a sense of belonging) leads to their incomplete understanding of the kind of education necessary for immigrant and language minority youth.

Scholars of teacher education tell us that the beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes of pre-teacher candidates and in-service teachers is a crucial component in determining how language teaching plays out in the classroom (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). How teachers perceive and care for their immigrant students is often derived from the ways in which they receive professional support in their school organizations (Gándara, Maxwell-Joly, & Driscoll, 2005). This point will be well demonstrated in the data chapters to follow. As Oakes discusses in her work on tracking, teachers in lower-tracks, which, arguably, ESL classrooms tend to be, overwhelmingly emphasizes “student conformity: students getting along with one another, working quietly, improving study habits, being punctual, and conforming to classroom rules and expectations” (2005, p. 85). In contrast, teachers in higher track classes are more likely to emphasize “critical thinking, independent work, active participation, self-direction, and
creativity” (p. 85). In Oakes’ schema, many ESL educators would unfortunately qualify as lower-track teachers.

The literature on ESL professionals demonstrates that they are shouldered with the brunt of academic, language, and counseling tasks for their students, and that their teaching positions reinforce isolation and burnout (Rance-Roney, 2009), findings that correspond to my own study. Additionally, lack of resources (e.g., textbooks, native language dictionaries, and translators) available for immigrant adolescent students leaves teachers scrambling and forces them into extra preparation time for which they are not compensated (Callahan, 2005). Part of this derives from how teachers are educated, which then translates into in-school relationships among staff. A prevalent issue in second language teaching is that secondary school teachers are primarily trained in content area instruction and cannot—or will not—assist ESL teachers with language instruction (Arkoudis, 2006). The division of status between mainstream and ESL teachers, and resulting challenges to working collaboration, remains a challenging issue for school reform. Thus, research must examine the nuances of what it means to belong in order to help teachers provide the adequate psychosocial support for immigrant learners.

Multiple psychological studies have measured the importance of teacher caring to student well-being and academic development. For example, some studies documented the importance of the teacher-student relationship for students’ perceptions of the classroom environment, achievement, and perceptions of the meaningfulness of academic tasks (Davis, 2001, 2003). Several studies reported that students’ perceptions of the teacher-student interpersonal relationship are positively related to their motivation and achievement (den Brok, 2010; Hamre, 2005; Martin, 2009). Others have emphasized the importance of teachers’ support for student autonomy (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). Moreover, evidence suggests that
students’ beliefs about how much adults at school care about them is associated with higher levels of positive health and academic outcomes (Teven & McCroskey, 1997; Whitlock, 2006). According to Perez (2000) caring teachers encourage racially diverse students’ cultural identification with school as well as engagement in learning.

Among stigmatized and/ or minoritized groups, teacher caring takes on particular importance. Indeed, Davidson and Phelan (1999) found that urban students who believed their teacher cared about them were more willing to work towards academic goals. Among Latino high school students, teacher caring and support negatively predicted students’ problem behaviors and positively predicted perceived meaningfulness of school (Brewster & Bowen, 2004). Studies with Latino middle school students reported positive effects of the teacher-student relationship and caring on engagement (García-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2005; Murray, 2009), and it has been suggested that teacher caring is particularly important for so-called “at-risk” students (Jennings, 2003). For example, Muller (2001) revealed an interaction between teacher caring and students’ “at-risk” status: among students considered “at risk,” teacher caring was a strong predictor of high school students’ growth in math achievement. Yet other research on belonging in high schools states that too little work has been focused on minority youth and belonging, and calls for a focus on African-Americans in high schools (Booker, 2006); certainly, this call must extend to studies of immigrant minority students and their teachers as well.

**ESL teachers.** The majority of immigrant youth in the United States are formally categorized as English Language Learners, meaning they are subject to English as a Second Language curriculum and programs. Generally, the relationships between EL-designated students and their teachers can be said to be emotionally supportive; still, curriculum tends to
be less rigorous providing less academic resources for ELLs. Reasons for the lack of academic support can be found in the way that ESL teachers are, like their students, marginalized in their school contexts and left unsupported by the State and by universities offering teacher education.

![Figure 2: Education for ESL/ELL Teachers in the United States](image)


As Figure 2 shows, many institutions of teacher training\(^6\) do not offer instruction in either bilingual or ESL education. In addition to the pitiful state of teacher education for ESL teachers, most ESL teachers fail to receive further training on the job, leading to burnout (Téllez & Waxman, 2005). Moreover, the teaching of newcomer youth is usually left to young, inexperienced new teachers. For example, ESL teachers in the state of California, where my study takes place, are more likely to hold an emergency credential than have received proper training (25% of ESL teachers versus 14% of mainstream teachers) (Gándara & Rumberger, 2000).

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\(^6\) While the above study is dated to 2000, recent work on teachers in California finds that institutions in that state have not been able to produce trained teachers to meet the needs of a population that has also escalated in the same decade. One in three children will be immigrants or children of immigrants in 2040 (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008) and currently 10.7% or 5.3 million children are classified as English Language Learners (Migration Policy Institute online [link](http://www.migrationinformation.org/ellinfo/FactSheet_ELL1.pdf).
In California, teachers have the option of two types of credentials which provide them with state approved training in the teaching of ELLs: CLAD and BCLAD. BCLAD (Bilingual, Cultural, Language and Development) is the more sophisticated and comprehensive training of the two, yet only five percent of California teachers hold the credential (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007).

In addition to unqualified teachers, there is a serious lack of ESL teachers nationally. While research on ESL teachers in states with the most language minority students reports that they feel underprepared, even the news from states who are newly receiving large numbers of immigrant youth in schools is even more alarming. Flynn reports on national research that cites 67% of teachers in urban fringe/large towns, 58% of teachers in central cities, and 82% of teachers in rural locales had never participated in professional development addressing the needs of ELL students (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Researchers call for the professional development of veteran teachers in order to give support to ESL teachers:

As noted, all indications are that the supply of new teachers specially trained to work with English language learners will not keep pace with the enrollment of LEP immigrants in the nation’s schools. These trends underscore the importance of supporting the professional development of veteran teachers and other educators who now work with English language learners. Mainstream subject teachers, in particular, will need professional development programs that help them mold content instruction to promote English language learning (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000).

Teachers in California, a state with one of the largest school-aged immigrant and language minority population nationally, report that they receive minimal professional development (PD). They are also clear that they lack the necessary resources to meet the needs of ELLs, and feel underprepared (Gándara & Rumberger, 2007). In 2000, California teachers reported a mean seven percent of PD time spent dedicated to English Language Learners (Gándara, et al., 2005). Lack of PD is severely inhibiting for continued growth for all
teachers, and particularly, I argue, for teachers of English Language Learners who are required to teach content, language, and linguistics, boost literacy, and educationally intervene with students who may come from underschooled backgrounds, refugee camps, or war zones, and those who have inappropriate grade placement in relation to age (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Moreover, with ESL curriculum and instruction explicitly connected to other academic areas since the passing of No Child Left Behind in 2001, ESL teachers and mainstream teachers share many of the same roles, but with different reactions and sets of responsibilities.

In a recent experiment in Florida, which has the third largest immigrant population in the U.S. and where 25% of students are language minorities, policy makers decided that ESL instructional methods should be part of the knowledge base of all teachers, and thus PD sessions on the teaching of ELLs was mandated for all teachers (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008). Angry mainstream teachers populated Saturday workshops; in order to ameliorate the situation, their ESL colleagues generated lists of general cultural sensitivity methods and classroom teaching techniques and presented them as "ESL strategies." After completing 300 hours of "ESL infused" training, teachers were considered well-prepared to work with language minority youth. The authors of the study argue, and I agree, that the offering of culturally sensitive methods such as "ESL strategies" devalues the ESL teacher as a professional and ignores the need for highly specialized, well-trained ESL educators (Harper & de Jong, 2009; Harper, et al., 2008).

The work of Harper and de Jong is critically important, and the ESL education knowledge base needs more studies like theirs in order to scale-up their findings. My professional experience supports the authors' findings—I have seen ESL professional development sessions reduced to an empty set of "good" teaching tips, often at the request of mainstream teachers.
At the same time, mainstream teachers also clamor for effective teaching strategies, overwhelmed by the new numbers of language minorities in their classes. Not differentiating the learning needs of immigrant students risks devaluing the students, their ESL teachers, and mainstream teachers. These perceptions can affect how students are able to experience a sense of belonging to the school community. Peer groups can do much to mediate adult-youth tensions and provide critical support networks, a topic to which we now turn.

**Peer Groups.** Peer groups play a critical role for youth and are a salient socializing agent for adolescents across cultures. In a number of places, adolescents take on new community roles that signify an increase in social responsibility over childhood, and in such cases, adolescents usually perform these actions in groups (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Cultural anthropologists write that peer groups can take on an intensity of attachment in adolescence that is not always found at other life stages where responsibilities, like pursuing the interests and position of the marital family, can take priority (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Unlike what popular television shows may relate, deep investment in peer groups and (oppositional) youth culture does not necessarily lead to a reduced focus on school. Warikoo (2011) analyzes the relationship between youth culture and academic motivation in her comparative ethnography of two schools—one in London and one in New York City—and found that most teens try to balance success with peers and success in school.

**Affect and friendships.** Peer groups can facilitate the emotional states of youth. A study by developmental psychologists discuss how either underinvolvement or overinvolvement with peers can lead to depression (Falci & McNeely, 2009); suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 10 to 14 year olds, and the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year olds
(p. 2031). The study evaluated previous findings (i.e., Ueno, 2005) that a single close friend was not enough to ward off depression. They found that a close friend could protect against depression, but that having too many friends, and a fragmented network (friends who do not know each other) could also lead to depression (2009), thus suggesting that studying isolated youth was not enough for researchers interested in how peer groups determine belonging. Their results carry implications for this dissertation, where the presence of close friends of one’s same linguistic background did not always forge belonging for all participants, but having peer support was hugely important to the youth.

Faircloth and Hamm also examine the role of peer networks in determining belonging for adolescents in classroom settings and at school (Faircloth, 2009; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Faircloth & Hamm, January 2011; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Previous literature clarifies that peer groups are a relationship context significant to diverse aspects of school adjustment. The work of Faircloth and Hamm delineates how peer groups influence adolescents’ dispositions towards school, and influence their having a sense of belonging (Faircloth, 2009; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Faircloth & Hamm, January 2011; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). In one study, it was found that a sense of belonging was the greatest among African-Americans who had multiple group memberships. They found that multiple-network memberships within a classroom might ground individuals relationally in multiple cultures, helping to establish a sense of membership that supports belonging, or "bicultural competence". Contradictory findings suggest that for younger adolescents, stable peer groups provide a more acute sense of belonging. Faircloth and Hamm's work is of interest here, as in the data chapters of this dissertation multicultural and multilingual peer groups greatly impacted the sense of belonging that this study's research participants experienced at Faulkner High School. Still, their focus on the Black-White binary
and "bicultural" mainstream again proves an incomplete frame of reference for ESL classrooms and schools that are ethno-linguistically diverse.

*Peer groups and social capital.* Other research on peer groups shows that peers can promote social capital for minority youth, which in turn promotes academic achievement (Gibson, Gandara, Koyama, 2004). Stanton-Salazar (2004) questions whether working-class adolescents can function as social capital for each other, hence promoting “pro-academic subjectivities, behaviors, and performance in school” (p. 21). He finds that:

Social capital can be represented as a storehouse of different types of resources, embedded in social relations, that can be mobilized when an individual or group wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposeful action. Access to this storehouse of resources and support (e.g., expert knowledge about scholarship opportunities) begins with personal “connections” to an individual or to an integrated network of individuals (p. 25).

Unquestionably, *peer relational resources* (Stanton-Salazar’s term) can be facilitated by adults, as was seen in this study when teachers introduced newly-arrived immigrant youth to peers who spoke their language and could help them integrate into school. Yet, in the findings presented by this dissertation, few immigrant youth made connections with native, English-speaking peers. Research shows that intra and interethnic peer relations have a powerful influence—negative or positive—on students’ feelings about belonging in school and the way in which they participate (M. A. Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolon, 2004). Study findings showed that while students may report an overall sense of belonging in school, they may be highly uncomfortable in the school setting and situations that bring them into direct contact with peers who they feel neither accept nor respect them; this directly effects the nature of their school participation and academic engagement (M. A. Gibson, et al., 2004).
Likewise, research on language minority students demonstrates that involvement with peer groups can effectively boost academic achievement (Kagan, 1995 cited in Tellez and Waxman, 2010). In their review of the literature, Tellez and Waxman (2010) found that multiple studies related examples of bilingual peers helping their language learning friends in a variety of learning tasks. To leverage the naturally occurring student support, Tellez and Waxman argue that high-achieving peers should be adequately prepared to support their classmates. Research in this area remains scant but is directly related to many of the findings in Chapter Five: Successful Communities of Practice.

Relational resources between native-born and immigrant peers was a focus of several qualitative studies. Using the qualitative method, as this dissertation does, lent a depth to the research produced by several ethnographers of immigrant youth. Dryden-Peterson (2010) found that, while rare, instances of peer relations between recently-arrived Somali immigrant students and U.S.-born, White adolescents in a small town in Maine could act as bridges for youth to work through the changing racial dynamics of their town. The relationship of two such youth was facilitated through collaborative assignments and class discussions, leading to a kind of collective identification. Still, most of the Somali youth remained segregated in an ESL program, a finding also noted in Stacey J. Lee’s study of the Hmong in Wisconsin. In Lee’s study, ESL youth, who she terms “traditional” students, found it frustrating that American students did not want to be their friends (2005). In other words, how immigrant students experience relationships has a lot to do with how they are integrated—or not—with the rest of the student body, a subject to which I now turn.
Mediating “belonging” through organizational practices

Treatment of the construct of "belonging" in studies of higher education. Studying belonging has major precedent in the literature on tertiary education, most of which has focused on the sense of belonging experienced by different ethno-cultural groups, analyzing those groups by race and social class. Here, I review a few representative studies; high school reform literature could benefit from the analysis of this genre.

Tinto (1993) argues that students’ persistence is dependent on their success in integrating into existing universities’ climates and structures. Building on his work, researchers on higher education have taken issue with how his theory makes integration dependent on the student, arguing that the institution must take responsibility for the students’ feeling of welcome. These studies tended to emphasize race as a major component of how students experience a sense of belonging. For example, landmark research finds that students’ success is in part due to the way they feel welcomed by institutional environments and culture (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). For Latino students, that welcome included a sense of a supportive racial climate. Building on this research, Johnson et al. (2007) measured how a sense of belonging manifested among different freshman racial groups (n=2,967) using analysis of variance (ANOVA). They found that, overall, students of Color (African-American, Asian/Pacific-American, and Latino) experienced a weaker sense of belonging than their White counterparts (Johnson et al., 2007). Ultimately, they found that the students perceived their transition to college (as supported by key peers and faculty members) and campus racial climate as influential to their sense of belonging (Johnson, et al., 2007).

Other scholars argue that previous studies on a sense of belonging neglected to study the impact of social class background (Ostrove & Long, Summer 2007). A 2007 study analyzed
how social class structured a sense of belonging for college students and the implications that it carried for their adjustment and performance at college: Ostrove and Long determined that feelings of status-based rejection may be particularly acute at elite schools and that social class may affect a student's ability to persist in college (2007). The authors wrote how the existing literature on social class and belonging reveals a persistent sense of difference and alienation among students from working class backgrounds. Their study was conducted at a small liberal-arts college where n=322 (83% White, no international students). The authors used hierarchical multiple regression to identify which class-based variables were most predictive of belonging and adjustment, and linear multiple regressions to understand how belonging mediated the relationship between social class and college outcomes like academic and social adjustments to college.

Ostrove and Long's findings suggested that not only did social class structured who belonged and who did not, but also that a sense of belonging had implications for participation in class, seeking help, and other critical behaviors that promote college success. The implications of their argument point to the importance of changing the college environment around social class, and not just race, as most studies have focused on; moreover, the struggles of people of Color at predominantly White universities are at least partially attributable to social class. Still, this group of literature defines belonging as belonging to something—a college, a campus, or campus-based racial and cultural groups. What they are lacking, and what is supplied by the finding of my study, is clearer notion of belonging to someone.

**Belonging in high school.** Belonging is not explicitly studied by scholars of high school organizations. Inclusion, at the high school level, is correlated with language learning, and the
discussion tends to focus on the nature and quality of immigrant youth's ability to learn English rapidly and effectively. Thus, the majority of North American literature focuses intently on ESL programming, and on immigrant students as *EL-designated students*, which I will touch on throughout this section.

High school reform, a topic that has garnered great public attention during the last few decades, tends to focus on issues of academic achievement, and pays rather less attention to issues of community, culture, and belonging. As noted earlier in this discussion, scholars do predicate that youth's development of a sense of belonging at schools is intimately linked to increased academic engagement. Adolescents have a deep need for belonging, and the internal school environment can be a primary place for connections and feelings of membership for them (Booker, 2007, p. 302). Osterman writes that a sense of belonging can be shaped through the policies of an institution (2000). Her review of the research demonstrated that purposeful implementation of design strategies significantly changed students’ sense of community as well as a wide range of motivational and behavioral outcomes (Osterman, 2000, p. 356). Her review, based on two decades of work across psychology, motivation, and organizational behavior, asserts that “one of the most fundamental reforms needed in secondary or high school education is to make schools into better communities” (p. 323).

Organizational structures and climates that impede or constrain the development of belongingness can be considered “subtractive schooling,” a term used by Angela Valenzuela (another key theorist who informs this dissertation study) in her 1999 ethnography of a high school in Houston, Texas. Valenzuela’s (1999) ethnography demonstrates how immigrant youth enter the U.S. public schooling system with a pro-school ethos, full of hope and belief in school as a primary factor in the fabled U.S. system of opportunity. Yet by the second
generation, youth's belief in schooling has changed. Her study results showed how recent immigrants to a large Houston high school tended to achieve academically, whereas the 1.5 generation, second, and third generations of Mexican-American youth do not; thus, the school “reproduces Mexican youth as a monolingual, English speaking, ethnic minority, neither identified with Mexico nor equipped to function competently in American’s mainstream” (p. 3). Her findings lead Valenzuela to argue how the cultural and political context of assimilationist schooling “subtracts” from youth over time, creating low-achievers and dropouts. Valenzuela is careful to distinguish that her participants believe in education, but not necessarily in schooling—the way in which content is delivered to them. Valenzuela writes,

School substracts resources from youth in two major ways. First, it dismisses their definition of education...second, subtractive schooling encompasses subtractively assimilationist policies and practices...A key consequence of these subtractive elements of schooling is the erosion of students’ social capital evident in the presence and absence of academically oriented networks among immigrant youth (p. 20).

Like Valenzuela, other scholars on organizational practices and policies provide a myriad of evidence for “subtractive schooling.” Indeed, much of the literature characterizes newcomer immigrant youth as “overlooked and underserved” in American high schools (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Schools have been slow to respond to the needs of immigrant students and, more frequently than not, create barriers for recent-arrival immigrant students’ success (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). The most frightening outcome that can be associated with tracking practices is student dropout rates, which have been described

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7 While elementary schools once welcomed the lion’s share of immigrant students—and still receive a higher proportion resources ear-marked for those students—foreign born children are now increasing in secondary schools (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). The normative institutional approaches of traditional K-12 pathways are problematic for this population: Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix (2000) write how the logic supporting the division of our educational system into primary and secondary schooling was to dedicate early schooling helping children develop English language and literacy skills, study habits, shared understanding about academic expectations and how to interact socially for a successful school culture. This left middle and high schools to focus primarily on academic subject instruction.
currently as reaching crisis level (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, March 2006). Recently-arrived immigrant youth are some of the most vulnerable to dropping out. Researcher Aida Walqui writes,

High dropout rates among language-minority secondary students are one indication that many schools are failing to adequately support the needs of these students. The belief that student dropout is due to a lack of proficiency in English often leads educators to overlook the economic, cultural, academic, and personal issues that immigrant students must confront on a daily basis (2009).

A major 1988 study on immigration in 33 communities across the state of California found that one out of four immigrant students in their sample had considered dropping out of school; undocumented students were four times as likely to consider this (Olsen, 1988). Further, the study found that the most-echoed reasons for considering to drop out were related to the children’s immigration experiences: “Lack of family support and worries about separation from family or those family members left in the homeland; uncertainty about the stay in the United States; tremendous conflicting pressures to succeed academically as well as to help with family burdens; discouragement about fulfilling graduation requirements; hostility and prejudice felt in the school environment” (Olsen, 1998, p. 88). Similarly to the work of Suarez-Orozco, Olsen’s study shows that the journey of migration results in aspects that challenge newly-arrived immigrant youth’s ability to successfully engage in their schooling. The actual structure and organization of schooling for immigrant youth (such as ESL programs) can help or hinder youth’s engagement, the subject to which we now turn.

**Labeling immigrant youth as “ESL” students.** A common institutional approach is to place immigrant students in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs before
“mainstreaming” them into the larger native community. In these programs, students are tested and placed at a certain language level (like ESL 2) and then required to take more tests to pass into higher levels of ESL before "graduating" into regular courses. Some programs, including the research site where this study takes place, use some configuration of the SDAIE method\(^8\), ostensibly a way of integrating content area instruction into the ESL sequence. Still, the majority of schools nationally utilize some kind of separate language program for their immigrant students. Student placement into such programs can be due to a variety of factors beyond language; schools lacking specialized guidance counselors and translators unfairly disadvantage immigrant parents attempting to navigate a new system\(^9\). One question that gets raised by the data presented in the next few chapters of this dissertation is around labeling: Does characterizing immigrant youth as EL-designated students unfairly stigmatize them?

Being categorized (symbolized in the language of labels) can adversely affect both one's actual, everyday ability to belong to a community and whether one feels as if one belongs. Yet, labeling can be beneficial, just as it is also harmful (Riddick, 2010). Positive outcomes can include appropriate treatment and obtaining better resources through funding and legislation. For struggling schools with large numbers of EL-designated students, funding opportunities earmarked for ESL can mean the difference between hiring and firing necessary teachers.

Negative outcomes can include: a) maintaining the status quo that keeps minority groups at the

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\(^{8}\) Specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) is a teaching approach intended for teaching various academic content (such as social studies, science or literature) using the English language to students who are still learning English. SDAIE requires the student possess intermediate fluency in English as well as mastery of their native language. The instruction is carefully prepared so the student can access the English language content supported by material in their primary language and carefully planned instruction that strives for comprehensible input. SDAIE is a method of teaching students in English in such a manner that they gain skills in both the subject material and in using English.

\(^{9}\) There is excellent literature, particularly stemming from researchers working in Canada, on immigrant parent involvement or engagement in North American schools. I do not review this literature here, as this study limits its perspective to students and teachers. I explore this methodological choice further in Chapter Three.
bottom of the social hierarchy, and b) maintaining a focus on child problems instead of addressing the environmental factors that produced the problem. Riddick argues that labeling is not always the cause of stigmatization (2010). To justify this claim, she cites examples of stigmatization without a formal label (suggesting that labels encapsulate or distill the stigmatization that already exists) and that negative informal labeling often occurs before formal categorization and labeling. While the author couches her argument in an examination of dyslexia, her conclusions are pertinent to ELL education; she concludes by warning that stereotyping through labels is at its worst when it highlights the power relationship between the communicators.

It is fair to say that immigrants are currently experiencing intense power relationships with long-term residents, and youth who speak poor English can be disempowered. Educators have labeled poor school performers throughout different periods of history; those labels reflected both attitudes and institutional conditions. Historians discuss how groups of students have always failed to meet education “standards”. Deschenes, writing with Cuban and Tyack (2001), use historical evidence to contextualize what could happen to low-performing students today. In their paper on the history of labeling students, the authors point out that in the early 20th century, immigrant students, called “laggards,” were clustered in lower grades because they failed the annual examinations for promotion from grade to grade. They explain that labels contain important information about educators’ and reformers’ values about success, social diversity, and individual achievement. Labels have created categories of individual failure and have left school structures largely intact. The authors argue that educators and reformers should learn from the past and reframe the question as “Which students will be labeled and how?” (2001) instead of labeling social constructions of failure and assigning blame.
In the scant empirical research on the issue of categorizing and labeling students, a single study shows that being labeled is experienced as stigmatizing: a special education researcher summarizes the perspectives of an elementary teacher and two immigrant, special education students (Persuad, 2000). The study further reports that the parents of the youth who were observed by the researcher fought the labels placed on the children by the school, and expressed feelings of exclusion from their child’s educational process (Persuad, 2000). The author concluded that the school paid lip-service to the needs of the children and parents, and instead inflexibly advanced the needs of the teachers and system (Persuad, 2000).

It is also argued that schools which label immigrant youth “EL-designated students” can obscure the complex academic and socio-emotional needs of what is a highly diverse cohort (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Issues like being a refugee, having had an interrupted formal education, not being literate in one’s native language, or being a member of a migrant worker family can create unique learning needs that schools need to meet in different ways. In other words, while there is decades of research on how immigrant youth can best be taught to speak English (e.g., Krashen, 1982, 1988; Cummins, 2001, Collier, 1992) and there is research that looks at teaching and learning practices for ELL students, like instructional differentiation (e.g., Cary, 2007; Gibbons, 2002,) there is a serious lack of research on how organizations and teachers can meet the needs of immigrant students—the most diverse cohort of students in the U.S.. Some new and encouraging work looks at ELLs as multifaceted students; labeling them "cosmopolitan intellectuals" (Campano & Ghiso, 2011), the authors re-envision language learners, transcultural community participants, and family members, and adolescents in a

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10 While curriculum is only taken up as a peripheral issue in the Pedagogy of Belonging study, it is worthwhile to question here how culturally relevant pedagogy can be made relevant to youth who are both bringing in their own global cultural understandings, and becoming immersed in the multicultural traditions of the U.S.
unique life stage. This subject is explored more in depth later in this literature review. Despite new research, normative practice is for schools to focus on helping immigrants learn how to produce enough English to pass high-stakes tests obscure the range of roles that immigrant youth play and their multi-faceted identity.

**ESL programs.** Picking up on Deschenes, Cuban, and Tyack's question “Which students will be labeled and how?” requires analysis of current ESL programming (2001). Program development and educational planning for immigrant youth has had a lengthy political and ideological history. Early schooling used the "sink-or-swim" method, a colloquial term for English-only immersion. Later, programs noted that placing students straight into native communities without specialized instructional assistance—particularly towards language learning—was challenged by decades of research that showed the necessity of scaffolding language instruction through retention and development of a student's native language (Crawford, 2004; Garcia & Baker, 1995). Today, while researchers recognize the importance of having programs to aid students in retaining their native language while learning English, and oppose returning to a sink-or-swim method of assimilation and language learning, a clear tension has begun to emerge. That is, the benefits of sheltering language instruction through an ESL or bilingual program comes into conflict with the ways in which these very programs have the potential to operate as a defacto tracking system.

Recently, researchers have described the ESL learning environment as “substandard, limited to low-level, remedial coursework meant to compensate for students’ limited language skills” (Callahan, 2005, p. 309). The same study showed track placement to be more statistically significant for achievement outcomes than English language instruction (Callahan, 2005). It is
important to tread carefully here: proponents of dismantling bilingual education in California, most notably through the passing of Proposition 227 in 1998 which forbade use of native language instruction to educate EL-designated students, used the desegregation argument as part of their rationale (Valencia, et al., 2002). Clearly, this argument was disingenuous; many consider the attack on bilingual education stemmed more from entrenched nativism manifesting itself through language ideologies, rather than a genuine concern for the students served through bilingual education (Valencia, et al., 2002). Thus, it is not an intention here to attack bilingual education, but rather to present the tensions inherent to developing bilingual education programs and the reality of how this programming is carried out in schools. Excellent two-way bilingual education can only be a linguistic asset to both native and immigrant youth.

Are ESL programs a form of tracking? Tracking, or the practice of grouping students based on their perceived intellectual ability, has been looked at in some depth, most notably by Jeanie Oakes and the research team involved with the A Study of Schools project in 1977 (Oakes, 2005). Data was collected in 25 racially, geographically, and socio-economically diverse secondary schools; the experiences of 13,719 teenagers were documented. Data found that the content of the tracks differed widely: lower tracks lacked rigor, focused on basic skills and behavioral management, while higher tracks focused more on critical thinking and college preparation. Oakes demonstrates how the ideologies of Social Darwinism during our last major immigration period (at the turn of the 20th century) led school reformers to develop ideas around curriculum differentiation and ability grouping that became a normative and fairly unquestioned part of American schooling. In other words, differentiated schooling practices like tracking are intimately linked to national responses to immigration.
In the 1820s and 1830s in New York City, schooling segregation was battled along religious, immigrant, and ethnic lines (Ravitch, 2000). Likewise in California, Chinese immigrant youth were routinely barred from public schooling until the Mamie Tate case ending segregated schooling in California in 1885. Some 50 years later, after increasing Mexican in-migration during the 1920s, 85% of California schools reported segregating Mexican-American children in separate schools or classrooms (Valencia, et al., 2002); language was cited as the primary rationale behind their segregation. In short, much of the process of determining how to organize school for immigrant youth is influenced by perceptions of culture and language11, a subject that I develop further in the next section.

After Proposition 227 in California, bilingual education was banned and programs like ESL education (whereby students take separate English classes for a few years) or English-only education became standard. Decades after the proposition, researchers have evaluated the impact of ESL education on youth's academic achievement. In her 16 year longitudinal of five school districts, Virginia Collier, a seminal writer on language learning and ESL programs, found the following results that programs had on the academic achievement of language minority youth (N=210,054):

- **Only dual language and bilingual programs** help students fully reach the 50th percentile in both L1 and L2 in all subjects and to maintain that level of high achievement, or reach even higher levels through the end of schooling. The fewest dropouts come from these programs.

- When ELLs initially attend segregated, remedial programs, these students **do not close the achievement gap after reclassification** and placement in the English mainstream. Instead, they maintain or widen the gap in later years.

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11 I argue that both culture and language are a proxy for race.
• Students with no primary language schooling (either in home country or host country) are not able to reach grade-level performance in L2 when they are placed into short-term, 1-3 year long ESL programs (V. Collier, 1992). (All emphases are mine)

The above findings are directly related to the situation I encountered at Faulkner High School, where my research participants were placed in remedial ESL classes, rather than enrichment classes (remedial because of the limited experience their teacher had, and the lack of support she was given to succeed).

Collier's work is pertinent to the psychological sense of belonging that the youth I interviewed had. That is to say, the ability one has to thrive academically is intimately connected with the kind of program one is placed in, and how that program is viewed and situated in today's political context. It is remarkable that, despite the immense amount of data we have that overwhelmingly shows the success of bilingual programs, voters reject bilingualism. How the wider politics lead to the shaping of school structure, and how that in turn affects the youth who attend those schools, is a major concern voiced throughout this dissertation.

**Organizational practices and culture.** Reviewing the literature on ESL programming highlights the tension inherent in its purpose; that is to say, ESL programs can afford belonging socio-emotionally, yet segregate academically and culturally. In this section, I touch briefly on the role of students' cultural lives in their academic and social well-being. Angela Valenzuela holds that today’s ESL classes segregate culturally (1999). She writes, “[T]he transitional ideology translates into the organization practice of segregating Spanish-speaking students from English-speaking ones. Hence, layered over the school's academic tracking system is a 'cultural tracking' system” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 180). She argues that segregation along cultural lines further marginalizes newcomer immigrant youth: “By
obstructing possibilities for fully vested bilingualism and biculturalism at the individual and collective levels, cultural tracking reinforces divisions among youth...cultural tracking thus stigmatizes immigrant youth” (p. 180). Academically speaking, linguistic and cultural segregation within already racially segregated schools is doubly detrimental to achievement opportunities for newcomer immigrant youth. Valenzuela writes, “Cultural tracking restricts immigrants’ achievement potential by limiting the courses offered within the cultural track to those taught in the general academic track: honors-track ESL courses do not exist. “Graduation” out of the ESL track is thus always horizontal to the regular track” (p. 181). This process of segregating immigrant students into separate programming reflects larger patterns of residential, socio-economic, and racial segregation in U.S. society, exacerbating a climate of xenophobia.

Some current research shows that entrenched tracking practices are related to social mobility along racial lines (Oakes, 2005; D. Sólorzano & Ornelas, 2002). How ESL programs are racialized could be reflected by how many second-generation and long-term English learners are in these programs. In California, a student is required to state the language spoken at home when they enter the school system. Without parent advocacy, students who come from a non-English speaking home are placed in ESL courses, regardless of their generational status or English speaking capabilities. This has led to absurd cases of students who are completely fluent in English getting stuck in the ESL track.

For racial minority and immigrant youth, this kind of tracking indexes how schools frame students’ native languages and “culture” as a problem. This has become a particular issue for Chicano and Latino youth leading recent scholarship to name Latino education as a “crisis” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Solorzano and Ornelas’ research shows that despite Chicanos
and Latinos constituting 43% of California’s K-12 public school enrollment, only 6 out of 100 individuals will graduate with a Bachelor’s degree. Enrollment in advanced placement (A.P.) classes, a major factor in accessing top-tier universities, is a sorting mechanism that perpetuates racial inequalities: in one Los Angeles high school Chicana/ Latina students made up 43% of the population but only eight percent of A.P. courses.

Still, some contradictory research demonstrates how ESL programs can also be highly successful—particularly in their ability to protect minority, immigrant students from racism and xenophobia in ways that promote student academic achievement, retention, and completion (Gacia & Baker, 1995; Valencia, 2002). This research is highly valuable to begin to develop ideas around the ways in which schools can structurally organize a sense of belonging for students.

Despite the long history of schools segregating recently-arrived immigrant youth, some scholarship suggests that new ways of academically and linguistically educating immigrant youth in culturally integrative ways are developing. Therefore, there have been notable exceptions to this gap in the literature on how schools can forge organizational belonging through integrative academic and linguistic programming for both native and immigrant youth. For example, Gil Conchas’ (2006) case study of first and second-generation immigrant youth in a Northern California high school examined how institutional support systems and organizational arrangements, or “institutional scaffolding,” could provide high poverty urban immigrant youth with necessary social capital to complete high school. The data brought to bear his arguments includes how admissions policies forged racial integration, a climate of mentorship and high achievement, and academically and linguistically rigorous curriculum.

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12 Conchas’ work deals primarily second-generation immigrant youth.
Other recent work on detracking, namely the Multiple Pathways project at UCLA, shows how schools can develop modes of learning to prepare all students equally for the worlds of work and college (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Yet, despite Patricia Gandara’s chapter on "Immigrants and English Learners," the study lacks significant data that exemplifies how to truly integrate diverse populations in linguistically and academically meaningful ways. Third, new research out on a concept called “global community” or “double designed” classrooms proposes to integrate newcomer programs with general education programs in order to avoid linguistic isolation and help teachers view ELLs as resources instead of liabilities (Gil, 2009). These new directions are promising; still, further scholarship on cultural integration and learning for immigrant youth is sorely needed. I now turn to discuss the intricacies of culture and belonging for immigrant youth in high schools through a consideration of factors like race, language, and generational status.

Part Three. Cultural Belonging: Studies central to the tradition of educational anthropology of immigrant youth and their implications for the Pedagogy of Belonging dissertation study

My study is specifically located in a tradition of educational anthropology, and particularly the educational anthropology of immigrant youth. This dissertation contributes to original scholarship in two ways. First, I reframe questions of identity and culture within the multiethnic mainstream. The educational anthropology of immigrant youth has focused primarily on the experiences of groups who share ethno-linguistic communities: for example, Stacey Lee writes about Asian American and Hmong youth, Angela Valenzuela has studied the social capital of Mexican-American youth, and so forth. My contribution lies in a horizontal analysis, whereby I focus primarily on the social worlds of recently-arrived immigrant youth.
from a myriad of ethno-linguistic communities—Persian, Korean, and southern Mexican, among others.

The above review clearly demonstrates that the majority of work on belonging, both in higher education and K-12 schooling, has been conducted with a focus on race, with some attention to gender and social class as experiences that can cause alienation. While pertinent, this focus has tended to leave out other experiences that can cause students to feel alienated, leading them to disengage from their schooling experiences to unfortunate results. For immigrant youth, a coalescence of identity factors can separate them from their peers, cause misunderstandings with their teachers, and generally make attaining a sense of belonging seem unfeasible. National origin, language, generational status, and dress are all pertinent aspects of daily life for many immigrant youth that can cause alienation or strain a sense of belonging to a community. Thus, studies of belonging must be opened up to consider which experiences of identity are central to achieving or hindering a sense of belonging to a school community, and in which places and/or times.

Secondly, I bring a new linkage to the educational anthropology of immigrant youth. I take a concern of educational psychology, the experience of belonging, and foreground it in this ethnographic study. In this final section of this dissertation’s literature review, I locate my study within the tradition of the educational anthropology of immigrant youth. Almost every study that directly considers belonging attempted to understand belonging through quantitative measures. For large-scale studies with large n’s, such as those conducted by Hurtado and Carter (2005) and Johnson et al., (2007), surveying the feelings of populations of students makes sense. But to understand the phenomenology of the experience of belonging, how it is operationalized in everyday life, and how the intersection of identity shapes belonging,
other methods of inquiry are necessary. Other studies, mostly qualitative, have indirectly studied belonging by considering the organization of schooling, or cultural integration.

There are two interlocking areas that I am not covering in this literature review: 1) issues faced by undocumented students, and 2) belonging as citizenship. While belonging for immigrant youth is researched through frames pertaining to cultural, political, and legal citizenship, whether that be to a nation-state or transnationally (Abu el-Haj, 2007; Rios-Rojas, 2011a), in this study I follow Amitai Etzioni’s thinking (Etzioni, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2009) to conceive belonging as a mid-level category: community. Democratic citizenship was not a concern raised by any youth with whom I spoke; rather, participation, as my participants defined it, was rooted in the relationships they formed\textsuperscript{13}, and their participation in their classroom and within peer groups at school. Undocumented youth have also not been foregrounded in this study. I believe that the critical scholarship of undocumented youth deserves full attention that is beyond the scope of the study here. In Chapter Three: Methods, I elaborate on my reason not to attend to issues of documentation. What is covered in this section is the issue of culture-- the central concern of anthropological scholarship. In anthropological scholarship focused on immigrant youth, three sub-topics arise, specifically: a) immigrant incorporation and subsequent cultural loss, b) language as the most visible manifestation of immigrant culture in schools, and c) the presence of cultural assets, like educational resilience and "funds of knowledge." I now turn to a fuller discussion of culture,

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\textsuperscript{13} Their lack of attention to it could have been because my participants were all documented. Of the two youth I spoke with who were documented, one was "pushed out" of school, and the other declined to be interviewed at length. This does not mean that transnational relationships weren’t discussed; certainly several of the youth touched on those ties and this will be illuminated later on.
and these three sub-topics. These topics should not be considered distinct and self-contained, but overlapping and iterative.

**Culture.**

This dissertation uses the concept of culture as it has arisen from anthropology and cultural-activity theory. For example, Erickson defines culture as the “patterning in human activity and... the beliefs and standards of judgment by which social action has meaning for social actors” (2001, p. 1). A popular definition among teacher Louis Moll (1998) explains culture in schools as the *lived experience of the student*, or those everyday practices that can become a cultural “fund of knowledge” for students, a concept that will be discussed in a later section. Moll writes, “Through our cultural practices we come to internalize, transform, and adapt the various cultural means that help create our circumstances of life, even as these circumstances help create us” (1998, p. 97). Warikoo and Carter (2009) build on Erickson and Moll’s definitions in their comprehensive explanation of culture:

... Culture inheres in practices and meanings shared by members of a particular social group, such as families, ethnic networks, neighborhoods, communities, schools, and organizations. Culture is characterized by shared values, beliefs, behaviors, styles, and *tool-kits* of 'symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views' (Swidler, 1986), practices ranging from speech styles and language, to specific kinds of physical interaction, to tastes in music, clothing, and food, and other 'symbolic' ethnic cues (Gans, 1979); and symbolic boundaries, or 'conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space' (Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). Finally, a shared group identity—emerging from either a collective narrative or beliefs about shared historical experiences, social experiences, and/or ancestry—characterizes a dimension of culture as we employ it here (Cornell, 1994; Weber, 1968). Some scholars of Black education, for example, utilize the concept of a culture to signify the resources and orientations of peoples of African descent globally who share experiences of racism, discrimination, and educational disenfranchisement across the African Diaspora (King, 2005; C. D. Lee, 2005). However, not all individuals of particular ethnic or racial groups
agree on what cultural practices or narratives define the group, and indeed, collective ethnic and racial identities risk essentializing individuals (Appiah, 1996; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Hollinger, 1995) (p. 368).

As Carter and Warikoo explain, collective racial identities can risk essentializing individuals. This phenomenon is critiqued by Mica Pollock (2008) who writes that the discussion around culture in schools can be co-opted by educational critics (researchers, journalists) who assign "culture" as a monolithic entity that adversely affects youth's school performance. Her argument deserves to be looked at in depth as it is central to my argument that the workings of culture in the multiethnic mainstream must be privileged in educational research.

As Pollock explains, these conceptualizations of culture are explanatory claims that name a group as having a “cultural” set of behaviors and then name that “cultural” behavior as the cause of the group's school achievement outcomes. She writes, "Some argue that 'group x' [e.g., “Asians”] employs a 'group x behavior' [e.g., “push their children”] that causes 'high' or 'low' achievement" (Pollock, 2008, p. 371); this argument can be substantiated by examples like the current furor over the "Tiger Mother" debate where a Chinese woman criticizes "American" parenting and advances "Chinese" parenting as more effective for children's success. Similarly, Pollock finds that such claims allow people to explain achievement outcomes too simply as the production of parents and children without ever actually examining the real-life experiences of specific parents and children in specific opportunity contexts.

Pollock terms her argument a "critique of shallow analysis of culture." She explains that deeper analysis requires pressing for actual, accurate information about the everyday interactions among real-life parents, children, and other actors that add up to school achievement patterns (graduation rates, dropout rates, skill-test scores, suspension lists, and the like). Pollock writes,
Shallow analyses of 'culture' that purport to describe only how a 'group's' parents train its children blame a reduced set of actors, behaviors, and processes for educational outcomes, and they include a reduced set of actors and actions in a reduced set of projects for educational improvement. Anthropologists of education should make clear that we examine children's experiences both in context and in appropriate detail; we study interactional processes that other observers might describe too quickly or with insufficient information (p.369).

Deep analysis can be done through explicitly, publicly, and colloquially naming what counts as deep, thorough cultural analysis of American school achievement patterns. Such actions by educational anthropologists function to support teachers and teacher educators to also think more thoroughly about which actions, by whom, and in what situations produce children's achievement.

**Multiculturalism.** This dissertation focuses on an analysis of culture in a multiethnic setting, hence a brief discussion of how educational anthropologists have understood multiculturalism in schools is pertinent.

How schools have dealt with multiculturalism (or not) has been the subject of a vast literature over the last few decades (see, for example, James Banks, Carlos Torres, Christine Sleeter, Geneva Gay, and Sonia Nieto, among others). In educational studies in general, the study of multiculturalism has tended to pertain to: its dissection as a philosophy for how to school ethnic groups, to the practices and policies of curriculum and instruction, to multiculturalism as a political project, and to state multicultural policy. Multiculturalism as a political project has been declared "dead" and a "failure" by many European states and U.S. social commentators (Torres & Tarozzi, forthcoming). While beyond the scope of my discussion here, that characterization is vigorously denied by educational scholars who call for a renewed focus on multiculturalism.
As pertains to my discussion of immigrant newcomer students, multiculturalism has not been the most robust model of analysis. As a subject, it has tended towards the analysis of U.S. students of color and how their identities have been taken up in schools, with some attention to language practices of those students of color (mostly African-American). Stambach writes that multiculturalism studies in the 1990s entered a new phase, analyzing the form and results of globalization through the consideration of human mobility and multi-direction immigration (Stambach & Bal, 2010). Stambach asserts that some multicultural scholars have shifted to understanding how ideas about culture are produced through different understandings of world events, differential access to resources and participation in local and world markets (Stambach & Bal, 2010); this is indeed an encouraging development. This turn in multiculturalism is particularly appropriate for theorizing the incorporation of recent-arrival youth into racially and linguistically diverse localities in the U.S., as schools can tend to continue their focus on the U.S. context of racial politics—a worthy endeavor, but limiting for international students, many of whom continue to live transnational lives. In short, multiculturalism in schools for recent-arrival immigrant youth, who may or may not be racial minorities, is less well-theorized or documented, but critically necessary.

Myriad factors can marginalize recent arrival youth. Immigrant youth are simultaneously foreign-born and racial minorities, a critical fact that seems completely ignored in U.S. scholarship on culture in schools. They are thus both cultural minorities within racial groups that are similar and different to their own, and can join the cultural majority in their own ethnic group. In other words, recent-arrival students tend to be students of Color and language learners, and are neither familiar with the dominant American culture (the aforementioned White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture) nor the plethora of minority cultures
and hybrid cultures that some schools are now finally privileging. Thus, traditional multicultural studies, while critical for existing racial minorities in the U.S., do not always provide robust theoretical models pertinent to immigrant students.

Consider the complicated nature of how traditional multicultural school practices have organized belonging for immigrant youth: the subject has been treated by a few key ethnographies of immigrant youth. For example, Stacey Lee’s (2005) investigation of race and immigration in a Wisconsin high school portrays immigrant youth engaged in a performative process which creates the Hmong as “other”. While the school attempted to provide multicultural opportunities, in reality the multicultural curriculum was provided for only Hmong students, and multicultural celebrations were organized by the school as a way to put Hmong cultural heritage on display for the White student body. In another example, Ngo (2008), who worked with the Hmong populations in Wisconsin as a student of Lee’s, found that the identity that immigrant students wanted to claim (such as Asian-American) was not always recognized by others; her research participants were characterized as Lao by their parents, and Chinese or Asian by their friends. In this instance, youth wanted to subscribe to U.S. racial categories but were identified as non-American/international by social groups. Both studies carry implications for belonging through cultural inclusion, in that schools, adults, and even peers fixed a discourse in ways that did not always mirror how youth recognized themselves and how their cultural lives in schools developed.

Similarly, Loukia Sarroub’s (2005) ethnography of hijabat (veiled) Yemeni girls in a Dearborn, Michigan, high school also explores how traditional multiculturalism, as practiced by schools, hindered identity practices of international students. Her study explored how the girls’ experiences formed a dialectic of opportunity and restraint. The dialectic was shaped by
tensions in how they either identified with the local expectations (in this case, in Michigan) versus their transnational community that linked the *hijabat* with their Yemen-based relatives and townspeople. Specifically, the religious and cultural expectations of their transnational Yemeni community placed the young women at odds with the culturally homogenous and Anglo-normative expectations of the schooling system. For the *hijabat*, belonging was constantly negotiated and reformulated depending on the community (transnational or Dearborn, Michigan, high school) within which they were engaging.

Some models emerging from the tradition of multicultural studies in the U.S. are helpful for new ways of thinking about the cultural lives of immigrant youth in schools. These models include: "border-crossing," a concept developed by scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa and continued today by Norma Gonzalez and others, and "cultural flexibility," developed by Prudence Carter. A new model, "transculturation," originally discussed by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz and continued mostly in the humanities, is also being picked up by U.S. scholars of immigrant youth, and holds exciting possibilities for theory and practice. I will examine each of these in turn.

*Border-crossing.* The concept of border-crossing is widely spread across the academy and across disciplines, including in the sciences and humanities. In education, border-crossing is perhaps most memorably discussed by Gloria Anzaldúa, a Chicana prose-poet who elaborates on the *mestiza* consciousness. What is of most interest to my analysis in this dissertation is how the writer talks about the spaces that are *in-between* borders. Anzaldúa writes about the borderlands occupied by Mexican-Tejana-Americans, and discusses belonging and identity as critical foci of analysis for those who occupy in-between spaces, gaps, and silences. She also
describes the metaphysical experience of “not belonging to any culture at all” and “being an exile in all the different cultures,” and recounts her own experience of feeling “all these gaps, these cracks in the world” (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 14). The notion of "cracks in the world" is central to the lives of immigrants. Political scientist Ray Rocco analyzes "new" and "old" migrants in Los Angeles, and discusses their occupation of "cracks on the world" by taking advantage of many of the cultural categories brought forward by postcolonial analysis—namely, hybridity, borders, margins, the “third space,” and the “in-between” (Torres, 1998).

Occupation of "cracks in the world" can also be a space of empowerment (hooks, 2003). As will be shown in the data presented by this dissertation, marginalization is also an opportunity to develop skills that lead to strategies of belonging, such as some of those presented in the theoretical framework section in the introduction to this dissertation. There, I discuss how strategies like imagination, alignment, and engagement can all become forms of participation and modes of belonging in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

*Cultural flexibility* is a concept that pertains to the crossing of cultural borders. It is defined by Prudence Carter in her research on Black and White youth as “the ability to interact in, participate in, and navigate different social and cultural settings, to embrace multiple forms of cultural knowledge” (2010, p. 3). Cultural flexibility is a promising concept for educational anthropologists working in immigrant communities: mapping out culturally flexible practices will elucidate how heightened ethno-linguistic diversity leads to particular forms of cultural identity and social capital. Carter explains that cultural flexibility is a feature of youth who she terms "multicultural navigators" and writes that the goals of navigators are:
Not only socioeconomic attainment but also an appreciating of the mosaic that produces all of American culture. They are the creators of a 'minority culture of mobility,' a concept that captures how upwardly mobile racial and ethnic minorities negotiate in discernible ways their predominantly white spheres of work and their predominantly co-ethnic neighborhoods (Neckerman, Carter, and Lee 1999) (2005, p. 151).

While Carter bases her concept of a minority culture of mobility on the interaction between Black students and a White mainstream, the concept of how multicultural navigators use cultural flexibility to find belonging becomes even more fascinating when considered in a multiethnic mainstream, as found in this dissertation study.

Transculturation is another concept of how borders can be crossed, or how borders can be used to the advantage of cultural development. Within a community of people, unique culture forms. As Duranti (1997b) explains, that culture is a system of practices that is “based on the assumption that any action in the world, including verbal communication, has an inherently social, collective, and participatory quality” (p. 46). Within diverse communities, actions are weighed both with the mores of the culture of origin and the expectations of the new community of practice. Pratt (1991) describes this as a contact zone, a place where diversity is grappled with, often in “contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (p. 34). Additionally, Pratt discusses how models of community are reinvented by transculturations. The concept of transculturations was originally developed by the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, who wrote of post-colonial Cuba as a place of “toma y daca” or “give and take” in 1940. Ortiz posed “transculturations” as a way to undermine the homogeneity and unilateral cultural loss implicit to the acculturation model. His model is
pertinent for the analysis here, as U.S. classrooms can become places where minoritized students are expected to adapt, assimilate, or acculturate to a Western, White, English-speaking norm (Darder, et al., 2003; Delpit, 1998). By way of contrast, transculturation is a dynamic process that, while involving some cultural loss, also involves the making of a new cultural space (Hoerder, Hébert, & Schmitt, 2006). Moreover, youth who engage in bilingual and bicultural spaces can develop transcultural dexterity, or transcultural skills (Faulstich Orellana, 2009).

These themes, which include occupying space in between borders, learning how to cross borders, and how culture is implicit to the work of identity when confronted with border(s), will be repeated throughout the remainder of this literature review and the sub-topics visited next: assimilation, language, and asset-based educational accounts of immigrant youth's lives.

**Culture in schools: Assimilation, language, and asset-based accounts of social and cultural capital**

1. **Culture and Immigrant incorporation**

As regards the process of incorporating foreigners into U.S. society, the ethnography of immigrant youth has been taken up by both anthropologists and sociologists of education, most of whom currently theorize immigration through the models of segmented assimilation, and/or transnationalism. A second tradition of theorizing incorporation has developed from the work of John Ogbu who writes about minority castes. I will review each of these traditions in turn.

**Segmented Assimilation.** Incorporation has been theorized in different ways: sociologists describe assimilation, and “segmented assimilation” patterns that immigrant minorities take, and educational scholars describe the “accommodation” or “acculturation”
patterns taken. Alba and Nee systematically examine assimilation in the U.S. and argue that it continues to matter in American life, despite several decades of emphasis on multiculturalism in the American landscape (1997). They ask: “To assimilate or not...and to what mainstream?” (Portes, August 14, 2005). This question is critical for my work as it informs how I conceive of producing a study of multiethnic, multilingual immigrant youth in a diverse mainstream in the context of shifting demographics in U.S. schools.

Original theorizing of acculturation (i.e., adopting the cultural patterns of the host society), structural assimilation (i.e., entry into groups), and identificational assimilation (i.e., developing a sense of peoplehood based on the host society) is attributable to the work of Milton Gordon (1964). Assimilation, in its most colloquial sense, refers to the shedding of one's first national, cultural, and linguistic identity and adopting the "American" way of life. Since its launching in the 1960s, scholars have developed more nuanced understandings of the model for social life and contemporary immigration. Today, assimilation is a heavily debated theory among political scientists and sociologists who consider ways in which immigration places a challenge to the collective identity of the nation-state (Joppke, 1998). The notion of segmented assimilation “gets rid of the concept of 'mainstream,' except as a rhetorical device, and assert[s] that the key feature of American society at present is not its homogeneity but its diversity” (Portes, 2005, p. 7). Hence, the usefulness of segmented assimilation as a model is that it stresses heterogeneity within the immigrant population, the host society itself, and the multiethnic mainstream. But it is also limiting in that it sees a major portion of youth assimilating into a so-called American underclass characterized by Black youth.

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15 Gordon distinguished “various dimensions of assimilation in American society, identifying the need for structural assimilation—in the labor and housing markets, as well as language and education—as the most important element in immigrant success, ahead of racial, cultural or moral (value) assimilation” (Gibney & Hansen, 2005, p. 19).
Educational scholars of immigration critique segmented assimilation for its lack of attention to the agency expressed by immigrants and the rigidity of the paths immigrants are understood to take. Segmented assimilation (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, & Haller, 2005) encompasses three pathways: assimilation into a) the dominant group, b) the native minority “underclass”, or c) immigrants' own ethnic immigrant communities. Warikoo and Carter (2009) critique the claim that proximity to native minority students (which theorists call "downward assimilation") threatens the educational achievement of immigrant youth, a critique with which I agree. Both Warikoo and Carter's work on immigrant youth demonstrates that the "oppositional culture" that segmented assimilation scholars attribute to native minority students, and by virtue of association immigrant youth who are incorporated into Black culture, is much more nuanced than it is made out to be. Warikoo's work, as discussed earlier in this literature review, demonstrates that youth define success both through educational achievement and popularity in peer contexts (2011); Carter found that inner-city youth can be "multicultural navigators" who retain their home community’s cultural assets as well as access the methods of success utilized and performed by the dominant culture (2005).

Further, segmented assimilation is critiqued for its lack of focus on how institutions contribute to the way in which pathways are created for youth. As Warikoo and Carter explain, "They ignore the fact that schools are cultural actors, too, with pervasive ideologies, rules, and codes that bolster status hierarchies among social groups. As active social agents, students, in turn, adapt, respond, and reinforce the cultural lines of demarcation within school" (2009, p. 376). And as Hall concurs:

Analyses such as these tell us a great deal about how people make sense of their lives, but little about how classificatory schemes are produced, circulate, and organize social practice. To avoid the classic fallacy of separating structural from cultural processes,
more attention needs to be paid to how structural factors are shaped by the cultural logics of particular classificatory systems, systems that are expressed, debated, and continually transformed across domains within the public sphere... (2004, p. 8).

In Lee's investigation of how schools racialize students, she argues that her participants choose the ways in which they wanted to assimilate: “My data suggest that Hmong adults were resisting aspects of Americanization that they viewed as either unnecessary for mainstream success or detrimental to mainstream success,” and “most Hmong adults support the practice of 'accommodation without assimilation' or 'selective acculturation'” (Gibson, 1988; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001 cited in Lee, 2005). As regards my study, these are important critiques. Indeed, I attempt to avoid the demarcated pathways of segmented assimilation, and entirely avoid the language of "downward assimilation," preferring instead to use Hall's recommendation that educational anthropologists map out how structural factors are shaped by cultural logics of particular classification systems, and also understand what occurs when youth "assimilate" to a non-White mainstream.

**Ogbu's Cultural-Ecological Theory.** John Ogbu's work has been heavily used—and debated—by scholars on immigrant and minority youth. In short, his theory contends that there are voluntary and involuntary migrants (Ogbu, 1983). His work evolved over time and became nuanced; the simplest version of his theory explores how voluntary migrants (such as immigrant youth who choose to come to the U.S.) are able to perform well in U.S. schools, whereas involuntary migrants (such as Black youth whose communities were brought to the U.S. in chains) perform poorly. Ogbu's lasting contribution was his argument that no minority culture is genetically superior to others (e.g., think the current arguments around Asian-Americans as the "model minority") or places more value on education than others (e.g., the "culture" argument employed by many current achievement scholars); rather, minority
responses to a discriminatory "system" can become oppositional and reject "White ways" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). It is this later idea, the rejection of "acting White," that garners the most interest by scholars, out of which theories of youth resistance have also developed (e.g., (D. Sólorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Multiple scholars of immigrant youth who investigate the relationship between culture, school structure, learning, and power draw on Ogbu's legacy. These scholars challenge, critique, elaborate, and reference his work (Conchas, 2006; Sarroub, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). For example, scholars who document the school experiences of Mexican-origin youth challenge Ogbu's theories for failing to differentiate the diverse response to schooling "among a group that has historically straddled Ogbu’s immigrant and involuntary minority typology" while still recognizing the importance of his work for noting "the inapplicability of the dominant model of assimilation to the experiences of historically subordinate groups like Mexican Americans” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 17).

In a recent review of the literature, the relationship between culture, school structure, and learning is discussed (Nasir & Hand, 2006). The authors write that while Ogbu's theories were once progressive, understanding the relevance of his work to learning in the classroom currently raises questions, like:

- How do multiple levels of culture, development, and power shape each other?

- How do the hierarchies of power and biases fueled by structures and perspectives in society become reproduced in the local activities of the classroom?

- How do the norms and conventions of the classroom reflect, either implicitly or explicitly, these structures and perspectives?

- And how are these norms and conventions transacted by students and teachers at the level of immediate classroom interaction? (2006, p. 459).
It is my hope that I address some of these questions in my work, particularly in the sections of this dissertation that provide a close-up on classroom processes. Both the theory of segmented assimilation and of cultural-ecological are interesting frames that buttress my explorations. Like these theorists, I am also interested in the classification of immigrants that occurs in schools, and how this affects the immigrant youths' school performance. Unlike these two theories, I do not advance a causal linkage between performance and youth's pathways. Rather, my focus remains on the structural forms of schooling, and levies a critique of how these structural forms (like tracking, discussed earlier, and teachers' perceptions of their students) employ cultural logic and impact the youth's opportunities to learn. In this way, I avoid locating poor school performance in the ethnic origin or assimilatory patterns of youth, and instead look at how schools hinder or boost opportunities for achievement. Equally as critical is my lens on generation. As Warikoo and Carter write, "In terms of diversity by generation, although most research on ethnic communities puts first, second, and beyond generations together (e.g., Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Purkayastha, 2005), research has shown that generations have distinct identities and adaptations to American society (Gans, 1992; Rumbaut, 2004; Waters, 1999)" (2009, p. 377). Now, I turn to a major concern of educational anthropologists of immigrant youth—language.

2) Language

In the U.S., linguistic discrimination is an acceptable form of overt racism. Language is at the heart of who we are and where we come from. Thus, as expressed in a poem by
Santiago Baca included in Otto Santa Ana’s (2004) masterful collection of research and stories, linguistic oppression cuts deeply.

Behaving like a good boy, my behavior shattered by outsiders who came to my village one day insulting my grandpa because he couldn’t speak English English---

the invader's sword
the oppressor’s language---

that hurled me into profound despair
that day Grandpa and I walked into the farm office for a loan and this man didn’t give my grandpa an application because he was stupid, he said, because he was ignorant and inferior, and that moment cut me in two torturous pieces

screaming my grandpa was a lovely man

after the farm-aid man turned us down and I knew our sheep were going to die, knew Grandfather's heart was going to die, that moment

opened a wound in my heart

and in the wound the scene replays itself a hundred times,

the grief, the hurt, the confusion

that day changed my life forever, made me a man, made me understand

that because Grandfather couldn't speak English,

his heart died that day,

and when I turned and walked out the door onto Main Street again,

squinting my eyes at the whirling dust,

the world was never the same because it was the first time
I had ever experienced racism, how it killed people’s dreams, and during all of it my grandfather said, *Pórtate bien, mijo*, behave yourself, my son, *Pórtate bien* (p. 168).

The scholar bell hooks wrote that hope exists in the margins (2003). Many immigrant youth use language and linguistic practices to formulate or act out their sense of belonging to a community, transnational or not. In Mendoza-Denton’s ethnography of Latina gang members (2008), she found that a certain gang—most of whom were also EL-designated students at the local high school—purposefully maintained their Spanish in order to marshal their Mexican culture and heritage as part of their gang identity and distinguish themselves from Mexicans who assimilated into American culture. Language became a way to belong imaginatively to Mexico and to align oneself with a community of practice in ways that were oppositional to schooling processes. Language, and the cultural inclusion that immigrant youth experience which can enhance or detract from their achieving a sense of belonging at school, is greatly influenced by peer groups, as discussed in the section on peer groups earlier in the review of studies of belonging.

As Valenzuela found, the relationship of language to identity was at the heart of the divisions between Mexican-born and Mexican-American youth in one Texas high school (1999). Valenzuela described how first-generation Mexican immigrants could not relate to the psychological stance of marginalized, ethnic minorities (1999). Her study shows that second-generation youth were subject to derision and teasing because of their poor command of Spanish, while recently-arrived Mexican adolescents could easily shrug off Spanish in their quest to conquer the English language.
Both ethnographies index claims made by seminal pieces in socio-linguistics theory on the function of language in speech communities. Namely, language functions to either bring speakers together in belonging, or forge alienation and difference. For example, what matters for linguistic membership may differ from social, political, and cultural criteria (Silverstein & Urban, 1996). Bucholtz and Hall (2004) describe how language influences identity through sameness and difference; these “phenomenological processes that emerge from social interaction” either allow people to imagine themselves as a group or perceive social distance (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Language can unite diverse groups (i.e., through “language loyalty”) and set also the exclusive boundaries that maintain a group (Gomez, 1968). When backgrounds (ethnic, linguistic etc.) differ, judgments of performance and ability—that in homogenous communication situations are reliable—break down (Gumperz, 1982). Interactions that might normally be routine are met with problems. Difficulties tend not to disappear with time and intensity of contact; rather, they can harden into ideological distinctions and become value-laden, so that every time problems of understanding occur, they serve to create further differences in the symbolization of identity (Gumperz, 1982, p. 3).

Yet there is also literature that suggests that speakers can bridge the distance created by language. In complex multicultural school settings, cultural differences can be treated as “borders” or “boundaries” (Erickson, 2005, 2011). When cultural difference is treated as a “boundary,” or the “simple presence of some kind of cultural difference,” then differences are depoliticized. Conversely, when cultural differences are treated as a “border,” or the treatment of a particular feature as grounds for differing rights, then differences are politicized. Thus, border-crossing, also discussed in the previous section on culture, is an action taken by
speakers to move back and forth across politicized language differences. A similar action to border-crossing is linguistic brokering.

In multicultural spaces, one way that language determines belonging is through a process called language brokering, or the everyday translation by bilinguals who have no formal training. Wenger (1998) defines a broker as a person who is “able to make new connections across communities of practice, enable coordination and... open new possibilities for meaning” (p. 109). Some scholars argue that language brokering should be termed cultural brokering because “so much of the broker's role involves some understanding of 'how things are done here'” and because the “interpretation of the new culture to parents or other adults... may or may not involve linguistic translation” (Trickett, Sorani, & Birman, 2010, p. 90). That is to say, unlike formal interpreters and translators, brokers mediate, rather than merely transmit, information.

Children, who tend to learn the new language and culture more quickly, become translators for members of their linguistic and ethnic communities: studies have been done on children translators in medical centers, home, school, and other community locations (McQuillan and Tse, 1995; Orellana, 2009; Valdés, 2003; Cohen, Moran-Ellis, & Smaje, 1999). Current research on language brokering shows that it goes beyond word-to-word translation to grapple with the linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and pragmatic nuances of the language and culture being brokered (Orellana, 2010). Some studies discuss challenges such brokering entails, like its impact on parent-child relationships, or the possibility of undue stress for the broker (Weisskirch, 2010; Tse, 1996b; Guss 2010). Yet other work documents how brokering work can be empowering for the child (Orellana, 2009; Cline, de Abreu, O'Dell, & Crafter, 2010; Valdés, 2003; Degener, 2010). Moreover, Bauer (2010) discusses how the socio-cultural identity
formation that children develop as a result of the brokering work should be considered a multi-layered, active citizenship. Much of the work on brokering discusses implications for educational settings. Still, the literature on the ways in which brokering can be viewed as a linguistic resource for students is limited. Furthermore, there have been few empirical studies of language brokering in the classroom, and no studies on peer brokering. Parts of this dissertation begin to address this lack of research.

3) Asset based accounts of immigrant youth

Scholarship on how recent-arrival immigrant youth are culturally incorporated\textsuperscript{16} into schools generally finds a profound and persistent “deficit lens,” a normative term in educational research that refers to how schools and students are labeled in common discourse and the media as \textit{problems to be solved}. As Erickson explains, “The use of cultural difference as a resource for starting and continuing conflicts has unfortunately been a common practice in formal schooling” (2011, p. 1). To counter this deficit lens, a distinct trend in the ethnography of immigrant youth has been to develop \textit{asset-based accounts}, or positive portraits of youth's cultural engagement and development and the skills and strategies that that development provides them for academic and social work. Asset-based or resource-oriented accounts frequently draw on social and cultural capital frameworks (see Bourdieu) to frame their data (see, for example, Conchas, 2005). While acknowledging the critical importance of the model of social and cultural capital, I turn here to a few key concepts that are particularly useful for

\textsuperscript{16} Culture can be a problematic word. As Norma Gonzalez (2004) discusses, anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn one discovered more than one hundred and fifty definitions of “culture,” leading later anthropologists to write “beyond” culture (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992), “locate” culture (Bhaba, 1995) and “critique” culture (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). In education, theorists have also struggled to define culture and at times “culture” has taken on discriminatory dimensions: some scholarship has assigned a student’s “culture” as the reason for his or her academic failure (see Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).
the lives of recently-arrived youth and students who have been living in the U.S. for less than four years.

Asset-based accounts have taken into consideration youth's linguistic assets (also reviewed in the previous sub-topic on language), cultural skills (like cultural flexibility and transculturations discussed previously), intellectual assets stemming from their social location, and skills that youth develop because of the process of migration itself. Asset-based accounts also record the social and cultural capital that immigrant youth gain through their experiences with peers (M. Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004) and community (Yosso, 2005).

One of the most powerful developments in asset-based accounts has been Moll's discussion of "funds of knowledge" (1998). His hopeful scholarship advises teachers to look beyond preconceived or essentialized notions of culture in order to understand how the particulars and practices of life ("los quehacerer de la vida") are resources—"funds of knowledge" that students use to cope with life. Funds of knowledge are obtained and shared among community members (Moll focuses specifically on family members and homes). Children are "participant-observers" of the exchange of goods, services, and symbolic capital in the functioning of households and communities, and thus, their knowledge of activities like building codes, carpentry, herbal cures, or cultivation of plants is valuable (Moll, 1998). Moll's thinking, like Carter's, above (2005), is both socially just and conceptually useful, but overly located in a U.S. centric perspective. Further mapping of the transcultural or transnational funds of knowledge that recently-arrived immigrant youth bring into communities and schools.

Recent thinking by Gerald Campano begins to push in this direction. Campano talks about the potential that children have to be cosmopolitan intellectuals (Campano & Ghiso, 2011). Campano discusses José Rizal, a writer and activist who spoke four language and was
familiar with seven, was an icon of Philippine nationhood, and married Philippine oral tradition with European literary styles, as an example of a cosmopolitan intellectual. Similarly, author Jorge Luis Borges, the Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat, and contemporary aerosal artist Banksy also live transnational lives and index global flows in their writing. These writers/artists/activists draw on contemporary and historical references that span continents, and are also rooted in their own local traditions. Campano, an obvious lover of literature, is far-reaching in his recommendations for how teachers could organize literacy education in 21st century classrooms. He writes:

In our work with immigrant, migrant, and refugee populations, we have learned that students' literacy practices and knowledge are not merely relevant to for their respective communities, but also have value for the world we share. We understand this capacity to make claims of universal significance as part of what it means to be a cosmopolitan intellectual (p. 164).

His work echoes the call of Suarez-Orozco for "global classrooms" that operate through competing and contrasting cultural models and social practices, and privilege the ideas of transcultural communication, understanding, empathy, and collaboration (M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007).

Campano argues that immigrant children who are born outside of the U.S. have unique vantage points that are incredible resources in the classroom. His central argument is worth quoting at length:

For students from immigrant experiences... cosmopolitanism is not just an imagined possibility, but often a perceptual and lived reality as well. By virtue of their diverse vantage points and transnational negotiations, they are uniquely positioned to educate their peers and teachers about the world. If, as Nussbaum contends, the role of education is to, 'cultivate the factual and imaginative prerequisites for recognizing humanity in the stranger and the other (p. 133)', then multilingual and multicultural students can lead the way... Their perspectives, derived from familiarity with multiple
and often contrasting settings, offer understandings of the human condition—including the suffering of many worldwide—that may not be readily available to individuals whose frame of reference has never been unsettled (2011, p. 166-7).

In the educational anthropology literature relevant to immigrant youth studies, there are many wonderful models that can be used to reform schools in order to empower traditionally marginalized students. Campano's work is reflective of scholarship that, growing out of the excellent origins of multiculturalism, is pushing beyond consideration of what it means to be an American minority to what it means to be a international in America—a shift in focus that better includes those who are immigrant language learners.

**Conclusion**

I position my study on the experience of belonging in the tradition of educational anthropology on the lives of immigrant youth. I separated this review into two topics: academic and social belonging, and cultural belonging. In the section on academic belonging, I looked at studies that had specifically measured how students experienced a sense of belonging in both secondary and tertiary educational contexts. I then looked at belonging through relationships with teachers and peers, and spent some time discussing the social organization of immigrant learning through ESL programming. I then turned to culture and belonging, and addressed the niche that this dissertation most closely corresponds to—educational anthropology. I reviewed work on belonging in cultural borders and borderlands, in addition to the relationship of language, culture, and belonging, and concluded with new and exciting work that is attempting to map out the kinds of assets that immigrant youth bring with them into the classroom, or asset-based reports.

My contribution to the ethnographic tradition, and the research literature on belonging,
is several fold: 1) I fill the gap in scholarship by expanding beyond race, class, and gender to consider other important factors in belonging such as language, generation, and national origin, (2) I consider these facets of identity in a multiethnic mainstream and interrogate what it means to belong through that lens, and 3) I conduct a study specifically concerned with belonging using ethnographic and narrative inquiry—a variable that has rarely been considered qualitatively. I believe this qualitative inquiry is critical to more deeply enunciate the *structure of belonging*: of how school organization, teaching and learning, teacher-student relationships, and peer group formation effects the experience of belonging for a vulnerable population.
CHAPTER THREE
Methods and Setting

Introduction

Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It discovers meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world—kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs and interests—focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning (Erickson, 2011).

With this dissertation project, I sought to understand *kinds of things in the world*, as described in the above quote (Erickson, 2011). Namely, I sought to understand kinds of belonging in community, and what kinds of people, actions, beliefs and interests make "belonging" a possibility for youth who can be marginalized in U.S. society. I looked at kinds of things that could influence a student's sense of belonging, like: kinds of beliefs that teachers' had about immigrant youths' value, kinds of students in the ESL program, the kinds of teachers who were given an assignment in the ESL program, kinds of questions that EL-designated students asked their teachers, the ways that immigrant kids interacted in the classroom with each other, kinds of peer groups, which languages were spoken in classrooms and by whom, what kind of curriculum was taught, etc. In other words, I looked at the structure of programs for EL-designated students, and the EL-designated students everyday lives at school.

In order to understand and interpret the kinds of things that happened in the academic and socio-cultural lives of recent-arrival immigrant youth, I spent 10 months observing and participating in daily activities with teachers, students, and administrators in a high school in Southern California. I followed up on the academic year participant observation for another eight months, conducting more interviews. Ethnography is primarily concerned with describing
and interpreting culture as a dynamic process; accordingly, it was an appropriate to investigate the cultural lives of students in a multiethnic, multilingual space. I pursued understanding the particular structure of belonging, rather than its overall distribution as something one has or does not have as asked by various quantitative researchers (see Osterman 2000 for a review of studies on belonging). Particularly, this dissertation is concerned with: (a) "the meaning-perspectives of the particular actors in the particular events," or their cultural models, (b) how those meaning-perspectives were influenced by location of occurrence (in this case, Los Angeles), and (c) identify causal linkages like—*what happened to help youth feel a sense of belonging* (Erickson, 1986).

While this dissertation study is not a critical or participatory ethnography, it is rooted in critical perspectives and social justice. As a subset of interpretive research in general, ethnography "developed out of interest in the lives and perspectives of people in society who have little or no voice" (Erickson, 1986, pg. 6). Through using ethnographic methods I wanted to capture the spirits of students who were considered burdensome by much of the staff at Faulkner High School, and demonstrate in detail the actual strengths, skills, and spirits that the youth had that helped them progress through Faulkner High School, which was a site of both belonging, and of alienation.

The bulk of data was collected from August 2009 through May 2010, with follow-up interviews and visits to the school site lasting until April 2011. Beyond systematic data collection, I also spent time with my focal participants that allowed me to build trust and create connections that ultimately gave me a deep sense of the kind of emotional lives that they were living. I collected information to understand *kinds of things*, and their meaning, such as: who belonged to which peer group and why, how language played a role in peer group choice, which
students felt a sense of belonging and what was a part of their life that helped them feel that, how language played a part in how youth helped each other in the classroom, how ethnic origin played a role in peer group choice, which teachers wanted to work with which groups of students and why, which teachers didn't want to work with EL-designated students and why, who was considered ESL and who wasn't, why some language groups remained in lower level ESL classes and others didn't, and so on.

*Comparative Education methods.* To complement the intimacy of everyday life documented by this study, I looked at contemporary patterns of immigration to the U.S., mapping the macro- onto the micro-, as I have been trained to do by my core discipline, Comparative Education. As the American Educational Research Association (AERA) emphasizes, our work as educational researchers should be *ecological*; thus it should draw on “interdisciplinary constructs and theories” to examine how our multi-dimensional identities change across time and space (AERA, 2009). Moreover, our work should investigate how norms of participation are influenced by larger “cultural, political and economic forces and institutions” (AERA, 2009).

This study was conducted against the backdrop of rising immigration and political tensions around culture, falling economic security for U.S. citizens, a loss of job security for teachers, and sweeping educational reform that emphasized testing the performance of students. I aimed to understand how immigrant youth were situated at that nexus of cultural, political, and economic mores and what that meant for their reception, incorporation, and interpersonal relationships with institutions and communities. As Erickson explains, "The task of interpretive research, then, is to discover the specific ways in which local and nonlocal forms of social organization and culture relate to the activities of specific persons in making choices.
and conducting social activities together” (1986, p. 129). My intellectual orientation and training in the field of comparative education, a field that theorizes the relationship between school and society, prepared me to ask these questions. And, as an anthropologist, I worked against making causal linkages between actions in the micro-culture and larger social patterns, but rather sought to explain the cultural models of my participants in the field as situated in bounded social field: a highly linguistically and ethnically diverse school setting. In sum, this work was necessary given that I am an "outsider" in Southern California: growing up in Canada, Germany and on the east coast of the United States meant that I have had a vastly different historical orientation to understanding forms of social life—particularly race relations.

My training in Comparative Education influenced how I made conceptual links in my analysis of data between aspects of the local/indigenous (e.g., the classroom, school, and/or neighborhood) and nonlocal (e.g., the neighborhood, state, region, nation and/or global). While investigating local actions at the school, I took part in information gathering such as: (1) studying demographic and geographical maps detailing the recent history of immigration to the United States, mostly housed and made available by the Migration Policy Institute; (2) reading media about immigration in order to correctly ascertain the public terrain and gage primary perspectives on the current battles of the day—language, documentation status, and economics; (3) reading media about school reform to understand the pressures experienced by teachers and other staff in charge of the in-school lives of immigrant youth; (4) attending lectures and talks about migration, race, and culture at the University of California, Los Angeles; and (5) carrying on informal conversations with residents of Los Angeles and Faulkner City to understand the tenor of a common history of immigration, race, and public policy in Southern
California. This work ultimately influenced the way I thought about my participants' lives, and shaped the lens I took while analyzing data and creating a narrative.

Creating local/ nonlocal linkages is challenging work, but crucial for making sense of patterns in the field. For example, researching the history of demographic changes in the United States and in Los Angeles helped me to understand the larger history of immigration that shaped the cultural integration patterns of my longitudinal youth participants (e.g., who spent time with whom as friends and whether this correlated to language or national origin) as discussed in the findings section in Chapter Six. In another example, economic issues and issues of testing emerged in my conversations with administrators and ESL teachers, one of whom had received a "pink slip" for each of the two years previous to the one I spent at the school, another two of whom left the school the year following the study. I followed up on issues raised by the teachers by reading newspapers and reports of schoolboard meetings, where the concerns around the laying off teachers were paramount and created an intense environment, helped me to ask the more informed questions and understand teachers' unwillingness to work with immigrant youth, as detailed in Chapter Four.

Faulkner High School. Finding the right site was challenging. I had three firm criteria: 1) I wanted to work with high school students; 2) I wanted to work in a multicultural, multiracial setting; and 3) I wanted to work with students who new to the country, defined in the literature as "recently-arrived" -- youth who had been in the country for under four years-- or the 1.5 generation. Finding a highly diverse site \footnote{I found the school that I will call here Faulkner High School by searching the LA Times school index, an index which is sortable based on various criteria.} in Los Angeles is a challenge because residential...
segregation patterns meant that public schools were also racially segregated. Faulkner High School was a highly diverse but middle class school: while I had been most familiar with high-poverty school up to the point of beginning dissertation work, I eventually came to appreciate the lens that a middle-class, suburban high school site afforded, namely, that the school was a good representative of the many large, middle-class high schools around the country that are being pushed to redefine themselves during this most recent wave of immigration.

With this background explained, I now turn to an in-depth discussion of the data collection site, participants, and the implementation of this research, including a review of the techniques I used to gather information. Then, I turn to the analysis of my own process and identify my positionality. In the final section, I conclude with a brief overview of my attempts to report back on the data to the school.

**Demographics of Faulkner High School and description of study participants**

Faulkner High School was located in a recently gentrified neighborhood in the sprawling Los Angeles area. The racial and ethnic make up of the student body was highly diverse, and I will spend some time in this section on demographics. This was to the advantage of this comparative study, as participants were chosen *across* race and ethno-linguistic group. This methodological decision sets this dissertation apart from studies that have chosen a group of participants based on race, membership in a particular ethno-linguistic community, and/or national origin (Faulstich Orellana, 2009; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; M. Gibson, et al., 2004; M. A. Gibson, 1988; Lee, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Maira, 2009; Mand, 2010).

I focused my analysis primarily around the experiences of youth who were 1.5 generation, also referred to as recently-arrived students. I was particularly interested in the
cultural integration and socialization processes of new immigrants. I choose to look comparatively at immigrant experience, and therefore my participants had a variety of ethno-linguistic backgrounds.

There were four kinds of participant groups in the study, demonstrated in the figure below.

![Figure 3: Four kinds of study participants](image)

In addition to systematic observations and interviewing with these four kinds of participant groups, I also interviewed the teaching corpus and the 10th grade class through questionnaires. These two large questionnaires helped to triangulate the more in-depth interviewing: one was given to the 10th grade student class (N=454), and one to the teaching corpus (N=64). The survey demonstrates the youths’ perception of their own motivation, further explained in the next chapter. Surveying is a common ethnographic tool. The Spindlers write that surveys provide “invaluable generalization that is impossible with ethnographic data
alone” (Spindler & Spindler, 1987, p. 28) The two surveys (i.e., teachers’ questionnaire and 10th grade student survey) are provided in appendices A and B, and the content of the questionnaires is described in more detail in the techniques of collection in the following section.

**Quadrant 1: ESL program students and the students in Room #47**

**ESL program.** Students in the ESL program at Faulkner High School constituted roughly 9 to 10% of the total student body (California Department of Education, 2010). The year that I conducted the bulk of participant-observation, the ESL program served 185 students between 9th and 12th grade. Of these, 29 students had been enrolled in the school system for less than three years, or what the literature considers "late arrival youth" or "recently-arrived" students. Students in the ESL program spoke a variety of languages, including Burmese, Serbo-Croatian, Punjabi, Cantonese, and Farsi (Persian). However, 138 out of the 185 students, or 74.6% of the ESL program, were listed as Spanish-speaking students in official records. This number is disproportionate to the percentage of "Hispanic" students at the school¹⁸, meaning that "Hispanic" youth were overrepresented in the ESL department. As Figure 4 shows, California Department of Education classifies 49% of the student body at Faulkner High School as "Hispanic."

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¹⁸ I do not have school records for the entire student body and their language status. Therefore, the only comparison I can make is compare language with ethnic origin data. This is not a perfect comparison by any means, as not all students who are "Hispanic" are also language minority students. What it does help us establish is that there is an over-representation of "Hispanic" students in the ESL program, and an underrepresentation of other ethnicities.
This data is substantiated by my observations. What I observed was that reclassification at the school was racialized; I do not have official records for reclassification, but based on 10 months of systematic observation, I saw that the beginning ESL class (ESL 1 & 2) was comprised of Spanish-speaking students (with three non-Spanish speaking students), while the higher level ESL classes (ESL 3) were mostly attended by Urdu, Farsi, Arabic, and Chinese-speaking students with only two Spanish-speaking students. ESL Level 3 was a transitional class; once you graduated from ESL 3, you were considered reclassified and eligible to take mainstream classes.

**Room #47.** I observed both the ESL 1 and 2 (a mixed level class) and ESL 3 classes. My documentation is primarily of the ESL 1 & 2 class, which I call Room #47, and I turn now to a discussion of who was in the classroom. There were roughly 15 students in the class at any given point; throughout the year, new students came in and other students left, either because they left the school or because they were considered ready for ESL 3. Analytically, I group the students into three groups; this is discussed thoroughly in the introduction to *Chapter Five: Successful Communities of Practice.* Here, I will mention briefly that the population of that class

![Ethnic breakdown of Faulkner High School Students, California Department of Education data](image)

**Figure 4:** Ethnic breakdown of Faulkner High School Students, California Department of Education data
was mostly Spanish speaking, and included primarily recently-arrived immigrants from Central and South America (Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Chile).

Room #47 also included two LTELs, or long-term English learners. This group is emerging in the research literature as an important group to study. They are generally defined as students who have been in ESL classrooms for over seven years. Kate Menken's work (Menken & Kleyn, 2010) looks at them as a demographic subset, finding that many LTELs are actually transnational students who have moved back and forth from the U.S. and Latin America, thus experiencing interrupted schooling. Other LTELs have been moved inconsistently by school officials through multiple types of programming; this can impact their ability to learn English in a manner suitable to test them out of ESL and reclassify them. Both these experiences were represented in the histories of students who were LTELs at Faulkner High School.

Finally, Room #47 also had non-Spanish speaking students. Over the year, this included (at different points) two Farsi speakers, an Amharic speaker, and a Thai speaker.

**Quadrant 2: Key informants**

I found key informants with the help and input of ESL teachers and coordinators at the high school. One of my key informants was not considered "ESL" (he was "reclassified") and three participants were EL-designated students. One of that three, Naaz\(^{19}\), also took non-ESL classes because she had an advocate—her stepfather—who worked for the district.

\(^{19}\) All participants' names are pseudonyms. Key informants chose their own names; I chose names for all other participants. Names were chosen to carefully reflect the spirit of the individual, and his or her cultural persona.
The guidance counselor and I made a list together of students based on my criteria of diversity. I also wanted diversity in terms of academic excellence as measured through grades. This choice was important so that I could see different kinds of experiences; I was also interested in how academic belonging was connected to the experience of psychosocial belonging\(^\text{20}\).

**Quadrant 3: Teachers and ESL teachers**

The teaching corps did not reflect the diversity of the student body, nor of the Los Angeles region. Out of 84 teachers, only 25 were teachers of color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Ethnicity(^\text{21})</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage of the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Not Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander Not Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American Not Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Not Hispanic</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Teachers</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{20}\) The connection between belonging and grades has not been presented in the data chapters because of the lack of conclusive ethnographic evidence. A fellow researcher of mine and I did conduct a statistical survey and measured the correlation of belonging and grade data. We found no statistical significance between recently-arrived and non-recently arrived students. We found that teacher expectations mattered more for belonging than teacher caring (Riconscente & Malsbary, 2012).

\(^{21}\) Ethnic descriptors are taken from the California Department of Education. Hence, I use "Hispanic" instead of "Latino". Normally, I describe this group as "Latino" according to their own preferences.
In Table 2 above, it is shown that 67% of the teachers were Caucasian. The heavily Caucasian teaching force did not reflect the ethnic diversity of the student body where 49% of students were of "Hispanic origin." As such, the teaching force also did not reflect the ethnic diversity of California.

*ESL teachers.* The ESL teachers who were interviewed and observed as part of my systematic observing of students were Caucasian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Native Language/ bilingual?</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Years teaching at Faulkner High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Patton</td>
<td>White Not Hispanic</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollie Griggs</td>
<td>White Not Hispanic</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey Stradder</td>
<td>White Not Hispanic</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: ESL teachers who participated in this study*

Notable here are linguistic demographics. None of the ESL teachers I observed were fully bilingual in English and another language. They were also new to the school, and two were new to teaching. These teachers participated in the study because they were the ESL instructors of my key informants. I initially had not planned on speaking to teachers, but after time in the field, it became clear that understanding the isolation and struggle of ESL teachers was critical to my interpretation of the socio-cultural lives of the immigrant students.

*Other staff.* The assistant principal and the ESL guidance counselor also provided invaluable orientation to me while I was in the field. In addition to their positions at the high school, they were also both doctoral candidates at local universities; as such, our conversations took on a different tenor at times. The assistant principal and the ESL guidance counselor were both able to speak on more sociological levels about the positioning of the ESL youth; they
were both vocal about their desire to reform the structure of the school for the EL-designated students. During fieldwork, the ESL guidance counselor and the assistant principal advocated for the youth, and expressed their concern with what they saw as the lack of willingness on the part of the teachers to help the youth. The support of these two faculty members was critical to me in the field, and with their sanctioning of my research, I had unlimited access to resources and school records. Next, I discuss the actual techniques I used to gather my data.

Data collection

Ethnography is an exploration of *emic or local* perspectives that form a particular culture. It involves systematic observing, recording, and analyzing of human behavior in “specifiable spaces and interactions” over a period time (Street and Heath, 2008, p. 29). Over the 18 month period that I collected data, the key techniques I used included: 1) participant observation; 2) interviewing, including questionnaires, informal, and longitudinal interviews; 3) experimental methods; and 4) gathering of artifacts (including cultural probes). In this section, I discuss each in turn.

Participant Observation

Passing through the garden-lush courtyard and into a long corridor, a visitor would find a bright, airy room—Room #47, Jennifer Patton’s ESL classroom. It was here that I spent the majority of the 2009-2010 academic year, probing the lives of the newest members of the high school community for their hopes, dreams, and fears, and for how the school could help them achieve a sense of belonging. I observed mostly in classrooms, but also during staff meetings and professional development. Observing meetings was opportunistic, depending on my time and whether I thought the discussion would pertain to the ESL population. I also attended a
few district level meetings that were focused on reforming the current ESL program in place. I wrote up formal fieldnotes for all of these observations.

I spent time in the quad in between classes. Sitting in one place outside meant that I witnessed the normal life of the school, including fistfights, kids dancing, teachers rushing about, and other everyday activities. Classes were full; Faulkner High School, like most other high schools in the Los Angeles region was experiencing major budgetary cuts. Mainstream classes had over 35 students; in this way, the ESL program was a good place to be as classes were kept small by the administration.

**Observations in Room #47.** I observed mostly in Room #47; from August 2009 through January 2010 I observed a class weekly. After the New Year, I began to observe several times per week. By Spring, I was in the classroom almost daily. At this juncture, and because of the research activities I was doing with the students, like cultural probes, which will be described in further detail in the next section on experimental methods, my involvement became more participatory than observational.

During the first, more observational part of data collection, I usually sat quietly in a corner of the room to get a good viewpoint. When I observed multiple times in a room, I would purposefully sit in different areas of the classroom; this meant that I was able to overhear different students' conversations. This became particularly important in the ESL 1 and 2 class, as the teacher divided the students by level, with more proficient students on one side of the room and less proficient students on the other. She then taught the class as if it were two classes, with the help of an aide. That meant that I was often attending to two sets of conversations and activities, which was challenging.

I used a method during ethnographic fieldwork that has been called the "constant
comparative method" of analysis (Glaser, 1965): researchers write, analyze, and then return to the field to check their impressions. I took jottings in the field, which I then wrote up as fieldnotes (I eventually had 300 pages of fieldnotes). I jotted down notes about "kinds of things": who spoke to whom, what language was used to converse in, who was friends with whom, what curriculum was taught, how students were organized in the classroom by their teachers and so on. I also kept a journal in the glove compartment of my car so that I could jot down notes and impressions immediately after leaving the field. After weekly writing sessions where I turned my jottings and diary into fieldnotes, I wrote analytic memo tying the observations I had made to other research I was reading or overall patterns that were emerging. In my final step, I developed keywords which eventually creating codes for analysis. Once back in the field, I frequently spot checked my emerging impressions with key informants like Juan Carlos, a youth participant, or Amber Griggs, an ESL teacher.

Keeping a field journal, writing analytic notes, and developing keywords were critical to my development of theory. Here, I will refer to the collective of these actions as memoing. Memoing created a “running record of insights, hunches, hypothesis, discussions about the implications of codes, additional thoughts, what not” and has fed into my final “integrative statements and the writing for publications" (Strauss, 1987, p. 110). Memoing was the first step towards data analysis. Memoing became a theory building process for me through its linking of data to concepts, development of new foci to bring back into the field, exploration of disconfirming evidence or opposing viewpoints, and reflection on whether or not particular research strategies were working. In addition, memoing (particularly through keyword creation) greatly helped me create emic definitions based on what I was seeing in the field, and eventually led to developing codes.
**Observations in other classrooms.** As time developed in the field and I became more interested in the ecology and politics of the ESL program, I started observing classes in addition to Room #47. These observations were mostly at the invitation of teachers who I got to know through attending PD in-session days. The ethos of the school was welcoming and friendly. Many of the teachers had attended graduate level programs and were interested in my functions as a researcher. Finally, some teachers were particularly concerned about the EL-designated students, and wanted to help me in order to participate in changing the culture of the school to more greatly benefit the youth.

In April and May of 2010, I performed more targeted observations of three classrooms. This coincided with my work with my key informants. I initiated "focal follows," whereby I observed the classes that my key informants told me were the most comfortable (e.g., helped them to develop a sense of "belonging"). I observed one class per day, every day, for a week. This meant that I systematically observed a week's worth of classes for each of the four key informants. Since the students chose the classes that they wanted me to observe, I observed science and English/ESL classes; I never observed math classes, and observed one history class at the request of the teacher.

**Interviews**

From February through May of 2010, I also began conducting more interviews.

**Teachers and staff.** At the end of the school year, I carried out a two-hour semi-formal interview each with four teachers (three ESL teachers, and one science teacher) for a total of four interviews. I chose to interview the teachers of the classes where I had done my focal

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22 "Focal following" is a method used by biologists to observe a specific creature move through various ecologies over a specified period of time.
follow observations. The nature of these interviews probed the teachers' beliefs about ESL and immigrant students, the place of minority languages in their classrooms, and each teacher's hopes and dreams for her class. I asked the teachers to compare their goals for their class with how they believed they met their goals. The interviews were semi-structured, but I left room for the interviewee to bring up her own personal concerns.

I also interviewed the assistant principal, who gave me a global view of the program and his intentions for reform, along with the guidance counselor. The questions for both interviews were developed from certain perceptions I had made while in the field, and much of my intention was to check and confirm/disconfirm my own assumptions about patterns I was seeing. Both the guidance counselor and assistant principal brought concerns about the willingness/unwillingness of the teaching staff to work closely with the EL-designated students. The guidance counselor was also a doctoral candidate at a local university and was doing her research on parent participation.

Finally, I interviewed the entire teaching body during a PD session through a closed-item questionnaire. The questionnaire probed the nature of their demographics, professional training, and beliefs about the interaction between language and curriculum (see appendix A).

**EL-designated students.** I conducted one interview with each of the 15 students in Room #47; the questions that I asked explored the nature of language choice and use in the classroom. The interview protocol was developed in conjunction with feedback I received from a working group I was a part of at UCLA during fieldwork (Appendix C). I also experimented methodologically in order to provide scaffolds for the students' interviewing process. I now turn to a more in-depth exploration of the two techniques I used with the immigrant youth.
Experimental techniques of inquiry with language minority youth

[Ethnography] began to achieve rapid legitimation by the educational research establishment only in the 1980s. It was given impetus... by critical perspectives on research... which often heavily rely on interactionist and interpretist approaches to data collection and interpretation. These approaches... acted to accelerate the process of dislocating the dominance of European-American, male and heterosexist perspectives in the social sciences and in education. Dislocating mainstream and hegemonic perspectives has, in turn, affected the purposes for which research was thought to be appropriate. (LeCompte, 2002, p. 285).

Margaret LeCompte reminds that educational ethnography is actually subversive and appropriate for agitating at the boundaries of normative research. Part of my intention with this dissertation research was to experiment methodologically. These experiments in the field were necessary as research with youth, particularly vulnerable youth who are triply marginalized by the normative functionings of community through their social location as language minorities, immigrants and youth of color. In order to access their interior lives and write from their perspective, or "standpoint" (Hill, 1986), I needed to find ways to gain the trust of, and talk to youth beyond the traditional format of the interview. Also, it was important to find ways to bridge language with youth when we did not share a common language (I speak some Spanish and German). Two experimental investigations are described in this section.

Art-based techniques of inquiry with language minority youth.

Drawing on my background in Visual Anthropology and my study of photography, I designed several activities that were similar in nature to what other research has called "cultural probes". My research activities, like “cultural probes,” were a “a collection of evocative tasks” (Gaver, Boucher, Pennington, & Walker, 2004) that took shape as packages of

\[24\] I did do an actual cultural probes packet with my longitudinal focal participants. I do not include this method here as I only had a 50% return rate and was unable, ultimately, to use the cultural probes during interviews. This method was ultimately unsuccessful for me, but the value of the activity is still relevant, I believe, to researchers working with language minority youth.
mixed-media materials. Cultural probe packages can include art-making objects such as disposable cameras, diaries, photo albums, postcards, and tape recorders; the objects are completed by participants privately and in their daily environments (Robertson, 2008). The purpose behind using this kind of technique is to allow the researcher insight into the interior life of the participant as controlled by the participant herself. Cultural probes aim to elicit clues about a person’s thoughts and daily lives. Probes value “uncertainty, play, exploration, and subjective interpretation” (Gaver et. al, 2004). My designs were not exact replicas of the other kinds of cultural probes that researchers have used with migrant participants, but this previous research enabled me to think about the purpose and value of using art-based techniques with my participants.

The value of cultural probes in my particular context was that it gave me a forum to think about how to scaffold language. Meaning, the youth in the classroom spoke varying degrees of English, and some spoke no English, and so I needed to have ways to access their inner worlds without language. It was also my hope that the creativity of the activities would help them feel more at ease, thus making it easier for them to participate in interviews. I do believe that both the lifemaps and photography project were integral to my work with these youth.

**Lifemaps.** The research activities I did were two-fold. After a few months of observations, I gave the students a lifemap activity that aimed to elicit their life histories and gave me some context about who I was observing in the classroom. This was an important move for me as it confirmed and disconfirmed assumptions I had about who was sitting in the room: namely, lifemaps helped me to see that there were both second-generation and recently-arrived youth in the classroom.
Lifemaps are a research activity that have been used by researchers with recently-arrived immigrant youth to elicit their emotional histories and develop biographical understandings (Fine & Jaffe-Walter, 2007). It is an appropriate method to use with youth who are still developing language because it is easily completable without language, and provides an object to describe and from which to speak during interviewing. Each participant in the ESL class I observed completed a life map\textsuperscript{25} (see Figures 5-7). I then conducted informal interviewing with the youth with simple contextual questions to clarify the content of their maps.

\textsuperscript{25} Lifemap photographs have been edited to remove the name of the school and any other identifiers in accordance with IRB.
Figure 5: Lifemap by Naaz, a 17-year-old young woman from Iran
Figure 6: Lifemap by Amnah, a young woman from Ethiopia
Photographing belonging. The second art-based technique I used was a photography project designed to have the youth document their sense of "belonging" at school. My first attempt at the project failed. I was unable to frame the activity in the way that I had wanted to because the powerpoint I had designed to introduce the project did not work during the time the teacher had given me to introduce the project. The teacher, who wanted to be helpful, took the youth on a tour of the school with their cameras. This meant that most of the images were duplicated and not individualized for each student. I redid the framing of the project and gave the students new disposable cameras. I also brought in photography books and looked at
photographs with the youth. We talked about the actual doing of photography and issues like lighting and perspective. We also discussed storytelling through photography and looked at the work of documentary photographers. I then told the youth to shoot pictures on their own time, and to take pictures of whatever they wanted; I asked that some pictures be of school, but did not require that all of the pictures were of school. Their prompt was: "Take pictures of things in your life that are meaningful to you." Other research on cultural probes ask for specific things like "something that reminds you of home" and "photograph one gadget" (Robertson, 2008). I ultimately decided to have semi-structured prompt to allow content to be directed by the students as much as possible.

After the youth returned with their cameras, I had the photographs developed, and then gave them cardboard backing to mount their photographs. I asked them to write three sentences about what the photographs show and mean to them. They picked their photographs, and I was in the classroom talking to them about their choices as they did so. The teacher also did some limited facilitating. I brought their photographic project to a research group I was involved with, and had analytical discussions about the kinds of questions I could ask the youth to prompt discussions on belonging as mentioned earlier. After the interviews, many of the youth elected to keep their projects.
Figure 8: Image by Srinak, a young woman from Thailand. This young woman was very lonely at school. In the caption she talks about a friend who had scaffolded her participation in the class, later, that friend graduated. The image and caption demonstrate the critical nature of relationships for immigrant youth at school.
Figure 9: Image by Alejandro, a young man from Mexico, of the teacher in Room #47. The participant expresses his gratitude that she helped him get through the high school exit exam. As a "late arrival" student, this young man needed extra attention and time to adjust to life at school and pass a high stakes exam that is only offered in English. Similarly to Figure 8 above, this image and caption reflect the importance of relationships to youth trying to navigate an unfamiliar school system.

The Photographing Belonging Project was used as a precursor to the interviews I conducted with each student. By including photography, the traditional interview format is refashioned into one that stresses intimacy, low stakes engagement, and storytelling. Another way that cultural probes complement traditional interviewing is that they “act as a precursor” by engaging the imagination of the participants, provide prompts, and bridge the distance between researcher and participant (Robertson, 2008). Researchers on cultural probes acknowledge that they only provide “fragmentary data” that should be “analyzed concurrently with other interview transcripts” (Robertson, 2008). In some instances, the images the youth
had taken and the placement of those images easily led into conversations that probed the nature of their belonging. Other photographic projects were more obscure. But in each instance, the photographs opened up a doorway to subjects that I believe I might not of otherwise known to ask about.

For example, the absence of people in one young woman's project led her to talk about her challenges in making friends and her decision to leave Los Angeles and return to Chile because of it. In another set of pictures, a young woman had taken mostly pictures of her family and friends, leading her to talk about her tight-knit community of Mexican immigrants in the area and how having that home community led her to value community. For example, one of her photographs was of a neighbor who had taken in the two children of another neighbor who had been arrested and was spending time in jail. She eventually discussed the failure of the school to recognize and build on the values of her home community—family, support, and helpfulness.

The methodological complexities of research in multilingual classrooms

Ten months into fieldwork studying “belonging” among immigrant high school students in a multicultural, multilingual high school in Southern California, I sat down with Anoush and his cousin, Tara. I had been observing Anoush’s class regularly, and was interviewing all of the students. Anoush was a new student who had arrived a few months earlier from Iran. At 18, with the physique and confidence of a young man, he seemed out of place in the “newcomer center,” the landing spot for immigrant students who were designated in need of English language instruction. Anoush was accompanied by his cousin Tara, a second-generation Iranian-American who carried herself with the assurance and languor of a graduating senior.

The following is a transcript of part of our conversation, wherein I attempted to probe Anoush’s
sense of belonging at school. He replied, with the thorough guidance of his cousin, that he found the teachers helpful, but did not enjoy his interaction with the students.

C.B.M.: So what does this school do well for students like you? How has it helped you since you have been here?

Tara: mige madrese chejori komaket kardeh yani maslan chon inglisit khob nistesh [She says how did they help you. Meaning because your English is not good.]

Tara: bebin doroogh nagoo an yani vaghaan narahati.... Bego kari nemikkonand [Look. Don’t lie. Tell the truth. Say it. They don’t make trouble for you.]

Anoush: midonam. Hehehehe [I know. Hehehehe.]

Tara: akheh hamchin... [Because this way...]

Anoush: yani chon zaban balad nistam chetori... [Because I don’t know the language...]

Tara: yani chetori komaket kardand [How do they help you?]

(Student Interview, May 2010).

I asked Anoush what the school “did well,” a broad and open-ended interview prompt, as I had been trained to do. Open-ended questions meant that I could not inadvertently corner the interviewee with my pre-determined notions of a correct answer, but rather leave the data free to speak to me. Tara, on the other hand, had no such compunction. “Meaning your English is not good” she stated plainly, full of the judgments I had worked for 10 years in the field of ELL education to re-direct, urging my colleagues to call the tentative language(s) spoken by recently-arrived youth “emerging” and “bilingual/ bicultural.” How did “they” help, she questioned, reducing the impersonal “school” to the personal interactions between Anoush and other members of the community. Anoush, avoiding the question of his “not good” English (later on in the interview we came back to this point), signaled that the teachers were helpful:
Anoush: man madrese injaro rastesho faghat baraye moalemash omadam [Honestly, I just come to this school for its teachers]

Anoush: bekhatereh mr.duke [For Mr.Duke]

Tara: moalema komak mikonand [Are the teachers helpful?]

Anoush: areh khyli mr. duke, mrs. juarez, mrs. kenner [Yes, Mr. Duke, Mrs. Juarez, Mrs. Kenner.]

Anoush: faghat hamina bachehash [Only these children.] ((I think he means other students))

Tara to C.B.M.: He said that the teachers are pretty helpful like Mr. Duke, Ms. Juarez, and the ESL teachers, but not so much the students, which I guess is normal.

Anoush: yani ye kari kardand ke man ehsase... [Meaning they did something that I felt...] (Student Interview, May 2010).

Tara to C.M.B.: The students are kinda rude, make fun of him because of his English or lack thereof.

Anoush: khob bezar man harfamo ta akhar bezanam bad bego, hehehe [So let me finish talking first and then you talk. Hehehe.]

To be clear, I do not speak, read, understand, or write Farsi. The transcriber and translator of my audio recording, a native Farsi speaker and doctoral candidate in linguistics unwittingly became part of the conversation, a latent ghostwriter who guessed at the meaning of Anoush’s dismissive “only these children,” writing to me: ((I think he means the other students)), and possibly interpreting the meaning of Anoush’s words in ways that I will not ever know. In this way, the interview became a polyvocal quartet across two forms, spoken and written.

When I tell people that I research the lives of teenage immigrants, I am most frequently asked, “Do you speak Spanish?” as if the word immigrant is synonymous with Spanish speaker. 
While I speak enough Spanish to make myself understood, I do not speak Thai. Nor Amharic. Nor Portuguese. Nor, as clearly evidenced by my lengthy absence in the above transcript selection, Farsi. This is a complex position for ethnographic researchers on language minority youth working in highly diverse multilingual settings.

Tara acted as the epistemic authority with her cousin, advising him, for example, to "be truthful". The conversation continued, with negotiation between the cousins as to the “truth” that would be presented to me, and friendly bickering about the tempo and turn-taking of the elements of the conversation. Yet, despite Tara’s court-marshaling of the direction of the interview, her directiveness was also additive: Anoush vaguely described his classmates as “children” who did something that he had “felt.” Tara’s familial knowledge led her to expose what I might have otherwise not known—that the students made fun of Anoush for his language skills, a point that was ultimately important for the analytical argument of Chapter Five: Successful Communities of Practice, regarding how the recent-arrival youth were positioned vis-a-vis the other students in the school. In this way, using a student translator, or “broker,” was both a hindrance and an advantage.

In parts of this dissertation, I discuss language brokering, a term which refers to the everyday translation by people on behalf of family or friends. Current research on language brokering shows that it goes beyond word-to-word translation to grapple with the linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and pragmatic nuances of the language and culture being brokered (Faulstich Orellana, 2009). Some time after this interview, analysis yielded data about how youth translated for each other in the classroom in order to facilitate belonging for each other—e.g., through making sense of the curriculum presented to them. Yet during interviewing in the field, theories of how youth use language to broker and interpret
information and culture were not foremost in my mind. Rather, I was calculating pragmatic questions: How much would hiring Farsi, Thai, and Portuguese translators cost me, and where would I find someone to translate Amharic-English? Further, I wondered: Would those translators intimidate the young people who had become so used to my presence? Would I be able to elicit the same kinds of emotions and responses from youth with two adults present?

Ultimately, I decided to ask my interviewees if they had someone who they would like to translate for them. These youth were not traditional co-researchers, but their participation did facilitate the research. Furthermore, by asking students to be my translators, I was asking them (without realizing it at the time) to become agentive and engage in dialogicality (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, youth were brokering language, the kind of work that I later found through analyzing my fieldnotes.

Left to choose a translator for themselves, students made their intentions clear: one young woman refused a translator—either classmate or professional, preferring instead to use our interview to practice her English. She sat virtually silent in the class that I had observed for 10 months, rarely called upon and rarely offering to participate. Others asked family members, friends, or classmates who seemed to enjoy the task. My Spanish being intermediate, I invited one of my key informants, Juan Carlos, a young man who showed natural leadership, to be my on-going Spanish translator. Juan Carlos was an excellent choice, and he facilitated the other youth’s comfort with me, tenderly caring for his friends when they became emotional over discussions of their homeland, language, and identity during the interview. And, unexpectedly, he became a co-researcher, pushing the students to answer deeply, reframing questions in Spanish when my awkward direct translations were misleading, and occasionally jumping in with his own analysis of his classmates’ responses.
Like with Tara and Anoush, my interviews together with Juan Carlos triangulated the more traditional one-on-one between an interviewee and her researcher. Youth translators, more than trained interpreters, became part of the process of research itself, unwittingly pushing the direction of the lines of inquiry and providing perspectives to the views of the researched. With my immigrant participants, who were marginalized in the larger English speaking school and mocked for what was perceived as their lack of linguistic skills, being able to broker for one another gave them a sense of belonging and confidence. As I gave up some of the control over my research project and its process and welcomed the research participants into the life of the project, I was also given an unexpected analytical gift; that is, brokering as a method of interviewing became content to analyze, and in the process my participants and I were further able to facilitate community in unexpected ways.

Focal youth/ key informants

While I did organize formal interviews for each of my key informants, the reality of my fieldwork was that I became "friends" of a kind with these young people. Hence, our relationships stretched beyond the confines of the four interview protocols I am about to describe here.

The first interview I conducted with each participant was based on a form developed by educational anthropologists George and Louise Spindler. They describe the interview process, called the Expressive Autobiographical Interview (EAI), as a cross between a structured expressive interview and a chronological autobiography (Spindler, 2000). While the participant shares biographical events, the interviewer listens for how the participant clarifies his or her identity, and interrupts with questions at critical points to elicit “materials concerning a
person’s cultural knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes concerning the people and the world around him or her” (Spindler and Spindler, 1987: 26). The interview protocol attempts to avoid the participant answering towards the “ideal” too often set up through a more direct questioning format. After the EAI interviews with each youth, I divided the next dialogues into themes: the first around their cultural lives, where I looked into the forms of identity that were salient to the immigrant youth at the time of our discussion, the second about academic experiences, and the third a "fact checking" interview, where I asked the youth about the themes that I had seen coming out of the completed participant observation work and earlier points of analytic interest.

In all of the interviews, I sought to understand what the needs of my participants were, and to look underneath the assumptions I had brought with me into the field. I also looked for and wrote about the “subjective data” of the informant—current emotional state, opinions, attitudes, and values (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 106). I monitored my relationship with participants for issues of power and found with one informant that it was difficult to broach our ages and my relative standing as a graduate student at UCLA. I often wondered if her responses were genuine, or if she was putting on a performance because she did not want me to think badly of her thoughts or feelings. It was particularly difficult to understand her opinions about race and racism at Faulkner High School. As a young Muslim woman who wore a hijab, I wondered aloud to her about the racism she might have experienced at the school. She denied any such experiences. The three other participants opened up a variety of emotional experiences with me, and several said they found the intimacy quite healing, as they gained a space and a forum to talk about their loneliness and fears with someone who was not a parent, not a peer, and not an authority figure. All this meant that I engaged in “affective
participation” which McCall and Simmons describe as the researcher's involvement in the emotional life of the observed (1969, p. 97). Much of my emotional involvement came from my own personal history, a subject I now turn to in a discussion of my positionality in the field.

**Positionality: Outsider/insider research in the field**

There are at least two distinct, rarely disentangled, sets of problems with outsider-insider relations in fieldwork. First, how do people view researchers, based on visible and audible identity markers such as phenotype, dress, speech and mannerisms? Who researchers seem to be delimit what people say to us and how they do so. There are ways to minimize social distances but social addresses can never be escaped and must be taken into account.

Second, how do lived experiences shape understandings and interpretations? This, the more slippery of the two concerns is difficult if not impossible to redress. Lived experiences shape profoundly how we see things...there are ways to expand our viewpoints on the world, but we can never completely step outside of them (Orellana, 2009, pg. 128).

**Being seen by others**

There were two marked limits to how I believe I was seen in the field by the youth. The first was my status as a UCLA student, and the second was my former status as a teacher. As a UCLA graduate student, I entered the field with a certain degree or particular kind of power and prestige. At a teachers' meeting held early on in the academic year, the principal of the high school, herself a graduate student, mentioned the "interest" that researchers were taking in the school, linking it to the development of the school's own prestige. While she did not single me out, my access was virtually assured once she and I realized that we shared (something about the field, not specific to UCLA). Likewise, and as mentioned earlier, doors were opened for me by the assistant principal, who was starting the process of applying to graduate school, and the guidance counselor, who acted as a *de facto* administrator of the ESL program and who was also
a doctoral candidate at another local university. Their kindness to me greatly influenced how I was able to understand the school, as I could not help but see them as compassionate and committed educators. It was sometimes difficult to hold the different truths and perspectives that teachers and administrators had towards each other. In particular, there was conflict between an ESL teacher and an administrator after I had officially stopped participant observation but was still conducting follow-up interviews. I heard about the conflict from both sides, and found it best to leave the details out of my fieldnotes. All this is to say that the field, for the ethnographer, is not a value-free, easy place to be. Interpersonal relationships are generally tricky and my time at Faulkner High School was no exception.

In her book *Subtractive Schooling*, Angela Valenzuela talks about wearing teenager fashion-- jeans and sneakers-- when she was in the field. I took a cue from her and changed the way that I dressed according to who I knew I would be talking to that day. Still, as a well educated woman, it would have been impossible and silly of me to assume that I could completely border-cross into youth culture and as such, I did not try. My intent was to establish myself as a sympathetic person who was easy to talk to, and not pretend to be anything other than what I was. Having said that, as a woman with tattoos, who looks young and is mixed race, the youth took a great deal of interest in me, and it was easy to have conversations and broach distance.

In Room #47, the teacher discovered that I had an education/ teaching background and asked me to help with various things in the classroom. That meant that early on, the students of Room #47 saw me in a more professional capacity. It limited my ability to be able to quickly and easily learn about their thoughts, perceptions, and values. My relationship with them was
similar to the relationship that the instructional aide had: one step down from the authority of the teacher, but not a peer. This was not the case with my key informants with whom I engaged in off campus activities like visiting UCLA, going to coffee shops for our interviews, and hanging out in the quad together. These activities helped to breach the distance of being an adult and my power advantage of being at a world-class university with them.

**Seeing myself and delineating experiential influences.**

No one objects to autobiography, as such, as a genre in its own right. What bothers critics is the insertion of personal stories into what we have been taught to think of as the analysis of impersonal social facts. --Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer.*

My use of personal experience serves as a vehicle for making the quality and intensity of the rage in Ilongot grief more readily accessible to readers than certain more detached modes of composition. At the same time, by invoking personal experience as an analytical category one risks easy dismissal. Unsympathetic readers could reduce this introduction to an act of mourning or a mere report on my discovery of the anger possible in bereavement. Frankly, this introduction is both and more. An act of mourning, a personal report, and a critical analysis of anthropological method, it simultaneously encompasses a number of distinguishable processes, no one of which cancels out the others (Rosaldo, 1993, p. 11).

Ethnography is the telling of stories, the stories of ourselves and the stories of those we come to care about throughout the course of our research. As Behar asserts in the quote above, writing vulnerably takes the "keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied" (Behar, 1996, p. 13). With my own history of migration, I felt that I was able to understand the emotional fabric of the experiences of my participants, but also noted that there were differences between our trajectories. I had attended both a U.S. high school (two, in fact) and lived the structure, and schools outside of the U.S. (elementary school in Toronto,
Canada; secondary school in Munich, Germany; and higher education in London, England). In this way, I had experienced various school structures as a child, adolescent, and young adult, and like my research participants, I was acutely aware of the differences across national structures and the ways in which I was welcomed and brought into successive new school communities.

There were things I believe I had in common with my young participants: I had also been schooled in a different language, knew the challenges involved with processing content and language simultaneously, and I understood what it felt like to be the outsider looking in on a community with unfamiliar cultural scripts\(^{26}\). Still, this insider status had limits, and thus limited me. I had attended secondary school in Munich, Germany, in a different ideological milieu.

While German schools have a hierarchical structure (youth are tracked into a *hauptschule* with a generalized curriculum, *realschule* with a vocational curriculum, or *gymnasium*, a university oriented curriculum, based on their aptitudes and test grades), I do not remember experiencing the incredible pressures associated with the current neoliberal paradigms in global schooling. The way my youth participants talked about taking and passing tests was only something I have experienced as an adult (when studying for the LSAT or GREs, for example), when admittedly the stakes are lower because one has an element of personal choice.

This meant that high school was a relatively pressure-free environment for me. I was mostly focused on my immediate emotional crises that had been induced in me through

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\(^{26}\) A note on the narrative style of this particular section: in writing this more personal narrative, I am following the narrative example of Paulo Freire in his biographical and professionally reflective text *Letters to Christina* and bell hooks in her work *Teaching Community*. Both well-regarded educators and authors purposefully adopted a more story-like, syntactically simple, and occasionally colloquial style for those two (and other) texts. Their purposeful decision was two fold: to write in a way that showcased how their intellectual biographies were a product of their everyday experiences, and to write in a way that broke the linguistic, narrative tradition of the academe, and access the narrative styles of common speech.
constant relocation, and was able to ignore school as a sort of interruption in my interior life. I was "checked out" in high school—to use the colloquial term—and had the poor grades to show for it. There were several moments when it seemed as if my stoicism and refusal to participate in my own learning (beyond the classes that interested me like literature, sewing, theatre, and the occasional social studies or piano classes) would have consequences as principals of the various school I attended eventually asked my parents to put me elsewhere. With the gift of a hindsight saturated with an understanding of social location, I believe that it was my parents' social capital—my father did have a Ph.D. after all—that somehow persuaded school officials to allow me to pass through their school despite my poor grades. Still, this passing was ultimately "unseen"—an organizing concept that I also use for Chapter Four—garnering neither negative, nor supportive, attention, but an attention I term benign neglect.

My utter invisibility diverged my experiences from those of both my sisters and (most of) my research participants; my experiences seem most similar to Ryeol's who, as you will read, was mainstreamed quickly and also passed relatively unnoticed. Like my research participants, my sisters attended a local school in Germany with an established ausländer program (foreigner's program) that was led by a specialized instructor. Their classes were full of the children of the Roma people and Turkish gastarbitors and, as my mother tells it, their strict German teacher treated them all as little savages who needed to be socialized into the proper mores of German social life. As such, my sisters' experiences much more closely mirrored those of my research participants who attended an ESL program, while I was thrust into "sink or swim" mainstream classes which meant that a) I did not pick up the stigma of "immigrant," but b) neither was I surrounded by other children like me who could help to cushion the strangeness and loneliness of life as the constant new girl. These experiences have influenced
my "insider" feelings in the field, whereby I viewed myself in a similar light to my research participants and felt a closeness to the experiences they described to me during interviewing. Of course, this history was mostly hidden from my research participants. I did share with all of them that I had also relocated at their ages, and with my four key informants I was fairly open about my past and the feelings it produced in me. With most of my participants I believe I was not seen as part of their tribe of cross-cultural kids, but I do think that the key informants and I formed close bonds around our shared feelings of loss, separation, nostalgia, and excitement that living in a new world produces. As such, I was able to play a role that I have since then termed "critical friend." As Anne Rios-Rojas describes in her dissertation, interviews represented but “the tip of a larger interactional iceberg that consisted of deeper kind of ‘hanging out,’ a kind that blurred the lines separating fieldwork from friendship” (Jackson, 2001, cited in Rios-Rojas, 2011b). I was not exactly a peer, but since I spoke the same language of loss and transformation, I was able to sympathize and empathize with the teenagers in ways that led my participants to express their deep appreciation of the interviewing process. One participant told me that he could not talk to anyone else in his life like he could talk to me. I viewed myself, and I believe I was viewed by most of my key informants, as a cross between a psychologist and a pal.

My "insider" status as a teacher. When I was in my mid-20s, fresh out of a Master's program in Anthropology, I moved to New York City. It was 2002, and jobs were scarce. I took a position as an ESL teacher, which gave me a much-needed year to figure out my next career move. I was placed in a middle school classroom in the South Bronx with 20 immigrant kids, no books, and a broken chalkboard. My first year of teaching, as most teachers’ first years, was a
disaster. Still, the emotional connection I forged with my students sustained me; as a child I grew up between three countries and two languages. This healing process led to my firm commitment to the education of immigrant, language minority youth, and I continued to teach for three more years in secondary schools, always with recently-arrived youth. Two of these years were spent in an award-winning school that had a progressive format for immigrant education. I then moved into teacher education, and spent several years training cohorts of teachers both in-service and pre-service in the field, and teaching second language acquisition courses. This became important in my relationship with the teacher of the main ESL classroom in which I was a participant-observer. My status as a teacher helped me to eventually become very empathetic towards her, but also meant that I was occasionally unable to slip out of an evaluative role, as will be described in more detail in the next section. Still, I was able to speak as a teacher to other teachers and staff in the field; this authoritative and knowledgeable voice gave me access to conversations that I may not of otherwise been able to have. This is a familiar situation faced by ethnographers; as Sarsby (1984) relates, informants define an ethnographer in terms which are familiar to them. The ethnographer may also attempt to project a particular image to assist the conduct of research like: the patron and source of material goods, the culturally incompetent (either as "child" or "pawn"), and the technical and cultural expert (Sarsby, 1984, p. 113)(emphasis mine).

I now turn to an examination of the kinds of choices, influenced by my personal history and insider/outsider roles, that I made while in the field.
Intellectual biography: critical decision-making in the field.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, I was welcomed at Faulkner High School with open arms. A wonderful opportunity for a young researcher, the incredible reception also became a source of some conflict for me over the time that I spent there. As challenges arose in the field and problematic school practices presented themselves to me, I struggled with how to critique the people who had kindly opened their doors to me. I will discuss this concern in more depth throughout this section.

There were three major stages in my thinking over the course of this project, which, for the sake of simplicity, I will term here critique, empathy, and integration. During the critique phase, I found much at fault with the school system, the teachers, and even some of the students. Then, upon beginning to understand the complexities under what seemed to be harsh practices, I became empathetic towards my participants, and began to understand how my participants' behavior was imbued with social meanings, or what Erickson calls understanding the organization of "meaning-in-action" (2011). Finally, I moved into an integration phase, where I struggled to see the shades of gray—to look at both the responsibility on the part of the school for what I saw as their failures, and to empathize for the complicated positions occupied by my participants. Many of us live our lives in dualities—right/wrong, then/now, here/there. Beginning to recognize the slippages between these constructs has led me to feel more comfortable with unanswerable questions and nuances; in the following pages, I share three critical moments that are emblematic of the major intellectual turns I have taken through this journey.
1. Critique

“Amaglia, apparently, has disappeared. Or rather, returned to Mexico. I overheard the teacher and some students talking about it in the classroom yesterday. Today, I ran into Jane Gross, the ESL coordinator, who told me that this was the second time Amaglia had disappeared. After she had returned the first time around, the school held a meeting during which they informed Amaglia that if she left school again she would be subject to $250.00 worth of truancy fines for each day she missed. As Jane put it, “I guess that backfired!”

"I am furious. I really don’t understand how anyone with a basic understanding of human psychology could think threatening a fragile and clearly disturbed young woman could help matters” (Ethnographer’s Diary, November 17th, 2009).

This entry in my ethnographer’s diary, dated November 17th, 2009, encapsulated the way in which I approached situations at the school site during the beginning of my tenure there. After two years of reading literature in the field of critical pedagogy, my view of schools and schooling had taken on a decidedly antagonistic flavor. Further pushing my perspective was my introduction to the California public schooling system. After having spent time in the NYC system, which was undergoing dramatic reform during my teaching tenure, I had come to expect certain kinds of processes. Spending time in Los Angeles schools, and getting to know the politics around education and immigration within a West Coast context, was confusing and alienating. I visited overcrowded classrooms where little to no instruction was taking place, read about Proposition 227—the instrumental legislation that had dismantled bilingual education—and spoke with teachers and researchers who were tired and occasionally bitter. I grew angrier and angrier; unknowingly, I brought my anger with me into the field.

My first few months in the field I analyzed teachers and counselors’ approach to the immigrant youth, determined to understand that the school was doing immigrant youth a
disservice. But little prepared me for the emotional maelstorm I went through when I met Amaglia.

Amaglia was a young Mexican girl who stood out to me immediately during my observations. The teacher and instructional aide spoke about her in hushed terms, and the other students seemed to be protective of her. I was told by the ESL specialist, guidance counselor, an ESL teacher and a teacher's aide that she was a troubled young woman: she had cried frequently at school, reported family troubles, and was increasingly frustrated with what she perceived as her inability to speak English—so much so that she asked to be put back into the lower level ESL class. Her grades, once high, dropped and she was frequently absent. I had hoped that Amaglia might become one of my primary research participants, but before I had a chance to enroll her, she was reported as missing. There was some concern around the ESL department as to her whereabouts. Still, no one had gone to her house to find her. Visiting students at home was something that was part of the ethos in a school where I had been formally employed, and I was conditioned to believe it was part of a caring teacher's professional obligation. I spent an afternoon visiting various staff members to ascertain what they knew about her whereabouts and consulted at length with a fellow Ph.D. student (who is knowledgeable about Los Angeles school politics) and a faculty member on my committee about whether I should have taken it upon myself to find Amaglia, counsel her, and try to get her to come back to school. Both cautioned me to allow the school to take their own procedures. While I recognized the importance of not overstepping my boundaries with the school staff and thus damaging my relationships with them, I could not help but feel as if I were failing this young girl who I barely knew.
Amaglia returned to school a few days later with her brother-in-law, who then unenrolled her from the school. They told the guidance counselor who had worked with Amaglia that she was returning to Mexico, a report that other students denied. Her teacher, the woman whose class I had been observing weekly since the beginning of the year, was cynical, remarking, “If Amaglia is so upset about the fact that she doesn’t have any friends, why is she going back to Mexico where she says people hate her? Why doesn’t she just move to Japan?” I was furious with what I perceived to be the teacher's inability to recognize her own culpability in Amaglia’s leaving school.

The incident intensified my disapproval of the schooling staff, particularly towards my co-operating teacher. I saw the school as failing its most vulnerable students—and it was. During this period, I characterized "belonging" as an absolute: the EL-designated students did not belong at the school by virtue of the fact that they were immigrants, and Amaglia’s disappearance was the symbol of that. It took several more months before I was able to see that adults fail children when they themselves are failing, that hegemony and agency are almost indistinguishably interwoven, and that the more absolutist authors of the critical pedagogues I had been reading were not always good at capturing the richly textured humanity possessed by those involved in the struggle of educating.

2. Empathy

“God, this work is hard. I thought I might cry on the way home. I spoke with Jennifer, my cooperating teacher today—she opened up to me in a way that she never has before. With downcast, teary eyes she told me that she is 'drowning.' She said—'I think I am a bad teacher. I am not helping these kids. I don’t think I am good at this. I don’t think I should come back to teach next year.' It broke my heart; strange how quickly I can go from directing my anger towards her, to directing it towards others’ on her behalf. She is alone; she has few resources and little to no support."
"Who is to blame? Why are these kids and their teachers being left to flounder in this beautiful school in this beautiful neighborhood?" (Ethnographer's Diary, January 28, 2010).

On January 28th, 2010, my co-operating teacher, Jennifer Patton, broke down in tears in front of me. I was immediately moved, and hugely concerned. A second year teacher, she had spent the first semester photocopying worksheets that she passed out to the students. Now, grading her midterms, she saw the fruits of her efforts and was devastated. Yet, as she explained and as I recognized from my years of working in teacher training, she had not received the support that she needed from her colleagues or administration to create dynamic ESL curriculum.

It was a crack in the dam that had existed between her and I. My silent disapproval was immediately washed away and I offered her help. She seized it. That afternoon, I went into a tizzy of dilemma: as an ethnographer, helping this teacher to plan curriculum would influence the research site. But as a human, I felt an obligation to this woman. I had received the best training in ESL pedagogy that one could receive while teaching in NYC, and thus had the expertise that she needed. To purposefully withhold what I knew in order to keep my research site sacrosanct seemed inhuman. After making my decision, I checked in with Dr. Sondra Hale who sat on my proposal committee. “In women’s studies we gave up the idea of positivist research a long time ago,” she said. “Do what you need to and document it.” And so, I spent time with Jennifer planning high level academic curriculum, talking about grouping strategies, assessment, and differentiation, and integrating language and content. She was an apt learner; after minor intervention on my part, she began to soar, producing beautiful lessons that the students seemed to enjoy and flourish in.
Intellectually, I was left plagued with a question: who is to blame? A few months later, I presented research from a pilot study at a national conference, asking the same question. It seemed unanswerable. At all levels of educational responsibility, human error and shortsightedness can plague even the best-intentioned individual. I began to find the staff at Faulkner High School well-intentioned. The assistant principal had made the ESL program his pet project; the guidance counselor was personally calling the parents of the immigrant youth to get them more involved in the schooling process. Still, it was someone’s responsibility to care for the loneliness and alienation that my teenage—and now adult—participants were expressing to me in my conversations with them. At this point in my journey, my concept of belongingness began to expand from the students to their teachers as well. I could see that when a teacher felt isolated and unhappy, her students would suffer.

Still, this intellectual turn brought confusion. By opening up my lens to the emotional lives of teachers, I began to lose my grasp on the ultimate focus off my project. Was my work only about students? Could I talk about how belongingness functioned in the overall ecosystem of the school without going so broad that I lost depth? Again, I sought the advice of good mentors. As I talked to with a mentor about my confusion and misdirection, she pushed me to move past my black and white thinking about belonging. I began to think about how I could stop assessing situations as belonging/non-belonging and move into seeing the shades of gray.

3. Integration

“Belonging is a double-edged sword, and an interaction between being an insider and outsider. Belonging isn’t hostile. One doesn’t usually belong and then take pleasure in purposefully keeping others from belonging—it just happens. Belonging is a warm comforter, a mood-altering drug that massages you until you are so warm and drowsy
that you forget that you were ever cold and awake...and that others still are” (Ethnographer’s Diary, May 4th, 2010).

On May 4th, 2010, the day I wrote the journal entry above, I forgot a student. I was facilitating a curricular intervention for a research activity; we were on the last day of the series of lessons and the students were making presentations of their work. I found myself occasionally slipping into Spanish as I facilitated the presentations, and then I forgot to call Anoush up to make his presentation. Anoush was a brand-new arrival from Iran who spoke little English. He was older than most of the students, already 18, and sat in the back of the room with his head down for most of his time in the classroom. In a later interview, he told me that he did not need the high school credits and had only come to school to try and make some American friends. When he realized that that was not going to happen, he gave up and waited out his time until the end of the school year.

Forgetting Anoush was a sharp realization for me; I had become a part of the ecosystem and was so cozily enmeshed in the bosom of the Spanish-speaking community that I forgot a kid on the periphery. It made me ponder the double-edged, slippery nature of belonging. I certainly did not belong completely—as an adult, a researcher, and a mediocre Spanish speaker. Yet, in certain ways I did belong, by virtue of having been with the group since September and my ability to speak in English and some Spanish. Being on the inside made me forget the outside. I now was able to see more clearly that it was not a matter of absolute belonging or not—but that belonging is a matter of participation in a community of practice and that, as such, belonging is based on relationships and actions.

At the time that I had this realization, I had begun studying the data analysis process with Dr. Fred Erickson. One of our assignments was to count types of occurrences: I counted
how many times different languages were used in the classroom, a project that eventually led to the fifth chapter of this dissertation. I was surprised by the results: bilingual (Spanish-English) interactions were much more prevalent than Spanish-only interactions. This led me to begin to understand that it was not a clear-cut matter of "speaking Spanish means you belong," but rather that all students (and the adults in the room) belonged through some interactions but not through others. Meaning, the Spanish-dominant students could not fully access the classroom interactions when they were being held in English and Spanish in the same way that the English-dominant (of whom there were two) students could not either.

With this new understanding, I pushed myself to reconsider what I have been seeing. In many ways, the students I spoke with were happy. They enjoyed the ESL class and adored their teacher, Ms. Patton. They felt that they belonged. Further, this shed light on the circles of belonging that I had begun to distinguish at the school; recently-arrived immigrant youth belonged in a different way than the second-generation children of immigrants; Spanish speakers (both first and second generation) belonged in a different way than minority speakers; and the entirety of the ESL program was a community of belonging that did not belong to the mainstream community. Seeing these circles helped deepen my thinking on belonging, and I realized being supportive also necessitates a nuanced critical lens: I could not be completely empathetic to those in charge, thus excusing their responsibility in the matter. My research participants’ participation in an ESL program carried certain implications, namely, that they would not be prepared for college coursework and eventual societal integration in the same way that an A.P. program, for example, prepares other students. Awareness of this fact demands that adults take responsibility and make change.
Integrating my thinking and seeing the complexity of belongingness for recent-arrival immigrant youth continues to be fraught with challenge. I am still struggling to consider reporting findings in ways that both honors my participants’ voices—their challenges, fears and hopes— in a way that does not vilify their teachers. Reporting on the teachers' perceptions of their immigrant students has since been a challenging task. Again, while I remain critical, I must balance this with understanding the cultural scripts of the teachers, and find a way to capture each group's perspective without vilifying one and romancing the other.

People can be less generous in lean times, yet I am left with questions: does this excuse, or empathetically explain, the internalized racism and frustration that the teachers carried and that ultimately conditioned the school culture? In a similar vein, is the lack of training that the teachers received an excuse, or empathetic explanation for their "groaning" at the thought of teaching an ESL class (as one teacher described them as doing)? Or, for the sake of writing a social justice narrative about the experiences of youth, do I hold these adults sternly accountable, for indeed someone needs to be accountable for climates of discrimination, and at every level (teachers, administration, district, state) there are empathetic explanations. I move back and forth between these positions in my writing.
Data Analysis and Limitations of the Study

It seems to me that ethnographers face a tremendous challenge in the fractured, fragmented, tormented and chaotic communities of this 21st century world-- the challenge of helping people develop social and educational policies to re-build meaningful and supportive schools and communities. Such a challenge requires a new stance for ethnographers, one which mandates at least a concern with solving problems, which may require activism, and certainly requires liaison with policy-makers (LeCompte, 2002, p. 296).

I conclude this section on methods with a brief description of my process of analysis, and the reporting on data to the subjects of my research.

Overall, the analytical process I followed corresponded to Fred Erickson's simple yet rich method of analysis: read and reread fieldnotes and interview transcripts, make assertions, comb through the data to support or refute the assertion, and write up vignettes (Lectures, Spring 2010). There were several points during analysis when the road was foggy and I needed to take a visual approach to coding and analyzing. For guidance in this, I used Schensul et. al's work on operalization, and created hand-drawn classification models of kinds of things that showed relationships between abstract patterns and concrete actions that I could count in my fieldnotes (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Schensul et. al's model of operationalization calls for the analyst to organize information into hierarchical taxonomies through either an inductive or deductive process; I found it difficult to start either from conceptual or grounded positions and so I started in the middle. Meaning, I generally started with the midpoint of the hierarchical model and worked from that midpoint, disaggregating down to smaller component parts, and up to larger levels of conceptualization. This midpoint analysis worked well and allowed me to look for consistency, update, and cross-reference the counts of things that I was doing. While I worked in this way, moving between conceptual
assertions (e.g., teachers do not want to work with ESL kids) and counts of actions, beliefs, and values, I looked for frequency vs. uniqueness of phenomena and systematic practices.

Limitations of the study: One of the biggest losses of this dissertation is that it remains a naturalistic study that has not been used to provide feedback to Faulkner High School’s teachers in a way that would support their practice. Part of this is because two out of the three ESL teachers with whom I worked closely, and who I believe would have been interested in hearing results after they were written up, left Faulkner High School the year after data collection was completed. As I progressed through the data analysis process, I wrote to the principal and offered her several different PD sessions that I believed would have been helpful for the teachers. She never responded. The assistant principal enthusiastically thanked me, but we were unable to actually schedule anything. The following year, the guidance counselor that I had spent time with was promoted to assistant principal (and the assistant principal became the principal of the school); we were able to arrange my attendance as an ESL meeting. Unfortunately, I was given 10 minutes to present on "motivation." When I answered a teacher’s question about grading EL-designated students, I was told that my answer was inconsistent with the policies of the district. Whether purposefully or because life is busy (probably the latter), I was not invited back.

I was trained to believe that research is meant for dissemination in various forums, including academic and practitioner. I still hope that this data can be helpful to a community of teachers and thinkers some day. I did not set out to do a critical ethnographic project, rather, my work is naturalistic with a social justice hopefulness about it. Still, I believe thoroughly in the adage that the researcher should leave a community better off than it was before the
researcher came into the picture; thus, I will continue to seek out ways to disseminate this work in school communities at large through political and policy-oriented writing.

With the flaws and small achievements of this work outlined in detail, I now turn to the analytical results of the study described here. In the following chapters, the everyday lives of teachers and youth are presented in order to explore the structure of belonging in a multiethnic, multilingual high school community.
CHAPTER FOUR
The Architecture of Belonging: How teachers' beliefs about low motivation and low status constructed the marginalization of immigrant youth

All architecture is shelter, all great architecture is the design of space that contains, cuddles, exalts, or stimulates the persons in that space. --Phillip Johnson

If a building is to meet the needs of all the people, the architect must look for some common ground of understanding and experience... We must learn to understand humanity better so that we can create an environment that is more beneficial to people, more rewarding, more pleasant to experience. --John Portman

Introduction

As the epigrams to this chapter intimate, architecture is more than a set of walls that create the space we inhabit. Likewise, community is more than the people who surround us. Rather, community—like architecture—can exalt and benefit the people who are a part of it, or do the opposite. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the participants at Faulkner High school, including teachers, students, immigrants, and long-term residents, perceived, negotiated and practiced community. Institutions, as we are told in theories of community, often have overlapping constellations of communities of practice. These constellations of communities of practice may have members in common, related enterprises, shared historical roots, and proximity, but they can also be conflictual and compete for the same resources (Wenger, 1998). Faulkner High School had communities of practices that were formally

designated (i.e., as departments like the ESL department), and those that formed organically. I have briefly sketched out what these communities of practice looked like in Figure 10.

![Figure 10: General schematic of the organization of Faulkner High School. Immigrant students populated both the general education and ESL programs. Some teachers worked only in one or the other program, while some worked in both programs.](image)

EL-designated students had a community of practice oriented around cultural sharing and the ways in which they supported each others’ learning, as will be described further in the next chapter. At Faulkner High School, educational practices and policies as regarded the EL-designated students were contested within and among communities of practice. General education teachers, ESL teachers and administrators had varying ideas about the value of the ESL program, and much of their perceptions were rooted in the political economy and cultural landscape of Southern California of the early 21st century. Power was also inherent to the constellations of communities of practice. As Torres writes, education is often a contested terrain, where:

Educational practices and policies emerge as a convoluted mixture where teachers and students’ resistance, emancipatory practices, bureaucratic behavior, and the ideological
norms all intersect in different ways, at different times, and for different purposes (Torres, 2009, p. 5).

In the rest of this chapter, I explore the contested terrain at work at the school site where this study took place, and looked at how EL-designated students were perceived, taught, and valued. This terrain, this *architecture*, produced a multicultural politics of belonging among constellations of communities of practice.

**Faulkner High School: A contested terrain**

There were several perspectives on the education of the immigrant students, the most extreme of which was that the youth were a problematic presence at the school. In turn, the youth felt that they were unwanted, creating alternative forms of community to mitigate their exclusion in the larger school setting. Staff were vocal about their view of immigrant-youth-as-problems. After a staff meeting in the Spring of 2010, an angry teacher sent her administrator an email voicing her frustration over the meeting’s focus on the immigrant students. She wrote:

*Hey Barbara,*

I just wanted to apologize for leaving early; I was hot, sweaty, and tired of hearing the same thing over and over about this population of our school. Look, you've taught these students, you know what little support at home they are getting (and giving to us). Out of all of the ESL kids I’ve taught, I'd say only about 10% couldn't communicate in English, the others were too lazy to care. I’m not going to slow down my teaching for these kids, or back off from certain test questions... These kids need to be pushed more if anything. And if we are the only ones pushing them, we are in a lose/lose situation. I

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29 Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the “immigrant” youth and the “ESL” youth. “ESL” was the term used at the research site by teachers to mean those students in the English as a Second Language program; it is a problematic term for two reasons: first, it conflates the recent-arrival with the second generation language learner population, two populations who have different learning and social needs (as demonstrated elsewhere in this dissertation). Secondly, the term is reductive, and some prefer to refer to language learners as “emerging bilinguals” (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Ultimately, my focus is on time, culture, and change among “immigrants”. While also a problematic term, “immigrants” is used here to reflect the situation of those who are new to the United States and U.S. public schools.
hope the future meetings won't be all about being "cheerleaders" or "pumping" these kids up, I hope everyone is doing that for all of their classes. In my opinion, most of these students shouldn't be getting extra attention, or rewarding them for their lack of giving a rat's ass. There are just so many other factors that come into play w/these kids. We could all be "teachers of the year" to these kids, and there would still be no change. Sorry, had to vent.

*Melissa*

When Barbara forwarded the email to me, she intimated that the teacher’s “conservative values” had something to do with her response. But the immigrant youth at Faulkner High School quietly determined the ways in which they desired their classrooms to function, pushing back on ways in which their power was undercut by larger social processes. During the same Spring, I interviewed a young woman who had moved to Los Angeles from Mexico three years prior. She said:

**Student:** We know that if we do something wrong, we have to correct it. In our culture—Latino culture, and other cultures too, we know that if we don’t know something we have to help each other out. If we have normal classes they will say—find it on your own. You are stupid, what are you doing in this class....And they say, “You know what, why aren’t you putting your best effort in this.” They don’t even look at—"she is an immigrant student. We should give her patience because she doesn’t understand the subject or the content that we explain today.

**CBM:** You are doing twice as much work because you have to do the content work, and the language work. So you are working twice as hard.

**Student:** Ah, ha. And sometimes they are like, “Why don’t you do your homework?” It’s not because [we] are just bad, it’s because we have to look in the dictionary to look for how to explain the stuff. They don’t look at it as... we are an immigrant class and we cannot read or see as well as other people can, you know. They can go to ask their parents, “What does this stuff mean?” Oh, they explain this and that. We have to look in the dictionary because we don’t have parents that speak that much English.

**CBM:** You have to do twice the work.

**Student:** Some teachers doesn’t look at that. They just think—this guy doesn’t do the homework, time to put an F, you fail. (Focal Transcript, May 2010).
For the immigrant youth, many who told me about how they had suffered significant and painful ruptures in their familial relationships as a result of migration, the benign neglect that the school demonstrated towards them undermined their ability to belong, culturally integrate, and to learn. For them, protective and communitarian interactions whereby their relationships helped them to belong and to learn were intimately coupled with educational progress. The example of a young man named Anoush demonstrated the principles spoken about and demonstrated by the immigrant students’ community of practice.

Anoush arrived at Faulkner late in the school year. He was from Iran, and he spoke little English. He was also in the 12th grade, a fact that presented challenges to his teachers and the guidance counselor who were concerned about how to get him the credits he needed to graduate. During class, some of the other immigrant students went out of their way to try to help him. In the following example, Juan Carlos intervened his behalf.

Anoush had pulled out his electronic translator and looked at it with Juan Carlos. Anoush tried to explain something from the translator with some difficulty. Juan Carlos left him and approached Jennifer Patton, who was back behind her desk. “Ms. Patton, does Anoush have to do this?” “I would like him to do this with you, or maybe with the instructional aide,” she replied. She continued: “Maybe he could just do auxiliary verbs instead of the past tense?” Anoush spoke up and directed a question to Juan Carlos: “I take home?” Juan Carlos turned and delivered the question to Jennifer, “Can he take it home? Maybe his dad can help him?” “Yes,” Jennifer gave him permission. Juan Carlos turned to Anoush, “You can take it home. Tonight. Bring it tomorrow” (Fieldnotes, April 22, 2010).

In this interaction, Juan Carlos positioned himself, and was positioned by the teacher, as someone qualified to direct Anoush’s learning. Indeed, his direction extended beyond that of beyond that of translator to that of advocate. The teacher’s comment that she would like Anoush to work with either Juan Carlos, a student, or the instructional aide, a paid adult,
demonstrates how youth can take on cultural work that is often unrecognized as work by traditional institutional authorities (Orellana, 2009). Over the year, the immigrant youth had formed a community within their classroom, and within the ESL program as a whole. Their support of each other was palpable. Juan Carlos worked with Anoush at length:

Then, Juan Carlos turned to Anoush: “Hey! Hey!” He explained to him their task. Anoush didn’t understand, so Juan Carlos opened up Anoush’s folder, which was lying on his desk, and searched it. He went through a large stack of paper sandwiched into the folder before pulling out a worksheet. He looked at it closely and then grabbed a pencil and wrote:

He
She
It

Then, Juan Carlos muttered to himself, “Oh no, no. Past tense. Was. Was.” He demonstrated how to navigate the worksheet for Anoush—taking the subject and turning it into a pronoun, then pairing it with the appropriate verb tense. Anoush went through the worksheet, occasionally referring to Juan Carlos’ notes. Juan Carlos stood quietly next to him, occasionally pointing at something or correcting. Anoush hesitantly guessed a couple of past tense verbs aloud. He got several right, then stumbled over a pluralization. He picked up speed after about a third of the worksheet. (Fieldnotes, April 22, 2010).

In this vignette, Juan Carlos supported and facilitated Anoush’s learning with precision. The three strongest students in the observed class were most active in their support of the other students (by virtue of being bilingual and more advanced in their coursework). But the emerging students contributed as well. For example, later in the class described above, a young woman from Thailand who struggled with English approached Anoush to offer him help. In their interviews, the immigrant youth routinely expressed their enjoyment of the community of practice that had informally emerged in the ESL program—a community and sense of belonging that they had created for themselves, and in which their teachers were eventually happy to participate. Throughout my interviews with the youth, the immigrant adolescents expressed
their frustration that they were not being helped to learn, and also expressed their appreciation of the ways in which relationships facilitated community and learning for them. As a young Thai woman put it:

The coach, very nice, helped me to talk to friends on the tennis team. He got the friend to come to me, ok, talking, talking. [But] I am lonely. Some of the teachers don’t care about the students. The teachers care about the good students, but they don’t care about the bad students. Teachers should help by having us talk more. Help more students like me. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Above, Srinak demonstrated her deep appreciation of the way her coach helped her form peer relationships, and mourned the way that some teachers only cared about students who performed well academically. Still other students noted particular teachers who took time out of their schedules to facilitate their learning.

Finally, students also related how other students were integral to their learning and school community involvement.

I have a friend Naaz, you know Naaz? Sometimes she comes to my house and I practice English with her... she helps me. Is good for me. (Student Interview, June 2010).
The interview excerpt above is particularly poignant because it documents a budding friendship between two similarly disaffected young women. Both Naaz and Ana Paula had experienced years of family separation—from their mothers—and were disengaged at school. Despite language barriers, these two young women found each other and forged a relationship. One can only wonder how the language of the heart enabled these girls to understand each other despite cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences.

Clearly emerging throughout the quoted material, youth defined belonging as *belonging to others*, a relational form of belonging that encompassed cultural and social belonging and took place in the context of academic learning. For the EL-designated students, a central practice in their community was forging relationships of support with each other. For the recent arrival youth, relationships were a deep source of capital for them. Because of their relationships, they were able to learn, play, succeed, and make friends. Belonging to a community of supportive peers and adults was a value that immigrant youth emphasized at school. Repeatedly, immigrant youth demonstrated that their aspirations, and their needs, could be, and were met by coaches, their families, teachers, and peers. The immigrant youth focused on how the relationships that they formed with other adults and other students benefitted them emotionally and academically.

*  

How the EL-designated students practiced and negotiated their community contrasted sharply with the way that they were positioned by adults at Faulkner High School. The excerpts above are emblematic of the conflict present at Faulkner High School during the 2009-2010 academic school year. Within the teaching culture at Faulkner High School, a cultural schema was at work that understood teaching immigrant youth as undesirable, and furthered
cemented by a typology of undesirability. This typology was organized around ethnicity, culture, language, and generational status, and explained (by the teachers) through behavioral patterns.

The year this research was conducted, the school administration was heavily engaged in reforming the program responsible for the immigrant youth, and had placed emphasis on the teachers’ role in the youth’s development. Their reform activities were introduced in a context whereby EL-designated students were routinely described in the research literature as “overlooked and underserved” in U.S. high schools, and the education of Latino students (38% of the population at Faulkner High School) was described as in “crisis” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). The email of the teacher who I call here "Melissa", quoted at the beginning of this chapter, represented the feelings of many of the teachers who did not want to teach the immigrant students. The majority of teachers at Faulkner High School did not want to teach immigrant youth in the ESL program. The youth were considered unmotivated and challenging, and the assignment was viewed as thankless work that took too much preparation and yielded too little reward. To be fair to the teachers, teaching content and language takes tremendous creative and intellectual preparation (Gándara, et al., 2005), particularly now, when test scores are routinely published in newspapers as a way to judge the abilities of a teacher. As one of the Science teachers told me with more than a hint of exhaustion in his voice:

It’s hard to give any student, even the immigrant students, extra attention. I have 150 students across five classes—I have to teach to the middle and hope that ones who need extra help seek me out (Fieldnotes, January 29, 2010).

Regardless, the ESL youths’ inability to pass state test scores was taken as proof of their lack of motivation. In turn, their teachers' frustration manifested in ethnicized blaming of the students.
Many immigrant youth, on the other hand, were acutely aware of their liminality in the esteem of their community. Interviews and a year’s worth of fieldnotes revealed how challenging it was for them to form productive, collegial relationships with other students and even teachers. Moreover, as demonstrated by the line, “[In] Latino culture, and other cultures too, we know that if we don’t know something we have to help each other out” (see interview above), the issue of "culture" became central in the struggle to understand each other—immigrant youth were accused of not participating in the culture of the school, whereas youth perceived that the values of their immigrant cultures placed emphasis on relationships. In this way, (1) teaching and learning, and (2) community interaction and belonging became decoupled at Faulkner High School. In other words, unlike what we have seen in the literature review on the ways in which belonging facilitates learning, members of Faulkner's school community did not seem to place importance on belonging and academics as integrally intertwined components of a successful program. Moreover, because the friction between academic achievement and community interaction remained unresolved in the public sphere of the school, the immigrant youth experienced a fragile sense of belongingness in the larger school setting.

In this chapter, I explore the perceptions, beliefs, and goals of teachers, counselors, administrators, and students at Faulkner High School, a bundle of subjective experiences that I term here cultural models. A cultural model is a presupposed, taken-for-granted cultural schema of an aspect of social life that is widely shared (although not to the exclusion of alternative models) by members of a community. Cultural models have an enormous role in participants’ understanding of that community (Quinn & Holland, 1987). While cultural models are not sole determinants of behavior, these shared meanings do influence behavior in
powerful and complex ways (Quinn & Holland, 1987). I argue here that the teachers’ communities of practice at Faulkner High School formed cultural models that influenced how teachers positioned EL-designated students. That positioning then shaped how youth were able to experience a sense of belonging, becoming an architecture that undergirded the social organization of Faulkner High School. Power and knowledge threaded through this architecture.

As Van Langenhove and Harreacute explain:

One can position oneself or be positioned as... powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on... Positioned as dependent, one’s cry of pain is hearable as a plea for help. But positioned as dominant, a similar cry can be heard as a protest or even as a reprimand. It can easily be seen that the social force of an action and the position of the actor and interactors mutually determine one another. (1999, p. 17).

The teachers' cultural model was formed, maintained, and circulated by talk, beliefs, and ideologies, or discourse. Foucault’s work has shown us how discourse is regularized and institutionalized, leading it to be perceived as “science” (1969). As such, this chapter concerns the cultural models at work at Faulkner High School, their circulation through discourse, and the contestations that occurred in and among the teachers’ constellations of communities of practice.

**The architectures of visibility and invisibility.**

Toward the end of the school year, Faulkner High School held a school assembly. Hundreds of students poured out of their third period class and lined up outside of the auditorium. An ESL teacher greeted me from her place in the line-up; behind her, the immigrant students who made up her class seemed too quiet and pale against the boisterous color of the other (non-immigrant) classes of students. The rally took place in the yawning
school auditorium, a concrete hall that bore the unfortunate stamp of 1970s school architecture. The assembly was an odd amalgamation of traditional high school spirit and current neoliberal school policies. The student body, led by teachers, held a rally to introduce the high-stakes state test that would be administered later that month, and urged students to perform well, indeed, to compete and to win.

In an effort to raise students’ spirits and introduce a united competitive front, the audience, led by student representatives on-stage, erupted into cheers and boos when the neighboring high schools scores were projected onto the onstage screen. A wide panoply of topics were covered: student leaders were introduced, several seniors shared where they would be attending college, and the cast of *Pippin* promoted the theatre performance that would be coming out later that month. A physics teacher whispered to me disapprovingly that the entire thing was a “farce” and that it was “crazy” to have a pep rally for a test. But I noted something different. In addition to the bizarre neoliberal logic that could lead one to instigate a pep rally for an exam, I noted the invisibility of the immigrant youth in the public forum of the high school. At this rally, like at other school-wide events I had attended, the recently arrived immigrant youth, representing around 9 to 10% of the total school body, were publicly absent. None of immigrant youth at the school took the stage to represent a faction of the school. None of them were in the school play. None of them were in the band that played. None of them were represented in the spectrum of 12th graders who introduced where they would be attending college.

It was not unusual that the immigrant youth were invisible at the pep rally. Their absence was notable in afterschool activities, sports, and the school newspaper as well. An ESL teacher, Ashley Griggs, noted that few teachers in the general education program even knew
who their immigrant students were. In the glass presentation box that sat in the front entry of
the school, revolving topics celebrated the identities of various sub-groups: Americans who are
also homosexual, African-Americans, etc. The accomplishments of immigrant Americans,
despite the furor around them in the larger “public square” of Southern California and the
United States, were never displayed. The lack of attention to immigrant cultural heritage at
the school was probably an appropriation of the absence of immigrant history in the cultural
heritage of Southern California, a topic that will be discussed later in this chapter. The
invisibility of the immigrant youth in the public life of Faulkner High School reflected the deep
uneasiness and sense of struggle at the heart of the relationships between immigrant youth
and their teachers.

The coalescence of the demands enacted through the yearly state and national tests
and the increasing numbers of immigrant youth who had complex and unfamiliar combinations
of academic, linguistic, social, cultural, and emotional needs could be crippling for many schools.
High schools nationally struggled to cope with some cheating on their tests; for example, in
Texas, more than 50,000 cases of cheating on the state exam were reported, and in Atlanta,
Georgia, 178 educators, including 38 principals, were questioned about cheating on state tests.
Researchers have described the situation nationally, writing:

We have no national policies for helping young immigrants who arrive during middle
and high school years. Our new, expanded federal education standards seem blind to
the existence of newcomer youth... Instead, we rely on an unreasonable faith that once
young immigrants cross the border, the logic of the market will work magically to
transform them into proud, loyal, and productive citizens. Or perhaps if we ignore them,

At Faulkner High School, too, the recent arrival, immigrant youth were invisible and ignored in
the public sphere, a painful exclusion that was noted by many youth in interviews. Yet,
concurrently, a focus on reforming the ESL program (initiated by the administration because of the low test scores of those same youth) had paradoxically placed the immigrant youth in the school’s spotlight. In that spotlight, youth were not framed as contributors to school academics or culture despite the good intentions of the administration who demonstrated genuine caring for the welfare of their students. Rather, the metamorphosis of the youth from invisible to visible occurred under an umbrella discourse that framed immigrant-youth-as-problems.

The cultural models of the ESL teachers

The ESL teachers with whom I spoke regularly, Jennifer Patton, Mollie Griggs, and Stacey Stradder, all believed that the majority of the other teachers did not want to teach immigrant students. Each teacher was fairly new—two were in their first year at the high school, and the other two had been teaching for less than five years, as detailed in Table 4 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Native Language/ bilingual?</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Years teaching at Faulkner High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Patton</td>
<td>Euro-American</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollie Griggs</td>
<td>Euro-American</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey Stradder</td>
<td>Euro-American</td>
<td>English/ no</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Profiles of the ESL teachers who participated in this study

It was the ESL teachers' shared belief that they had been given the task of teaching the immigrant youth because tenured and senior teachers didn't want it. Still, despite their frustration with this, all three teachers strongly stated that they enjoyed and wanted to work with the immigrant youth.

The other teachers, many of whom did teach level 4 or R-FEP immigrant youth in their classes (Redesignated as Fluent English Proficient and mainstreamed in general education
coursework\textsuperscript{30}, did not want to work in the ESL program with youth who were levels 1, 2, and 3.

On an ethnographic questionnaire distributed mid-way through this research project, teachers (n=68) reported an average of eight years spent teaching immigrant youth; collectively, the teachers’ teaching experience ranged from one year to 28 years in the classroom. Of the teachers (both general education and ESL) to whom I distributed the ethnographic questionnaire, 40 teachers perceived teaching the EL-designated students as \textit{more} challenging than teaching native English speakers, and 10 teachers perceived teaching EL-designated students as \textit{the same or easier} than teaching native English speakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>EL-designated students are \textit{more challenging} to teach than English-only students</th>
<th>EL-designated students are \textit{similarly challenging or easier} to teach than English-only students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 8</td>
<td>13 teachers</td>
<td>4 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 7</td>
<td>27 teachers</td>
<td>6 teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 teachers</td>
<td>10 teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Perception of the difficulty of teaching EL-designated students, by years teaching

Finding the students challenging is not the same as \textit{not} wanting to teach them (indeed, teaching content and language at the same time demands higher-order teaching skills and deep knowledge discussed earlier). Table 5 represents findings from the corpus of data analyzed for this chapter (teacher ethnographic questionnaire data open-ended response items, observation fieldnotes, and interview transcripts), which demonstrated the following: despite contact with the immigrant youth, and time to learn how to work best with the youth, the task of teaching EL-designated students was considered “frustrating,” “challenging,” and “overwhelming” by

\textsuperscript{30} Redesignation did not mean that the youth no longer struggled with English language acquisition. Redesignation simply means that youth were able to test out of their ESL status. Recently-arrived youth especially still needed language support; this statement is based both their own reports, and research. This evidence points to the need to educate in-service mainstream teachers in second language acquisition theory and methods.
most of the general education teachers. As shown in Table 5, the teachers’ opinions were not
differentiated by length of teaching experience, contrary to the opinions of the ESL staff, who
believed that it was the older teachers who demanded classes without immigrant students in
them. Spending more time on learning how to teach did not make teaching EL-designated
students seem less challenging, and neither did being fresh out of a teaching program with new,
enthusiastic ideas. When I asked the teachers who should be responsible for teaching the
immigrant students, the ethnographic questionnaire respondents reported that immigrant
students came under the purview of ESL teachers.

![Figure 11: Breakdown of teacher perceptions for EL-designated student support](image)

Question #9: ESL immigrant students are best helped by:

- Both mainstream and ESL teachers
- ESL teachers ONLY

Over half of the respondents (a mix of mostly general education and a few ESL teachers)
for this question felt that ESL teachers “best help” immigrant youth. The table above is
substantiated by other researchers who have found that content area teachers and support
staff (e.g., counselors and librarians) who presume that immigrant youth are the responsibility
of specialized staff, function as autonomous “gatekeepers” of complex information systems
(Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). ESL teachers teach across grade level and multiple content areas
and need to bridge the gap between immigrant youth and support staff, factors that increase
the teachers’ sense of isolation and poor self-efficacy.
Both Jennifer and Mollie were fiercely protective of their students, partly attributable to the chilly attitude of their colleagues. Jennifer Patton was cynical about the willingness of the other teachers to work with EL-designated students; she thought that if the school could choose not to have EL-designated students, that some people would rather not have them. But, she protested, it was because they did not know what a great experience it was to work with the ESL kids:

Classes are small and you can laugh with the kids...if teachers could see what they could learn from these kids every day, no way would anyone laugh at them. They would respect them even more. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Indeed, small classes in a school where teachers had total teaching loads of 150 students were a rarity, and covetable; one might imagine that this would have increased the attractiveness of teaching in the ESL program. This was not the case. Mollie Griggs concurred with Jennifer that teaching the immigrant students was enjoyable, and also felt a strong sense of protectiveness towards the youth.

I talk to my husband and I tell him... I feel like they make me feel motherly, you know, maybe because I know they are shoved by the wayside and there are so many teachers who are like, “Oh my god I don’t want to teach ESL.” It’s like wow, you know, somebody needs to take them in and care.... so it’s just like—I was never a cheerleader, but I think inside there is a cheerleader. And that comes out. I get emotional, it’s sad. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

It is worth it here to compare the perceptions of the ESL teachers to a content area teacher who had experience working in the ESL program. Patty Ngo, a science teacher who the administration considered as one of the best teachers at the school, had taught an ESL- Science class during the 2008-2009 school year. Patty was considered a success and offered the class for the 2009-2010 school year. She refused the assignment: like her ESL counterparts, Patty was deeply concerned about how her immigrant students’ test scores would reflect on her.
However, she had several recently-arrived students in her general education science class who were placed in the class because of scheduling conflicts. At the urging of her supporting teacher, who had also worked with ESL-Science teacher and found the academic rigor of the class severely lacking, Patty opted to keep the recent arrival youth in her general education class in order to protect them. In her end of the year interview, she stated that teaching ESL could be creative “because you learn to break things down more” (Teacher Interview, May 2010). Still, she mostly thought that teaching ESL youth was undesirable, overwhelming, and difficult. Among other reasons, Patty noted that that she needed more paid preparation time (“prep”) to effectively plan for her ESL courses, and that grading was difficult because of the imbalance in the “output” by the youth.

I know in terms of just output, again there was just like students who were getting huge scores and students that really didn’t care. So it’s really hard to balance; you can’t really grade on a curve at that point because high kids are still going to get a high score anyway. So that was a difficult thing. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

The teacher’s use of the word “output” indexed the political economy at work in Southern California and throughout the United States at the time of this writing. The language that Patty used, and particularly the word "output," indexed the increasing subjecting of schools to market logic, whereby students are consumers/ producers rather than democratic citizens. At the time this study was conducted, the language of accountability had insidiously infected schools nation-wide, and Faulkner High School was no exception. Patty’s perspective, 

32 Faulkner, like many schools, was affected by the crisis of accountability that had revolutionized the U.S. educational system since the passing of NCLB in 2002, as will be discussed at length later in this chapter. This crisis owed itself to more than a simple desire to understand and assess students; rather, the neoliberal economy of the 30 or so decades prior to the passing of NCLB had ultimately created an ecology wherein accountability meant high-stakes, punitive testing in schools, and the scapegoating of teachers who were unable to meet those scores. Neoliberalism is characterized as the promotion of open markets and free trade, the reduction of the public sector, and the decrease of state intervention in the economy and the deregulation of markets (Torres, 2009). Here, I
as voiced above, was representative of other general education teachers, for whom teaching the immigrant youth was an undesirable teaching assignment because of the academic “output” and corresponding motivation of the students. It was a perspective that deeply frustrated the ESL teachers who perceived that their colleagues equated students with test scores. With deep emotion (that is difficult to capture in the dry words of this text), Jennifer conveyed her frustration with the other teachers: “It’s not all about the tests, it's about the relationships too!” (Teacher Interview, May 2010). Concurrently, Jennifer expressed the stress she was experiencing because of the administration’s expectation that she would raise the EL-designated students’ test scores.

Faulkner High School had been recognized as a California Distinguished School, yet the school’s overall test scores had been affected by their immigrant student population who had failed three years of state tests and not met federal targets in 2008-2009 (the year before I conducted my ethnographic study). From August 2009 to May 2011, I spoke with teachers, administrators, and a guidance counselor to elicit their perceptions, beliefs, and view of immigrant youth. I asked broad, open-ended questions about the teachers’ struggles and their aspirations for their EL-designated students (e.g., “What was your goal for this academic year?”).

After data was coded and grouped into themes, the motivation of the EL-designated students emerged as the primary concern of all of the teachers, both ESL and general education.

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theorize that the political economy was a natural aspect of the conflict between communities of practice at Faulkner High School.
Discourses at Faulkner High School, 2009-2011. Discourses were ascertained through counts of individual statements made by teachers, which were then grouped and distilled into the three categories.

Motivation was the primary discourse among all teachers. ESL teachers were most concerned with pedagogy (teaching and learning); this included perceptions about whether an ESL teaching assignment was challenging or enjoyable. Data representing the (mostly) general education teachers show that they were primarily concerned with the culture of the EL-designated students after their concern with motivation. Their concern with culture had a predominantly negative slant, while the discussion of culture that occurred among ESL teachers was predominantly positive or neutral. Now, I turn to a deeper analysis of each of the discourses at play within the teachers’ communities of practice, examining the general education teachers first and the ESL teachers in the following section, and analyze the ways in
which their cultural models were influenced by the larger political economy and cultural landscape of Southern California.

**The Discourse of Motivation**

As Figure 12 demonstrates, the Faulkner High School teachers' primary discourse was about the depth of the immigrant youth's motivation. Over and over again, the EL-designated students were described as unmotivated and apathetic to the extent that “motivation” became a disconnected and sliding signifier that no longer carried meaning. In fact, it was difficult to ascertain what exactly the teachers' meant by motivation, and whether they were concerned with motivation as it pertained to poor student behavior, lack of interest, or academic ability.

During a staff professional development (PD) session, a White male teacher who appeared to be in his mid-thirties vocalized popular perceptions when he said: “I think the problem is student apathy. They [EL-designated students] don’t do their homework. And they don’t use the support system in place” (Fieldnotes, January 22, 2010). This view was repeated with frequency throughout the PD session and elsewhere.

For most of the teachers, students’ motivation, or lack thereof, was considered *the* issue pertinent to teaching language minority youth. As science teacher Patty Ngo reported:

Unfortunately a lot of people *groan* when they get that class like it’s not a class that’s promoted or -- you know what I mean but-- it is a frustrating group. It was like “come on,” like “do this.” And you know, before I took the class on, they [the other teachers] were telling me make sure you do all your work in class because the students won’t do it at home, maybe because of parents, maybe because they just aren’t -- they have been taught to make sure to -- you know, to succeed you need to put in that effort. So it’s just difficult. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).
Patty reported that many of her colleagues found EL-designated students frustrating to teach. She intimated that parents may have contributed to their children’s lack of motivation by not pushing them hard enough at home. Additionally, she related that teachers felt they had to put more effort into the class to keep kids motivated.

Yet for other teachers, mostly ESL teachers and non-White minority teachers, motivation was not the primary concern. As I mention elsewhere, motivation became a sliding signifier. Some teachers tried to explain the causes for immigrant students’ lack of motivation, or disagreed with the prevalent view entirely. During a conversation with the ESL coordinator for the middle school, it was explained to me that the EL-designated students had spent years together in the same classes. This was felt to “create problems in the community” because the students had become “complacent” (Fieldnotes, September 25, 2009). Ashley Griggs viewed the issue of EL-designated students’ motivation as an issue pertinent to school structure. She called the students “chatty” and viewed it as natural teenage behavior:

They [the teachers] blame it on the fact that these students have just been together all their lives and they are pals, like there is camaraderie…. but I also hear honors teachers say, "The reason my honors classes are so chatty is because they have been together this entire time." (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Some instructors blamed their colleagues’ expectations and poor teaching for the students “lack of motivation.” One young woman (who was part of a university program who paired graduate students with teachers to boost content) explicated that all of the students had the potential to be unmotivated, regardless of ESL status or not:

When you don’t have any expectation of them at all, when you expect them to be dumbasses, of course they are going to be dumbasses, right? I mean that was astounding to me. I'm like, you know, don’t you have any sort of expectation for these students at all? There was another teacher that would always assume that period six was going to be just awful, and they were. And I actually I worked with this teacher who said, “My
period four is terrible.” So I took over period four and I taught it, and they were perfect. They were little angels. And she would get so angry at this. (Teaching Fellow Interview, February 2011).

The teaching fellow’s narrative reveals the layers of blame that can accumulate among members of the high school community. On the one hand, the teaching fellow perceived that youth responded behaviorally to the kinds of expectations and curriculum that were presented to them. On the other hand, her overall stance on the lack of capability in all but one of the teachers in the department she worked (elsewhere in the interview, she stated that the majority of the teachers should be fired and replaced) could have been influenced by the insistent rhetoric of contemporary mediascapes that teachers are to blame for the failures of public schooling—an issue that will be addressed more closely during my discussion of the second cultural model on teaching and learning. The teaching fellow’s interview, when considered in light of other perceptions produced at the school, tells the story of a high school under siege. Teachers blamed students, teachers blamed other teachers, and everyone blamed testing—except for the administration. The administration took the stance that testing was appropriate and caused healthy competition because no real punitive measures were attached to the results of testing. The thick layers of blame present among actors suggest that the school community sought explanations for “harmful events” (Alicke, Buckingham, Zell, & Davis, 2008), which I will elaborate on briefly here.

In the psychology of blame, people seek attributional explanations for harmful events (such as the failure of a group of students which could put the school’s standing in jeopardy) in order to avoid being victimized by the event, and to seek explanations in order to mitigate emotional reactions to a sufferers’-- in this case the immigrant youths’-- misfortune (Alicke et al., 2008). This seeking entails judging how much control a person or group of people have
over the harmful event (such as how motivated or unmotivated the immigrant youth were). Observers assign blame according to the amount of control they believe the perpetrator has over his or her actions (Alicke et al., 2008). In this case, teachers blamed other teachers or students according to their understanding of what they believed teachers and students should be able to do. A lack of understanding of around how teachers and students learn can contribute to blame. Furthermore, the hyper-individualistic thread in U.S. moral and legal traditions means that observers are primed to expect actors to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” and face challenges successfully, regardless of how much they are capable of or know. At the school, a pattern of blaming resulted in the teachers debating heavily about who among the students in the ESL program were motivated and who were not. While the lines were often blurred, teachers positioned the U.S. born children of immigrants (who were referred to as “lifers” because they had been in the ESL program since grade school) were unmotivated, and positioned the recently arrived immigrants as motivated (but with qualifiers).

The positioning and hierarchicalizing of immigrant youth at Faulkner High. At Faulkner High School, teachers positioned\(^{33}\) the quality of their students' motivation according to generation, language, and culture. Accordingly, a kind of pecking order emerged in which students who were new immigrants to the country (both Spanish speakers and non), or “recent arrivals,” were considered to be more motivated to learn than their second-generation Latino classmates. Secondly, non-Spanish speaking EL-designated students (e.g., Persian or Portuguese speaking) were generally considered more successful than those of Latino origin

\(^{33}\) Here, I use positioning to mean those ways in which actors’ speech and behavior is understood as relative to their role in a particular relationship.
and/ or Spanish speakers. As Keogan writes, “Giving order to our daily lives depends on an elaborate symbolic system based on distinctions...people can be a source of symbolic pollution if they linger too long in a “place” they do not “belong,” or if they appear as a threat of burden to the established order of things” (p. 13). At Faulkner High, the ESL youth were sorted by generation and language to determine who was a more, or less, a burden on the teaching staff.

The hierarchicalizing of immigrants at Faulkner High School indexed current processes in the U.S. where politicking and mediascapes have conflated the word “immigrant” with Mexican and “illegal.” As Hayes-Bautista writes on Latinos in California, “In the popular cultural model about immigrants, a wide net is often cast that mixes nearly all Latinos together, irrespective of whether they were born in the United States. Claims about the undesirability of undocumented immigrants can be quickly generalized to all Latino immigrants, then to all Latinos” (2004, p. 154). The chart below shows comments representative of the 45 written responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recent-arrival or 1st generation immigrant students</th>
<th>U.S. born, or 2nd generation immigrant students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “recent arrivals try harder”;</td>
<td>• “Second generation ESL students tend to be unmotivated and have poorer behavior than non-ESL students”;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “recent arrival immigrant students tend to be more motivated workers and better behaved”;</td>
<td>• “Second-generation ESL students, in my experience, are more apathetic than their recent arrival counterparts. They have been &amp; are comfortable in the system. There is little motivation for these students that I can see”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “recent arrivals, in our case are in general better behaved, more curious and successful.”</td>
<td>• “Lifers”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Descriptions of the quality of motivation of 1.5 and second-generation immigrant students

Despite the general perception of the recent arrival students as “motivated,” this view seemed to end once the student began to speak English fairly fluently; at this point, the student was

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34 One ethnographic questionnaire respondent wrote me a note to tell me that my questions were “biased”. It was unclear what was meant the teacher meant, unless asking about immigrant youth at all was unwelcomed.
positioned similarly to second-generation youth. This was made clear on the ethnographic questionnaire I distributed. A respondent corrected one of the questionnaire items, writing: “Students who have been here for over a year are no longer recent arrivals.”

Notable in the teachers’ responses was the lack of attention to academic issues. A few respondents mentioned language as the overall difference, but no respondents brought up concerns related to pedagogy. Hypothetically, these answers could have been: "First generation students require more support in acquiring both social and academic language, whereas second-generation students need more support to develop academic vocabulary." Or, "Recent arrival students are great in the classroom because they bring in globally diverse cultural perspectives towards math." Instead, motivation became the locus of blame, an element that teachers viewed to be within the control of the students. Ultimately, the struggle of the teachers was blamed on the students themselves, with motivation cited as a proxy for culture as the defining factor contributing to immigrant/ELL youths’ attitudes and failures. Few blamed themselves or understood the wider panoply of issues that affected their ability to serve the students. As one of the ESL teachers put it as she complained about the attitudes of her colleagues:

[I]t’s the school’s, the parents, and the community’s responsibility to take care of these kids. The group who is supposedly responsible keeps diminishing...gets down to the teacher, the students themselves. They are kids—they can’t be responsible for everything. (Teacher Interview, May, 2010).

Both quantitative and qualitative data bolsters my analysis of motivation as a smokescreen. Quantitative data showed that the students’ motivation was not statistically different based on generation, although it did vary by class. In a survey that asked 10th grade students (N=451) to self-report on their perception of their own motivation in Science class,
students demonstrated no significant difference between generations. We\textsuperscript{35} tested valid and reliable measures of motivation (persistence, self-efficacy, and interest), and the results were similar for each indicator. We chose to test science classes because several of my focal students had indicated that it was their preferred class, and because I was systematically observing a 10\textsuperscript{th} grade science class. Figure 13 shows the results for persistence, which are similar to the results for self-efficacy and interest:

![Figure 13: Students' self-reported persistence in Science class](image)

Results of the 1st generation (recently-arrived) are slightly higher because the sample size is much smaller. The error bars show that there is a 95% confidence interval.

In addition, qualitative data showed little variance between students’ “on-task” and “off-task” behavior in class according to generation\textsuperscript{36}. In a focus class of primarily recently arrived EL-designated students, visited two to three times a week for an academic year, students were “on task” 73% of observed instances and “off task” 27% of observed instances.

\textsuperscript{35} I conducted this portion of the study in conjunction with Dr. Michelle Riconscente of the University of Southern California.

\textsuperscript{36} I coded all of the classes I attended over the 2009-2010 year for “attention to assigned task” (for things like volunteering to answer a question) and “attention to other things” (for things like chatting with a friend about something other than the curriculum). I did not code any occurrence that needed interpretation, not matter how certain I was of how the student’s attention might have been directed (e.g., “staring at the clock”, where a student could either be interpreted to be waiting for class to end, or pondering a conceptual point in his head while his eyes wandered).
Likewise, in observed classes with second-generation ESL and general education students\textsuperscript{37}, youth were observed to be “on task” 77% of the time and “off task” 23% of the time. Like the quantitative analysis, fieldnotes showed that generation made little difference (i.e., five percent) to whether students were paying attention to their schoolwork or not\textsuperscript{38}. These counts of motivation oriented behavior are substantiated by a detail of classroom life:

Ms. Griggs was out at a training. In her place was a youngish looking gay man with crinkles around his eyes and a warm smile. A few young people began to trickle into the room. One girl greeted the sub, “Hey Mr. Smalls.” A girl wearing a hijab and a boy went straight to the bank of computers that ran along the inner wall. The rest of the students burst into the room in a flurry. Some went immediately to the back of the room and began to pull poster board and art materials from storage spaces, the nook where Ms. Griggs’ desk sat, and a tall cabinet in the back center of the room. Voices swirled above the din: “Project...,” “No, she said we aren’t doing them today,” “But they are due tomorrow!” Jay called out above the bustle that they weren’t working on their projects during class that day. He was met with scattered protest, “Well, we are going above and beyond,” declared one boy who stood ready with project materials in his arms. (Fieldnotes, January 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2010).

What is most notable in the excerpt above is the assertive protest of the student who declared himself and his classmates to be ready to “go above and beyond” (it is also interesting to note my own positionality in this instance: I observed and recorded this fieldnote before the issue of motivation was on my ethnographic radar). I have spent time discussing my own observance of the students’ motivation and the students’ self-reported data in order to demonstrate the following point: the teachers’ perceptions of the EL-designated students as unmotivated, and their resulting cultural model, caused a \textit{smokescreen effect} at Faulkner High School.

\textsuperscript{37} I visited general education classes frequently and sporadically, and formally observed (i.e, written up in fieldnotes and memoed) roughly 15 visits over the same academic year.

\textsuperscript{38} Grade level also made little difference.
The smokescreen effect of motivation at Faulkner High School

The *smokescreen effect* at Faulkner High School was produced by the disparity between the teachers’ perceptions and the students’ beliefs and actions. This striking disparity elucidates that, student level data notwithstanding, the teachers’ perceptions were that the students were not motivated; hence, the teachers’ claimed to know that the immigrant youth were academically and socially problematic. As such, our concern must be what was rendered invisible because of the teachers’ concern with motivation.

Teachers who struggle to motivate their students are in an empathizable position; indeed, who would want to work with someone who is unmotivated to learn? Their beliefs about motivation and language minority students did not mean that the teachers' were outwardly unkind to the immigrant youth (on the contrary, many of them were kind and expressed concern for many of their students well-being). Problematically, their beliefs distracted from other concerns that could have been more adequately addressed. Indeed, the overall organization of this distraction is that seeing immigrant students' strengths and reframing their questions can lead to effective social justice reform for the immigrant youth and their second-generation classmates in and out of the ESL program.

Conventional wisdom, such as an overriding concern for a group of students’ motivation, was formalized in the structure of schooling through the reification of knowledge. In other words, a cultural model was held as scientific proof of the students’ condition. Knowledge, as Foucault tells us, is the product of power (1969). At Faulkner High School, the intended reform couldn’t reverse the logic of the teachers’ thinking “it is not our responsibility to deal with unmotivated students.” How power has been inherent to the historical marginalization of
linguistic minorities and students of Color in schools in Southern California was not a topic broached in the public square of Faulkner High School. Indeed, issues of power were rendered invisible because teachers viewed their cultural models as true (or, scientific proof). As expressed by the author of the email introducing this chapter, “These kids need to be pushed more if anything. And if we are the only ones pushing them, we are in a lose/lose situation.” The teacher was misguided; I argue that the smokescreen effect was the lose/lose situation. By promoting motivation as conventional wisdom, the teachers lost the chance to foreground, in public dialogue, the other concerns they had. This foregrounding could have led to a re-envisioning of what it meant to be a school community in a year that saw the district and administration particularly intent on making the immigrant youth visible. As I argue throughout this chapter, teachers are the architects of belonging in school communities. Secondly, promoting motivation as the major concern positioned students in ways that hindered their ability to form a sense of belonging at school.

The teachers’ cultural model presupposed the abilities of ESL youth, immigrant or U.S. born, and helped to symbolically formalize Faulkner’s ESL program as a defacto system of segregation at the school. I venture to suggest that a student’s “motivation,” particularly when motivation is measured by aspects like finishing one’s homework or not goofing off in class, may feel more or less like a controllable variable; the global push and pull factors leading to increasing levels of immigration and corresponding cultural conflicts, on the other hand, may not. At Faulkner High School, therefore, motivation became a smokescreen for what few teachers wanted to broach—cultural belonging and integration between long-standing residents and immigrant communities.
The Discourse of Culture

Motivation was cited as a reason that the teachers’ did not want to work with the immigrant youth at Faulkner High school; thorough data analysis demonstrated that the teachers’ also viewed the immigrant youth as *culturally problematic*. This was in direct contrast to the perceptions of the ESL teachers: the ESL teachers never mentioned cultural conflicts, but did reflect on pedagogy and the lack of rigor available to their students.

Parental involvement was also highlighted as a challenge for teaching the language minority youth, another way that the lack of interest on the part of students was interpreted as “culture.” Unfortunately, most teachers characterized immigrant parents as uninvolved in their children’s education. This was a view expressed at different times through the year that I spent collecting data at Faulkner. The comments on parents ranged from a view that the parents were unable to help their children because of their own lack of knowledge, to the parents as more negligent than non-immigrant parents due to cultural factors. During the professional development session, only two teachers defended immigrant parents and marshaled socio-economics as a reason they were not as involved as U.S. born parents. The other comments were levied despite a flourishing immigrant parent program that had been created by a guidance counselor, who was also a doctoral candidate at a nearby college, earlier that year.

Some of the teachers’ concerns about culture provided valuable information about the kind of learning for teachers necessary in a highly diverse setting. For example, teachers voiced concerns about challenges of multiculturalism.

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The issue of “culture” was the second most frequently coded phenomenon across the entire data corpus related to the teachers’ perceptions of the student population. The teachers defined culture as inclusive of aspects such as “family” (home culture), “language” (lack thereof), cultural “differences,” cultural “integration,” and “values” (like belief in or response to school, or “American values”).
I came from New Mexico where they have a dual culture. Here, it is multicultural. I am not prepared. I don’t know how to help them. (Teacher Interview, January 2010).

This admittance could have been an excellent topic for a school-wide conversation on how to service diverse youth. Unfortunately, protected time to explore the opportunities multiculturalism affords was obscured by the larger cultural schema that problematized the Latino and immigrant youth. For example, one of the most respected teachers at the school had success with both the general education and ESL populations (but refused to teach the ESL class the second year it was offered to her) still perceived the Spanish speaking immigrant youth as not assimilating properly into the overall climate of shared diversity at the school.

I don’t think that [the immigrant students] are integrating well— I – you know, just even when the bell rings, I can see usually the ESL kids-- they tend to be the ones that are talking to each other... And you know, speaking Spanish means that you will connect to one kind, one type of one person only. You need to make sure you are including everyone else. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

The teacher’s description of not integrating was evocative of popular political opinions in the United States at the time this dissertation was written. Xenophobic conditions led to the creation of exclusionary laws in states like Arizona (with H.B. 1070) and Georgia (with H.B. 56 and others) and targeted Spanish speakers as not properly assimilating into the English speaking general education. The blame for not integrating, in the teacher’s eyes, was squarely on the shoulders of the students who were “only connecting to one kind of person” and “needed to make sure that everyone else was included.” In this instance, the teacher perceived that shared multicultural diversity was threatened by the school’s Spanish-speaking community. Her view speaks to the kind of tension about how to integrate communities into a larger whole, as discussed by Amitai Etzioni (Etzioni, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2009).
The obvious focus on Spanish-speaking students as a problem was not lost on her students. Juan Carlos voiced his frustration with her enactment of this cultural model:

My teacher asked me to stop speaking Spanish in class but she didn’t ask Amnah to stop speaking Urdu. I felt like, angry. I think Ms. Ngo did it because there was a reason, like... people who don't speak Spanish told me they don't feel that comfortable when we speak Spanish. The other students say "Speak English." (Student Interview, May 15, 2010).

Juan Carlos was simultaneously angry and understanding of his teacher’s position. While he recognized the unfairness of her asking him to stop speaking Spanish and allowing Amnah to continue speaking her native language, he also located her perspective within a wider cultural schema that treated Spanish as an unwelcome threat within a diverse community. Within weeks of my interview with Juan Carlos, the state of Arizona implemented a controversial policy (SB 1070) that mandated persons to carry their immigration documents at all times, and legislators also closed ethnic studies programs in high schools and universities citing ethnic separatism as rationale. In this way, “diversity” and “multiculturalism” were used as a means to exclude one “kind” of immigrant from the wider U.S. cultural panoply.

The immigrant youths’ guidance counselor, Mila Crenshaw, sympathetically addressed the staff’s framing of their own inability to work with the youth. In a year that had seen five guidance counselors' positions cut due to budget restraints, Mila had been put in the position of administering solely to the immigrant population; this move spoke to the commitment of the administration to reform the ESL program. Mila’s position was created, she admitted frankly, by the administration’s concerns with the test scores of the immigrant youth—once again demonstrating the dual edged nature of testing which creates structures of visibility and invisibility. The counselor framed herself as a learner; her role, as she explained it, was to learn
how to integrate the immigrant youth into the larger schooling system and then distribute that knowledge throughout the counseling department to create a culture of support. Her intention was that this way all of the counselors would eventually be able to serve the immigrant population.

I think that the student population [recent arrival immigrant students and EL-designated students] was growing faster than we were paying attention to. Before stepping into this position, I didn’t really know about the curriculum side of things, what kids are actually taught in the classroom and the different programs and that was a downfall for the counselors... like we weren’t really aware of immigrant kids, what is ESL, you know, even though we were scheduling the kids, we didn’t really understand how the kids got in, how they got out... [On being the only person who works with the immigrant students] I think every counselor here should still have the knowledge of how to handle that student because—what if I am not here next year? (Counselor Interview, June 2010).

Mila had great aspirations for the immigrant student population, aspirations that she admitted might be impossible due to the continuing budget crisis and layoffs. She hoped for money to get more psychological services for the students, parent information centers for the many parents who did not understand the way the system worked and were intimidated by coming to the school, academic intervention services, cultural awareness opportunities for the teachers, a group to help the youth deal with political issues, and services for students coming in 11th and 12th grade—the group that she said was the most challenging. She also felt challenged trying to figure out the transcripts that were brought in: “The class is usually just called Math or English and the students are like, ‘Why, I had a little bit of chemistry, a little bit of physics,’ so you know, we are trying to figure that whole thing out.” Mila was emotionally involved with her work and mentioned several times how painful it was for her to see what the students lacked and not know how to help them. Testing was an ever-present specter, mirroring the cultural model among the ESL teachers as discussed in the first section of this chapter.
We had to start explaining to them that whole process of testing...the kids weren’t taking the test [CELDT]\(^{40}\) seriously because they didn’t understand it... We want to see that they at least try to—try to graduate. They have their CAHSEE\(^{41}\). I mean, the majority of the kids we have right now that have not passed are seniors, EL-designated students, you know. (Counselor Interview, June 2010).

The construction and framing of the immigrant youth as a problem (to a greater extent by the general education teachers and much lesser extent by Mila Crenshaw and the ESL teachers) at Faulkner High School had the potential to marginalize the cultural wealth brought by the students into the school community (Yosso, 2005). This paradigm has been noted by other scholars on schooling and immigration; indeed, the notion of schools dismissing their students’ culture has been well-documented by authors writing about cultural deficit theory (Cole & Bruner, 1971). The staff at Faulkner High School believed that they were (at best) willing learners and (at worst) intolerant of cultural differences.

Both frames demonstrate the deep-seated belief of the staff that the immigrant youth (and by extension their parents) were “other” to themselves and a group to be understood, rather agentive persons with whom one could enter into dialogue. Moreover, teachers’ discourse around *motivation*—that the immigrant youth did not care about their own learning—was a social construction of a particular locality *and* an idea perpetrated through the global framing of migrants that has occurred, in part, due to the neoliberal economy. Indeed, *not knowing* is a curious discourse: the documentation of the best practices of reputable education programs for EL-designated students in California (Olsen, 1988) and nationally (Rance-Roney, 2009; Spaulding, Carolino, & Amen, January 2004), demonstrate that the knowledge of how to construct programs that are academically and culturally integrative and thus success is available

\(^{40}\) California English Language Development Test that determines placement in ESL programs and “redesignation” as general education.

\(^{41}\) California High School Exit Exam
to us. Moreover, educators a century prior had developed public schooling programs that successfully served immigrant youth (Perrone, 1998). Hence, lack of knowledge is a cultural model that depends on logic beyond the schoolhouse door.

The social context housing Faulkner High School

Motivation is a smokescreen for culture. The culture of the immigrant youth, as defined by the general education teachers, was central to the conflict around the ESL program. Perceptions of culture drew on the larger social context of Los Angeles, and the way in which immigration is understood in California.

The U.S. has greatly relied on her states to manage immigration in lieu of coherent national policies. This has resulted in differing cultural and symbolic modes of incorporation regionally, as discussed in the previous section.

California has received the lion’s share of immigrants during the last few decades. According to the 2000 census, California was the place of settlement for nine out of the top 10 largest immigrant nationalities (the remaining nationality were Cubans, who settled in Florida). Los Angeles was the premier destination, receiving (in order of proportion) Mexicans, Salvadorans, Filipinos, Chinese, and Guatemalans (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006). The adjacent counties of San Diego and Orange County were the eighth and ninth largest receiving sites in the U.S., making Southern California the area where 19% of foreign-born immigrants chose to make their home (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Keogan, 2010). These steady patterns high of migrant settlement were reflected by Faulkner High School’s consistent population of ESL youth.
As Figure 14 illustrates, the population of EL-designated students at Faulkner—the only available indicator of the presence of foreign-born youth at the school—had been holding relatively steady for 15 years preceding this dissertation study. Of the EL-designated population, many of these students would have been first generation; R-FEP students are not represented in the table. Essentially, this means that the immigrant/EL-designated student population at Faulkner High had held steady at about 9% to 10% of the student population for the previous decade and a half. The overwhelming presence of the foreign-born in the region and at Faulkner High School begs the question—why did the teachers believe that they did not know how to help immigrant youth flourish?

This is a complex and difficult question to answer, and certainly owes a great deal to how national policies around immigration position immigrants within local communities. Local histories may play a part in the “cultural othering” that can occur in schools. For example, Keogan (2010) argues that a lack of value is placed on the immigrant past in Southern California,
as demonstrated through the symbols of the cultural landscape, through social policies, and through mediascapes. Social relations in Southern California are intimately linked to immigration, and the way that U.S. institutions define and are defined by immigrants will have a lasting effect on racial and ethnic relationships (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). Keogan writes,

Due to differences in the demographic concentration of certain immigrant-ethnic groups, variation in group rates of economic mobility, and related differences in forms of narrative-identity politics, the very concept “immigrant” has acquired different meanings in different geographic areas within the United States. As a result, the contemporary politics of inclusion/exclusion are significantly influenced by variation in local cultural traditions of imagining “immigrants” as a social category of people. (2010, p. 49).

In Los Angeles, for example, “recent arrivals are particularly vulnerable to anti-immigrant rhetoric” (Keogan, 2010, p. 4). But in other localities, such as New York City or Toronto, immigrants can be evoked as necessary for the continued growth of the population and part of the sacred cultural history of the city. Unlike NYC, which has become the symbolic center for the commemoration of the “nation of immigrants,” “the history and cultural landscape of Southern California gives little reminder of the positive contributions immigrants made to the development of the area” (Keogan, 2010, p. 20). For example, Keogan’s content analysis of the New York Times revealed a rhetoric in that newspaper that presented NYC as a site that commemorates and mythologizes the immigrant past through historic landmarks like Ellis Island and ethnic neighborhoods like the Lower East Side. The immigrant-origin myth in New York centers on how the city “needed” immigrants to fuel its growing economy, a cultural model similar to contemporary high immigrant receiving nation-states like Canada, where the narrative around immigration contends that without migrants, the Canadian population would
not grow. By way of contrast, thorough content analysis of the *Los Angeles Times* and scholarship produced in the area has revealed a different narrative: the immigrant past in Southern California is mostly centered around the U.S.-Mexico border, with its negative connotations of “illegal” immigration and unwanted peoples. It has also been argued that European-origin Americans have tended to arrive in Southern California after years of acculturation on the East Coast, making immigrant-ness a less pronounced part of their cultural history (Keogan, 2010). Unlike in NYC, where a collective immigrant-ethnic struggle has formed in the official landscape, the native Anglo population in Southern California is less likely to symbolically commemorate an “immigrant as us” narrative. Nevertheless, it is important to briefly note here that “globalizations from below” have belied the official narrative of Los Angeles (Torres, 1998). Social movements concerned with race, class, gender, and immigration break the official silence and are integral to the city’s history.

**Mediascapes.** This research does not directly correlate the ways in which media influenced exact perceptions that the teachers formed; in general, media was a factor. Of the 58 teachers who answered a question on an ethnographic questionnaire about where they learned about pedagogy, schooling, and social issues affecting immigrant youth, 40 (68.9%) answered "media/ newspapers/ own research." It could be argued that media, newspapers and other inquiry is a form of non-formal professional development. Here, I will explore the current milieu within which non-formal professional development is situated.

As the historian Ron Takaki writes, the “narrow definition of who is an American reflects and reinforces a more general thinking that can be found in the curriculum, news and entertainment media, business practices, public policies” where not to be White is to be constructed as “other” (1993, p. 5). This symbolic cultural model forgets and silences the
permanent nature of immigration to and multiculturalism in the United States. In my own cursory content analysis, I did a search of images. I typed “New York City immigration” and “Los Angeles immigration” into a Google image search. The following images were both in the first 15 images:

![Figure 15: Poster advertising Immigrant Heritage Week in NYC](image1)

![Figure 16: May Day Protests over immigration rights in Los Angeles](image2)

The images are representative of the results of my search. In the first 15 images that were presented by the “New York” search engine, images of Ellis Island and black and white
photographs of groups of immigrants were displayed. In the “Los Angeles” search, the first 15 images were of massive protests over immigration rights. Figure 15 denotes pride and celebration, whereas the second denotes conflict and struggle. This is not to draw contrasts between just these two cities, or to suggest that racism and nativism doesn’t exist in New York City—of course it does. Rather, this is to suggest that mediascapes can symbolically frame communities in such subtle ways that we might not even notice their influence on the reception and incorporation of those communities into social spaces and institutions.

In my excavation of the discourse inherent to the cultural models at work among communities of practice at Faulkner High School, I have examined the logic behind teachers’ unwillingness to work with immigrant youth in detail. The rationalized their own unwillingness to teach ESL youth on the students’ lack of motivation, which I argued was a smokescreen for culture. The culture of the immigrant youth, as defined by the general education teachers, was central to the conflict around the ESL program. The smokescreen effect shrouded a second concern: testing. Interview data demonstrates that concern with test scores was a critical part of the rationale, for some teachers, concerns that did not seem solvable in a year in which the state appeared to be teetering towards the brink of economic collapse. In the years sandwiching data collection, state and district budget cuts hurt the ability of Faulkner’s teachers to adequately meet the needs of their students. Both teachers and students were structurally, symbolically, and socially positioned in ways that impacted their sense of belonging to a community (that cared and supported, rather than blamed), and ultimately, their learning.

There was a second group who constituted a community of practice through their participation in the organizational structure that housed the immigrant students: the ESL teachers (see Table 4). Unlike their colleagues, testing did not deter the ESL teachers from
working with the youth, but did cause internal conflict and struggle. Now, I turn to the final section of this chapter and discuss the position of the ESL teachers in the constellation of communities of practice at Faulkner High School.

The Discourse of Pedagogy

“Democratic learning, or education that encourages the meaningful political participation of citizens in public policy development, came under attack as labor market needs began to define acceptable and valued schooling objectives. Schools were increasingly viewed as production facilities whose primary mission was providing industry with its required human capital.” (Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 2).

The ESL teachers who I interviewed blamed themselves, their lack of access to resources, and the ESL program at Faulkner High School for the lack of academic opportunity that they believed their immigrant students had.

You would think that if [the administration] wanted to see success as far as English learners that they would seek or at least look out for somebody who has the teaching experience and who would be a good choice for working with these kids. And I am not saying, you know, I am not putting myself down and saying I am not a good choice for working with these kids but I think that there would be more of a benefit to having somebody who had more time. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Jennifer Patton believed that she was a poor teacher and not meeting the needs of her students; she blamed her lack of time (she had been given five different subject matters to prepare for) and her inexperience for her inability to meet her students' needs. She wasn’t incorrect in her assessment of her flaws. Her classroom, which I observed regularly, lacked rigor and was subject to rote learning noted both by me and by students in their discussions with me.
The students, for the most part, cared deeply for their teachers. The ESL teachers were subject to the same familial treatment with which the youth levied with each other. I heard very little critique of their teaching practices; yet, the critique I did hear was scathing and specific to the poverty of the curriculum.

I don’t think these people understand people who don’t speak English. They need to do something different—I don’t know, some trip, take us to the zoo. Teach us the animals' names in English. Something different, because from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the school is hard, I don’t know. Doing the same things. They are not thinking. In Brazil, we study more. Here, you take just some classes, not all. These people lost my time. My opinion is I am lost my time [Wasting my time]. Not all, ESL and math it is very good. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Like Ana Paula interviewed above, other students also mentioned how much more rigorous the curriculum was in their previous schooling outside of the U.S., as compared to the education they were receiving at Faulkner. An immigrant student who had been redesignated as a senior told me that he had been bored in the majority of classes: “learning the language was a problem, and the laziness” (Fieldnotes, April 15, 2010). Students clarified that in their previous schooling experiences that they had had more rigorous requirements—two different math courses and two different science courses in one year, for example (“here, you just take some classes, not all”). Naaz, from Iran, was frustrated because she had to take classes with freshman (she was an 11th grader), and several 12th grade students from Mexico said that the classes were so easy that it made them lazy. A geometry teacher I interviewed told me that she erroneously had several recent arrival EL-designated students in her class, but, owing to the substandard quality of the ESL geometry class, she decided to keep the students with her.
Repeatedly, the ESL teachers blamed their lack of knowledge for why the immigrant youth were not experiencing success.

I really don’t know what I am doing. I don’t understand why I was given this job. I am a first year teacher here—I came over from the middle school. Don’t get me wrong, I love these kids. But I don’t even have my ESL certification; I took the test last month! (Teacher Interview, January 2010).

Sentiments like the above were common. The ESL teachers had definite ideas about what could be changed; some were frustrated by old textbooks, others felt that the fact that the students were segregated in ESL classes meant that they weren’t exposed to other students, native English speakers, who could challenge them.

Both Jennifer Patton, a beginning teacher whose curriculum was slow-paced and based on comprehension activities and questions rather than analysis or higher-order thinking, and Stacey Stradder, the 32-year veteran whose curriculum was well thought out and dynamic, considered leaving teaching. Each assigned her consideration to her low self-efficacy as it related to teaching in the ESL department.

Jennifer looked at me from where she was sitting in a desk organizing the oral part of the students’ exams. “I’m tired,” she said in a quiet voice. “Why?” I asked. “I’ve had to work on these exams all week. They take a long time to put together,” she replied. “You did a lot of work here,” I attempted to comfort. Jennifer nodded slowly. “I had to do five exams: for my English class, my ESL 5 class, and my other ESL classes. I looked at that old textbook and the CELDT test to come up with the questions... one class, I had to grade on a curve... because... they got mostly Ds. They say that your students should have Cs... but Ds? I think I am a bad teacher. I am not sure if I am going to come back next year. Someone else is interested in the position and I... I feel like I am not very good at this. I don’t know if I want to be a teacher anymore, but I don’t know what else to do.” (Fieldnotes, January 28th, 2010).
As shown here, a great deal of the teachers’ self-efficacy was intimately tied to testing. Jennifer, a new and young teacher, had no guidance in the complex task of creating assessments for a varied and differentiated population of students. Lacking cutting-edge research on how to design assessment, she drew on the district CELDT test (which tests students’ incoming language proficiency) and an “old textbook” to do so. Several of the teachers I spoke with complained about the inadequate textbooks provided to the students. Jennifer had mocked a textbook that was mandated in ESL classrooms in California and described how one of her students had used the textbook for three grade levels in a row, including his move between junior and high school.

Like what I found with Jennifer, other research has demonstrated that high-stakes testing can be damaging to language minority students. A study of 10 schools in New York City shows that high-stakes testing poses consequences and challenges to teachers of ELLs; the vast majority of ELL educators described themselves as "teaching the test" (Menken & Kleyn, 2010). This ultimately dictated language policy in those NYC schools and affected the way in which they programmed, offered classes, and the strategies and methodologies they used. Some schools increased the amount of English instruction that ELLs received in a school day, while

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42 In my decade of work as a teacher and teacher educator in the ESL world, I have come across few resources on how to adequately assess the intricate process of simultaneous language and content learning required of immigrant youth in high school classes. In my one purview as an assessment coordinator in New York City, I was provided access to statisticians who trained us (a group of educators of immigrant youth) and spent two years supporting us to develop ESL student friendly assessment. It is difficult to imagine how Jennifer could have created assessment that produced anything other than ‘low grades (i.e., C’s and D’s).

43 It was at this point that Jennifer and I had a conversation about my role in her classroom; as I discuss in my methods section, this conversation marked a turning point where I no longer felt I could sit quietly by and scientifically observe while she floundered. After a single session I conducted on methods, Jennifer’s teaching improved dramatically. Her classroom, once based on photocopied worksheets, became project-based and inclusive; after a few weeks of trying out a new curriculum she approached me, eyes shining and said that the students were learning and that she couldn’t wait “to see what else the kids can do!” The incident dramatically demonstrated to me how much simple professional development can do for teachers.
others increased native language instruction. Menken's findings—that the education of recently arrived immigrants were dictated by high-stakes testing—are similar to the situation I found at Faulkner High School. Like Menken, I also found that the ESL classroom curriculum was heavily focused on test prep and literary elements.

The other two ESL teachers I observed and interviewed had more experience than Jennifer. Still, each struggled in her own way to deliver the appropriate academic instruction for her students. Much of their difficulties were related to their self-efficacy and their struggle to prepare the immigrant students for their annual state and federally mandated tests. Each of the five teachers I interviewed formally, and the many others I spoke with informally, spoke of their concerns for their students’ test scores. While some teachers’ self-efficacy was related to how well their students performed on their tests (e.g., “the ESL kids’ test scores reflect on me” and “the administration would like me to do more test prep”), other teachers were vocal about how they considered testing the immigrant students an educational injustice.

The testing is awful. Look, I teach an idiom a day in my class. But if I don’t tell my students the exact idiom, well, they aren’t going to get it right on the test. They had to take a test that had a question that said: The man walked up to a bar and the bartender asked him—what’s your poison?. How are my students going to get that? They don’t know what poison means! It’s unfair. And they have no time to take the test—they have to follow the exact time. If the test starts at 9:01 and ends at 9:55, that is all they get. They have these computers and they just have to follow them. (Teacher Interview, October 2009).

Another teacher, a first year teacher at Faulkner who had 30 years of experience with immigrant youth elsewhere, explained that the classroom at Faulkner wasn’t used efficaciously as a barometer for what the students could do well. By implication, state testing (which has been repeatedly shown to ignore the cultural and linguistic knowledge(s) of ethno-linguistic minorities) mattered more to the administration than teacher-created tests. Yet, teachers'
assessments are designed for students based on the teachers' experience and knowledge of the skills and strengths of their students.

The kids feel the ESL label. I teach them more than the regular English teachers. I took two tests in to show the assistant principal—one was from mine, the other was from a regular English class. I showed them to the assistant principal and I asked him which one he thought was more rigorous. He agreed that mine was more rigorous. So I asked him to remove the ESL label but he didn’t. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Here, Stacey Stradder explained that the stigma of the ESL label was detrimental to the students (I would argue detrimental to their sense of belonging), and a mismatch with the actual rigor that she was providing. Her perception is substantiated by historians of education who argue that struggling students have always been labeled, and that those labels reflected both socially situated attitudes and institutional conditions. Historians point out that in the early 20th century, immigrant students were called “laggards” and were clustered in lower grades because they failed the annual examinations for promotion from grade to grade (Deschenes, et al., 2001). Labels contain important information about educators’ and reformers’ values about success, social diversity, and individual achievement (Deschenes, et al., 2001). Labels have created categories of individual failure and have left school structures largely intact. The authors argue that educators and reformers should learn from the past and refocus the question as “Which students will be labeled and how?” instead of labeling social constructions of failure and assigning blame (Deschenes, et al., 2001). Likewise, scholars of special education in schools write that negative outcomes of assigning labels can include maintaining the status quo that keeps minority groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Maintaining the status quo happens when teachers focus on a child's problems and do not address the environmental factors that produced the problem. The author continues by explaining that labeling is
stereotyping when it indexes the power relationship between the communicators (Riddick, 2010).

What Stacey Stradder may or may have not known was how the actions of the administration at Faulkner High School were constrained by the state: the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 mandated federal funds for any school district with 20 language minority students or more, valuable funds during the post-2007 capitalist crisis that saw schools firing teachers to save money. In her interview, Stacey lambasted how the state testing regime was hurting the students, particularly the newly arrived immigrant youth.

And that new Iranian boy! It’s an educational injustice! He had to take the high school exit exam three weeks after he got here! I put him with other boys to help him—but he shouldn’t be in this class. I can’t give him the services he needs. (Teacher Interview, April 2010).

Like Jennifer Patton, Stacey Stradder demonstrated varying understandings of the impact testing would have on their students, probably reflecting their experience as teachers. Jennifer and Mollie related the challenges of testing to their own ability to prepare the students adequately, particularly in the face of cultural and linguistic bias such as unusual idiomatic expressions that would be impossible to predict. Stacey took a clear political stance on testing, calling it an “educational injustice.” She connected testing to the stigmatization associated with the ESL label, reflecting the larger stigmatization of being an immigrant in the contemporary United States.

Both Stacey and Jennifer spent time developing interactive tests and quizzes for their students that differed from the traditional exams (like the California High School Exit Exam) levied by state and federal testing requirements. After a unit on communication, Stacey gave
her students a test that included watching old advertisements on Youtube and analyzing them for communicative purpose.

Ms. Stradder passed the test out. As she did so, the teens were still talking to each other. She said, “There are places to draw pictures, places to match pictures. When you get to the third page, stop, because we are going to watch a video. And, this is also a test for me. It is a test to see if I taught you so that you can remember.” The exam began, and students quieted down. Stacey approached Mehdi, the new Iranian student, and asked him if he could try to understand the test based on the questions. (Fieldnotes, April 14, 2010).

Stacey, a 30-year teacher, was comfortable enough with herself to be able to openly share with the students that testing was not just about their own knowledge, but about her teaching skills. The following academic year, Stacey spent even more time on equitable testing practices for immigrant learners, a move that was praised by her administration. Jennifer also worked hard to create testing experiences that her students could access.

“First, we will look at the test together,” Jennifer said to her students. “In this part, you have to tell me if it is a short vowel sound or a long vowel sound. Then, you look at the picture and write a vocabulary word. There are many questions. For numbers 62 and 63—tell me the time.” Her cadence was slow and she pronounced every syllable of her instructions. She spoke in short sentences. She continued: “Part G: Indefinite articles. “A” or “an.” Turn the page. Part J. Contractions… you understand contractions—you remember contractions? She. She’ll.” Jennifer stood in front of the group; as she spoke about each section, she gestured to it by holding one finger at the top of the section, and one finger at the bottom of the section, to visually mark it off for the girls. Sol, a student, looked down at her paper forlornly. “You can do it!” Jennifer said encouragingly. (Fieldnotes, January 28, 2010).

By taking the students through each section and paying minute attention to the details of the test, Jennifer carefully eliminated the distraction that many non-native speakers of English stumble over: understanding the English of the directions. This simple consideration is not taken into account by the makers of standardized tests, nor, I would venture to assume, the native English speaking teachers and administrators who distribute the tests. Nevertheless, as
the sensitivity shown by Jennifer and Stacey demonstrates, changing the methods of testing does not need to require any “dumbing down,” but rather careful visual or literacy scaffolding so that students can access a test’s intellectual demands. Their actions demonstrate the structure that belonging can take in a classroom. Through demonstrations of caring and encouragement, and scaffolding of difficult academic experiences, both teachers were creating classrooms were students could feel safe to belong and learn. As such, belonging is not a fuzzy concept, but rather a carefully worked out plan that can be instituted, refined and elaborated.

Communities of practice are made coherent through a shared repertoire of stories, artifacts, tools, historical events, styles, actions, discourses, and concepts (Wenger, 1998). Their belief that they were failing their students held by the three ESL teachers was not a position that was unique to them, nor to the locality of Faulkner High School. Nationally, teachers were negatively affected by a focus on testing; indeed, the political economy of education had resulted in a climate of competition and accountability (represented most visibly through testing), a subject that we turn to now in order to further excavate the shared repertoire of the ESL teachers’ community of practice.

**Teaching immigrant youth in an era of testing**

**The politics of reform.** The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act is a reform that was born out of the neoliberal turn in the 1980s. The current wave of educational reform, spurred in part by the ever-rising focus on the free market, has had the effect that, when telescoping to a single classroom, teachers like Jennifer Patton believe that they shouldn’t continue with their careers as teachers because their classroom test scores are poor. Despite successfully building a space of belonging through practices that encouraged emotional protection, learning, and
cultural maintenance, Jennifer still felt that she should end her teaching career; this demonstrated just how saturated the very essence of schooling is by testing policies. The promotion of the free market and global competition has introduced a spirit of competition into schools; the way these reforms have been rationalized has resulted in major conflict among education scholars. On the one hand, scholars cite neoliberalism and the market agenda as the driving force behind high school reform. On the other side, scholars and policy makers claim these reforms are based on equity and closing the achievement gap between Whites and racial minorities. Critics of neoliberalism in education view these reforms actually provide a challenge to democratic equity, just as Jennifer, the ESL teacher protested that “It’s not all about the tests, it's about the relationships too!” (Teacher Interview, May 2010). Education is reduced to “applying business principles within occupational contexts to arrive at decisions consistent with protecting market economy efficiency” (Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 18). Localized, these two arguments have blurred, becoming almost indistinguishable. At Faulkner High School, the assistant principal, a thoughtful, committed educator who was devoted to reforming the ESL program, saw no conflict in how testing had thrust the immigrant youth into the spotlight. He found testing to be an important measurement of their abilities, and saw the reform of the ESL program as a moral imperative that “should be done anyway” (Interview, August 2010). Despite his perspective, the data spoke otherwise: testing at Faulkner was a process that brought issues of power and culture to the fore, as the most vulnerable members (the immigrant students and their teachers) of the school were marginalized and positioned as a problem to be solved.

Likewise, opponents of neoliberalism argue that equity based reforms, which are instituted to provide educational opportunities for girls, indigenous populations, linguistic
minorities, and “at-risk” youth, are actually rooted in competition-based reforms (Torres, 2009). While the administration remained convinced that the tests were incidental to the larger issue of 

 equity reform for the students, teachers in the community of practice concerned with the immigrant youth saw the “equity” argument as a thin veil for their real agenda: “It’s a lie so that they can tell WASC\textsuperscript{44} that they did something about the immigrant kids,” a teacher stated boldly to me at a professional development training (Fieldnotes, January 22, 2010). The reform pushed by the administration was eroding the already fragile community interaction at Faulkner High School, as evidenced by Melissa’s email introducing this chapter. Hence, pedagogy at Faulkner High was decoupled from belonging and made subject to an obsession with test scores. The values and expressed needs of the immigrant youth—a need for community and relationships that would help them flourish and engage in learning—were sidelined.

Authentic learning and belonging in the ESL program at Faulkner High School was undermined by a focus on output rather than input. In education, the distribution of resources can mean the \textit{input} into schools, student access to excellent teachers or resources, or the \textit{outcomes} of schooling, like achievement scores. The conditions that support the learning of the students, as Banks calls for, or the input necessary for reasonable output, was a major issue at Faulkner—as discussed previously, a lack of resources for the ESL program was a common reason the teachers did not want to work in it. It is argued that neoliberalism in education has directed its attention to outcomes, and minimized input and access (Banks, 2007). James Banks writes, “The almost exclusive focus on outcomes--outcomes as measured by test scores alone—deflects attention away from conditions that support learning...” (p. 7). Teachers, as a primary

\textsuperscript{44} Western Association of Schools and Colleges, an accreditation organization operation in California and neighboring states.
and important part of the conditions supporting the learning of students, are currently at the whim of a political economy that links their performance to test scores.

**NCLB and the cultural politics of teaching**

After the enactment of NCLB, teachers, who had been through various waves of deprofessionalization in the latter half of the 20th century in the U.S., were again being critiqued. For example, as concerns the issue of teacher training and development, Weiner writes that NCLB’s HQT (Highly Qualified Teacher) requirement defined teachers as those who had “standardized content knowledge” rather than purveyors of knowledge of school context or of students’ learning characteristics (Indeed, knowledge of school context and students’ learning characteristics are two areas that are hugely important for teachers who work with vulnerable minorities like immigrant youth). The HQT was the U.S.’s manifestation of the global standardizing and deprofessionalizing of teachers; through the NCLB policy, teachers were characterized as workers who “have no social or political responsibilities beyond providing an education that is de facto vocational training” (2007, p. 166). This requirement is particularly challenging to ESL teachers, who are not provided with any kind of standardized content knowledge in their education training *because no such standard content for ESL exists.* Nowhere are standards as incoherent and unreflective of the reality of ESL classrooms curricular needs as in state ESL standards. To reiterate, in schools, teachers are called upon to teach content through language, whereas the ESL standards focus only on language or “Americanization,” and content standards focus mostly on conceptual learning. Rarely do teachers of immigrant youth get the training they actually need for what to teach and how to teach it.
While the vagueness of state standards can leave room for gifted teachers to create their own dynamic curricula, more often, undertrained, isolated, and overburdened ESL teachers (like Jennifer Patton, who had five different levels of ESL and English classes to prepare for and only one paid prep period to do so) flail. This can lead to resorting to mandated textbooks, resulting in the scenario described by Jennifer whereby one of her students had used the same ESL textbook three grades in a row. Researchers are clear that the intentional vagueness of the standard is a result of the erosion of the standards movement in the 1990s (Ravitch, 2010), and what can be described as the mismatch between the state’s understanding of the ESL teachers' role and the real needs of schools. Policy makers, administrators and practitioners seem less clear about this mismatch. The reality of how poorly teachers are prepared and supported is rarely reflected in the press.

NCLB’s manifestation in schools has been accompanied by a national mediascape that has insidiously and slowly transformed the public and political view of the role of teachers in educating society’s youth. The public attitude towards teachers in 2011 has been described as a “campaign of vilification”; coverage of the debates surrounding teachers qualifications and layoffs, and their subsequent public protests and demonstrations in several states around the country has been hostile. Educational historian Diane Ravitch has stated that the “roots” of this current campaign of vilification lie in the 2002 passing of the NCLB act (2011, March 6). She wrote:

That law mandates that all students must reach “proficient” on state tests by 2014, a goal never reached by any nation or state. Any school that cannot reach that utopian goal will eventually be declared “failing,” with dire consequences, including firing the staff and closing the school. The assumption behind this punitive approach is that poor student performance is caused by incompetent teachers and principals, despite the fact
that decades of social science show that family income is the most reliable predictor of test scores. (New York Times, March 6, 2011, “It Started with No Child Left Behind”).

Education professor Pedro Noguera, writing in the same New York Times series, broached a similar analysis on the roots of the attacks on teachers, citing economics as an additional reason for the vilification (2011, March 6).

The recent attacks on teachers can be traced to the convergence of three distinct but related trends: continuing concerns about the lagging academic performance of American students, a belief among policymakers and some foundations that firing “bad” teachers would lead to significant improvements in student achievement, and a desire among lawmakers to balance state budgets by reducing financial commitments to the pensions, salaries, and benefits of public employees, particularly teachers. (“Reforms Driven by Education Fads,” New York Times, March 6th, 2011).

Ravitch and Noguera (who, owing to opposing political backgrounds, might otherwise rarely be found writing about the same topic from the same perspective) reflect the growing discontent between researchers and practitioners working on the ground in education, and the politicians who write policy for schools based on the goals of economic capitalism and the logic of the market.

During the 2009-2010 school year, teachers across the country were fired because of the poor test scores of their students. In August of 2010, the Los Angeles Times published a database scoring elementary school teachers as “effective” or “ineffective” based on a controversial value-added approach (Lovett, 2010, November 9). This was faulty research, as it used student progress as measured by test scores to determine the “value” a particular teacher had “added” to his or her classroom of students. The LA Times’ publishing of the scores was ultimately deemed responsible for a young teacher’s suicide; his colleagues reported that the young man was dedicated and passionate about his job and was shattered by the scores (Personal Communication, January 2011). Protests followed. The publication of the scores by
the *LA Times* followed the misplaced logic of accountability, wherein output was valued but input was lacking.

In other words, assessments by the *LA Times* came at the end of a school year which had seen the worst budget cuts in decades. In California, 30,000 teachers and administrators had received pink slips, and nearly 10,000 public school employees were laid off (CA Majority Report, retrieved April 9, 2011). The effects on California’s most vulnerable students was drastic and immediate. One newspaper reported that the budget cuts would affect racial and linguistic diversity by laying off junior teachers, many of whom were of Color and bilingual, and close down programs servicing immigrant learners. At Faulkner High School as well, pink slips were issued under the protest of teachers, parents, and students.

In such an economic context, teachers increasingly absorbed the stress and frustration of the public and of policy makers. In a *New York Times* article, a journalist reported Indiana’s state superintendent and veteran educator as claiming, “This is in no way, shape or form an attack on teachers; it is a comprehensive effort to reform a system” (Hess, 2011, April 9). Under the name of equity, reformers created a climate that was pervasively uncertain and unsafe for teachers. Also in the name of equity, reformers had created a regime of accountability that was particularly challenging for the most vulnerable youth—cultural and linguistic minorities like recent arrival immigrant youth.

**Conclusion: Teachers as cultural workers**

As we saw in the introduction to this dissertation, youth are attending school during a period of dramatic demographic and economic change. The changing nature of things, due to

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globalization, demands a new kind of schooling. In this chapter, I analyzed the entire corpus of data gathered in the school community that I researched from August of 2009 to April of 2011. After participating in the community for six months, I had begun to see that the immigrant youth were considered undesirable participants by a majority of teachers and students, and silenced in interpersonal relationships, intellectual contributions, and membership in the public community. This chapter asks the question: why? That is, *why were immigrant youth at Faulkner High School rendered invisible and silent at worst, and tolerated at best?* The answer generated draws on a complicated mixture of global forces also at work in U.S. education: reform based on the logic of the market and cultural clash and fatigue as a result of the movement of peoples. At Faulkner High School, this meant that administrators, teachers and students were subjected to accountability measures that left them with conflicting needs and interests. And, immigrant students were considered burdensome by some of Faulkner’s teachers who were influenced by nativist immigration politics. The school community focused on helping the immigrant students achieve because of the spotlight they were placed under by the students’ test scores. Unfortunately, this meant that the school asked itself a question that worked against youth achieving a sense of belonging at Faulkner High School. The question they asked was: how do we reform our school program to ensure that immigrant and language learning students pass the district and state tests? I argue here that they were asking themselves the wrong question. Rather, the question necessitated by globalization—with its changing economic patterns and cultural shifts—is different. The question Faulkner High School could have asked was: how do we reform our school program to ensure that immigrant and language learning youth are incorporated intellectually, culturally, and socially? And, how do we reform our school community so that we are advancing the goals of democratic
citizenship for all of our students? Throughout this chapter I have argued that answering the first question perpetuates a cycle of alienation and miseducation, while addressing the latter has led and could continue to lead to a pedagogy of belonging. The teachers may have answered the former, for answering the latter—incorporating immigrant youth into a community focused on the goals of democratic citizenship, be that within local, national, transcultural, or cosmopolitan communities—requires measurement that which is difficult to measure. As Robert Glaser writes, “Those personal qualities that we hold dear—resilience and courage in the face of stress, a sense of craft in our work, a commitment to justice and caring in our social relationships, a dedication to advancing the public good in our communal life—are exceedingly difficult to assess” (as cited in Ravitch, 2009, p. 166). What is most discouraging is that the youth I worked with over the 2009-2010 school year were remarkable examples of the qualities Glaser evokes. As demonstrated in my interviews with them, which will be elucidate further in the next two chapters, the immigrant youth faced incredible stress—that of losing country, home, and language, as well as acquiring new habits of being and cultural adaptation—with courage and resilience. Moreover, the youth at Faulkner exemplified justice and caring in their social relationships with one another, supporting each other’s class work, language learning, peer interrelations, and cultural adaptation with vigor. Had Faulkner High School asked different questions, those qualities might very well have been identified and affirmed by the larger community, bringing the youth in from the margins and centering them as valuable contributors. As it was, the focus on achievement and accountability created a rhetoric of public concern that unwittingly scapegoated the youth as a drain on the larger community.
As such, this chapter demonstrates that education is political. Here, the issues at play among the staff of Faulkner High School are representative of the politicization of education in an era of heightened immigration, and how culture is subject to power. The political economy, the state, testing, and a historical marginalization of immigrants (particularly Latino immigrants) in Southern California were invisible artifacts in the daily practices of Faulkner’s general education teachers. The ESL teachers and their students pushed back on their obvious segregation in ways that demonstrated their agency. Their profound practices of protectiveness, community maintenance, and support become even more meaningful when situated against the backdrop of the current anti-immigrant hysteria saturating the United States. As the epitaph at the beginning of this chapter stated: "If a building is to meet the needs of all the people, the architect must look for some common ground of understanding and experience."

Teachers are the architects of belonging in schools. Their task is to learn to understand the humanity of their students in order to create a beneficial, imaginative, and culturally inclusive school.

In this chapter, I argued that the education of the immigrant and ESL youth at Faulkner High School constituted a contested terrain. I discussed the discourses at play in the cultural models formed in the teachers’ communities of practice, and demonstrated how the teachers’ positioning of the youth as unmotivated and uninterested in school and learning was a smokescreen that obscured real issues at hand. I explored the social impulses behind the teachers’ discourse, and analyzed how the cultural landscape of Southern California had incubated a school where not knowing about immigrant students was justifiable. Then, I turned to the concerns of the ESL teachers, and discussed their fears in light of high-stakes testing and a climate of accountability and the vilification of teachers. I theorized that because
of the cultural models of the teachers, (1) teaching and learning, and (2) community interaction and belonging became decoupled at Faulkner High School.

Further important in this chapter is the definition of belonging that emerged. As stated in the title of this dissertation, I analyzed the lives of immigrant youth through three lenses: the academic, the social, and the cultural. Belonging, for the immigrant youth, was initially defined in this chapter—and will be continued to be defined through the next data chapters—as a form of belonging to each other, or relational belonging. This relational belonging was subject to the segregation implied by the ESL program (social belonging), enacted through cultural models (cultural belonging), and took place in the context of teaching and learning (academic belonging). These analyses will be further refined in the next few chapters, and discussed in the conclusion to this dissertation.

To sum up, I turn to a discussion of the ESL teachers. Freire writes that progressive educators are neither aggressive towards learners nor paternalistic (Freire, 2005). While the three ESL teachers described in this chapter did not discuss critical education or their own political stances, they showed their political stance through the fabric of their everyday lives. Acts like their careful scaffolding of the tests the youth needed to take and their speaking out at professional development meetings showed their consistent focus on attempting both to meet the educational needs of, and politically advocate for, their students—regardless of the fact that they did not have the language to describe such actions as political. Indeed, their respect of, and commitment to, their immigrant students in the face of loneliness, isolation, confusion, doubt, and outright persecution by their colleagues is at the heart of critical education’s struggle to roll back the educational reforms enacted by a neoliberal economy and reclaim schooling as a space for democratic expression and true human flourishing. While the
frustration of the three ESL teachers mounted and was possibly a factor in causing two of those interviewed to leave the school the following year, they persevered in defending the dignity of their position and the dignity of the students in their care. In this way, the ESL teachers, and to a certain extent the two administrators showcased here—the assistant principal, and Mila Crenshaw, the guidance counselor, demonstrated that they are “cultural workers”. As Freire writes:

Let’s repeat then, that the educator is a politician. In consequence, it is absolutely necessary that educators act in a way consistent with their choice—which is political—and furthermore that educators be ever more scientifically competent, which teaches them how important to know the concrete world in which their students live, the culture in which their students’ language, syntax, semantics, and accent are found in action, in which certain habits, likes, beliefs, fears, and desires are formed that are not necessarily easily accepted into the teachers’ own worlds. (2005, p. 129).

Accepting their students and striving to privilege their racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gendered backgrounds (all three of the ESL teachers were White, female, English-speakers and long-standing residents of the U.S.) meant that the students were able to forge a sense of community despite the discrimination they experienced in the larger school organization. In the next chapter, which focuses on language as an organizing factor in belonging, I turn to a closer look at one of the ESL teacher’s classrooms, and refocus on the voices and perspectives of the students themselves. Set within an architecture that does not always exalt, stimulate, or afford belonging, acts of community—and of disharmony and anger—occur among the students. Their everyday lives, their voices, frustrations, and small triumphs are thrown into sharper relief against the setting explored here, the backdrop of a community that struggled to welcome and value their contributions.
CHAPTER FIVE

Successful communities of practice: The role of language in creating belonging in a diverse ESL classroom

We are looking for the pedagogical arts of the contact zone. These will include, we are sure, exercises in storytelling and in identifying with the ideas, interests, histories, and attitudes of others; experiments in transculturation and collaborative work ....

--Mary Louise Pratt

“It’s not just learning English, it’s learning other cultures.”

--Maritza, 10th grade EL-designated student

Learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming-- to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person.

--Etienne Wenger

Introduction

In high school, where the development of one’s personal and academic identity is closely tied to those of one’s peers, negotiating the meaning of identity within the membership of a richly diverse cultural and linguistic space was a fascinating, and occasionally troubled, process. The community I studied challenged the ways in which the students’ shaped their identities and responded to each other’s social and academic needs. As Wenger’s (1998) work on communities of practice demonstrates, identity develops within community because a group’s boundaries give the individual space to define who he is, what he does, and who he could become. Alternately, when barriers to participation in a community are erected, leading to marginality or non-participation, a person might define herself by who she is not. Wegner writes:


Identity is the locus of social selfhood ... On the one hand, it is the power to belong, to be a certain person, to claim a place with the legitimacy of membership; and on the other it is the vulnerability of belonging to, identifying with, and being part of some communities that contribute to defining who we are... (p. 207).

This perspective characterizes a community as a project where culture, learning, and personal identity are organized in ways that contribute to the social development of the group and the development of the individual. Language can be a central feature of how individuals participate meaningfully in community and actualize identity and agency (Duranti, 2004). During analysis, it became increasingly clear that language was central to how youth experienced a sense of belonging to the classroom community. In the larger school community, perceptions of language status and value were ideologically embedded in perceptions of who was treated as a valid intellectual contributor. Students who were defined by their language—tested and placed in a separate and remedial language learning program (ESL)—had a greater chance of being placed other remedial mainstream classes (Earth Science as opposed to Biology or Physics, for example), and tended to be excluded in clubs, sports, the theater program, and other extracurricular activities. Hence, language was a critical dimension in youths' experience of belonging.

Among the immigrant youth and EL-designated students, there was a wide range of responses to their status: being invisible and silenced in the wider school community could be deeply traumatic. Language also shaped who the youth befriended, what they learned, how they related to teachers, and how involved they became in school activities. As will be further evidenced throughout this chapter, the ability to speak and the experience of silence was a critical dimension in how the students engaged with other aspects of their identity—like gender, national origin, and academic standing.
Overview of the chapter. In the following chapter, I first give a brief recap of theories of language, culture and community introduced in the literature review of this dissertation. I then explore, in micro-ethnographic detail, the ways in which language formed community, and drew lines of inclusion and exclusion at Faulkner High School, and in an ESL level 1-2 classroom, which housed students who had been characterized as having the lowest level of language proficiency. Finally, I present results of data analysis. First, I look at the relations between the recently-arrived and second-generation language minority students, and the lines of inclusion and exclusion that affected their participation at school. Second, speaking practices that occurred in one ESL classroom over an academic year are examined. This section also looks at the relationships that form in multilingual classrooms around language, and how the students and teacher participated in a supportive community of practice. In the final section, I link youth participation in speaking practices to learning, and discuss three ways that the youth accessed curriculum and supported each other’s academic growth.

Theories of language, culture and community

The multicultural politics of belonging at Faulkner High School. The presence of racism in U.S. schooling has been extraordinarily well documented (Bell, 1992; Booker, 2006; Carter, 2005; Dixson & Rausseu, 2005; Duncan, 2002). In the larger socioscope of U.S. immigration politics, race and immigration status are now heard, as language becomes a proxy for racialized practices. I venture this analysis based on the events occurring in Arizona as of the writing of this chapter: across the state, lawmakers are suggesting that teachers with accents (U.S. born or not) should leave their positions, only the latest manifestation in the wave of anti-immigrant
policies that have been taking place across various regions in the U.S. for decades. Years of English-only activism has created a climate where languages other than English are differentially positioned: the particular aggressiveness toward Spanish and Chinese speakers in California, and Arabic speakers in New York City, is racially motivated. For example, White, European Swiss-German speakers are rarely told that their accents are unwelcome in the public sphere, for example. Italians, Jews and the Irish lived their lives on the problematic side of the color line in the late 19th century, only to graduate from being People of Color to Whites (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001); contrastingly whereas Mexicans have sunk beneath the color line to share space with Blacks. In other words, ethnic and racial immigrant groups are racialized in either positive (White) or negative (Black) ways, and language is intimately bound up in the process. These social patterns also were present at Faulkner High School.

“Lifers” vs. “The non-American kids”:

Differential positioning of EL-designated youth at Faulkner High School.

In the following section, I analyze two trends that I observed at Faulkner High School in order to demonstrate how the participants in the wider community of practice heard race and immigration, and how that hearing resulted in consistent and dramatic bullying of the recently-arrived immigrant youth. This hearing of race followed several patterns, here, two will be analyzed: (1) Teachers differentiated language minority youth between good ESL students (i.e., the recently-arrived) and bad ESL students (i.e., second-generation), and (2) the Latino U.S. born children of immigrants bullied the Latino recently-arrived immigrant youth. The co-occurrence of these two trends suggests that race, language and immigration generation were
factors in how the EL-designated student population was stratified, affecting the academic trajectories and socio-emotional lives of the youth participants involved.

Recently-arrived immigrants at Faulkner High experienced exclusion because of their language, race, and generational status (i.e., 1st or 1.5 generation). In every instance of bullying (except one) that was reported to me by the youth participants, micro-aggressions experienced by recently-arrived immigrants were related to language or speaking practices. Both native English speakers and second-generation Spanish speakers were the primary bullies, and the recently-arrived were often the targets. As a recently-arrived student reported:

If you ask an English person, how do you say this word, they say—“Oh you say it first.” And then you say it and they are like “Oh, hahaha.” ... There was this one girl in my history class, they asked her to say something. When she said it, they said, that’s not how you say it. They made fun of her for an entire month. (Student Interview, May 2010).

As Maritza told it, non-English speakers were baited by English speakers. If a non-English speaker took the bait and mispronounced a word, he or she could be made fun of at length. This kind of teasing led many of the recently-arrived immigrants to shut down and not speak in their classes. Often, this was to the severe detriment of their academic engagement.

While the second-generation Mexican-American youth bullied the recently-arrived youth extensively, it is possible that they were participating in what Freire called the “existential duality of the oppressed”. This existential duality meant that the second-generation Latino youth, having “internalized the image of the oppressor” followed "the guidelines of the oppressor" by mocking students who did not speak English well (1970/2007).

48 As defined by multiple critical race scholars, including Danny Solorzano (2009), racial micro-aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate derogatory racial slights and insults toward People of Color. A racial micro-aggression might be evidenced by a White woman’s dressing up as a Mexican maid for a Cinco de Mayo party, for example.
appropriating the targeting that their communities receive through recent exclusionary practices such as book banning of books pertaining to Mexican-American subjects in Arizona, and the banning of bilingual education in California, Massachusetts and elsewhere. As Baugh (2003) discusses, linguistic profiling is the auditory equivalent of racial profiling. He writes:

Our language, be it speech or writing, tells others much about us as we perform linguistic tasks throughout our daily lives. Perceptions of intelligence, or the lack thereof, are often deeply interwoven with perceptions about language, or specific dialects and accents within a particular language. (p. 155).

The basic evaluation of the skill and intelligence of immigrants by the Californian school system is based on their language background (i.e., the language spoken by their parents, and their own first language) and their performance in linguistic tasks. A testing protocol determines who is a linguistic “other” and thus who should be housed in a separate and (often unequal) academic program like Faulkner High’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program. In some instances, this linguistic profiling was a neutral action with beneficial consequences—many of the 1.5 generation youth, called “the non-American kids” by one teacher, were glad to have the extra attention that they received in the ESL program. For other students, particularly the second-generation who were widely referred to as “lifers”, viewed being placed in the ESL language program as crippling to their academic trajectory and success.

Lifers.

Many second-generation youth, colloquially referred to as “lifers” (a term for prisoners) by their teachers, had been a part of the Faulkner ESL program since elementary school. In a focus group in a Spanish language class, I asked a group of mostly Latino, Spanish-speaking students, as well as a mix of ESL and general education students of varying grade levels, what they thought and felt about Faulkner’s ESL program. While some second-generation, Spanish-
speaking students felt that the slow pace was helpful to them, particularly to assist them in their English language social interaction with peers, others did not:

**Jorge:** Basically, like I’m sitting next to kids since the second grade that just came to the country two weeks ago and I didn’t – I was born here. And I feel that just because English isn’t your first language at home or isn’t spoken in your home, "oh, you should be in ESL" or "oh, this kid he doesn’t know English at all, and look at his last name".... And I just think that they should give us a try at least at a non-ESL class, see how we do. ... a lot of us that are in ESL now will prove to people wrong and that we can go to the level of, you know, kids that have been born here or kids that have been speaking English their whole life, even kids that weren’t even born here. Just because of the color of our skin or by our last name or by the language that we’re speaking at home that we can do anything that we can put our minds to and that’s what we do.

**C.B.M.:** But you think that people don’t believe that you can do it.

**Jorge:** I really – honestly, I don’t think people believe that we can – the test scores say it all. But that’s because we’re tired of it at one point, you know what I mean? (Focal Group Transcript, May 2010).

Jorge’s reference to test scores was telling. As explored in depth in the previous chapter, the discourse around the EL-designated students being unmotivated was tied to their poor performance on state and district tests. Here, Jorge indicates that the students were tired of taking the tests which had something to do with their low scores.

Other students in the class felt similarly to Jorge.

**Paulina:** I’m like until 6th grade in ESL, and then 7th to the 9th grade, I wasn’t and I did good. I had like above a C plus in my English classes. And this year, they just put me in a ESL class and I’m like, what’s going on, like I’ve been doing good in my regular classes; why am I in ESL?

**C.B.M.:** So you were out of the class for two years or out of this program for two years and you were doing fine in your regular classes and you were put back into the class? Do you want to be there?

**Paulina:** Not really because it really makes me feel dumb.

**C.B.M.:** It makes you feel dumb.
Paulina: Especially on a test because it says like circle the line or like under – which one’s the pattern, one of these things is different, or something like that. (Focal Group Transcript, May 2010).

As Paulina’s comments indicate, students who had been moved out of ESL could be moved back into the class if they failed the California English Language Development Test (CELDT)—an annual test that is required for any students who tell the school that they speak a language other than English at home.49 As one of the students told me during the focus group, his father has listed English as his first language in one school he had attended and he was not put into ESL classes; at Faulkner High School, his family listed Spanish and he was placed in ESL.

The second-generation students interviewed were acutely aware that their fate was mostly determined by a test; as another student said, even his parents couldn’t get him out of the ESL program after coming to the school and speaking with the administration. So why couldn’t the youth simply pass the test and exit the program? While there is no firm data to explain that phenomenon, most of the teachers at Faulkner High assumed—and reported—that they found the second-generation students lacking in motivation.

Student motivation among the “lifers” was a major area of concern for teachers. As discussed in depth in the last chapter, EL-designated students were described as academically unmotivated to the point of apathy. During the professional development session, when asked what the challenges presented by teaching EL-designated students were, a White male teacher who appeared to be in his mid-thirties vocalized the popular perception of the EL-designated

49 The year after this data was collected the assistant principal and ESL guidance counselor met with ESL students and parents and impressed upon them the critical importance of testing. Test results rose dramatically and some students were finally able to exit the program. In a follow-up interview, the ESL guidance counselor told me that she thought the students just did not know the connection between the test and their position as an ESL student, and hadn’t been taking the tests seriously. What was not apparent was how much the students’ were enacting their own resistance to the tests (in the form of not participating or failing the tests) that they saw as undermining their worth and intellectual value.
students when he said: “I think the problem is student apathy. They don’t do their homework. And they don’t use the support system in place.” Another teacher, an older White man, explained that student motivation was attributable to the students’ “culture”. He said, “the problem is their culture. There is no sense of urgency....this isn’t only a problem with the Spanish, but now with other cultures too.” But in other conversations, particularly with those teachers who had more contact with the ESL youth, explanations of the youth’s lack of motivation were attributed more to schooling structure than to students’ culture. During a conversation with the ESL coordinator for the middle school, it was explained that the EL-designated students had spent years together in the same classes. This was felt to “create problems in their community” because the students had become “complacent.” One ESL teacher viewed the issue of EL-designated students’ motivation as a consequence of the school structure, and not the students' Latino “culture”. She called the students “chatty” and viewed it as natural teenage behavior:

They [the teachers] blame it on the fact that these students have just been together all their lives and they are pals, like there is a camaraderie... but I also hear honors teachers say, the reason my honors classes are so chatty is because they have been together this entire time. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Despite the measured views of some of the ESL teachers, student motivation was of primary relevance to the perceptions of the overall teaching staff. Yet, as verbalized some of the teachers, and perceived some of the students, motivation became a proxy for culture, and culture became a proxy for Latino, Spanish-speaking culture. Yet even for teachers who did not contribute “cultural” values to the way second-generation students experienced their learning, language differences were still perceived as a challenge, rather than a resource, for academic learning. This perception was strong, despite decades of research that shows the benefits of

The attitudes of the teachers toward the language learners as a whole contributed to a climate that racialized language and immigration. In a teacher survey, staff (teachers, counselors and instructional aides) was asked about the benefits of different kinds of diversity in the classroom. In the chart below, it is demonstrated how teachers more easily saw the benefit of racial differences to their classrooms, but were divided on whether linguistic diversity could be a resource in their classroom, was a neutral factor, or was a conflict in their classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>CONFLICT</th>
<th>CONFLICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>Percentages</td>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>Percentages</td>
<td>Counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Diversity (N=61)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Diversity</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Teachers' attitudes toward diversity in their classrooms
Notable in the table above is the difference in how linguistic vs. racial diversity is viewed as conflictual for the classroom, with almost 40% of teachers viewing language diversity as problematic, versus 8% viewing racial diversity as problematic.

This is not to contradict the real teaching and learning issues that having youth of varying English language abilities can present to a teacher with little ESL training, but rather to show how the teachers' cultural scripts contributed to the overall racing of immigration at Faulkner High School. In the focus group I conducted, students verbalized their experience of how language, culture, and race became conflated and ultimately a mediator of their academic trajectories:

**Raul:** Like she was saying like they do put us into a category. You know, so and so is Latino and she doesn’t go to college. So you know, these kids aren’t going to college. And how do they expect us to go into college and get naturally good grades if we’re

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50 N represents the number of teachers who answered the item.
spending our whole time learning slowly the way that ESL teaches it, you know what I mean.

We got to catch up to the level of other kids in non-ESL classes, you know what I mean. You got to learn, you know – you got to learn Shakespeare... and different other books. And I mean my girlfriend’s in an honors class and she’s reading books that my cousin that was in ESL didn’t get to read until she was in 12th grade. Now she is in her sophomore year in college and she’s reading those books that my girl is reading. And it’s like, wait, I’m not going to read this book till I get in college? I took my girlfriend’s book and I read it. And I could read this, you know, there’s barely one word in here that I don’t understand. And she’s reading this and even she barely knows any – you know, of the words in there, you know. I just feel that we also need to catch up to the level of the students that there are in non-ESL classes. There are some kids that move out of ESL before we do. And I’m sorry to say, but they’re not Latinos.

C.B.M.: They’re not Latinos.

Raul: They’re not Latinos. Some of them are Asians. We know way more English than they do and they get out of ESL classes easier than we do, you know what I mean. And I don’t think that’s fair. I don’t think – it’s not right. It’s not just – we do the same amount of work they do and they got out easier and we stay in here for three more years. That’s just the way it is, you know what I mean. It’s – yeah, it is racist. Well, I think it is racist. And there was this European kid in our class. He was from Czechoslovakia and he was in ESL for –

Juan: A year.

Raul: -- a little more – yeah, for a year. He had a full accent and everything. He did not know a drop of English. He – I don’t think he ever met anybody in – back in Czechoslovakia that even spoke English. And he did – you know, he gets inside the class and he gets out in a year. And people like me, and Juan, and I think about the whole class have spoken English almost every single day of our life. And we’re here in the ESL from preschool or kindergarten to college. (Focal Group Transcript, May 2010).

As Raul expressed, he was acutely aware of the academic opportunities he was missing because of his ESL status—Shakespeare, rigorous classes, equal college preparation. He believed in his own ability to achieve, and was also perceptive about how linguistic profiling and language determination was differentiated along racial and generational lines. His perception mirrors a 2008 study that described how Latinos (here termed "Hispanics") are in ESL programs longer than Caucasians and Asians.
In contrast to gender and SES, there was a much larger variation in percentages and median time spent in the ELL category across racial/ethnic categories. These ranged between 21% for Hispanics to 55% for Asians and Caucasians...It took almost 10 semesters for Hispanic students to be reclassified..., while it took half as much time for Asian and Caucasian students to be reclassified (Abedi, 2008).

Raul's cynical joke: “I don’t think he ever met anybody back in Czechoslovakia that even spoke English” is the everyday response that complements the broader brushstrokes of the statistics above. Other youth showed the same kind of precocious awareness of how the organization of their learning constrained them: in a 10th grade English class, two second-generation, Latino students were deeply in discussion. One complained about how a teacher had addressed him:

Ms. C said our class is ESL. There are girls in that class who don’t speak English. I was like, I speak English! (Fieldnotes, January 21st, 2010).

The boy was clearly frustrated at his enrollment in a class where, as he saw, some people did not speak English and thus needed the class, whereas he spoke English and did not need the class. As evidenced by the reflections of several of the Latino EL-designated students, second-generation youth experienced structural discrimination based on racial, cultural and linguistic attributes, and couched in teachers' rhetoric around motivation. This positioning was probably a reason for the second-generation's hostility toward the newly arrived immigrant youth. As Valenzuela (1999) demonstrated in her ethnography of Mexican-American youth in a high school in Texas, a “politics of difference” emerged between the Mexican-American and first-generation immigrant students; this politics of difference hinged on language and culture. Valenzuela delineated how the marginalized ethnic minority stance taken toward the dominant culture on the part of the second-generation youth diverged from the purpose of the recently-
arrived immigrants, who viewed themselves as having gone through a great deal to reach the U.S. and thus as hard-workers concerned with learning English and with no need to elaborate a Mexican identity. She writes, “In the absence of sustained effort toward cross-generational communication and solidarity, relationships… are at risk” (p. 170). Likewise, documenting language socialization practices in an ESL classroom in Hawaii, research found that EL-designated students positioned each other to avoid being positioned by the teacher (Talmy, 2004). Specifically, second-generation youth mocked the “FOBs” (Fresh off the Boats) in ways that indexed the cultural production of language discrimination at the macro-level and created a “linguistic identity hierarchy.” The public teasing and linguistic identity hierarchy that Talmy observed in Hawaii also occurred at Faulkner High and hurt recently-arrived youth emotionally, socially, and academically.

“The non-American kids.” The recently-arrived youth, particularly the Latinos, seemed conflicted about their experience of linguistic micro-aggressions at the hands of their cultural counterparts. Some of the youth reported experiencing race-based bullying (conflating the terms race and culture):

It’s a Latino to Latino problem because Latinos think they are the best. They think they are better than other people just because they were born here or they speak more English. They are going to make fun of you because you have a different culture, even if you speak the language properly. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Others asserted that it wasn’t a race or generational problem, but simply a linguistic divide between those who spoke English and those who did not:

It’s not a Latino issue—Latinos hang out with each other. It’s a language issue.

(Student Interview, May 2010).
Frequently, the recently-arrived youth expressed that language was tied to the perception of their intelligence, just as the second-generation youth had expressed elsewhere. A 17-year-old Farsi speaker said:

In Iran, people are warm. Here, American people are cold. They think because I am an immigrant, because I don’t talk natural, that I am stupid. (Fieldnotes, November 17, 2009).

Linguistic profiling and public teasing were devastating for some of the youth, even shaping their academic participation. As Maritza, a Mexican-American 10\textsuperscript{th} grade student who had been in the U.S. for about three years continued:

On the day of the presentation I didn’t go—I was absent, I was sick! I didn’t want to hear some comments. With biology, you have to present projects. I get sick, I go to the nurse... because I know they are going to be like, “what are you saying. Can you explain? We don’t understand that part.” What the heck, I am doing my best effort to explain to everyone. And it is kinda scary for me to stand up in front of everyone who is going to judge you because you don’t know how to speak well. At the end everyone is going to make fun of you, and you are going to fail the test or project anyway. (Student Interview, May 2010).

As Maritza explained, her fear of standing up and presenting her work in her biology class led her to skip those days on which she knew she would have to be on stage. Maritza’s perception that she was being judged, coupled with her belief that she wouldn’t pass the project anyway, was enough to keep her out of school or avoid that particular class by making up an excuse to go to the nurse's office. Her approach to dealing with the linguistic discrimination she received seemed out of character. Maritza was a bold, tough girl who was a natural leader in her ESL class and fiercely protective of the other immigrant students. As she reported in her interview, she was saucy enough that her classmates generally left her alone, or befriended her and bowed to her will. Yet in this instance, the strength of the discrimination that Maritza perceived in her biology class led her to disengage with a school that she
otherwise enjoyed attending. The racialization of languages other than English hindered other youth from fully participating in what the school had to offer as well, like joining after school clubs or taking elective classes. A 12th grade Korean boy spoke of his regret in not taking any art classes during his high school experience; he described himself as shy, but his shyness manifested itself around being able to speak English to a standard that he desired.

The complexities of participating in a multi-ethnic, multilingual mainstream were clearly seen in peer and teacher-student interactions around language. The non-Spanish speaking immigrant youth did not experience the cultural conflict with the second-generation youth from their own regions of the world—perhaps because non-Spanish, non-English speakers did not experience the same kind of devaluing by the adults at Faulkner High School. Rather, the direct opposite happened: a regional identity emerged among peer groups of mixed generational status. It was reported in interviews that the Korean youth hung out with the Japanese students, the Ethiopian and Ethiopian-American students formed a single gender (girls) clique that spoke in English and Amharic, and that youth from South Asia and the Middle East spent time together. Regionally based peer groups and regional culture will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

The importance of speaking English was a subtle message that minoritized language speakers (non-English, non-Spanish speakers) used to regulate each other. One young woman discussed how her multinational group of friends, mostly Urdu speakers, had decided to stop speaking Urdu:

This year we started speaking English because some of my friends said they don’t feel really good speaking Urdu in front of the people who is... this guy, he is Pakistani but born here. He doesn’t speak Urdu. That’s why this year some of my friends said “DON’T
speak Urdu in front of those people. It doesn’t matter if you speak alone with us, but be respectful [to them].” (Student Interview, March 2010).

As the young woman narrated, her group of friends had been accustomed to speaking Urdu together. Yet in this new academic year, the group decided, at the urging of one friend, to begin to speak in English together. The friend rationalized his urging because they had a new member of their peer group who was nationally (and probably religiously) connected, but not linguistically connected. There was a subtle political dimension to their peer group decision.

The young woman continued:

I don’t know why [we speak English]. I don’t understand the concept. Last year I just spoke Urdu, it didn’t matter. But we know that other people think— you are living in this country, speak English. That’s why my friend said that. (Student Interview, March 2010).

As the girl explained, she did not understand why they had to speak English, as Urdu was once a way for her to meet new friends. Indeed, as she told me later in the interview, by their speaking Urdu freely, other Urdu speakers would approach her and her friends and join the group. Yet over time the group had become aware of outside censor (“we know what other people think”) and felt pressure to speak English. Thus, the clique self-regulated to meet the standards of the monolingual, English speaking community.

“The non-American kids” response to their positioning in the school.

There was a range of strategies practiced by the immigrant youth in response to the culture of the school. Wegner (1998) writes that as we go through successive forms of participation, our identities form trajectories within and across communities of practice; identities are defined with respect to the interaction of multiple convergent and divergent trajectories. (p. 154). The recently-arrived immigrant youth grouped themselves roughly by their relationship
to the community of practice in which they participated. Youth practiced a competent trajectory, or an outbound trajectory, or moved somewhere in between these more defined states.

![Diagram showing competent trajectory and outbound trajectory]

Figure 17: Strategies by which youth related to their community of practice

**Competent community members.** As Wegner conceptualizes, membership in a community translates into an identity as a form of competence (1998, p. 153). To be competent means to be in familiar territory in a community of practice, to experience competency and to be recognized as competent, to know how to engage with others, to understand the enterprise, and to share resources used to communicate and to go about activities (p. 152.) Those youth who demonstrated community competence immersed themselves in a group of peers who were culturally and linguistically similar to them, and generally reported being happy at the school. Notably, these were the same students who were clearly engaged in the life of the ESL classroom, namely, Juan Carlos, Maritza, and Alejandro among the transcultural brokers, and Sol, Misericordia, and Mahlet among the observers monolingual speakers. Of this group, only Mahlet was a non-Spanish speaker. She joined a group of Amharic-English bilingual speakers of mixed African origins (i.e., Ethiopians, Ethiopian-Americans, natives of Angola, and an Ethiopian-Italian), who were protective of her, meeting her during the passing period to take her to her classes.
Alejandro described how the presence of Spanish among his peers made him comfortable and lessened his fear of speaking English.

The beginning was hard. I was like scared. Because when I came here, when I have to go to the market or wherever to do something like pay, I was like uh-oh is going to be difficult! I get nervous.... now I am nervous but not like in the beginning. (Student Interview, June, 2011).

Alejandro described his fear of using English in ordinary interactions when he had arrived in the U.S. two years prior. When I asked Alejandro about how speaking Spanish in his ESL classroom helped him, he said:

It’s like... when... I speak Spanish it’s like I lose the fear, the scared, you know? Confianza. I don’t know but that does something. Because in my other classes when nobody speak Spanish I don’t like to speak English because... I don’t know why. But when there are people who speak Spanish, I, I speak English, you know? (Student Interview, June 2010).

While unclear about his motivations, Alejandro was clear that being in the presence of other Spanish speakers helped him feel more confianza, loosely translatable as "trust", that he could speak English. Alejandro had come to Faulkner High School with no previous school records, and had reported spending the previous year out of school. He was already 18, and the assistant principal and his guidance counselor made an effort to get a special exception in place to give him an extra year to earn enough credits to graduate. He also received a great deal of attention from the instructional aide in the ESL classroom, who befriended him and provided emotional support after his father died. Interestingly, Alejandro was one of the only students I talked to who reported that he had not experienced anyone making fun of him for speaking Spanish. It is likely that the direct effort of adults at Faulkner High to provide him with individualized socio-emotional and academic support attributed to Alejandro’s ability to feel like part of a community at Faulkner High. In addition, he had a strong group of Spanish-
speaking friends at school. Unlike Alejandro, other students who demonstrated community competency had experienced language discrimination; still, they were able to find strength and solace in their community of Spanish speakers.

*Outbound community members*⁵¹. Some immigrant students reacted to the culture of the school by forming their identities around an outbound trajectory. This manifested in several ways; some youth left school, while others lingered at the edges of the academic and social life of the school in a liminal state.

![Diagram showing Liminal Participants and School leavers with names: Osvaldo, Ana Paula, Mehti, Amaglia, Paloma.](image)

**Figure 18: Students who liminally participated, or left Faulkner High School**

*Liminal Participants*. Some of the immigrant youth reacted to the culture of the high school by taking a stance that could be described as “waiting it out,” or liminal participation. For example, Mehti, an older teen from Iran who enrolled in the school half way through the academic year, recounted to me through a peer translator how he had made the decision to enroll in Faulkner High School.

I really thought that if I came here, for instance, I can find foreign friends, friends other than Iranians. Maybe, for instance, I could find a girlfriend. The second reason was that I wanted to improve my language. *Ke motaasefaneh farsim behtar shod.* Unfortunately, my Farsi got better! [Laughs]. (Student Interview, May 2010).

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⁵¹ These particular categories are *etic,* and based on the categories of participation discussed by Wenger 1998.
Mehdi quickly found that his goals to make friends and improve his language skills would not come to pass. He complained that in his classes, students spoke mostly Spanish, and that the students in general (not the other immigrant students), did not befriend him. Hence, he decided to leave school at the end of the academic year, without graduating, and later enrolled in a local community college. In the meantime, he attended classes, although he spent a good deal of time with his head down on his desk. He took the blame on himself:

The teachers are good. The lessons are good... but right now my mind is a bit troubled. It's messed up. I can’t study a lot right now. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Blaming himself as “messed up” (e.g., what could alternatively be called homesick and in culture shock) and thus unable to study, Mehdi released the school and its teachers of responsibility for his inability to access the peer culture and learn English. Other liminal participants were not as kind in their assessment of the culture of the school and its impact on the content of their schooling. As Ana Paula, a young Brazilian woman expressed:

My grades aren’t good now, because I am not coming. In Brazil, I always go to school because I loved school. I loved it, my friends! [Now] I don’t feel like coming to school. (Student Interview, June 2010).

Ana Paula was frequently absent from class, and when present was often sleepy and drifted in and out of lessons. When awake, she was a bright and lively presence and demonstrated a curious mind. Unlike Mehdi, she placed the blame for her disengagement squarely on the shoulders of the school. In fact, she blamed the school for her friend's (Paloma’s) decision to leave and return to Chile, her home country. Paloma also held the alienating culture of the school, and particularly the unkindness of her non immigrant peers, responsible for her decision to leave.
Leavers. Paloma and Amaglia, from Chile and Mexico respectively, both left Faulkner High School because they were unable to experience a sense of belonging at Faulkner High School. Paloma attributed her leaving to the coldness of her peers.

In Chile when there was a new student, everyone wanted to be friends with that person, but it is not the same here. (Student Interview, May 2011).

Paloma and Ana Paula both related that Paloma’s decision to leave Faulkner High School and return to school in Chile was a direct result of her inability to achieve a sense of belonging among her peers at the school. While Paloma had a group of international friends with whom she spent time on the weekends (i.e., Ana Paula and Naaz, a young Iranian woman), and while she had friends in the ESL class she attended, these pockets of social support were not enough; she was unable to access the dominant culture of the school. Even more dramatically, Amaglia’s leaving of Faulkner High School, only a few months into my fieldwork, signals the critical nature of making belonging a central part of school life.

Amaglia. Amaglia was a tragic case and the impact of her leaving on her teachers and peers was sudden and dramatic, although not particularly long-lasting. The young Mexican woman had come to Faulkner High School in the 10th grade; she had enough credits from her schooling in Mexico that she could have graduated early. During her first year, she had done well. Then, over the summer, she had what her guidance counselor called a “drastic” change in her appearance—she cut and colored her hair and began to wear fashionable clothes. Her teacher recounted how she had come to school and sobbed for the first few months that she attended. During her second year, she began to regularly skip class. She told her teachers that the English language was “too hard” and asked them to put her back a level in her English language class. The guidance counselor told me that she “was drowning” because she did not
understand her classes. The school arranged a lighter course load for her, but after 15 weeks she still had no grades in her classes because of her absences. During an early data gathering activity, her responses were alarming to me, and to her teacher:

Figure 19: Written on the corner of the paper

I don’t know what will be happen with my life.

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52 This data gathering activity was called a "life map" and has been done successfully by other researchers working with immigrant teenagers. The goal is to have the students plan, and then draw a map showing their life histories. The map can then serve as a prompt for interviewing. Amaglia did not draw a life map. I gave her response on the written planning sheet to her teacher. Several weeks later, Amaglia did not return to school. I spoke with both the ESL guidance counselor and ESL coordinator about the response on her life map, but the situation, at that point, was out of their hands because she had been officially taken out of school by a family member.
When I lived in my country I felt kinda happy because I was lived with my family. Coming to the United States was sad because I miss my parents, I didn't like the language. I think people in Los Angeles treat immigrants bad. Being an immigrant makes me feel really bad because I don't speak English. I would describe myself as a student who like a irresponsible student. Being in [ESL] classes at school it is hard for me because sometimes I don't understand. My friends at school are important to me because they aren't important for me. One difference between how I act at school and how I act with my family at home is... I feel the same. One thing I wish I could do at school is... I don't want do nothing. My biggest dream in life is to... I don't have dreams.

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Some words have been edited from the photograph to protect the identities of the participants.
I abandoned my dreams cause I didn't want to stay with my parents.
I wanted to see my parents.
No body remembered my birthday.
Because I didn't have money and I had to work.
I felt really bad.
I don't like the school.

By her own admission, Amaglia felt that her status as an immigrant at the school was a source of pain. She cited language, missing her parents, and her inability to access the curriculum as the reason that she did not feel good. Her focus on language was revealing; she repeated that speaking English was hard, that she felt bad because she did not speak English, and even characterized herself as irresponsible. Unlike Amaglia's situation, in classrooms where teachers and staff explain the metacognitive process of language learning, explaining for example, that it take 5-7 years to learn a language well, and that bilingualism can entail emotions of loss, students may have a greater ability to be resilient and see themselves as in process, rather than as failures.
In subsequent parts of the data gathering activity, Amaglia reported severe feelings of isolation, although fieldnotes show that her peers took interest in her well being, asking her tenderly where she had been after her long absences. When I brought her report to the attention of her teacher, Ms. Patton, and the instructional aide, they expressed little surprise. Ms. Patton pulled Amaglia aside to speak with her, but did not take further action. To be fair, they both reported having had previous conversations with her about seeking psychological help; the instructional aide told me that the social workers/ counselors that the school provided were “useless.” It seemed that both adults felt helpless and incapable of helping Amaglia.

While there was a distinctive measure of concern by the adults in the school regarding her welfare (the guidance counselor told me that she had had many “confidential” conversations with Amaglia and that the school “did the best we could with what we knew”), harsh disciplinary actions regarding her frequent absences taken by the school during the Fall of 2009 was regarded by the ESL coordinator to be the impetus for which Amaglia had been waiting. Shortly after she was told that if she missed any more school she would be fined hundreds of dollars for truancy, her brother-in-law, himself barely out of his teens, came to school to withdraw her. He told the school she was returning to Mexico, but her peers in the ESL class gave Ms. Patton a different account. She was still in town, they said, but not in school. After Amaglia left, one of her teachers approached the guidance counselor, distraught. “I was just starting to get through to her,” he said.

Amaglia is the most dramatic and tragic case of those students I have categorized here as liminal participants and school leavers. Sadly, both the literature on the drop out rates of immigrant youth, which have been described as reaching crisis level (Bridgeland, et al., March 2006), and my own background working with immigrant youth, inform me that her story is not
uncommon. Recently-arrived immigrant youth are some of the most vulnerable to dropping out.

Researcher Aida Walqui (2009) writes:

High dropout rates among language-minority secondary students are one indication that many schools are failing to adequately support the needs of these students. The belief that student dropout is due to a lack of proficiency in English often leads educators to overlook the economic, cultural, academic, and personal issues that immigrant students must confront on a daily basis. (p. 1).

A major study on immigration in 33 communities across the state of California found that one out of four immigrant students in their sample had considered dropping out of school; undocumented students were four times as likely to consider this (Olsen, 1988). Furthermore, the study found that the most-echoed reasons for considering drop out were related to the children’s immigration experiences: “lack of family support and worries about separation from family or those family members left in the homeland; uncertainty about the stay in the United States; tremendous conflicting pressures to succeed academically as well as to help with family burdens; discouragement about fulfilling graduation requirements; hostility and prejudice felt in the school environment (Olsen, 1988). Belongingness along linguistic, cultural, and academic lines is critically related to retaining immigrant students in secondary schools.

Amaglia’s story demonstrates the importance of a strong community for recent-arrival immigrant youth. It is urgent for schools to put excellent socio-emotional care into place for their recent-arrival immigrant teenagers, and create structures that support peer culture that is welcoming and inclusive. Academic learning depends on emotional well-being. Language is an integral part of that well-being.

The majority of the youth who expressed competent community participation were bilingual or Spanish-only speakers who were supported by their bilingual friends, whereas the
majority of the youth who were liminal participants or leavers were not bilingual. Language and belonging were integral experiences in the daily life of the ESL classroom. Speaking practices were integral to: 1) the formation of a successful community of practice, and 2) the youths' cultural participation in that community of practice. Now, I turn to a closer examination of the social life and social dynamics of the ESL classroom.

Speaking Practices in an English as a Second Language Classroom

In the previous section on how the hearing of immigration impacted the experience of the immigrant youth in the larger school setting, I noted how the recent-arrival students felt excluded in general peer culture, and even targeted by the second-generation Latino youth. I described how the youth felt that their speaking was linguistically profiled by their peers; the youth gave details of the everyday language-oriented micro-aggressions that they experienced. The youth strategically reacted to the exclusionary peer culture in three ways: a) by developing a strong and inclusive community of peers who were closely related in culture and language; b) by liminally participating at the school, or spending their time waiting for their high school experience to pass; c) by leaving the school altogether, thus acting out a rejection of the school’s culture. Many of these students experienced some relief from the language discrimination they experienced in their other classes in Room #47, Jennifer Patton’s classroom where ESL levels 1 and 2 met daily for direct language instruction. The majority of the students in this class were recent-arrival immigrants, a change from the other content area ESL classes where level 3 students—many of them second-generation—tended to overwhelm the presence of the recent-arrival students.
The community of Room #47 provided a space of inclusion and protection for many of the students, far from the public teasing and alienation they experienced in the larger community. Laughter was frequent in the ESL classroom and led to a warm sense of community. In addition to typical teenage jokes related to bodily functions, relations with the opposite sex, and the like, the youth humorously engaged with the texts and materials presented to them through the curriculum, and engaged in meaning-making that canvassed politics, their own cultural resources, and relationships. Sometimes, this occurred through making connections, personal or otherwise, to a text.

After the group read the essay, the teacher asked questions about the events in the text. “What is the problem for the fish?” she asked. “The fish are separated from their family!” Osvaldo interjected. The class laughed; the teacher joked back, “Ha ha! The fish are crying!” Then, she went on to discuss the environmental issues the fish were facing. (Fieldnotes, October 20, 2009).

Osvaldo frequently made these kinds of connections, and found quirky, offbeat ways to make his peers laugh. His humor could be oddly savvy, and mentions of controversial California social policy, such as Proposition 8 or greencards, reflected his awareness of the current political dramas of the day. In this instance, connecting the concept of “problem” to family separation was poignant in a room of young people who had reported to me that many of them had experienced years apart from their mothers, fathers, brother, and sisters because of the migration process. Family separation is common among immigrants: researchers found that 79% of their sample population (N= 407) were separated from their father at some point during the migratory process, and 55% were separated from their mother (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). Room #47 was a safe, familial space for some students, and concurrently a space of exclusion, or indeterminate belongingness, for other students. In fact, the ESL classroom was both a microcosm of the politics of language that played out in the larger school setting, and a
retreat from the larger school setting and protector of native language use. The ESL classroom, therefore, was a complex space where belonging could be a double-edged experience.

In the following section I discuss three groups of students\(^5^4\) who were members in this local community of practice. The purpose of this micro-ethnographic description is to show in detail how their status as language learners is an asset to their learning ability and social sophistication, rather than a problem to be overcome as is broadly perceived by schools and members of society.

I group the community of practice participants in three broad brush-stroke groups:

**Transcultural Brokers**
- **Definition:** Speakers who understood and produced Spanish and English to a proficiency level of everyday usage who leveraged their language skills to coordinate action and meaning among the community participants.
- **Speakers:** Juan Carlos, Maritza, Alejandro, instructional aide.

**Peripheral Brokers**
- **Definition:** Speakers of primarily either English, or Spanish, with some emergent capabilities in a second language, who engaged from the periphery.
  - **Spanish Speakers:** Misericordia, Sol, Kristina, Paloma
  - **English Speakers:** Jennifer Patton (Teacher), Osvaldo, Graciela
  - **Portuguese and Spanish:** Ana Paula

**Observers**
- **Definition:** A speaker of a language other than English or Spanish, either monolingual or bilingual who, by virtue of their silence, existed on the borders of the classroom interactions
- **Speakers:** Srinak [Thai], Mahlet [Amharic], Naaz [Farsi], Mehdi [Persian]

Figure 22. Schematic of the participants in Room #47, by role

\(^5^4\) It is my hope that through my categorization of groups of students by their roles in the social organization, rather than by language (e.g., “ESL student”) that this work can push against some of the deficit ways in which immigrants are perceived (e.g., as a deficit language learner rather than as a participant and contributor).
I now turn to a closer analysis of how these three groups functioned in the everyday life of the classroom.

**Inclusion and exclusion through language code choice**

When I conducted interviews with student participants at the end of the year, Juan Carlos was a natural person to ask for assistance during interviews with Spanish-speaking students. Indeed, Juan Carlos had been helping most of the other young people make sense of their experiences in the classroom all year long. A natural leader, he would not only translate, or broker, when asked by a student or teacher, but also took the time to check in with his peers during classroom activities. Like Juan Carlos, other students also took the initiative to translate for their peers, and their initiative happened in different ways. At other times, students would pool together their linguistic resources to make sense of a particular text. Frequently, this resource pooling was spontaneous: a student would notice another student sitting quietly and ask whether he or she understood the current activity or conversation. When the answer was no, several students would issue directives and explanations in English and Spanish. The teacher had become adjusted to such interruption over time and would wait patiently for the conversation to end. Students also engaged in sharing their cultures with one another, through word play and by teaching the non-Spanish speakers to speak Spanish.

It had taken some time for this thick soup of informal, student-regulated speaking practices to cohere into normative classroom behavior. Jennifer Patton was a second year teacher with the district. She was originally reluctant to allow her students to speak so freely in the class, yet over time the students grew bolder with their needs and desires. By Christmas, the classroom space had grown into a dynamic community in which different kinds of speaking
practices flourished. As Ms. Patton grew more comfortable with the use of multiple languages in the classroom, she began to encourage the youth to help each other with the curricular work by translating words into Spanish. This was a shift from her earlier attempts to stem translation; in September, Ms. Patton had scolded a student saying, “If you use a translator, I will take points off. I don’t know why you don’t know what ‘envelope’ means.”

When asked what helped them learn in their class, most of the Spanish speakers immediately noted the speaking practices as a critical component of their learning, and of their developing friendship and a strong community. Maritza explained how she enjoyed being able to help her classmates who spoke less English.

ESL 2 students can help ESL 1. That’s kinda tight because back in the middle school, I didn’t speak anything, like, and people didn’t even, like, get close to you or help you... or explain things to me, you know like how we do in ESL 1 and ESL 2. And yeah... it’s pretty awesome, I guess. (Student Interview, May 2010).

As Maritza explained, she felt good about being able to help her classmates because in the larger community the EL-designated students were not assisted in their learning by native English speaking peers. This, Maritza explained, made it challenging for her to sit in mainstream classes. By way of contrast, helping each other access the curriculum and classroom processes was a hallmark of this ESL classroom at Faulkner High School, a practice that Maritza was not alone in thinking was “awesome.”

**Forming community through speaking practices: inclusion and exclusion**

Over the course of my year in the ESL classroom, I found that speaking practices determined who was able to participate fully in the life of the classroom and community. The language that a student spoke dictated whether or not that student was able to take part in
classroom learning and social participation. How much talk occurred, and in what language, is detailed in Table 8 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed talk by language</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage of total classroom talk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed talk in Spanish and English</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed talk in only English</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed talk in only Spanish</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed talk in any non-Spanish, non-English interaction</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Language choice breakdown of any observed, and recorded, “talk” interactions in Ms. Patton’s ESL class, 2009-2010

Students, the teacher (a native English speaker), and the instructional aide (a native Spanish speaker) interacted with each other in blends of language codes: English-only; Spanish-only; English and Spanish mix; and languages other than English or Spanish (termed here as “minoritized” or “non-English, non-Spanish”). Interactions which used the English language were most prevalent; the curriculum was primarily delivered in English by the teacher. Still, English-only interactions represented less than half of all interactions. Over a quarter of the classroom interaction was conducted in Spanish and English through translation and occasional code-switching. Notably, students who spoke both Spanish and English were able to participate in 100% of the interactions in the classroom because they could participate in all English-only interactions, all Spanish-only interactions, and all English-Spanish interactions. Conversely, English only speakers could access 76.8% of classroom conversation, and Spanish only speakers could access 47.3% of classroom interactions. The Thai, Amharic, and Farsi speakers could access only as much as they were able to understand in either English or Spanish, since the non-Spanish, non-English interactions were mostly in French, a language Ms. Patton spoke and occasionally used to demonstrate certain rhetorical or grammatical points. As such, participating in the life of the community in this ESL classroom was organized around the ability

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55 One count equals one turn taken in a conversation.
to communicate in speaking practices; here, the ability to participate and belong was promoted or hindered by one’s ability to speak both English and Spanish.

**Inclusion.** In the following example of language brokering, an interaction around a textual reading showed the way in which language was utilized in speaking practices.

The teacher paired the students up to discuss the story. Osvaldo began to explain the story to a Chilean student who rarely spoke in class, and spoke very little English. He appealed to the teacher: “This is hard because I don’t know Spanish that well. What’s Fall?” Maritza jumped into the conversation, translating, “Verano? Verano [Summer? Summer].” Alejandro turned to her and corrected her, “No, Otoño [No, Fall].” (Fieldnotes, November 29th, 2009).

The students interacting in this example were representative of the spectrum of Spanish speakers who can be loosely grouped into transcultural broker and peripheral broker categories as represented in the previous section: those who spoke mostly English and little to no Spanish (i.e., Osvaldo); those who spoke mostly Spanish and little to no English (i.e., the Chilean student); and those who were more or less Spanish-English bilingual (i.e., Maritza and Alejandro). What the example doesn’t show was the third category of speaker, the observers, who existed to varying degrees on the periphery of the Spanish-speaking student group. The interaction also shows how the teacher, Ms. Patton, occasionally used the linguistic abilities present in the classroom in order to facilitate learning: asking students to translate a text into Spanish helped the students who spoke Spanish only. However, her plan was somewhat challenged by Osvaldo’s inability to speak Spanish to a working degree. Moreover, the observers, who are not represented in this particular vignette, but who were part of that classroom activity, were unable to participate in the activity as set out by the teacher. Wenger writes that participation and non-participation are fluid processes that locate the individual in a community (2000). As demonstrated in the vignette above, three types of students
participated in the classroom based around their language abilities, but the transcultural brokers (e.g., Maritza and Alejandro) participated most in the classroom community, thus operating as the classroom’s synaptic connections.

Commonly, talk in the classroom was a strategy for cultural connection, and found the students engaging in word play.

The teacher gave the next assignment. “Draw six pictures of the Thanksgiving story—you can fold your paper to make small squares to draw them on, like a story board.” Juan Carlos joked quietly, "Like a burrito.” Maritza giggled. Encouraged, Juan Carlos continued, “like a torta.” Maritza picked up the strand: “Fold it again and you have a tortalito!” Juan Carlos responded, “A soft taco.” They were both giggling now. (Fieldnotes, November 29th, 2009).

Here, the youth used the image of folding to toss words back and forth, connecting the food lesson on the quintessential American feast to the food common to both their Mexican heritage. The use of Spanish and bringing cultural connections to the instructional activity indexed the sense of safety the youth had in the classroom space.

**Exclusion.** Wegner writes that the mix of participation and non participation shapes “fundamental aspects of our lives,” such as: how we locate ourselves in a social landscape, what we care about and what we neglect, what we attempt to know and understand and what we choose to ignore, with whom we seek connections and whom we avoid, how we engage and direct our energies, and how we attempt to steer our trajectories (Wenger, 1998). The transcultural brokers had the most choice around how they located themselves in the social landscape, engaged their energies, and steered their trajectories. The non-Spanish, non-English speaking students did not, a situation that was, at times, painful to observe.

The conflict began as the teacher began to put girls into partners to do the activity. When she told Sol, a Mexican, that she would be partnering with Srinak, a young woman from Thailand, Sol broke out into howls of protest. “Noooooo, no, no!” In Spanish, she
tried to make her case, “Ella no entiende nada. Quiero trabajar con Misericordia [She doesn’t understand anything. I want to work with Misericordia].” (Fieldnotes, January 12th, 2010).

Here, a Mexican girl named Sol protested working with Srinak, the sole Thai speaker in the room. Sol used Spanish—the language that only she and the teacher in this moment understood—to make her case. Here, Sol manipulated language (and knowing) as a way to explain not wanting to work with a certain student, and to argue for her desire to work with another native Spanish speaker. Sol claimed “ella no entiende nada” ["she doesn't understand anything"] as her reason for not wanting to work with Srinak. In other words, Sol leveraged the not knowing of Spanish as a reason to work with another Spanish-speaking girl (and her best friend, Misericordia) despite the goal of the activity to acquire English vocabulary, which did not necessitate understanding Spanish. The interaction continued with the teacher’s implicit support of Sol’s desire.

Ms. Patton stared at Sol wordlessly. When Sol paused she said, “No, you are going to work with Srinak.” Sol continued protesting loudly. The members of the classroom watched her. Srinak’s face was absolutely still and betrayed no emotion. The teacher caved, “Ok, then you will work with Mahlet. You have to work with one of them—you can’t work with Misericordia.” Misericordia jumped into the conversation, “No, yo trabajo con Mahlet [No, I'll work with Mahlet].” She picked up a card and turned her back to Sol and the teacher as if to close the conversation. The instructional aide entered the conversation and addressed Sol: “You have to practice English.” Sol capitulated. (Fieldnotes, January 12th, 2010).

Here the teacher directed Sol to work with one of “them”-- one of the observers, giving Sol a choice of whom she could interact; that choice was based on language ability. Jennifer’s use of the word “them” acknowledged and highlighted how the non-Spanish speaking girls were on the margin of the community. While Jennifer and the instructional aide frequently exhorted Sol and Misericordia to use less Spanish, their unofficial use of Spanish in the
classroom sent another message. Further, Misericordia’s choice to work with Mahlet belied Sol’s claim that language could hinder students from working together. The vignette above is not sufficient to yield an interpretation of Sol’s real reasons for not wanting to work with Srinak. However, throughout my time in the classroom, it became clear that Srinak was considered unfashionable and interacted very little with the rest of the classroom community, while, over time, Mahlet became a favorite of the Spanish-speaking girls. Their acceptance of her culminated in the Spring when Sol and Misericordia began to informally tutor Mahlet in Spanish. In this way, language was invoked to exclude one young woman from participating in classroom curriculum (Srinak), while including another (Mahlet). Here, the teacher did not disrupt the way inclusion and exclusion were ordered by the students.

Some of the Spanish-speaking students noted the challenges facing the minoritized non-English, non-Spanish speakers in the ESL classroom and expressed empathy for their situation.

Yo creo que lo sienten mal, porque todo el mundo quieran que recibieran pais, tener algún con hablar y no estar da solo [I think that they feel awkward, because everyone wishes to be welcomed in a country, to have someone to talk with and not to be alone]. (Student Interview, June 2010).

Noting that she believed the minority language students felt badly, the student quoted above explained their situation in terms of isolation and loneliness. As such, she recognized the powerful nature of silence in constituting who participates in, and thus belongs to, a community.

**Peripheral brokers and observers.** While the transcultural brokers existed at the center of the social and academic life of the classroom, dominating the flows of learning and social engagement, the peripheral brokers and observers existed on the periphery to varying degrees. There was universal agreement that Spanish and English were either spoken in equal amounts,
or more Spanish was spoken in the classroom. However, perceptions of the usefulness of bilingual talk varied among speakers. For instance, the two English peripheral brokers, Graciela and Osvaldo, did not seem overly perturbed by the amount of Spanish spoken in the classroom. They had grouped off into their self-described "own little world," and often talked about how the other was their primary support for learning English and for dealing with a stressful life in school. Both students were second-generation Mexican-Americans who had been born in the United States. They were part of a subset of students at Faulkner High who had been caught up in the ESL program for many years, unable to test out, as discussed briefly in the first few sections of this chapter. Graciela and Osvaldo were liminal participants at school in many ways. As Osvaldo and I spoke one Spring afternoon, he told me that he perceived life as dark. The 9th grader had been getting into frequent fights and thought that the rest of high school would be "hell"; he was waiting to graduate so that he could join the army. Yet he described himself as having a certain sense of affinity with the recent-arrival immigrant kids as both they, and he, had “suffered.” His teacher thought that Osvaldo might be dyslexic, and he described “little white pills” that he had had to take in elementary school to help him focus. Yet, he did not want to get any testing for a possible reading disorder as he thought it was better to stay in the ESL class than to be moved to “special classes,” by which I assume he meant the special education program. Thus, he waited through ESL class. As Osvaldo put it:

She [the teacher] has to explain everything and I have to wait for everybody to catch up so, I get bored...I have to get used to it because I am going to stay with them and see them next year for ESL 3. (Fieldnotes, May 6, 2010).

While he verbally noted that he had to get used to the boredom and waiting, his behavior in class communicated something quite different. His constant joking with the teacher (moaning cheerfully “will this hell never end” after Ms. Patton told him to put his book away)
and frequent interruptions and contributions to lessons seemed to demarcate a kind of resistance to the position in which he had been placed. By contrast, Graciela was placid and calm. She also reported a great deal of bullying, much of it sexualized, and a resignation to being in the ESL class.

Well, there are times that I wish I weren’t [in ESL class], but then I look at it like, I have to be in it no matter what. Because I have to improve, I have to start somewhere. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Graciela had internalized that her writing needed significant help, and talked freely about how she had wanted to leave school (drop out) after her 8th grade graduation. Her mother and grandmother had helped her find purpose and she began attending high school; Graciela, like Osvaldo, had a sense of empathy for the challenge facing recent-arrival immigrants because of her own challenging path.

Both Osvaldo and Graciela felt that there was a significant amount of Spanish spoken during the ESL class period. “My own little Spanish class, mixed with ESL”, Graciela said, laughing. They also both noted how Mahlet was being taught to speak Spanish by the bilingual and Spanish peripheral brokers. Neither seemed to resent the amount of Spanish spoken, and talked about learning new Spanish words. Some of the other Spanish peripheral brokers also appreciated the amount of Spanish spoken. Sol and Misericordia frequently joked with the transcultural brokers, and spent time out of school with Juan Carlos and Alejandro. Sol was occasionally frustrated with the amount of English spoken because she couldn’t understand what was being said. Another Spanish-speaking peripheral broker, Kristina, showed an awareness of how it could have repercussions for her English language acquisition:

We speak more Spanish. I try to communicate with Mahlet or Srinak [to practice my English]. I want to learn fast so that I can get into college. (Student Interview, May 2010).
Throughout the year, Kristina made a conscientious effort to speak to Mahlet and Srinak in English. This put her in a position both of elaborating on transcultural codes and facilitating community. Her actions could have been attributable to the amount of pressure Kristina was under to learn English; her aunt and uncle had adopted her in order to bring her to the United States, and she was about to turn 18. She reported having little understanding of how the class credit system worked, whether credits from her school in Colombia were accepted by Faulkner High School, or whether or not she could take summer school classes to make up the credits. Despite this lack of navigational information, she pushed herself to learn English to get into college. Another young woman, an emergent bilingual, reported spending her time solely with other non-English, non-Spanish speakers in order to speak English and learn. Yet later in the same interview, she also reported enjoying speaking in Spanish because she was beginning to forget words, and liked the practice. Thus, those students who had access to the bilingual world of the classroom had to make a purposeful and concerted effort to speak in English, and did so by interacting with the observers.

The observers were more vocal about their dislike of the amount of Spanish used in the classroom. Srinak gave an account of her frustration:

It [Spanish] is a problem for the class. I know Ms. Patton speaks English, but the students don’t speak English. I don’t speak Thai [in school]. Sometimes if someone asks me—ok, I speak Thai. But I don’t want to speak Thai, because, at my house, I speak Thai with my family. But here I want to practice English. I come here and I see the problem for the class, a lot of people speak Spanish: Sol, Misericordia, Kristina... I want to try to speak English. (Student Interview, June 2010).

As Srinak recounted, she viewed the amount of Spanish spoken as problematic for the whole class, and for her. She placed blame squarely on the shoulders of the Spanish-speaking youth;
she cited her own actions and motivation to practice English as the reason why all students should want to speak English—if she wasn’t going to speak Thai in school, then no one else should speak their native language in school either. She also divided languages into two spheres of competencies: Thai, for her, was the language of the home and the family, and English, for her, was the language of the marketplace, in this case, school. It is interesting to note here that Srinak did not have a large and familial school based peer group (like the South Asians, for example), which may have influenced her perspective on what language was proper to use where, and when.

Analytically, the inclusion and exclusion practices occurring in the ESL classroom have several dimensions. Throughout this chapter thus far, I have attempted to draw tentative conclusions around how language was an aspect of belonging, and how that in turn influenced the socio-emotional lives of the students. As discussed throughout this work, students took several different stances toward the use of English and Spanish in the classroom: enjoyment, equivocality, and exasperation. *Enjoyment* was exemplified by most of the transcultural brokers who, able to access both languages fairly equally, demonstrated no real conflict between either learning English or retaining Spanish. This could be attributed to how the transcultural brokers experience language discrimination in the larger school community: to them, the ESL classroom was a safe space where they could speak Spanish and be themselves without experiencing the language based bullying discussed earlier in this chapter. Tolerance was also exemplified by the English speaking peripheral brokers who had access to the rest of their classes in English and seemed passively amused by the amount of Spanish happening in the room.

Secondly, *equivocality* was demonstrated by students who recognized both the benefit of Spanish to their continued learning of the language and the hindrance of Spanish to their
English development. Transcultural brokers and Spanish peripheral brokers also demonstrated equivocality. A few of the Spanish-English transcultural brokers minimized what they viewed as too much Spanish use in the classroom. One student explained that while she had the ability to translate for the Spanish dominant students, she often chose not to because she believed it was bad for their English language development. As such, the student actively positioned herself as a person who was taking charge of her peers’ educational development. Taking on this role as the director of their peers’ learning frequently occurred among the Spanish-English transcultural brokers and greatly facilitated speaking practices around curriculum that occurred in the classroom, a role explored later in this chapter.

Finally, students displayed *exasperation* at the presence of Spanish use in the classroom, as demonstrated by Srinak and Mehdi. Not much data is available to systematically analyze whether or not the minoritized languages were subjected to the same kinds of linguistic micro-aggressions as the students who spoke Spanish. Limited data suggests that they might have been. This, of course, meant that the observers\(^56\) were doubly minoritized, first within the larger English speaking community, and secondly within the Spanish-speaking community of the ESL classroom. Still, the space ultimately functioned as a protector for the EL-designated students who, in both the microcosm of their school and macrocosm of the socioscape of contemporary politics, were stigmatized for their emerging English language proficiency.

\(^{56}\) Their experience of alienation and belonging was complex and layered. While they were minoritized in the ESL classroom, they escaped the political racialization experienced by Mexican-origin youth in the wider social landscape of Los Angeles.
The role of adults in the ESL classroom

In the previous section, I explored how the belonging experiences of the youth, shaped through exclusion and inclusion in classroom community, were organized by language code choice and speaking practices. As described throughout this chapter thus far, there were two adults who participated regularly in the life of the ESL classroom at Faulkner High: Jennifer Patton, the ESL teacher, and Elena Sanchez, the instructional aide assigned to the classroom. Their presence in the room played a complex role in the organization of speaking practices and language choices over the academic year. Both adults used Spanish and English to interact socially and around curriculum with the students, but in deeply divergent amounts as shown in the table below.

![Adult language code choice](image)

Figure 23: Breakdown of language choice and use in the classroom

Figure 23 displays the different languages that the teacher and the instructional aide spoke in the classroom. The graph represents counts of adult turn taking in classroom conversation (see Table 9 for further delineation of adult language use). When the counts were translated into percentages, it became apparent that the teacher spoke mostly in English (88.2%), and minimally in Spanish (11.8%). The direct opposite was true of the instructional
aide who used twice as much Spanish as English (71.1% of talk in Spanish versus 28.9% of talk in English). As noted in the earlier section on the students’ speaking practices, bilingual Spanish-English ability meant that the student occupied a central role in the classroom activity, and through access to the full tableau of classroom interaction, was able to experience full inclusion. While the instructional aide spoke more in Spanish, her capability to speak in both Spanish and English enabled her to participate fully, while the teacher was sometimes relegated to the sidelines of her own classroom, unable to understand the Spanish conversation at hand.

Elena Sanchez worked as an instructional aide in the classroom. A middle-aged Cuban-American married to a Mexican, she contributed greatly to the familial like atmosphere of the classroom. She took a special interest in the Spanish-emergent youth in the classroom, and Ms. Patton often assigned her to work with them; this role promoted her use of Spanish in the classroom. Ms. Sanchez’s persona ranged from maternal to peer, and she took great pleasure in teasing the students in rapid exchanges of both Spanish and English. They, in turn, teased her, inquired about her husband and grown children, and came to her with their problems—mostly in Spanish. She took great pleasure in noting, with a flourish of her hand to her heart, how their problems weighed on her and, while dramatic, her lengthy relationship with the youth demonstrated her deep caring. It was reported that she and a few of the other instructional aides hosted study parties for the youth in her home. Her familiar relationship with the students was met with some frustration on the part of the teacher, who observed that the instructional aide’s presence was hindering the students’ linguistic development through her use of Spanish with them.

Jennifer Patton’s relationship with the students was quite different. Unlike the instructional aide, Ms. Patton displayed an ambivalent stance toward the use of native
language and the student-directed speaking practices. That is to say, she demonstrated both frustration with the use of Spanish in the classroom and promoted the use of native language in the classroom (e.g., Spanish, but also other languages) almost in equal parts. Nevertheless, Ms. Patton did choose to take up Spanish in the classroom, particularly in response to the initiation of her students through asking questions in Spanish, or speaking to her directly in Spanish.

Table 9 shows the patterns of that talk in Spanish and English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Type</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Total English</th>
<th>Initiated interaction (A)</th>
<th>Response or group participation (B)</th>
<th>Total Spanish</th>
<th>Initiated interaction (D)</th>
<th>Response or group participation (E)</th>
<th>Total Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Aide</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Recorded patterns of adult talk, by language

57. One count represents one turn taken in the classroom conversation. For example, a count could have been a turn in a curricular discussion, a turn in social interaction, giving directions, or responding to a student question.
In both the fieldnotes and in the interview records of our conversations together, Ms. Patton seemed ambivalent about how to negotiate the multiple dimensions of those speaking practices that occurred among the students she taught. In the following section, Ms. Patton’s ambivalence will be explored in finer detail, and analysis will be advanced that her ambivalence stemmed from her uncertainty about her role as a teacher. Moreover, it is claimed here that Ms. Patton's uncertainty led to a disruption in the normative authority position of a public high school teacher (i.e., the teacher as ultimate epistemic authority and as the social manager). This disruption meant that the students had more freedom to direct activities in the classroom as they saw fit; in operation, this meant that there was more language brokering (everyday translation) in the classroom than Ms. Patton might have otherwise allowed. In the following section, the teacher's ambivalence is explored by disentangling two factors that illustrated her uncertainty over her role in the classroom: 1) her lack of confidence in her ability to effectively contribute to her students’ language learning, and 2) her conflation of classroom management with language production.

**Ms. Patton’s ambivalence.** While the students frequently used Spanish and English to negotiate their own learning, the teacher conducted the class primarily in English. In fieldnotes, a formal end of year interview, and many unstructured interviews over the year, Ms. Patton expressed her internal conflict over the speaking practices that had developed as a normative function of intellectual life in the classroom. Her conflict mostly surfaced as frustration with the use of Spanish in the classroom, and her understanding of Spanish as a necessary part of the youth’s development. Her affect toward the ESL youth shifted significantly from the beginning to the end of the academic year. When we first met, Ms. Patton (who taught five different English classes to both immigrant and native born youth) spoke of her mainstream English class
as her “break” from the challenge of her ESL classes. Her attitude changed over the year. In her end of year interview, she expressed how happy she was to have worked with this group, how much she had learned from them, and her anger that other teachers shunned EL-designated students. Still, her ambivalence toward how language functioned in the classroom remained steady throughout the year.

Lack of confidence in her own abilities. While a newer teacher, Ms. Patton demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of second language acquisition theory. She had had theoretical training at a reputable teacher training university program, and spent three years as an aide in an ESL classroom in a different school in the region. She also, at least by the end of the year, had clear goals for what she wanted her students to learn. Still, she persistently voiced that she was failing her students as a teacher. In late January, after administering a mid-term to her students, she confessed to me in tears that:

I feel like I am not very good at this. I don’t know if I want to be a teacher anymore but I don’t know what else I want to do. (Teacher Interview, January 2010).

In the Spring, Ms. Patton made changes to her curriculum and appeared to enjoy her teaching more. Still, she had great awareness of the impact that being a newer teacher had on her students’ ability to learn English. In her end of the year interview she expressed:

I am learning to teach and they are learning English, these two things reflect each other. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Over the year, Ms. Patton struggled with feeling capable as a teacher. She went through highs and lows, much of which was related to her understanding of her students’ progress, measured through their acquisition of the English language. She did not have clear mentorship, although she had a good relationship with the foreign language teaching staff and the assistant principal.
Through the majority of the year, Ms. Patton chose to work mostly with the more bilingual students in her class (who were district designated as ESL 2), leaving the instructional aide to work with the English-emergent youth (ESL 1) on worksheets she had assigned. Later in the year, she integrated ESL 1 and ESL 2 students and set up groups of students who could help each other. She left it to some of the stronger students, like Juan Carlos or Maritza, to work with those non-Spanish speaking students who spoke little to no English.

She also struggled to find ways to integrate the Spanish-speaking youth with the non-Spanish, non-English speaking students.

Ms. Patton gave her students an assignment, and told them that they could write their answers in their native language. The students didn’t understand what that meant. “Well, you can write in French.” “Chinese?” a girl laughed, querying. “I don’t think that will help you too much!” Ms. Patton laughed back. (Fieldnotes, October 6, 2009).

At the end of a class early on in the academic year, Ms. Patton directed her students to complete the assignment in their native language, or L1, rather than in English. When she was asked what the term “native language” meant, she explained, tongue in check, that the students could write in French. This caused joking between her and one of the transcultural brokers. The example above is an unusual and rare example of Ms. Patton’s promotion of native language use with a language other than Spanish. The language that she promoted was not a language represented by the non-Spanish speaking population of the classroom, who spoke Farsi, Thai, Amharic, and Portuguese. Rather, French was a language that she knew herself, and occasionally used to demonstrate a grammatical point in English. Jennifer Patton may have been exemplifying a language she had spent time learning as a way of relating to her language-learning students. Unfortunately, missing an opportunity to introduce the language spoken by the students into the classroom’s linguistic repertoire further marginalized the
observers. In her end of the year interview, she expressed how challenging it was to know how to organize opportunities for the observers.

You know, but I try to encourage them using English to the best of their ability...So, it is that effort that I am looking for and that’s what goes into my participation points in the classroom. So I don’t know any way to regulate the language. I’m not going to ask them to stop speaking their first languages. It’s a little unfair that there is nobody else to speak Thai or Amharic, so – but there is nothing I can do about that. (Teacher Interview, May 2010).

Her students often approached her and asked questions in Spanish; Ms. Patton would then attempt to get her students to speak in English by asking them to ask her questions in English, and rewarding their effort with participation points. She concluded our interview by recognizing her inability to participate in speaking practices among her students (i.e., “it’s a little unfair”), and expressing her lack of confidence in her ability to help the non-English, non-Spanish speaking students access the classroom interactions more fully.

Her lack of confidence stemmed from more than what she viewed as her ability to promote their English language acquisition. As Ms. Patton expressed in the quote above, she did not know how to “regulate” how much her students used their native languages in the classroom. Ms. Patton’s use of the word “regulate” broaches another issue that added to her ambivalence about speaking practices in the classroom. While knowledgeable about language learning theories like code-switching, which asserts that bilingual speakers naturally use elements of two languages to communicate across a variety of social situations in which they find themselves, Ms. Patton confused language production that promoted learning and language production that could be negatively interruptive.

Conflation of classroom management and language production. Ms. Patton’s ambivalent stance toward the language choices of her students extended to the way in which the students
organized themselves through speaking practices. While she frequently enjoyed the lively atmosphere of the classroom, her frustration with what she viewed as her classroom management issue also came to the surface. Her ambivalence meant that she either exerted control excessively (like denying a request to use the bathroom, or yelling at a student for getting out of his chair to return a book to the bookshelf), or stood back and exerted no control at all. While this negotiation of one's authority is a common process for first year teachers, Ms. Patton's was different in that it carried high stakes for the language learning of the students. Meaning, oral production is an important part of any ESL curriculum, and the students' ability to speak freely could benefit them. Likewise, the free flowing talk could have been a detriment to the students who were shyer about speaking up and may have needed the teacher's scaffolding of their oral participation.

The disruption of her authority that occurred as a result of the fluid production of language in the classroom was both epistemic and social. For example, because of the instructional aide’s ability and willingness to speak in Spanish, the Spanish-emergent girls frequently called on her to answer their content questions. Socially, the joking and humor levied by the bilingual youth in Spanish and in English was accessible only by those who were full participants (i.e., those who had full access to classroom interactions by virtue of their bilingualism) in the classroom.

In her classroom interactions with the students, Ms. Patton expressed both frustration at the use of Spanish in the classroom, and also verbally sanctioned its use. For example, toward the end of the first semester, Ms. Patton seemed particularly intent on fostering the use of English among her students.
Ms. Patton said firmly, “Really, if you want to go to ESL 3, you need to speak English in class.” A few minutes later she continued, “You are speaking Spanish and you need to show that you can speak English or you are not going to ESL 3!” (Fieldnotes, January 5, 2010).

Here, Ms. Patton reprimanded her students for speaking Spanish, exhorting them to use the English language in the peer talk that was happening at that moment. She cited progressing to the next level of English as a Second Language classes (i.e., ESL 3) as reason to speak English at that time. Yet at other junctures, Ms. Patton told the students to use Spanish to translate for each other (as exemplified in the vignette in the last section where Ms. Patton organized a Thanksgiving activity around the transcultural brokers translating for the Spanish-speaking students), promoted the use of native language, and even spoke in Spanish herself.

In interviews, Ms. Patton expressed her internal struggle to find a way to handle her students’ speaking Spanish.

Last year I tried to implement this system where if they spoke language other than English while they were in my classroom they would lose participation points ...but as someone who has taken a look at language theory, I know that was not the best choice. (Teacher Interview, May 26th, 2010).

Ms. Patton admitted that her practice had diverged from her theoretical training in language acquisition by her desire to control the use of native language in the classroom. She continued and noted that both the students' translating was both helpful and a distraction in the classroom.

Juan Carlos has leadership skills and he is a great translator, but... it does cause distraction and, you know, it is not an ideal situation. (Teacher Interview, May 26th, 2010).

Then, Ms. Patton wondered if her negotiating of Spanish was a classroom management issue.
Then you can expect them to code-switch like that, but – there needs to be some way of regulating it at some point. I can’t have things like Juan Carlos yelling across the classroom to Alejandro who is over there or whatever like -- I can’t have that, and that may be more of a classroom management issue than rather – rather than a language issue. (Teacher Interview, May 26th, 2010).

Again, Ms. Patton demonstrated her understanding of second language acquisition theory by using the term "code-switching." Still, she continued to demonstrate her frustration with the intimate role language played in the organization of the social behavior of the students by citing an example of how Spanish could be disruptive. She credited Juan Carlos’ yelling to Alejandro as a possible effect of her poor classroom management, rather than a moment of linguistic learning or development.

Ms. Patton’s ambivalence, created through her lack of confidence in her own abilities and her conflation of management and language issues, meant that she demonstrated an uncertainty over her role in the classroom, which led to a disruption of the traditional teacher fronted authority and hierarchy. In a quiet moment, Ms. Patton even acted as a student.

Ms. Patton and the instructional aide talked quietly at the board. Ms. Patton said, “How do you do the progressive in Spanish?” She took a marker and wrote the esperar on the board. “¿Esperar [Wait]?” the instructional aide said, hesitatingly, and looked taken aback. Then the instructional aide said: “Mmm, esperando [Mmm, waiting].” Ms. Patton wrote the conjugated verb on the board. “So,” Ms. Patton continued, “¿Estoy esperando [I’m waiting]?” “Mmm, sí [Mmm, yes]...” the instructional aide answered in a firmer tone. (Fieldnotes, January 5th, 2010).

Ms. Patton asked the instructional aide for a Spanish language tutorial, but did so in a way that hid her own lack of knowledge from the students. Asking the instructional aide for help quietly allowed her to maintain her role as the epistemic knowledge in the classroom; her stance differed from other teachers who would freely express their lack of Spanish knowledge and ask the students to teach them words. Ms. Patton’s ambivalence toward the use of Spanish in the
classroom also manifested in her desire to access the Spanish-speaking life of the classroom by learning new grammatical forms with which to communicate.

Ms. Patton’s struggle with her role both promoted and hindered students' speaking practices in the classroom. Her ambivalence prevented her from managing the multiple speakers in the classroom in ways that could have more effectively integrated the students and their diverse languages into a more cohesive and inclusive classroom community.

Yet, and concurrently, her ambivalence allowed a disruption of her epistemic authority to emerge, thus opening up space for the students to engage in speaking practices with each other that played on natural language learning and promoted cultural sharing. Moreover, with the traditional hierarchical authority disrupted, some students had the opportunity to exert leadership, such as Juan Carlos or Maritza’s care taking of the English-emergent students, and Sol and Misericordia’s protective stance toward Mahlet, the Amharic speaker. Next, I link the issue of language and social inclusion and exclusion to academic learning, and explore three ways in which the disruption of authority in the classroom gave space to the students to develop opportunities for their own learning through their talk and social participation.
How belonging, as shaped by speaking practices, impacted academic learning in the classroom: Language brokering, transculturations, and resource pooling

The experience of belonging/non-belonging that was shaped through language choice and speaking practices impacted the academic functioning of the classroom. That is to say, the social organization of the classroom was intimately linked to the learning experiences of the students.

**Participation and non participation through language brokering.** The atmosphere in Room #47 tended towards the carnivalesque. Such was the impression I received throughout a lesson on Thanksgiving foods taught in November, during which multiple speakers engaged in making sense of the unfamiliar vocabulary and unknown cultural practice.

The teacher asked the students to define what a turkey was. “Turkey...turkation!” someone joked. Alejandro replied, “It’s a chicken.” Someone else answered simultaneously, “bird.” Juan Carlos was confused and asked the class at large: “¿Gallina o pavo [Hen or turkey]? ¿Gallina [Hen?]” The teacher continued reviewing, then asked the class, “We eat traditional food at Thanksgiving because we are what...?” “Thankful!” Maritza interjected. While they spoke, Juan Carlos had turned around to Claudia who was sitting behind him and explained the concept of “whipped cream” in some detail: “Es como la crema en una mocha [It is like the cream on a mocha drink].” (Fieldnotes, November 24th, 2009).

Here, six different students were involved in making sense of what traditional foods were eaten at Thanksgiving. The students joked about the make-up of the word "turkey" ("turkation"), clarified vocabulary and differentiated the specific ("turkey") and the general ("bird"), distinguished the distinction between “bird” and “hen” in Spanish, and interpreted the meaning of whipped cream. As evidenced in the vignette, brokering acts like word play, humor, making connections, and comparison were strategies used here by the students to integrate
new information into their pre-existing schemas. Like the street performers tossing out their juggling rings, words like “bird” and “pavo” were tossed out to the teacher and other students to see if they would be taken up. Side conversations, like the one had by Juan Carlos and Claudia, were tolerated by the teacher, who would simply redirect her attention to other students or wait patiently to restart her explanations. This instance was representative of many throughout the academic year where word play like “turkation,” joking, and even singing would weave itself through the translation work and meaning-making. This created a familial tone and a sense of safety in the classroom.

Peer helping in content and process through resource pooling. During student language brokering, groups of students integrated the new knowledge presented by the teacher and her curriculum into their linguistic and academic repertoire. Their brokering was not just direct translation, but also a way for the students to contribute to making new knowledge; here, I term this action "resource pooling". Like in other brokering practices, participation in resource pooling was limited by language code choice. It was prevalent among the Spanish-speaking, English-emergent girls, whose conversations would not only concern making sense of the content of the activity, but also how to accomplish the process of the activity.

These patterns of participation began to change in the Spring as the community grew more unified and the girls learned more English. As a sense of community grew, all of the students began to participate more in each other’s learning. In a typical interaction involving resource pooling, three students and the teacher helped Ana Paula understand a literary analysis activity. The kind of interaction shown in the example below was common toward the end of the academic year.
Alejandro explained the task to Ana Paula, a native Portuguese speaker. She asked Alejandro a question in bits and pieces of Spanish in her emphatic way. Sol and Juan Carlos jumped into the conversation. “Mira, mira. Principio problema [Look, look. The first problem],” Sol interrupted. “La problema más grande [The biggest problem].” The teacher joined in, “The character faces problems.” Juan Carlos exclaimed as if he had just understood something, “Oooh. Lucha, lucha [Fight, fight].” The teacher continued in English to Ana Paula: “You have to tell about the character and the place. The character, no le gusta [doesn’t like] the storm.” Juan Carlos and Alejandro were now speaking to each other in Spanish. “Con otra [With another],” Juan Carlos said. Alejandro asked, “¿Con otra?” “Aha,” Juan Carlos confirmed. (Fieldnotes, March 7th, 2010).

This typical, rapid-fire interaction showed how involved the students had become with each other’s learning; they pooled their (a) linguistic and literary knowledge, and (b) understanding of how to navigate the task. This pooling was in order to assist each other. The interaction involved varying levels of language abilities across three languages: a Spanish dominant speaker (Sol), a Portuguese speaker who spoke Spanish but limited English (Ana Paula), two Spanish-English bilingual speakers (Alejandro and Juan Carlos), and the teacher, who spoke some Spanish. The resource pooling exemplified here involved literary analysis (“Mira, mira. Principio problema”), bilingual interpretation (“The character faces problems”), explanation of the process necessary to complete the task (“You have to tell about the character and the place”), and sense-making in Spanish (“Con otra”).

In this rich instance of peer-facilitated resource pooling, participation across language helped learners access the materials. Still this interaction shows another way in which participation necessitated Spanish-English bilingualism, to the inclusion of some in the community and the exclusion of other, namely, Ana Paula. As Ana Paula explained to me in a later interview, she had learned Spanish during her first year in the United States in order to converse with her mainly Spanish-speaking class. When I interviewed her, she explained how
she had recently befriended a Farsi speaker and was newly attempting to work on her English language development. With this linguistic move to become included in a community that she had been erstwhile shut out of—native English speakers—Ana Paula’s Spanish diminished and reduced her ability to participate in with her Spanish-speaking peers. Her story exemplifies the complex choices around inclusion and exclusion that young adults make during their participation in multilingual, multi-ethnic spaces.

As the year wore on, Jennifer Patton capitalized on the naturally occurring pooling of resources in the classroom by calling on students to take leadership roles.

The groups worked on a biography of Edgar Allen Poe. Alejandro had been paired with three of the Spanish-speaking girls from the ESL 1 class, and was translating the biography into Spanish with help from the instructional aide. In another group, Juan Carlos and Maritza were speaking back and forth in Spanish about the biography, which they passed between them. One of the members of their group asked Juan Carlos what a word meant. “Traje [suit],” he replied. “¿Sabes traje [Do you know suit]?” (Fieldnotes, February 16th, 2010).

Here, Jennifer Patton gave Alejandro a leadership role. She later told me that her choice was strategic: “He doesn’t always feel good about how much English he knows and I wanted him to have a chance to be the strong person in a group.” Over time, Alejandro helped several of the Spanish-speaking, English-emergent students access the text. Sometimes his helping them meant he had to rely heavily on the teacher or instructional aide. Hence, his role also developed into one that helped to facilitate interactions between the official leadership in the room (i.e., the adults), and the less empowered (by virtue of their still emergent English) students. In addition to Alejandro, Juan Carlos and Maritza, two strong Spanish transcultural brokers, were put in a group with two minority speakers who they gently cared for and helped to access the curriculum. Thus, groups were constructed to negotiate learning for the students.
Jennifer Patton leveraged the process of resource pooling and normed it as a responsibility that students needed to have for each other. The students did not consider this norming arduous; indeed, in interviews, when I asked the broad question, “Who helps you learn in your class?” all but one student immediately named *other students* as the people who helped them learn. This was not out of dislike for the teacher, rather, she was adored by the students and called a good and helpful teacher. Still, contrary to the processes observed in other, more traditionally teacher-fronted classrooms, these EL-designated students depended on each other to learn through informal group processes and cooperative learning.

**Forming community through transcultural moves.**

The concept of transculturations was originally developed by the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz who wrote of post-colonial Cuba as a place of “toma y daca,” or “give and take,” in 1940. Ortiz posed “transculturations” as a way to undermine the homogeneity and unilateral cultural loss implicit to the acculturation model. His model is pertinent for the analysis here, as U.S. classrooms can become places where minoritized students are expected to adapt, assimilate, or acculturate to a Western, White, English-speaking norm (Campano & Ghiso, 2011; Carter, 2005; M. A. Gibson, 1988; Nakanishi & Nishida, 1995; D. Sólorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). By way of contrast, transculturation is a dynamic process that, while involving some cultural loss, also involves the making of a new cultural space (i.e., neoculturalism) (Anderson, 2010). Moreover, youth who engage in bilingual and bicultural spaces can develop transcultural dexterity, or transcultural skills (Faulstich Orellana, 2009).

Transculturations, or transcultural moves, were frequently cited in student interviews as a source of enjoyment for the immigrant youth. Maritza put it particularly well, linking these
moments of “toma y daca” (Arnedo-Gomez, 2008) as a way of cultural sharing that formed a special community.

Our classes are filled with people from other countries. So we have different cultures but like we share some part of them and then, like, the classes are more fun and entertaining. For me it’s not just learning English, it’s learning other cultures. (Student Interview, May 2010).

Maritza explained how language acted as a proxy for cultural sharing, which in turn made classes fun. Drawing on common understandings in language scholarship, Bucholtz and Skapoulli write, “Social grouping is a process not merely of discovering or acknowledging a similarity that precedes and establishes identity, but more fundamentally of inventing similarity by downplaying differences” (2009, p. 371). But my observations in Room #47 noted an opposite strategy that adds complexity to their assessment: transcultural moves among the Spanish-speaking students invented similarity not by downplaying differences, but by sharing difference. In this next, and highly representative example, students who hailed from Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, and Brazil shared Spanish language differences across national origins.

Claudia, a pretty Colombiana, laid her head down on her desk in what seemed like a gesture of boredom. Juan Carlos, sitting next to her, leaned across and pulled on one of her bouncy dark curls. He let it go and then, almost tenderly, wrapped the curly strand around his finger. “¿Cómo crespo [How curly]?” he asked. “No, rizos, [No, curls],” she replied. Juan Carlos, a Mexican, asked, “¿Qué es rizo [What is a "rizo"]?” “Cómo Maritza [Like what Maritza has],” Claudia replied. Maritza was wearing her hair in several long loose ringlets tied together with a pink ribbon. Juan Carlos leaned over to ask Paloma, a Chilean, how she said curl. “Sí, crespo [Yes, a curl],” she replied. Juan Carlos needed confirmation: "¿También se dice crespo [Also, you say curl?] Paloma affirmed. Juan Carlos seemed satisfied and informed them, "Chinito en El Salvador [A little curl in El Salvador]." The conversation continued for some time (someone offered the word “colocho” [colocho] as another alternative) with Alejandro eventually joining in: "¿Tú-- dices que [You--say what]?” asked Juan Carlos. (Fieldnotes, November 24th, 2009).
Juan Carlos instigated a conversation about the word “curl” in the Latin American world, eliciting parallel vocabulary from his peers. He asked Claudia if her curls were like "rizos," and she corrected him pointing to Maritza’s hair to explain. Juan Carlos seized upon this and the students shared their word for curl in Chilean and El Salvadorian Spanish. Actions like this were common in Room #47, even breaking out during an interview. Here, Juan Carlos’s playful interest in the range of vocabulary that one can use to refer to one’s “curl” posits analysis around the ways in which sharing knowledge about culture gave the youth in the ESL program a way to formulate their identities around transcultural practices and the linguistic wealth inherent in an ESL classroom.

In another example, cultural sharing was evident in peer teaching. Generally, these occurred between the Spanish-speaking, and minority language speakers, and were a way to bring observers into the Spanish-speaking community. Instances of Spanish language teaching bridged the distance between the Spanish-speaking students and non-Spanish-speaking students.

The girls were working on English verbs. Sol, a native Spanish speaker, and Ana Paula, a native Portuguese speaker, began a back-and-forth about an answer in Spanish. Sol corrected Ana Paula after she confused the word “iso” and “eso” [this]. “Ehhhso,” Sol said to her. She repeated herself in a quick, firm staccato: “Ehhso. Eh. Eh. Eh. Eh-so. Eso.” “I’ll write it down for you,” the instructional aide, who was hovering nearby, said in English. She went to the white board and began to write. “Qué es eso [What is this],” Sol said in a tutorial voice, “Que es eso, eso, eso, eso.” Misericordia joined in and demonstrated the words meanings with her arms, “eso,” she said, pointing to the far corner of the room. Mahlet, the Amharic speaker, was watching and eventually joined in: "¿Eso?” she queried, smiling. (Fieldnotes, January 19th, 2010).

Sol, Misericordia, and the instructional aide all worked to help Ana Paula understand the meaning of the Spanish word “eso” ["this"]. Eventually, another non-Spanish speaker joined
the lesson of her own accord. Needless to say, this was not the official curricular activity the actors were supposed to be working on. In the interaction, both Ana Paula and Mahlet showed that they were interested in learning Spanish. The Spanish-speaking girls and the adult bilingual instructional aide seemed eager to aid in this project. Sharing one’s language with another is about much more than language learning. Language is a fundamental part of identity and the way in which one expresses who one is to the outside world. For these young women, existing inside a prism of Spanish in an English-speaking, and occasionally hostile world, sharing their language with others was a moment of great empowerment. In the cited interaction, Sol and Misericordia were able to demonstrate their knowledge and took charge of an instructional moment, showing that in this moment at least, they were not at a deficit, they were not lacking, and they were not incomplete. For the two non-Spanish speaking minority speakers, the situation was a little more complex. Ana Paula did not know any other Brazilians at school, and did not speak in her native tongue in the ESL classroom. Mahlet, like many other minority speakers, learned some sporadic Spanish but mostly kept quiet. Like other students I interviewed, Mahlet did not voice resentment toward the Spanish speakers. So, with few outlets to speak in their native tongue within the classroom, Ana Paula and Mahlet navigated diversity using transcultural skills. Outside of the walls of #47, language politics shifted. While Spanish speakers were dominant in the ESL classrooms, other languages were privileged in the wider school setting. Belonging, then, was fluid. In certain spaces language code choices caused particular relationships and communities to flourish, which they could not in other spaces.
Conclusion

As Wenger has explained in his work on communities of practice, a community is a project where culture, learning, and personal identity are organized in ways that contribute to both the social development of the group, and the development of the individual (1998). In this ethnography, students either more fully participated, by becoming brokers of language and culture, while others either chose or were, silenced. The ability to speak Spanish and English was a major factor in who was silenced and who was not, but it was not the determining factor. Over time, the group of students of Room #47 developed a community of practice where their goals were to share and learn about culture, enjoy and learn language(s), and help their classmates academically.

This successful community of practice was critical for the youths’ wellbeing and resilience. Given the larger political sphere and great hostility towards immigrants and language minorities evidenced through restrictive, nativist social policies, protective spaces of belonging become even more valuable. These research findings carry implications for the way in which recent-arrival students are understood and framed in their host communities. To sum up, remaining concluding thoughts will advance in three areas: (1) scholarship, (2) teaching and learning practices, and (3) policy, and demarcate how the actions and dialogue of recent-arrival youth can further our understanding in each area.

First, micro-ethnographic data clearly demonstrates how belonging functioned in the community of practice in Room #47; namely, youth created spaces of belonging (and sometimes not belonging) through certain practices like: accessing curriculum by translating for each other, international and cross-cultural sharing, and linguistic enjoyment. As such, belonging was formed through relationships around culture. What emerged in the most
successfully egalitarian practices, was, as I term it, community capital. As Tara Yosso (2005) argues, that Students of Color bring various forms of capital—nurtured through cultural wealth—with them into schools. Yosso challenges the Bourdieuean theory of culture capital for working from an assumption that People of Color lack the capital necessary for ability (2005). Drawing on this assumption, schools function to “fill in what’s missing” from the knowledge of poor and racially marginalized students. By way of an alternative, Yosso offers the concept of “community cultural wealth” as a way to reframe students of color and understand the cultural wealth that they bring with them into schools. She maps out forms of capital as “navigational” and “aspirational” and invites scholars to elaborate. As seen throughout this dissertation, the recent arrival immigrant students consistently described the value they placed on relationships, and helping each other and being helped. Based on my observations of the immigrant youth in Room #47, I advance that “community capital” is another attribute of community cultural wealth. I will continue building this theoretical model in the conclusion to this dissertation.

As regards teaching and learning, it is clearly demonstrated here that the youth who engaged in relationships with each other in this community of practice gained skills and knowledge that are of benefit to them in a global world: “cultural sophistication, better communication and collaboration skills, and higher-order cognitive skills for critical thinking, as well as the metacognitive abilities for reflecting on their own learning so as to become lifelong learners” (M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). The transcultural brokers in Room #47 (those students who understood and produced Spanish and English to a proficiency level of everyday usage who leveraged their language skills to coordinate (a) culture, and (b) academic meaning

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58 Cultural capital is “an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (Bourdieu, 1977 as cited in Yosso, 2005).
among the community participants, actively used these skills to support their classmates in their learning.

The actions and dialogues of transcultural brokers, and the other students who were brokers-in-training, can become a teaching tool for us, those people committed to furthering social justice education in this age of the global neoliberal economy. In this way, the student becomes the teacher and the teacher, the student, a process that Freire tells us will naturally occur where there is humility and love (Freire, 1970, 2005; Roberts, 2008). By problematizing the discourses that limit teachers’ education, and by foregrounding the transcultural practices of immigrant youth (documented here through language, but practices that also happen through music, dress, civic engagement, and other cultural phenomena), educators and researchers stand to gain more nuanced knowledge of the needs and attributes of recent-arrival youth, thus continuing to work against the current deficit lens that frames immigrants as unable to speak English, unable to pass high-stakes tests, and unable to participate in the way teachers want. Being labeled an “English language learner” has ideological consequences that can lead community members to oversee or miss how students are able to participate in their own learning. By reforming teaching and learning in ESL classrooms to focus on global skills, the cultural wealth and skills youth bring with them into those classrooms will be better aligned with the learning goals. I will elaborate on these reflections further in Chapter Seven, the conclusion of this dissertation.

The integration of immigrants through language is a worldwide issue, and not something that the U.S. needs to face alone. McAndrews (2007) describes three policy debates that have manifested globally around the integration of immigrant students: one of these is the place that majority versus minority immigrant languages should have in school curriculum. She writes
that this policy debate has generated heated debate, scholarship, and has been an historical preoccupation. In the United States, this scholarship and historical preoccupation has varied dramatically based on state politics and the position of the state geographically in the union, as seen in *Chapter Four: Teacher's perceptions of their immigrant students*. In that chapter, the discussion of the symbolic and cultural landscape of Los Angeles is used as evidence of the politics of at the heart of the relationships between teachers and their students at Faulkner High School. Yet despite the rising numbers of language minority youth in our schools (5.3 million, according to the Migration Policy Institute, an 83% change in the last fifteen years), coherent integration policy is non existent at both the public and the educational levels. As Marcelo Suarez-Orozco says, U.S. policy on immigrant integration is like an ostrich with its head stuck in sand (Personal Communication, October 2010).

The federal government is investing in education through policies like NCLB and Race to the Top, and ignoring the obvious: a wealth of linguistic skills and global knowledge present in the diverse populous of the United States. Indeed, the findings of this chapter clarify how the use of multiple languages builds community and promotes learning. It is time for local, state and federal organizations to invest in education through common sense, equitable language policy that creates coherency throughout the states, and sets a moral tone of inclusiveness. Taking swift and decisive action could prevent more young people like Amaglia from leaving school for uncertain futures, with neither the academic skills nor the language to help them meet their goals.
CHAPTER SIX
Unseen Strengths, Unseen Skills, Unseen Spirits: The cultural lives of immigrant adolescents

Introduction

Adolescence, as popularly conceived of in the U.S. imagination, is a time for focused study, sports, budding romances, and prom. Media tends to spin distinct narratives about what teenagers are like. For example, in popular TV shows like The Hills or 90210, teenagers live in suburban sprawl, wear expensive clothes, and have plenty of time and space to discover their identities. Other narratives draw on the thinking of G.S. Hall (1916) to represent the teen years as one of Sturm und Drang or wracked with emotional turbulence that lasts from puberty to adulthood. These narratives tend to emphasize the stormy emotional lives of youth, and often focus on discordent relationships with parents and school authorities. All this is to say, that popular representations of adolescents rarely present nuanced and complex stories. Rarely are the stories of immigrant teenagers represented in any rich complexity. Yet their stories are important: immigrant teenagers experience sharp disruption in their social worlds, a disruption that can have grand impact on their lives, identities, and futures. This chapter attempts to rectify that gap, adding its voice to other great ethnographic work (see the literature review) that explores the everyday lives of immigrant teens in order to represent the complicated nature of their participation in community and learning.

Adolescence is commonly understood as the second stage of life, a time when the child moves from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. This Western notion of independence is belied in part by the data presented in the previous chapters and continued in this chapter, where the youth demonstrate the value of community and interdependence in their social worlds and learning experiences. As Wenger (1998) explores,
participation in communities of practice entails the development of particular forms of identity. Inherent to identity formation is the experience of roles, such as the codes that are inherent to the role of "student", and the role one takes in relationships, such as those with family and friends. Immigration means the transformation of familiar codes, roles and routines, and is thus a critical construct through which to look at the community participation and identity development of immigrant youth.

We are transformed, Daloz relates, when “some change in our world suddenly forces us to relate to it in a sharply different way” (1986, p. 138); the dynamics of that transformation involve grappling with an inner versus outer self, the subjective versus the objective, and needs of others versus one's own needs (1986, pg. 141). Youths' transformation is not an isolated, individualistic occurrence, but one deeply rooted in community participation and engagement with society. As Rogoff explains, “Human development is a process in which people transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities, which in turn contribute to changes in their cultural communities across generations” (2003, p. 37). Immigrant youths' contributions to their cultural communities are rich and varied, and cultural work is an ideal method to capture this contribution. As Schleger and Barry write, "Whereas the sociologist or social psychologist might ask, "How does society affect the adolescent?" the anthropologist will ask, in addition, "How do adolescents affect society?" (1991, p. 6). The purpose of this chapter is to provide the kinds of descriptions of immigrant youths' social worlds and skills to help researchers and practitioners ask the following: how do immigrant youth affect their school communities?

In this chapter, I try to capture the spirit of some of the contributions of four young people, looking at the strengths, the spirits, and the skills that they bring with them into their
communities. I draw their stories from 14 interviews collected over a year and a half, and systematic observations in the Science and English/ESL classes of each of the participants over the 2009-2010 school year. The four participants are not just adolescents, but immigrant adolescents. Their developmental period is one of transformation, and at the same time their social worlds, communities, and families are also transforming. Immigrant teens can experience complicated relationships with parents and family as a result of long periods of separation, struggles with identity and acculturation, language learning, familiarizing themselves with new schooling structures, expectations, and peer relations. The question around which this chapter is organized asks: What does it mean to be an adolescent at this particular juncture in history, and an immigrant?

In the United States, the archetypal story of the immigrant relates how an intrepid immigrant arrives to the new land, is incorporated into an ethnic neighborhood, and eventually assimilates, thus achieving the so-called "American Dream." For the individual, the archetype is rendered personal: the sense of loss is always new, and arriving and settling entail emotions like tension and excitement, resistance, and open embrace. In today's U.S., the ordinary life of the immigrant is largely invisible. What is made visible is the political rhetoric around problems the immigrant presents to the nation. As such, the inner strength that it takes to leave all that is familiar, to uproot one's life and one's family, and start anew-- this strength, and the skills that are learned as a result of the immigrant experience—frequently go unnoticed in the political battles around immigrant documentation and public services for immigrants. Markers of identity, like race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, language become factors in the

59 The reader will find the style of this chapter different to the previous. Relying mostly on interview data, this chapter presents first-person accounts primarily, rather than ethnographic vignettes.
obstacles and opportunities that immigrants face in sites of reception. Youth find ways to cope with these processes, just as they find ways to respond to the demands of schooling, family, binational responsibilities, and planning for uncertain futures. Their resiliency is functional and impressive, and add to more evidence of the ways in which adolescents contribute to society.

Finally, this chapter is comparative. It explores the tension between the universal and the specific as they manifest in youths' lives. As discussed more at length in the methods, four youth from five different countries participated in the study, as demonstrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student (Gender)</th>
<th>National origin/ length of time in U.S. at start of study</th>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>Grade level at start of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juan Carlos (M)</td>
<td>Mexico/ 8 mo.</td>
<td>Spanish &amp; English</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryeol Kim (M)</td>
<td>Korea/ 2.5 years</td>
<td>Korean &amp; English</td>
<td>12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naaz (F)</td>
<td>Iran/ 4 mo.</td>
<td>Persian, English, and some Portuguese</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnah (F)</td>
<td>Pakistan and Saudi Arabia/ 1 year</td>
<td>Urdu, English, Arabic</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 11: Longitudinal interview participants. Key informants*

This chapter is organized into three sections that look at the similarities and differences among the participants. First, we will look at aspects of the universal experiences in the migration journey of the participants, the “leaving” part of their stories. Second, we look at the context of acculturation, or the “arriving” part of their stories, and how the diverse mainstream differentiated their experiences. Third, and finally, we look at the process of acculturation, or the “staying and belonging” chapter of the youths’ lives. Throughout these sections a focus is to compare in order to understand the tension of the universal and the particular: What is it like to be an immigrant teen? On the other hand, what is it like to be an immigrant teenage boy from Southern Mexico who is separated from his mother and siblings and who lives and attends school in Los Angeles?
Part 1, Leaving: The strengths, skills, and spirits produced by the migrant experience

Ryeol Kim

Ryeol wanted to be a doctor, “But for skin, I don’t want to see blood.” His was a gentle humor that took time to surface; when it did, his deadpan, self-effacing comments were infectious. He was a tall, stout boy, with a paradoxically confident posture and shy demeanor. Ryeol, a native of Seoul, South Korea, was part of the second wave of migration in his immediate family: his brother emigrated first, living with a cousin and then with a “stranger” in order to attend high school in the United States. Two years after his brother landed, Ryeol and his parents emigrated to Los Angeles, reuniting the family. They had a very close-knit family, taking trips together to explore the U.S. and working through the immigrant experience together. The Kim family could have joined other Korean nationals in the U.S., after all, Koreans are the seventh largest foreign-born group in the United States (Yau, 2004). But instead of residing in the large ethnic enclave of Koreans in downtown Los Angeles, they moved to suburban, middle-class Faulkner City. This meant that the family was not geographically supported by an immigrant, linguistic community where Ryeol might have been able to make friends. Their family had to depend on each other during the challenges of their experiences; Ryeol was lonely, despite having his family surround him.

The Koreans say that if you come to USA before high school, you can – you can adapt – you can adapt the culture and the environment and language very easily. But if you come to USA after high school, you can, I mean, you cannot adapt the culture as well as them, as well as the young children. [...] I don’t know if I would go back. Depend on my parents. If my parents stay, I’ll stay. Our family wants to stick together. I’m lucky person you know, because many people in Korea want to come America to learn English and yeah many things (Student Interview, January 2011).
Throughout our conversations, Ryeol showed a sophisticated understanding of the familial, cultural, environmental, and linguistic challenges that would face him during migration. Korea was itself going through demographic changes at the time of this writing, with an increase in undocumented foreign workers, and simultaneously, migrants leaving Korea for the U.S. and Japan's better educational opportunities (Yau, 2004). He commented on the folkloric wisdom that migrating as an adolescent would bring greater challenges than migrating as a young child. Ryeol's self-reflectiveness about the hardships that were facing him and his ability to work through them is skillful. Likewise, his clear choice to stay close to his family may demonstrate his traditional cultural beliefs around assisting and helping his family (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999), demonstrating his ability to work within the expectations of the U.S. system while valuing interdependence.

Ryeol had clear and well-formed opinions about what was helpful to him about school. During our final interview, about one year after we first met, he was a matriculated freshman at a university in Southern California. Ryeol had matured and was reflective about the purpose of schooling, what had worked for him throughout his binational schooling career, and how navigating schooling could be challenging.

My family helped with my education and my motivation. Asian families work a lot, you know, parents push them really a lot, you know, like I don’t know about others. But in the Asian communities, they have some joke you know: A is Average, B is Bad and C is like… I forgot, C is something... and D is Death and F is like the bad word you know. That’s the joke! To me, the purpose of education is to be with my dream you know, like if I don’t study, I lose chances. As you study, you get more chance, because you get more licenses and more diploma, and that gives you more chances to get a job and do something in the world. The purpose of education is for a dream (Student Interview, January, 2010).
Ryeol expressed a central value--the importance of good grades and education as a vehicle for his dreams. In this way, an analysis could venture that his narrative contradicts the view of Asian parents' obsessive concern with grades as part of inherent biological or racial make up. This determinist viewpoint can unduly influence educational planning and policy; in fact, the overrepresentation of Asian youth in higher levels of ESL classes and mainstream classes at Faulkner High School may have reflected the persistent societal view of Asians as the "model minority." Rather, Ryeol's thinking showed the universal longing of all peoples throughout time and culture to pursue their dreams. Ryeol's pursuit of his own happiness through the opportunities available to him is a value that is central to most migrants' lives; nevertheless, this central value is received differently in different social contexts. As a young Korean man, his desire for personal growth may have a gentler reception in Los Angeles than similar dreams by other ethnic minorities such as immigrants from Southern Mexico.

Ryeol's ability to be self-reflective was also apparent in his analysis of the difference between Korean and U.S. schooling structures.

School in Korea is different. You stay with one class—you don’t move, and the teachers come to you. It means that you get to know the people in your class and the students have more friendship, we are like a family. The teachers are really good, they are considerate. We went as a class to one of my teachers’ weddings—we sang and played instruments. What I like about here is the freedom. You can take whatever classes you want. You don’t have a lot of choice in Korea. I think education in America is more practical. We came here for my education, you know. It is very important to be able to speak English in Korea. (Student Interview, January 2010).

Ryeol began to understand that his choice to be educated in the U.S. meant that he would have to sacrifice the experience of belonging to a community. Unlike his particular situation in South Korea, where school had felt like a family and teachers were enmeshed in the life of the community, his time at Faulkner High School had been alienating and, at times, painful. His
intense shyness and fear about his oral production meant that he was isolated at Faulkner High School. Still, his ability to be self-reflective was a skill that enabled him to exhibit a kind of inner quiet and confidence, a knowingness that his lack of belonging at Faulkner was impermanent. Self-reflection was a strength and skill that was unseen at the high school.

Amnah

Amnah was bubbly: words, ideas and gesticulations foamed up and ran over effervescently as she interacted with her peers and teachers. Some of her instructors found her demanding, others were excited by her energy and aspirations. She wanted to be a writer of horror stories and mysteries, an “educated persons with degrees,” a botanist, and a wife, but not necessarily in that order. She presented herself as well adjusted. Amnah’s stability could have been attributable to her language ability, her family, and her socio-economic status. Of all of my participants, Amnah had the most robust familial structure: she had siblings close to her age and two parents with whom she had moved from country to country. On the other hand, Naaz and Juan Carlos had been separated from a parent, and Ryeol from his sibling, during their migration journey. Amnah’s family was solidly middle class and the children had been able to attend English-medium schools, where they learned content in (British) English. Amnah asserted that it had only taken her a couple of days to get used to living in English-saturated Southern California. She had plenty of language acquisition experience, having had lived her “half life,” as she described it, in Pakistan and “half life” in Saudi Arabia, which she referred to simply as “Saudi.”

Amnah was reflective about her experiences across three countries.
Saudi is more like California than Pakistan. In Saudi, people have good cars and enjoy their lives. It is middle class. The main difference between California and Saudi is that over there, people are Muslim and wear the long thing, you know? Here, everyone is wealthy. Saudi Arabia is a wealthy country too, I can say that. They have so much petrol over there. They have so much money. But, there are people here too that need help—the homeless people. Pakistan is very poor or very rich—we were middle class, normal, but there was poverty all around. Pakistan is like India, with no new technology, like cars. So much poverty there and in India-- little children working (Student Interview, February 2010).

Amnah's experiences in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and her religious values as a practicing young Muslim woman, had led her to an awareness of socio-economic difference. Like Juan Carlos, and unlike Ryeol and Naaz, class was something she addressed frequently. She was vocal that she wanted to construct her future around service work. Amnah also noted conversations had in class about global differences, repeating bits of information to me about the African economy or orphans in Indonesia. Her understanding of global inequities was a strength that could of made her an excellent resource for any social studies course.

Like the other youth I interviewed, education was central to Amnah's family's rationale for emigration.

We came here for study only. Over there, study is really expensive and hard. Over there the economy is getting higher. People are having trouble sending their kids to school. Over here it is free so if you are a genius you can get more education so you can make your society better. That’s what I want. My mom says look, she is educated, be like her. My little brother is not interested in study so he has bad grade. But my father and I talk every day and he says study, study, study. We tell him to do that (Student Interview, February 2010).

Amnah, Ryeol, and Juan Carlos all mentioned education as the primary reason for their moving to Southern California. Their fervent belief in education was a central value that belied the immigrant ethnic hierarchicalizing that occurred in the wider political sphere in the U.S., as discussed in the section on Ryeol above. Meaning, the characterization of Asians and South
Asians as motivated to learn, and Mexicans as not, impacted the way that Amnah and Ryeol were socialized into classes at Faulkner High School. At Faulkner High School, Asians and South Asians were in higher proportion of upper level ESL classes, and the ESL Level 1 class had mostly Mexican and Central American students.

Language played a factor in Amnah's sense of belonging. Having attended an international school in Saudi Arabia where English was the *lingua franca*, Amnah reported that she picked up English fairly easily. Her interest in schoolwork also drew on her background as a transnational student, a resource that was not recognized by her biology teacher who found Amnah "needy" and characterized her interactions with her as draining. Amnah's language abilities smoothed her transition to school, and enabled her to engage more quickly in content and pursue her intellectual passions.

We got green cards and came over here easily. My family had a hard start when we came here to California. My father only spoke Arabic and he couldn’t explain the problem with machines to people. I didn’t understand vocabulary words, but I picked up English fast, basic English, and after that it was no problem.... We have been here for three years—we came in July 2007. I loved the beautiful plants when we came here. It was like my home in Pakistan, which was big with flowers and plants inside and outside. My grandfather put flowers inside the house that would help you not get cancer. That’s why I want to be a botanist—I am interested in nature and how plants work in the body (Student Interview, November 2009).

Amnah, more than the three other youth I spoke with, experienced a sense of belonging at school. That sense of belonging was probably attributable to a combination of several factors: her strong family unit, previous training in English, and her socio-economic status. Like Ryeol, her migration experiences had left her with a deep sense of reflection and curiosity about the world, skills which she leived on the subject of socio-economics and global inequities. Her enthusiastic interest in the natural world, drawing on her experience of vastly different natural
landscapes, could have been a wonderful resource in her science class. In my observations of her classes and conversations with her Science teacher, her intellectual skills and deep knowledge went unrecognized.

In a science class that I observed in May of 2010, the class prepared for an upcoming fieldtrip they would take to test the quality of a local body of water.

The teacher flipped to a new slide which had a black background with white lettering; the caption read “National Drinking Water Week, May 2-8.” The teacher explained what national drinking water week was to the students and then showed them a slide of a river. "Is this a healthy stream?" she asked them. All but two of the young people raised their hands to say "yes." A skinny Latino boy in the back row called out, “It looks healthy. But it might have like, bacteria.” A thick Afro-American girl with a deep voice added, “All water is not healthy. It looks clean, but it may not be as clean as you think it is.” (Fieldnotes, May 5, 2010).

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, the demographics of Faulkner High School were unusual for the Los Angeles area in that racial subgroups were largely evenly divided. Despite the multiculturalism--and even internationalism--of the school student body, the curriculum remained U.S.-centric. Amnah's interests and background were not used as resources by the teacher into during any of the classes I viewed; rather, she and the other EL-designated students remained quiet, sidelined. Amnah's interest in biology and social inequality meant that she may have been able to lend a transnational perspective on water health. The interlocking issues of clean water and global poverty reduction is one of the premier agenda items for the United Nations; in Amnah's nation of origin, Pakistan, NGOs and local partners work vigorously to reform sanitation practices. As such, Amnah's sense of academic belonging could have been heightened through transculturally relevant pedagogical issues and practices in her science classroom.
Juan Carlos

On a breezy, late September day, almost exactly a year after we met, Juan Carlos and I sat at a Thai restaurant close to the high school and discussed his summer, which he had spent in his village in Michoacán. “I feel Mexican now,” he said. The in-between feeling he had described to me for most of the previous year had faded, and this trip home—his fourth since he had relocated to the U.S., had consolidated his identification as a first-generation Mexican in Southern California, an identity that in the 21st century nativist U.S. West was not always easy to navigate. “I’m Mexican no matter where I am,” he continued, “I never thought I was American or something. I always thought I was Mexican... but now it’s just something I won’t hide.” Juan Carlos’ stance in the Fall of 2010 was a dramatically different take on his place in the world to a year previously, when he had said: “I feel like Mexico is not my home anymore. Like, I see everything is different like – not like before…”

Juan Carlos grew up in a Southern Mexican town of about 1,000 people. His father had left 20 years prior to Juan Carlos' own emigration; his father had lived a life of circular migration, actions that were easier before 9/11 and the hyper-policing of the U.S.- Mexico border. Juan Carlos left Mexico in 2008 at the age of 12, traveling first to Chicago to stay with family, where he was out of school for four months. In Southern California, things got easier for him and he started attending Faulkner High School. His father, who was a painter and with whom Juan Carlos worked on Saturdays, was doing well for himself. The father and son shared an apartment in the bustling downtown area of the suburban Los Angeles area surrounding Faulkner High. Juan Carlos exhibited a great deal of confidence and independence that he may have gained through the transnational migration that forces many children to grow up quickly. Still, he missed his family in Mexico and it became the subject of many of our conversations.
I miss my mom. Her food. You know what a tienda is? It’s like when people put stands, they sell things on the street. I used to hang out there and eat different kinds of food. It exists here, but it isn’t the same. It’s not as good. I miss the food. I used to go out at night with my friends when I was in Mexico. I used to dance a lot. Wild music, hip hop...I don’t really know what’s the problem, like because I think everything’s better in the U.S. But I, sometimes I miss Mexico, like I don’t know how, and – but I won’t like to be an American either. So it’s kind of hard. (Student Interview, December 2010).

Juan Carlos' longing for home was a reoccurring topic in our conversations. Unlike Amnah, who had the security of her family with her, Juan Carlos' migration had separated him from the people who he loved. For many of our conversations, he expressed feeling torn, neither American nor Mexican, and unsure of how to find a stable identity.

The family’s migration pattern was diasporic; when I met him, Juan Carlos and his father lived in Southern California, his older sister and her husband were in Texas, and his two brothers—one of whom had been in the U.S. since before Juan Carlos was born and who he only met upon moving to the U.S.—were in Chicago. His mother wanted to remain in Mexico, and his sister was waiting for her residency paperwork to be prepared in order to join her family in the United States. Juan Carlos' family's patterns reflected his village's, where roughly 30% (Juan Carlos' estimation) of men were involved in migration; many women stayed behind. The U.S. political landscape regarding immigration affected the family, but Juan Carlos did not pay close attention to his parents' conversations about it. He dismissively—as if the governments of nation-states were simply silly and needed to get with the lives of 21st century transnational kids-- expressed a desire that there be “no borders.” The political landscape of the state of Michoacán, on the other hand, and the violence that had engulfed his village concerned Juan Carlos. He recounted how, on his last visit home, soldiers had marched
through the streets of his village: the violence in his village was prevalent, and the *narcos*, or drug-runners, were "going crazy", but it did not deter him from wanting to be in Mexico.

Juan Carlos’ portrait is different than that of the other three youth. Unlike Naaz, Ryeol, or Amnah, Juan Carlos was deeply affected by his national identity and more attuned to the racism and discrimination that were inherent to his incorporation process. As Portes and Rumbaut detail, the relevant contexts of incorporation are defined by “the policies of the receiving government, the conditions of the host labor market and the characteristics of their own ethnic communities” (2006, p. 91). Additionally, immigrant lives are affected by the symbolic and cultural landscape of the region in which immigrants find themselves. Juan Carlos, more than his three classmates, was aware of the racism and linguistic discrimination that accompanied his integration process because he belonged to a group that, in Los Angeles and the U.S., was heavily marked as unacceptable.

*Diasporic relationships.* The research on family separation is limited, but what we do know is that separation, particularly from mothers, impacts youth emotionally, psychologically, and academically. Juan Carlos’ heightened emotionality, like Naaz’s (who will be discussed in the next portrait), impacted his ability to concentrate at school. Both Juan Carlos and Naaz, at three years and eight months in the U.S. respectively, were intellectually brilliant but seemed disengaged at school. Relationships were reoccurring theme in Juan Carlos' interviews. Juan Carlos stayed up late, watching *telenovelas* and then sleeping in class. He had a girlfriend in Mexico City with whom he had a tumultuous relationship; managing his long-distance relationship with her was frequently an exercise in mental gymnastics. He desperately missed his mother and friends as well.
My best friend and I, we start to kind of separate like, when I just moved to Chicago I was like, calling him like five times a week or something, I don’t know, how many times but it was like that, like yeah. But now it’s like we’re kind of separate. It’s not the same (February 2010).

Juan Carlos’ mood varied dramatically, based on how frequently he and his girlfriend who lived in Mexico City had been communicating or whether they were fighting. He occasionally doubted his own ambition, and wondered if his U.S. education was worth the separation. Juan Carlos, a product of two decades of a transnational movement between Mexico and the U.S., was driven to create a tight-knit family. He dreamed of being a loving husband and a father who was present in his children’s everyday lives; this led him to question his own desire to attend university in the U.S. The belief that he had had in himself as a child wavered in young adulthood, and he responded emotionally to intellectual challenges. Juan Carlos’ emotionality was the product of his diasporic relationships.

Unlike Amnah, Juan Carlos felt a certain kind of hopelessness about his future. He illustrated that the person he had been and the person he had become after migration had marked his life. As a child, he felt boundless—he could learn to draw if he pleased.

Well, when I was a kid, when I was like four or five, I saw my sister drawing and I was like, damn she’s good. I wish I could draw like you. I tried to draw, but I couldn’t. But I can draw now because one I was just thinking and I said, why she can do that and I can’t, so, why? I said at least I’m going to try and I tried and well, I did it. Now, I am not sure if I will fulfill my dreams (Student Interview, November 2010)

Juan Carlos’ early determination wavered. He was interested in pursuing his dreams, but felt torn by his binationality and connection to the people he loved who remained in Mexico.

On a trip we took together to a local university to meet with a South American doctoral candidate, a trip I designed to give Juan Carlos a sense that there were opportunities for
international students and Latinos in higher education, Juan Carlos became overwrought. Visiting the university made him question how he could stay in the U.S. and attend college so far away from his girlfriend in Mexico City. It was likely that Juan Carlos' separation from his family influenced his struggle to decide between his education and returning to Mexico to be a father and husband.

Juan Carlos’ own father was supportive but academically absent.

He doesn’t come to the school or go to parent meetings. In my first day he asked me to be a good guy, because he doesn't want to come to -- or he doesn't want to have problems with me. He works a lot, ten hours a day. When he comes home he has to get some food, because we don't cook (Student Interview, March 2010).

In the literature on immigrant parent involvement, researchers frequently describe teachers as viewing immigrant parents as under-involved (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005). In general, studies agree that parents make a fundamental difference in academic achievement (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). Likewise, parent involvement in the schooling of children heightens a sense of belonging and improves children’s academic and behavioral performance (Chavez-Reyes, 2010). Yet the reality that parents may not be available to engage with schools, either because they are physically in a different country, or working long hours to support family in other countries, is less widely understood. At a staff meeting at Faulkner High School, immigrant parents' lack of involvement was problematized in two ways: attributed to either cultural values (disparagingly), or, by more benevolent teachers, attributed to a language barrier.

"We think the problem is that there isn’t a strong relationship between the parent, the teacher, and the student. There is a lack of understanding and support there," the man said. He continued, "And, what about all the students who aren’t Spanish speakers? Most of the staff here speaks some Spanish, but what do I do with the student in my class who speaks Urdu? Special education has a good parent protocol, but I don’t know if we can do the same thing for language" (Fieldnotes, January 29, 2012).
The teacher raises a critical point about how to access parents who speak languages other than English and Spanish. It was a factor for some of the non-Spanish, non-English speaking parents, like Amnah’s mom. As Amnah recounted, "Now my father’s English is good, he can communicate easily. It is still hard for my mother. She doesn’t go outside a lot, just stays home, and that makes it difficult for her to learn English." Faulkner High School eventually made a special effort to create parental involvement through an evening program.

Fred [the assistant principal] then began the meeting by discussing how the parent meetings were going. They had been set up as a way to get parental involvement, he said. "At the first meeting there were only six parents. So the guidance counselor personally called each parent. She didn’t leave voicemails and she didn’t email—she made sure she got in touch with everyone. And at the second meeting, there were 80 parents present." Gasps and applause broke out from the assembled teachers. Fred nodded confirmingly. He continued, "Last night we had about 20 parents. We want them to ask questions and understand what their children are doing" (Fieldnotes, December 9, 2009).

As evidenced by the assistant principal’s announcement at an ESL teachers’ meeting described above, there were spaces of genuine belonging and caring at Faulkner High School. With Juan Carlos’ family unable to attend ELAC meetings, and Juan Carlos’ lack of interest in becoming close to his teachers, he chose a different path to create belonging in his new, U.S. based life. He did not replace his parents with teachers, as he described some of his peers as doing.

I’m happy when I’m with my parents, when I talk to my mom, with my dad, with my brothers all the times, yeah. I feel good when I’m talking to my girlfriend. I tell her everything. I don’t talk to my teachers here—some people talk to some of the Spanish-speaking teachers, but I don’t. I don’t feel comfortable (Student Interview, March 2010).

Instead, Juan Carlos became parental, showing a skillful interdependence, and took care of the students around him who were emerging bilinguals or needed extra support.
Juan Carlos left the group and walked across the classroom to the front of the room. He joined the group in which Edwin was sitting. He bent over several of them and looked at their papers. Then he spoke and pointed at the paper. He then walked over to a group of girls sitting in the front row as well, but to the right side of the classroom. He spoke with one of the girls and then picked her paper up. He looked at her paper and then spoke with her again. Juan Carlos remained at the desks of the girls for some time. He stood facing them, and, leaning over, wrote on one of the girls’ notebooks. (Fieldnotes, January 21, 2010).

In this highly representative vignette, Juan Carlos takes on the persona of a teacher. The teacher herself was absent, and a sub was watching the class. Juan Carlos moved easily from group to group, helping a set of boys with their Spanish homework before moving onto a group of girls and working with them on their English work for the period. Juan Carlos found belonging through his peer support skills and built his own sense of relationships by interacting with his peers in positive ways. His empathy for students around him made him a favorite with his ESL teacher, who capitalized on his natural strengths and skills. His resources were cultivated through the process of migration and its product, family separation.

**Naaz**

When I met her, Naaz had been living in the United States for nine months. She was at once stormy and passive; in classes, her inertia was apparent. She would sit quietly, staring, in her own little world, suddenly breaking out of her reverie to enthusiastically answer a question before lapping back into silence. Outside of class, Naaz was a lively and expressive young woman who yearned for a “normal life” as she described it, full of clothes and boys. She wanted to be an actress.

Naaz was the most outwardly emotive of the youth with whom I spent time. Similarly to Juan Carlos who evidenced signs of depression, Naaz also struggled to maintain her well-being.
Unlike Juan Carlos, she was able to put words to her feelings: she described herself as depressed and knew that the origin lay in relationships. Reuniting with her mother after a long period of separation, missing her family in Iran, attempting to build peer friendships at school, and maneuvering the hostility between her and her second-generation Iranian-American cousins were the uppermost thoughts in her mind.

Following the Iranian Revolution in 1978-1979 and abolishing of the monarchy, Iranian immigrants to the U.S. increased dramatically—a 74% increase between 1980 and 1990 (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). Political refugees and asylum seekers migrated primarily to California; by 2000, 41% of the Iranian foreign-born lived in the Los Angeles area, with another large percentage in San Diego (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). In recent years, visas have been issued primarily to family and relatives of the U.S.-based Iranian community. The community is highly professional, with the top professional categories in management; 50.9% of Iranians have bachelor’s degrees compared to 24% of the total foreign-born population in the U.S. (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006).

Naaz was clear that she could not return to Iran.

My country wasn’t like that cool. It’s why we move here. It’s not good for teenagers like me. I think you heard about that thing. Kinda like war there, so. Iran wasn’t that bad and Arab people, I mean, Muslim people attacked there, so everything about culture and the religion is different now. If you are born in Iran you will have to be Muslim, if you can’t change your religion, they will kill you. Here, Iranian people can believe what they want. This necklace I wear is the Zoastrian religion. I don’t think I go to visit again. My life complete here, my stepfather, mom. I have no reason to go to visit there. Maybe to visit my friends, but I don’t feel comfortable. They are ask you some questions if you live in America…(Student Interview, February 2010).

Naaz had a heightened political awareness, an appreciation of religious freedom, and family reasons to cut off ties with Iran. She was perceptive and evidenced self reflectiveness (similar
to Ryeol’s reflectiveness) when she told me that she did not want to visit Iran because it meant living here and there and would confuse her. Given her emotionality about life in her receiving context, she was uncannily aware of why returning to Iran to visit would be unmanageable for her. Naaz felt that circulatory migration and a transnational life would be challenging to her emotional stability.

I would like to go back. But I don’t like to go back to Iran, and then back to America, and then again back to Iran…. you won’t know how to continue with your life, how to go to school, what to do with your future. It’s like one of your legs in Iran, one here, and you are confused. You have to chose one place, and live there (Student Interview, April 2010).

This decision demonstrated both an awareness of the politics of her life, and her ability to move back and forth between spaces. Unlike Juan Carlos, who welcomed chances to go to Mexico even though they could potentially heighten his sense of loss, Naaz needed to permanently leave her country of origin and start a new life. This may have influenced the way she integrated into peer groups, which will be discussed in the next section.

Naaz’s attachment to the Persian diaspora in the Southern California area was mixed. She hated the traditional holidays that were celebrated (“oh my god boring”), was thrilled to attend a concert of a famous Persian singer (“Benjamin, do you know him?”), and while she fought constantly with the only other two Persians at Faulkner High School, she once expressed her desire to move to a different high school where there was a more sizeable Persian population. She had an active Persian/ Persian-American life on the popular social media network, Facebook.

I really want to stay here long-term. But I am not that happy as I thought [I would be]. After coming here, I was so excited. America was my dreams. And still I like it. But when I came here everything is so regular. Maybe better than my country or my last life,
because my life really changed. But it wasn’t what I thought. Maybe it is one of the reasons that I am not that happy (Student Interview, April 2010).

Naaz’s migration journey had been simultaneously disappointing and exciting and she moved between happiness and depression. Still, her familial situation in Iran was untenable, and she was experiencing a much healthier family life in the United States. Her mother was the first of the nuclear family to migrate; she divorced her husband and got remarried in the U.S. She left her children for almost a decade in the care of her ex-husband who, by Naaz’s account was a drug addict and emotionally abusive.

My family are good. I have a stepfather and he is really good. Sometimes I feel like he is my real dad. And my mom is like okay with everything. She really help me and she wasn’t like that when she was in Iran. She was so hard about everything.

I lived with my dad in Iran after my mom left. He used drugs everyday—hashish. He was married to his drugs. He often calls me now and once we talked but it was boring because he cry and he say, I really miss you. He doesn’t miss me. He is just saying this because he wants to come here. When I lived with him in Iran, he always was talking to me so bad and one time he called my mom and was like, "Why you left your child with me? I am tired!" So this means he didn’t like us, right?

He didn’t have a lot of money and my mom had to work a lot. So, she never was at home and sometimes I remember...when I was in elementary school I just wanted that when I came home mom was home. I always was alone, nobody was at home and it wasn’t a simple thing. When I grew up and I got to 15 I made my life up with my friends, I got a boyfriend, I got whatever I could with myself and my friends. That time [childhood] passed for me. I can’t change anything (Student Interview, November 2009).

In the extended interview quote above, the complexity of life as an adolescent is poignantly revealing. With a difficult family situation, Naaz substituted parents and structure with her peer group. Still, she mourned the loss of an idealized childhood innocence. The issues that Naaz experienced would have been challenging for any young woman; emigrating to a new
country and new language was a further disruption to the fragile stability she experienced while living in Iran.

Growing up in a politically charged environment, without a mother, and with a father on drugs, could have had serious consequences on Naaz's behavior. While she made what she characterized as mistakes with young men when she arrived in Los Angeles (which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter), her resilience was undeniable. She was emotional and highly independent, as evidenced by a class that she decided to walk out of one day without telling the substitute teacher or classroom aide where she was going.

Her school behavior was rarely what might be labeled as disruptive; rather, she had the attitude of someone who had raised herself and felt that the rules of high school were childish and inapplicable to her. Her self-reliance and independent spirit was even evident in the way she spoke about her faith. Religion was important to Naaz, but did not occupy the foundational role it took in Amnah's life.

It’s a simplest religion ever. If you see three parts, right, the first one is acting good with people, the second one is talking good and the third one is, wait, I think talking and thinking good, that’s it, that’s the religion. And they don’t force you in anything, you can do whatever you want. It was the first religion in Iran.

Perhaps because of her experiences in Iran, she deeply appreciated the freedom of her faith ("you can do whatever you want"), and freedom in general.

Despite her independent spirit, Naaz was fiercely devoted to her mother and stepfather, and was hugely grateful for the opportunity to lead a new life. Reflecting demographic trends, Naaz's family was also middle-class and professional. Her mother had left her father in Iran to marry a teacher at Faulkner City Middle School. Because of her stepfather’s close watch, Naaz had a protected and facilitated educational program. For example, in the ESL class that I
observed from 2009-2010, she was removed from the class midway through the academic year and placed in a higher level (ESL 3). To my professional estimation, her English had not improved beyond that of her (mostly Spanish-speaking) classmates. Still, the placement was good for her and she enjoyed ESL 3 much more than ESL 2, mainly, she said, because the demographics changed from primarily Latin American Spanish speakers to Arabic speakers and she felt a heightened sense of belonging. Naaz’s gratitude and resiliency are excellent examples of the kinds of unseen spirits that immigrant youth have.

The four youth with whom I spoke varied in their emotionality, and much of that variance depended on the emotional support they were receiving from the people in their lives. Relationships in schools are critical for recent-arrival immigrant youth. Research relates that it is in schools that immigrant youth forge new friendships, create and solidify social networks, and begin to acquire the academic, linguistic, and cultural knowledge that will sustain them throughout their journey (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). There are nuances to the forging of those social networks: the most well adjusted of my participants was Amnah, who had a solid and extensive family network that had never been separated. Each of my other participants had been separated from a member of their family for a period of time, and two had been separated from parents. The emotional lives of youth who were separated from their parents mirrors nascent research we have on how immigrant youth are psychologically impacted by family separation.

As researchers explain, globalization is changing the dynamics of the family: "Increasingly, the world over, experiences of transnational families can be characterized by ‘the separation and reunification of family members over time’ (Tyyksa, 2007)” (C. Suárez-Orozco,
Migration processes are different too: some mimic Juan Carlos’ situation, with the father going first, sending remittances, and eventually bringing the children over one by one. Other migration patterns see kids migrating alone: “astronaut” or “parachute” kids, like Ryeol’s brother, leave to “study abroad.” In other patterns, mothers migrate before their children—like in Naaz’s case. Psychologists write that situations like that experienced by Naaz mean youth suffer two sets of relational attachment disruptions—first, from the parent, and secondly, (once the child leaves to migrate and reunite with the initial family of origin) from the kin who took care of the child while the parent was gone (Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2011).

Families, both through separation and through reunification, can experience conflict, with youth unwilling to give up the independence they had earned while on their own and parents experiencing guilt (Suarez-Orozco et. al., 2011). Similar to Naaz, who reported to me that she was depressed, or Juan Carlos, who was emotional with being fully cognizant it, research also reports that family separation can increase depression, anger, and low self-esteem (see Rutter, 1971; Smith et. al., 2004).

There is a tinge of tragedy within a global system that pushes parents to leave their children to make a better life for the family, and then does not give families the support to reunite. The psychological effect of family separation carries heavy implications for schools. In the wake of family disruption, relationships with adults at school can carry even greater significance. As noted in my observations of classes, a young Nicaraguan student who had lost his father became very attached to the maternal, Cuban instructional aide. For ESL teachers to be the architects of belonging they need the support of their colleagues—be that guidance counselors, school psychologists, or other teachers. It is a community effort to provide the services for recent-arrival youth that can help them flourish psychologically and academically.
Academic productivity is a result of students who feel a sense of belonging; as such, belonging and academics, which can be decoupled by teachers and academic staff not noticing the spirits, strengths and skills of immigrant youth, must be relinked in order to increase opportunities for youth at school.

The skills that the youth profiled here brought with them to school were numerous. Likewise, the students' spirits were strong. The act of leaving what was familiar and beginning anew either created or enhanced qualities like empathy, willingness to help, and curiosity. All four of the youth also had a sophisticated reflectiveness. By that I mean that all four youth were remarkably able to bear witness to their own lives and extract meaning. As Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." The reflective nature of these four youth—and other youth who I interviewed—showed analytical sophistication and an understanding of the nature of life and our world that can have much value for school communities.

Other kinds of strengths and skills were also inherent to the practices of the youth with whom I spoke. Amnah's understanding of social inequity and the natural world, Naaz and Juan Carlos' description of the political violence that influenced their migrations, and Ryeol's deep understanding of comparative international schooling are the kinds of practices that build school communities. This social and political knowledge was another strength that teachers could have highlighted in the classroom to increase global awareness. Still, as discussed in Chapter Four, creating transculturally relevant pedagogy at a time of increased testing is hindered by the current demoralization and challenge to the task of teaching. Nevertheless, for the sake of youth like Ryeol, Juan Carlos, and Naaz, who were vocal about their loneliness and emotional distress, we adults in the education community must try to change the current climate.
Part 2. Arriving: Acculturation into the diverse mainstream

For any adolescent, peer groups function as an important socializing factor (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). For the immigrant adolescent, who may have left behind family and is struggling to culturally adapt to a new situation, peers become the keys to a new world. In the lives of my four focal participants and other immigrant youth, peers scaffolded the experience of arriving and adapting to a new place. Peer groups provided a critical orientation to a new place, helping the immigrant students by language brokering, accessing academic content, protecting them from immigrant-oriented discrimination and bullying, and providing a cross-cultural buffer by sharing home culture and home language. In this section, I delve into the multiethnic, multicultural nature of immigrants' peer groups, and discuss how peer groups play critical roles in the acculturation experiences of the youth.

The cultural assimilation processes of Korean, Urdu, and Farsi speaking immigrant youth

The non-Spanish speaking immigrant students accelerated through the specialized educational program more quickly than the Spanish-speaking immigrant students. They also joined the diverse mainstream more rapidly, and their patterns of belonging forged relationships that crossed linguistic and generational lines.

Bi-generational and bilingual culture. Ryeol Kim was a senior in high school when he first joined this study. For the three years that he had been attending Faulkner High School, he struggled with language and friendships. He was a minority among minorities: after his older Korean friends graduated his sophomore year, he became only one of five Koreans in the school, leading him to spend most of his time online in Korean chatrooms. He was in the ESL
program for one year, after which he attended mainstream classes and the occasional ESL-English class. Ryeol reported that he was scared to speak in his mainstream classes, although his teachers regarded his performance highly and he achieved good grades with the help of tutors. He was isolated and lonely at school. The few friends he did have had immigrated from various places in East Asia; their bonding occurred around Korean pop culture.

Asian people stick together mostly, but over time Latinos and Asian start to mingle. It’s hard at first because I don’t have anything to talk to Latinos about—only schoolwork or tests. But with Japanese people, for example, we can talk about television stars. Japanese people watch Korean drama, and Korean people Japan animation. We have similar cultures. And in Korea, there are a lot of people from Japan. I had a classmate in Korea whose mom was Korean and dad was Japanese and he lived in Seoul. People in the Philippines know Korean stars too—Korean stars like to be famous in other countries. (Student Interview, March 2010).

Ryeol’s explanation of how he formed regionally oriented friendship groups is fascinating, particularly for questions of scalarity. Throughout much of this section, we will see that the particular region of the world from which a student hailed was relevant to his or her socialization process at the multi-ethnic, multilingual school. Pop culture, in Ryeol’s case, facilitated friendships across language and national boundaries.

A year later, after graduating from Faulkner, Ryeol had made friends with a group of first and second-generation Koreans (“Korean and Korean-Americans, we speak Konglish”) and enjoyed the freedom of college. Ryeol’s sense of belonging -- and appreciation for diversity -- was formed after he found his niche among the Korean expatriate community. Without other Koreans at Faulkner High School, he experienced alienation. With a move to university, he found a sense of belonging among a bilingual and bi-generational peer group. Drawing on the stability of this group, Ryeol was finally able to appreciate the promises of multiculturalism.
It is an important skill, not just to be in your own country, but to be in the world. We can learn English from other countries--Canada I think, maybe England too. But USA has the multicultural, you know. In USA you learn how to interact with other people very easily. Korea has only Korean people, you know, there is not many other ethnicities. So in Korea, I can interact with only Koreans, not with other communities, not with other cultures (Student interview, January 2011).

Ryeol’s portrait exemplifies how (a) academic success was measured by test scores and not by verbal participation in the community of practice, and (b) bilingualism and biculturalism can be a critical scaffold for students to acculturate into the diverse mainstream.

Transregional culture.

Amnah, a 10th grader who had grown up in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, deeply appreciated the diversity at Faulkner High School.

Most of my friends are from Pakistan—all girls. There is one Burmese boy, and there is Christians -- one is from Egypt and the others are Burmese. And there's Persian too. This year we talk mostly English because of our friends who are coming from an Urdu family, but born here so they speak English. So we speak English and now we collect the friends from other places like Burma, Egypt, Dubai, and Iran. The girl from Dubai doesn't speak Urdu, but she said she learned Hindi, but Hindi and Urdu are same. And one the girl who's from Burma, she doesn't even knows our language and she speak Burmese and English. The girl from Egypt speaks Arabic, but talks to us in English. (Student Interview, January 2010).

Amnah happily participated in the ESL program at Faulkner High School; she was proud of her multinational friend group, addressing the group’s “collecting friends” as if they were trophies. Amnah’s socialization process also highlights issues of scalarity, as noted in the portrait of Ryeol. Like Ryeol, Amnah was socialized into a peer group that drew commonalities around their connection to a geographic region, and across language, and national origin boundaries. Amnah drew on the culture of South Asia and the Middle East, and on languages indigenous to those areas—Urdu, Arabic, and Hindi. Heightened labor migration to the Middle
East (e.g., 70% of Qatar’s residents are foreign-born) has created a remarkable migration context where the entire world meets (Baldwin-Edwards, 2005). Amnah’s life in Saudi Arabia undoubtedly prepared her to engage fluidly with other nationalities and cultures; still, she participated most with a group that shared similar cultural references. How immigrants have also imported regional multiculturalism and transculturalism to the United States is a fascinating and underdeveloped area of study in U.S. educational scholarship.

Amnah shared how she made friends initially.

I don’t really talk to other people in my classes. One of the teachers helped me start making friends. She told me that there was another girl who spoke Urdu. I went to the main office, I got her information, where is her last class, I met her, she is becoming my friend. She wear the scarf like me. I said, “Do you know Urdu,” and then she said “Yes,” and we -- then we start talking. For one year I only have two friends. The other one that the teacher introduced me and this one. When I came to high school with Selma, we talked Urdu together. And this girl, Yubna, you know her, said “I’m here in this school new too and I heard you guys talking in my language so I decided to talk to you," and that’s how she become our friend. And slowly, slowly -- last year we just talk in our language. It doesn’t matter where we are and we just talk in Urdu and that’s how my Urdu-speaking friends comes. (Student Interview, January 2010).

Amnah chose her friends based on language and religious observance. She was aided by a teacher who recommended that Amnah should meet a young woman similar to her. This was an occurrence that was brought to my attention several times while doing fieldwork at the school: once, during a jawboning session with a teacher who was not formally enrolled in the research project, he recommended that I introduce a young woman from Brazil to one of my research participants. These informal connective practices have been formalized into peer mentoring programs at other schools with immigrant populations.

Amnah’s story demonstrates that the presence of a peer group that originated in a shared regional background was instrumental to her development of a sense of belonging at
school. Her tri-cultural knowledge facilitated her interest in language; she recounted to me one sunny afternoon in the quad at Faulkner that she wanted to get a part-time job with the U.S. census which would give her the opportunity to use one of her many languages (Arabic, Hindi, English, and Urdu). It was important to Amnah to continue learning Urdu, her first language, in order to avoid the teasing to outright castigation that many immigrants (and she too, probably) receive when they return to visit their culture of origin. Maintaining a coherent cultural identity through the study of Urdu was important for Amnah.

I don’t speak Arabic because I went to an English school in Saudi, but I can read it. In Hindi I can understand it but I can’t write. I really like Arabic. Christina, the girl who’s from Egypt, I hang out with her. She’s so beautiful and she introduces me to Arabic music. I love the Hindi movies too. I don’t care if I talk Urdu or English, because I know I always talk Urdu in my home, so if I don’t talk Urdu in school -- so it doesn't affect me but it help me, you know in learning English. I’m learning Urdu more anyway, the writing part and the reading, because my Mom had some books here and they have very good stories in it and I just try to read it anytime I get free time. I think it is good to know both languages because sometimes people can’t write in their own language and then they don’t seem like an educated person. At home I am the only person who is good in Urdu—my brothers and sisters have forgotten it. Tradition is important to me. The Muslim celebrations, Eid and Bakrid, you know it? (Student Interview, January 2010).

Amnah, a devout Muslim, aptly negotiated her belonging to a multireligious friend group with an unswerving adherence to her own cultural and religious traditions (“tradition is important to me”), and also spoke frequently about her enjoyment of different cultural groups at school. She showed off her knowledge of Spanish and Chinese words during our interviews, and spoke of her preference for salsa over hip-hop dance. Her portrait speaks of her ability to acculturate to a diverse mainstream through a practice of cultural flexibility. The presence of many other youth from her world region at Faulkner High School (both in and out of the ESL program) encouraged her sense of belonging at school.
A study of Desi teens in Silicon Valley is helpful to elucidate aspects of teen culture among South Asian youth (Shankar, 2008). Shankar explains that “Desi” youth culture is remarkably new, having developed after economic liberalization and satellite television took hold in South Asia in the 1990s (2008). The author explains, “Desi teen culture is constructed from a range of local and global influences, and Desi teens draw on stylistic elements from global media such as Bollywood as well as from local media such as hip-hop and pop music videos on MTV” (p. 54). Shankar’s characterization of the relationship of the global and local in teen culture is descriptive of processes at Faulkner High School. More precisely, I argue here that the globalization of pop culture localizes the regional, as teens from particular regions of the world—South Asia and the Middle East, East Asia, Africa, and Latin America—share regionalized cultural references and language practices. Amnah’s interest in pop culture was evident, and she referred to how she and her friend group argued about the styles of dance they enjoyed. Amnah once again displayed remarkable cultural flexibility as she described her enjoyment of not only U.S. and South Asian/Middle Eastern styles of dance and music, but also Latin American dance such as salsa.

While the data does not show the effect of Amnah’s belonging on her academic life, other research has definitively demonstrated that an increased sense of belonging correlates with academic engagement (Osterman, 2000).

Adoptive culture. Naaz, a young woman from Iran with whom I spoke only months after her arrival, was a singular case. Similar to Juan Carlos, Naaz was challenged by the

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60 "Desi" is the term used by many South Asians to describe themselves; I never heard this term at Faulkner High School.
generational divide between recently arrived and the second-generation youth at Faulkner:

“The Persian who was born here, they don’t want to connect to the person who came here and who are new. That’s Persian people, see, they are crazy.” Unlike the patterns demonstrated by Amnah, Juan Carlos, and Ryeol, all of whom chose friends from their geographic region, Naaz chose friends based on their similar emotional experiences; this excluded her religious Muslim peers like Amnah, whom she considered sheltered and naive. It took her time to find a group she felt comfortable with.

I sit at home a lot. My mom is like-- you have friends, you have good school, you are living here, you are free, why you are not happy. But I am like mom, you don’t understand. Like, my friends are not fitting me. (Student Interview, November 2009).

Naaz attributed much of her emotional ups and downs to the challenges she had faced in her childhood. We chatted in between classes toward the end of the academic year as students whirled around us like sharp leaves in a winter wind; Naaz told me that her parents wanted to send her to a therapist. Naaz was upset. She knew she was depressed and didn't want her mother and stepfather to worry about her, rather, she wanted to protect them. Naaz was cognizant of how her challenging relationship and separation from her mother had affected her. She had developed a sense of adulthood and independence during the time of family separation. Eventually, Naaz found a best friend, Ana Paula from Brazil, who had also been separated from her mother for many years during migration. Before meeting Ana Paula, Naaz struggled. Her trials to find friends who would “fit” her were poignant in light of the strong role her peers had played in her life when she lived with her addict father in Tehran.

Naaz found the peer culture at Faulkner High School divisive and alienating.

People are so weird here. They are like – they have – maybe it’s normal. They have their own groups and none of them are friendly. If a group is popular, they are together.
But, they don’t want to know people. New people, they don’t accept them. In the cafeteria, kids sit at different tables. One table there just are blonde guys, seniors. Yeah and one of the tables is just for softball team members. Last year there was a seat at one of the table with the Black kids. We just sat beside them and they just look at us and they laughed and made fun of me and I leave. Yeah, that's why I don’t like to hang out with them anymore, I mean, there are good guys, but I don’t know. Maybe my big problem is my language. I can’t talk. Maybe if I could like English so well I could find good friend for, like, myself. (Student Interview, April 2010).

Naaz was very aware of the lines of race and language that divided groups in the multiethnic, multilingual high school she attended. Her orientation, probably stemming from her immigrant experience, led her to develop cultural flexibility, an integral skill in negotiating multicultural spaces.

Ultimately, language, religion, class, national origin, and world region pop culture were not factors in her seeking a sense of belonging; rather, she looked for friends who had the same sense of independence, with cultural practices similar to her own.

I hang out with Brazilians. They are so partying, like oh my god. They speak English, you know. I can understand that, like I can talk with them and I am learning Portuguese. They are so warm, like first time when I met them, it was like they know me from – I don’t know, three years ago. They were so good to me. They are – they are like Persians. (Student interview, February 2010).

Unlike like Juan Carlos, Ryeol, and Amnah, language was deemphasized in Naaz’s ultimate selection of a peer group. The warmth displayed by Brazilians, a large community in the Los Angeles area, was a group trait that helped Naaz feel as if she belonged. Like Ryeol, Naaz’s choices at school were limited. She was one of only three Persians at the school and expressed wistfully once that she would like to transfer to a neighboring high school that had a large population of Persian youth. Yet her assimilation into the Brazilian community also meant her
disenchantment with Faulkner High School; like Naaz, her best friend Ana Paula found the ESL program academically mediocre and preferred to cut class than come to school.

Still, and differently to Ana Paula, Naaz’s strong father kept her in school, but she made poor grades and frequently seemed checked out in classes. Her disengagement at school was correlated with her status as a recently-arrived immigrant teenager. The challenges that she faced as a result of the process of immigration—depression, socialization into a community of peers, becoming a member of a new family—were more immediately pressing to her than academic success. Her story marks the critical importance of school policy that recognizes the experience of being an immigrant differently to that of being an "ESL" student (i.e., a language learner), and provides critical social services.

**Conclusion.** In the discussion of the global and local, we can overlook the presence of the regional. This study shows that the *transregional culture*, in this case the South Asian/Middle Eastern region, emerged as an organizing factor among some immigrant peer groups of mixed generational status in their emigration context. Amnah characterized her friends based on what languages they spoke, their national origin, and their religion rather than on whether they were first, second, or third generation.

Interview and observational data from this study showed that Amnah’s regional cultural peer group reflected similar trends among other immigrant groups at Faulkner High School. Namely, East Asians grouped together (e.g., Korean youth hung out with Japanese students); the Ethiopian students had a large clique of girls of mixed generational status (Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Ethiopian-American), some of whom spoke Amharic and others of whom only spoke English; and, the Mexican, Central American, and South American first-generation
students spent time together both in and outside of school. Pop culture was a major determinant in the forming of these groups: Amnah’s peer group was formed in part through an appreciation of the pop culture, music, and Bollywood film that dominate both the Middle East and South Asia. And as Ryeol shared, he was unable to befriend Latino students because they did not have the same pop culture references (leaving only “boring” schoolwork to talk about), whereas his Japanese and Filipino friends all knew Korean pop stars and actors. Yet unlike the practices of the recently-arrived Persian, Pakistani, and Korean youth, Juan Carlos belonged to the majority ethno-linguistic community at Faulkner High School and thus had a different experience of belonging.

In the lives of immigrant teens, peer culture was critical for well-being and belonging. Although there is variation in how challenged Ryeol, Amnah, and Naaz were by their school experiences and opportunities to belong, they all similarly experienced the freedom to create the cultural experiences they desired. Their experiences as minorities in a highly diverse context led to isolation for Ryeol, a regional peer group for Amnah, and an adoptive culture for Naaz. Each practiced turning cultural “boundaries into borders” in order to belong (Erickson, 2005), finding ways to enjoy ethno-linguistic diversity through bicultural strategies or cultural flexibility. Moreover, Amnah's story exemplifies an identity practice that occurred among the immigrant youth in the diverse mainstream, namely: global boundaries become local borders. Yet, and as extensively documented in the last chapter, the Spanish-speaking youth experienced an extra division along immigrant generational lines, meaning, the separation between first and second generation was highly pronounced in ways that it was not for the other youth.
The fourth longitudinal participant in this study, Juan Carlos, engaged in frequent cultural sharing across Latin American national and ethnic boundaries and had a supportive group of friends from countries across the Spanish-speaking world—Nicaragua, Chile, and Colombia among others, for example. Nevertheless, his identity as a Spanish-speaking immigrant meant that his assimilation process was different from the assimilation processes of non-Spanish speaking immigrants. Spanish was both an asset and a liability, as demonstrated thoroughly in the beginning to the last chapter. With ESL classes housing a majority of Spanish-speaking teachers, aides, and classmates, Juan Carlos found friends quickly (unlike Naaz and Ryeol) and received intensive academic support; on the other hand, he was positioned against other Spanish-speaking students generationally, linguistically, and culturally. As he explained,

I feel proud of being Mexican. So, I don’t like to be American. But most Americans aren’t racist. I feel like Latinos born in the United States are the real racist people. An American won’t call me "beaner," and a Latino would do that. (Student Interview, November 2009).

The racialized linguistic strife between the second-generation and foreign-born Spanish-speaking youth had heavily impacted their experiences of belonging; Latino EL-designated students were positioned as "unmotivated" by their teachers; the recently-arrived Mexican and Central American youth were similarly positioned through their cultural proximity to the "Latinos." That is to say, at Faulkner High School, teachers focused on Spanish-speaking, Latino youth as problematic; their doing so indexed the complicated ethnic landscape in Southern California where heavy immigration had led to an appreciation of multiculturalism, but the presence of the Mexican border meant that Mexican immigrants were viewed as a threat. As Levinson writes, schools crystallize the conflicts and accommodations around cultural differences occurring in other spheres of society (2002).
In interviews with the Spanish-speaking youth, their positioning (by their teachers and within the social landscape of Southern California) clearly impacted their incorporation process and set them up for bi-generational conflict. As the data showed, the non-Spanish speaking youth (like Naaz, Ryeol, and Amnah) described their experiences of belonging as free of institutional constraints, whereas the Spanish-speaking youth explained that their sense of belonging was mediated by their institutional experiences—i.e., the ESL program and teachers at Faulkner High School. Here, I explore those experiences, as reported by Juan Carlos and his classmates, and how the structure of school impacted their ability to form community.

**Part 3, Belonging: U.S. based multicultural politics and their shaping of youths' assimilation strategies**

Immigrant adolescents arrive to a landscape of identity politics that may be distinctly different from their own. That is to say, the politics of race, class, language, gender, and sexuality have distinct codes that U.S. born youth learn through the nature of their growing up in U.S. communities. By way of contrast, recently-arrived immigrant adolescents need to place their own regionally and nationally based understandings of ethnic and gender codes to the side and learn a new set. Immigrant adolescents' reaction to cultural codes can be one of confusion, hurt, or guilt. Youth often build immense character through difficult situations in which they are forced to learn the unspoken rules of being a U.S. teenager. Surviving such situations requires patience, awareness, and belief in one's own ability to survive. The spirits of the youth, therefore, were instrumental to their ability to learn the codes of U.S. multiculturalism and learn how to belong. For each of the four focal students, a different aspect of their identity became salient over the time that I spent with them. Language, of
course, was always a concern, but other identity markers mattered as well, and in different ways. For Naaz, being a young woman in a highly sexualized culture meant that she had to traverse uncertain codes of behavior in her interactions with young men. For Juan Carlos, being Mexican in a border state (i.e., California) placed him in political dynamics that were impossible to ignore. Amnah’s faith and visible appearance as a young woman wearing a hijab also meant that she felt at odds to the, again, highly sexualized culture of the high school she attended.

For Ryeol, on the other hand, his lack of friends who spoke Korean adversely impacted his daily life, and he escaped into transnational online worlds. In this section, I more closely examine the nuances of identity that shaped the ways in which the youth experienced belonging to U.S. high school culture over time.

**Religion and life in the U.S. as a Muslim**

Amnah revealed her religiosity slowly. She prefaced her conversations with emphatic assertions that she appreciated all religions; with her exquisite sense of multicultural, cosmopolitan appreciation, her affect for multiple religions while remaining able to be devoutly certain of the truth of Islam shows a superior multicultural skill. Islam stabilized a core identity for Amnah, and worldview was oriented around the tenets of her faith. It was the “root” that she shifted from and back to, and the pillar that helped her make sense of a sometimes vicious peer culture.

My friends are Muslim and Christian. I have one friend—I don’t know what she is. She changes her religion like her coat! I am Sunni. My Sunni friends and I, in Ramadan, we goes to the masjid and we open the fast together. You know, we have the Koran and each –Koran is divided in 30 chapters and each chapter we have to finish each day. So—and while they're finishing each chapter you have to be stand and I did it in my time because my friends, I was so excited like this. I just learned that the bible says that the
earth is made in six days, that is kind of interesting thing to me, I didn’t know that thing. I like every religion in the world—even Christian, Jewish. Like here, I met so many people, I never met them before. Like Chinese people, practice their Buddhism and I like it so much. I saw, uh, monks and they’re so good, yeah.

My friends talk to me about other religions. That is why I want to visit the church and... you know the Jewish place, there too, synagogue, to see how is it. That is interesting to me. I don’t say that any religion is bad because that is bad for me. Because my mom say, if you do for somebody bad, just throw water on their clothes, then they will do the same thing to you and how do you feel about then. My mom teach me really good, really peaceful, so I just walk on her ideas. That’s why my thinking is not bad (Student Interview, February 2010).

Amnah demonstrated that she was aware of the position of Islam in the contemporary West.

Her reticence to initially share her beliefs with me contrasted sharply with how in-depth our discussion become once she opened up about her devotion. Her conversation with me was firmly unapologetic, conveying a confidence unusual for her age and position.

Sometimes people think Islam is bad, they say oh, they don’t take their womans out, and they don’t...well, it’s the good thing. You want to be safe environment, you want your children to grow good, in good environment. So why don’t...if you keep your womans in protection, so the child who is growing up see her mother flirting with anyone, than the child say oh mother doing it, why don’t I do it, and the environment get more worse. And the girl say let me just use this boy, like this. And boys, when they grow up, become adult, and his mom and dad get old, then he will think mom is nothing, dad is nothing, let’s go have fun, alone—they are dying, let them die. So, if you make your environment good your children help you in your future (Student Interview, February 2010).

Amnah had a clear picture of how to defend her faith. In the United States, a secularized country that is increasingly hostile to people of faith, and particularly to Muslims, her conviction was a sign of her strength and the flexibility of viewpoint she had developed through her migration experiences. She had internalized a positive portrayal of women through her faith,
and was adament that her particular form of dress was good for her as a young woman, and as a member of a religious community.

So Islam, I think it is a good thing to wear the hijab. I notice here, people wear few clothes and they just…the boys sometimes abuse her. I saw a girl last year, who get pregnant, I think her boyfriend left her. I felt bad about her. Now people are different and gossip about her. If they had a safe environment, that girl would be safe. That girl don’t have to go through all the bad condition and the people talking and so, that’s why I think that the best religion about that Islam because you just cover yourself for the good environment. The boy can abuse you badly, this boy just want you for fun, they marry you and after that it’s…And after that divorce, and so many others… It is good for your environment if you just cover yourself, and no attractions (Student Interview, March 2010).

Amnah’s dress became a source of lengthy conversation between us; while I initially showed interest, after Amnah was able to ascertain that my intent was not to prescribe knee-jerk perceptions of Islam (like how wearing the hijab is anti-feminist), she took the subject on and, in her forthright manner, contacted me to tell me that she wanted to conduct another interview to explain her wearing of the hijab and religious perspective more fully. During that interview, she put us on a computer and we surfed multiple websites showing nationally based hijab styles (Egyptian appeared to be the most popular). Amnah carefully detailed her process of trying out and discarding various styles of tying her hijab.

How do I feel wearing a hijab here? Just fine. Some people have mohawks, I have a hijab. Some people ask me what is that and I just tell them it is a scarf. They never treat me badly. When I came here I didn’t wear it because I didn’t know anyone else who did, but then I met a friend she started wearing it and I said ok, if you are wearing it, I can wear it.

I researched how to wear a hijab online. Egyptian woman, they wear it a so really nice way, but I don’t know how to do it, so I just make my own style then. My mom, she is so simple. She just roll it like that and she go. She doesn’t care. I am more fashionable. This country there is more freedom, you can wear whatever you like or not, it depend on you. Everyone dresses so differently—half sleeve, without sleeve, more sleeve. I
used to wear the full black dress before. I am going to do it again someday (Student Interview, February 2010).

Amnah saw more in her covering herself than a religious observance. There was also an element of fun and fashion for her, and a way to connect back to a transregional culture. In the Middle East, Egypt tends to be the trendsetter, and young women wear colorful scarves in a multitude of styles. Amnah distinguished herself from her mother's hijab-wearing, just as frequent generations of daughters distinguish themselves from their mothers' lipstick shades or heel height. She clarified in great explicitness how wearing the hijab protected her from the sun, describing the “scientific” reports she had read on the internet that advanced hijab wearing as a form of protection against skin cancer. This move indexed what has been described by scholars of Desi youth culture as the preoccupation in South Asia with skin color, as light-skin “increases social prestige and cachet for marriage” (Shankar, 2008). Still, the hijab ultimately had significant religious motives. Religion surfaced as a core marker of identity for Amnah.

It is hard to practice Islam here. We have to pray five times a day. Wash your hands, face and feet. And after that there is one piece of cloth and we face to Caba. Even here they do it at the mosque. You know we face to Caba, where Mecca is. We all do that and we just pray. It is like only five minutes. In Pakistan it was easy. We prayed together at home and we got out of school at 1pm so we could pray. Here, I wait all day to pray because it’s too hard. I can’t go outside. I can’t wash myself as easily there, as I can do at home. I don’t want to miss my other things, my work, so I just wait until I go home. I don’t mind waiting until I go home. Islam says that if you go somewhere, use their rules and regulations. Suppose you are driving a car and you go my country, they say... You can do u-turn, you can make u-turn. But here, you can’t make u-turn. So if you are living in America you are going to follow their rules, if you go to Pakistan, you are going to follow their rules. If you go to Pakistan and say I am an American and follow my laws, you mess up their system. So that is why Islam say where ever you go it is fine to use their rules. (Student Interview, February 2010).
Islam enabled Amnah to take a *denationalized* approach to her life. As a continuous thread that was socially significant in each of the localities her family settled (including Faulkner City where a sizeable Muslim population resided), Islam became the *belongingness* that gave her the security to approach U.S. secular society with a heavy measure of empathic detachment. As Amnah said, *“Islam says that if you go somewhere, use their rules and regulations.”* Her position is aligned with current thinking that Islam presents a challenge to our traditional conception of the nation-state (see e.g., Tibi, Bassam, 1999; Sajed, Alina, 2011). While thinking in the political sciences argues the tension between secularity, the nation-state, and the “threat” of Islam, Amnah’s counter-story reveals a young woman full of hope and joy, whose rigorous faith enabled her to take a stance of openness and acceptance towards the multicultural world in which she found herself post-migration. Amnah represents the kind of openness to culture that could be termed *cultural flexibility*, whereby flexibility is a metaphor that denotes the ability to bend towards the wind without breaking.

Amnah’s faith intersected with her perspective on the role of gender and sexuality. Her appearance and demeanor, while symbols of faith, were also measures of protection against an occasionally vicious youth culture. The year that I intensively documented life at Faulkner High, the media was full of stories of teen bullying that had become so cruel that some victims resorted to suicide. Faulkner’s staff had assembled a task force to address bullying because many teens, including the non recent-arrival youth, had experienced physical and mental abuse. The wrenching story of the young woman who became pregnant and was taunted because of it became a totem for Amnah, a cautionary tale that reaffirmed the positive tenets of her faith that prescribed a strict code of conduct for the purpose of keeping her—and her male
brothers—safe and protected. Islam provided a basis for Amnah to negotiate and confirm her understanding of multiculturalism, gender, and sexuality.

Race, class, national identity, and longing

Juan Carlos’ identity as a Mexican was a reoccurring theme in our conversation. His life had impacted the way he viewed the world and his future, and he grappled with issues of race, language, and belonging in ways that Ryeol, Naaz, and Amnah did not. Most likely, the intense political focus on the “Mexican” immigrant in Southern California (a discourse that is discussed at length in the next chapter) positioned him in ways that the other three youth were not.

Juan Carlos was acutely aware of class and how his own had changed when he moved to the U.S. The economy of Juan Carlos’ village, which was located in Michoacán state, consisted of farming and selling the products of the land. His mother did not have to work, depending instead on the remittances his father sent home. His family was considered upper class in his village, as his father’s remittances had enabled the children to have things like a computer, and several TVs—one of which was in Juan Carlos’ room: “I have things other people can’t have.”

Class came up in his discussions about life at Faulkner High where he, alone among my focal participants, noted the differences in the student body because of class (many of the Black and Latino youth were from poorer, adjacent neighborhoods and were allowed to attend Faulkner High School because of a special system of permits). He noted that his scholastic preparations were to help him make a change in his class status: “I have to – to be prepare to the future and I want to have a better life. Like, I don’t want to work like all the Mexicans work, I mean like painting or something, I want to be a professional.” Juan Carlos equated being Mexican with not being a professional; the following interview transcription was captured at the beginning of
2009, a time when he was still struggling his own sense of shame around being a Mexican in Southern California (before his 2010 declaration that he was now proud of being Mexican). He spoke with a wistful, sad lilt when he reflected on what he had sacrificed to come to and to be educated in the U.S.

I think people is smarter here. Because Mexico, the people was not really worried about school, I mean some people were, but some people weren’t. I’m proud of being Mexican, but I think Mexicans are kind of, I don’t know like doing bad because they have a different kind of life like, I mean different to Americans. They don’t believe in education, yeah because some people whose, how do you say that, when they had the same age as me, they start working and they start having sex, girls get pregnant when they’re 14, 15. So I think, it’s not a good thing.

Still, it’s easier to be here than there—at least it is easier for my education. Sometimes, I wish Mexico was different, like I wish Mexico had same schools, same things that the U.S. had... I can’t go back to study there. I would like to – maybe I would like to go back when I am a professional. Yeah, I think life is better in the U.S, but I’m always thinking in Mexico (Student Interview, December 2009).

Juan Carlos experienced racism in a number of ways. As he related, he was somewhat ashamed of his father—and other Mexicans—working class position and longed to climb up the class ladder. Juan Carlos also expressed that both his White and Asian teachers, and his Chicano classmates, mocked his speaking of Spanish and called him traditionally discriminatory names (‘beaner’).

Juan Carlos experienced a change in his socioeconomic status as he shifted in between countries. In Mexico, he was middle class with the markings and trappings that conveyed that status. In the United States, Mexicans are generally viewed as belonging to the lower classes; this socialization occurs both between the White and Mexican populations, and between Mexican populations and other Latin American communities in Los Angeles and California. The socialization of Mexicans as lower class originates in a complex history.
After the Mexican-American War of 1948, the United States acquired huge territory that was carved up into the Western states—one of which was California. Mexicans were problematized, as the U.S. courts struggled to define their racial status, and Latinos fought to exercise their rights to vote, hold property, and educate their children (Hayes-Bautista, 2004). Their story is, of course, similar to the Chinese in Northern California; in Southern California, the focus on Latinos, and particularly Mexican-Americans, sharpened in the 1990s. Already envisioned in the public imagination as gang members, high school dropouts, and welfare mothers, Mexican-Americans were further defined by the politics and economy of the 1990s as “illegal immigrants,” conflating documentation, generational status (many Mexican-Americans had roots in California stemming back to before the state was established and the territory still belonged to Mexico), language, and culture. Mexicans became the locus of fears about immigration and, racialized as Black, were further reified as low class through media hysteria and voters’ fears.

Juan Carlos’ experiences of class in Los Angeles were acute, shaping his ability to experience belonging. Nevertheless, he showed skills, strengths, and spirit over the two years that I knew him, as he worked his way from self-loathing because he was Mexican to proudly declaring himself Mexican, as the quote that began this chapter exemplified.

The performance of gender, sexuality, and culture

None of the young men who I interviewed brought up their perceptions of gender and sexuality (although Juan Carlos discussed his girlfriend’s almost rape in Mexico City with me). Yet quite a few of the young women I spoke with, both the recently arrived and the second generation children of immigrants, brought up the sexual harassment they were experiencing
at school. In a recent study, 35% of youth in secondary schools (N=522) experienced harassment; boys and girls experienced it in equal numbers, but it upset girls more. As reported in the New York Times in 2008,

Walking through school hallways or in classrooms, girls said they must fend off boys reaching out and squeezing their breasts or grabbing their crotch or bottom. But girls also verbally harass each other, making lewd comments and writing sexually-charged allegations on Web pages or in text messages (Parker-Pope, May 1, 2008).

For immigrant girls, sexual harassment is also loaded with cultural nuances. During our interview, Naaz disclosed a painful secret. She had unwillingly lost her virginity to a boy who never called her again; she was terrified to tell the school counselor, and did not feel she could talk to her mother about the situation. Her most immediate question was whether any boy in the U.S. would want to marry her, as in Iran she would not be able to get married if she was not a virgin. Her concern was stemmed not only from her own cultural mores, but also from the still present double-standard at work at Faulkner High—a standard Amnah also touched on when she shared how her faith protected her from a sexual climate that she found to be aggressive.

At Faulkner High school, like you are dating someone and everybody knows that. Then when you go in today, someone says like she is a slut. I used to like being so popular in Tehran, but I don’t like now. Why? Now, I am thinking probably it’s not good. If you do something, everybody knows.

I talked to this guy on Facebook and he showed what I wrote to all of his friends and they laughed at me. Persian people – this happened, and I never met him or something, but he is going to tell people that I am not a good girl. It’s in Persian people a lot.

I used to want to be a boy because Persians tell boys – you can do whatever they want, but if a girl do something, they just call you bad names and like, I go to hang out at this one school, because there were a lot of Persian people. So I thought, maybe I can make a lot of friends. Now, I am not thinking about that because the guy I slept with goes there. So, it was like, you know, there’s a lot of Persians, and he is going to talk about
what’s happened, and I don’t want people to think that’s the kind of person I am. (Student Interview, February 2010).

Naaz, an attractive, outgoing young woman, seemed to be engaging in the kind of sexual behavior that can affect young women who come from homes with difficult or absent parents. Yet her yearning for love through her sexuality was tempered by the cultural values she drew on, and she recognized the double-standard at work in the peer groups she thought about joining. Those cultural values presented an element of protection for her, yet were a source of self-shaming. I have seen very little written on young immigrant women and their sexuality: as challenging as it is to understand your identity as it pertains to language or class, taking a bicultural lens to sexuality could be even more fraught with tension. This particular subject deserves careful and sympathetic research.

Naaz’s story adds richness and depth to our understanding of the life of immigrant girls and how they construct a sense of belonging. Naaz was fairly uninterested in discussing classes and schoolwork with me, even though, out of all of my participants, she received the lowest grades. She was scornful of being placed in classes with 9th and 10th graders (she was aged-in as an 11th grader but needed to make up credits to graduate), and frustrated, like the other three youth portrayed here, by her inability to produce well on tests. But her main concern was establishing a peer group to replace the one she had left in Iran, friends that “fit” her and understood her longing to be young, go out, and enjoy the nightlife of the city, and laugh and talk about boys, sex, and clothes.
Language and the persistence of the “model minority” myth

When I spoke with Ryeol during his senior year at Faulkner High School, he related to me that speaking in class was not the only way that language was a barrier. Silence also prevented him from getting to know his high school peers well.

I had a lot of friends in Korea, but it is different here. When I first came to school, I had a couple of Korean friends. When I first came here, the guidance counselor connected me to a couple of other Koreans, but they graduated [...] Now I am alone. There are six other Koreans here, but they were born here and don’t speak Korean, so it is different with them. I don’t want to talk to my parents about this because I don’t want to worry them. I am happy when I am with my family. Teachers? No, I don’t talk to them about how I feel, and I don’t talk to counselors either. I hold my problems in my heart. (Student Interview, November 2009).

When I first met Ryeol, about five months into his senior year at Faulkner High School, there was a quiet sadness that hung about him. He told me that his first two years had been lonely and uncomfortable. After that period, which researchers on language call the “silent period,” his English language skills improved somewhat and he became more comfortable. But Ryeol still felt barriers at school, barriers around his ability to break the silence between himself and others at school. Students laughed at him in class for his accent and misuse of vocabulary, so he shut down and stopped speaking in class. He studied hard for tests, and with two parents who were working, his family was financially able to pay for tutors to help him pass high-stakes tests that he needed to graduate. Ryeol’s mother had learned English by taking an online class when the family was still in Korea, and could help him with homework. But general, everyday English was problematic and made him feel alone and lost. Sometimes his teachers were able to help him, especially his ESL teachers, and at other times he was left on his own to figure out how to navigate an unfamiliar school system.
Language barrier is the hardest part. Sometimes I want to express something that I cannot express. Sometimes I misunderstand questions, I make a lot of mistakes. Sometimes I am scared to take mistakes. I didn’t like to speak sometimes. It took me a long time to become comfortable; but even now there are so many words that I don’t know. It can make me angry. Ms. Stradder, my 12th grade English/ESL teacher is the only one who encouraged us to speak in class. I like that a lot. The rest of the teachers, we just sit down and listen to their lecture, but she makes us work in front of people. (Student Interview, March 2010).

Ryeol's recounting of a supportive teacher who encouraged him to use his English demonstrates the critical nature of the teacher-student relationship to language acquisition.

Unfortunately, a supportive teacher was not enough to help Ryeol socialize at school. For Ryeol, English was still necessary to participate in pan-Asian peer groups, but he did receive academic and navigational support in class from other non-South Korean Asian classmates.

When I came here some other Asian friends helped me. Aan Lee-- she's Filipino. She helped me a lot. When I first came in I really didn't understand what they said. When they say, “Pass this paper,” I did not understand at all, you know. She would help me to understand. I'm watching the processes and, like, imitating. So that's what I did at that time, but when the teacher started to solve the problem on the board, I didn't know what they doing. But when I stuck with the problem, Aan Lee tell me what am I suppose to do in English, very slowly, with easy vocabulary. She had been here for six or seven years already, so she knew what it was like (Student Interview, March 2010).

Ryeol's story corroborates much of the evidence throughout this dissertation which demonstrates repeatedly the critical nature of peer support in learning among immigrant youth.

Still, Ryeol was unable to make many friends. In lieu of stable peer friendships, Ryeol turned to online social networking; the online world in Korea was light years ahead of that of the U.S., as he described it. Online life had interesting implications for his experience of culture. He and his mother were able to tap into the Korean community of immigrants in Los Angeles (the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan area has the largest population of Koreans in the U.S., and the city of Los Angeles has the largest ethnic enclave of any U.S. city) and Koreans in Korea.
Impishly, he related that he had exploited the immigrant story to advance his cause on his college essays; he had not felt a real sense of culture shock as he had already felt connected to life in the U.S. through his Internet explorations before he moved to the Los Angeles area.

Korea people really have a lot of communication in Internet. So when they -- so Internet is really developing, really, really, developing. It has some side effect, yeah, kids don’t play outside. But it is also good for us, because it helps literacy. People have to learn how to read and write because they want to be on the Internet like everyone else. Both my mom and I spend a lot of time on the computer. We go to cafés [chat rooms]. I can talk with other peoples a lot there, and they share ideas by making some notes and comments. It helps us. Actually, there is a site that Korean women and girl immigrants use, so my mom joined to the site and looked for some information. She looks for other immigrants’ lives, like just, where is the best place to go or like where is the best restaurant, like that. Before I came here, I read a different website about immigrants’ experiences here in the U.S. On that website, they said the people who are immigrants will be used to in United States in three years. They say three years, but I have been here for two, three years, but my language is not developing that much, you know what I mean? Now I go onto the Internet and read gossip about the stars, and read the news. I download Korean programs. You know that essay I wrote for college about cultural differences? It was kind of a lie. I didn’t have much culture shock because I was already so used to American culture from watching it on the internet. It didn’t feel different when I came here. (Student Interview, June 2010).

In this fascinating interview quote, Ryeol explores the multifaceted nature of the Internet in his personal life and in Korean society. His remarks on the internet supporting literacy show his deep grasp of and continuing connection to social issues in South Korea. But he also demonstrates how his online life supported his migration journey and his incorporation process into Los Angeles, providing navigational capital. Finally, the Internet plays a role in global culture. As he noted, he did not experience much culture shock because of his familiarity with U.S. life through his online forays. How his understanding of “culture shock” was mediated by his online life speaks to the interaction between cultural literacy, technology, and
globalization—a more in-depth exploration of the intersection of these phenomena is not possible here; further research in this area for immigrant youth is desirable.

As touched upon earlier in this chapter, Ryeol developed a pan-Asian friendship group which was established through shared references to pop culture and humor; still, he found most of his belongingness by engaging in virtual communities and spending time with his family. Transnational flows of information and mediascapes have transformed the traditional immigrant story, but other parts of the story remain the same: the silencing, and the myth of the model-minority. What was most telling to me about Ryeol’s situation was the depth of his loneliness underneath the cloak of the “good student.” It is not enough for schools to focus on belonging because research shows it promotes academic engagement and achievement; belonging is necessary to help youth flourish and enjoy everyday life in and out of school. Language played a central role in Ryeol's inability to form strong peer groups; as was touched on in Chapter Five, being a minority language speaker among minority language speakers (like a Korean speaker among Spanish speakers, in this instance) can be isolating. Ryeol was challenged by parental and personal expectations to successfully transition to university. This meant that, without the value placed on multilingualism by school or by the host society, Ryeol (probably unknowingly) sacrificed friendships for achievement.

Conclusion

The four subjects of this chapter, Amnah from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Juan Carlos from Mexico, Naaz from Iran, and Ryeol from Korea, had each been in the United States for less than three years at the time when I met them. Their stories are different to each other due to their relationship to their country of origin and their positioning in the landscape of American
identity politics. Yet there are many similarities among them, similarities that can yield analysis around immigrant generation and length in the U.S. as a marked and distinctive category of identity that needs to be taken up by research and by school organizations concerned with providing social justice to educational experiences.

All of the youth showed certain skills, strengths, and spirits by virtue of the challenges of being an adolescent, as well as an immigrant. The youth loved their families and were in many ways protective of them, shielding their families from the troubles that the youth themselves were facing them. The traditional break described in the developmental psychology literature whereby teenagers move away from their families to choose peer groups is less sharp here. The imposed break of migration, which separated all but one of the youth from family members, created both an independence in the youth that was respected by their parents and a desire on the part of these youth to be close to their families once they were rejoined. Nevertheless, peers were critical in the youths' acculturation and provided a source of comfort and belonging in an alienating and often unwelcoming school community. The youth learned skills from their engagement in multinational peer groups; namely, the youth all displayed an enjoyment of multiculturalism that is an absolute asset and enduring skill in today's globalized workplace, school environment, and communities.

Finally, the youth all struggled with the transformation of their identities, a process that is present in the lives of all adolescents, but particularly present when attempting to learn new cultural codes as an immigrant. For the young people, identity and cultural learning was made up of a complicated mix of: a) their personal and familial histories, b) nationalized and ethnicized understandings of social interaction gained both in their country of origin and the U.S, and how c) they were positioned in their new communities of practice. For the young
women, Naaz and Amnah, sexuality and gender were primary, and they each responded in
different ways. For Ryeol, as a minoritized languge speaker at Faulkner High School and in
Faulkner City, language became imprisoning, affecting his ability to create belonging at school
and probably leading him to his finding a sense of belonging in other spaces, like Korean online
social worlds. For Juan Carlos, the history of Mexicans in the United States, a particularly
politicized arena in today's public sphere, meant he struggled to see his national identity as one
of value. Next, I will summarize several of the themes of this chapter in more detail and relate
them to the strengths, skills, and spirits of the youth.

**Between the universal and the particular: The cultural lives of recently-arrived immigrant youth**

The practice of identity is one that entails negotiating the experience of self (in terms of
participation and reification), formulating membership to a community, and finding meaning in
the trajectory of development (Wegner, 1998). In my study, the youths’ stories illustrate the
complexities of practicing identity and belonging to a multicultural high school community in
the 21st century. From this, certain themes arise: loss, relationships, language, and gain
through transculturations. The discussions of these themes center around three main areas:
school, relationships, and culture. While each of the students professed education to be the
goal and impetus for their move to the U.S., their relationships with school were varied. For all
of this youth in this study thus far, and these four focal participants, school was sometimes an
alienating place: learning English, making friends, and negotiating a stigmatized identity all
erected obstacles to the youths' ability to engage with and enjoy communities of practice at
school. Their alienation is an example of the necessity of a psychological sense of belonging to
a school community, as described in the review of the literature in this dissertation (Osterman, 2000). Only Amnah expressed a real enjoyment of life at school, a factor probably helped significantly by her large peer group of culturally similar friends and stable home life. The dreams and aspirations of the youth were also bound to their psychological welfare and “sense of belongingness.” For Juan Carlos and Naaz, the two more emotionally vocal students, the future was a site of conflict and uncertainty. For Ryeol and Amnah, on the other hand, the future was bright: Ryeol was on the cusp of graduating when I met him and, in his emotional life, he had already left behind the trauma of integrating at high school, and Amnah enjoyed her everyday life, overflowing with talk of dream jobs and the everyday skirmishes found in the lives of all teenagers.

*Relationships.* Relationships dominated the ways in which youth experienced belonging. Their belongingness was not always relative to place or citizenship, as discussed by other scholars of immigrant youth and belonging (see, for example, Maira, 2010), but always fashioned through interactions with others. This pattern (belonging as a product of relational support and as a precursor of community capital) was also notable in the social actions and perceptions of other recent-arrival youth who I interviewed and observed as part of this study; how belonging and relationships facilitated learning and culture is discussed throughout the three data chapters. Teachers figured large in the lives of all the youth; how teachers taught them in ways that they could learn and achieve and/ or reached out to them and supported them were repeatedly lauded and appreciated in interviews I conducted with these youth and other immigrant students. Relationships with parents—absent and present—were critical as well; Naaz, Ryeol, and Amnah all benefitted from highly attentive parents. Naaz and Juan Carlos also suffered the separation from their mothers: Naaz struggled to reunite with hers, and
Juan Carlos lingered over the memories of his mother’s food. Family is the social unit fundamental to human flourishing; nowhere is this more obvious than in young migrants.

**Learning English.** Learning English, as for all immigrants, was a major factor in each students’ ability to experience community at the high school. Interestingly, the importance placed on learning English was salient in different social areas for the different participants: for a few of the youth, learning English was most salient to their ability to engage in class, for other youth, learning English was difficult because it prohibited them from making friendships or getting jobs after school. With the learning of English, the issue of making friends was paramount, and all of the youth mourned the friend groups they had left in their country of origin. Relationships were determined by language abilities, English and other languages, and by culture. Three of the youth spent time with youth from their region of origin: South Asia/the Middle East, Latin America, and East Asia. Naaz had a difficult time accessing peer groups, eventually becoming friends with some of the other recent-arrival girls (from Chile and Brazil) who enjoyed a robust social life and were equally disaffected from school. Being unable to form strong friendships affected them to varying degrees, but Naaz, Juan Carlos, and Ryeol all experienced a similar deep sense of longing for intimacy and closeness with another person, or group of people, a feature that is fundamental to the ways in which teenagers develop and form a sense of their own identity.

**Culture.** Culture was a determinant in relationships and also in cultivating a sense of belonging to school. Pop culture, the online world, cultural adjustment or lack thereof, religious values, and language were star characters in the youths’ grappling with their public lives and other people. Ryeol found a sense of belonging online that gave him a transnational cultural affiliation to Koreans in Los Angeles and his friends in Seoul. Biculturalism, or circular
migratory patterns like spending the summer in one’s country of origin and the academic year in Los Angeles (as Juan Carlos did and Naaz dreaded doing), was a factor in how belonging was routed through culture and place. Transregional culture played a critical role for all of the students as they acculturated and formed peer groups; this topic will be further explored in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. Exercising the skill of cultural flexibility endowed all four of the youth with an affinity for the multiple cultures, ethnicities, languages, and ways of being that were presented to them in the cultural smorgasbord that is Los Angeles.

Reoccurring throughout the data upon which I draw to build this chapter is the question of the implicit tension between the universal (that is, how immigration affects the human heart) and the particular (that is, how the migrant experience is differentiated by the politics of belonging in the host community) that these youth embody. The youth lived the kind of in-betweeness with which all migrants, old and young, can identify. But to live the emotions of the expatriate at 15, 16, and 17 is a very different experience to that of the adult. Along with the physical and mental changes and attachment trajectories inherent to the development of the adolescent, the emotional ruptures presented by the migration experience can are a profound experience for a young person. The youth interviewed here lived both positive and problematic independence and interdependence. Doing the kind of cultural, linguistic, social, and academic work that was required of them by their in-school lives awarded a cosmopolitan spirit, strengths like independence, persistence, and self-reflection, and skills like cultural flexibility and empathy that lent each of the youth I interviewed a kind of sophisticated gravitas. At the same time, their independence led to loneliness. They shrouded their loneliness, hiding it from parents and teachers, making the process of diagnosing a need for belonging to a community challenging for busy school officials. Yet this need is critical, and evidenced by the
previous chapters of this dissertation, largely unseen. I think that it is not overstating things to claim, based on the evidence presented in this chapter and the reality of demographic changes in the U.S. and in public schools, that: bringing immigrant youth from invisible and silent positions to visible and recognized full members of the community is the central challenge of 21st century public schooling in the United States today.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Toward a Pedagogy of Transcultural Belonging

The inquiries addressed in this dissertation make a case for the following theoretical assertion: that spaces with diverse immigrant groups are fascinating laboratories of new cultural forms in the 21st century. Despite the conditions impeding immigrant youth from successful academic outcomes, and despite the occasionally conflictual and fractured relationships between teachers and students, I believe the story told here is ultimately a positive one. To follow Mike Rose:

What gets lost in most discussions of multiculturalism and education—from the right and the left—is the potential for joy in diversity: cultural gestures and practices counterpointing each other, mixing, sliding about in a vibrant social space. (2006, p. 51).

What ultimately occurred at Faulkner High School, a local space of transnational flows, was that youth who might never have had occasion to meet each other, did. Thus, for example, young women from Iran and Brazil forged friendships around shared emotional processes—loss, longing and the excitement of diversity. Their experiences point to practices of a culture of acceptance, learning, and transcultural interactions. In a globalizing world, these patterns and processes are crucial to forging new ways of being in the world, and to educating an increasing diverse generation of young people. As such, the aim of this dissertation is to advance the idea of a pedagogy of transcultural belonging.

What constitutes transcultural belonging?

Transcultural belonging is an ecological system, involving individuals, classrooms, schools and society. Among other phenomena, patterns in peer groups (illustrated through portraits in the last chapter) demonstrate that some of the immigrant youths’ assimilation
processes were essentially smooth. Their proximity to a highly diverse mainstream fostered a sense of belonging to peer groups formed around various transregional cultures, bilingual speaking practices, and intergenerational engagement. As the examples of Amnah, Juan Carlos, and Ryeol reveal, interaction among cultures led to a particular kind of flexibility whereby young people retained the traditions of their own ethno-linguistic heritage, and simultaneously engaged in new and unfamiliar cultural practices—often from multiple parts of the world. Absolute minoritization, as in the case of Naaz who had only two other Persians to spend time with at school, led to extremes: Naaz drifted through ethno-linguistic communities at school until she found one whose cultural practices felt similar to her own, rather than spending time in peer groups with geographic proximity to Iran. Cultural flexibility is defined by Carter in her research on Black and White youth as “the ability to interact in, participate in, and navigate different social and cultural settings, to embrace multiple forms of cultural knowledge” (2010, p. 3). It is a promising critical concept for educational anthropologists working in immigrant communities, as mapping out culturally flexible practices could illuminate how heightened ethno-linguistic diversity leads to new forms of cultural identity and social capital.

Secondly, transcultural belonging is critical for classrooms and learning. The transculturations that occurred in Room #47 showed the natural curiosity of the young people about other parts of the world, other languages, and other ways of living. Even so, as evidenced by the marginalization of minoritized language speakers in a mostly Spanish-speaking ESL classroom, educational professionals (and the researchers who support them) are still, it seems, learning how to adequately respond to the incredible diversity of needs present in multilingual classrooms. In the case of Room #47 discussed in Chapter Five, a community was responsive to Spanish-English bilingual students, placing value on the needs of some participants.
Unfortunately, the community did not promote the growth of all of the learners in the classroom, and students like Srinak, the Thai speaker, felt excluded to the detriment of her educational experience. Careful vigilance is required to respond adequately to all youth through strategies including 1) privileging transculturations, peer language, and culture brokering as valuable social and cognitive work, and 2) supporting a community’s pooling of resources by promoting linguistic leadership roles. More research on how to support teachers in this endeavor (remembering that only a fraction of high school teachers have second language acquisition training) is highly needed.

Third, transcultural belonging is a societal necessity. The question of how communities will unite in a super-diverse hotspot demands a more in-depth understanding of the cultural ecology into which immigrants are incorporated. Both the cultural schemas of their teachers and the racial politics of Southern California influenced how four young immigrants portrayed in this study were able to make friends and participate in their school community. The struggles and successes of the students at Faulkner High School suggest a matrix of multidimensional and multivalent processes of assimilation that occur in contexts of super-diversity. This matrix requires social scientists and educational researchers to rethink normative approaches to culture, language, identity, and education, and build upon the cultural wealth inherent in dynamic youth practices. As such, labeling immigrant youth or language minority youth as "EL-designated students" can position young people as needing to assimilate into a homogeneous "American" mainstream that no longer truly exists. Rapid demographic changes since changing immigration laws in 1965, coupled with globalization, means that many schools are now dynamic contact zones. Making our way, educationally speaking, through new zones of
transnational flows and "global assemblages" requires us to form a different kind of populous (S. J. Collier & Ong, 2005). Simply put, monolingualism is not a viable global strategy, and future citizenship must truly be flexible (Ong, 1999). The transcultural nature of immigrant youths' lives heralds a new way of schooling: we can turn away, resorting to tired social policies that have left us in the midst of a messy ideological battle, or we can embrace the future, documenting and pedagogically advancing the naturally occurring strengths of youth in the contact zone.

In the following pages I will briefly recap the dissertation by summarizing each chapter's findings in light of the theoretical framework presented in the introduction. Then, I will unpack my assertion that belonging is transcultural, and explore how a theory of transcultural belonging is relevant to the current educational landscape.

**Summary of the dissertation in light of the theoretical framework.**

To approach the study results, I used a theoretical framework made up of interdisciplinary perspectives on community. I used learning theory, theories of social relations, and theories of the interaction between school and society. In the review of relevant literature, I cited multiple studies that had quantitatively demonstrated the critical importance of belonging for student development. This literature was helpful, but the lack of a deep analysis of the social and psychological structure of belonging, reflected in the question that prompted this dissertation (How do we go from being a group of people sitting in a room to a community?), required ethnographic inquiry. As such, I decoupled the subject of belonging from its seating in quantitative inquiry and forged a new link between the study of belonging and qualitative literature, particularly ethnographies of immigrant youth. Then, I presented an
ecology of transcultural belonging through three case studies: one at the school-society level, one at the classroom level, and one at the level of the individual.

The first case study, called "The Architecture of Belonging" came out of analysis of (a) the total corpus of fieldnotes, including professional development sessions, teacher meetings in addition to classroom visits, (b) a questionnaire completed by teachers (N=68), (c) a survey of motivation completed by 10th grade students, immigrant and non (N= 450), and (d) interviews with school administrators, teachers, and students. The findings revealed an architecture that made issues important to the education of immigrant youth both invisible and visible.

Immigrant youth's concerns and values were largely invisible in the mainstream school community; they only became visible after they were problematized as a group unable to pass high-stakes testing. Teachers blamed the immigrant youth for being "unmotivated" to learn. In Chapter Four I argued that “motivation” was a sliding signifier that obscured the real needs of EL-designated teachers and students. Furthermore, it was argued that the discourse of motivation meant there was a missed opportunity to build on the cultural wealth of immigrant youth.

At Faulkner High School, administrators, teachers and students were subject to accountability measures that left them with conflictive goals. That is to say, the goals of the immigrant youth, to form relationships and community, were in conflict with the kinds of success required by school practices and policy. Concurrently, immigrant students were considered burdensome, low status, and low motivation by some of Faulkner’s teachers, who could have also been influenced by nativist immigration politics. At Faulkner High School, the staff asked themselves the following question: how do we reform our school program to ensure that immigrant and language learner students pass the district and state tests? I argue here that
the discourse around testing and student motivation obfuscated the actual needs of EL-designated teachers and their immigrant, language minority students, preventing the formation of an architecture of belonging.

Etzioni’s model of an "authentic community" defines community as a web of affect-laden relationships (Etzioni, 1996). Etzioni and Wegner also defined community as a commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings with members who engage in shared histories, rituals, and culture (Etzioni, 1996, 2000; Wenger, 1998). While Faulkner High School had webs of affect-laden relationships, those relationships did not translate into shared values, norms, and meanings. As the case-study in Chapter Four demonstrated, the immigrant youth valued supportive relationships that led to learning, whereas the teachers and staff were required to value performance on high-stakes testing, in line with the current neoliberal educational policies which have been amplified by the economic down-turn in California (and in the U.S.). Using these definitions to assess community responsiveness, we can see that Faulkner High School was not fully responsive to the needs of all of its members. As Etzioni elaborates:

Communities are characterized by a relatively high level of responsiveness. This third characteristic excludes social entities that oppress their members: It defines as partial communities those that are responsive to some members or sub-groups, but not to all; it characterizes as unauthentic those communities that respond to the false needs of members rather than to their true needs (1996, p. 5).

Following this definition, the mainstream social entity that was Faulkner High School was a partial and unauthentic community. Still, smaller communities of practice had many characteristics of responsiveness and authenticity such as the ESL classroom featured in Chapter Five.
In Chapter Five, I reported on data gathered in one ESL classroom. I found that the practice of the youth in the classroom was to form community around language, transcultural sharing, and learning. Notwithstanding the ambivalence of the teacher and the lines of racism and language that affected the ability of the youth to establish a completely inclusive community, the ESL classroom was ultimately a successful community of practice.

Chapter Five also demonstrates two of the major themes of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s work on community. Namely, Dr. King discusses community as a site for pooling one's resources, and argues for the interrelatedness and interdependence of humans. At the same time, Dr. King addresses the bicultural nature of the Negro, writing, "This is the dilemma of being a Negro in the United States. Every Negro is a little bit colored and a little bit white" (1967, p. 53). The classroom community of Room #47 evinced these two polarities. On the one hand, the immigrant youth successfully pooled their resources to create spaces of cultural sharing and learning. Much of their support of each other occurred through translation practices. On the other hand, some of the youth, particularly the Spanish-speaking youth, also experienced fractured belonging in that they did not belong to Latino peer groups (their word for the second-generation Spanish-speaking youth), nor were they fully identified with their countries of origin anymore. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates the critical importance of Dr. King's theory of community as a place to transform power relationships: the immigrant youth, through creating their own practices around inclusion, disempowered larger social exclusion and achieved a sense of safety and belonging in their ESL classroom.

The final case study, Chapter Six, consisted of four portraits of immigrant youth. Analysis was drawn from longitudinal interviews with four participants, and participant observation (focal follows) in different classroom settings that the four participants attended. Chapter Six
built on Wegner’s theories of identity development and analyzed adolescent development from an anthropological, rather than a psychobiological perspective. Specifically, data showed that youth participated in cultural activities that facilitated the ways that they integrated and contributed to the multiethnic, multilingual mainstream. Three areas were explored: youth’s migration journeys, youth’s acculturation through participation in peer groups, and the relationship of the youth to their identity markers like race, gender, and class. This chapter more closely examined what feminist theory calls the "politics of belonging"; I will discuss this in greater depth in the next section. Now, I turn to a discussion of how the three case-studies answered this dissertation’s research question.

Revisiting the research questions in light of data findings.

This dissertation is acutely concerned with everyday interactions. How activity unfolds, who participates in activity, and in which language(s) activity is conducted, have a great deal to do with the larger political sphere. In this sense, scale and indexicality permeate the investigations of this dissertation. The research questions that inform this dissertation are:

- **What is the structure of belonging experienced by recently-arrived immigrant youth in a multiethnic high school?**
- **How do recently-arrived immigrant youth achieve a sense of social, cultural, and academic belonging at school?**

I will now consider each of these questions in turn.

(1) **What is the structure of belonging in a multicultural community of practice?**

Erickson explains that ethnographic work is concerned with *structure*, or the kinds of things that occur in settings, and how meaning becomes action (Erickson, 1986). For example, I
looked at *kinds of things* like: forms of beliefs and values, ways of speaking and using language, ways of collaborating around academic work, friend-making processes, differing and similar migration journeys, differing and similar assimilation experiences. I also looked at organizational practices like: ways in which youth were tracked into classes through adults' organizational and programmatic decisions, how tracking indexed larger social phenomena like racism and immigration politics, and, kinds of adult judgments of value that accompanied how youth were distributed. I noted that these processes all shaped modes and trajectories of belonging. The modes and trajectories of belonging were not explicit: rather, the structure of belonging at Faulkner High School was shaped by everyday actions and conversations between teachers and students, students and students, and other members of the community. Noting this allowed me to see the central assertion of this dissertation: at the heart of everyday relationships are constrained by larger social politics influencing the ways that youth were able to feel a sense of belonging.

*The politics of identity.* We saw throughout this dissertation how a hierarchy of value was established by some of the teachers. This hierarchy was erected through the teachers' perceptions of the value/ non-value of identity markers like language, national origin, length of settlement (i.e., generation), and class, all of which biased who was seen as deserving as entry into the mainstream community. This entry was symbolized by who was promoted-out of the ESL program and into the mainstream academic community. The teachers were not the only actors responsible for creating and maintaining a hierarchy; the youth themselves, most notably in the Spanish-speaking community of first and second-generation students, also circulated notions of belonging and exclusion through bullying practices. Use and facility of English was a way for youth to strategically belong to the mainstream. The youth monitored
their use of language (as in the example of a young Urdu speaking woman whose peer group decided to speak English instead of Urdu while at school), and monitored each other’s language (as in the example of the second-generation youth bullying the recently-arrived youth for speaking with accents or not understanding the English of the classroom).

These practices index the politics of language and belonging that dominate the national conversation, and have corollaries in international and comparative examples. State level and national levels of language exclusion and hierarchism appear in policies like Proposition 227 in California, a major ballot initiative that profoundly influenced the English-only movement across the U.S. Such English-only policies index an increasingly polarized landscape where Latinos are becoming more publically visible—think actress Sophia Vergara who unashamedly draws attention to her accented English in a popular television show. At the same time, Latinos are pushed to become less visible through draconian legislation that racially profiles People of Color and linguistic minorities, falsely equating all immigrants as "illegal" Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants. These racialized politics do not stop at the schoolhouse door. The youth were acutely attuned to lines of inclusion and exclusion in the larger social setting, and experienced national and state legislation echoing through their interactions with each other and their teachers. It is impossible to separate one's identity from one's ability to belong in the United States.

Ecologies of belonging. While identity shapes belonging, identity is shaped by the context of reception that occurs differently in different localities and regions of the United States. These contexts of reception change over time. As of the writing of this dissertation, new demographics and settlement patterns are shifting national dynamics, changing traditional immigrant-reception sites and new immigrant destinations alike (e.g., see Helen Marrow, 2005,
and Stanton Wortham, forthcoming). In other words, place matters intensely to schooling for immigrant youth. In Los Angeles and Southern California, a history of immigration and multiculturalism means that official celebrating of ethnic pluralism. Such was the case at the site of investigation in this dissertation—Faulkner High School. The racial diversity of the school was a source of much pride, for state evaluators, teachers and students. But as one teacher put it — “we get praised for something that we aren’t actually doing. They tell us how proud they are of the diversity here, but that isn’t something we created. No one talks about the actual work we do.” Some teachers valued the learning and identity development that comes along with practicing multiculturalism. But most teachers did not make multiculturalism a direct learning principle of their classroom.

In fact, multiculturalism was cited as a way to castigate youth for not belonging, as evidenced by the words of one teacher, who faulted the immigrant youth for not properly integrating into the multiethnic mainstream. As she put it, immigrant students were “only connecting to one kind of person” and “needed to make sure that everyone else was included.” In this instance, the teacher perceived that shared multicultural diversity was threatened by the school’s Spanish-speaking community. Scholars have tended to view multiculturalism through two complementary lenses: first, that it is about the balance of social cohesion and cultural pluralism, but secondly, that it places a focus on redressing the unequal relationship of marginalized groups to mainstream society (Torres, 1998; Wieviorka, 1998). At Faulkner, teachers were divided on their perspectives about how to form an equitable multicultural school community. A handful of teachers worked specifically with Black, Latino, and immigrant youth to raise their consciousness of the issues of those communities. Most teachers, as exemplified in the quote above, either took a laissez-faire attitude towards racial and cultural
integration, or placed responsibility on students to maintain social cohesion (rather than holding adults responsible for teaching multicultural strategies for social engagement and learning as suggested by scholarship).

The architecture of the district reflected programmatic decisions that can also be analyzed for their politics. The program at the high school level demonstrated that the multiethnic mainstream was a site of both conflict and of belonging. The district of Faulkner City had robust dual language program offerings. Students who attended the dual language programs were, as one teacher related, middle class and White. The youth in the ESL programs, on the other hand, tended to be Latino and came from the poorer side of town, where families lived in apartment buildings, not stand-alone houses with yards. As argued throughout this dissertation, immigration in California, with border politics and a lengthy history of Mexican-American oppression, operates differently to immigration politics elsewhere. Yet the practice of coding certain immigrant groups as undeserving is a global phenomenon evidenced by the following highly politicized incidents:

(1) In Milan, Italy in 2004, the nation convulsed over a local school's decision to provide a separate Islamic class for students-- a request levied by the community's Muslim families and agreed to by the school (Torres and Tarozzi, forthcoming).

(2) In Cairo, Egypt in 2005, 3,000 displaced Sudanese protested the refusal of the UNHCR to grant them refugee status and rights to resettle in a third country. The protests ended 3 months later with 25 dead and hundreds more in prison.

(3) In Arizona in 2010, SB 1070 granted police the rights to detain anyone suspected of undocumented status. Some religious leaders characterized the move as reminiscent of Nazi-Germany.
(4) In Australia in 2011, asylum seekers set fire to an overcrowded detention center to protest living conditions. Some asylum seekers had been held there for over 2 years.

(5) In Georgia in 2011, HB 56 was passed. Modeled after SB 1070, it took that law even further. It required teachers' to inquire into students' immigration status and barred undocumented youth from attending the state public college system. Some professors began to teach classes illicitly, calling their action "Freedom University".

The above list demonstrates the heightened politicization of immigration globally. It also demonstrates how critical it is to advocate for the rights of children, youth and adults to belong to the communities in which they reside. Belonging, then, is not simply a feel-good topic, but a political activity with consequences. Integrating communities into a larger national or transnational community requires a measure-of skill and strength, and qualities of character, like patience and flexibility. While the larger society deteriorates, the immigrant youth who shared their lives in this dissertation quietly got on with the business of acceptance and integration, demonstrating qualities and values that carry deep implications for the future of pluralistic democracies.

(2) How do recently-arrived immigrant youth develop a sense of social, cultural, and academic belonging at school?

Recently-arrived immigrant youth develop a sense of social, cultural, and academic belonging at school through relationships that support them emotionally and educationally. As developed by feminist theorists, belonging is a relational concept. Rowe (2005) argues that the belonging as articulated by a “politics of location” establishes an individualized identity, and ignores the community that we live in relation too. She reconstitutes belonging as a “politics of
relation” which aims to render transparent the political conditions and effects of our belonging (what I call "who are you from"). She writes,

“The sites of our belong-ing constitute how we see the world, what we value, who we are (becoming). The meaning of self is never individual, but a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of, often without reflection.” …Who we love, the communities that we live in, who we expend our emotional energies building ties with—these connections are all functions of power. So the command of this “reverse interpellation” is to call attention to the politics at stake in our belonging, and to envision an alternative” (p. 16).

Relational scaffolding, a theoretical model developed out of this dissertation, refers to ways in which purposeful relationships between peers, teachers, and other school staff help each student develop through cultural participation (see Figure 24). Relational scaffolding is influenced by the context of reception of a particular place, a term that refers to the politics and ideology that influences how new immigrants are welcomed. Teachers are the human face of context of reception in schools (Dabach, 2011).

Prudence Carter (2007) writes about how poor, urban, minority students with little to no social capital need adults who are multicultural navigators. Multicultural navigators model strategies for students to retain their home community’s cultural assets while deploying methods for-success utilized and performed by the dominant culture. Relational capital helps youth develop navigational skills, as was demonstrated repeatedly throughout the data presented in this dissertation. Immigrant youth noted instance after instance where primarily peers but some teachers helped them learn how to do an unfamiliar institutional system (e.g., navigational skills), whether that meant translating, explaining the credit system, setting up
newcomers with friends who spoke their language, or other acts of relational support and orientation.

Relational scaffolding is a building block of what Conchas calls "institutional scaffolding" (Conchas, 2006). In this dissertation, I found that relationships were conditioned by institutional practices; for example, using test scores to measure teacher performance meant that teachers didn't feel free to create relationships with immigrant youth. The term institutional scaffolding refers to how relationships are applied and replicated organizationally to create a functioning social institution. Conchas (2006) examined how institutional support systems and organizational arrangements—like admissions policies that foster racial integration, a climate of mentorship and high achievement, and academically and linguistically rigorous curriculum—provide high poverty urban immigrant youth with the necessary social capital to complete high school. The community framework component of societal integration builds upon Conchas’ characterization of institutional scaffolding, by examining the ways that schools integrate immigrants from diverse backgrounds and promote social inclusion both in the ESL classroom and in the school as a whole.
Figure 24: Transcultural Belonging Model

The model shows how immigrant youth can be supported through relationships to be integrated into school communities thus maximizing benefits of institutional scaffolding as defined by Conchas, 2005. Institutions, and the relations that create them, are influenced by the context of reception and the politics of place. Results of this dissertation show three areas necessary for institutional scaffolding (as mediated by relational scaffolding): (1) navigational skills (helping immigrants understand what needs to happen to negotiate everyday life in schools. This could include explicitly teaching the credit accrual system, or making school announcements bilingual); (2) language brokering and community language acts, like translating, that support youths’ academic and social engagement; and, (3) transcultural identities that are recognized, and those skills which have directly evolved from the transnational nature of youths’ lives are leveraged in the academic setting.

Now, I further explicate the Transcultural Belonging Model in a discussion of how pedagogy relates to transcultural belonging for immigrant youth. I outline a philosophical contribution of this dissertation to educational research and the ethnography of immigration and youth.
Toward a Pedagogy of Transcultural Belonging: Theoretical conclusions on belonging, education, and politics

The findings of the study, and the shift from “belonging to what” to “belonging to who,” excavates Freire’s method of critical consciousness and his shattering of the dualism of the student-teacher relationship. Meaning, for Freire, prise de conscience entails humans coming face to face with the reality of their world, and educational authorities gaining the humility to accept that they can learn from their students. The world that is problematized in this dissertation is the social life of the migrant; through understanding the migrant's social world, we can also learn and operate from youths' perspectives on culture, belonging, and their needs. Put quite simply: immigrant students need to experience a sense of belonging. By not prioritizing their needs, we have decoupled belonging from academic success. That is to say, data from this dissertation showed that the neoliberal testing environment prevents educators from taking care of students' socio-emotional adjustment. Relinking belonging to educational outcomes means that we take seriously the notion that helping immigrant youth “belong” is the most critical aspect of the work we do in schools. The specific forms of transcultural belonging that can be seen throughout this dissertation were shaped by the school's setting in a highly multiethnic and multilingual demographic. Advancing a pedagogy of transcultural belonging means that we must push past the traditional framework offered by multiculturalism, and make central the transnational and transcultural nature of immigrant youths' lives. Here, pedagogy refers to an educational ethos that can be advanced to transform practice and policy.
Youth culture among immigrants has a transcultural nature.

The major finding of this dissertation was that immigrant youth are living transnational lives and developing transcultural skills, but that those skills are not taken up (i.e., recognized and leveraged) by teachers and schools, much less recognized in the formal architecture of schools. Much is made of the need for multiculturalism in schools. This has led to myriad culturally sensitive models of education. Like culturally relevant pedagogy, multicultural training is often based in the histories of Black and White Americans. With the blurring and diversifying of the color line in an era of heightened immigration, a global, multicultural outlook is needed. Transcultural, as I use it here, is the companion term to transnationalism. It encompasses U.S. based multiculturalism but opens it up to nonlocal (international, regional) possibilities.

In Wenger’s work on communities of practice, he stressed several issues of identity and group participation that push learning forward. First, Wenger stressed the issue of identity and membership in various groups, theorizing how identity changed as a part of that membership. Correspondingly, he addressed how the boundaries and peripheries of groups-- communities of practice, required flexible identities and forms of learning. Finally, he discussed how belonging is shaped through participation in those communities of practice and along the faultlines of boundaries and peripheries. It could be said that the immigrant youth foregrounded in this study lived dual lives on the periphery-- at school, in their neighborhoods-- and in the center of their community of practice however that formed--- in the ESL classroom or among their peers, for example. Culture, of course, is a central practice in a community. This dissertation advances the notion that the transcultural was the product of the constellations of communities of practice at Faulkner High School.
As the youth revealed through their vigorous discussion of their identities in the portraits in the previous chapter, and as I observed in the ESL classroom, transcultural work was a central feature of a sense of belonging to a community. Youths' transcultural work included: (a) forging nonlocal and regional peer groups, (b) strategic multiculturalism such as choosing which ethnolinguistic group they wanted to belong to (as the young Portuguese speaking girl did when she chose Spanish speaking friends first, and then Persian speaking friends depending on her social and academic needs at the time), and (c) metalinguistic awareness, enjoyment of multilingualism, and multi-lingual sharing. These are all skills that can be taken up through relational scaffolding to increase school engagement opportunities for immigrant youth, as delineated in the Transcultural Belonging Model introduced in the previous section. All these and other factors are opportunities presented to educational researchers to abandon inappropriate identity categories and open up discussion about new identities in a globalizing world.

**Belonging as a transcultural/ transregional/ transnational practice among peers.** The peer groups and friendships described by the four immigrants in Chapter Six paint a picture of the coalescence of the local and the regional. U.S. schools have seemingly grasped the importance of multiculturalism (although they are still resistant to critical multiculturalism—a multiculturalism that moves beyond celebrating culture to teaching anti-racism), but have not necessarily grasped the importance of a global culture. This is where we can learn from the cultural wealth that the recently arrived bring with them into our schools. For each of the young people interviewed, peer groups were a relational location in which immigrants engaged in diasporic culture; friendships were formed around culture, language, and national (nations of
origin) proximity.

In Chapter Six data demonstrated the following: a) South Asian/ Middle Eastern groups united through language (Hindi, Arabic and Urdu), pop culture, and other shared regionalisms and b) Asian diasporic and local groups like Koreans, Chinese and Japanese united through online life and pop culture. Data used for Chapter Six also show the regional peer groups who consisted of c) African peer groups made up of immigrant, first- and second-generation high school girls, and d) Latin American peer groups who shared an ethos of latinadades-- cultural knowledge, language, and pan-Latin festivities like “Day of the Dead” and the World Cup. The presence of the regional carries fascinating implications for current scholarship on multiculturalism and interculturalism.

Ethnographic studies of immigrant youth can tend to focus on racial and multicultural practices through U.S. based theoretical frameworks (e.g., Lee 2005, Valenzuela 2002, Olsen 1997). This dissertation advances knowledge about how immigrant youth import, locate, and experience transnational culture. This dissertation shows that the questions we ask need not focus around the local and the global, but rather the local and the non-local. By discussing the non-local, we open up space to think about transcultural, transregional, or transnational practices. Local and non-local practices were taken up in peer groups, as demonstrated in Chapter Six. Those relationships provide a kind of belonging that is exercised through imagination and alignment, practices described by Wegner in his work on communities of practice as ways to maintain community.

Transculturalism/ transregionalism/ transnationalism is germane to youth depending on their positioning in the wider society. In the U.S and particularly in Southern California during the 2009-2010 year, the word “immigrant” was virtually synonymous with “illegal Mexican”.
This meant that Juan Carlos’ experience at Faulkner was different to those of Ryeol, Naaz, and Amnahn, who were less stigmatized in the wider socio-cultural setting of Southern California. Studies of culture among recent arrival youth would do well to be aware of the focalizing that occurs, and how particular immigrant groups push the limits of social tolerance, while others are seen as productive assets to an already multicultural U.S. society. This stigmatization has serious implications for how recent-arrival youth are incorporated into the pre-existing school community, how peer groups are formed, and how youth are able to achieve a sense of belonging.

Transcultural practices and understanding-of-self: Identity work among immigrant youth.

Youth were differentially positioned by the cultural politics they experienced at school. Cultural politics also affected how they positioned themselves and adjusted the salience of their identities across communities of practice and ecologies. Most insidiously, the immigrant youth entered a cultural soup that had established identity categories—e.g., the Mexican boy had not been “Latino” until he came to the U.S., nor had the “Asian-American” been Asian until he arrived in Los Angeles. As detailed throughout the literature review, identity is a critical part of how youth experience a sense of belonging. Studies have looked at the aspect of race, gender and class in how youth experience a sense of belongingness to and within an educational institution, but no studies have looked at the issue of language as a mediator of a sense of belonging. For the youth I interviewed, language was a critical part of their identity. Secondly, their portraits disclose how identity can be a site of tension between permanence and fluidity. Meaning, how the youth prioritized different aspects of their identities either remained static, or changed, depending on context. Their stories suggest a critical message for scholars and
education practitioners who research and influence the lives of immigrant youth. Namely, our analysis, and teaching, must remain dependent on the perspectives of our participants and the realities of their lives.

The U.S. obsession with racial politics drives U.S. based researchers to think intensively about race. My intent here is not to de-emphasize the importance of studies of race and racism, but rather to suggest that with recent arrival immigrant youth in particular, we must commit to recognizing identit(ies) as transcultural. I will explore this assertion in further depth now, focusing on the third building block of immigrant integration in schools labeled "transcultural identit(ies)" in the model pictured in Figure 24.

In order to support youths' transcultural work in classrooms, their identities as international and transnational citizens must be recognized. Further, the particular strengths of the skills that come out of their migration journeys must be allowed space in the classroom, and leveraged to help youth access academic success. Here, I will elaborate on an analogous treatment of transcultural identity, support and skills in the field of nursing.

“Transcultural” in nursing education and care has been central since the 1950s. Nursing educators explain:

... transcultural nursing [is] a formal area of study and practice which takes into account the specific values, beliefs, and ways of life of people of diverse or similar cultures with the goal of using this knowledge in creative ways to provide culturally congruent care (Leininger 1998, 1991b). Discovering the needs of individuals of families of different cultures and environmental areas is a skill that ultimately guides the nurse to make appropriate nursing-care decisions and take appropriate action (Mashaba & Brink, 1994). (Emphases mine).
What is so useful and appropriate about this definition is its focus on the creative aspect of care-giving for international patients, and the focus on how their care emerges from a nurse’s interactions with the patients themselves. Specifically, care emerges from a focus on the individual, his or her family, his or her familial culture, and his or her environmental area of origin. Likewise in education, focusing on the individual and his or her familial culture takes into consideration what is most important to the individual and his or her family and his or her sociological area of origin, or nation of origin and context of reception. This sociological ecology could be different for each international young person. In the health professions, considering the environment of the patient is critical; similarly in education, considering the sociological environment—politics, economics, education, culture—from which youth emigrate and into which they immigrate—is critical to our care.

For both researchers and practitioners, basing theory and practice in transcultural belonging when providing care for international, immigrant students, is preferable to current modes of operation. Starting from the vantage point of the immigrant student opens up creative and fresh ways of thinking about human interactions in and through education, society, and community. Those implementing a Model of Transcultural Belonging must consider the sociological area of origin, or what parts of the subjects’ identity become salient in and across a variety of settings and ecologies. Thus, race cannot be the only lens through which the lives of immigrant children are analyzed even though race is at the heart of social relations in the United States. Rather, immigrant youth need to be understood in terms of the identity politics that are pertinent to their national origin and current context—be that tribal, racial, linguistic, national, or religious. Returning to the example of Hasanatu, the young refugee from Sierra Leone whose story I told at the beginning of this dissertation, we can see how she may of
understand herself in terms of how her gender was used as a tool in war and dislocation, but upon arriving in the U.S., her Blackness may become salient as she is racialized in particular ways. The multiplicity of identities like Hasanatu's need to be taken up in complex ways by ethnographic work.

Take for example, the four participants I discussed in the previous chapter. The youth's markers of identity and subsequent sense of belongingness was salient in different ways for each of them, dependent on their personal characteristics, local and global politics, family structure, language, class, religious tradition and so forth. For each, there were primary and secondary factors. For example, for Naaz, the primary factors that emerged as salient in her quest for belonging and cultural adaptation were gender, and her Persian heritage. These factors drove her experiences with her sexuality, independence, forming peer groups and so forth. Language emerged as a tertiary concern, critical in so far as she felt it limited her initial ability to make friends, yet, ultimately, it played a role of little import as she found friendships in the Brazilian community in Los Angeles. For Juan Carlos, national origin was the nexus through which all of his other understandings of his own identity flowed. For Juan Carlos, too, generation emerged as a secondary concern that impacted his ability to make friends. For Ryeol, language was a major determinant in how he experienced his educational progress. And for Amnah, her regional identity and religion/faith determined her interaction with peers, her dress, and her sexuality, whereas her family support influenced the way she experienced educational progress. In short, research on belonging would do well to consider identity through a transcultural framework, positioning analysis as originating in the individual and how his or her identity markers become salient across ecology and context.
Limitations of the study and directions for future research on the transnational and transcultural nature of immigrant students' lives.

(1). The geographic location of immigrant incorporation matters greatly for the politics of belonging and therefore, for a pedagogy of transcultural belonging.

   Across the globe, nation-states, cities and rural areas respond differently to international migration; as Castles and Miller state, “Globalization remains a crucial context for understanding 21st century migration. On the one hand, globalization drives migration and changes its directions and forms. On the other hand, migration is an intrinsic part of globalization and is itself a major force for reshaping communities and societies” (2009, p. 54).

   Migration could be characterized as the dark face of globalization. As economic policies enacted by global organizations created “push” factors, they spurred the movement of the global South to the global North (Torres, personal communication, 2011).

   The context of reception is critical to understanding the nature of transculturalism in the lives of immigrant and language minority youth. As discussed at length in Chapter Four, the setting of Faulkner High School in Los Angeles, a city with a lengthy history of immigration and intense border politics, meant that youth became socialized at school in different ways. Extrapolating this data, we can see that across the globe, immigrants are incorporated differently and similarly in specific localities. Sociologists and social geographers continue to map out comparatively how immigrants are socially incorporated based on the sociohistory of a locality; this theoretical stance is imperative to work on immigrant youth in schools because schools index wider social politics.

   There are marked similarities in responses to global migration between and among national policies, education systems, and communities of practice. In a majority of sites, response to migration leads to increased practices of inclusion and exclusion, particularly along
cultural lines. Cultural attributes like language, race and religious practices are heightened areas of conflict, as they symbolize the struggle over who belongs, and who does not. This process of “othering” worldwide is exacerbated by the neoliberal world economy. In this economy, international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) have been created to ensure efficiency, not to protect weak economies nor vulnerable social groups (Castles & Miller, 2009). Thus, the poor, losing economic opportunities at home, move to the wealthy countries. Still, it is also true the immigrants tend to represent the middle-class of their country of origin, being those who can actually afford to leave their homes. As Portes and Rumbaut write, this explains why the present education and skill level of the immigrant population in the United States at present is relatively equal to the levels of the native-born (2006).

How vulnerable social groups have been incorporated into societies changes according to locality. In fact, it is argued that migration works similarly everywhere with respect to labor market segmentation, and settlement (2009). The main differences can be found in public attitudes and corresponding government policies on immigration, citizenship and cultural pluralism. Indeed, this argument makes sense in the context of the portraits of belonging in chapter four. Naaz, Ryeol, Juan Carlos and Amnah’s families all went through similar settlement and economic patterns, but their cultural accommodation and integration differed sharply. Hence, we can see a multicultural politics of belonging emerging through the ways in which the struggle over inclusion/exclusion and culture manifests differently in different localities. The point here is that the nation-state can “structurally position” immigrants in ways that impact their socio-cultural positioning. That is to say, inter/national and state policies can determine whether immigrants are viewed as “belonging” within the community of their new residence.
Schools are often a battlefield for cultural politics and are also a rich site within which determine how immigrant, minoritized groups experience social positioning, tolerance, and blame. Adults make decisions in the best interest of youth: these decisions become formalized in schooling programs and are manifested in curricular choices, grouping practices, and the provision of socio-emotional support. This formalization is not neutral as ideologies frame attitudes about groups. It can then be argued that adult educational decision-making is saturated in the drama of immigration currently debated in liberal democracies. The ethnography of immigrant youth needs to explore this issue through multiple forms of evidence—historical, social and cultural, psychological and institutional. Researchers should emphasize the “focal immigrant”, that ethnic group which exists at the limits of cultural tolerance. This concept requires us to situate the concept of the “focal immigrant” in the everyday life of schools to determine how institutions accommodate difference.

When considering the role of place in the ethnography of immigrant youth, an important difference to consider is how liberal democracies produce different educational experiences for immigrant minority groups in schools. Questions like: How does the concept of the focal immigrant change based on the limits of tolerance in different nation-states, and how do these differences manifest in the everyday life of their schools? are important. In places like Arizona and California, for example, the current focal immigrant is the undocumented Mexican immigrant. Issues of resource allocation based on legality and the language of instruction in schools push the boundaries of tolerance in these states. By way of contrast, bilingualism is noted as important to global development in nation-states like South Africa, or the states in Western Europe. Rather, the issue of HIV/AIDS in the former, or religious practice and dress in the latter emerges in anti-immigrant rhetoric. In schools, this carries direct consequences for
learning. For example, many immigrant youths in the U.S. are barred from participation in bilingual education, or are segregated in English as a Second Language programs (yet they may usually dress as they please, and health is rarely cited as a concern for the intermixing of groups). Ethnographers of place and immigration could benefit from the microanalysis afforded by comparative case studies, and the macroanalysis provided through cross-cultural and historical contextualization. This research will engender dialogue around accommodation, citizenship, and cultural politics; ethnic group dynamics in a pluralistic society; racism and linguistic discrimination in contemporary liberal democracies, and the effects of the limits of tolerance on educational decision-making.

Too often, we tell the stories of individual schools without conceptualizing the macro-processes that have led to their being the way that they are. For example, what are the transcultural processes that occur in new immigrant destinations like Iowa and Wisconsin versus established sites of super-diversity and global cities like London and New York? I believe that demographic shifts in Faulkner City could have led to much of the racialized and discriminatory positioning of immigrants (particularly immigrants from Mexico), that took place within the walls of the high school. It is my hope that future investigations will better theorize how the position of Faulkner City within Southern California could deepen our shared understanding of the political and social rationale that lead to the experiences of the people who I have documented here.

(2) Global teaching and learning.

As with all ethnographic work, researchers often sacrifice breadth for depth. This sacrifice was not an easy one to make. The tension inherent in this study was that while attempting to draw a portrait of a school community, I was also magnifying the position of one
sub-population within that community. This meant that I had to demarcate certain boundaries in my gathering and reporting of data to de-emphasize my relationships with parents, with teachers, and with the children of immigrants who populated the ESL department, and yet still retain these groups as minor characters in the stories of the recent arrival students, my focus population. Furthermore, and importantly, immigrant students are still conflated with EL-designated students. This means that recent arrival immigrant youth sit in class next to the children of immigrants; both are taught an “English as a Second Language” curriculum which is widely critiqued for being reductive and overly simplistic (Callahan, 2005; M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). Recent arrival immigrant students and the children of immigrants have different needs, not the least of which is cultural adjustment services for the recent arrival youth. I was unable to truly investigate the factual differences in (1) the perspective of teachers towards the two different groups, and (2) actual services rendered such as length of time the second-generation spent in the ESL program versus that of first generation students. Carefully documenting the diversity of the ESL cohort is important in order to match educational offerings with specific student needs.

Documenting the lives of the immigrant youth meant that I necessarily spent time with the children of immigrants who were their classmates. The story of the second-generation in the United States is heartbreaking. They were truly positioned as failures by Faulkner High School, and by the prevailing wisdom among educators in Southern California in general. While I was able to represent some of the views of that group in this dissertation, I tried to limit their perspectives to those that established a relationship between themselves and the recent arrival youth. This was a difficult line for me to walk. There is good, quality work on the relationships between the second-generation and recent arrival youth (Lee, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999), but
more work is needed in order to impact productive policy reform. Moreover, second-generation Mexican-American youth are dropping out of school in record numbers (Gándara & Contreras, 2009), necessitating a closer look at the connection between their position as the focalized immigrant group and school success.

I also would have liked to systematically explore the curriculum offered to my participants, and the historical changes in the city where Faulkner City High School is located. Research that builds on this dissertation would do well to push into areas like curriculum, and the nuances of the ESL cohort.

While I documented some of the teaching and learning available to students (and the work of ESL teachers), this dissertation was not particularized to the curriculum. Interview quotes and participant-observation demonstrate that a global focus could have been an excellent resource for immigrant students. This could be an exciting direction for future research. While there are many excellent readers and teacher education courses for ESL teachers (see, for example, Carlos Ovando’s work on ESL classrooms, or Kip Tellez’s recent publication on democratic learning for EL-designated students), the majority of teachers of EL-designated students in the United States are undertrained by teacher preparation programs and in-service professional development. The major complaint I heard from teachers while in the field was that they didn’t have adequate resources, and they didn’t have the training they needed to truly service the international youth in their care. With the rising enrollment of EL-designated students, and the teacher shortage in this area, the United States public education system may well experience a colossal failure if it doesn't modernize. Future work could reveal the many exciting opportunities that teachers have to engage in global curriculum production in schools and in teacher preparation programs.
Global curriculum is an important area of development. The work of the classroom I observed for most of the year was reductive and misaligned with the cultural and linguistic resources at the teacher's disposal. With global youth in our schools, educational policy and curriculum have the opportunity to be responsively global in nature. Suarez-Orozco (2007) notes that learning in the global era requires particular ways of thinking and being: (a) lifelong cognitive, relational, and behavioral engagement with the world, (b) curiosity and tolerance of ambiguity, (c) cultural sophistication to empathize with diverse peers, (d) synthesis of knowledge within and across disciplines, (e) collaborative work and effective communication among diverse individuals, and (f) socially responsible and democratically engaged citizens, among other aspects. It was clearly demonstrated across this dissertation that the immigrant youth observed had most of the qualities Suarez-Orozco names, and are aptly positioned to be participants in a new kind of 21st century learning. This may require us to rethink how we see immigrant youth; as discussed in the literature review, Campano and Ghiso (2011) call immigrant youth "cosmopolitan intellectuals." The authors write that the world of children's literature does not reflect the reality of 21st century classrooms with youth with multiple national backgrounds, languages, and transnational commitments. Their thoughts are worth quoting at length here:

By virtue of [immigrant students'] diverse vantage points and transnational negotiations, they are uniquely positioned to educate their peers and teachers about the world. If, as Nussbaum contends, the role of education is to, 'cultivate the factual and imaginative prerequisites for recognizing humanity in the stranger and the other (p. 133)', then multilingual and multicultural students can lead the way... Their perspectives, derived from familiarity with multiple and often contrasting settings, offer understandings of the
human condition --including the suffering of many worldwide-- that may not be readily available to individuals whose frame of reference has never been unsettled (p. 166-7).

As the results of my study demonstrated, this understanding of the human condition and of diverse vantage points often occurred in the underlife of the classroom, and through relational scaffolding. Thus, researchers and practitioners concerned with the politics of education need to stand ready to shine a light on what occurs in the margins of classrooms, and find a way to take what is naturally occurring, capitalize on its strengths, and help to make it an institutional ethos. At the least, this task may require us to reimagine ESL classrooms from being spaces of remedial learning, to being cutting-edge spaces that lead us in new ways of thinking about 21st century skills and global learning. As one of the ESL teachers I interviewed put it:

I have heard teachers talk about -- kids as having no potential because they can’t score well. But I believe it’s an absolute, amazing thing that we live in a country that promises a free and public education to every child and then that really means something, something really important and sacred. And I see that broken down -- being broken down by, you know, the economic gap and the cultural gaps. And I believe in the potential of a child, of every child. (Teacher interview, May 2011).

It is our task to help to advance a pedagogy of transcultural belonging to support the potential of every student, especially those who-- like recently-arrived immigrant youth, are vulnerable among us.
APPENDIX A: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability, even if you have little contact with “recent arrival” immigrant youth (i.e., students who have been in the U.S. school system for three years or less) or ELD/SDAI students in your classes. Choose the answer that best represents your thinking and your teaching practice, and check only one box per question.

Area 1: Instruction and Assessment of ELD students (both “recent-arrival” and U.S. born to immigrants)
1. ELD students are:
   - Much more challenging to teach than American born students.
   - Only a moderate challenge to teach, especially if you speak a foreign language.
   - There is little distinguishable difference between teaching ELD students and English-only students.
   - Much easier to teach than American born students.

2. In order to teach ELD students I have:
   - Significantly changed the way I structure my lesson design and delivery.
   - Kept the way I structure my lesson design and delivery mostly the same, but sought the advice of the SDAI teacher in order to implement some small modifications.
   - My classroom instruction remains the same, but ELD students can come to me for extra help outside of class time.
   - My classroom instruction remains the same; I rely on the instructional aide to help the ELD students.

3. In general, ELD students have ________ than most English-only students.
   - Better behavior but worse content area understanding.
   - Better behavior and better content area understanding.
   - Worse behavior and worse content area understanding.
   - Worse behavior and better content area understanding.
   - There is little distinguishable difference between ELD students and English-only students.

4. When I assess ELD students I:
   - Grade them exactly the same as everyone else.
   - Give them one grade for language development and one grade for content understanding.
   - Grade more for effort than for content understanding.
   - Grade more for improvement than for content understanding.

Area 2: Cultural strategies and immigrant youth.
5. I think that having racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom:
   - Is a completely neutral factor in academic learning.
   - Is an irreplaceable benefit to academic learning.
   - Occasionally hinders academic learning.
   - Frequently hinders academic learning.

6. I think that having linguistic diversity in the classroom:
   - Is a completely neutral factor in academic learning.
   - Is an irreplaceable benefit to academic learning.
   - Occasionally hinders academic learning.
   - Frequently hinders academic learning.

7. Cultural differences like dress, hygiene, and cultural norms for behavior:
- Are a non-issue in my classroom.
- Are a factor I use to develop my own and my students’ world view.
- Must be respected by both teachers and students.
- Can create conflict unless managed properly.

8. “Recent arrival” immigrant students should be integrated into mainstream classes:
- After they have mastered English, even if that takes years.
- After a period of one to two years, even if they haven’t quite mastered English.
- Immediately. It is better for their English language development.
- Immediately. It is better for their academic content development.
- None of the above. Both immigrant and American born students should participate in bilingual or dual language programs in high school.


9. “Recent arrival” immigrant students:
- Are best helped by trained ELD professionals: SDAI teachers, coordinators and counselors.
- Are best helped by content area/ discipline level teams of teachers (including SDAI teachers).
- Are best helped by interdisciplinary teams of teachers (including SDAI teachers).
- Need advocacy by every staff member and teachers.

10. Professional development as regarding ELD/ “recent arrival” immigrant youth can come from many different sources. Below, check any box that indicates where you have learned about various issues. If you have not received (or conducted your own) direct training on a particular point, please leave those boxes blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Current Employer</th>
<th>University education course or certification training</th>
<th>Newspaper/media/ own research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standardized testing and ELD students</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic credit accrual or graduation requirements and ELD students</td>
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<td>Issues faced by undocumented students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrating language and content area strategies into instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELD or SDAI learning standards and curriculum development</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom management techniques specific to ELD students e.g., differentiation, heterogeneous student groupings, peer tutoring etc.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assessment techniques specific to ELD students e.g., rubrics and portfolios.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of racial, cultural, or linguistic discrimination and immigrant students</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique issues facing recent arrival immigrant youth, e.g., isolation, family separation, cultural adaptation.</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current California immigration law and how it affects education policy</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. What difference, if any, do you see between second-generation ELD students, and “recent arrival” immigrant students?

12. One thing you have always wanted to know about your “recent arrival” immigrant students is:

Demographic Information:

Gender  Male / Female. Race/ Ethnicity:___________________________.
Age:__________

Are you an immigrant? Y/N. Are you the child of immigrants? Y/N. If yes, national origin:______________.

If you are not a teacher, what is your position?__________________________________________.

If a teacher, what is your subject:__________. Years teaching____. Years teaching ELD students______. Level of ELD student usually taught:__________

Do you speak any foreign languages? Yes:_______________/ No.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this questionnaire, or if you would like to participate in a short interview based on your responses, please email christine.brigid@gmail.com.

COMMENTS:
APPENDIX B. 10th grade "Belonging" Survey

Name: SCHOOL NAME:

Study ID:

Please show how much you disagree or agree with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Really DISAGREE) to 6 (Really AGREE).

Please show how much you disagree or agree with each statement by circling a number from 1 (Really DISAGREE) to 6 (Really AGREE).

Really Disagree 1 Disagree 2 Kind of Disagree 3 Kind of Agree 4 Agree 5 Really Agree 6

1. I am included in lots of activities at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. The teachers at this school respect me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. I really try hard in science class. 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I enjoy science. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. My science teacher respects the culture I come from. 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. I volunteer to answer questions in science class. 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. I work hard until I can understand difficult science assignments. 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. It is hard for people like me to be accepted at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I feel like a real part of this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Most teachers at this school are interested in me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. My science teacher cares about me as a person. 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. There’s at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem. 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. Science is boring. 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. Other students in this school take my opinions seriously. 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. My science teacher thinks people from my culture should become scientists. 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. I am treated with as much respect as other students at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. People at this school know I can do good work. 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. Other students here like me the way I am. 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. My science teacher doesn’t think I can learn science. 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. I can really be myself at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. When I make mistakes in science, I keep working until I get it right. 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. If my science teacher had a choice, s/he wouldn’t teach the kids who don’t speak English well. 1 2 3 4 5 6
23. When my science teacher gets frustrated with us in class, it’s because s/he cares about us. 1 2 3 4 5 6

* * * * * * * Continued on the other side •
24. My science teacher wants what is best for me in life. 1 2 3 4 5 6
25. I am good at science. 1 2 3 4 5 6
26. I wish I were in a different school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
27. I am terrible at science. 1 2 3 4 5 6
28. I feel proud of belonging to this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
29. People here notice when I’m good at something. 1 2 3 4 5 6
30. Teachers in this school are not interested in people like me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
31. I feel very different from most other students at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
32. I am certain I can do well in science. 1 2 3 4 5 6
33. Sometimes I feel as if I don’t belong at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6
34. My science teacher challenges me to reach my full potential. 1 2 3 4 5 6
35. Science is interesting to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
36. People at this school are friendly to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
37. If I cannot figure out part of a science assignment, I skip it. 1 2 3 4 5 6
38. In science class, I pay attention to what the teacher is saying. 1 2 3 4 5 6

Please be assured that the responses you share will be kept completely confidential.

Were you born in the United States?

If YES, please answer the questions in this box.
Was your mother born in the US? Yes No
Was your father born in the US? Yes No
What is your native language? ______________
How many times have you moved? ______

If NO, please answer the questions in this box.
What year did you come to live in the US? ______
How many times have you moved since you moved to the US? ______
What is your native language? ______________

Have you ever been separated from your mother or father because of immigration? Yes No
If yes, for how long? ______
Are you still separated from your mother or father because of immigration? Yes No

Thank you for completing this survey!
How have things been in ELD class?
What is an example of something you like in ELD class?
What are some things you don’t like?
Who helps you learn in the class?
Who do you talk to most in class? And who don’t you talk to?
So how much Spanish do you think is spoken in the class, versus English?
Is that helpful to you?
What helps you learn English?
How are you doing in your other classes?
Tell me about your Photographing Belonging poster.
   Probes: What do the pictures tell me about you?
Creating a LifeMap

A lifemap is a visual timeline of your life. To create the lifemap, you will think of important events, people, and places from your life. You will create a picture or symbol that represents each event. Then, you will put these in chronological order and describe why each is important to your life.

There are four steps to this activity.

1. Choose the part that your lifemap shows and write it below (I will help you):

2. Brainstorm ideas for your life map by filling out the sentence completion worksheet (pg. 3).

3. Plan your lifemap by filling out the event worksheet (pg. 4). Rate each event as a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. 1 is the worst. 6 is the best.

4. Create your lifemap!! Draw a picture/symbol for each event, person or place. Put the pictures in chronological order on your paper, and write a 2-3 sentence description
explaining how this picture is important to your life. Make your lifemap neat and in color.

BRAINSTORM: Sentence Completion......

Example: My favorite thing to do is... sit and look at the rain, or at the ocean, and talk about my life with my best friend....

When I lived in my home country I felt...
    because...

The best thing about my home country/ culture is...

Coming to the United States was...
    because...

I think people in Los Angeles treat immigrants...

Being an immigrant student at CCHS makes me feel...
    because...

I would describe myself as a student who...

Being in ELD/ SDAIE classes at school is...

My friends at school are important to me because...
One difference between how I act at school and how I act with my family at home is...

One thing I wish I could do at school is...

My biggest dream in life is to....

You are now finished with brainstorming and planning.

Begin creating your lifemap!
Dissertation Bibliography


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