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OF STUDENTS WITH INTERRUPTED OR INCONSISTENT FORMAL
EDUCATION**

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COUNTERSTORIES OF SIFE EXPERIENCES:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS WITH INTERRUPTED
OR INCONSISTENT FORMAL EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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by

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ABSTRACT

COUNTERSTORIES OF SIFE EXPERIENCES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS WITH INTERRUPTED OR INCONSISTENT FORMAL EDUCATION

Erica Flores

Students with Interrupted or Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE) are positioned in our society in such a way that many SIFE cannot advocate for themselves (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; Linville, 2016), and they must rely on educators to speak on their behalf and address the inequities they face (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; Linville, 2016; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Teachers are working to navigate these challenges; however, local and state programs and policies have had a negative impact on the academic success of SIFE in the traditional high school setting (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). This study uses Critical Race Theory and LatCrit as the theoretical lens to explore connections between the experiences of the students and the lack of equitable practices available to the immigrant student population. Thus, through the inclusion of multiple case studies, this study engaged teacher and student participants in interviews, focus groups, and journaling to make sense of the experiences, obstacles, and complex interplay between empowerment and oppression that SIFE experience. This

study has implications for state education departments, institutions of higher learning, and school districts to form an increased understanding of the unique experiences of the SIFE population resulting in changes to local policy, pedagogy, and curricular programming.

Keywords: Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education, SIFE, Counterstories, Critical Race Theory, LatCrit

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my former students who influenced my journey in ways they will never know. Thank you for motivating me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIPOC.....	Black Indigenous People of Color
CTE.....	Career and Technical Education
CRT.....	Critical Race Theory
ELL.....	English Language Learner
ENL.....	English as a New Language
ESL.....	English as a Second Language
ESOL.....	English to Speakers of Other Languages
MLL.....	Multilingual Learner
NYSED.....	New York State Education Department
NYSESLAT.....	New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test
NYSITELL.....	New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners
BISOC.....	Black Indigenous Students of Color
TESOL.....	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Leaving all she knew behind, Kristina sat atop the “death train,” a freight train that travels through Mexico to the United States. Holding on for her life, she envisioned the endless possibilities that her new home could provide. The violence and poverty in her native country prevented her from attending school regularly and led to this sudden departure with her mother and brother. Kristina’s brother received daily threats from gang members who require either payment or initiation into the gang once young men turn a certain age. The family could no longer afford to keep her brother safe and left everything behind, including her father.

Upon her arrival in the United States, Kristina and her family relied on the help of friends and distant relatives who had previously made the same journey. She was enrolled in her local high school and obtained a job at a delicatessen where she helped prepare food. Although Kristina is a dedicated and hardworking student, her work schedule and family obligations interfered with her school schedule, creating barriers to credit accrual. The gaps in Kristina’s education and her limited literacy in Spanish and English also contributed to the academic challenges she faced at the local high school, where all classes were taught all in English.

After only two years enrolled in a U.S. high school, teachers and counselors expressed their concerns regarding Kristina’s accrued credits and her limited English proficiency. She was advised to consider an alternative high school that provides foundational English as a New Language (ENL), mathematics, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses all with a bilingual staff. Kristina transferred to this evening program where she had more time to dedicate to work and could also learn more about

the culinary arts trade through the CTE program. The program was an exciting prospect for Kristina as she was eager to learn more about culinary arts in the hopes that it would help her attain multiple employment opportunities in the future. Kristina continued to dedicate herself to her education and managed to maintain her enrollment in the program with an excellent attendance record. The afternoon/evening hours of the program provided the flexibility she needed to navigate through work, school, and other family obligations. As she neared the end of her third year in the program, and approached the age of 21, she realized that this was the end of her secondary educational journey here in the United States. Unfortunately, the alternative school, and all state-funded high schools, only provide services for students until they reach the age of 21. During her time enrolled at the alternative school, Kristina made progress towards advancing her English language proficiency while also learning a great deal in the culinary arts program. At the end of the program, Kristina was still concerned about the lack of any degree or certification, feeling as though she might not advance in this country without it.

Immigrant students in the United States, such as Kristina (A pseudonym, as are all names in this study), a participant in my pilot study, come to the United States seeking an education that provides a clear path to the American Dream (Hos, 2020). Immigrant students often face obstacles such as inequitable schooling experiences, language barriers, and financial strain (Calderón et al., 2019). These are challenges that students are not yet equipped to navigate on their own. Therefore, they rely on guidance from the educators they encounter in order to navigate the school system they have entered. However, the U.S. education system has not yet developed a clear stance on how to ensure that our immigrant population of students do not lag behind their non-immigrant

peers academically (Olivares-Orellana, 2020). The purpose of this study is to better understand the schooling experiences of SIFE and the events that have influenced those experiences. By sharing the stories of students like Kristina, educators can learn more about the hurdles and challenges that SIFE encounter in academic settings in order to improve retention and graduation. Through this study I engaged the student participants in the writing of their counterstories to shift the deficit discourse (Hayes, 2019; Ross & Ziemke, 2016; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017) and highlight the assets of SIFE.

Who are SIFE?

Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE) are a subgroup of newcomer immigrant Multilingual Learners (MLLs) who attended schools in the United States for less than 12 months. These students are functioning at 2 or more years below grade level in native language literacy and/or 2 or more years below grade-level in mathematics due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling prior to arrival in the United States (NYSED, 2016). Although using labels to identify and describe students can push them into categories that are counterproductive (Hickey, 2015), the term SIFE is student-centered, putting the identity of the person first, and is commonly used in districts to refer to this specific population of students. The students themselves may not be aware of the label they have been given; however, teachers and administrators use the term to differentiate between the greater population of MLLs and the subpopulation of SIFE.

Although SIFE are considered MLLs, there are differences between the two populations. MLLs are students who are learning English as a new language or who are not yet fully proficient in the English language (NYSED, 2019). Although these students may be immigrants, there is a large population of MLLs who are born in the United

States but do not enter the school system fully proficient in English (NYSED, 2019). SIFE are a subgroup of MLLs who are unique in that they have recently arrived to the United States with inconsistent or interrupted schooling which has resulted in low levels in literacy and/or mathematics (NYSED, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to identify which subgroup of students I am working with to clarify the purpose of the study. It is common for SIFE to be underprepared to handle the language and content demands of grade-level material in U.S. schools due to the gaps in their formal education (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Similarly, U.S. schools are not fully equipped with the necessary support or interventions for these students leading to high dropout rates among the SIFE population (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010, 2015; Lukes, 2014). In fact, “U.S.-born 16- to 24-year-olds had a lower status dropout rate in 2018 than their foreign-born peers” (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 109). Therefore, there is a need for focused research into the needs and experiences of this particular set of immigrant students to create and sustain programs and policies that support their learning and success.

SIFE have experienced limited or interrupted access to schools for reasons such as “poverty, isolated geographic locales, limited transportation options, societal expectations for school attendance, a need to enter the workforce and contribute to the family income, natural disasters, war, or civil strife” (WIDA, 2015). These students are perhaps the most vulnerable group of migrant students as many struggle academically in their native language, therefore increasing the academic gap even further (NYSED, 2016; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). This academic gap includes limited literacy in both the native language and English as well as mathematics (NYSED, 2016). Additionally, SIFE typically have little familiarity with the dominant culture of the United States, which is

the culture with economic and political power that enforces the norms, language, and customs (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Therefore, the SIFE population also lacks “social capital and knowledge of educational systems” (Lukes, 2014, p. 49), leaving them to navigate an unrealistic educational pathway with little background knowledge and support (Hos, 2020; Lukes, 2014; Olivares-Orellana, 2020).

District Culture and SIFE

SIFE hope that they will be taught about the new schooling system, accruing social capital; instead, they have encountered unsympathetic treatment and injustices (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). These injustices, which include unfriendly staff, microaggressions, and policies and practices that turn students away, are often the result of a school’s culture and teachers’ indifference toward them. School culture can be defined as “the basic assumptions, norms and values, and cultural artefacts that are shared by school members, which influence their functioning at school” (Maslowski, 2001, pp. 8-9). The social norms, behavioral patterns and interactions among stakeholders shape the school culture, manifesting itself as “the way we do things around here” (Bower, 1996) in any given school. Researchers agree that a school’s culture can impact student achievement, motivation, and their overall socio-emotional well-being resulting in either a “positive school culture that improves school effectiveness” (Peterson & Deal, 2011, p. 11), or a toxic culture that results in a lack of overall concern (Peterson & Deal, 2011).

Throughout reviews of extant research, scholars have suggested that the policies established by educational institutions have led students to believe they have few to no options (Lukes, 2014; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Rarely do high schools provide credit-bearing foundational courses for SIFE; therefore, their journey to a high school diploma

often results in some sort of attrition, either students dropping out of school or students being pushed out by school or district-level personnel, for which a motivating factor is avoiding low graduation rates that have negative consequences for school districts (Lukes, 2014).

Programming and Pedagogy

Although federal regulations have impacted the schooling experiences of SIFE (Olivares-Orellana, 2020), this section focuses on the ways in which New York State regulations have an impact on the SIFE experience. The current pathways provided in secondary schools are both concerning and challenging for SIFE due to the graduation requirements mandated by New York State (Hos, 2016). For example, foundational newcomer courses rarely bear any credit, which often results in students who age out before accruing the necessary credits to graduate (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016; Kanno & Cromley, 2013). Additionally, students in New York State are expected to demonstrate English proficiency and pass the English Language Arts state exam in order to graduate high school. However, research indicates that most MLLs acquire proficiency in a new language in five to ten years (Cummins, 1981; Hos, 2012; Menken, 2013) depending upon the literacy in the native language. This research highlights just how challenging it can be for the SIFE population to pass the state English Language Arts exam in such a short period of time and it is one example that suggests how state policies are not fully responsive to the needs of SIFE.

To close the academic gap and properly support this population of students, the literature suggests intense literacy instruction in both English and the native language to address the foundational skills that the students are lacking (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015;

Freeman et al. 2001; Garica et al., 2011; NYSED, 2016). There is also a push to provide these students with a temporary newcomer program that not only addresses foundational skills but also allows the students to transition to the new school culture and learn school norms in a separate space with a specialized instructor (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016). Researchers such as Feinberg (2000) and Hos (2016), agree that the separation of the SIFE population from mainstream students may be controversial, but “the advantages outweigh the disadvantages” (Hos, 2020, p. 1025). Additional services—provided by support staff such as counselors—that focus on the socio-emotional health of students and parents, are also beneficial when considering the possible trauma these families may have encountered (Russel, 2012; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018; Wood, 2011).

SIFE experts and scholars recommend that teachers who work with SIFE focus on collaborating, activating prior knowledge, drawing from students’ funds of knowledge, employing hands-on learning, providing opportunities for discussion, and incorporating the native language (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Russell, 2012). Teachers are also encouraged and advised to implement culturally responsive teaching (Drake, 2017), which can be defined as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). This can be done by incorporating the students’ prior experiences, native language, interests, and culture into the curriculum (Durden et. al, 2015). CRT holds as a fundamental tenet that educators need to understand who their students are outside the classroom in order to effectively teach them inside the classroom (Linville, 2016).

Student Assets

The literature surrounding SIFE highlights the student assets as falling into two main categories: resilience and work ethic (Flores, 2021; Hos, 2020; Ledger, 2017; Lukes, 2015; Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Potochnik, 2018). SIFE are seen as a resilient group of students due to the many challenges and barriers they have overcome to attend school in the United States. Scholars emphasized that although students may have been exposed to traumatic events, focusing on their challenges ignores their resiliency, an asset the student is bringing into the classroom (Cho et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to avoid perpetuating the dominant narrative of challenges and struggles, educators are encouraged to learn about their students' individual stories (Ryu & Tavilla, 2018).

The work ethic of the SIFE population is also a common asset observed by researchers in the field. One researcher found that "SIFE develop strong aspirations for higher education and see their presence in the United States as an opportunity" (Hos, 2020, p. 1039). SIFE are generally "optimistic about their future in a new country, where they will have the opportunity to attend school" (Ledger, 2017, p. 2). Additional research has found that students are highly motivated and tend to demonstrate high levels of classroom engagement as they want to learn and find academic success (Flores, 2021; Lukes, 2015). The gaps in schooling often result in students who are older and more mature than the average high school student. Therefore, SIFE are often "less likely to engage in behavioral problems" (Potochnik, 2018, p. 865).

The same work ethic observed in the school setting extends beyond school hours, as SIFE may have additional home responsibilities, including the need to juggle work and school (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Potochnik, 2018). Although schooling is of

great importance, long work hours often result in absences from school and increased “silent periods,” a term coined by Stephen Krashen (1981) to describe the preproduction phase of language acquisition, where students are not yet ready to speak in the new language as they are building competence and processing the target language (Bligh, 2014; Krashen, 1981). Frequently, the extended time needed for building competence and processing new language demands are often misread as disinterest and lack of motivation (DeCapua, 2016; Lukes, 2014).

Dominant Narrative

The deficit views of SIFE and the dominant narrative that classifies these students as “academically deficient” (Olivares-Orellana, 2020) have perpetuated the mindset that these students are a problem due to increased dropout rates, rather than an asset due to their existing knowledge and unique experiences (Hos, 2020). The dominant narrative can be described as a shared and widespread commentary that uses generalizations to describe and/or categorize a group of people. For example, these views are often perpetuated by the dominant white American culture and impact the perceptions of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities (DiAngelo, 2018; Kendi, 2019; Zarate et al., 2016). The mainstream media has played a major role in creating the dominant narrative about immigrant students such as SIFE (Solórzano & Perez-Huber, 2020), which has led to the deficit views of this population.

The current ban of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in 8 states (Ray & Gibbons, 2021) is also the result of a dominant narrative that tends to misrepresent the main tenets of this theoretical framework. In 2020, President Trump brought CRT to the attention of the American public by labeling the theory as anti-American in various speaking

engagements and more formally through Executive Order 13950 (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020). The executive order attempts to prohibit teaching and trainings, at the federal level, that are rooted in CRT. More recently, at a rally in 2022, Trump claimed, “Getting critical race theory out of our schools is not just a matter of values, it’s also a matter of national survival” (Levin, 2022). This type of discourse trickles down into the field of education where support of the SIFE population becomes politicized; educators, school boards, and policy makers may be less likely to view CRT as it pertains to the rights of individual students, but more as a moral point to be won.

For example, a recent headline seen on Fox News stated, “San Diego public school teachers to give migrant kids in-person instruction before their own students” (Hasson & Early, 2021). The headline sends the message that migrant children are not considered students and are taking opportunities away from American-born students. This article was written in response to the push for in-person learning for the most vulnerable students, including MLLs, the majority of whom are born in the United States (Mitchell, 2016).

At the time of this writing, the current crisis at the southern U.S. border has also intensified the public discourse about the Latinx immigrant population (Isacson et al., 2021). According to the Pew Research Center and reports from the U.S. Border Patrol, the month of July 2021 accounted for the highest monthly total of encounters with migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border in more than two decades (Gramlich, 2021). For years, the Latinx population has been plagued “by their mark of illegality, which in much public discourse means that they are criminals and thus illegitimate members of society undeserving of social benefits, including citizenship” (Chavez, 2008, p. 3).

In the field of education, the dominant narrative guides the policies and practices that continue to marginalize students of color (DiAngelo, 2018; Oluo, 2019; Picower, 2013; Zarate et al., 2016). For example, federal and state policymakers continue to develop accountability standards based on the narrative that the American education system is failing in comparison to students in other countries (Tucker, 2021). This added pressure results in higher standards for graduation, which can be unrealistic for some of the SIFE population, who are struggling to graduate by the age of 21 (Flores, 2021; Olivares-Orellana, 2017). By contrast, this study promotes the use of counterstories (Delgado, 1989) as a methodological and narrative tool, to center the voices and stories from a commonly silenced population and to gain better insight into their experiences while exposing and interrupting the dominant discourse (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Miller et al., 2020).

Theoretical Lens

In order to explore the research question in a way that acknowledges and addresses structural inequities as well as the dominant narrative of SIFE as uneducated and disengaged (Lukes, 2015), this particular dissertation utilizes Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical lens. In doing so, I draw upon the CRT practice of counterstories to explore the personal and schooling experiences of the SIFE participants in ways that foreground their voices. The dominant narratives that currently exist privilege the social norms of the heterosexual, white male in the middle/upper class (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). These stories lead us to believe that the low academic achievement of students of color is “attributed to perceived deficiencies in the student” (Shapiro, 2014) such as a “lack of educational aspirations” (Lukes, 2014, p. 828). These narratives also lead to

dominant stories, in which negative stereotypes of people of color are perpetuated and reinforced when their experiences and lifestyles do not emulate those of the dominant culture (Miller et al., 2020; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2013).

CRT has been extended by scholars to include LatCrit, in which “scholars study immigration policy, as well as language rights and discrimination based on accent or national origin” (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 3). The LatCrit theorist argues “that race was birthed by racism and subsequently has been used as a tool to justify the way jobs, power, prestige, and wealth are distributed” (Dunbar, 2008, p. 94). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) suggest that using CRT in education, and more specifically LatCrit, students can share their experiences and contribute to counterstories that support social justice and an understanding of the racialized, gendered, and classed structures of education for Latinx students.

Critical Race Theory provides an important theoretical lens for exploring connections between the experiences of the participants and the lack of equitable practices available to the immigrant student population. The SIFE population is not positioned to acquire power in our society due to the limited opportunities they have to graduate from high school. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, I focus on the student experience which had implications for policy and practice.

The concept of counterstories is critically important to this study because of their ability to change the deficit narrative of SIFE that is currently perpetuated in educational spaces. SIFE are often seen as a needy population of students that underperform academically and lack the necessary skills and resources to find success in the U.S. schooling system (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2017; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Menken, 2013;

Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Counterstories, also known as critical storytelling or counter narratives, is an approach to methodology, data collection, and data analysis that privileges the experiences and stories of groups that hold (multiple) minoritized status to expose the dangers and limitations in accepting racial stereotypes perpetuated by privileged voices (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Miller et al., 2020). The participants' counterstories add to the scholarly literature on what we know and understand about SIFE students *and* challenge the deficit discourse that has become widespread belief regarding the schooling experiences and achievements for students who identify or are labeled as SIFE.

Problem Statement

As the immigrant student population in the United States continues to rise, so too do the numbers of Multilingual Learners (MLLs) (NYSED, 2019), many of whom are struggling to learn a new language. SIFE who enter the U.S. school system with gaps in their education and dreams of success often are faced with overwhelming barriers (DeCapua & Marshall 2010, 2015; Drake, 2017). Some barriers include (1) racially and linguistically segregated schools; (2) under-resourced schools with limited professional development for teachers and inadequate programming; (3) transient lifestyles and frequent school mobility; (4) limited English proficiency; (5) financial responsibilities requiring students' full-time employment; (6) family migration de-emphasizing education; (7) parents' educational experiences and varying expectations; and (8) academic marginalization (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Drake, 2017; Hagelskamp et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Some of these barriers

highlight systemic shortcomings that ultimately lead to limits in educational attainment and employment opportunities for students of color.

Careful analysis of the academic success of SIFE reveals that SIFE require a different pedagogical approach from what has been previously established for MLLs (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Potochnick, 2018) because of their additional social and psychological needs (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; NYSED, 2016). The success of the SIFE population is often restricted due to a number of circumstances that are outside of their control. Some of these circumstances include: (1) a lack of teacher preparation (Linville, 2016); (2) an irrelevant curriculum and heavy reliance on standardized testing (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015); (3) policies that do not assign credits to newcomer courses (Hos, 2016); and (4) a single pathway to a diploma (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010).

Teachers are working to navigate these challenges; however, local and state programs and policies have had a negative impact on the academic success of SIFE in the traditional high school setting (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Carefully crafted counterstories provide students the opportunity to share their point of view while educators gain insight to their experiences. Therefore, this dissertation study includes student participants in the presentation of the findings to highlight their version of the high school experience, while also providing pedagogical context as shared by the teacher participants.

Importance of the Study

The current body of research tends to perpetuate the deficit views of SIFE in our classrooms and society by focusing on their limited academic growth especially at the secondary level (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). To shift the discourse from a

deficit view of SIFE to asset-based view, this study intends to amplify student voice by working with and alongside the student participants. The current struggles at the U.S. southern border and longtime negative media coverage of the Latinx immigrant population further the urgency for research that can provide an authentic picture of the immigrant experience. This dissertation contributes to the literature surrounding SIFE by sharing counterstories that are co-constructed with the student participants to learn from the population of students who are often spoken about and not always listened to.

Additionally, there was a need to examine how to close the gaps in educational achievement and socio-economic status, so that SIFE are positioned to work towards a high school equivalency degree or diploma. The marginalization faced by the SIFE population based on the intersections of “race, ethnicity, language, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, and other categories of difference” (Paris & Winn, 2013, p. xv) called for additional research that uses a critical lens. The current fight against, and in some cases banning of, CRT (Ray & Gibbons, 2021) further intensified the need for research that continues to shed light on the ways in which “particular systems colonize the experiences of everyday people” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p. 205). By focusing on how the inequality happens, educators can learn to avoid this type of practice and create educational spaces that provide equitable opportunities.

The purpose this dissertation is to make sense of the experiences, obstacles, and complex interplay between empowerment and oppression that SIFE experience. With this study, scholars and educators will gain valuable insight into the experiences of SIFE, shifting the deficit mindset to view these students as assets. To that end, my study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How do SIFE describe their schooling experiences?
- 2) What events do SIFE identify as having an influence on their academic/schooling experiences and why?

Rationale for the Study

The SIFE population is often written about by educators and scholars without much input from the students themselves. I am committed to practicing a more humanized approach to research alongside students of color (Paris & Winn, 2013). Although researchers have shared the counterstories of SIFE (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020), this study engages in research practices “with and not on or about youth participants” (Paris & Winn, 2013, p. 22) of the SIFE population. I include the SIFE participants in the drafting of their counterstories to conduct “humanizing research in ways that privilege the co-construction of knowledge, human agency and voice” (Paris & Winn, 2013, p. 23).

I see this study as being a unique contribution to the field of education, more specifically, for the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in that it explored the stories of students who have been historically marginalized because of their immigration status, levels of English proficiency, access to education, and levels of literacy, by collaborating in scholarly research to learn from and center their lived experiences. I think it was important to include student participant input in the findings to reveal the individuals behind the negative statistics and harmful headlines. Although this study promoted the scholarly intention of exploring the schooling experiences of SIFE participants, participation in this study also provided a unique experience for the student

participants as they contributed to the academic writing by using counterstories as a methodological and narrative tool.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review was designed to provide an understanding of how SIFE in extant studies experience education at the secondary level in the United States. Included is a discussion of the barriers that SIFE face, which illustrates how challenging it is for this subgroup to graduate high school. I drew upon Critical Race Theory as a lens through which I analyzed the literature because it invites a critical analysis of how societal inequities are reproduced in our school systems and how these inequities lead to an increase in school attrition for students of color (Freeman et al., 2015; Lukes, 2014; Peguero et al., 2016).

Methods for Locating Literature

Most of the literature used in this review was acquired over several years while I was enrolled in my doctoral courses. Some articles were recommended readings from professors, mentors, and committee members. Other articles were found by using the references of the relevant literature or through two systematic searches that I will describe below.

I began my searches by identifying the inclusion and exclusion criteria as the following: (1) studies conducted and published between 2005 and 2021, (2) studies published in English, (3) peer-reviewed articles published in academic or scholarly journals. The initial criteria allowed me to find relatively recent studies that are most relevant to my own interests and needs. I searched using five major databases: Academic Search Premier, ERIC, JSTOR, EBSCO Host, and ProQuest. The search was conducted by entering several categories of words using Boolean phrase identifiers. My first search included the following combination (a) interrupted formal education; (b) interrupted

formal schooling; (c) culturally responsive; (d) culturally sustaining; (e) Equity; (f) English learners; (g) SIFE; (h) SLIFE. A second search a year later was conducted with the following combination: (a) interrupted formal education; (b) interrupted formal schooling; (c) Critical Race Theory; (d) counterstory; (e) counter narrative; (f) English learners; (g) SIFE; (h) SLIFE.

In order to organize and document the new literature, I emailed myself a list from each database with the articles to cross reference which articles were duplicated and which I had already reviewed. I narrowed down the articles by reading the abstracts and looking for research that focused on English Language Learners and SIFE at the secondary level as well as those that focus on the experiences of students of color. The first search resulted in a total of 45 articles while the second search resulted in a total of 59 articles. However, there were duplicate articles that emerged from the different databases. Both searches resulted in several articles that I had already reviewed; therefore, the first search resulted in 19 new articles for review and the second search resulted in 20 new articles. Additional literature used in this review was not found from this search but instead was the result of previously reviewed books and articles. The following tables represent the data from my initial review based on the abstracts.

Table 1*Literature Search Results 1*

Database	Number of Articles in Initial Search (2/7/20)	Number of New Articles after Initial (Abstract) Review	Total Number of New Articles
Academic Search Premier	8	8	6
ERIC	13	12	5
JSTOR	0	0	0
ProQuest	24	13	8
Totals	45	33	19

Table 2*Literature Search Results 2*

Database	Number of Articles in Initial Search (2/25/21)	Number of New Articles after Initial (Abstract) Review	Total Number of New Articles
Academic Search Premier	3	3	1
ERIC	17	17	8
EBSCO Host	70	13	6
ProQuest	50	26	6
Totals	140	59	20

The History of Bilingual Education in The United States

In order to understand the ways in which SIFE are educated in the United States, it is important to discuss bilingual education's development in a U.S. context. This is important because educators, parents, and practitioners fought a long battle to get the education system to recognize the necessity for bilingual education, which includes programs such as dual language, transitional bilingual education, and English as a New Language (ENL) (Flores & García, 2017; Ovando, 2003). Although the United States has historically been characterized as a nation of immigrants, it has also witnessed that a "quick assimilation into English is another prevailing characteristic of U.S. history" (Nieto, 2009, p. 61). However, Gándara and Escamilla (2017) have pointed out that there were exceptions to this ideology as evidenced by an 1839 bilingual education law in Ohio that authorized German-English bilingual programs. In 1847, Louisiana also enacted a similar law to support French-English bilingual programs.

The push to speak English in this country can be traced back to the 1880s when indigenous children were forced to attend boarding school and learn English (Ovando, 2003). This pattern continued through the implementation of the Nationality Act in 1906 which made it mandatory that all immigrants learn English before naturalization could be considered (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017) and the Burnett Act of 1917 which "required all new immigrants to pass a literacy test" (Nieto, 2009, p. 62). In fact, Gándara and Escamilla (2017) stated that "by 1923, 34 states had laws requiring English-only instruction in all private and public primary schools" (p. 2). In 1919, even President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "We have room for but one language in this country and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as

Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house” (Crawford, 1998, p. 100). Rhetoric like this creates the kind of dominant narrative that has been so pervasive in American society, that English is the language of patriotism and an English-only culture is the one that should prevail in the United States for many years to come (Nieto, 2009).

Although scholars agree bilingual education is not yet widely accepted nor always implemented with fidelity, individuals fought very hard to promote bilingual education resulting in the programs we have today (Flores & García, 2017). Several key court cases throughout the years such as *Meyer v. Nebraska* in 1923, *Farington v. Tokushige* in 1927, and *Mo Hock Ke Lok Po v. Stainback* in 1949, paved the way for major changes in the way students are educated (Bybee et al., 2014; Ovando, 2003; Nieto, 2009). These court cases each invalidated laws that prohibited bilingual education. Another case that sparked optimism among the Mexican-American community was *Méndez v. Westminster* in 1946. In this case, the Méndez children, who resided in the community of Westminster, California, were denied admission to their local elementary school, which only admitted white students, and were told it was due to their English proficiency. However, cousins to the Méndez children were granted access to the same school because “of their light complexions and their last name, Vidaurri, which was French” (González, 1990, p. 150). This case was “the first successful constitutional challenge to segregation” (Valencia, 2005, p. 389) but was not appealed to the Supreme Court.

A major change to the education of students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds began with the 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* case, which not only ended racial segregation in all schools, but also recognized the

inequities that existed for students of color including language barriers. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was amended in 1974 to “explicitly define bilingual education programs, identify goals, and stipulate the requirements of feedback and progress reports from the programs” (Nieto, 2009, p. 63), which helped to clarify what was required of districts. The *Lau v. Nichols* case of 1974 was also instrumental in this fight as the Supreme Court ruled that it is the school district’s responsibility to properly educate students who do not speak English by providing the necessary resources, programs, and accommodations. The Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), passed by Congress in 1974, required districts to take action which was clearly specified in the 1981 case *Castaneda v. Pickard* (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017). The guidelines stated that the programs must be research based, effectively teach students English, and be properly staffed and funded (Bybee et al., 2014).

Although the courts and policymakers could not come to a consensus regarding their position on bilingual education, researchers have remained steadfast in their claim that bilingual education is absolutely necessary and beneficial (Bartolotti & Marian, 2012; Menken, 2013). The inconsistency among policymakers is evidenced by quick and frequent changes made to education policy. For example, President Ronald Reagan proposed education reform known as “back to basics” in the 1980’s in which he discredited bilingual education, fought to adopt English as the official language of the United States, and increased funding to English-only programs (Ovando, 2003; Nieto, 2009). This contrasts greatly with the Clinton Administration’s support of the Bilingual Education Act under the Improving America’s Schools Act in 1994 which included funding increases for immigrant/bilingual education and the Title I program (Billig,

1997). Then again, policymakers sought to end bilingual education in California through Proposition 227 leading the way for similar paths in Arizona and Colorado.

Proposition 227 was a ballot initiative in California that coincided with a rise in the Latinx population in California as well as a rise in hate crimes aimed at the Latinx population (Johnson & Martinez, 1999). The influx of Mexican immigrants and anti-Latinx sentiments resulted in an English-only movement and the passing of Proposition 227 in June of 1998, which aimed to educate “immigrant students” in a one-year English-only immersion program. This initiative deprived parents of the choice of programming for their children unless they went in person to submit a written waiver (García & Curry-Rodríguez, 2000). Proposition 227 was controversial as it discriminated against language-minority students on the basis of class and race.

Public support for bilingual education plummeted further after the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, as it prioritized the need for English proficiency by holding schools accountable for student performance on high stakes testing (Bybee et al., 2014). Schools feared the loss of funding for poor performance and made English acquisition a priority even while studies continued to highlight the benefits of bilingual education, multilingualism, and multiculturalism (Custodio & Loughlin, 2017). Ongoing research on bilingual education continues to support the cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional advantages for students from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bybee et al., 2014; García et al., 2008; Ovando, 2003; Moses, 2000). However, this research is still met with resistance from opponents of bilingual education which includes members from all stakeholder groups (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; Howard et al., 2018).

Program Options

Bilingual programs in the United States can be categorized into two separate goals, English acquisition or multilingualism. Those programs that focus on English acquisition are also labeled as subtractive programs as “they are not intended to develop bilingualism and biliteracy and frequently result in loss of students’ native language, and [are] assimilationist in that they do not foster the development of multicultural perspectives or cross-cultural competence” (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017, p. 6). Even though these subtractive programs are intended to address “the linguistic needs for minority youth...they do not reinforce students’ native language skills and cultural identity” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 25). They consist of early exit and late exit transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs and English as a New Language (ENL) classes, more often known as English as a Second Language (ESL). Early exit (one to three years) and late exit (four to five years) TBE programs call for the use of the native language in content areas to assist students as they acquire English, while ENL/ESL focuses on the use of the English language in all four modalities, which include reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Palmer, 2011).

Additive programs, commonly known as dual language programs, aim to foster the addition of a new language, creating students who are able to fluently speak, read, and write in this new language (Alvear, 2019). Dual-language programs also afford students the opportunity to develop cross-cultural competence while also engaging in a rigorous and sustained bilingual curricula. These programs are not limited to multilingual learners; they are also provided to English proficient students, supporting all students as they learn a new language (Flores & García, 2017). It is important to note that in dual language

programs “all students learn at least two languages and all students learn content area subjects in English as well as other languages” (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017, p. 7). However, these programs are more prevalent in elementary schools, leaving the majority of secondary students to rely on the subtractive models of bilingual education resulting in students who dropout of high school.

Understanding Dropout Rates Among Students of Color

In this section I examine the reasons and risk factors that leave Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color (BISOC), especially those that hold multiple minoritized statuses, more susceptible to dropping out of high school. High school dropout rates are an area of concern for educators and policy makers, especially when it comes to the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities who are not graduating high school (Freeman et al., 2015; Lukes, 2014; Peguero et al., 2016). The event of dropping out can be described as a student who disenrolled from high school and did not acquire a high school diploma or graduate equivalency degree (Lukes, 2014); however, most people do not view a GED as the equivalent of a high school diploma (Peguero et al., 2016). Dropping out of high school is usually the result of “a long process of disengagement” (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 310). This disengagement can manifest itself in common risk factors including inappropriate school behaviors resulting in referrals, disciplinary action, suspensions, or expulsions; excessive tardiness and chronic absenteeism; low academic performance in reading and math; low overall grade point average; and an overall negative school culture (Freeman et al., 2015).

A negative school culture or a school which is viewed as unfair or unjust by the students of color often leads to diminished beliefs in the school system (Peguero et al.,

2016). Educational policies are currently designed to perpetuate the inequalities in our greater society which often manifest themselves in underprivileged, minority communities that are socially isolated and segregated with fewer resources (Lukes, 2014). According to Hos (2020), “schools recreate inequality by purposely excluding certain groups from education or restricting the types of knowledge available to them” (p. 1026). This is especially evident in secondary schools where students become more aware of power structures as certain knowledge and beliefs are valued and respected (Peguero et al., 2016). Moreover, Peguero et al. (2016) demonstrated how “strong social bonds to school could minimize the likelihood of dropping out” (p. 318) but the inequality that permeates in our secondary schools make it difficult for racial/ethnic minority groups to make strong connections to the school community. The increased segregation in schools and the resource inequalities plaguing certain districts impact the high school experience as BISOC have limited access to extracurricular activities, high quality teachers, and advanced academic courses (Hos, 2020; Lukes, 2014; Peguero et al., 2016).

Researchers have also found that minorities are often marginalized and mistreated by school personnel resulting in individuals who are labeled as push outs and shutouts (Lukes, 2014; Peguero et al., 2016). Students who have been pushed out of high school were “encouraged to leave and pursue a GED or to abandon school due to reasons that include age, behavioral issues, lack of credits, or pregnancy” (Lukes, 2014, p. 810). Lukes (2014) also coined the term “shutouts” to describe immigrant students who are shut out of high school upon their initial attempt at enrollment following their arrival to the United States. These schooling experiences have led to a lower quality of life in

comparison to their English-proficient and monolingual counterparts who are continuing their education at the college level and acquiring higher paying jobs, hence positioning themselves with power in our society (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). In the following section, I will explore how these immigrant students, most often labeled Multilingual Learners (MLLs), fare in our secondary schools.

Multilingual Learners in Secondary Schools

MLLs continue to be the largest growing population of students in the United States (Mellom et al., 2018; Shapiro, 2014). These are students who are simultaneously learning conversational English or Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and academic content language or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1981; Cummins, 2008; Mozayan, 2015). Although most researchers use the term English Language Learners (ELLs) to describe this population, our understanding has evolved, and with that, so has the language we use to address them (García et al., 2008). Most recently, research on this specific population of students has shifted to use these asset-based terms: emergent bilinguals or multilingual learners. These terms acknowledge the assets that come with learning a new language and focus on mastering multiple languages rather than just learning the English language (García, 2009). Throughout this study, I have chosen to use the term *multilingual learner* as it has seamlessly been integrated into the field of education and represents all students learning a new language (Mitchell, 2012).

Secondary MLLs are often mainstreamed into English-only classrooms despite the language barrier (Calderón et al., 2011; Mellom et al., 2018; Shapiro, 2014). Commonly, content area teachers are underprepared to work with linguistically diverse

students and in turn tend to develop deficit views about this population of students (Reeves, 2006). Furthermore, research has revealed that most MLLs can acquire proficiency in a new language in 5-10 years (Cummins, 1989; Hos, 2012; Menken, 2013), depending upon the literacy in the native language. This makes high school graduation very challenging (Lukes, 2014). Moreover, the quality of education in the native language and potential gaps students may have in their education can negatively impede the acquisition of literacy and content (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2012).

Immigrant Students

An immigrant is a person who is lawfully admitted to the United States (Baugh, 2020). In the United States there are several categories of immigrants. This includes naturalized citizens, permanent residents, refugees, and undocumented immigrants (Botler, 2019). Although many immigrant students in the United States are multilingual learners, not all immigrants are English Language Learners in need of specialized English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction. In fact, the data reveals that a majority of MLL population learning English are born in the United States (Nelson & Davis, 2017).

Refugees

Refugees are also a population of immigrants who “are unable or unwilling to return to [their] country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Mossaad, 2018, p. 1). Refugee students face deficit narratives as the U.S. schooling system does not value “the rich linguistic, social, and cultural resources that children with refugee backgrounds and their families have brought

to the United States” (Cun, 2020, p. 178). Research has shown that there are increased efforts in educating students who are not native English-speakers, however teachers are not adequately prepared to tackle the nuances associated with teaching immigrant students and refugees (Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Along with strategies to ensure language acquisition, teachers would benefit from a greater awareness of the students’ prior experiences (Olivares-Orellana, 2020).

Undocumented Students

The term undocumented student refers to those “who were born outside of the United States, have not been permitted admission under the most current and specific set of rules for longer term residence, and who are not U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents” (Katsiaficas et al., 2018, p. 2). In 2020, approximately 321,000 new undocumented students entered the United States K-12 public school system (Culbertson et al., 2021). The undocumented status occurs if an individual enters the illegally or overstayed a visa (Botler, 2019). Undocumented students can also obtain twilight status through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which can protect them from deportation (Botler, 2019).

Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education

Researchers have argued that the term, Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE), does not fully cover the varied experiences of this niche population (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). For example, in order to include students who have experienced limited schooling as a result of the education system in their native country, this term has been expanded to SLIFE, or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010).

Other researchers may prefer to use a term developed by Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000)—underschooled—which describes students who have limited literacy skills in both their native language and English and who have been in the country for under 4 years. In this study, I have chosen to use the term SIFE to refer to the subgroup of multilingual learners on whom I focus as it is the term that is used in New York State (NYSED, 2016), where I conduct my research. In the following sections, I highlight the SIFE experience as well as some of the challenges that the SIFE population face in school.

The Experiences of SIFE

Although the experiences of the SIFE population have been documented in literature, researchers rarely share the students' perspective. The schooling experiences and migration stories told by the SIFE population share some common themes, which include the resiliency and motivation of students who are also burdened with adult-like responsibilities, obstacles, and for some, even trauma (Diaz, 2019; Flores, 2021; Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Porter, 2013). In this section I will highlight the SIFE experience as told in their own words by the handful of articles that emphasize the counterstories of SIFE (Diaz, 2019; Flores, 2021; Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Porter, 2013).

Schooling Experiences. According to students, they are highly motivated to become proficient in English, graduate high school, and enter the workforce (Porter, 2013). Some of these students aspire to achieve goals that also include college and careers (Diaz, 2019). An unfortunate obstacle is the clear disconnect between the students' goals and the limited understanding of the U.S. education system (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Many students shared that they were not aware of the

graduation requirements. Some even lacked the understanding of what it meant to have the SIFE label (Olivares-Orellana, 2020) or that being in a SIFE program meant they weren't accruing the necessary credits needed to graduate from high school in the allotted time frame (Hos, 2020). One student demonstrated this in an interview, "When I started school here all my classes were called SIFE. I don't know what that means but I know it's different. We are separated from the other Spanish speaking students. Some classes feel too easy" (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 11). It is also worth noting that this student was misidentified as SIFE as she never experienced interrupted education.

Students shared that once enrolled in high school they received a schedule but were not provided with any clarifying information on the courses, their status as SIFE, or any say in their placement (Flores, 2021; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Several students end up being pushed out of high schools as they were discouraged from enrolling and even advised to attend alternative schools (Flores, 2021). One student was told "I was turning 18 soon and I couldn't study there" (Flores, 2021, p. 9), while another student recounted "My mom received a letter from the school... and they told her that I didn't have the credits I needed to graduate and so they sent us [to an alternative school]" (Flores, 2021, p. 9). In interviews conducted by Hos (2020), an 18-year-old student shared "I want to finish high school and go to college" (p. 1036). This same student was not aware of the graduation requirements, and with the limited credits he had accrued as well as the very challenging state exams it didn't seem realistic that he would graduate. Similar stories were told by students interviewed by Flores (2021), Olivares-Orellana (2020), and Porter (2013), and highlight the need for transparency in the enrollment process.

In contrast to these experiences, some students shared that they found success in the SIFE program and were well prepared to join the mainstream classes. This was emphasized by a student who stated “I was first placed in the SIFE program. I had different teachers for different subjects. Most of my classes were in Spanish except for English class. I liked the classes and I liked my friends. I think they prepared me well for the regular classes” (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 11). Similarly, another student from the same high school stated:

When I entered school here, they told me since I was an immigrant that had stopped going to school in my country and was coming with little knowledge, they told me they were going to enroll me in SIFE. They explained they couldn't place me according to grade level because there were too many things I didn't know and had to learn. I thought it was ok. I feel good in the SIFE program. I feel like I have many things to learn still. I like the SIFE program. Teachers are very nice. I trust them. (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 14)

Overall, most students agreed that their teachers were helpful and demonstrated care.

Students who were on track to graduate high school shared they found the support they needed both in and out of school. Diaz (2019) interviewed a student who stated, “In this country, there is a lot of help and many programs. It's important to look for something or someone that can help us advance” (p. 80). One such example was highlighted by another student who expressed, “Thanks to this school, I am at the level that I am. My counselors try their best to help me find scholarships to go to college, they have helped me with almost everything. Even though we are not American citizens, the

school has helped us a lot” (Diaz, 2019, pp. 79-80). This type of support can make the difference in keeping SIFE enrolled in high school and even higher education.

The schooling experiences of the SIFE population differ in that some students emphasize the great amount of support they receive from peers and teachers while others feel that they are treated differently and looked down upon. This sentiment was shared in the following excerpt from an interview:

My experience at school here has been a disaster. There are people who view us as if we are garbage because we are outsiders and can't speak English. Some teachers think that because I am an immigrant, I'm less worthy than others. Sometimes teachers make me feel like I should give up. I don't like my SIFE classes. (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 12)

Another student shared, “When I came from my country, I was very ignorant about everything they have over here...and so everything was new. And I noticed my classmates looking at us (other newcomers) like we were weird” (Flores, 2021, p. 10). Acculturative stress is just one common obstacle faced by many of the students.

The additional responsibilities of work and for some being a caretaker for other family members has impacted the schooling experience (Diaz, 2019; Hos, 2020). Some students have shared that they must work in this country to support themselves and therefore, school is secondary to work (Porter, 2013). For example, “My family had the belief that when you are 18 it's your responsibility now to work and be responsible for oneself” (Diaz, 2019, p. 87). There are also students who have found great success in the job market and prefer work to school. One student conceded, “I don't have to finish school, I can just work in my uncle's store” (Hos, 2020, p. 1035). These counterstories

shed light on the need for flexible scheduling to provide the students with access to the education which they are entitled to.

Migration Experiences. Many of the students were comfortable detailing the reasons they left their native country and of the events that took place during their migration. For several students the violence and gangs were at the forefront of the decisions to leave (Flores, 2021; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). Another common reason was to reunite with family members who were already established in the United States (Olivares-Orellana, 2020). The journey for some was a challenge, as they shared the dangers of migrating with coyotes and the poor conditions of the detention centers (Olivares-Orellana, 2020). In one scenario a student divulged her experience at the detention center, “That place, Oh my God, I regret having gone there. It was so cold that you could not stand it ... We were all sleeping on the floors, it was the worst. I had to spend three days there. We were fed bad food ... for the three days I was there I did not eat ... After three days, they called my name. I thought I would be taken to my grandmother but nothing” (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 10). A similar narrative was told by another student,

The day I was detained was a very disastrous day. As soon as I crossed the river, there was la migra. They grabbed me and sat me on the floor. They asked us about our origin and family. There was a lady traveling with me. They put us in a van and took us to las hieleras. Las hieleras are a horrible place. I was scared because I could hear children crying and screaming. It was very cold and we had to sleep on the floor without blankets. I was cold and frustrated. We had to use aluminum foil to cover ourselves. We all shared it. There was an open toilet and everyone

could see what you were doing. We had to drink water that came from a dark stream and the food was often rotten. (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 11)

The trauma the students are dealing with varies greatly from physical violence to emotional separations. One student had the physical scar of a gunshot wound and shared that he seeks revenge on the Burmese soldiers he once fought with, as they killed his friend (Hos, 2020). Another student admitted, “My sister was in a gang and she murdered my grandmother in front of me” (Diaz, 2019, p. 89). These traumatic experiences have had a negative influence on the academic success of students. For example, one student declared, “I came much traumatized because of so many things that I couldn’t concentrate in my classes and I failed many classes” (Diaz, 2019, p. 89). Teachers and students alike agreed that the trauma can impact the schooling experiences of SIFE, but the students have also emphasized their resilience in achieving their goals despite the temporary setbacks.

Barriers to Academic Success

Students who struggle with literacy in both their native language and English require a safe space where they can make mistakes without fear of being ridiculed (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Some students who identify as SIFE might also be refugees, as well as students who are undocumented or live with parents who are undocumented. This leads to challenges that other MLLs might not face, such as “acculturation stress, pre-migratory trauma, economic issues, emotional issues, language struggles, and urban resettlement issues” (Drake, 2017, p. 339). Additionally, undocumented parents and threats of detection also might lead to long periods of separation among families and restricted access to important programs, due to the fear of

deportation because of unauthorized status (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). The resulting psychological, mental health, and social-emotional issues students encounter are obstacles they must overcome or contend with in order to find academic success.

Consequently, SIFE often become discouraged by these barriers especially when they come to realize that many of their dreams and goals are not realistic given their previous limited schooling, which has left them far behind their classmates in satisfying graduation requirements, in relation to their age and grade-level (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). Similarly, many have fallen further behind as a result of structural limitations to graduation (Hos, 2016). Students face the dilemma of aging out before they are able to accrue the necessary credits for graduation because, more often than not, the foundational newcomer courses do not bear any credit toward graduation requirements (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016; Kanno & Cromley, 2013). The academic success of the SIFE population, as determined by high school graduation, is limited due to a lack of teacher preparation (Drake, 2017; Linville, 2016), irrelevant curricula (Drake, 2017), standardized testing (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015), policies that do not assign credits to newcomer courses (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016), and the single pathway to a diploma (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). As a result of these injustices, “34% of Latinos aged 16 to 24 in the United States have not completed high school or attained a Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED)” (Lukes, 2014, p. 809). The low graduation rate of Latinx students has negatively impacted their quality of life and career options (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

There were a reported 238,050 multilingual learners in New York State’s K-12 schools during the 2018-2019 academic year (NYSED Data Site, 2019), of which 3.5%

identified as SIFE (Alvarez, 2020). NYSED (2021) has reported that most recently, the 2016 cohort of students included a multilingual learner graduation rate of 46%, meaning that over 50% of MLLs are not graduating on time and/or are dropping out of high school altogether. Although the data for the 2016 cohort did not specify what percentage of graduates are SIFE, data surrounding the 2014 cohort indicates that only 16.7% of SIFE graduated from high school (NYSED, 2018). These numbers highlight the inequities that exist at the secondary level for the SIFE population.

The following sections introduce the research that explores a variety of strong, asset-based practices that could be used for the SIFE population as well as research that examines some of the current inequities they are facing. I have organized the review thematically, in order to introduce how each concept impacts the SIFE population.

Asset-Based Practices

In this section I explore the concepts of funds of knowledge, culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP), bilingual education, relevant curricula, and the asset-based mindset. These various concepts provide a foundation for exploring practices that can be identified as equitable for the SIFE population.

Funds of Knowledge

To better support the learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students, scholars recommend building upon students' cultural experiences also known as their funds of knowledge (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014). Funds of knowledge refers to "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). Calling on funds of knowledge is especially important when

working with diverse populations of students from different cultures and language backgrounds such as MLLs (Paris, 2012). Educators who collaborate with students and their families are best able to meet students at their current Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), building skills and knowledge from the students' independent developmental level with the use of "age appropriate materials" (WIDA, 2015, p. 6). By including opportunities for students to refer to their funds of knowledge within the curricula (Shapiro, 2014), students can make connections between academic content and their own cultural experiences (Campano, 2005). This type of engagement motivates students to take an active role in their learning.

Since its conception, funds of knowledge have evolved to include a new concept known as funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Funds of identity can be defined as the "historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 37). Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014), have argued that the funds of knowledge approach has its own limitations requiring the use of funds of identity as well. These limitations highlight the focus on the funds of knowledge of adults and not children (Hogg, 2011). The premise behind the concept of funds of identity comes from the need to discern how to incorporate the students' funds of knowledge into the school culture and curricula. In other words, there are certain methodological approaches that can be utilized by educators to make the connections to the students' identity and experiences.

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) categorized the funds of identity into 5 major types. They include:

(1) Geographical Funds of Identity (for example, the Grand Canyon as a symbol of Arizona state in the United States of America), (2) Practical Funds of Identity (any meaningful activity such as work, sports, or music), (3) Cultural Funds of Identity (for instance, national flags or social category such as introversion/extroversion, age, gender, or ethnic group), (4) Social Funds of Identity (significant others such as relatives, friends, or colleagues), and (5) Institutional Funds of Identity (any social institution, such as family, marriage, or the Catholic Church). (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 38)

Two new approaches to gathering this identifying information from the students themselves include activities such as a self-portrait (Esteban-Guitart, & Vila, 2010) and relational maps also known as a “significant circle” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 38). The significant circle activity asks students to draw a circle, write their name in the middle, and surround it with “different objects, activities, institutions, and people that he or she perceives as being relevant, important, or significant” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 41). This occurs in order of importance by writing the most important things closest to the center of the circle. By engaging in these activities teachers can discern important information about the students’ identities. Simultaneously, these activities allow students to express what it is meaningful to them and begin to interpret their own identity. Teachers that focus on the funds of knowledge that SIFE bring to the classroom demonstrate an asset-based mindset in which they focus on the strengths of the students rather than the skills they may be lacking (Calderón et al., 2019). This mindset is critical

when working with the SIFE population to find accessible points of entry and individualize instruction to meet students in their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995), Gutiérrez et al., (1999), and Moll and Gonzalez (1994) paved the way for Paris and Alim (2014) to develop the culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) framework. This framework moves beyond culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogies (Cazden & Leggett, 1976; Gay, 2000), towards equitable practices for students and communities who have been marginalized in the past. Paris and Alim (2014) argued that culturally relevant pedagogy, funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) and third space (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) require further development, which resulted in a need for CSP.

According to Paris (2012) the goal of CSP is to support “multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers... to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (p. 95). Through the implementation of the practices outlined in the framework, students’ cultural and linguistic identities are maintained and developed. This framework calls on educators to center the cultures and linguistic practices of students of color in order to provide students of color with access to linguistic and cultural flexibility.

Education in the United States has a long history of “anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, and related anti-Brownness” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 2) which is apparent in educational spaces as school norms, curricula, and instruction are grounded in a Eurocentric view. These norms extend to educators and researchers alike as they focus on

how to get students of color to perform in identical ways to the white-middle class, clearly demonstrating an assimilationist mindset. This assimilationist mindset is the belief that students of color “should conform to white, middle-class social norms and identity” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 196). In other words, it is the student’s responsibility to adopt the white culture and replace their own. Alim and Paris (2017) highlighted that the assimilationist mindset has contributed to the “saga of cultural and linguistic assault [that] has had and continues to have devastating effects on the access, achievement, and well-being of students of color in public schools” (p. 1).

CSP reimagines schooling for students of color in a way that that moves beyond pedagogical strategies that are carelessly added to the curricula. Instead, this reimagined education decenters whiteness by calling out the “white middle-class, monolingual/monocultural norms... as harmful to and discriminatory against” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 12) students of color. Emdin (2010) described how to decenter whiteness through the implementation of hip-hop pedagogies when working with urban students of color. Hip-hop is more than a genre of music, it is “a distinct culture...replete with customs, belief systems, practices, and schematic understandings” (Emdin, 2010, p. 5). Hip-hop pedagogy is “a way of authentically and practically incorporating the creative elements of Hip-Hop into teaching, and inviting students to have a connection with the content while meeting them on their cultural turf by teaching to, and through their realities and experiences” (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015, p. 67). Through the use of hip-hop pedagogy educators not only engage students but they also reposition their unique culture and experiences by valuing hip-hop in academic spaces (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

According to Heidrick & Curinga (2021), the CSP framework is most appropriate for the SIFE population because “the emphasis is on meeting the students where they are by bringing the context of learning into immediate relevance, and then transitioning students to more abstract ways of thinking” (p. 16). Implementing CSP with the SIFE population supports student engagement in new content material by relating instruction to themes and concepts that students are already familiar with, allowing them to make meaning based on their own cultural and linguistic resources.

Bilingual Education

Considering the fundamentals of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2014), which include developing one’s culture and native language, SIFE would benefit greatly from bilingual education programs that sustain the native language (Custodio & Loughlin, 2017), encompassing a truly equitable high school experience. Bilingual education programs reflect the CSP paradigm shift that leads to multilingualism and multiculturalism, fostering positive cultural identities (Corredor, 2021). Implementing a bilingual program is a procedural event, requiring a team of stakeholders to plan together, gathering both research and data to begin discussions around the critical decisions that need to be made (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Hamayan et al., 2013). This includes, but is not limited to, student selection criteria, funding, program modeling, teacher selection, family support, goal/expectation setting, teaching materials, and curriculum.

Research has shown that MLLs enrolled in bilingual education programs not only attain English proficiency faster, but also, they maintain their native language, hold a positive attitude toward school (Kim et al., 2015), and achieve significant cognitive

benefits (Bartolotti & Marian, 2012). When teachers can assess the literacy skills of the students' native language and use that information to make connections to the new language, students have appropriately scaffolded content material that meets them at their own individual level (August et al., 2002). In short, native language instruction is proven to support students' academic English and help them catch up to their English monolingual peers in a shorter amount of time (Menken, 2013).

Curriculum and Instruction

Researchers also argued for the use of a non-biased, multi-perspective curriculum (Ezzani, 2014) that considers the students' native culture during planning, instruction, and assessment (Durden et al., 2015). SIFE students are entering U.S. schools with a different set of skills that are often overlooked in traditional Western educational practices (DeCapua, 2016; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Wood, 2011). Much of the SIFE population comes from collectivist cultures that share obligations and commitments with one's extended family which differs greatly from the individualistic culture of the United States which centers on personal attributes and accomplishments (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). This serves as an important reminder to consider the students' culture during program development and instructional planning. By providing consistent opportunities for students to work in pairs and small groups or by incorporating project-based learning into the curricula, students will be better equipped to acquire new content through a familiar learning style.

Utilizing parents and other community agents as resources provides teachers with the opportunity to draw upon the funds of knowledge of the students. Calling upon the students' funds of knowledge provides scaffolding for students who are then able to make

connections to even the most rigorous content (Barton et al., 2004; Colomy & Granfield, 2010; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Favela & Torres, 2014; Moll et al., 1992; Russell, 2012; Wood, 2011). When students are able to relate to the content being taught, they are more likely to be engaged in the learning process and feel validated, because their own cultures are valued and integral to the learning experience (Colomy & Granfield, 2010; Roy, 2017; Wood, 2011). By extension, educators who utilize the expertise of parents or other community agents learn to collaborate and network with the community and families, nurturing students and fostering meaningful relationships. For example, Calderón et al. (2019) shared a brief vignette of a teacher who learned about each of her students by sending out a brief questionnaire to parents. In making this initial connection she not only learned all about the students' interests, but she also learned that a parent of one of her students was a seamstress who was able to help the class make sock puppets for their social studies unit. These established relationships cultivate a compassionate environment in which students feel safe to take risks, participate in critical conversations, and develop a community of learners similar to what they have previously been exposed to (Cooper, 2020).

Asset-Based Mindset

Researchers have suggested it is important that teachers who work with SIFE view their differences and diversity as an asset, avoiding the deficit perspective that focuses on what they may be lacking (Hickey, 2015). According to the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2019) professional standards, ESOL providers are required to offer a classroom experience that includes the following: addressing bias, stereotyping, and oppression; challenging instances of injustice; and supporting families

beyond the school, by working with and influencing policymakers when it comes to MLLs (Linville, 2016, p.104). It has become commonplace in the ESOL classroom to find trusting relationships and close attachments between students and teachers, as educators demonstrate ethical care through empathy, different pedagogical practices, and advocating for students (Hos, 2016). In contrast, many mainstream teachers continue to hold deficit beliefs and attitudes towards language learners, which can have a negative impact on the students' progress (Mellom et al., 2018; Pettit, 2011). Deficit beliefs held by teachers include viewing and treating students as blank slates when they enter the classroom. From this viewpoint, the inclusion of multiple languages is viewed as a challenge or problem rather than an asset (Shapiro, 2014). These deficit beliefs lead to lowered expectations of the students, which influence how teachers interact with the students and more importantly, how they teach.

A number of researchers argue that educators must first reflect on their own cultural practices and beliefs before working with a diverse student population in order to develop cultural proficiency and understand potential challenges (Durden et al., 2015; Favela & Torres, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Siwatu, 2011; Thompson, 2009). The ultimate goal of cultural proficiency is to shift one's mindset and in turn, the culture of the school, in order to embrace cultural differences and view diversity as an asset (Lindsey et al., 2018). Therefore, research suggested schools provide professional development to counter the deficit mindset as all teachers are responsible for educating diverse students and are expected to uphold equitable practices for all students (Calderón et al., 2019). Additional recommendations from researchers included hiring more educators who share the social and cultural background of the students as they are

innately more equipped to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Mellom et al., 2018).

Summary

Bilingual education in the United States has undergone many transformations and continues to reflect the political climate without much consideration placed on what is best for the students (Calderón et al., 2019). Although federal regulations require multilingual learners to have some type of bilingual education in their program, it does not always sustain the native language (Gándara & Escamilla, 2017). Instead, certain programs can do more harm than good resulting in a higher number of multilingual learners and SIFE who dropout of high school (Lukes, 2014). This is often the case in districts that aim to provide the minimum requirements for multilingual learners, simply focusing on compliance and not high standards (Calderón et al., 2019). Multilingual learners are comprised of students who are native born but many are also immigrant students (Hos, 2020). Research has indicated that teachers have not been trained to adequately address the needs of the immigrant population which also includes refugees and undocumented students (Olivares-Orellana, 2020).

To better support teachers as they work alongside immigrant students, such as SIFE, a few studies have addressed the experiences of SIFE as told by the students themselves (Porter, 2013). Although the literature surrounding the stories of SIFE is limited, scholars have begun to highlight the vast differences in their experiences (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). This includes the schooling experiences as well as their experiences prior to arrival in the United States (Flores, 2021; Hos, 2020; Olivares-

Orellana, 2020). This research emphasizes the value of learning about the experiences of our students to better support them in and out of the classroom (Diaz, 2019).

The SIFE population comes to the United States with significant barriers that can be properly addressed through programming and policy (Ledger, 2017). Students who enter secondary school with limited literacy in the native language and English find academic instruction very challenging as classroom practices tend to rely heavily on the printed word (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). This is where researchers have recommended that teachers reimagine classroom instruction for students who enter with a different set of skills than we are accustomed to (Alim & Paris, 2017). By focusing on the students' assets, which includes their funds of knowledge, teachers can begin to reach students in their zone of proximal development (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014).

SIFE also require the use of the native language (Custodio & Loughlin, 2017). Researchers continue to highlight the benefits of an additive bilingual program that develops students who are fully literate in multiple languages (Mitchell, 2012). Experts in language acquisition also pointed out that students will acquire a new language faster when they can use their native language as a frame of reference (Kim et al., 2015). Furthermore, one's native language is a large part of one's own identity and by sustaining the students' native language, their culture and identity also remain intact (Paris & Alim, 2014). Through the CSP framework, educators can reinforce and sustain the students' identity instead of further marginalizing this population through the assimilationist mindset that is so prevalent in our schools (Alim & Paris, 2017).

While the extant literature has explored SIFE, the research is minimal and warrants further exploration to expand upon previous studies. The timing surrounding

this study is also unique in that it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the schooling experiences of SIFE. Moreover, individual student experiences and perspectives vary, which calls for continued research on the SIFE population to ensure that there is no dominant single story. In the following chapter, I address the inequities seen in the education system and the ways in which we can support marginalized populations such as SIFE. I will provide a comprehensive overview of the theoretical lens of Critical Race Theory/LatCrit and the role it plays in the field of education.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, I draw upon Critical Race Theory (CRT) to highlight the ways in which Black, Indigenous, and students of color (BISOC) are marginalized and oppressed by our current education system and cultural norms. This theoretical frame, along with the review of research that was provided in the preceding chapter, will offer insight into the reproduction of social inequities in U.S. schools, specifically in the context of immigrant students with interrupted or inconsistent formal education. In this chapter, I draw on the principles of CRT, as well as LatCrit, which is related to CRT in important ways, to lay a foundation for the lenses through which this scholarly endeavor will be conducted. In this dissertation, I will draw on both CRT and LatCrit to help make sense of the data.

The History of Critical Race Theory

The origins of the CRT movement can be traced back to the 1970's, which resulted from the work of legal scholars such as Alan Freeman, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Mari Matsuda and Derrick Bell, the movement's father figure (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Gillborn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1993). These scholars, who were distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the field of law, aimed to transform the "relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). CRT also built upon previous theories, movements, and philosophies, such as critical legal studies and radical feminism, as well as the Black Power and Chicano movements (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT has grown an extensive body of literature that extends to specific disciplines, such as education. The work of Ladson Billings & Tate (1995) was instrumental in introducing CRT to the field of education. The basic

tenets of CRT include “(1) permanence of race and racism, (2) challenge to dominant ideologies, (3) interest convergence, (4) race as a social construct, (5) intersectionality and antiessentialism, (6) interdisciplinarity, (7) centrality of experiential knowledge and/or unique voices of color, (8) commitment to social justice” (Martinez, 2020, p. 9). These tenets can all be applied to the field of education where there is systemic racism in institutional structures that implement policies that perpetuate inequities for students of color (Solórzano et al., 2005). Such educational policies, including mandatory courses for MLLs that are not credit bearing, result in higher numbers of BISOC who dropout of high school.

Tenets of CRT

The Permanence of Race and Racism

The permanence of race and racism in the United States is the first tenet of CRT, and it holds that racism is “ingrained in political, legal and educational structures that they are almost unrecognizable” (Taylor, 2006, p. 73). The privilege that comes with whiteness can impact a person’s ability to see or understand this permanence. For this reason, this tenet asserts that we must reject the notion of color-blindness, as it perpetuates inequalities by ignoring the experiences of those affected by racism and the inherent racism that exists in our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Gillborn, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). However, race and racism are not the only constructs that result in marginalization of certain groups. The intersections of one’s identity can influence the access they have to an equitable education, which is a very real concern for many immigrant students.

The Challenge to Dominant Ideologies

The challenge to dominant ideologies, a second tenet of CRT, pushes back against claims of “objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 313). These claims are actually meant to distract and “act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 313).

Challenging the dominant ideology is difficult and often met with resistance from the dominant groups because its foundations can be traced back to “white supremacist beliefs” (Martinez, 2020, p. 11). In educational spaces, it is common for these ideas to further the advancement of white students while ignoring the challenges that BISOC face. For example, the notion of color-blindness is evident in the curricula of schools that ignore the history and contribution made by people of color (Kendi, 2019), which can be traced back to 1619 “some 157 years before the English colonists even decided they wanted to form their own country” (Hannah-Jones, 2019, para. 7). It is also common to learn a race-neutral history of the United States, claiming this country to be a country of immigrants (Ladson-Billings, 1998) who have all faced similar challenges, ignoring the over 12 million Africans “brought in chains across the Atlantic Ocean” (Hannah-Jones, 2019, para. 7).

Most recently, CRT has faced strong opposition as evidenced by Executive Order 13950 (Exec. Order No. 13950, 2020), signed into action by Donald Trump on September 23, 2020, which prohibited federal funds from being used for diversity and inclusivity training that is rooted in Critical Race Theory (Cineas, 2020). The Executive Order claimed that these trainings were “rooted in the pernicious and false belief that

America is an irredeemably racist and sexist country” (Bubl , 2020, para. 2). The Biden Administration has since reversed the executive order by instating Executive Order 13985 on January 20, 2021; however, the anti-CRT sentiment runs high among white supremacists with bills passed in several states preventing teachers from using CRT (Schwartz, 2021). The Trump administration also took fault with the New York Times’ 1619 Project for which reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones received the Pulitzer Prize. The 1619 project was “a ground breaking series of essays, poems, graphics and visual art pieces named for the 400th anniversary of the arrival of enslaved Africans” (Becker, 2021 para. 12). These essays were then adapted to a curriculum that has pushed lawmakers across the country to attempt to ban its use in the classroom. At the same time, Hannah-Jones struggled with tenure at University of North Carolina as members of the board initially refused to vote on her tenure candidacy due to their political affiliations and personal beliefs surrounding CRT (Becker, 2021). Eventually the board voted to grant Hannah-Jones tenure, but she made the decision to leave the University of North Carolina for a position at Howard University (Kirkman, 2022). The current opposition to CRT and culturally responsive pedagogies highlights the need to challenge dominant ideologies to better support the culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence, or the idea that progress occurs only if it benefits the dominant culture, is the third tenet of CRT. Derrick Bell (1980) clearly translated the principle of interest convergence into one concise statement: “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (p. 523). This “form of self interest of elite whites” (Delgado & Stefancic,

2017, p. 9) was demonstrated during the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case. Bell used this as a prime example of interest convergence, as this case was largely influenced by foreign policy as the United States engaged in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. America struggled to remain a picture of democracy and leader of the free world while gaining attention for the racial discrimination that plagued the country (Bell, 1980; Bell, 2004). In the end, the desegregation of schools did more harm than good for students of color (Horsford, 2006). Segregated neighborhoods made integration challenging. Therefore, students of color continued to be taught in underfunded and overcrowded schools (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Most Black teachers were displaced following the integration, many were fired with no cause by white majority school boards and Black principals found themselves demoted to meaningless titles (Fairclough, 2004). The loss of Black teachers impacted students of color as Black “teachers enjoyed close relationships with their pupils based on empathy with the individual child and an intimate knowledge of the black community” (Fairclough, 2004, p. 44). The integration of white teachers into Black schools also negatively influenced the experiences of students of color who were often punished for minor offenses and more often than the white students.

Race as a Social Construct

The notion that “race is a product of social thought” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9) and not “a biological determinant” (Martinez, 2020, p. 12) is an example of race as a social construct, the fourth tenet of CRT. In other words, society has created categories, or races, as well as specific characteristics attached to the people of each race. Assigning characteristics to each race becomes further complicated when you consider differential

racialization, the way the dominant society shifts the racialization of minority groups over time (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As a result, stereotypes of minority groups are created to match the evolving dominant narrative as conditions in our society change. For example, current events tend to dictate which immigrant group is the target of discrimination. The crisis of 2021 at the southern U.S. border (Cornish et al., 2021) and the dangerous rhetoric of the Trump administration, immigrants from Latin American countries are labeled as dangerous and illegal (Bellovary et al., 2020). Post 9/11, Arab and Muslim immigrants were perceived as a threat to security, which was perpetuated by the media (Arti, 2007), and during World War II Japanese American immigrants were forced into internment camps as a result of the irrational fears that lingered after the attack on Pearl Harbor (Ogawa, 2004). Kendi (2019) asserted that “race is a mirage” (p. 37), in that people choose to see certain aspects of another race whether these traits exist or not. Eventually the mirage is no longer an illusion, and can be used to create “new forms of power: the power to categorize and judge, elevate and downgrade, include and exclude” (Kendi, 2019, p. 38). In this way, race is a power construct created by the dominant race with self-interest in mind.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, or the idea of “overlapping identities” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11), which provides a basis for examining the ways in which race and gender intersect and further marginalize people who hold multiple minoritized statuses (Crenshaw, 1991). As a theory, this fifth tenet considers all aspects of a person’s identity in their experience, recognizing that factors such as race, gender, and class all play a role in the oppression of certain groups of people. Antiessentialism is also tied to the fifth

tenet as it “involves centering experiential knowledge” (Martinez, 2020, p .14) but also acknowledging that there is no single experience or attribute held by all members of a certain group. This reasserts the notion that individuals within a certain group reserve the right to share their stories in an attempt to counter “culturally racist assumptions that attempt to describe or explain socially constructed racial groups as homogenous in the way they think, act, and believe” (Martinez, 2020, p. 14).

Interdisciplinarity

The sixth tenet, interdisciplinarity, speaks to the importance of “analyzing race and racism by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 599). In doing so, CRT continues to push boundaries, expanding into new fields and disciplines, while drawing upon traditional scholars as well. Race and racism are so complex that there is no one discipline that can solve the problems of racism which has led scholars to promote the expansion to strands such as Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women’s Studies etc. (Martinez, 2020). In the field of education, educators, students, and communities not only learn from the progressive strands listed above, but can also draw on literature, art, sociology, political science, and other disciplines to learn about the human experience (Martinez, 2020; Yosso, 2002).

The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge and Voice of Color

A seventh tenet is the centrality of experiential knowledge and voice of color, which encourages minorities to write about race and racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). This tenet introduces the counterstory methodology, providing people of color the opportunity to share their lived experiences to challenge the dominant narrative circulating in all spaces. Counterstory is “a method of

telling stories by people whose experiences are not often told” (Martinez, 2014, p. 38).

Bell (1995) emphasized the importance of telling stories in stating that, “The voice exposes, tells and retells, signals resistance and caring, and reiterates what kind of power is feared – the power of commitment to change” (p. 907). In education, counterstories can be used as a transformational tool to better design curricula that center the voices and experiences of people of color (Martinez, 2020). By acknowledging the voices and experiences of people of color, CRT recognizes these counterstories as a legitimate way to combat racial oppression.

Commitment to Social Justice

The eighth tenet of CRT is the commitment to social justice. According to Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), a social justice research agenda aims to eliminate “racism, sexism, and poverty” while also empowering “underrepresented minority groups” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 313). The commitment to social justice is ever present in educational research as critical scholars recognize “that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and empower” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, p. 598). Moreover, CRT emphasizes that racism is not declining; instead, it is embedded in our way of life and disguised as everyday norms (Dunbar, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Ability tracking is one example of a norm that exists in plain sight but has contributed to the resegregation of schools (Rector-Aranda, 2016). The commitment to social justice calls on educators to fight back against the norms that are reproduced in our school system, further perpetuating social inequities in education.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Critical Race Theory in Education can be defined as a

Scholarly movement that applies CRT to issues in the field of education, including high-stakes testing, affirmative action, hierarchy in schools, tracking and school discipline, bilingual and multicultural education, and the debate over ethnic studies and the Western canon. (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017, p. 173)

Instrumental to the implementation of CRT in education, Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) highlighted that gender and class are not the only factors that influence the academic performance and educational experiences of students of color. The education movement of the 1950's, which promoted assimilation and the American melting pot, led to the multicultural education reform movement (Banks, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Although multicultural education was designed with a focus on educational equality for students from diverse racial and social class groups, critical race scholars argued that multicultural education did not offer a radical change that ensured justice for the oppressed but rather, it allowed the status quo to prevail (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014). This discontent among scholars led to a focus on critical race theory in education. According to Solórzano & Yosso (2002), “a critical race methodology in education challenges white privilege, rejects notions of ‘neutral’ research or ‘objective’ researchers, and exposes deficit-informed research that silences and distorts epistemologies of people of color” (p. 26). As such, this methodology is dedicated to social justice research aimed at dismantling educational institutions that continue to oppress and marginalize students of color.

When it comes to the schooling of students in the K-12 setting, CRT has been used to explain the ways in which white supremacy has impacted students of color. Researchers (Pérez Huber, 2011; Mitchell, 2013) have highlighted how Latinx students are racialized and “how dominant ideologies of white supremacy, in this case, English dominance, shape school culture, illuminating how dominant ideologies maintain school climates that are unfriendly to communities of color” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 212). Schools have not yet accepted responsibility for the role they play in subtractive schooling which has led to low achievement rates among U.S. born students of color (Valenzuela, 1999). Subtractive schooling is the result of subtractive assimilation which “negatively impacts the economic and political integration of minorities” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 26) as it devalues the language and culture which are central to the identity of students of color. Valenzuela (1999) also highlighted that subtractive schooling is also the result of the lack of care students encounter from teachers who have racialized them as “lazy underachievers” (p. 5). Subtractive schooling strives to assimilate students by focusing on the acquisition of the dominant language and culture, while the home language and culture are abandoned and thus subtracted from the student’s identity (García, 2009).

In addition, research has also demonstrated how policies and finances have contributed to the inequitable schooling opportunities for students of color (Alemán, 2013; Stovall, 2013; Velez, 2008). For example, Long Island, a suburb of New York City, is plagued with “a high degree of segregation and inequality” (Roda et al., 2009, p. 1) as a result of the district boundaries preserved by “those with the most power and privilege” (Roda et al., 2009, p. 2). Such policies have historical groundings in the United

States and are linked to property rights, more specifically the inclusion and exclusion of families of color from certain communities (Alemán, 2013). More current policies are disguised as a revamping of school; however, the changes are meant to draw the attention of white families and lead to the pushing out of students of color (Stovall, 2013).

Curriculum & Instruction

The Eurocentric curricula that still dominates U.S. schools is designed to maintain white supremacy while silencing the voices, perspectives, and contributions made by BIPOC (Ladson-Billings, 1998). These same curricula claim to embrace multiculturalism but perpetuate a colorblind perspective by highlighting the immigrant experience as common ground among all Americans. In other words, these curricula would highlight the United States as being a nation of immigrants with equal challenges upon arrival, implying that one's work ethic is the only factor that plays a role in achieving success. This perspective isolates BISOC who have yet to rise above the immigrant status like most other European groups.

Although culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies have made their way into many classrooms, there are still teachers who adhere to traditional strategies and techniques. This type of instruction is evident in monolingual classrooms where students sit in rows, work silently and independently, while learning through a color-blind lens (Calderón et al., 2019). The implementation of culturally responsive practices has “the potential to empower students of color... [by centering] highly charged histories and contemporary realities that the majority dismiss with narratives of colorblindness, meritocracy, or postracialism” (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 208). The current curricula seem to address racial injustice elsewhere in the world such as the

horrific events that took place during the Holocaust, but rarely reflect on the events that have taken place in this country “such as the Tulsa Riots or the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, or violent Indian removal and the effects of Manifest Destiny on Mexican and other native inhabitants of the West” (Rector-Arranda, 2016, p.6). The inclusion of such content affirms the students’ identity and culture within the classroom setting.

Traditional instruction is designed for students from the dominant culture, resulting in deficit views of students who do not master the content. This type of instruction calls for students to adhere to white norms and characteristics that are attributed to whiteness. Unfortunately, this means that students of color do not perform well on traditional assessments, “tests whose very existence is based in white supremacist representations of intelligence and models of efficiency” (Rector-Arranda, 2016, p. 11). Assessments that are normed to the dominant culture draw upon the “native knowledge and ways of knowing” (Rector-Arranda, 2016, p. 11) possessed by students who are members of the dominant culture, and do not take into account or measure the diverse perspectives and varied prior experiences of students of color who are outside of that culture (Delpit, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Yosso, 2005).

School funding also impacts the curricula and educational experiences of students of color. CRT argues “that poverty in conjunction with the condition of their [students of color] schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55). In short, better property equals better schools as “the quality and quantity of the curriculum varies with the property values of the school” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 54). Those students who live in upper-middle class white neighborhoods have access to numerous course offerings leading to a rigorous programming for all

(Peguero et al., 2016). Students who attend such schools are more likely to find that their schools are equipped with up-to-date resources and technology to enrich their learning experiences. Additionally, high quality teachers, who are better trained to deliver high quality instruction with high expectations, are more likely to be found in these neighborhoods (Delpit, 2012). The opposite is also true of schools that serve poor students of color, where statistics revealed a high turnover rate among quality teachers, limited resources, and limited course offerings (Hos, 2020; Milner & Howard, 2013; Suarez Orozco et al., 2011).

It is also important to highlight that a school's curriculum is not solely composed of the materials that are used. A curriculum goes beyond the surface of what is presented in classrooms, including "curricular structures, processes, and discourses" (Yosso, 2002, p. 93). Curricular structures, which include programs such as honors classes, advanced placement courses, and gifted and talented programs, "are directly supported by a set of curricular processes whereby students are granted or denied access" (Yosso, 2002, p. 93). In fact, Valencia (2002) has stated that it is common to find that curricular processes have excluded students of color, especially the Latinx population, from having access to rigorous programs, therefore leaving them unprepared for the basic demands of a four-year college. Curricular discourse includes the use of "code words" (Yosso, 2002, p. 94) such as excellence, reform, meritocracy, and diversity, to maintain and disguise inequalities as they relate to race, class, and gender. This discourse is also related to the materials educators use and the content they have chosen to teach. Should a teacher decide to supplement a history textbook with articles or documents from a different point of view, they are giving the students a chance of deciphering the truth (Freire,

1970/2018). However, when teachers endorse one side of the story, they have revealed their political stance and position on issues that relate to social justice (hooks, 1994). Typically, textbooks and curricula are Eurocentric and ignore the voices of people of color while focusing on the white, middle-class experience (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). This is true even when addressing the history of Indigenous groups as it is told from the white perspective.

Although educators, policymakers, and researchers alike strive to create equitable educational experiences for all students, it is important that they focus on the inequities that exist in the school curricula rather than focusing on the inequitable outcomes. The hidden curriculum (Anyon, 1980) plays a large role in perpetuating the inequities in the educational experiences of students of color. The implementation of CRT in classrooms provides us with the opportunity to both analyze and change the current structure of educational inequality. CRT in education can bring a heightened awareness to the racialized experiences of our students (Olivares-Orellana, 2020; Solórzano et al., 2005). As a researcher who focuses on the experiences of the Latinx population, I focus the next section on LatCrit, which operates under the same principles as CRT as a means to better serve the Latinx community.

LatCrit

Critical Race Theory has been extended by scholars to include LatCrit, which is a “branch of critical race theory that considers issues of concern to Latinos, such as immigration, language rights, and multi-identity” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 178). Using the “strengths offered by critical race theory” (Martinez, 2020, p. 22), LatCrit emphasizes “the intersectionality of experience with oppression and resistance and the

need to extend the conversation about race and racism to include all colonized and marginalized people of color” (Yosso, 2002, p. 95). Additional issues important to LatCrit also include ethnicity, culture, language, sexuality, phenotype, and identity (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit was initially informed by the literature of Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Feminism, but the term LatCrit was not embraced until 1995 at a Critical Race Theorist workshop for the Latinx community (Hernández-Truyol, et al., 2006).

The LatCrit theorist argues “that race was birthed by racism and subsequently has been used as a tool to justify the way jobs, power, prestige, and wealth are distributed” (Dunbar, 2008, p. 98). Just as CRT argues that class oppression is only one factor of racial oppression, LatCrit emphasizes that “class and racial oppression cannot account for oppression based on gender, language, or immigration status” (Solórzano & Delgado, 2001, p. 313). The early legal scholars of the LatCrit community investigated the diversity of the Latinx community and emphasized “that not all Latinas and Latinos are Hispanic; that not all Latinas and Latinos are Roman Catholic; that not all Latinas/os speak Spanish; or want to; and that not all Latinas/os live in the United States due to immigration” (Hernández-Truyol et al., 2006, p. 188). The Latinx community is not a monolith and therefore, LatCrit provides the necessary lens through which issues specific to the Latinx community can be addressed while simultaneously understanding and respecting the differences within the community.

Solórzano and Yosso (2001) suggested that through the use of CRT in education, more specifically LatCrit, students can share their experiences of the racialized, gendered, and classed structures of education for Latinx students. Similarly, scholars and

researchers have included *testimonios*, or a Latinx participant's personal experience, as a methodological approach (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). *Testimonios* help us to better understand the experiences of the Latinx community as they “reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more humane present and future” (Pérez Huber, 2009, p. 644). In scholarly research, *testimonios*, much like counterstories, can be used both as a method and methodology (Delgado Bernal et al. 2009). In this way, the method and methodology both allow the researcher to understand the lived inequities of participants while also honoring their knowledge as a means of deconstructing traditional scholarship.

Testimonios serve as a critical tool to counter the “epistemological racism that limits the range of possible epistemologies considered legitimate” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169) which are often those epistemologies that do not conform to the Eurocentric perspective. Unfortunately, the dominant epistemology is “based on the social history and culture of the dominant race.... which portrays people of color as deficient and judges the scholarship produced by scholars of color as biased and nonrigorous” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002, p. 169). This is where *testimonios*, backed by LatCrit and CRT, can begin to shed light on the Eurocentric scholarship that continues to oppress Latinx students. By attributing the culture and beliefs of the Latinx population as being the cause of negative schooling outcomes, the dominant epistemologies have contributed to the deficit views of Latinx students. This type of deficit view was demonstrated in the *testimonio* of an immigrant teen named Karla who was mistakenly classified as SIFE due to her migration to the United States from El Salvador (Olivares-Orellana, 2020). As a result of this label, Karla was placed in a

specialized program and stated that “When I started school here all my classes were called SIFE. I don’t know what that means but I know it’s different. We are separated from the other Spanish-speaking students. Some classes feel too easy, like science.... I want to be in regular classes for bilingual students, not separated” (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 11). This shows that Karla’s migration was interpreted to mean that she had experienced some kind of interrupted education and therefore, she was viewed as being at a deficit. LatCrit theory works in concert with CRT to challenge the dominant narrative surrounding race and racism and how they impact the education of Latinx students (Solórzano & Delgado, 2001).

Dominant Narratives

In the field of education, deficit discourses about students of color are often the result of the dominant narratives perpetuated by members of the dominant group. The dominant narrative that currently exists is one that privileges the social norms of the heterosexual, cisgendered, white male in the middle/upper class; these stories lead us to believe that straying from this lifestyle is not natural (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Kendi (2019) powerfully asserted that being white in America is a privilege, “the primary one being the privilege of being inherently normal, standard, and legal” (p. 37). Being white in America means you are not a constant suspect of illegal activity, whereas people of color must always be on high alert. The recent murder of George Floyd highlighted this issue and brought our attention to disproportionate number of unarmed civilians who are killed by the police for simply being black (Dreyer et al., 2020; McKeeseon et al., 2016). The dominant narrative in America equates people of color with criminal activity (Kendi, 2019).

Delgado (1989) emphasized that these stories are developed by the dominant group to support the powerful position they hold, which become more powerful as stock stories that “are often repeated until canonized or normalized” (Martinez, 2014, p. 38). For example, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) asserted that stock stories tend to make correlations with “good schools” and “good neighborhoods” being those linked to mostly white communities, whereas the schools in working class communities of color are associated with the “bad schools” and “violent neighborhoods” (p. 29). This good/bad binary extends to skin color, socio-economic status, language, immigration status and culture. This concept was demonstrated on January 6, 2021 when a group of mostly white rioters illegally stormed the U.S. Capitol Building with firearms and other weapons but were treated with respect and dignity by law enforcement (Fadel, 2021). This treatment is a direct contrast to the way the mostly Black protestors were treated during the summer of 2020 in response to police brutality (Summers, 2021). Despite the mostly peaceful protesting, the stock story focused on the looting and violence that erupted, while also justifying the insurrection at the capitol claiming they were guests of the 45th President of the United States (Fadel, 2021). In this way, the oppressor or dominant group uses stock stories to maintain their privilege and rationalize oppression (Martinez, 2014; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

According to Martinez (2020) “a majoritarian [dominant] story distorts and silences the experiences of people of color and others distanced from the norms such stories reproduce” (p. 23). Yosso (2002) has highlighted the role the media plays in perpetuating narratives of Latinx students as a “troublemaking, disrespectful, and uneducated” (p. 57) population. These narratives also lead to negative stereotypes of

people of color which are perpetuated and reinforced when their experiences and way of life do not emulate the way of the dominant culture (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Historically, the United States has established a nation of immigrants who are quick to assimilate out of necessity; however, in more recent years immigrants are working hard to maintain and sustain their native cultures, moving further away from the norms of the dominant culture (Calderón et al., 2019).

The dominant narrative that circulates the field of education asserts that students of color are “disadvantaged students whose race and class background has left them lacking the necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital” (Yosso, 2005). This type of dominant narrative is played out in Martinez’s (2014) composite counterstory of a Mexican student in graduate school, where her placement in the program was questioned by professors simply because there was a cultural disconnect that caused her to listen more than she spoke, citing that there was a “a cultural standard in grad school that [she doesn’t] understand” (p. 49). This type of deficit discourse is harmful as it does not acknowledge the many assets students do bring to the classroom (Hogg, 2011; Moll et al., 1992). CRT calls for educators to challenge the dominant ideology thus revealing the privilege and power of dominant groups (Yosso, 2005).

Counterstory

Counterstories not only aim to dismantle dominant narratives but are also “a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 14). The application of counterstories began with legal scholarship in order to examine the lived experience of law (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Miller et al., 2020), allowing marginalized communities to share their experience of institutional racism

(Miller et al., 2020). For example, Martinez (2014) highlighted the institutional racism she faced during her graduate studies by sharing a composite counterstory of a student who was encouraged to drop out of a doctoral program. This story highlighted a Mexican graduate student who was told by her professors that she and her research interest were not the right “fit” for the sociology program as her focus was on race. As a Mexican student, many assumptions were made about her identity and culture; professors labeled her as “a working class Chicana [with a] wealth of cultural knowledge to share” (Martinez, 2014, p. 47) making her feel uncomfortable and disconnected from the rest of her classmates during both formal and informal discussions. In the end, this student realized that there are cultural gaps that prevented her professors from understanding her role in the program and her unconventional interdisciplinary research.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described counterstories as “the ‘voice’ component of critical race theory, [which] provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice” (p. 58). Critical race scholars highlight this voice through “parables, chronicles, stories, counterstories, poetry, fiction and revisionist histories to illustrate the false necessity and irony of much of current civil rights doctrine” (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 57). Similarly, Delgado & Stefancic (2017) defined counterstories as “writing that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 171). Along those same lines, Solórzano & Yosso (2002) explained that counterstories are “a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (p. 32). According to Martinez (2020), counterstories provide a “contrasting description and narrative from a different perspective” (p. 16) to discredit and challenge stock stories

“based on ignorance and assumptions about minoritized people. These counterstories, utilized in education, aim to serve as documentation of the contrasting educational experiences of people of color with that of the dominant group highlighting the systemic racism in our society” (Miller et al., 2020).

Counterstories in research can be described as both a methodology and a method (Martinez, 2020). Counterstories as methodology is the “process” (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012, p. 634), whereas counterstories as method is the “research tool” (Martinez, 2020, p. 2). In other words, counterstories as method tells the untold stories of marginalized groups while the methodology aims to expose and challenge the systems of oppression that continue to perpetuate stock stories. Martinez (2020) revealed that counterstory as methodology is “a theoretically grounded approach with interdisciplinary roots in ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, legal studies, and the humanities” (Martinez, 2020, p. 3). Counterstories can be composed using multiple genres and features including composite characters, vignettes, dialogue, fantasy, autobiographical reflection and dialogic epistolary (Martinez, 2020). In this dissertation, I use counterstories as a research tool to share the untold stories of SIFE. I provide a primary text that supports the need for programming and policy change, and that considers the unique schooling experiences of SIFE.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is used to understand and explore a holistic picture of participants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A qualitative research methodology allowed me to explore the schooling experiences of SIFE in order to better understand and uncover the participants' experiences. This qualitative research study used the case study methodology, which Yin (2017) has defined as “an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth” (p. 15). I collected data using a variety of formal approaches, such as interviews, focus groups, journaling, and researcher memos. Utilizing these multiple sources of data, I developed case studies to explore and illustrate the “contemporary phenomenon” of being a student with interrupted formal schooling in the current time period in New York State in order to present cases that emphasized the experiences of each participant.

Situating the Proposed Study

The conception of this research study began with a pilot study I conducted to learn more about the experiences of SIFE at an alternative high school program located in the suburbs of New York in the Long Island region. Having worked at a similar program in the past as a teacher, I went into the research with certain biases surrounding the level of instruction and work ethic of the students. In my past experiences as a teacher, many of the students who were enrolled in the program were there merely because it was a legal requirement of their immigration status and therefore, their attendance was inconsistent. I observed that the students made little progress, as they were bored with the type of instruction they were receiving, which was a focus on the basic drills of mathematics and English through the use of worksheets. As a researcher, I expected to

see much of this same instruction at the alternative schools I observed in, but instead I was impressed by the level of commitment from the teachers, students, and administrators. These new observations made me acutely aware of the deficit views that many educators (including myself) had of these students due to the dominant narrative or the “discourses that focus on negative attributes, qualities, and characteristics” (Milner, 2012, p. 28) of students who are classified as SIFE.

SIFE students are often regarded as a challenging population with which to work (Olivares-Orellana, 2020) because they can struggle to complete grade-level material in their native language and struggle with English (Potochnick, 2018). This deficit mindset that views this population as challenging is often driven by data that highlights the huge disparity in test scores and graduation rates between multilingual learners and their monolingual counterparts (McFarland et al., 2017). Gaps in academic achievement have led many educators to believe multilingual learners, especially SIFE, cannot make the necessary progress towards high school graduation resulting in a deficit-based approach to MLL education (Calderón et al., 2019). The deficit approach not only focuses on what the students have not yet learned, but also strips them of all their cultural assets by focusing on the acquisition of English (Paris & Alim, 2014). Moreover, the hyperfocus on mandated state testing provides district leaders with an incomplete picture of what students know and results in data-driven programming based on imperfect data (Menken, 2009).

Pilot Study

The pilot study investigated the following question: What is the SIFE experience in an alternative high school setting? To answer this question, I engaged in observations

and interviews at two alternative high schools, Location A and Location B, both located in a suburban region in the Northeastern United States over two separate academic years, beginning in February 2019 and ending in March 2020 (Flores, 2021). To conduct the pilot research, I identified two research sites, both of which were alternative schools located in a suburban region approximately 50 miles from New York City. In the United States, alternative schools typically service those students who are at risk of failing or dropping out of high school, and who do not thrive in traditional high school settings (Izumi et al., 2015). Dubovicki and Topolovčan (2020) described alternative schools as “free schools” (p. 56), as they “do not follow the prescribed state plan and program (of curriculum)” (p. 56). The two alternative schools offered various programming and services to meet the unique needs of students according to their ability levels.

The alternative schools provided career and technical instruction for students with disabilities during the daytime hours. The SIFE program took place on Monday through Thursday from 3:00 pm -7:00 pm, which provided basic English, mathematics, and vocational courses, such as cosmetology, culinary arts, and automotive technical training, until the students age out of the program (at the age of 21). This alternative high school program was offered to newcomer multilingual learners whose first language was Spanish. The teachers were also bilingual and/or worked alongside a bilingual teacher’s assistant. Students who chose to enroll in this program unknowingly forfeited a chance at a high school diploma, as they had to unenroll from the traditional high school. In the following sections, I explain the two phases of the pilot study and the findings that have propelled this line of inquiry to its current phase.

Phase One. I visited Location A eight times between January 2019 and April 2019. There were four student participants and two teacher participants who took part in the study. The students ranged in age from 18-21 and all were Latinx from Central America. One student self-identified as female, while the other three as male. One student was denied the opportunity to enroll in the traditional high school while the others were enrolled for up to two years. There were two teacher participants at Location A who worked at the program for two years and five months, both of whom were native Spanish speakers of Latinx descent. The lead teacher and her assistant used their instructional time to teach basic mathematics and literacy using both English and Spanish. A detailed list of student participant demographics from Location A and Location B can be viewed in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

Student (pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Country of Origin	Duration at Traditional HS	Duration at Alternative HS	Site Location	Career Path
Kristina	20	F	El Salvador	2 years	2 years 6 months	A	Culinary
Andres	20	M	Honduras	N/A	3 years 5 months	A	Automotive
Ignacio	21	M	Honduras	1 month	2 years 5 months	A	Automotive
Fernando	20	M	Honduras	2 months	2 years 5 months	A	Automotive
Jennifer	18	F	El Salvador	2 months	4 months	B	Cosmetology
Angel	21	M	Guatemala	4 months	1 year	B	Cosmetology
Sebastian	18	M	Guatemala	N/A	4 months	B	Automotive
Frances	20	F	Guatemala	N/A	2 years 6 months	B	Culinary
Juan	20	M	Guatemala	2 months	1 year 6 months	B	Cosmetology
Benjamin	18	M	El Salvador	6 months	1 year 6 months	B	Culinary
Carlos	18	M	El Salvador	3 years	1 year 6 months	B	Automotive

Notes.

*All names are pseudonyms

*Age at the time of the interviews

* Duration at Alternative HS at the time of the interviews

During Phase One of this pilot study, I conducted eight classroom observations, with each session lasting about 2 hours. I was present to observe the ENL instruction,

which was infused with content-based instruction by means of interdisciplinary units of study. I conducted 4 formal interviews, one with each of the 4 student participants. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish which is the native language of the participants. The questions focused on the students' prior schooling experiences, the events that led them to enroll in the alternative school, and their current experience at the alternative high school (please see Appendices O and P). I conducted 2 teacher interviews, one with each teacher participant, which consisted of open-ended questions that addressed the teachers' comfort level working with SIFE, prior teaching experiences, pedagogical methodology, native culture, and any background knowledge that the teacher might have regarding the students' prior education.

Once this initial data was collected, I learned that none of my participating students would be returning to the program the following academic year because they were all aging out. Although I had collected some data, I was not yet ready to move into the analysis phase and decided I would continue collecting data in the following academic year. Unfortunately, the program was not renewed at Location A, prompting me to look into an identical program, run by the same organization, at a different site 20 miles east of Location A.

Phase Two. I visited Location B six times over three months between January 2020 and March 2020. Of the ten participants at Location B, seven were students and three were teachers. Like Location A, all of the students were between the ages of 18-21 and all were Latinx from Central America. Two identified as female and 5 identified as male. Two students lacked the opportunity to enroll in the traditional high school while others were enrolled for up to two years. The three teacher participants at Location B

taught ENL and mathematics at the program for over one year together. The lead teacher self-identified as Ukrainian with a strong working knowledge of conversational Spanish; the teacher's assistant self-identified as Dominican, a native Spanish speaker; and the substitute/co-teacher self-identified as Spanish, a native Spanish speaker as well.

I conducted 6 classroom observations at Location B, each session lasting about 2 hours. These observations were conducted during the ENL instruction which was infused into the interdisciplinary curricula. Formal interviews with students were conducted in Spanish, the students' primary language, and, given their comfort level, seven students (in three separate groups) engaged in a focus group interview. The same interview protocol from Location A was used with the students at Location B (please see Appendix M-N for the Pilot Study Individual Student Interview Protocol). Again, this protocol focused on the former educational experiences of SIFE participants, the events that brought them to the alternative school, and their current educational experiences at the alternative high school. Consistent with the method used at Location A, 3 teacher interviews were conducted, one with each of the teachers. The same interview protocol from Location A was used with the teachers at Location B (please see Appendix O for the Pilot Study Individual Teacher Interview Protocol).

Data Analysis

The formal student interviews were all conducted in Spanish. Following the interviews, I transcribed the Spanish audio and then translated them to English prior to coding. The data from the pilot study were coded using positioning theory "as a means of analysis to better understand how the students were positioned at the alternative school in comparison to the traditional high school setting" (Flores, 2021, p. 8). According to Harré

et al. (2009), positioning theory reveals the implicit and explicit rationale for the way people act toward one another, and thus, my analysis focused on the assumed and/or assigned positions of power within two classrooms. During the first round of coding, the data was analyzed in search of examples of reflexive and interactive positioning, which are the two ways in which a person or group might claim or be assigned a position. By claiming one's own position they have enacted reflexive positioning whereas interactive positioning occurs when assigning positions to another individual or group (Kayi Aydar, 2018). I categorized the data into four themes which emerged following the initial round of coding: (1) positioning; (2) power of the institution; (3) culture and language; and (4) resilience and empowerment (Flores, 2021).

In the following section I demonstrate how the data from the pilot study offered insight into the culture of power, as well as the four themes that shed light on the experience of the SIFE participants. I also address how the issues of power in the classroom applied to the students' schooling experiences.

Pilot Study Findings

Through this pilot study I found that the alternative schools utilized interactive positioning (assigning to others) to empower students (Kayi-Aydar & Miller, 2018). Teachers catered to the needs of the students, they embraced the native language and culture, using it as leverage to build students' capacity with the content and the new language. Students also emphasized the inclusive culture and close relationships between students and teachers at the alternative school; students were positioned in a way that actually defied the classroom norms to which they had become accustomed. Furthermore, these alternative programs not only catered to the needs of the students but also

implemented interactive positioning to empower the language and culture of the students. For example, Ignacio, a participant of the pilot study, stated:

Aquí [la escuela alternativa] al menos puedo hablar español, todos los estudiantes hablan español y los profesores también. Todos nos entendemos, así que cualquier pregunta que tenga, la puedo hacer y me entienden y pueden ayudarme. [Here (the alternative school) at least I can talk Spanish, all the students speak Spanish and the teachers too. We all understand each other and so any questions I have, I can ask, and they understand me and they can help me]. (Flores, 2021, p. 12)

This student highlighted the ways teachers at the alternative school embraced the native language and used it as leverage to build students' capacity with the content and the new language. This type of pedagogy and practice motivated students despite the hurdles they encountered. Benjamin, another participant, highlighted how the curriculum and programming he encountered at the alternative school empowered him to reposition himself as assertive and confident.

Aprendí a expresarme, porque antes de llegar al bachillerato o la high school yo tenía pena para hablar así en público. Pero hacemos presentaciones delante de los demás y es muy importante porque puedo practicar mi inglés. [I feel like I really like it for the reason that I learned to express myself, because before I got to high school or high school I felt sorry to speak like that in public. But we do presentations in front of others and it is very important because I can practice my English]. (Flores, 2021, p. 12)

The student participants were empowered through their experiences at the alternative school, developing a new sense of accomplishment and resolve as they acquired

proficiency in English through integrated, bilingual content instruction. At the alternative school the teachers assigned rights and duties to the students, positioning them as equals in the classroom which served to establish an inclusive community. For instance, the flexibility and student choice evident at the alternative school empowered students to focus on language acquisition and career options while attending to current employment obligations. Juan, a student from Location B stated,

Nos dan muchas oportunidades de mejorar en este país, con las opciones que tenemos aquí, en este programa. Tenemos dos días a la semana en las clases de inglés, y aparte de eso, podemos aprender un oficio que estamos haciendo ahorita, y aprender metodología. Aparte de eso yo podría tener tiempo libre para trabajar, porque los dos son muy importantes. [They give us a lot of opportunities to improve in this country with the options we have here in this program. We have two days a week in English classes, and apart from that, we can learn a trade that we are doing right now, and learn methodology. Apart from that I could have free time to work, because both are very important]. (Flores, 2021, p. 15-16)

This example highlighted the inclusive culture and sense of community the students experienced at the alternative school, which contrasted with their experiences at the traditional high school. Students, such as Juan, told variations of the following: “Estaba en una clase en la que muchos de nosotros no hablamos inglés y casi nunca hablamos. Siempre estábamos ocupados.” [“I was in a class where there were a lot of us who didn’t speak English and we hardly ever spoke. We were always just busy.”] (Flores, 2021, p. 9). This comment signaled that Juan was positioned in a way that followed the hierarchal norms of the classroom setting. This is consistent with societal norms, through

which students are positioned in the school system because of the power held by the institution.

A common finding from interviews with students revealed that the educational institutions established policies that led students to believe they had few-to-no options.

The students expressed the following:

(a) Fui a la escuela secundaria [para inscribirme] pero me enviaron aquí [escuela alternativa]. Dijeron que pronto cumpliría 18 años y no podía estudiar allí. [I went to the high school (to enroll) but they sent me over here (alternative school). They said that I was turning 18 soon and I couldn't study there.] (Frances, Location B)

(b) Me hubiera gustado haber tenido la experiencia en la escuela secundaria [tradicional], así que me decepcionó. [I would've liked to have had the experience at the (traditional) high school, so I was disappointed.] (Andres, Location A)

(c) No tenía los créditos que necesitaba para graduarme, entonces mi maestro me habló de este programa. Y vine a verlo y fue muy interesante [I didn't have the credits I needed to graduate so my teacher told me about this program. And so I came to see it and it was very interesting.] (Juan, Location B)

(d) Mi mamá recibió una carta de la escuela para una reunión y le dijeron que no tenía los créditos que necesitaba para graduarme, y por eso nos enviaron aquí [escuela alternativa]. [My mom received a letter from the school for a meeting and they told her that I didn't have the credits I needed to graduate,

and so they sent us over here (alternative school).] (Carlos, Location B)
(Flores, 2021, p. 9)

Unfortunately, these students experienced what Lukes (2014) described as pushing out and were not given the same equitable learning opportunities that were afforded to their English-speaking monolingual counterparts. Institutions sometimes resort to pushing out students who are perceived as a challenge rather than adjusting their programming to better serve immigrant students.

The counterstories highlighted in this pilot study are based on the contributions made by the student participants. These stories detailed how immigrant students were turned away from traditional high schools or advised to drop out, which demonstrated how students were assigned a position with little power, thus enacting the rules of the culture of power. This power is evident in our school system and impacts vulnerable students on a daily basis. The counterstories also illustrated how educators challenged the rules of the culture of power and as a result empowered the student participants. The findings from this study suggested that people from the dominant culture who speak the dominant narrative are in a position of power. Therefore, it is important to understand how students make sense of their position in the classroom and our greater society.

Evolving from the Pilot Study to the Current Study

Taking from phases one and two, my research evolved from alternative high schools to traditional high schools. Students were quick to share that their experiences at the alternative schools were very different from what they experienced at the traditional high schools. This made me curious about what the traditional high school experience looks like for SIFE and I decided that the third and final phase of this study would take

place in the traditional high school setting. In the third phase I chose to highlight the participants' story beyond their experiences at the traditional high school setting but also included outside experiences that have influenced their schooling. These data bring attention to the unique experiences of SIFE as told from their own point of view. Although the opportunity to observe and work alongside participants at two different alternative high schools was not the intended path, I gained valuable insight from students who came from several different towns in the Long Island region. Therefore, I conducted this last phase of the research in multiple traditional high schools. Drawing on CRT as a theoretical lens, I explored the participants' narratives by developing counterstories alongside SIFE that revealed how they experience high school. To this end, the findings from the pilot study engendered a novel continuation of this line of research guided by the following research questions: (1) How do SIFE describe their schooling experiences? (2) What events do SIFE identify as having an influence on their academic/schooling experiences and why?

Design and Methodology

This qualitative study of 3 SIFE at the secondary level provided insight on the ways in which the SIFE population described their schooling experiences and the events that have influenced said experiences. I employed multiple case studies (Yin, 2017) to examine how SIFE experience high school. Through the use of interviews, journaling, researcher memos, and focus groups, I aimed to understand the personal experience of each participant. This design emphasized participant voice as I developed and shared counterstories provided by the students that documented the academic experience of SIFE at the secondary level.

The multiple cases allowed for a comparative component in order to understand the similarities and differences among the cases, while also providing insight into the participants' experiences (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This is appropriate for this research study due to the multiple research sites, each bounded by an individual student participant. By including multiple cases at different research sites, the findings were even more compelling as I examined the phenomenon in different environments (Stake, 2006).

Setting

Participants from this study attended or worked at multiple high schools located in a suburban region in New York, spanning 20-40 miles outside of New York City. This region is considered one of the most segregated suburbs in the United States (Choi et al., 2019). Student and teacher demographics in the region differed greatly in that 45% of the student population are non-white, of which 26% are Latinx; however, 92% of teachers are white (Mangino & Levy, 2019). From these data, one can extrapolate that students did not see their racial and ethnic identities reflected in the teaching staff. The targeted participants for this study were adolescent SIFE enrolled in a traditional high school program. Additionally, the teachers of the select SIFE and administrators will also be included in study.

Student Participants

The participants for this study included three SIFE who were enrolled in a traditional high school setting. There were a reported 238,050 multilingual learners in New York State's K-12 schools during the 2018-2019 academic year (NYSED Data Site, 2019), of which 3.5% identified as SIFE (Alvarez, 2020). The students were selected based on 4 main criteria: 1) Spanish-speaking, 2) labeled as SIFE in high school, 3) were

willing to have ongoing virtual meetings, 4) ninth to 12th grade student. In this region, the majority of the SIFE population are Spanish-speaking which was beneficial as I am a researcher who is fluent in both English and Spanish and was able to conduct interviews with participants in their language of choice.

Teacher Participants

This study also included seven teachers who worked alongside the SIFE population at the traditional high school. The only inclusion criteria was that they had worked with the SIFE population, more specifically with the students chosen to be participants for the study. The teachers did not need to be bilingual nor certified as an ESOL professional. In most districts there are only a handful of teachers who have been trained to work alongside the SIFE population, which narrowed down the pool of possible teacher participants.

Participant Recruitment

I work closely with district administrators as a part of my full-time employment, therefore they were my main point of contact in the districts and helped me recruit participants. I began by reaching out to three district administrators via email to express my interest in working with the SIFE population in their district as part of my dissertation research. These administrators are professional contacts based on my work with the district. In the email, I shared a brief abstract of the research I intended to do and request a follow up meeting via Zoom to share more details (please see Appendix P for email template). After meeting with each administrator individually I emailed the administrators documentation to support my study, such as verification of IRB approval from my University's IRB Office, and copies of consent/assent forms (see Appendix A-G

for the consent and assent forms). These forms were required to get superintendent and school board approval. Upon hearing back from the administrators via email, I scheduled a time to speak on the phone or via Zoom to discuss participant recruitment of both teachers and students. I shared flyers with the district administrator to pass along to teachers and students to provide a bit of context for the study, gauge interest, and find volunteers as prospective participants.

Through my discussion with the district administrator, I clarified that I was looking to begin with about five to seven students from each district but would narrow down the student participants to a sole participant from each district (totaling three across the districts) who was willing to participate in interviews for an extended period of time. Throughout my pilot research I found that the SIFE population is transient so I wanted to account for participants who drop out of the study along the way. The sole student participant from each research site was the basis for each case. In addition to the student participants, I also discussed the recruitment of three to five teacher participants with the district administrator. I explained that the teacher participants should be based on the select teachers that work alongside the SIFE participants.

Once the district administrator identified five to seven students and three to five of their teachers, I asked the coordinator to provide me with a list of emails to share consent/assent forms with prospective participants. As part of the participant selection process, I had an initial meeting via Zoom with teachers and then students to determine final participants. When I met with teachers, I asked teachers about the students' academic history, level of maturity, and overall responsiveness to help me make the decision if I had multiple volunteers. During the student meeting, I fully explained the

study and provided student participants with the opportunity to ask me questions in order to make a fully informed decision as to whether or not they would like to carry on to individual interviews. The goal was to determine those students who were willing to engage in ongoing interviews and debrief sessions throughout the Winter of 2022.

Situating the Researcher

I have worked alongside multilingual learners since 2012 as a middle school English as a New Language (ENL) teacher in both New York City and the Long Island region. Additionally, I worked with SIFE at the high school level in an evening program to help support their English language acquisition. Most recently, I transitioned to support and advocate for multilingual learners as an employee of New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Long Island Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, where I support Long Island school districts in implementing effective Bilingual/ENL programs by enforcing state regulations and providing professional development for teachers and administrators. This recent shift from teacher to resource specialist comes on the heels of my frustration with inequities and discrimination I witnessed and learned about throughout my tenure as a classroom teacher. Some inequities included refusing to scaffold or differentiate instruction, misidentifying MLLs as having learning disabilities, directing microaggressions at immigrant students, perpetuating and acting on the deficit views of MLLs, pushing out MLLs from secondary schools, forbidding the use of the native language, and avoiding communication with the parents/guardians of MLLs.

Through my experience working as a teacher and resource specialist in the Long Island region, I encountered a deficit mindset from teachers as well as a resistance to working with the multilingual learner population. Variations of this mindset I

encountered included teachers labeling the “Spanish kids” as “lazy,” teachers characterizing immigrant students as “illegals and drug smugglers,” and teachers condemning parents as individuals “who don’t care.” As a doctoral student/doctoral candidate, I have focused much of my energy on deepening my understanding of the role race, culture, and ethnicity play in education. I have done this by engaging in extensive reviews of literature, attending conferences alongside prominent names in the field, and conducting my own research. This focus, alongside my newly acquired knowledge of the state regulations as they pertain to multilingual learners, has made me acutely aware of the systemic inequities that exist for our immigrant students and has given me the drive to study this.

Finally, as a researcher who holds multiple identities including but not limited to, daughter of multilingual parents, sister, wife, educator, and Latinx scholar, I hold multiple insider and outsider positionalities in this study. As an insider, the role I play in the region presented certain challenges for teachers and administrators, who were not as forthcoming with certain information. As a regional representative of New York State Education Department’s Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, my role is to support districts; however, I have also participated in activities of a disciplinary nature which may lead some to view my presence in the district as problematic. For example, certain district leaders might have seen me as a representative of the state who can report questionable practices that are not aligned with the state regulations. Nonetheless, there were advantages to my role as an insider in the district especially when working with communities and individuals of color (Kersetter, 2012; Milner, 2007). For this study in particular, I worked with participants who identify as Latinx, conducting interviews in

Spanish, and using what I learned to develop counterstories. As an insider I was able to “translate conceptually rather than literally” which also “includes translating culturally-specific knowledge” that only an insider would have access to (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 365). Terms of endearment are one such example of translation that requires culturally specific language for the term *mamita* directly translates to mommy but can be used for any female. I believe that being a cultural and linguistic insider is beneficial in that I have the necessary background knowledge needed to translate and interpret the participants’ words.

In some ways I may also be considered an outsider because I was unfamiliar with the distinct culture in each high school, and I might also have missed some of the historical context within each setting. This can work to my advantage as it provided the space to be a bit more objective (Kersetter, 2012). I might also be seen as an outsider because of my privileged status as a researcher, which is common in research with marginalized communities. However, in this study the participants were the “holder of knowledge thereby disrupting traditional academic ideals of who might be considered a producer of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 365). I also recognized that my advanced level of education and socio-economic status, in relation to that of the student participants, categorized me as an outsider or person to whom they cannot relate. In this way, I can use my outsider status and different lived experiences to my advantage to “elicit fuller explanations” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 410) and more details. Nonetheless I was “the outside ally and activist who brings attention to the conditions of a particular group of Latinas/os” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 365). By holding multiple insider and outsider positionalities, I developed a unique relationship with participants, one in

which I can be an ally and possibly relate to their experiences as a Latina but also had the ability to shed light on their experience as a researcher.

Data Collection Methods

The multiple case study method explores “an in-depth inquiry into a specific and complex phenomenon, set within its real-world context” (Yin, 2013, p. 321). Multiple case studies differ from a single case study in that the researcher can develop the analysis based on each case independently, as well comparatively, in order to understand the similarities and differences among the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The evidence and theories that emerge from multiple case studies are seen as strong, reliable, and convincing because the findings are based on more than a single case (Yin, 2013).

A multiple case study design was appropriate for this study because I had more than a single case that I analyzed to look for similarities and/or contrasting results (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake 1995). Further evidence of this argument is confirmed by Yin (2009) as case studies are often used in research questions looking to explain the “how” and “why” of contemporary events. My own research is not only be categorized as a multiple case study, but also, and more specifically, as an instrumental case study in that it “provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549). An instrumental case study uses a case, in this study a person, to learn about a specific phenomenon. With this study I am interested in a particular educational phenomenon which is how SIFE experience high school and I share this through an appropriately bounded case that is in depth and honors the experiences of multiply-minoritized students.

In light of COVID-19, this study was conducted virtually, as continued physical distancing was required in academic spaces (Wiggington et al., 2020). I expected that this would impact the data collection process in that it could take participants a bit longer to feel comfortable in interviews, especially the student participants. In order to build this rapport with the students I met with each student participant multiple times in the hopes that they would become more comfortable over time. Additionally, I attempted to put the students at ease by sharing my own experience as a multilingual learner. I made up for some of the physical cues that I might have missed out on by conducting the interviews virtually by meeting with participants multiple times and engaging in enhanced member checking.

I conducted all interviews and focus group interviews via Zoom. Prior to conducting individual interviews, I had participants take part in a participant selection meeting in order to obtain a general understanding of the students' experiences. I utilized purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2006) to choose participants who understood the significance of this study, were willing to meet for several interviews, were comfortable sharing their experience in detail and agreed to being involved in my writing of the counterstory, which went on for several months. Student participants were asked to journal about their academic experience and journal about their own reactions to being a participant in this study. Lastly, I kept researcher memos to capture my own observations and thoughts throughout the process. In what follows are the descriptions of the data collection methods I employed. I end this section with table 4, a visual representation highlighting the alignment between the data collection methods and each particular research question.

Data Sources

Interviews

The primary method of data collection for this study was semi-structured interviews of student participants. I conducted three individual interviews with each participant over a two-month period. Each individual interview lasted about 60-90 minutes (Yin, 2017). One goal of this research was to learn about the academic and schooling experiences of SIFE; therefore, the first two student interview protocols focused on the participants' schooling history, their daily experiences in high school, and their own identities (see Appendix H-K for a detailed description of the Individual Interview Protocols - Student). The third interview served as a form of member checking and was guided by probing questions that arose based on the analysis of the first two interviews. I conducted these interviews in Spanish, my native language and the participants' native language as well. This enabled the participants to tell their stories in their own language, which is important to capture the cultural and contextual nuances (Roulston, 2014).

I also conducted individual interviews with teacher participants. I met individually with each teacher at least twice to conduct interviews. These interviews provided context to the schooling experiences of SIFE as the teachers were asked to provide insight into the curricula, program, and overall school culture. The first interview was semi-structured and ranged between 38 and 60 minutes (see Appendix L for a detailed description of the Individual Interview Protocol - Teacher), whereas the second interview served as a form of member checking and was guided by probing questions that arose based on the analysis of the first interview. During these interviews I asked

questions about the teachers' knowledge of the SIFE population, their experience working alongside the student participants, their teaching philosophy, how the schools SIFE program and curricula worked to support the students, and how the school's culture has influenced the SIFE experience.

Focus Groups

I used multiple focus group interviews, or guided conversational interviews (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), with the teacher participants. Focus groups allowed for participant interaction where they could learn from one another and find comfort in sharing their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2013). As a researcher, these focus groups provided me with an opportunity to listen as the participants engaged with one another and observed as they interact. The focus groups ranged between 39 and 54 minutes and took place after individual interviews were conducted. The focus group provided participants with an opportunity to share details of their experiences working alongside SIFE (see Appendix Q for protocol).

Journaling

As a means of capturing additional student insight, I asked students to journal, reflecting on our discussions during individual interviews. I shared a password protected Google folder with each student participant where they used Google docs to respond to the prompts (see Appendix R for journal prompts). The journal prompts were available to students in Spanish and they responded to the prompts mostly in Spanish. Students were also directed to use the speech to text feature on Google docs, or Google drawings if they preferred. Journaling was used to “refine our mutual understanding of the interviews and to serve as a means of communication” (Janesick, 2019, p. 5). These journal entries were

extended to include anything the participant wanted to share as it all informed their experiences, whether academic or not (Healy, 2005). Through the use of comments and suggestions I was able to communicate with the student participants to either ask clarifying questions or respond to any queries they had. I used the journals as a springboard for interview questions. According to Janesick (2019) “journal writing can open up a wide variety of follow-up questions in a study and give insights into the writer’s beliefs and values” (p. 6). I also used these entries in the participants’ own written words when developing the counterstories.

Researcher Memos

I used researcher memos to capture my own feelings, thoughts, questions and reflections about the research. According to Ravitch & Carl (2016), this type of reflective and reflexive writing is crucial throughout the research process. I took time to memo at least once a week beginning with an identity and positionality memo at the onset of data collection. This initial memo allowed me to reflect on how my own positionality, identity, assumptions and biases can influence and shape my research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This memo also served as “a log for retrospection” (Botha et al., 2020, p. 5) allowing me to keep track of how my interpretations changed overtime.

According to Bryant & Charmaz (2007), “memo writing is a private conversation between the researcher and his/her data” (p. 251). For this reason, the writing was not always formal and in the end some of the entries did not relate to the findings but “the interplay between researcher and data is crucial to the generation of knowledge that reflects the breadth and depth of human experience” (Birks et al., 2008, p. 69). In this study, I used researcher memos throughout the data collection and analysis phases to

record my decision making, to articulate my interpretations, and to maintain momentum writing from the onset of the study (Birks et al., 2008).

Table 4

Data Collection Methods

	RQ1	RQ2
Student Interview	X	X
Journaling	X	X
Researcher Memos	X	X
Teacher Interview	X	X
Teacher Focus Group	X	X

Data Analysis

I safeguarded the data by storing it all on a password-protected USB and a password-protected laptop. I kept track of the data collected by using a data collection log detailing the date, method, participants, contact information, and duration of time. To organize the data, I maintained separate electronic folders for each case, meaning each student participant. Within each folder I had additional folders for interviews, focus groups, and journals. My researcher memos remained separate as I reflected on more than one case at a time. These memos included reflections on some key points captured immediately after collecting the data. In addition, I also used the memos to highlight important points, themes, feelings, or ideas as they relate to CRT and LatCrit. For this study, data collection and data analysis occurred concurrently (Saldaña, 2015) to ensure

that the participants are involved in the entire process including the presentation of the findings.

To perform an in-depth coding process with appropriate attention given to the language used by participants, I chose to code the data in two different cycles utilizing a different approach each time. Once the interview data was transcribed by myself or a transcription service and edited for accuracy, I prepared the data for coding by dividing the text into separate “units or stanzas when a topic or subtopic shift occurs” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 19). In this way I already begin precoding the data by spotting important quotes or even codes within the stanzas.

Cycle One

According to Saldaña (2015), “coding requires that you wear your researcher’s analytic lens” (p. 7). For this reason, I decided to use In Vivo codes, which is inductive and emerges from the language that was used by the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2013) for this first cycle of coding. The use of In Vivo coding was most appropriate for the study as this type of coding is used to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 295) and “particularly useful in educational ethnographies with youth” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 106). I attempted to limit the number of In Vivo codes by coding every three to five sentences, but since there was no real formula to follow, if something stood out I applied it as a code (Charmaz, 2014). Some examples of these In Vivo codes include, (1) no socializaba mucho con los estudiantes [did not socialize much with students]; (2) me daba pena [I was embarrassed]; and (3) solo hablaban inglés [they only spoke English].

Cycle Two

After an initial round of In Vivo coding I then used focused coding (Saldaña, 2015) to categorize the already coded data from cycle one into thematic or conceptually similar categories. During this cycle I continued to focus on my theoretical lens and used the eight tenets of CRT (as described in Chapter Three) to help explore these categories. In this way I moved from In Vivo codes to categories and used the tenets of CRT to identify a more complex understanding of the categories. The entire process occurred for each individual case. As I moved on to theming the data, my goal was to develop overarching themes from the participants' statements by "bringing meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and it's variant manifestations" (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000, p. 362). The themes were the outcomes of coding and categorization (Saldana, 2015) and both CRT and LatCrit helped me develop a new way of understanding the emerging themes. The emerging themes were then compared across the multiple cases looking for patterns that related to the research questions.

The multiple case design followed a replication logic (Yin, 2017) in which "each individual case becomes the subject of a whole case study" (Yin, 2017, p. 57). In other words, I used a case-based approach to identify within-case patterns and developed an individual case report, before looking for patterns and relationships across the cases (Yin, 2017). Based on the patterns I then developed cross-case conclusions based on the similar or contrasting findings. The final steps of the multiple case study procedure included modifying the theory, developing policy implications, and finally writing the cross-case report (Yin, 2017). The findings or summary report focused on both the individual case studies and the multiple case results.

Presentation of the Findings

I developed the counterstories to share the findings of the research, and involved the student participants in the process because it spoke to my belief in CRT and LatCrit. In order to protect the identity of all participants, I used pseudonyms for each person, school, and district as I wrote the findings, conclusions, and counterstories. The voices of the participants are extremely important to me and have value in my research all the way through to the write up. Therefore, the participant involvement in the counterstories extended beyond member checking; I wrote the counterstories with their guidance along the way. These findings support policy makers as they develop multiple pathways towards high school graduation for our immigrant population of high school students. The findings are also informative for teachers, school administrators, and educational researchers, to build context on the unique academic experiences of SIFE.

Counterstories, utilized in education research, aim to serve as documentation of the contrasting educational experiences of people of color and dominant groups. In so doing, counterstories have the power to highlight systemic racism in our society (Miller et al., 2020). Much of the discussion about SIFE has centered around deficit views (Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020). For this reason, I drew from the data that I collected in this study to develop a narrative counterstory with each of the student participants. In this way, my presentation of findings also served as a site of empowerment in that the student participants were able to share their counterstories, and co-develop their narratives (Hos, 2020).

Throughout my analysis of data, I implemented enhanced member checking by not only sharing my interpretations of interviews and journal entries with the participants

but providing participants with direct involvement in the creation of their counterstories. I had student participants help construct their counterstories as I wrote them using interview data, journal entries, researcher memos, and “participant-researcher collaboration” (Chase, 2017, p. 2692) which extended beyond the traditional member check, which generally occurs once early in the analysis. This is important for this study as the counterstories presented by the researcher are meant to accurately and authentically promote student voice.

To accomplish this level of member checking, I met with student participants once a week and wrote up my findings, as co-constructed counterstories, throughout the Winter of 2022. Each session lasted about 30 minutes. I started by sharing my initial findings in writing with the participant and began discussing how to frame their individual counterstory. We worked together to create an outline of what was written up and how I would write it. Although the writing was be done mostly in English, I do anticipate the need to translate writing for the participants to provide substantial feedback. This level of academic translation was challenging and resulted in a watered-down version of my discussions, therefore the quotes from the student participants were presented in Spanish first. Following the initial member checking meeting, I shared a Google document with the student where I drafted their counterstory. They were asked via email to review the writing periodically and provide feedback using the commenting feature. This guided our in-person discussions. In this way students that struggled to meet weekly were still able to provide feedback asynchronously.

Transactional and Transformational Validity

Qualitative researchers have long argued against the concept of validity especially as it related to critical research in support of the empowerment of marginalized groups (Cho & Trent, 2006; Lather, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because validity is a positivist concept and I was not engaging from that standpoint, I drew on the concepts of transactional validity and transformational validity to ground the “worthiness” of my study (Cho & Trent, 2006). I addressed transactional validity through the implementation of multiple methods and member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) while transformational validity was addressed through catalytic validity (Lather, 1986).

According to Cho and Trent (2006), transactional validity refers to “an interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a relatively higher level of accuracy and consensus by means of revisiting facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted” (p. 320). To achieve transactional validity, all transcribed interviews underwent enhanced member checking that was grounded in CRT and LatCrit. This enhanced member checking invited student participants to analyze data and co-construct their counterstory by providing ongoing feedback to ensure their written story accurately portrayed their own experience. I also drew upon the process of crystallization which “deconstructs the traditional idea of validity and...provides us with a deepend, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (Richardson, 2000, p. 13-14). In this way the researcher uses multiple methods all the while recognizing that it is impossible to ever know everything, leaving room for growth.

This idea of crystallization speaks to the notion of transformational validity which can be defined as “a progressive, emancipatory process leading toward social change that is to be achieved by the research endeavor itself” (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 321-322). Transformational validity was achieved through the inclusion of catalytic validity, or “the degree to which the research empowers and emancipates the research subjects” (Scheurich, 1996, p. 4). This is seen in my study through the use of counterstories as they have the “ability to raise consciousness and thus provoke political action to remedy problems of oppressed peoples” (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 325). Much like the crystallization process that has been seen in many post-modern mixed-genre texts (Lather & Smithies, 1997; Linden, 1993; Richardson, 1997), the counterstories in this study were co-constructed alongside the participants using interviews and journal entries, thus providing participants with the opportunity to share their own reality.

Limitations

This study has two limitations. First, the study was limited in that the student participants were drawn from just the Latinx community. Although the SIFE population does include students from many different cultures and communities, the majority of SIFE in the region and research sites in which this study was situated are from the Latinx community. Being that all the students share Spanish as the native language, I am able to communicate with them as a native speaker. Given the numbers of Spanish-speaking immigrants ranging in age from 13-18, it is so important that their voices be heard.

Secondly, researcher bias, or *a priori* assumptions, can impact the credibility of the findings (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Enhanced member checking took place to be sure that participants were involved in the development of the findings. Richardson

(2000) emphasizes that qualitative research is “always filtered through human eyes and human perceptions, bearing both the limitations and the strengths of human feelings” (p. 15). Considering that I conducted multiple in-depth case studies, I have a thorough understanding of the participants and research sites (Creswell & Poth, 2013).

Additionally, I had conducted a pilot study that allowed me to refine the interview protocols in preparation for this study. The pilot study was conducted over a two-year period and at two different research sites. This time frame and sequential research design provided me with ample time to revise the interview/focus group questions and adjust my own facilitator style. According to Chenail (2011), pilot studies can be used to address researcher bias because they provide the opportunity to test run the proposed methods and “make adjustments based upon the performance of the method” (p. 257). In this way, the researcher had the opportunity to reflect and get feedback in preparation for the main research study.

Timeline

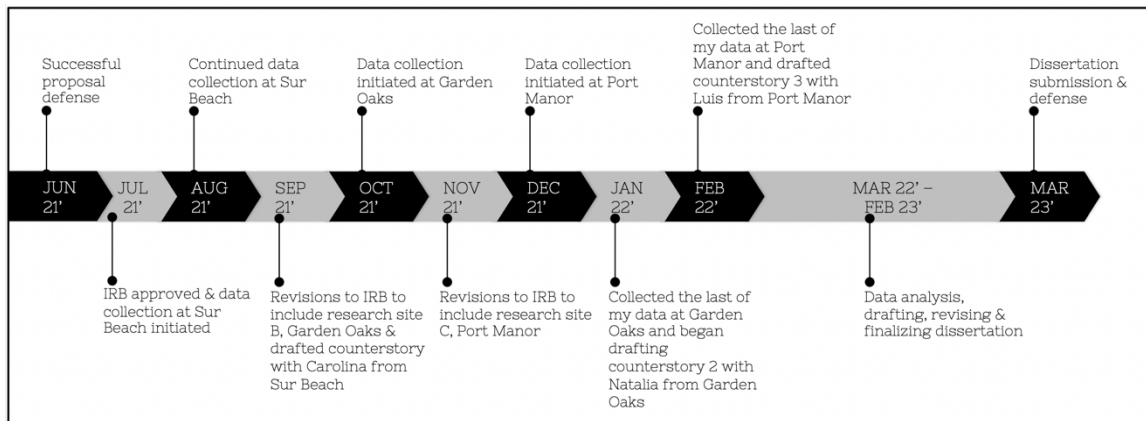
Upon successful completion of the dissertation proposal defense, I revised the IRB I used to gather pilot study data to reflect the discussions had with my committee members. I submitted the revised IRB in early July 2021 and was granted approval by the IRB committee members at their July 2021 meeting. Once the IRB was approved, I began collecting data from the participants I had recruited from research site A, which I named Sur Beach. I used the months of July and August to conduct interviews with the teacher and student participants from Sur Beach and began to analyze the data.

In September 2021, I recruited the participants from research site B, which I named Garden Oaks and revised my IRB to include this research site. I used the months

of September and October 2021 to collect data from Garden Oaks, while simultaneously analyzing the data collected to this point, and began drafting the first counterstory alongside Carolina, a participant from Sur Beach. In November 2021, I submitted a revision to my IRB to include research site C, which I named Port Manor. During the months of December 2021 and January 2022 I collected data from Port Manor and Garden Oaks, I also began drafting a second counterstory alongside Natalia, a participant from Garden Oaks. In February of 2022, I collected the last of the data from Port Manor and worked with Luis, a participant from Port Manor, to draft the third counterstory. Beginning in March of 2022, I dedicated myself for several months to the data analysis as well as drafting and revising Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. During February and March of 2023, I worked with my committee to finalize the dissertation and defend my research.

Figure 1

Timeline



CHAPTER 5 COUNTERSTORIES

In this chapter I share three counterstories, each unique in the writing style and content. This chapter answers the question, how do SIFE describe their schooling experiences? As detailed in the previous chapter, I worked closely with three student participants from three different school districts in Long Island, New York. The student participants were each interviewed three times, completed several journal entries, and met with me to review the initial coding of interview transcriptions and journal entries. Following these meetings, the students read along as I began drafting their stories. They were encouraged to contribute to the writing by changing, adding, or expanding on my initial drafts. The meetings continued until I was confident that their stories had been written in a way they were proud of and comfortable with. With that in mind, this confidence was achieved by including student participants in the construction and analysis of their counterstories, ensuring their stories remained true to their experiences and identities. Accordingly, I implemented enhanced member checking by engaging the participants in the construction of the counterstories, which extended beyond the typical member checking (Chase, 2017). The goal of our meetings was to learn about and highlight the schooling experiences of SIFE in a way that was authentic to their perspectives. Student participants shared stories of their schooling experiences in their native countries as well as in the United States. Through these conversations, student participants also highlighted specific events that influenced their schooling experiences.

Delgado and Sefancic (2017), highlighted counterstories to challenge an existing premise or view. To shift the deficit discourse about SIFE, this study utilized counterstories that were carefully crafted alongside the student participants, with the

intention of amplifying student voice and the assets they bring into our classrooms. A current deficit narrative circulating the mainstream media frames SIFE as students in need of more financial support than can be reasonably provided (Smith, 2022).

Furthermore, questions surrounding the landmark supreme court case from 1982, *Plyer v Doe*, have revealed that policymakers are concerned about the costs associated with providing an education to undocumented students (Goodman, 2022). The participants' counterstories offered insights into the stories of Latinx SIFE which often go untold. These counterstories speak against the dominant narrative which tells "myths of Latinx inferiority, brokenness, and failure" (Pérez, 2021, p. 154). Collectively the participants in this study spoke against the deficit mindset of SIFE, while highlighting the racialized microaggressions they encountered, and the ways in which inequities occurred in educational spaces. It is my hope that the counterstories shared in this chapter can provide an authentic depiction of the experiences of SIFE, emphasizing the need for policy change in support of SIFE

These counterstories were each crafted using a different counterstory method. The choice to use one writing method over another was very intentional as I wanted to find the best way to capture each unique story while considering the participants' preferred way of articulating their story. I also considered the diverse literacy levels of the student participants, as they demonstrated strengths in the different language modalities. In this way I honored their authentic voice by choosing a writing method that conveyed their strengths as a storyteller.

The first counterstory was constructed as an authentic *testimonio* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012), using mostly the words of the student participant, Carolina, with

little translation and minimal interpretation. I felt very strongly about holding onto the words used by Carolina because she did a great deal of reflecting to get her experience out of her own head and onto the paper. We worked carefully to construct this story together by collaborating on a Google document that she could also edit. At first, she was hesitant to contribute in written form, so I posed additional questions for clarification and confirmation purposes. As she grew comfortable, she eventually began to make comments throughout the document without being prompted.

The second counterstory was developed as a co-written memoir (Denton-Borhaug & Jasper, 2014) alongside Natalia, a student participant from Sur Beach. Natalia demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of the role power played in her schooling experience and in her interactions with faculty and staff. The powerful connections she made were reminiscent of the student memoirs described in Denton-Borhaug & Jasper's 2014 article, which inspired me to suggest this method for Natalia's counterstory. The focus of this counterstory is on the events that influenced the student's schooling experiences. In this way, the counterstory is reminiscent of a memoir.

The third counterstory was written as dialogue between researcher and participant. This counterstory was inspired by the writing of scholars such as bell hooks (1994) and Aja Martinez (2014) who have written autobiographical reflections in this manner. This method allowed me to use the translations of the original transcript along with some paraphrasing to share the participant's story in a nonlinear fashion. In line with the procedures outlined in Chapter Four, the sections that follow offer three unique counterstories crafted alongside each of the student participants.

Carolina: With Help from God

At the time of data collection, Carolina was a 21-year-old high school graduate determined to obtain a college degree and become a teacher, despite her undocumented status in this country. She was the first person in her family to have graduated from high school in this country and she hoped to inspire other young people to do the same. She attributed much of her academic success to the neverending support from her extended family and, of course, her faith and close relationship with God. In one of her journal entries, (written in English and Spanish by Carolina and translated in the brackets by the researcher) Carolina stated:

I can say that God has a big part in my life. Me gusta tener una relación muy cercana con Dios. Pero también están mis tios. They have helped me since the first day. Yo estaba muy relax solo trabajando but ellos me dijeron que tenia que hacer algo con mi vida. Y me ayudaron a inscribirme en la escuela me motivaron cada dia. Porque hubieron dias en los que I give up but there was my tia tell me get up and ve a la escuela. I found a family en ellos si muchas veces I get mad con ellos pero now I do understand why they regañarme muchas veces and I can see what they want in my life. Tal vez no fue ayuda económica pero esa ayuda emocional fue la que me motivó para continuar siempre esperaron lo mejor de mi y eso me motivó a dar lo mejor de mi. *[I can say that God has a big part in my life. I like to have a very close relationship with God. But there's also my aunt and uncle. They have helped me since the first day. I was very relaxed just working but they told me that I had to do something with my life. And they helped me enroll in school, they motivated me every day. Because there were days when I*

gave up but there was my aunt telling me to get up and go to school. I found a family in them, although many times I got mad at them but now I do understand why they scold me often and I can see what they want in my life. Maybe it wasn't financial help but that emotional help was what motivated me to continue. They always expected the best from me and that motivated me to give my best.]

Carolina first came to the United States in 2014, when she was just 14 years old. Her decision to leave Honduras was the result of a dark time she went through in her adolescence. In an interview, she recounted this period in her life:

Creo que yo empecé como a ser más rebelde. Eh, me volví como nada me importaba. Mi mamá solo pasaba trabajando. Y, y mi abuela era la que nos cuidaba. Entonces no tenía atención. Solo tenía como 13 años o 14. Entonces, eh, necesitaba atención. Creo que era una forma a veces de decirle a mi mamá como, “Aquí estoy. Eh, no está yendo bien mi vida. Eh, ¿dónde está mi papá? No lo veo.” Entonces empezó a dejarme de importar todo. Y ahí fue donde mis calificaciones bajaron. Empecé a consumir alcohol a esa edad pequeña. Fueron muchas cosas. Un hombre ya muy mayor, y me seguía, me perseguía. Eso era muy malo. Donde yo estaba ahí iban incluso las maras, todo. Entonces, eh, mi vida fue yendo como, eh, solo para abajo y para abajo, todo era malo. *[I think I started to be like more rebellious. Eh, I acted like nothing mattered to me. My mom was just working. And, and my grandmother was the one who took care of us. So I didn't have attention. I was only like 13 or 14. So, uh, I needed attention. I think it was a way of sometimes telling my mom like, “Here I am. Hey, my life is not going well. Hey, where's my dad? I don't see him.” So I started not caring*

about anything. And that's where my grades dipped. I started consuming alcohol at that young age. There were many things. A much older man was following me, chasing me. That was very bad. Where I was there even gangs, and everything. So, uh, my life was going like, uh, just down and down, everything was bad.]

In reflective conversations, Carolina suggested that she was looking for her mother's attention and did so by rebelling. She paid little attention to school, spent time drinking with her friends, and soon found herself in dangerous situations around grown men and gang members.

While Carolina continued to spiral downward, her aunt brought up her concerns and gave her the idea to move to the United States with her father. She shared:

Una tía me dijo que era una gran oportunidad porque si mi papá se venía a este país yo nunca mas iba a volver a saber de él. Necesitaba una mejor oportunidad para mi vida, necesitaba cambiar tanto como en el estudio, igual económicamente. Incluso cuando tomé la decisión de venirme para aquí, no se lo pregunté a mi mamá, ni le pedí permiso, nada, solo le dije, "En una semana me voy." "¿Para dónde?" me dijo. "Yo voy para los Estados Unidos con mi papá." [An aunt told me that it was a great opportunity because if my father came to this country I would never hear from him again. I needed a better opportunity for my life, I needed a change both in my studies and, also financially. Even when I made the decision to come here, I didn't ask my mom, I didn't ask her permission, nothing, I just told her, "I'm leaving in a week." "Where to?" she told me. "I am going to the United States with my dad."]

The decision was made quickly as Carolina knew this would be the opportunity she had been waiting for to change her life around.

When asked how she would describe her journey, she stated that it was difficult but that “God put the right people in her path to help her.” The initial move from Honduras to Texas involved many bus rides and even traveling on foot. Carolina shared, “nos tocó ver cosas que jamás pensé que tenía que ver” [*“We saw things that I never thought I would have to see”*]. She was very open about her migration story and recalled a few of the memories that will always stay with her. While still in Mexico, Carolina and her father encountered corrupt police who threatened the pair if they could not produce money to save their own lives. Carolina openly discussed this experience, recalling:

Nos amenazaron. Eh, le dijeron a mi papá que si no les daba el dinero pues nos iban a matar y todo eso. Y, y mi papá pues traía como \$100.00 por si acaso, como aparte escondidos, y se los dio, y nos dejaron ir. [*They threatened us. Eh, they told my dad that if he didn't give them the money they were going to kill us and all that. And, and my dad, well, he brought about \$100.00 just in case, as a hidden aside, and he gave it to them, and they let us go.*]

The most shocking part of her journey was the walk across the Mexico-Texas border. Between the pace they kept while walking across the vast desert and an encounter with a dead body, Carolina says this was something no one should ever have to experience. She recalled:

Si no se apuran, se van a quedar botados. Y en la noche hay bueno, de aquí para allá solo una sola persona los va a guiar. Tienen que caminar al ritmo de esa persona. Coyotes y todo eso porque está feo el desierto. Y nosotros dijimos,

“Guau.” Incluso, ah, cuando veníamos caminando todo eso, que es como un lugar que nunca se acaba, y vimos a alguien que estaba muerto. *[If you don't hurry up, you're going to be left behind. And at night there's well, from here to there only one person as a guide. You have to walk to the rhythm of that person. Coyotes and all that because the desert is ugly. And we were like, “Wow.” Even, uh, when we were walking all that, in a place that like never ends, and we saw someone who was dead.]*

After a short time in Texas, Carolina recounted that life in the United States “no era como lo contaban. Porque tenías que trabajar para pagar renta, comida. No era como ‘Oh, tu vas a llegar y es como tu casa.’ Tenías que tratar de aprender un idioma diferente, porque no hablaban español.” *[It wasn't how they spoke about it. Because you had to work to pay rent, food. It wasn't like “Oh, you're going to arrive and it's like home.” You had to try to learn a different language, because they didn't speak Spanish.]* Carolina was suddenly faced with very real adult responsibilities all while trying to acquire the language and culture.

In Texas, Carolina lived with her late aunt, who recently passed from COVID, and worked at a paper goods factory. She remained in Texas for about six months, which was not a positive experience. Carolina explained that her father left her behind in Texas soon after their arrival and described the environment there to be very negative. Eventually Carolina found her way to Florida, seeking to reunite with her father in the hopes that she could find a better living situation and focus on school. She traveled with some of her father’s friends, which was not ideal because she didn’t know them, making the long car ride from Texas to Florida uncomfortable.

Carolina enrolled in high school in Florida and worked as a dishwasher at a local restaurant. Once the academic year ended, Carolina moved to another town with her father and his new family who did not prioritize school. Carolina explained that her father preferred that she work and contribute financially to the household. “Entonces necesitaba ir a otra escuela. Y mi papá necesitaba como inscribirme. Y él ya no quiso hacerlo. Dijo que ya no más escuela.” [*“So I needed to go to another school. And my dad needed to sign me up. And he didn't want to do it anymore. He said that's it no more school.”*] For the remainder of her time in Florida, Carolina continued working as a dishwasher but also cleaned homes for additional income. She claimed she was grateful for this time as she learned how to be responsible but she also emphasized that “pero a la vez me enoja, porque en un momento de mi vida él fue el que destruyó ese sueño de yo superarme. You know, like ser alguien en la vida.” [*“at the same time it makes me angry, because at one point in my life he was the one who destroyed that dream of bettering myself. You know, like being someone in life.”*] This went on for about a year, from the age of fifteen-sixteen, after which she left her father and his new family behind to move to Long Island, New York with yet another tia [aunt] and her family. Carolina shared that this was an easy decision to make as she was never close to her father and he was holding her back from achieving her dreams.

Although the initial transition to Long Island was challenging, as Carolina struggled to find a job and had difficulty enrolling in school, it was there that she found a stable and supportive living environment. Carolina recalled that her aunt was incredibly patient and kind during this transition period. “Fue difícil, porque yo no trabajaba, y a veces me daba como pena decirle que necesitaba algo, y ella, “No. Ah, no tengas pena.”

Y yo no sabía cómo [risas] actuar. Hasta después que encontré trabajo. Y luego ella intentó ponerme en la escuela.” [*“It was difficult, because I didn't work, and sometimes I felt ashamed to tell her that I needed something, and she said, “No. Oh, don't be embarrassed.” And I didn't know how [laughs] to act. Until after I found a job. And then she tried to put me in school.”*]

This experience contrasts with that of living with her father, who expected Carolina to work over going to school.

After a few months living in Long Island, Carolina and her tia went to her local school district to register for high school. At the time, Carolina was still a minor and was not under the supervision of either of her legal guardians, therefore the school requested additional documents—including transcripts and her mother’s signature—that were not easily accessible. “Me rechazaron!” [*They rejected me*], she explained simply. She elaborated:

Me faltaban como unos papeles. So, luego decidí solo como trabajar y no más escuela, y dejé pasar como un año o dos. Y then – eh – empecé como un caso migratorio ... and then, uh, they told me, “If you go to, uh, if you go to school is going to be – is going to look good for you.” And then I was like, “I really have to go.” Uh, I’m just doing it for this. And then they, and the lawyer told me, “No. You have to.” Because cuando el juez diga que, ah, why you have to stay in this country. Entonces eso me hizo pensar, “Oh, tiene un sentido, porque ¿qué voy a hacer todo el tiempo? Like just working in McDonald’s? I don’t want to.” So, eso me hizo volver a intentar la escuela. [*I was missing some papers. So, then I decided just to work and no more school, and I let a year or two go by. And then – eh – I started like an immigration case... and then, uh, they told me, “If you go to,*

uh, if you go to school is going to be – is going to look good for you.” And then I was like, “I really have to go.” Uh, I’m just doing it for this. And then they, and the lawyer told me, “No. You have to.” Because when the judge says, ah, why you have to stay in this country. So that made me think, “Oh, it makes sense, because what am I going to do all the time? Like just working in McDonald’s? I don’t want to.” So, that made me try to return to school again.]

The initial rejection Carolina felt lingered for some time and made her feel as though she didn't want to go to school. However, after some legal guidance, she realized school was not just a way to stay in this country. School also represented a lot to her, as she wanted to make her family proud and show them that she was appreciative of the opportunities she had been afforded. She also wanted more for herself and believed that a high school diploma would open more doors, so she went back to the school district to enroll almost two years after her initial arrival in New York. She recounted:

Volvemos a ir, con mi tía y su amiga, otra vez a la oficina de, ah, Sur Beach, el distrito y todo eso. Y fue rápido. Hicimos la cita. Eh, me entrevistaron. Hicieron como un test de cómo estaba mi inglés, mis matemáticas. Solo me dijeron que por mi edad, ah, necesitaba conseguir un crédito y entregarlo, que iba a ser incómodo, porque tenía que, ah, compartir, ah, salones con niños más pequeños que yo, todo eso. Y, y yo dije, “Okay. Está bien. Lo voy a hacer.” Luego me dijeron que estaba la opción de ir a Wilson Tech, y todo eso, y yo dije, “No. Yo quiero ir a la high school.” Y entonces, eh, me dijo Okay. [We went again, with my aunt and her friend, to the office of, uh, Sur Beach, the district and all that. And it was fast. We made the appointment. Uh, I was interviewed. They gave me a test of like my

English, my mathematics. They just told me that because of my age, ah, I needed to get a lot of credits, that it was going to be uncomfortable, because I had to, ah, share, ah, classrooms with children younger than me, all that. And, and I was like, "Okay. It's okay. I'm going to do it." Then they told me there was the option to go to Wilson Tech, and all that, and I was like, "No. I want to go to high school." And then, uh, they said okay.]

Carolina was determined to graduate from high school which could only be achieved through a full-time schedule at the traditional high school. Despite the significant challenges she faced—the age gap between her and her peers, the credits she would need to acquire, and the recommendations to consider alternative programs—Carolina made the decision to enter the traditional high school. She recounted:

Empecé en octubre. Mi consejera, recuerdo que al principio me decía, ah, que quería, ah, que me fuera a Wilson Tech, porque ya tenía 18 años, iba a cumplir 19, y así, y, y que no se iba a ver bien, y que, eh, no tenía ningún crédito, cómo iba a hacer 22 créditos en tan poco tiempo. Y, y no sé, era como siempre teníamos como esa, eh, mala como vibra, no sé, entre ella y yo. [I started in October. My counselor, I remember that at the beginning she told me, ah, she wanted me, ah, to go to Wilson Tech, because I was already 18 yearsold, I was going to be 19, and so on, and, and that it wasn't looking good, and that, uh, I didn't have any credits, how was I going to get 22 credits in such a short time. And, and I don't know, it was like we always had like that, uh, bad vibe, I don't know, between her and me.]

As Carolina reflected on the academic success she found, she noted that many individuals played an important role in that success. Whether it was back in Honduras, where aunts and uncles helped her mom raise her and her sister, or here in the United States, Carolina's extended family played a major role in the success she achieved. Throughout her short time enrolled in the school district, Carolina recounted the immense support she received from faculty and district leadership. "Y yo sé que Dios siempre puso como personas ahí en mi camino para que me ayudaran, porque siempre estaban los maestros, la Sra. Berrios, mis tíos, que siempre me han apoyado." *[And I know that God always put people there in my path to help me, because there were always teachers, Mrs. Berrios, my uncles, who have always supported me, were always there.]* She also pointed out how the change in her demeanor helped her overcome many challenges, recalling:

Antes era muy negativa, y decía, "Ay no. Realmente no puedo. No creo que sea capaz." Siempre eran como muchas excusas que me ponía yo misma... "Si puedo con esto, claro que sí puedo con más." Entonces ahí mi mentalidad empezó a cambiar y dije, "Guau. Sí Puedo. *[Before, I was very negative, saying, "Oh no. Realistically I can not. I don't think I'm capable." They were always like many excuses that I made myself... "If I can do this, of course I can do more. So then that's when my mindset started to change and I was like, "Wow. Yes I can."]*

In three short years Carolina acquired 22 credits and passed three Regents Exams, which was no easy feat. Each credit is equivalent to "180 minutes of instruction per week throughout the school year (i.e., 108 hours of instruction for a full year course), or the equivalent" (NYSED, 2013). Students in New York State are required to take Regents Exams, which measure achievement in high school courses. The three Regents Exams

Carolina took included English language arts, mathematics, and United States history and government. She did this all while working full time and learning a new language.

After graduating from high school, Carolina applied for a scholarship from Queens College for undocumented students. One of her teachers helped her apply for the scholarship and continued to guide her as she awaited a response. Carolina looked into other alternatives, such as local community colleges, but she could not afford the tuition without assistance, as she was subject to an additional fee as an undocumented student. Without the scholarship, Carolina would have to continue working fulltime and enroll in a Wilson Tech program. She stated that she doesn't want to waste any time: “sería como algo que podría hacer, like while I’m waiting.” [*“It would be like something I could do, like while I'm waiting.”*]

Carolina’s end goal is to be a history teacher at the high school level. She hopes to share her story with others, highlighting her perseverance, determination, and all that she was able to accomplish. Carolina elaborated:

Me gustaría como ayudar a otras personas, y recordando, sé que puedo contarle mi historia a otros y decirles, “Hey, si yo pude, no hay cosas que pueda decir que tú no puedes, eh, que las excusas y como el no puedo solo está en la mente. Porque sí se puede. Y si encuentras personas como las que yo encontré en este camino, se puede.” Me gustaría escribir un libro sobre mi experiencia, y superación, porque eso es lo que veo, y no me quiero detener. Por eso quiero seguir ir al colegio y todo eso. [*I would like to help other people, and remembering, I know that I can tell my story to others and tell them, “Hey, if I could, there’s nothing to say that you can't, eh, that excuses and think I can't, it's*

only in the mind. Because yes you can. And if you find people like the ones I found on this path, you can.” I'd like to write a book about my experience, and overcoming things, because that's what I see, and I don't want to stop. That's why I want to continue going to school and all that.]

Carolina has shared that she is proud of herself stating “me siento como orgullosa de lo que he hecho” [“I feel kind of proud of what I've done.”]. Carolina emphasized her close relationship with/and belief in God guided her to where she is today. Although she has shared some of her long term dreams and goals, she also expressed that she leaves her future in God's hands.

Natalia: When the World Was Interrupted: A Silver Lining?

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic beginning in March 2020, the Regents Exams were canceled in June 2020 due to school closures, and then again in August 2020, January 2021, and June 2021. As a result of nearly a year and a half of remote learning, quarantines, and hybrid instruction, the New York State Education Department decided to cancel all Regents Exams for the second year in a row. What would this mean for high school students? The unanticipated effect of the pandemic-driven decision to cancel Regents Exams impacted the short-term outcomes for many students, and falsely inflated graduation rates for those cohorts because the assessment barrier was eliminated. This was the case for Natalia, a student participant from Sur Beach.

In New York State, students are grouped in cohorts according to the year, age, and grade in which they enroll in high school. The graduation rate for each cohort is captured on August 31st, four years after they enter 9th grade (NYSED, 2022). Students who are MLLs and who transfer from another country are assigned a cohort based on

their age at enrollment. The cohort assigned to students determines how many Regents Exams the student will need to graduate; at a minimum, students need to pass three exams in order to graduate. Students in New York State are required to take Regents Exams, which measure achievement in high school courses.

MLLs, like many BISOC, are especially challenged by the standardized format of the Regents Exams as they are normed to students who speak the dominant language and are a part of the dominant culture. Although some of these exams are translated into different languages, students who do not benefit from instruction in the home language are not well prepared to take the exam in their home or preferred language. As a result of the language barrier that some MLLs encounter, the Board of Regents offers an appeal for students who entered the United States in grade nine or higher, are classified as an English Language Learner, and achieve a score of 55-59 the second time they were administered the ELA Regents Exam.

For many multilingual learners in New York State, this cancellation was a window of opportunity to graduate without needing to pass the dreaded Regents Exams. Students find the exams to be stressful; they are high-stakes exams, yet students are not afforded the same scaffolds they are accustomed to during their normal instruction (Coltrane, 2002). These exams are not an authentic demonstration of learning as they do not consider the cultural experiences or linguistic proficiency of MLLs (Hos, 2020). Thus, the removal of this barrier provided many MLLs with a unique opportunity to graduate from high school without having to pass these exams.

The cancellation of Regents Exams was a temporary phenomenon that will not apply to future populations of SIFE, unless New York State policy makers and the

members of the Board of Regents use COVID-era data to reassess and inform changes to these assessments and their impact on student (SIFE) outcomes. The cancellation of the Regents Exams, and the concomitant increased graduation rates, suggested a need for research to follow that cohort of students and see the long-term impact of achieving graduation when Regents Exams are eliminated. The following counterstory focuses on Natalia, a student who graduated from high school in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her counterstory invites important questions, such as, are students like Natalia thriving? Or was graduating with the Regents exemption an empty victory? What opportunities and affordances does the high school diploma provide for Natalia? Did the elimination of the Regents Exams leave more room for exploratory learning and student-led inquiry?

Natalia beamed with pride as she crossed the stage at her high school graduation. Although the face mask covered her smile, the tears in her eyes revealed the happiness she was feeling. She caught sight of her family in the audience: her mother who always dreamed her daughter would find better opportunities in this country, along with her younger cousin who was raised as her sister. She sat back in her chair and reflected on how she got to this point, and she thought of the grandparents she had to leave behind.

At the age of 13, Natalia and her ten-year-old cousin made the month-long journey from El Salvador to the United States. Natalia and her cousin, Stephanie, were raised by their grandparents and left the only home they had ever known in July 2015 to reunite with Natalia's mother who resided in New York. As the older of the two, Natalia was left with the responsibility of keeping both herself and Stephanie safe during their travels. The journey was a horrible experience, one filled with suffering that she preferred

to leave in her past. Instead she focused on the time she spent in immigration's custody as the real transition from life in El Salvador to life on Long Island with her mom.

Natalia recounted the relief she felt upon seeing immigration officers as there were just a few drops of water available during the last three days of her journey to the United States. After a short time in Texas, Natalia and Stephanie were sent to a facility in Brooklyn, still under the care of immigration. In the facility, the girls had their own bedroom, were given healthy meals, and were even taken on small local trips in NYC. Natalia spent a little over a month in this facility while her mother completed the necessary paperwork to take her home. It was during this period of transition that Natalia was introduced to the English language, American culture, and schooling for the first time in over four years. Although the instruction and content were limited, she felt that the foundations she learned at the center helped prepare her for her new life.

As a child growing up in El Salvador, Natalia risked her life on a daily basis just to get to school. Her grandmother often pleaded with her to stay home, but Natalia refused to live in fear at home. Eventually, the gangs who threatened her life and requested money from her grandparents prevented Natalia from returning to school after 4th grade. Natalia remained home with her grandmother tending to household duties for years, leaving the house only for brief trips into town for basic supplies. The calls for cash and threats continued and after much persuasion from her grandparents, Natalia finally agreed to reunite with her mother in the United States.

Since beginning school in the United States in October of 2015, Natalia found that the love she once had for learning was a distant memory. One reason for her change of heart had to do with the initial challenges and discomfort she felt upon her enrollment.

When Natalia and her mother first attempted to register in the district, they encountered a woman that Natalia described as a racist. This district employee was impatient with Natalia's mom who struggled to complete the necessary paperwork, often asking her to complete the same forms multiple times and always needing more documentation.

Natalia stated:

Era bien, este, racista ella. Pues yo siento que ella lo hacía de – de hecho, fue que a veces ella nos decía que llenáramos un papel, y llevábamos ese papel, y decía que no era así. Entonces y a mi mamá – mi mamá la sintió bien pesada a ella – y mi mamá me decía que quizás de hecho lo hacía, que no sé qué. *[She was very, um, she was racist. Well I felt that she did it on purpose, it was that sometimes she told us to fill a form, and we would turn in that form, and she would say that it was wrong. So then my mom – my mom didn't like her – and my mom told me that perhaps she actually did it on purpose, so on and so forth.]*

The abundance of paperwork prevented Natalia from starting school in September with the rest of her peers; she had to wait until late October which added to her stress. This negative experience—coupled with the fear she felt over the potential language barrier she would experience and the need to make new friends—were enough to make her resistant to starting school at all.

During the first few weeks at middle school, Natalia asserted that she did not put much effort into her schooling because she felt very uncomfortable at school. Over time, as more new entrants to the school arrived, she started feeling more confident in her English skills; she knew that she had made some progress in comparison to her peers. Although her time at the middle school was brief, starting in late October and finishing

eighth grade in June, she eventually became comfortable in the school only to experience nerves again about moving up to the high school the following September. Students spoke about the high school as though it was a bad school where students often picked up bad habits, but this did not worry Natalia as much as the unknown temperament of teachers and the difficulty of the courses she would be taking. Natalia shared:

Cuando llegué a high school, el miedo solo era en que, en que cómo fueran los maestros de allá pues, de la high school, porque en tener amigos no tanto, porque ya, ya había hecho amigos en la middle school, entonces ese era el único miedo, de que las clases iban a ser diferentes, y todo. *[When I got to high school, the only fear was, how were the teachers there, well, from high school, because it wasn't about having friends, because I had already made friends in middle school, so that was the only fear, that the classes were going to be different, and everything.]*

Once settled into high school, Natalia found that she had a lot more freedom which made it easy for her to come and go as she pleased. Throughout her time at the high school, Natalia abused her new found freedom and was selective of the classes that she would attend and those that she skipped. Most often, the courses she would attend were those taught by teachers she got along with and the courses she chose to skip were those from the teachers she felt were unfair in their treatment of her. Natalia felt there were teachers who were blatantly racist towards the LatinX population as she overheard conversation in which teachers would refer to her and her classmates as hopeless and would become easily angered if students even asked questions. Unfortunately, Natalia and her friends felt they were not welcome in all classrooms and that the passive

aggressive comments made by teachers did not motivate them to attend those classes regularly.

After six years in the United States, which included one year in middle school and five years in high school, she had lost hope of graduating from high school. As Natalia recounted some of the other variables that played a role in her academic struggles at the high school, she concedes that, yes, she was frequently late to class and skipped most classes altogether. She had her favorites and would attend only those classes with select teachers regularly. However, she felt it made no difference if she went or not; most teachers spoke only English and did so too fast, so she simply couldn't keep up. Her schedule in grades 9 and 10 included a great deal of ENL courses with teachers who used the home language to support the content. However, in grades 11 and 12, she had been promoted to all mainstream courses with limited support in place. She recalls even repeating a few of her courses with the same teachers only to fail the class again. Working in the evenings at the grocery store also meant that there was little time for homework and made waking up in the morning a challenge. If not for Ms. Rivera, Natalia was convinced she would not have graduated.

Ms. Rivera was a new bilingual teacher who worked with Natalia for two years in an effort to help her pass math class. Natalia found that Ms. Rivera was not judgmental, a common critique she had of many of her other teachers. Furthermore, Ms. Rivera was one of the few Latinx teachers she could communicate with and relate to. She looked at Ms. Rivera as her parent away from home and was always grateful for her unwavering support. This support included a one-on-one credit retrieval course that Ms. Rivera taught in her own free time to ensure that Natalia made the most of remote learning and

canceled Regents Exams. Even though Natalia struggled to keep up with her monolingual peers, she was grateful to have had the opportunity to return to school, make friends who shared similar experiences, and graduate from high school. Ms. Rivera elaborated on the support she provided and stated:

She ends up as a senior in my math, my freshman math class, and then I go to the counselor and I'm like, "What are we going to do for her?" Like, you know now, we're virtual, she's having a hard time. Long story short, we come up with a program where she does uh, credit recovery virtually, and I end up working with her. And, and the interesting thing is, then because of maturity and everything, she's able to do the work now.

Natalia took full responsibility for not doing her part to pass all her courses the first time around and stated that she feels most teachers and administrators at the high school really did all they could to help students succeed. However, she thinks that the school should do more to ensure that students do not skip class and just hang out in the cafeteria. She recalls security guards being aware that she was skipping classes as they would tell her to go to class but that was not enough to deter her from going to the cafeteria period after period to hang out with her friends. Natalia and her friends also learned how to leave the building without getting caught.

Several months after Natalia's graduation she reflected on how the unique circumstances of the COVID pandemic actually served as a silver lining, creating the opportunity to work one-on-one with Ms. Rivera in online learning environments to accrue the additional mathematics credits she was missing. Additionally, NYS Regents

Exams, which had once created a barrier to graduation, were canceled during the COVID pandemic clearing the way for Natalia to cross that stage in June of 2021.

She was very proud of this accomplishment, but was still disappointed that she did not acquire English proficiency and thought she would benefit from additional schooling or training. Natalia had shared that although she was enrolled in English dominant courses, she was not provided with opportunities to speak English with her peers which impacted her confidence in using English out in the workforce. For example, Natalia shared:

La clase perfecta para mí fuera en que hubiera poquitos que hablaran en español, y más que hablaran inglés, como para, para uno desarrollarse pues con el inglés. ¿Me entiende? Porque ve que si hay solo personas que hablan inglés, y uno puede hablar un poco inglés, pues a uno ya le toca hablarlo, y, y uno se desarrolla más, porque solo hay personas que hablan inglés. [*The perfect class for me would be one in which there were a few (students) who spoke Spanish, and more who spoke English, so as to develop more English. Do you get me? Because you see if there are only people who speak English, and one can speak a little English, well, one has to speak it, and, and one develops more, because there are only people who speak English.*]

Natalia currently works a full-time job at a gas station and feels that she is picking up more English communicating with customers. However, Natalia views this as a temporary position and is very interested in pursuing a career in cosmetology. At the moment, she is struggling to find work aligned to her interests but during her free time she watches YouTube makeup tutorials and practices these looks on her cousin. A dream

job for Natalia would be working at Sephora as a makeup artist. She had her sights set on the cosmetology program at BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Educational Services) in the hopes that formal training would help her find a career in the field. The one thing that stops her from pursuing these interests is her undocumented status. Until this point she has had to find employment through word of mouth, ensuring that the employers will overlook her current status in this country.

Luis: Una Gran Oportunidad

The following counterstory is written as a dialogue between myself, the researcher, and Luis, a student participant. I was inspired by the works of bell hooks (1994) and Aja Martinez (2014), which allowed me to share Luis' story by combining excerpts of the translated interview transcripts and journal entries as the data collected was all in Spanish. Excerpts that were linked thematically and shared the same In Vivo codes were integrated to create a semblance of an authentic and fluid conversation. Similar to the prior two counterstories, using the words of the participant, the following dialogue will provide the reader with a better understanding of the schooling experiences of a SIFE participant, and the events that have influenced those experiences.

Researcher: Thank you for speaking with me and sharing your story.

Luis: Mm—well, I thought it was important. I'm open to meeting new people, and learning how you've come to do this research.

Researcher: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Luis: I was born in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. I don't know my dad because they had problems together. You know the couples. They had problems when maybe I was in my mom's belly,

uh-huh. So I didn't know him. Yes, then, my mother was in Belize for about seven years and well, I was with my grandmother, uh-huh. I grew up more with my grandmother. When my mom returned she was in a new relationship with my step father and he took care of us.

Researcher: And what was your schooling experience like in Honduras?

Luis: When I was with my grandmother, I studied up to third grade and from then on, my mom took me to another school where I studied a little more. I've never liked school very much.

Researcher: Why is that? What were the schools in Honduras like?

Luis: In primary school it's about learning to read, speak, write and all that. Well, I left school when I was twelve years old. I also lost a year because I didn't know much. I passed first grade but then second grade I had to repeat, it was very difficult and the classes were changing. I find school very boring but I do it in this country because I need to learn a second language. I didn't want to go anymore so I told my parents the truth, that I found school boring, and that was it.

Luis shared that he had always found school boring and repeated this sentiment often throughout our discussions. His main interest in school revolved around learning the English language, a goal he had always been interested in pursuing, and one that he had deemed essential now that he resides in the United States. Ultimately, Luis would like to become fully biliterate and bilingual in both English and Spanish in the hopes that

it would lead to better job opportunities in the future. Despite the language barrier, Luis would even ask questions in school to better understand the process of language acquisition and how he can make additional progress in his English proficiency.

This opening discussion also highlighted the initial complications Luis experienced in school, such as repeating second grade while in Honduras, and the challenging content he encountered in Honduras. It is unclear if the boredom he has experienced has more to do with the frustration he feels when instruction is too challenging for him or if it is reflective of the content/manner of instruction. When he speaks about his schooling in the United States, Luis has shared that he is bored in most classes and that the content is challenging, but that he is determined to pass all his courses and graduate. His continued academic struggles may be the result of his limited schooling in Honduras and initial struggles with basic literacy in Spanish which he experienced in primary school. Luis had shared that most of his teachers rely heavily on translated materials in Spanish as well as home language instruction which may not be helpful scaffolds for Luis as he is a student with limited literacy in his first language and had long gaps in his education, therefore he struggles to read the translated materials make connections to the instruction. A concern raised by his teacher suggested that there is evidence of a learning disability, which may explain his academic struggles in Honduras at such a young age.

Researcher: So what did you spend your time doing once you stopped going to school?

Luis: I worked alongside my stepfather. I liked working better. I was a farmer. We grew corn, beans and most fruits, bananas, plantains,

mangoes, all of that. I love it. I always loved to do that. And you know in my country we need money to be able to study and get a good degree, to be a professional. We need a lot of money.

Researcher: Did you ever plan on returning to school?

Luis: No, I always dreamed of coming here to the United States. There is an opportunity for all of us Latinos who are here and that is why there are so many who make the same journey I did to get here. It has always been a great opportunity and I am so grateful to all the people who have taken good care of me. Sometimes guys like me come here and don't know how to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. If you put forth the effort, you can be a professional here in this country. So it is my responsibility to continue to fight for these opportunities.

Researcher: What do you mean by fight for these opportunities?

Luis: I'm not sure how to explain it. If you push yourself, you can make your dreams a reality. I actually had vivid dreams of being in the United States; they started when I was 14. In the dreams I had a house and family in the United States; my body was in my country but my soul was always here. And look, now I'm here. So, I put forth a lot of effort because I came here for an opportunity. So I go to school, I go to work after, and I don't complain because this is what I wanted. It's all a miracle and although right now it's hard, in the future I will be rewarded.

I know I said I didn't like school but when I got to this country I said "I have to go to school." There are days I don't want to wake up at 6:00 am or take the bus, I still go to school and give thanks to God for the opportunity. Just like I can't expect the remote to change the channels on the television without me pushing a button, the same is true of my life. I have to push and fight for my life to change.

My goals are to graduate from high school, and if God gives me the opportunity, continue studying. Hopefully God gives me a visa to be a legal resident here. If not I will still be grateful for the opportunity to be in this country. It's like having a job that you no longer want, maybe its become boring. However, there are so many other people wanting the job you are bored of so I never take this opportunity for granted.

Like many other immigrants, Luis demonstrated his gratitude for the new opportunities that being in this country has afforded him. At the age of 17, Luis made the difficult journey to the United States pursuing the American dream, which for him included citizenship, a free education, a home, and career. He stated that he left Honduras for many reasons but mainly because of the suffering that many people encountered in Central America. Luis felt that his country is not governed well leaving many of its citizens unsafe and hungry. He wanted to ensure his family did not continue to suffer as they worked hard to have enough money to meet their basic needs. Luis believed many

other young men like him immigrated from Central America to the United States in order to keep their families safe and comfortable.

In the excerpt above, Luis emphasized his deep appreciation to be in the country he always dreamed of living in. Now that he is here, he has chosen to make the most of every experience, which includes school and work. On multiple occasions, Luis shared that he hopes to have a good job in the future. When asked to elaborate what he would classify as a good job, Luis shared some examples, such as a doctor, a teacher, and a restaurant manager. Luis indicated a clear understanding that these types of positions may require a great deal of schooling and are not easily obtained positions, but he did not share a detailed plan for securing all of the necessary qualifications.

Researcher: Does this mean that you now enjoy school?

Luis: It's all boring. No, I don't like it. Almost every class here is really hard. The truth is it's very difficult; Mathematics, uff, not mathematics it's super difficult for me.

I am always a good student though. I am well-behaved and I have always won over the teachers. So I spend all my classes sitting, and listening all the time—writing or reading, just paying close attention. The teachers will eventually ask us questions and if I'm not paying attention how would I respond.

Luis associated good behavior to mean a student who took on traditional behaviors and roles in the school setting. His response also revealed he had associated good behavior in a teacher-directed classroom to show up as sitting quietly, listening intently, and reading and writing when directed to do so. Although these student actions

are often associated with what some consider to be appropriate school behaviors, this type of instruction is also reminiscent of what Freire (1970/2018) described as the banking system of education. The banking system assumes that students are blank slates consuming the knowledge held by the teachers. By engaging in this type of learning and demonstrating these behaviors, Luis can easily fly below the teachers' radar and struggle without drawing much attention to himself. Therefore Luis may struggle to access the content but because he was a well behaved student who didn't interrupt or trouble the notions of good behavior, his lack of understanding may have gone unnoticed.

In the excerpt above, Luis described himself as a good student, meaning he is always present in class, on time, and respectful; however, he does not find school to be engaging. By describing school as boring, he sheds light on the need to adjust the instruction in classrooms to ensure all students are enrolled in motivating courses. He also revealed that the majority of his lessons are teacher-centered with minimal opportunities to engage in academic discussion or hands-on learning. This type of instruction is not engaging for students and may be part of the reason why Luis finds school so boring (Emdin, 2016). Moreover, scholars have emphasized the importance of moving away from the banking system of education and the treatment of students as passive consumers of learning, especially for BISOC (hooks, 1994). hooks (1994) looks to Freire's work as it "affirmed that education can only be liberatory when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor" (p. 14). In this way, educators are called on to create strategies that engage students as active participants and critical thinkers.

Moreover, educators struggle to effectively determine if a student has a language difference, as a result of their level of English proficiency, or if the academic struggles are reflective of a disability (Genao, 2016). Research indicated that there is both an over and under identification of MLLs with learning disabilities (Sanatullova-Allison & Robison-Young, 2016; Sullivan, 2011). Some of what Luis has shared is reflective of a student with a learning disability. For example, his literacy in English and Spanish were several years below grade level, he found all his courses to be very demanding, he often struggled to remain engaged in the instruction, and he had struggled academically from a very young age. These are indicators of a student with a learning disability but they are also reflective of SIFE and therefore, it is a common occurrence to overlook the consideration of special education services for the SIFE population. Furthermore, the referral for an evaluation requires parental consent and consistent data collection documenting the academic challenges the student may be experiencing, which is challenging to collect considering the unique academic needs of SIFE.

Researcher: So what do you do when you find the content difficult?

Luis: I've had good teachers and they always help me. I like that the teachers are very cool, I like how they explain, and they are all the same. We have time to laugh with friends but also get our work done. They speak both languages, and I love both languages.

Researcher: Are you confident speaking English?

Luis: Eh—I speak a little, less than—than Spanish. I speak more Spanish than English in school. I only have 2 classes that are all English. About an hour and twenty-five minutes speaking English. The

teachers always ask that we study Spanish here, according to them that will help us learn more English.

Researcher: Have you found using mostly Spanish to be helpful at school?

Luis: Well I would like to see it changed—to change, and maybe learn a little more English. I would like to improve my English, and math even though I don't like it.

Luis emphasized the importance of learning the English language because he believed becoming proficient in English would lead to a successful life in this country. He touched upon the ways his teachers supported his language acquisition by building up his Spanish in order to transfer his skills to English. For instance, one teacher shared, “I build on Spanish. It's kind of like the three things, major things. Like the three pillars. Acknowledge literacy skills in their language. And then simultaneously try to build up the language of English”. Although Luis's teachers were correct as research on second language acquisition emphasized the importance of developing the first language (August et al., 2002). In order to acquire the language, students also need to practice the new language using all four modalities: listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Honigsfeld, 2019). If Luis's teachers all relied on the home language as a resource or scaffold to access the content, he was given limited opportunity to use academic English. For a student with limited literacy in the native language, translations are not the most effective scaffold to access the content as they have limited exposure to content specific academic vocabulary in their home language.

Researcher: Do your teachers ever have you work in groups on assignments to practice your English or do you mostly work independently?

Luis: Yes, for some things group work is good. I have always liked it separately because I don't trust the other guys.

Researcher: In what way?

Luis: Oh, they are quite different. They don't talk like me and—I mean, I can't trust them. Because they have their own friendships, and I'm afraid that if I say something offensive they will maybe go to the office and complain. They are mostly Ecuadorian kids. So that's my fear, that I have a misunderstanding with those guys. That's why I am friends with the boys who are from Central America, the Salvadorians and others from Honduras. Our countries are neighbors so we understand each other and can talk about things that are native to us.

Luis' fear of being misunderstood made him hesitant to speak to and collaborate with some of the other Spanish speaking students. At the age of 20, Luis is an older high school student, more mature than some of his peers, and aware of the cultural differences between himself and his peers. Luis wanted to avoid any potential conflicts in school as he had witnessed other misunderstandings resulting from differences in dialects and slang, and felt he could completely avoid such a scenario by keeping to himself or solely interacting with students who were also from Honduras. In this way, Luis isolated himself from many of his peers.

Researcher: What advice would you give to a student who, like you, has come from another country, has had gaps in their education and is starting high school while also learning English?

Luis:

Well...if you have a relative or parent here in this country, listen to their advice and respect it. Thank God if you are here with your parents and make the most of the opportunity to go to school while they take care of you. I don't have my mother here and even though we facetime and talk on the phone it's not the same and I don't know when I will see her again. So I make the most of my time at school. At school, I'm happy. Then I come home and get ready for work. I'm here alone, I have to think about food, clothing, shelter, and school.

Also, talk to your teachers. Some of them are very understanding, which is important. If I try my hardest to do my homework but for whatever reason don't complete it I can talk to my teachers and they understand, I'm doing this on my own.

Life is not easy. When I was just ten years old I thought I would never be separated from my mom and step dad. Then seven years later I moved away and everything changed. I've become accustomed to being alone. I can laugh at times and joke around but it's not like it used to be when I was a kid. So my advice is to always keep your parents in mind and make them proud.

Remember what they taught you and everything they gave you; be the best version of yourself. Yeah, that's important.

Yes, I've helped a lot of kids by saying, "Well, listen to your dad's advice. Do not pick up bad habits. Don't mark up your body. You

will never see a tattoo or stripes on my head, no. I am only complying with what this country asked of me when I first entered. They told me, “You can't defile your skin so you can get what you want... be mindful of it...”

Researcher: Who gave you that advice?

Luis: An advisor when I first arrived in Texas. He told me, “Take care of your face. Don't get in trouble.” I was in the casa hogar, it's like a children's home once you have been cleared by immigration and a guardian in the United States has been contacted.

The warnings and unsolicited advice Luis received when first arriving to this country had manifested itself in biases that Luis now has of individuals with tattoos. He took the advice that was given by immigration as a law he must follow in order to remain in this country. It is possible that this advice was in response to individuals who are in gangs and often use tattoos as a mark of membership (Phillips, 2001), however the assumption that this young man might one day follow this path reflects the complicated, and often deficit-based views that many hold with regard to unaccompanied minors (Diaz, 2019). Unfortunately, this advice has had a lasting impact on Luis and had even skewed his own perception of what tattoos indicate.

Researcher: Are you comfortable sharing your experience of leaving your country behind?

Luis: Yes, it was very hard for me. Well, when I left my country, everything was fine. Of course we took a risk of encountering danger, but in Mexico it was much worse. We went three days

without eating or drinking anything. Everyone suffers during that journey, but it's even harder for the adults who are looking for the American dream. Getting caught as a minor in Texas is very different from the adults. I spent only one day in the nevera [refrigerator], the cold holding cell.

Like I shared earlier, I dreamed of being in this country since I was little. I always wanted to learn another language and one main reason was to support my family. You know in my country there are many bad things. They don't govern well and allow the people to suffer. In Central America it's always like that, people dying for food, work, or a home. So that's why so many people are immigrating to this country.

Researcher: How do you feel talking about your past and these very personal experiences?

Luis: I'm always calm, I talk about my past because I like to remember things. These same events have not happened to anyone else. This is my story and perhaps another kid's story is very different. I don't think my past has affected me in a negative way. Other than really missing my family. It was great to get home everyday and see my mom.

Researcher: Who is your current support system made up of?

Luis: Well, I have my uncle, he's my guardian here, and he is the only

one who has given me this opportunity to come to the United States. He gave me this opportunity and I don't know what that will bring for me. I also have teachers, other classmates at school. On the other hand, everything is different here. We don't even celebrate Christmas here because we don't have the time off. In my country that's a day to be with family.

Feelings of homesickness came up in both formal and informal discussions. Luis provided insight into his close relationship with his mother. When he made the decision to leave Honduras, it was hard on him and his mother. He recounted the many concerns she had about him traveling alone and their shared grief of having to separate without knowing when they might be reunited. Although he would often video chat with his mother using FaceTime, he has shared that these calls can never replace being with his mother and being able to hug her. Although Luis remained optimistic about getting his permanent status in this country, there was a small part of him that worries he will not have the opportunity to see his mother in person.

Researcher: Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?

Luis: I hope to graduate. In five years, well I'll have a better, more permanent job. I'll have a better understanding of what success might look like for me. I know that there are a lot of opportunities here, and as I grow older I might discover a new opportunity.

Luis is still learning what opportunities may be available to him once he graduates high school. He is very hopeful that his vision of the American dream will be actualized but at the moment he is pursuing one goal at a time. He is very focused on graduating

high school in the hopes that it will open additional doors for him and grant him permanent status in this country.

Conclusion

The three counterstories presented in this chapter described the experiences of three SIFE enrolled in Long Island high schools. The counterstories inform our understanding of the schooling experiences of SIFE but also the events that have influenced their academic experiences. Each of the student participants put in hours of their own time to see these counterstories come to fruition. By engaging in enhanced member checking and the collaborative writing cycle (Chase, 2017), the student participants helped to cultivate counterstories that highlight their experiences using their authentic voices.

Each of the counterstories was presented using a different writing style to further distinguish the unique experiences of each student participant. These choices were influenced by the writings of other CRT scholars (Denton-Borhaug & Jasper, 2014; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; hooks, 1994; Martinez, 2014) whose expertise has served as ongoing inspiration. A goal of these counterstories is to humanize the SIFE population and their experiences. It is also my hope that the student participants felt empowered as they contributed to academic writing through their counterstories.

CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to make sense of the experiences, obstacles, and complex interplay between empowerment and oppression that SIFE encountered. The study aimed to provide valuable insight into the experiences of SIFE, shifting from a deficit mindset so educators, policymakers, and others are better poised to understand and highlight the assets that this population brings to classrooms, communities, and society. With this study, I explored ways to humanize research (Paris & Winn, 2013) by engaging the SIFE population in scholarly conversations that centered their voices, experiences, and knowledge. The participants collaborated in the writing of their counterstories, ensuring an authentic contribution to the field of education (Olivares-Orellana, 2017).

This chapter addresses the questions framing my research, which were:

- 1) How do SIFE describe their schooling experiences?
- 2) What events do SIFE identify as having an influence on their academic/schooling experiences and why?

As I investigated the primary research questions, I uncovered findings that did not directly respond to these questions. These findings were mainly the outcome of discussions with teacher participants and they provided a great deal of context into the student participants' experiences. Although the focus of this study was on the student experience and student voice, I included teacher interviews to understand the pedagogical decisions that influenced the experiences of SIFE in school. These teacher interviews supported the counterstories shared by the student participants. In Part One of this chapter, I responded to the research questions by elaborating on the three themes that emerged from the work I did alongside the participants: a) contradictory mindsets within

a single system; b) belonging and community cultural wealth; c) continuum of research-based programming. Then, in Part Two, I presented the unanticipated findings, which explored the ways COVID-19 impacted the schooling experiences of SIFE. These unanticipated findings also responded to research question two.

Part One: Main Themes

The journal writings and interview data from multiple one-on-one discussions with participants were analyzed to find patterns and themes that responded to the two research questions. In this part of the chapter, I synthesized the findings as they related to each of the major themes. The first two themes—(1) contradictory mindsets within a single system and (2) belonging and community cultural wealth—responded to both research questions. Whereas the third theme—continuum of research-based programming—did not directly respond to the two research questions, the findings in this theme provided a great deal of context behind the students' schooling experiences. The following themes focused on the students' personal and schooling experiences.

Contradictory Mindsets Within a Single System

The interactions between students and educators that either empowered students or further oppressed them were evident in each case study. These interactions had strong influences on their schooling experiences. The student participants had to reconcile the mindsets of educators—either those who viewed the students as assets or others who demonstrated biases towards the SIFE population. Student participants often highlighted meaningful interactions with educators in their respective high schools, noting educators who seemingly went above and beyond their required duties. Some students also emphasized that there were instances where they felt that educators passed judgment and

were not helpful or supportive. Throughout my data collection, I also interviewed teachers who worked alongside the student participants to gain insight into the pedagogical decisions and academic programming they experienced. As I read through the transcripts of the interviews and began coding the data, I found that the teachers sometimes used deficit-framed language when talking about the SIFE population. In this section, I will share the ways in which students interacted with educators who held deficit perspectives and how that resulted in low expectations, microaggressions, and inequitable learning opportunities. Also highlighted in this section are the ways in which other educators with asset-based mindsets supported students through a commitment to social justice.

Deficit View of SIFE. Carolina, a student participant from Sur Beach, shared that she was initially shut out of high school (Lukes, 2014), citing that the district requested paperwork that she could not obtain because of the associated fees. Several months later, Carolina was able to enroll in high school but was encouraged to leave, as the counselor suggested that Carolina would not be able to accrue the necessary credits to graduate in such a short time given her age. She shared:

Mi consejera, recuerdo que al principio me decía que quería que me fuera a Wilson Tech, porque ya tenía 18 años, iba a cumplir 19, y así, y, y que no se iba a ver bien, y que, eh, no tenía ningún crédito, cómo iba a hacer 22 créditos en tan poco tiempo. [*My counselor, I remember at first telling me that she wanted me to go Wilson Tech, because I was already 18 years old, I was going to be 19, and so on, and, and it wasn't going to look good, and that, uh, I didn't have any credits, how was I going to get 22 credits in such a short time.*]

Such a finding exemplified how schools are pushing out immigrant students. According to Lukes (2014), pushouts are immigrant students who were encouraged and/or counseled into signing discharge papers which stated that the student chose to leave school.

Although the reasons for pushing students out of high school vary, in this scenario, Carolina shared that the counselor suggested she would not be able to acquire the necessary credits to graduate.

The research shows that pushing Latinx immigrant students out of high school is a common occurrence (Gotbaum & Advocates for children of New York; Lukes, 2014). Carolina's interactions with the counselor illustrated how pushing out happens. In this exchange, Carolina was led to believe she would not be able to graduate high school and had no choice but to go to an alternative school. As a student with limited understanding of the school system, this type of guidance is taken seriously as she assumed this was told to her with her best interest in mind. This aligned with previous findings in which Flores (2021) shared the experiences of SIFE at an alternative school who were pushed out of their high schools. One student stated "Fui a la escuela secundaria (para inscribirme) pero me enviaron aquí (escuela alternativa). Dijeron que pronto cumpliría 18 años y no podía estudiar allí. [*I went to the high school (to enroll) but they sent me over here (alternative school). They said that I was turning 18 soon and I couldn't study there.*]" (p. 9). These findings support Lukes's (2014) research that suggested SIFE are often pushed out of high school, thus impacting the graduation rates of SIFE.

The counselor also packaged the idea of leaving school with a positive spin by offering up an alternative school. The offer to attend the alternative school is an example of interest divergence. Unlike interest convergence, which Bell (1980) described as

progress that occurs for BIPOC only if it also benefits the dominant culture, interest divergence is the reverse and is more common (Guinier, 2004). During interest divergence, “racial interests are assumed to diverge” (Gillborn, 2013, p. 479) leading to policies that ensure the dominant culture benefits while further oppressing BIPOC. The school district is the key beneficiary as it can avoid the negative consequences associated with low graduation rates. Once students are pushed out into alternative programs and sign discharge papers, the school district will no longer be impacted by the students test scores nor will they impact the graduation rates of said district. The participant, however, would relinquish the opportunity to obtain a high school diploma as the program she was offered focused on technical training without the inclusion of accredited courses that would lead to the completion of high school. Carolina’s experience with the counselor demonstrates the counselor’s deficit view of Carolina because she assumed Carolina was not capable of graduating from the traditional high school with a diploma.

During the course of this study, the teacher participants also revealed a deficit view of SIFE. The following quotes were transcribed from interviews with Mrs. Rasteiro and Mrs. Laffin from Port Manor, in which they expressed their concerns regarding high school graduation and academic success for SIFE:

- a) They don't even know, understand, uh, negatives and positives and stuff like that.
- b) These kids are, from day one, doomed to fail.
- c) They don't even know how to write that much in their native language.

Now, you can't have a SIFE program without native language arts support.

They had to take native language arts and we called it amongst us, like it was native language arts zero.

- d) They will never really catch up. And I think we did the most we could.
- e) My experience after 10 years, very rarely they can really get to anything close to what's expected of them, what they really have to achieve to graduate from high school.
- f) SIFE students tend to drop out. So if they could get to a CTE career, something- classes, get some kind of skill. If that— that skill involves passing a test—Forget it. They can't do it either.

These findings are significant because they validate the assertions made by the student participants. It is concerning when educators hold low expectations because it can impact classroom instruction and the academic success of SIFE (Mellom et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the deficit mindset the teachers demonstrated in these quotes aligned with previous findings by researchers Olivares-Orellana (2020) and Hos (2020) who pointed out that “this type of deficit perspective weakens expectations for students and hinders educators’ capacities to identify the various forms in which giftedness may appear” (Olivares-Orellana, 2020, p. 4). The teachers described the students as empty slates, disregarding their assets and what Moll et al. (1992) have coined as funds of knowledge. These excerpts illustrate ways in which deficit-oriented thinking comes to the surface.

Racism, Microaggressions, and Stereotyping. A common thread among the experiences of the student participants were encounters with racism, microaggressions, and stereotyping. In this study, the participants experienced what scholars Solórzano & Pérez Huber (2020) describe as racial microaggressions, or “layered, cumulative, and often subtle and unconscious forms of racism that target People of Color. They are the

everyday reflections of racist systems and ideological beliefs that impact Peoples of Color's lives" (p. 55). For example, Natalia recalled overhearing conversations in which the teachers discussed the students' progress, inability to keep up, missing homework, etc. Natalia believed that teachers felt the students were hopeless and that they couldn't understand the conversations taking place right in front of them. She explained further stating, "la asistente de ella que le ayudaba, este, se ponían a hablar así de los alumnos, según ellas decían que en secreto, pero no hablaban en secreto, porque nosotros oíamos." *[She and her assistant who helped her, um, they would talk like that about the students, according to them they said it secretly, but they didn't talk in secret, because we heard.]* Natalia added, "todos sentíamos que esa señora era bien racista porque en la clase de ella solo tenía hispanos." *[We all felt that this lady was very racist because in her class she only had Hispanics.]* Her recollection of her teachers' discrimination underlines the concept of racial microaggression. In this example, the teacher—who was not a participant of this study—held deficit-framed conversations about Natalia and her peers in their vicinity. According to Natalia, the teacher highlighted low expectations of the students by assuming they wouldn't be able to understand these discussions because they were all Spanish-speaking. Natalia's words suggest that the ongoing conversations caused the students discomfort and led to an understanding that these comments were a form of racism.

In another example, Natalia detailed how she experienced racial microaggressions from a teacher who would single out the Spanish-speaking students. She elaborated, "ella se ponía como a tirar indirectas diciendo, 'Ah, si vienen tarde, por qué no se quedan durmiendo en la casa.' Y cosas así pues." *[She would make passive aggressive comments*

saying *'If you are coming late, why don't you stay sleeping at home.'* And things like that.] Natalia explained that the comments were targeted at the Latinx students because the teacher would make these remarks in Spanish, which ensured they understood. Furthermore, it was a first period class to which many students were late, including those who were native English speakers, but the comments were only in Spanish. Natalia encountered racial microaggressions in the form of layered verbal assaults and expressed that these layered verbal aggressions influenced her schooling experience in a negative way as they caused her to grow increasingly withdrawn. This is in line with what researchers Solórzano & Pérez Huber (2020) have found as they indicated the effects of racial microaggressions are cumulative and can take an academic toll on people of color. The findings also shed light on the reasons why Natalia may have struggled academically, as she was targeted by racial microaggressions from multiple stakeholders at her high school.

Although Natalia was acutely aware of the racism within her high school, teachers from all three research sites made assumptions and perpetuated negative stereotypes about the family structures and home lives of SIFE. The following quotes gathered from interviews with the teacher participants are examples of the stereotypes and microaggressions that the student participants were exposed to:

- a) They don't necessarily have that at home, someone that's checking in and being like, are you getting all your stuff done and knowing what they need to get done.
(Ms. Campano, Sur Beach)
- b) Their learning ability is limited because of many issues. They're not exposed. They don't have dialogues at home. They don't... growing up, they grew up with

maybe grandmas or, or that nobody had an opportunity to have an intelligent conversation with them. (Mrs. Rasteiro, Port Manor)

- c) And usually they are, many of them are in school, not because they want to be in school. It's just because they have to fulfill their law requirements...they didn't plan to come to the United States to study. They planned to come to the states to work, make money, send to the family and some more people to come. (Mrs. Rasteiro, Port Manor)

These racialized stereotypes and microaggressions can be best understood through cultural deficit theory (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997), “which places blame on people, families, and communities who cannot overcome structural barriers to achieve educational success” (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020, p. 24). In these quotes cultural deficit theory is played out as the teacher participants blamed the families for the perceived deficits of SIFE. They assumed that their cultural values contradicted what was needed to achieve academic success. According to Solórzano & Pérez Huber (2020), “Cultural deficit theory has historically been used to explain academic underperformance, and low educational outcomes among Students of Color in the United States” (p. 24). This theory provided some context for understanding how these teacher participants talked about these particular students. Evidence of cultural deficit theory underscored the importance of the counterstories shared in Chapter Five, as those counterstories challenged these exact stereotypes and provided a window into the lived realities and experiences of SIFE.

Commitment to Social Justice. In contrast to the teachers who held deficit views of SIFE, the student participants also interacted with educators who not only held high

expectations for the participants, but also demonstrated a commitment to social justice by engaging in “resistance strategies that attempt to counteract the conditions and results of ineffective educational practices” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 310). For instance, Carolina recalled a time when Mrs. Berrios, the district’s director of ENL and World Languages, sat with her to explain her rights as a student in the district as she was feeling pushed out of school by the counselor. She shared that, “Ella un día me trajo a mi casa y hablamos. la Sra. Berrios me había dicho que si yo ponía como, mucho de interés, y me ponía a hacerlo muy bien todo, yo podía quedarme en la high school y podía sacar los 22 créditos en 3 años. Y me gustó.” [*She brought me to my house one day and we talked. Mrs. Berrios had told me that if I put in like, a lot of effort, and I did all very well, I could stay in high school and I could get the 22 credits in 3 years. And I liked that.*] Mrs. Berrios explained to Carolina that she was entitled to make the decision and explained that she could stay at high school and graduate if she tried. Carolina expanded by stating how she stood her ground:

Y luego yo fui hablé con ella una vez más. Y recuerdo que mi inglés no era muy fluido como lo es un poco mejor ahora. En ese entonces yo no sé ni cómo yo le expliqué a ella que yo me que quería quedar en la escuela, que yo iba a hacer lo mejor de mí, que no me quería ir. Que y sabía, porque yo ya había hablado con la directora del distrito, que yo tenía como el derecho de poder hacerlo. [*And then I went and talked to her one more time. And I remember that my English was not very fluent as it is a little better now. At that time I don't even know how I explained to her that I wanted to stay in school, that I was going to do my best,*

that I didn't want to leave. That and I knew, because I had already spoken with the district director, that I had the right to be able to do it.]

In this example Carolina demonstrated how she was empowered and fought back against the norms that were reproduced in the school system. Also evident in the resistance that Carolina engaged in is human agency (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), where Carolina gained the confidence to stand up for herself and act on her own behalf. This is important because the literature shows that SIFE often have a limited understanding of the US school system and their rights within the system. Mrs. Berrios empowered Carolina by teaching her about her rights which is an example of how educators can work towards social justice.

Another example of an educator who attempted to counter the inefficiencies of the school system was Natalia's teacher, Ms. Rivera. In this study, Ms. Rivera revealed that Natalia was close to graduating if not for her struggles with passing math. In an interview Ms. Rivera stated "I don't know if Natalia would have ever been able to pass the [math] Regents. The Covid exemptions definitely helped her." She also explained "long story short, we come up with a program where she does uh, credit recovery virtually, and I end up working with her." Ms. Rivera's commitment to social justice and high expectations proved to be the catalyst that propelled Natalia towards high school graduation. Natalia shared,

Yo a la Ms. Rivera le tengo un aprecio bastante, y también ella, oído que yo no me he podido graduar, ella me ayudó bastante para que yo pudiera hacer los exámenes, porque solo me faltaban seis puntos. Entonces Ms. Rivera me dijo, "Voy a ver" – me dijo – cómo hago para que no vengas a la escuela a tomar las

clases, y te vayamos a dar clases a la casa.” Debido al covid y al aprendizaje remoto, esto fue fácil de acomodar en nuestro horario y ¡pude aprobar el curso de matemáticas que había fallado muchas veces! [*I have a lot of appreciation for Ms. Rivera, and she also, heard that I couldn't graduate, she helped me a lot so that I could take the exams, because I was only six points off. Then Ms. Rivera told me, “Let’s see - she said - what I can do so you don’t have to come to school to take the classes, and we’ll homeschool you.” Because of covid and remote learning this was easy to accommodate into our schedule and I was able to pass the math course that I had failed many times!*]

This is significant because Ms. Rivera took action and fought back against the norms of the school system that perpetuated inequities. In this example, Ms. Rivera provided Natalia with the individualized instruction she needed and was deserving of. The credit recovery course was not a common practice at Garden Oaks and the decision to support the student in this way exemplified a commitment to social justice. According to Giroux (2001), engaged educators play an important role in developing a radical mode of critical pedagogy which Ms. Rivera attempted to do with one small change that had a big impact on Natalia’s schooling experience.

Belonging and Community Cultural Wealth

The second theme revealed that the student participants shared similar experiences and challenges while integrating into a new school system. In this study the student participants felt as though they did not belong and were not welcomed into the mainstream school community. The student participants found it challenging, and even uncomfortable, to be in classes with the native English speakers. They also found the

school community to be segregated in that the SIFE population rarely interacted with the native, English-speaking students.

Segregation. Common among all student participants was the segregation they experienced at their respective high schools, which further ostracized them from their native, English-speaking peers. For example, Luis disclosed that he didn't have any relationships or friendships with his native, English-speaking peers mainly because most of his classes were with other multilingual learners and the home language was often used in instruction. Luis stated, “durante el día hablo más español que en inglés. Solo tengo una clase de 30 minutos que es solo inglés” [*during the day I speak more Spanish than English. I only have a 30-minute class that is only English.*] Luis' schedule and class makeup did not provide him with the possibility of making connections with students outside of the Latinx community. This same sentiment was echoed by Natalia who also observed that there was very little interaction between the newly arrived Latinx students and native, English-speaking students. By providing specific classes for MLLs and the SIFE population, the student participants were not given ample opportunities to engage with their English-speaking peers in a social or academic setting to master the new language. The segregation within each school building exemplified what CRT scholars (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) refer to as interest convergence. The programs in which the student participants were enrolled may appear to represent progress in the sense that SIFE students were provided with courses specifically designed for newcomers. This is consistent with research that has indicated that SIFE often benefit from foundational programs that focus on literacy (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016). However, the dominant culture—in this case the native, English-speaking students

and teachers—also benefit from the segregation as it eases the challenge of scaffolding and differentiating instruction that would be required if SIFE were fully integrated in the school. School districts can continue with the status quo, meaning the district will continue to prepare the native, English-speaking students for the Regents Exams, as they always have. This is evidence of interest convergence in that school districts uphold the graduation rates needed to remain in good standing, while also segregating the SIFE population under the guise of progress for SIFE.

Natalia was clearly impacted by the segregation she experienced in school. She even went on to describe her ideal class make up, which included English-speaking students despite the discomfort she might feel:

La clase perfecta para mí fuera como estar – no todos de, de, de que hablen español pues, sino que estar como algunos que hablen español, y los demás que hablen inglés, porque sintiera como que yo aunque me diera pena, sintiera en como que me tocara que hablara el inglés para desarrollarnos más. [*The perfect class for me would be like – not all of, of, Spanish speakers, but being like some who speak Spanish, and the rest who speak English, because even though I might feel embarrassed, I think it would make me speak more and help my English develop.*]

The segregation described by Natalia is significant because she was not afforded the opportunities to socialize with her native English-speaking peers nor was she able to have academic language modeled for her by her peers.

This segregation also sheds light on the teaching practices in the MLL setting as both Luis and Natalia described an emphasis on the Spanish language in their classrooms

by peers and teachers. This is important because on the surface we see that students were receiving instruction in their home language; however, the teachers did not hold a bilingual certification. An individual who is proficient in social language but lacks proficiency in academic language, is not qualified to support students in an academic setting. To obtain bilingual certification, teacher candidates must demonstrate a certain level of proficiency in formal academic language to support instruction in the content areas. Without this support students will not have equitable access to the academic linguistic demands needed to engage in rigorous academic instruction. In addition, the translated resources teachers were using had not been vetted for accuracy or quality, therefore the resources students were exposed to may have had linguistic and cultural errors that did not provide the same level of rigor afforded to other students. Moreover, the students were removed from the mainstream classes where their English-speaking peers continued rigorous instruction in an English-dominant setting. Meanwhile, the SIFE population was exposed to a watered-down curriculum, further marginalizing the SIFE population.

Social Capital. The participants did not feel immediately welcomed in the school environment due to the segregation and therefore self-isolated by only interacting with their immigrant peers who were also learning the language. For example, Natalia felt that the “Gringos” purposefully ostracized the newly arrived Latinx students by making negative remarks about their current levels of English proficiency. Natalia’s interactions with her peers centered around the established culture of English dominance. She described these interactions by stating, “nunca me hicieron bully, pero a muchos otros sí, se rieron de ellos por no poder hablar inglés.” [*I was never bullied but many others were,*

they were laughed at for not being able to speak English.] According to the literature, this unfriendly school climate is representative of how dominant ideologies continue to impact BISOC in the K-12 setting (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). In this brief excerpt, the dominant ideology is perpetuated by the other students as they subordinate the Spanish-speaking Latinx students for not being fluent in the dominant language. This is important because the racialization of the Latinx students resulted in a subcommunity, built by the SIFE population. These findings exemplify the concept of social capital (Yosso, 2005), as the Latinx students created their own social networks to support one another while navigating through the institution of education. Historically, communities of color have relied on their social capital to attain an education and feel supported as they do so. According to Yosso (2005), “these peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support” (p.79) which was a necessity for Natalia and her peers as they were not welcomed into the larger school community.

Although the Latinx participants did not feel welcomed into the mainstream school culture, they established their own social networks in order to participate in the traditional high school experience in a way that made them comfortable. Natalia reported that she felt relief as more and more Latinx students enrolled in the middle school when she first arrived:

Pero ya luego, fueron llegando más, más niños nuevos así de mi país. Y pues ya yo me fui sintiendo como en confianza, porque ya yo sabía que no era yo la única que estaba así que me sentía mal porque no, no iba a aprender tal vez, o cosas así.

[But then, more, more new children like those from my country began to arrive.

And well, I started feeling confident, because I already knew that I wasn't the only one feeling bad that I wasn't going to learn, or things like that.]

Carolina also touched on the immigrant Latinx subculture at her high school by stating, “hay muchos hispanos aquí alrededor, donde quiera que uno vaya así que siempre me sentí cómoda.” [*There are a lot of Hispanics around here, everywhere you go so I always felt comfortable.*] Thus, it is evident that the student participants relied on their social capital to comfortably navigate high school and attain education. This finding demonstrates the concept of counterspaces (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Solórzano & Pérez Huber found that engagement in counterspaces were often used as a defense mechanism against microaggressions and in much the same way, my research revealed that the student participants acted in this way.

In an interview, Natalia spoke of skipping classes that she was not comfortable in to spend time with her friends in counterspaces such as the cafeteria stating, “Las clases que no me gustaban, no me gustaba entrar. Entonces era como que siempre cortaba. En el día yo nomás iba a tres clases o a cuatro. Ya luego me salía con mis amigas, o si no, iba para la cafetería.” [*The classes that I did not like, I did not like to go to. So it was like I was always cutting. During the day I only went to three or four classes. Then I would go out with my friends, or if not, I would go to the cafeteria.*] Natalia’s desire to increase comfort levels in a somewhat hostile environment by seeking out other newcomers is evidence of her ability to create counterspaces. Moreover, Morales (2017) stated, “Counterspaces within CRT literature have often been understood as spaces to build community within hostile environments, particularly educational institutions” (p. 1). In this study, the student participants were marginalized in their respective educational

institutions, leading them to find ways of healing with their peers by building their community and in turn demonstrated their own empowerment.

Aspirational Capital. The three student participants in this study self-identified as undocumented students who were seeking permanent residency in this country. The participants indicated that their undocumented status created additional barriers towards achieving a sense of belonging. In this study the participants experienced the concept of racist nativism (Pérez Huber et al., 2008), which is described as “the assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is to be perceived white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the right of whites, or the natives, to dominance” (Pérez Huber et al., 2008, p. 43). Racist nativism was revealed in this study through policies supported by educational institutions. For example, while preparing for life after high school graduation, Carolina learned that her undocumented status in this country meant that she was required to pay a higher tuition rate for community college. In this example, the institution created a policy that distinguished who belongs, “reinforcing belonging and nativeness to white students” (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020, p. 13), while excluding undocumented students. Carolina shared:

A, Community College ya entré. [*I was accepted to Community College*]. But at first, uh, I was like, “Yeah. I’m going to go no matter what.” Uh, but now I’m thinking about it, because, uh, they sent me the payment, and it’s really high.

Because I don’t have documents. So, they charge you for that.

This finding is important because it exemplifies the inequities propagated by institutions of higher learning. The tuition for a full-time student at the community college is roughly

\$2,735 per semester, however as an undocumented student Carolina was charged the out-of-state tuition which is \$5,470 per semester. This higher tuition rate is an additional burden and an example of the institutional racism faced by undocumented students and thus a racist policy as equal access to the institution is decided based on immigration status (Kendi, 2019). Institutional racism is defined as “formal or or informal structural mechanisms, such as policies and processes that systematically subordinate, marginalize, and exclude nondominant groups and mediate their experiences with racial microaggressions” (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020, p. 303). The consequences of the policy that enforced the higher tuition rate—which has racist, classist, and nativist undertones—further marginalized students like Carolina by creating a unique barrier to higher education.

This example demonstrated how the concept of racist nativism impacts “the educational trajectories of Latina/o students, and particularly undocumented Chicana/Latina women” (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020, p. 62), as Carolina’s initial plan and timeline had been derailed due to the lack of funds for this extra fee. Carolina had to rely on the social capital she acquired through social networks to achieve her goals. As discussed in the previous chapter, Carolina believed that much of her success stems from her support system of family, friends and educators. She stated, “Y yo sé que Dios siempre puso como personas ahí en mi camino para que me ayudaran, porque siempre estaban los maestros, la Sra. Berrios, mis tíos, que siempre me han apoyado.” *[And I know that God always put people there in my path to help me, because there were always teachers, Mrs. Berrios, my uncles, who have always supported me, were always there.]* She has worked with community-based organizations to learn about different pathways

through which undocumented students can obtain scholarships for higher education. In the following interview excerpt, Carolina shared her long-term goal and demonstrated aspirational capital, which “refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real or perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Carolina explained:

Si Dios me lo permite, me gustaría escribir un libro sobre mi experiencia, y superación, porque eso es lo que veo, y no me quiero detener. Por eso quiero seguir ir al colegio y todo eso. Porque me gustaría como ayudar a otras personas, sé que puedo contarle mi historia a otros y decirles, ‘Hey, si yo pude, no hay cosas que pueda decir que tú no puedes.’ Las excusas y como el no puedo solo está en la mente. Porque sí se puede. Y si encuentras personas como las que yo encontré en este camino, se puede. *[If God allows me, I would like to write a book about my experiences, and overcoming them, because that's what I focus on, and I don't want that to stop. That's why I want to continue going to school and all that. Because I would like to help other people, I know that I can tell my story to others and say, ‘Hey, If I could, there's no reason to say that you can't.’ The excuses and the I can't is all in your mind. Because yes you can. And if you find people like the ones I found on this path, it can be done.]*

Carolina’s resiliency is evident in the way she persevered in graduating high school and continuously strived to attain a higher education despite her undocumented status. Although her immigration status created additional barriers such as higher tuition rates, she challenged these inequities and tapped into resistant capital, which are the “knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality”

(Yosso, 2005, p. 80). She did so by seeking additional funding options in the form of scholarships.

Familial Capital. In this study, the presence of familial capital was evident in all three cases. Familial capital is a form of cultural wealth that “refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Carolina, Luis, and Natalia shared their gratitude for guardians who were motivating and supported their goals. For example, Carolina credited her tia’s [aunt’s] support as one of the contributing factors of her academic success. Her recollection of the role her family played in her education underlines the concept of familial capital. Carolina expanded on this in her journal stating:

“Mis tios. They have helped me since the first day. Yo estaba muy relax solo trabajando but ellos me dijeron que tenia que hacer algo con mi vida. Y me ayudaron a inscribirme en la escuela me motivaron cada dia. Porque hubieron dias en los que I give up but there was my tia tell me get up and ve a la escuela. I found a family en ellos. Muchas veces I get mad con ellos pero now I do understand why they regañarme muchas veces and I can see what they want in my life. Tal vez no fue ayuda económica pero esa ayuda emocional fue la que me motivó para continuar siempre esperaron lo mejor de mi y eso me motivó a dar lo mejor de mi.” [*My aunt and uncle. They have helped me since the first day. I was very relaxed just working but they told me that I had to do something with my life. And they helped me enroll in school, they motivated me every day. Because there were days when I gave up but there was my aunt telling me to get up and go to*

school. I found a family in them. There were many times I got mad at them but now I do understand why they would scold me many times and I can see what they want for my life. Maybe it wasn't financial help but that emotional help was what motivated me to continue. They always expected the best from me and that motivated me to give my best.]

This affirms the presence of familial capital, which is a stark contrast to the racialized assumptions about the Latinx community. More specifically, the notion that “parents neither value nor support their child’s education” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75) is not reflected in the experiences of the student participants. Carolina accrued familial capital through her interactions with her extended family, as they modeled “lessons of caring, coping, and providing *educación*” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), the latter of which includes the type of education that leads to a well-mannered and moral individual. Such lessons informed the way she progressed academically, impacting her aspirational capital as well.

Comparably, Luis also shared that his family—his uncle and cousins—encouraged him to return to school after several years of interruption. Luis explained that his cousins have graduated from high school and that his uncle was hopeful that Luis would also graduate. His uncle made his expectations clear: Luis was to attend high school and work when he could to help support the household just the way his cousins had done. Luis’ cousins served as a source of navigational capital, which “refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). His cousins provided Luis with insight into how the schooling system works here in the United States as they had already successfully navigated the local school system. While recounting discussions with his uncle, Luis recalled, “cuando vine aquí, pues él me contó que tenía que estudiar

y yo, pues eso me impresiona porque él dijo, ‘Vas a aprender tu segundo idioma. Si tú quieres, puedes aprender mucho más. Ya con dos idiomas puedes conseguir un mejor trabajo’” [*when I came here, well, he told me that I had to study and I, well, that impressed me because he said, ‘You are going to learn your second language. If you want, you can learn much more. Now with two languages you can get a better job’.*]

Luis’ uncle demonstrated an understanding of and valued linguistic capital (Faulstich Orellana, 2003), which may extend beyond the ability to communicate in more than one language to include cross-cultural awareness (Yosso, 2005).

In this section, I presented data which suggested that the three student participants relied on their community cultural wealth to overcome the segregation, microaggressions, and racism they encountered. The concept of community cultural wealth counters the narrative that POC lack cultural capital, which perpetuates a deficit view of communities of color. In this study, the three student participants revealed their cultural wealth through six forms of capital which included social capital, familial capital, aspirational capital, linguistic capital, resistant capital, and navigational capital. According to Yosso (2005) “these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth” (p. 77). This is evident in the data presented by the student participants as there was an overlap in the forms of capital they depended on for guidance as they experienced the institution of education in this country.

Continuum of Research-Based Programming

In this study, the student and teacher participants described the programming for SIFE at their respective high schools based on their own experiences. Utilizing the

descriptions provided by participants and cross referencing these descriptions with the literature on best practice as well as the regulations and guidance set forth by New York State, I found that the three programs were on a continuum of research-based programming. In other words, there is a broad spectrum of appropriate program options and research-based practices for the MLL population and each of the school programs lie somewhere different on the continuum. The data suggested that the schools that demonstrated a clear understanding of New York State regulations and implemented them with fidelity had a stronger program to support SIFE. It was also apparent that educators struggled to properly implement the regulations because the regulations themselves lacked adequate descriptions, clarity, and direction. The findings provided in this theme do not directly respond to the research questions but instead are directly connected to the implications of the study to be discussed in Chapter Seven. By using the data collected from teacher interviews and focus groups along with the experience I bring as an employee of NYSED's Long Island Regional Bilingual Resource Network, I am positioned to compare the three programs utilizing my understanding of the regulations and research-based best practices in support of MLLs. In this section I compare the three high school programs by focusing on three sub-themes that emerged from the data.

ELL Identification and Placement. New York State Education Department's Commissioner's Regulation (C.R.) Part 154, which is the law that governs the education of ELLs in New York, states that if a student identified as an ELL also meets the description of SIFE then, "the student shall also be identified as a Student with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education" (NYSED, 2015, p.10). However, C.R. Part 154 does not specify how districts should identify SIFE. The recommendation that directs

schools to administer the SIFE oral interview questionnaire, the Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS), and the Writing Screener (NYSED, 2019) appears in subsequent guidance documents.

Garden Oaks. A concerning finding was that Garden Oaks did not follow NYSED’s recommendation as reported by teacher participants; therefore, students were not identified as SIFE. Although some teachers may have been aware of the students’ interrupted education, there was no specialized placement for the SIFE population nor were teachers aware that SIFE were present in their classrooms. In an interview, Ms. Rivera from Garden Oaks revealed that, “Garden Oaks High School doesn't tell me whose SIFE and who's not. I don't know if they're not allowed. I don't know if they don't have an assessment to assess that. I don't know that much about SIFE, to be honest with you.” She further elaborated that when her director approached her to be a part of this research, she also asked her to identify potential student participants. Ms. Rivera reported her discussion with the director stating, “She's like, ‘Can you think of any?’ And I'm thinking to myself, well, if you all don't identify them, how do you want me to identify them?” The data from Ms. Rivera suggested that the school was out of compliance as they are not identifying SIFE in the district. Without the proper identification of SIFE, additional issues arise. For example, teachers could not appropriately service these students if they were not aware of their presence in their classrooms and were not provided with adequate training or resources to meet their unique needs.

Sur Beach. The identification and placement of SIFE at Garden Oaks contrasted greatly with the procedure followed at Sur Beach. Sur Beach not only followed NYSED’s guidance with fidelity by screening potential SIFE using the MLS, but they also used the

results of the screener to dictate the placement of the student. For example, Mrs. Keller stated, “from what I understand, like all new students, all new ENL students, they do the home language survey, the NYSITELL and then they take some type of home language exam. But I, that's all done at district office.” Ms. Campano confirmed this by sharing, “our chairperson gives them the MLS screener when they come. If... maybe if the students have said, or their families have said that they had interrupted education.” Based on the data shared by Ms. Campano, the students in this school district were screened by district personnel and the teachers were also aware of the procedure. This is important because the students were entering school with assessment data that teachers used to support them. This same data was also used to place the students in appropriate courses. Because student programming and placement is an important step in ensuring equitable access to instruction for SIFE, C.R. Part 154 dictated that each district must describe the practices that inform screening, identification, and placement of all ELL subgroups in their comprehensive plan.

Port Manor. Based on the interviews conducted with the teacher participants in Port Manor, I found that this school fell somewhere between the Garden Oaks and Sur Beach on the continuum of research-based programming. For example, the teachers from Port Manor revealed that SIFE were properly identified utilizing NYSED’s recommended MLS, but the school did not have a specific program to address the needs of low literacy SIFE. According to Mrs. Rasteiro from Port Manor, there was no longer a SIFE-specific program due to lower enrollment numbers:

I think that because of the numbers, we don't have enough. But they don't think that four kids, let's say three kids are enough to start class. We are informed if a

student meets the criteria [of SIFE]. Um, but you know, and then we're just kind of left to address, you know, the needs of the student on our own.

Therefore, the students in Port Manor went through the entire ELL Identification Process, which included the MLS, but once they were identified as SIFE, there was no specific placement for them other than a room with other newcomer students. The identification and placement of SIFE varied from school to school which led to discrepancies in how the students were serviced. School districts were required to formally identify SIFE, which not all schools did. By identifying SIFE using the MLS, teachers can use the assessment data as a guide to begin instruction at the students' zone of proximal development (Salva, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978). This same data can also be used to place students in the appropriate courses and programs, however some schools did not allocate courses designed specifically for SIFE. This is problematic because the students were not receiving equitable learning opportunities despite teachers' best efforts.

As discussed in Chapter Two, research indicates that SIFE need additional support that are not applicable to the general MLL population. For example, SIFE benefit from age-appropriate literacy instruction in both the native language and English (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016; Salva, 2021). This is not a standard part of instruction for other MLLs at the secondary level and without it SIFE are not receiving the foundation needed to access the curricula in the content areas. To ensure equitable learning opportunities for the SIFE population, teachers need appropriate training and resources to implement curricula designed for SIFE. The following section highlights the types of training and resources that the teacher participants were afforded.

SIFE Specific Training and Resources. Research has indicated that educators who work alongside the SIFE population require additional training and resources, distinct from the larger ELL population, to support the unique needs of SIFE (Hos, 2016). For example, SIFE may need additional guidance on the norms in a formal school setting and instruction that supports low levels of literacy at the secondary level (Hos, 2016; Salva, 2021). NYSED also recognized the need for specific resources to identify SIFE and the need for a SIFE curriculum to address the “additional challenges they may encounter that not all ELLs face” (NYSED, 2019, p. 3). The Bridges to Academic Success Curriculum was started in 2011 and is funded by NYSED in collaboration with researchers from the City University of New York (CUNY) to design literacy focused year long curricula for SIFE in grades 6-12. Access to the curriculum is free, however this access is only granted once educators have attended a training session. Furthermore, districts who participate in this program have to purchase books, which are a key component of the curriculum.

The teachers at Port Manor shared that they do not have access to the Bridges program and instead, they continuously develop their own curriculum to meet the students at their level and within their zone of proximal development. Although NYSED recommended the use of Bridges, the guidance documents did not mandate any specific program. Instead, the regulation simply stated “each school district shall provide either a Bilingual Education or English as a New Language program to students identified as English Language Learners” (NYSED, 2015, p. 15). According to the teachers at Port Manor, the larger community did not prioritize the needs of SIFE and therefore financial

resources were diverted away from supporting the immigrant student population. For example, one teacher, Mrs. Rasteiro, stated,

And I know in the district, we have different groups of interest. And unfortunately, the immigrants are the last heard. So, the only people that fight for them are the ENL teachers. That's the reality. The ENL teachers are the only ones, and we are the minority.

One example of this concern surrounding funding was highlighted in an interview with Mrs. Rasteiro who was trained to use the Bridges curriculum with SIFE in her previous school, however, the school decided not to invest in SIFE-specific resources.

According to Mrs. Rasteiro:

There was no money. They were not going to buy it. They didn't, and I didn't even ask. I mean, I knew that they were, there was no money and that this would never approve. That's politics.

Instead, she had been asked to use System 44, which was a reading intervention program. She went on to explain, "I did mention that I was trained on the System 44 and, um, and then they said, 'Oh, we have it here.' Uh, so instead, we had System 44. The basic concepts are more appropriate for lower levels, in my opinion. So, I don't think, I'm not like the biggest fan of System 44 [for SIFE]." This is significant because without regulatory guidance which clearly describes the expectations of a SIFE program, the services districts provide will continue to vary from one district to another, which is inclusive of districts that may provide the bare minimum.

In contrast, the teachers at Sur Beach were trained to implement the CUNY Bridges Program for their SIFE population. Teachers described the program to be "a

really well scaffolded organized curriculum” and “aligned to the way that a regular English class would look and feel with a reading level appropriate for low literacy SIFE kids, but not babyish.” These comments about the program demonstrated the research that went into the development of this curriculum, focusing on the needs of SIFE. For example, researchers recommended a specialized curriculum (Hos, 2020) that featured “small group instruction, collaborative work, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, strategy development, sheltered content courses, and theme-based and academically challenging curriculum with language modifications” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010, p. 160).

Mrs. Keller also emphasized the support they received while implementing the program:

My first year that I participated in Bridges and then every year since I've had to go to at least a couple of trainings just to like every time they roll something new out or check-ins. They're kind of always making sure that you're implementing things correctly. Um, they're making sure that, um, that you know how to use the resources that are given to you. It's not just like I said, not just something that's just like handed to you.

In this quote, Mrs. Keller indicated she felt prepared to teach the SIFE population and had the appropriate resources for low-literacy, adolescent students. Ms. Campano also highlighted the support the teachers receive from district leaders stating, “I mean, Mrs. Berrios is amazing as our chairperson. She does whatever she can to support these kids. And she's always trying to get us different resources and training. She's who put me in touch with the Bridges group.” These examples demonstrate the overall commitment the

district had to supporting SIFE by allowing and encouraging teachers to attend frequent training sessions.

Teacher Collaboration and Co-teaching. In 2015, revisions to C.R. Part 154 mandated changes to the ways in which students are serviced, mainly through an integrated model in lieu of the pull-out method which was favored prior to the changes. Integrated instruction in the ENL setting can be delivered by one dual-certified teacher; however, it is more commonly delivered through co-teaching, which pairs a general education or content area teacher with an ESOL teacher (NYSED, 2015). The shift to this collaborative model of instruction was implemented to integrate content and language instruction but also to integrate teachers and students (Cordeiro, 2021). Through this integration, students were no longer segregated to receive all their instruction outside of the mainstream setting, and therefore, they were exposed to a more rigorous curriculum that integrated content and linguistic scaffolds.

The teachers in Garden Oaks labeled their collaboration as co-teaching, however the descriptions of classroom instruction provided by teacher participants did not align with the descriptions of effective co-teaching as described in research and NYSED guidance documents. For example, Ms. Rivera, the ENL Mathematics co-teacher shared:

He [my co-teacher] tried to get students ready for the Regents, which is going to be in June. He's like, if Ms. Rivera's okay with it, can she just pull them out the same period, go in... you know, go into different classrooms, and teach them basic math and, and teach them how to use a calculator?

This example revealed that the students who should have received integrated instruction in math were often grouped homogeneously; therefore, they were still segregated from

their native, English-speaking peers in a stand-alone setting. The ENL teacher in this scenario was not a content specialty teacher and therefore did not have the appropriate credentials to deliver integrated instruction in math on her own to these students. Although the regulations do not specify what co-teaching in the integrated setting should look like, research clearly dictates that it is not delivered in two different settings, and it is not the ENL teacher always working with ELLs apart from the general class (Villa et al., 2013). To this point, researchers Honigsfeld & Dove (2010) defined 7 co-teaching models for the ENL integrated classroom which has been shared widely through published articles, books and in collaboration with NYSED as a way to provide guidance to NYS educators. Figure 2 provides a brief description of these models as well as a visual representation of what each model might look like in practice.

Figure 2

Co-teaching Models for the ENL Integrated Classroom

Model 1: One student group: One lead teacher and another teacher teaching on purpose



Description: The mainstream and ESL teachers take turns assuming the lead role. One leads while the other provides minilessons to individuals or small groups in order to preteach or clarify a concept or skill.

Model 2: One student group: Two teachers teach the same content



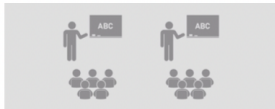
Description: Both teachers direct a whole-class lesson and work cooperatively to teach the same lesson at the same time.

Model 3: One student group: One teacher teaches, one assesses



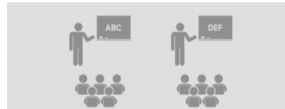
Description: Two teachers are engaged in conducting the same lesson; one teacher takes the lead, and the other circulates throughout the room and assesses targeted students through observations, checklists, and anecdotal records.

Model 4: two student groups: Two teachers teach the same content



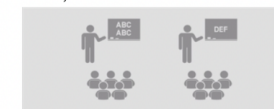
Description: Students are divided into two learning groups; the teachers engage in parallel teaching, presenting the same content using differentiated learning strategies.

Model 5: Two student groups: One teacher preteaches, one teaches alternative information



Description: Teachers assign students to one of two groups based on their readiness levels related to a designated topic or skill. Students who have limited prior knowledge of the target content or skill are grouped together to receive instruction to bridge the gap in their background knowledge.

Model 6: Two student groups: One teacher reteaches, one teaches alternative information



Description: Flexible grouping provides students at various proficiency levels with the support they need for specific content; student group composition changes as needed.

Model 7: Multiple student groups: Two teachers monitor and teach



Description: Multiple groupings allow both teachers to monitor and facilitate student work while targeting selected students with assistance for their particular learning needs.

Note. Adapted from Collaboration and Co-teaching: Strategies for English learners (76-81), A. Honigsfeld, M. Dove, 2010, Corwin Press. Copyright 2010 by Andrea Honigsfeld.

Additionally, a NYSED guidance document on integrated co-teaching in the ENL setting, states that:

Co-teaching is not an opportunity for a grade-level or content-area teacher to have a teaching assistant or helper in the class. It is not one teacher providing instruction while the other teacher roams around the room. Co-teaching is not each teacher taking turns with one teaching while the other looks on. It is not the job of the ESOL teacher to be a one-on-one tutor, translate core content materials, push-in and pull aside only the Multilingual Learners (MLs) and English Language Learners (ELLs), or instruct MLs and ELLs in any other form of skill-

based or content-based learning that is not fully aligned to grade-appropriate core content standards and curricula (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2022, p. 1).

If students were segregated from their native English-speaking peers as described by teachers at Garden Oaks, they were not benefiting from the integrated co-teaching model.

Mrs. Perez echoed this same type of instructional model:

It's good that we have a co-taught class, because when you have close to 30 kids in a class, and the classroom teacher is trying, is teaching at the front of the room, and you may have kids that get it quickly. We would push those students up to the front of the room, and I would tell my co-teacher, teach them in English. And so then I would push students that needed a lot of my attention to the back of the room, and then I would work with just them in Spanish.

This quote demonstrated a misunderstanding of integrated co-teaching, which should include the implementation of research based co-teaching models and varied student groupings (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2019). Unfortunately, without training on the seven co-teaching models for integrated ENL and time to effectively implement the cycle of co-teaching, teachers at Garden Oaks resorted to homogenous grouping. The cycle of co-teaching indicated that co-teachers were responsible for co-planning together in addition to co-instructing, co-assessing, and co-reflecting, and neglecting any phase can disrupt the balance of the cycle (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2019).

The teachers at Sur Beach shared a different type of innovative collaboration that did not fall under the umbrella of integrated instruction as defined by NYSED or co-teaching. These educators shared that they collaborated very often to meet the needs of the students, both formally during department meetings or curriculum design, but also

informally via text message. Mrs. Keller shared, “We all are in a group chat with each other that's non-stop. Like we're constantly connected and we share students.” This communication is usually having to do with the social-emotional well-being of the students. The academic discussions occurred across the departments to tap into the interdisciplinary instruction that allowed the ENL teacher to support the linguistic demands of the content being taught in the Regents tracked courses. Ms. Campano highlighted that:

a) we know what's going on in the other classes, so we can kind of intertwine things, um, for those kids, because I think they need to build on the same skills. Repetition is really important. So building on those skills in multiple classes is key.

b) I think that, between departments, we are pretty cohesive in, you know... I know that they're practicing some type of skill in their English class. I try to incorporate that however I can with vocabulary or with writing in math, so I think interdisciplinary. Um, there's cohesiveness there. I think that really helps them.

These data points are suggesting that the teachers have established their own collaborative structures even though they are not formally co-teaching. This is reflective of what researchers describe as cultivating a collaborative culture (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2012). As Honigsfeld and Dove (2012) asserted, “any successful education plan for ELLs begins with the skillful implementation of collaborative efforts so that all stakeholders have an opportunity to share their concerns, opinions, and expertise” (p. 317). The teacher participants at this school have managed to implement collaborative structures despite the lack of guidance established in the regulations. To support SIFE across

content areas, the teacher participants looked to research-based practices demonstrating initiative to ensure the needs of the SIFE population were met.

Part Two: Unanticipated Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the educational landscape for students, as each state distributed recommendations for the schooling of students in the K-12 setting (Wim Van Lancker, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic led to remote and hybrid instruction which forced teachers to make pedagogical changes. In 2020, NYSED released guidance on how to support students during remote or hybrid instruction which included guidance on how to assess students which may have positively impacted students' grades. Additionally, many of the strategies teachers learned during remote learning continued to be used in the face-to-face setting to support students. Some of the strategies include teacher collaboration, parental involvement, engaging digital tools, recorded mini-lessons, flipped learning, and the use of formative data (Gonzalez, 2022). These strategies may also have played a role in helping students to access the curriculum in ways they previously could not. Although educators have shared their concerns over the inconsistent education provided to students during the pandemic (Anderson, 2021; Chang-Bacon, 2021), NYSED (2021) had reported an increase of 21.6% in the graduation rate of MLLs, more specifically ELLs, in the 2017 cohort who graduated in 2021 compared to the 2015 cohort who graduated in 2019. The data did not clarify what percentage of those graduating ELLs were SIFE, but the data were specific to students who were actively learning English as a new language and had not yet tested proficient on the NYSESLAT. Therefore, this section aims to discuss two possible reasons for the increase of graduation rates for ELLs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cancellation of Regents Exams

One potential reason for the increased graduation rates was the cancellation of Regents Exams. The Regents Exams had been a consistent barrier to high school graduation for SIFE in New York State. However, due to concerns over social distancing and the potential spread of COVID-19, the Regents Exams were canceled in June 2020, January 2021, June 2021 and January 2022. Any student who was scheduled to take a Regents Exam for their assigned course was granted an automatic pass of the exam if they passed the course at their local high school, which is a local district decision.

This phenomenon is relevant to this study because in two of the three cases explored in this research, students graduated without the Regents Exam requirement. For instance, the teachers from Garden Oaks shared how Natalia benefited from the cancellation. Mrs. Rivera stated:

I don't know if Natalia would have ever been able to pass the Regents. So last year, all she had to do was pass the classes. She didn't actually have to sit for the Regents. The Covid exemptions definitely helped her.

Mrs. Perez echoed this same sentiment by sharing, “She graduated and, but I have to say the only reason she probably graduated is because she got a lot of exemptions because of Covid.” This finding is important because it highlighted the barrier that standardized tests posed to SIFE (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015). According to Menken (2010), MLL’s for whom English is their new language typically scored about 20-50 points below their native English-speaking peers on standardized state assessments. These assessments were not only aligned to state and federal accountability measures, but were also required for student promotion in high school and graduation (Bybee et al.,

2014). The recent increase in graduation rates for ELLs warranted a deeper look into the ways that SIFE are assessed when we considered their cultural and linguistic differences, such as the limited understanding of the dominant culture in the United States and the low levels of literacy in their native language.

The SIFE population are simultaneously developing English proficiency and content knowledge. Despite these linguistic differences and interruptions to their education, SIFE are held to the same standards as native English speakers and must demonstrate command of the English language and content to graduate high school (Olivares-Orellana, 2017). These expectations ignore the educational needs of SIFE and make the assumption that they are learning in the same way that monolingual students learn, leading to inequities in the education of SIFE (García et al., 2008). Research indicates that “bilingual people fluidly use their linguistic resources —without regard to named language categories—to make meaning and communicate (Vogel & Garcia, 2017, p. 4). However, the emphasis on standardized assessments to demonstrate their learning assumes that bilingual students perform as a monolingual student in each language.

Additional research on high-stakes testing and MLLs revealed that these tests have led to both higher retention rates and lower graduation rates for MLLs (Vasquez Heilig, 2011). Data from this study also suggested that “high schools narrowed curriculum and pedagogy in response” (p. 2654) to the high stakes testing that are tied to graduation. Educators are so concerned with the number of students passing these tests, they are teaching to the test, leaving some students unprepared for life after high school.

Cancellation of the NYSESLAT

Another possible explanation for the increased graduation rate of ELLs in the 2017 cohort was the cancellation of the 2020 New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The NYSESLAT is the annual assessment given to current ELLs to obtain updated proficiency levels, which for some means testing out of services and dropping the ELL label. However, in May 2020 the NYSESLAT was canceled and therefore there were more current ELLs in the 2020-2021 academic school year as students were not able to update their current levels of English Proficiency.

The cancellation of the 2020 NYSESLAT impacted Luis because despite the growth he made in his English proficiency since arriving to the country in 2019, he remained at the same emerging level, requiring him to receive 360 minutes of ENL instruction a week. The NYSESLAT was administered in spring 2021, but Luis was remote during the testing window, which was a common issue across the state. To ensure all students were receiving appropriate services, NYSED implemented a special administration of the NYSITELL in the fall of 2021, to reassess students who did not take the NYSESLAT in the spring due to remote instruction. Unfortunately, the guidance provided by NYSED was vague and Port Manor did not take advantage of this opportunity. Mrs. Laffin stated: "I'm not sure our district redid the NYSITELL. But with the numbers that we have, we didn't have the manpower to." Therefore, Luis was still being serviced as an emerging level student, which might have prevented him from accessing a more rigorous and inclusive schedule. A student at the entering or emerging level is mandated to receive 360 minutes of ENL instruction per week, half of which are in the stand alone setting with other entering and emerging students. This is noteworthy

because students at the transitioning or expanding level are mandated 180 minutes of focused ENL instruction per week in an integrated setting; stand-alone ENL is no longer mandated, which could provide Luis with more exposure to the English language with his native, English-speaking peers.

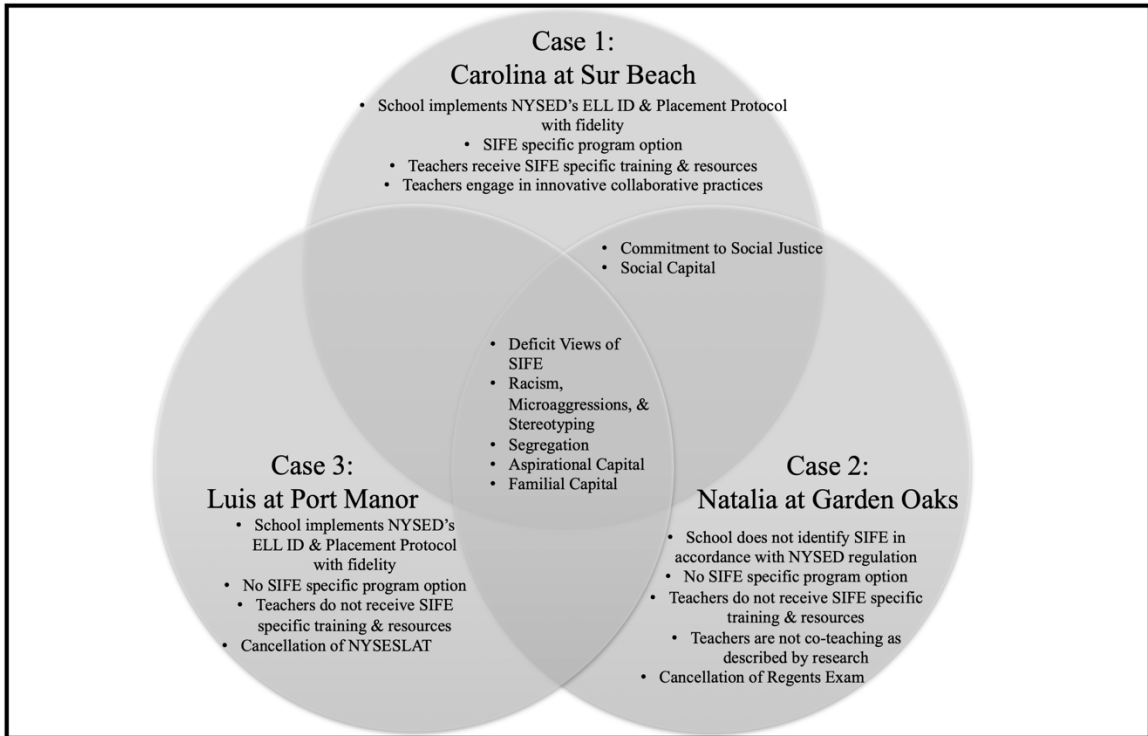
In a study conducted by Vasquez Heilig (2011), the findings suggested that the parents of MLLs “were more likely to trust the school with the success of their children” (p. 2652). This is contrasted with the parents in white families who are more comfortable questioning the schooling process. This is significant because Luis’ family did not question the school when he was not given the opportunity to demonstrate his growth in English proficiency. As a result of this oversight, Luis’ proficiency level remained the same which may have excluded him from other academic opportunities. Surveys have shown that Latinx parents “are more likely to have positive views of their neighborhood school than other groups” (Vasquez Heilig, 2011, p. 2653). Although this trust in the schooling system may not always be warranted, it is reflective of the cultural norms in the Latinx community.

Cross-Case Comparison

In this section, I compare and contrast the experiences of the student participants to highlight the similarities and differences at each of their respective high schools. By looking at the themes and subthemes presented in this chapter, I will make connections across the cases. Below I have also included Figure 3 as a visual representation of the cross-case comparison described herein.

Figure 3

Cross-Case Comparison



The first theme, contradictory mindsets within a single system, was evident within all three cases. More specifically, the three student participants were exposed to educators who held deficit views of SIFE, and experienced racism, microaggressions, and stereotyping, which influenced their academic experiences. Both Natalia and Carolina also recalled interacting with educators who demonstrated a commitment to social justice through their willingness to fight back against the norms that perpetuated inequities at their high schools.

The data from this study suggested that the schooling experiences of the SIFE participants were influenced by the lack of belonging in the larger school community. The participants all experienced segregation within their respective schools citing

minimal interaction with their native speaking peers. As a result of this segregation, the participants often relied on their community cultural wealth to navigate the school system. For Carolina and Natalia, this cultural wealth included social capital, through the social networks they established with other immigrant Latinx students. All three participants shared the ways in which aspirational capital and familial capital played a role in their academic experiences. By focusing on their goals for the future, the student participants demonstrated resilience despite the barriers they encountered. The participants also found motivation and guidance from their families who expressed unwavering support.

The third theme discussed in this chapter was the continuum of research-based programming, which highlighted the discrepancies in each school's pedagogical decisions. Each school followed the ELL identification process with varying degrees of fidelity. Sur Beach implemented NYSED's recommendations when it came to screening students using the MLS and placing identified SIFE in a designated program. It was also evident that the teacher participants from Sur Beach understood the process and used the data from the screener to support their new students. The ELL identification and placement looked very different at Garden Oaks, as the district did not identify SIFE. Therefore, teachers did not know which of their students, if any, were SIFE making it challenging to tailor their instruction to meet their needs. Port Manor followed the recommended identification process but did not have a SIFE specific program option to place those students who were identified as SIFE.

When discussing SIFE specific training and resources with the teacher participants, it was evident that each school district provided teachers with differing

levels of support. Sur Beach not only purchased SIFE specific resources, they also enrolled the teachers in ongoing professional development to address the specific needs of SIFE. Meanwhile the educators at Garden Oaks shared that they did not get any SIFE training which was also echoed by the teachers at Port Manor. Teacher collaboration and co-teaching was a topic of conversation at both Garden Oaks and Sur Beach. The teachers at Sur Beach mostly held dual certifications therefore they did not co-teach. However, they did describe an innovative collaborative school culture that the teachers developed independently to support their students across the content areas. The educators at Garden Oaks were assigned co-teachers, but without the training to properly implement the integrated ENL co-teaching model, the teachers struggled to engage in the full cycle of co-teaching.

The unanticipated finding surrounding the impact of COVID-19 influenced the schooling experiences of both Luis and Natalia. Natalia benefitted from the cancellation of the Regents Exams, as it eliminated one of the barriers to high school graduation. She and her teachers expressed that if not for the cancellation of these exams, she may not have successfully graduated from high school. Additionally, Luis was impacted by the cancellation of the NYSESLAT. Luis did not have an opportunity to demonstrate the growth he had made in his English language proficiency due to the cancellation and as a result he was scheduled as an emerging level student. This meant that Luis received an additional 180 minutes of ENL instruction per week which may have prevented him from taking a more rigorous course.

Theoretical Overview

Throughout this study, exclusion surfaced as a phenomenon that the participants had to negotiate in many ways. The student participants recounted how they experienced school from outside of the dominant school culture and mainstream community. The SIFE population at the research sites, three Long Island high schools, were often segregated from their peers, which led to feelings of subordination and not belonging. The participants also described how the racialized microaggressions they encountered from both their peers and teachers added to the exclusion, as the participants resorted to self-isolation as a form of protection. CRT acknowledges the ways in which institutions implement the concepts of interest convergence and interest divergence to prioritize the needs and wants of the dominant culture. This study demonstrates how educational institutions continue to rely on interest convergence and interest divergence rather than initiating educational change in support of SIFE. In this section, I explore how students navigated exclusion in this study while I try to make sense of the reasons why.

District Demographics

Long Island is plagued with “a high degree of segregation and inequality” (Roda et al., 2009, p.1) as a result of the district boundaries preserved by “those with the most power and privilege” (Roda et al., 2009, p. 2). Such policies have historical groundings in the United States and are linked to property rights, more specifically the inclusion and exclusion of families of color from certain communities (Alemán, 2013). More current policies are disguised as a revamping of school (Stovall, 2013); however, these policies are an example of interest divergence, benefiting those from the dominant culture who purposely exclude communities of color.

In this study, the three student participants experienced segregation at their respective schools, which is reflective of the segregation within the larger Long Island community. A recent report published by ERASE Racism (2022), revealed that Long Island remains “one of the 10 most racially segregated metropolitan regions in the U.S. School district boundaries” (Gross, 2022) which reflects the ongoing structural racism that has yet to be addressed. This segregation has severe implications for funding as the study found that the most segregated districts received “\$10,00 less in revenue per student than predominantly white districts” (Gross, 2022, para. 1). The lack of diversity in the teaching staff is equally alarming as studies reveal that 92% of Long Island teachers are White, while students of color make up about 45% of the student population (Mangino & Levy, 2019). As a result, many students do not experience school as a welcoming and affirming environment despite the increased awareness surrounding CSP and resources such as NYSED’s (2019) Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework. Thus, the increase in racial diversity on Long Island does not translate to integration at the community level or within schools.

Carolina, Natalia, and Luis described the exclusion they experienced at school by emphasizing the discomfort they felt during the limited interactions they had with their native English-speaking peers. This discomfort is not reflective of an inclusive school environment that fosters a community of learners who welcome differences. Instead, the three participants rarely found themselves in courses where they engaged with their peers from the dominant culture and found themselves developing their own social networks

within the Latinx immigrant community to socialize with peers that are also experiencing high school as an outsider.

School Culture and Mindsets

Schools are considered a microcosm of the larger society. The same mindset that is reflected in the larger community is often replicated in the local schools (Lindsey et al., 2018). When we explore the phenomenon of mindsets, we often find that they are embedded in hierarchical relationships of power and perceived status. When we are talking about school systems, that hierarchy consists of teachers, building leaders, district leaders, school board members, and the larger community. This can be dangerous because the power held at these various levels directly influences decision making regarding instruction, programming, and funding allocations based on the dominant mindset, which often has disparate implications on historically marginalized student subgroups (ERASE Racism, 2022).

According to Bessen (2019), district leaders on Long Island are aware of the need to prepare all stakeholders to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Fullan's theory of educational change (2016), suggests that educational change occurs over a continuum of phases. Considering that the initiation phase is greatly influenced by advocates from district leadership to external agents, such as school boards and the larger community, the implementation phase will only progress if there is a perceived need for the change. This is concerning as Long Island school board meetings have been plagued with representatives from Save Our Schools (Bocanegra, 2021), an organization that claims, “that white children are being scapegoated for systemic oppression, amid a national conversation on tackling pervasive inequities in education and other institutions”

(para. 10). The influence of the larger community has the power to stop educational change before it can even begin further perpetuating the concept of interest divergence.

In this study, Natalia emphasized the racialized microaggressions she encountered from teachers and students alike. Similar experiences have been documented in local papers as recent headlines indicate that students enrolled in Long Island schools continue to encounter educators who hold deficit views of communities of color which is revealed through the racism, microaggressions, and stereotypes students experience. For example, one recent headline read, “Family files lawsuit against school on Long Island over racist comments made by teacher” (Sager, 2023). Another headline stated, “Discrimination claim filed on Long Island against White teacher accused of repeatedly describing Black student's hair as ‘ethnic’” (Gusoff, 2023). These headlines are reflective of the ongoing racism students are exposed to in school settings. The purposeful segregation on Long Island, which was motivated by racism, continues to be upheld while school boards and community members ensure that topics such as inclusivity, equity, and racism are not addressed in Long Island Schools.

The Hidden Curriculum

Jean Anyon (1980) describes the way the hidden curriculum is implicitly taught within the traditional curricular discourse, replicating the class hierarchy, and contributing to the social inequities that are inherent in our society. It is common to encounter white middle/upper class students at schools that encourage student autonomy, authority and problem solving (Anyon, 1980). In other words, these students are well prepared to utilize analytical and intellectual powers, as they are well versed in multiple literacies. Meanwhile, Anyon (1980) asserts that at “working class schools” Latinx

students, and other students of color, are exposed to a curriculum that marginalizes them as they learn to follow steps and procedures that limit decision making with rules that are meant to be followed. Yosso (2002), elaborated on this concept stating, “Barring textbooks or teachers who bring a multifaceted version of U.S. history to the curriculum, students have little access to academic discourses that decenter white upper/middle class experiences as the norm” (p. 94). The purposeful segregation in the Long Island region contributes to the recurring hidden curriculum in schools that primarily teach SOC.

Furthermore, the fight to keep CRT out of schools, can make it challenging for educators to implement a curriculum grounded in CSP for fear of the possible ramifications. CSP reimagines schooling for students of color by moving beyond pedagogical strategies that are carelessly added to the curricula. Instead, this reimagined education decenters whiteness by calling out the “white middle-class, monolingual/monocultural norms... as harmful to and discriminatory against” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 12) students of color. In this way CSP acknowledges the hidden curriculum that continues to marginalize SOC and works to create schooling opportunities grounded in the assets of the students and their communities. Therefore, educators cannot claim to sustain the cultures of their students without first confronting the hidden curriculum that intentionally or unintentionally harms SOC.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the findings of my qualitative study on the schooling experiences of SIFE. I included an analysis and synthesis of the data collected as it pertained to the research questions by focusing on three themes—(1) contradictory mindsets within a single system (2) belonging and community cultural wealth (3)

continuum of research-based programming—that emerged from discussions with the participants. In an effort to continue centering the voices of SIFE, these findings emphasized the students’ personal and schooling experiences. Part Two of this chapter highlighted unanticipated findings, related to the impact in which Covid-19 had on the schooling experiences of the student participants. In Chapter Seven, the next and final chapter, a discussion of implications for action, and recommendations for further research related to the SIFE population will be presented.

The analysis of the data suggested the student participants encountered racism, in the form of racial microaggressions (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020) as well as systemic inequities that influenced their schooling experiences. The findings documented in this chapter also made connections to the concepts grounded in CRT and LatCrit such as community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), interest convergence/interest divergence (Bell, 1980), and cultural deficit theory (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). As the data was analyzed, it became clear that not all student participants had equitable learning opportunities at their respective high schools as the programming for SIFE varied in each school district. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic also influenced these schooling and learning experiences. The findings in this study will be further discussed in the following chapter as I look to the experiences of the three student participants to offer implications for state education departments, institutions of higher learning, and individual school districts.

I will end this analysis chapter with what Carolina chose to highlight in her journal entry about her participation in this study. The journal prompt asked the following

questions: Why did you agree to participate in this study? What do you hope will come from participating in this study? Carolina responded by stating:

Esta experiencia para mí está siendo muy fascinante porque sé que con mi historia voy a ayudar a muchos jóvenes que en un futuro lo van a necesitar escuchar. Sabiendo que si alguien como yo pudo hacer, why can't they. By this time when you ask something I really feel comfortable answering. Dije sí a ser parte de su tesis porque me agrada la idea de ayudar a otros y pensar que alguien va a necesitar saber esto. También me siento muy agradecida por ser parte de su tesis ya que es una nueva experiencia para mí. [*This experience has been very fascinating for me because I know that with my story I will help many young people who will need to hear it in the future. Knowing that if someone like I could do it, why can't they. By this time when you ask something I really feel comfortable answering. I said yes to being part of your thesis because I like the idea of helping others and to think that someone is going to need to know this. I also feel very grateful for being part of his thesis as it is a new experience for me.*]

CHAPTER 7 IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

My counselor, I remember at first telling me that she wanted me to go Wilson Tech, because I was already 18 years old, I was going to be 19, and so on, and, and it wasn't going to look good, and that, uh, I didn't have any credits, how was I going to get 22 credits in such a short time.

~ Carolina

The purpose of this dissertation research, which utilized multiple case studies, was to better understand the schooling experiences of SIFE and the events that have influenced those experiences. The dissertation answered the questions: (1) How do SIFE describe their schooling experiences? (2) What events do SIFE identify as having an influence on their academic/schooling experiences and why? By making sense of these experiences, I also intended to provide clarity on the obstacles and complex interplay between empowerment and oppression experienced by the SIFE population

With this dissertation, I drew on interviews, focus groups, journal entries, and researcher memos to document and explore the perspective of SIFE enrolled in three different high school settings. As previously explained in Chapter Four, the inspiration for this study evolved out of a pilot study that investigated the experiences of SIFE in alternative high school programs. The participants of that study revealed a great deal about their experiences in the traditional high school by comparing and contrasting the mostly positive experiences at the alternative school to those from the traditional high school. The student participants from the exploratory study emphasized the discomfort and the inequities they experienced with regard to how they were treated at the traditional high school prior to withdrawing and registering at the alternative school. After analyzing

the data from that pilot study, I became interested in learning firsthand about the experiences of SIFE in a traditional high school setting.

In this dissertation study, I explored how SIFE experienced school in three different districts in Long Island, New York. Chapter One emphasized the challenges and inequities that SIFE may experience when enrolled in a school system that does not consider the unique needs of SIFE. In the following chapter, I explored various subsets of the literature related to the topic, including MLLs in secondary school, the history of bilingual education in the United States, and the ways in which the extant literature describes appropriate schooling for SIFE. Chapter Three instilled a sense of urgency by focusing on the ways in which institutions, such as the education system, continue to oppress students of color. I outlined the tenets of CRT and LatCrit to clarify how the needs of BISOC are often overlooked due to the inherently racist practices and narratives that are commonplace in schools today. I described my research design and methodology in Chapter Four, in which I explained that I would conduct multiple case studies of three student participants—Carolina, Natalia, and Luis—from three different high schools to highlight the experiences of SIFE by incorporating the use of counterstories and the CRT lens.

This study focused on the perceptions of the student participants but also included the voices of teachers to provide context to the academic experiences. The experiences of the student participants were presented in Chapter Five as co-developed counterstories that were based on multiple interview transcripts and journal entries. In Chapter Six, I presented the findings within the following themes: a) contradictory mindsets within a single system; b) belonging and community cultural wealth; c) continuum of research-

based programming. I also shared the unanticipated findings that were related to the impacts of COVID-19. In this final chapter, I offer implications for policy, practice, and research. I end this chapter with recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Findings

In this section, I identify the contributions of this study to the existing literature on SIFE. In Chapter Two of this dissertation I provided a review of the literature that described the context of the problem studied herein. Within the review of existing literature, there was a deficit of information describing the experiences of SIFE as told from their perspective which called for continued research to ensure there is no dominant single story about the SIFE population. In what follows, I will situate the findings from my study within the extant literature by focusing on each of the following themes: (a) contradictory mindsets within a single system, (b) belonging and community cultural wealth, (c) continuum of research-based programming, and (d) the impact of COVID-19.

Contradictory Mindsets Within a Single System

The findings of this study highlighted the danger of the deficit discourse surrounding the SIFE population. Researchers have suggested it is important that teachers who work with SIFE view their differences and diversity as an asset, avoiding the deficit perspective that focuses on what they may be lacking (Hickey, 2015). This builds upon the findings of Calderón et al. (2019) who recommended schools provide professional development to counter the deficit mindset as all teachers are responsible for educating diverse students and are expected to uphold equitable practices for all students. In this study, deficit beliefs held by teachers include viewing and treating students as blank slates when they enter the classroom. From this viewpoint, the inclusion of multiple

languages is viewed as a challenge or problem rather than an asset (Shapiro, 2014). These deficit beliefs led to lowered expectations of the students, which influenced how teachers interacted with the students and more importantly, how and what they taught.

These assertions were confirmed through data collected from interviews and journal entries in which Carolina described how she was initially pushed out from high school due to the assumptions made about her ability to acquire the necessary credits needed to graduate high school. The student participants also shared that they experienced racial microaggressions at their respective high schools. Natalia's interaction with several of her teachers evidenced racial microaggressions in the form of layered verbal assaults and expressed that these layered verbal aggressions influenced her schooling experience in a negative way as they caused her to grow increasingly withdrawn. The data collected from the teacher participants also demonstrated how cultural deficit theory played a role in the schooling of SIFE, as the teacher participants blamed the families for their perceived deficits of SIFE. They assumed that their cultural values contradicted what was needed to achieve academic success. The comments made by the teacher participants in this study demonstrated the importance of the counterstories shared in Chapter Five, which aimed to challenge stereotypes of the SIFE population.

By contrast, the student participants described other educators who demonstrated an asset-based mindset leading students to experience contradictory mindsets within their individual school systems. These educators not only held high expectations for the student participants, but also demonstrated a commitment to social justice by engaging in "resistance strategies that attempt to counteract the conditions and results of ineffective educational practices" (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 310). This was evident in

the way Carolina was empowered to fight back against the norms that were reproduced in her school. Once she learned about her rights, she made the decision not to sign discharge papers despite the pressure she felt from her counselor.

Belonging and Community Cultural Wealth

During interviews, Carolina, Natalia, and Luis made several references to seeking out the support of other members from the Latinx community to better navigate through the school system. The findings of the study illuminated the presence of community cultural wealth in the form of social capital, familial capital, aspirational capital, linguistic capital, resistant capital, and navigational capital. This builds on the research of Yosso (2005) as she stated “these various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth” (p. 77). These assertions were confirmed as the student participants described the ways in which they persevered because of the comfort and knowledge they found within their own communities.

These participants shared that their daily schedule segregated them from their native English-speaking peers which led them to feel unwelcome in the mainstream school environment. Due to the culture of English dominance that permeated the schools, the student participants created their own social networks to support one another exemplifying the concept of social capital. These sentiments were reciprocated by Natalia who observed bullying and experienced racialized microaggressions from her teachers and peers. In response to the discomfort Natalia felt in certain classes, Natalia would skip these classes and spend time with her friends in the cafeteria. This built upon findings of previous studies where students from the Latinx population created counterspaces

(Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020) which became a defense mechanism against the microaggressions they were experiencing.

Carolina illuminated the ways in which cultural capital overlaps in sharing how she worked to overcome financial barriers to higher education. She did so by relying on the social capital she acquired to connect with community based organizations that would help her get scholarships specifically meant for the undocumented population. She also demonstrated aspirational capital as she maintained “her hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real or perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Moreover, she tapped into resistance capital by challenging the inequities she faced by seeking additional funding. Luis shared that the overlapping forms of capital that he depended on most were found within his own home. His family encouraged Luis to return to school upon his arrival to the United States affirming the presence of familial capital. Luis’ uncle explained the many benefits of graduating high school to Luis, one of which was the accrual of linguistic capital. Moreover, his cousins, who had already graduated from the local high school, were able to guide Luis through the school system sharing navigational capital. The similarities and differences in the experiences of these three participants sheds light on the racialized, gendered, and classed structures of education for Latinx students. More importantly, by highlighting the experiences of three unique Latinx participants, I utilized LatCrit as a lens to discuss the issues specific to the Latinx community, while also respecting that this community is not a monolith.

Continuum of Research-Based Programming

The findings of this study support the extant literature suggesting that the SIFE population are in need of additional academic programs and resources that other newly

arrived MLLs do not require. Of specific note were the discrepancies in how the students were supported within the three high schools. The data suggested the program options for SIFE in each of these schools varied in the ways they implemented regulations, appropriate program models, and research-based practices. This was demonstrated in Garden Oaks, as the district did not formally identify SIFE in the district despite the regulatory guidance that mandates the number of SIFE in the district. As a result, the SIFE in Garden Oaks experienced school in ways that are not equitable, as compared to their peers from other districts such as Sur Beach. In Sur Beach SIFE are formally identified using the states' recommended screener and then teachers are provided with the data from the screener, which helped inform instruction. Furthermore, Sur Beach has a program dedicated to low literacy SIFE. This aligns with previous research stating that SIFE require intense literacy instruction in both English and the native language to address the foundational skills they may be lacking (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015; Freeman et al. 2001; Garica et al., 2011; NYSED, 2016). There is also a push to provide these students with a temporary newcomer program that not only addresses foundational skills but also allows the students to transition to the new school culture and learn school norms in a separate space with a specialized instructor (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010; Hos, 2016).

At Port Manor, the teachers shared that although they formally identify SIFE and follow the suggested protocol set forth by NYSED, they do not offer a program dedicated to the needs of SIFE. Mrs. Rasteiro was formally trained to implement the recommended curricula for SIFE but the district did not invest in the resources needed to implement the program. This example supported the findings of previous studies that suggested school

districts often opt out of purchasing the appropriate resources (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015) and do not properly train their staff to be able to meet the needs of SIFE (Linville, 2016). These sentiments were reciprocated by Ms. Rivera as she and colleagues have received no SIFE training at all.

Based on the data collected in teacher interviews and focus groups, the findings of this study supported the extant literature suggesting that co-teaching is often misunderstood resulting in the segregation of MLLs into homogeneous groups that focuses on watered down content (Dove & Honigsfeld). This was demonstrated in the case of Ms. Rivera, who pulled the MLLs in her class to a different room to teach them how to use the calculator while the rest of the students prepared for the Regents Exam. By contrast, the teachers at Sur Beach described a collaborative culture that was organically implemented by the teachers to best support the students through interdisciplinary units of study.

The Impact of COVID-19

The findings of this study highlighted the ways in which SIFE are negatively impacted by high-stakes testing. Due to temporary changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, MLL's graduated at higher rates during the pandemic as compared to before. The data suggested that the Regents Exams were a barrier to graduation for the larger MLL population which included SIFE. This builds upon the findings of Vasquez Heilig (2011) who suggested that high-stakes testing have led to both higher retention rates and lower graduation rates for MLLs. Moreover, these assessments are normed to the dominant culture and draw upon the "native knowledge and ways of knowing" (Rector-Arranda, 2016, p. 11) possessed by students who are

members of the dominant culture, and do not take into account or measure the diverse perspectives and varied prior experiences of students of color who are outside of that culture (Delpit, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Yosso, 2005). Natalia in particular benefited from the cancellation of the Regents Exams as she and Ms. Rivera both believed that she would not have graduated with that requirement still in effect. This finding warrants a deeper look at how SIFE are assessed considering that they are simultaneously learning English and the content.

Implications

For Policy

While the SIFE population in the United States continues to rise (Salva, 2021), little attention has been paid to policy related to this niche population of MLLs. For this reason, and based on this dissertation's findings, I offer the following calls to action: (a) enhancements to C.R. Part 154 for clarity and consistency (b) SIFE specific program models for districts to follow; (c) revisions to ESSA that consider SIFE.

Enhancements to C.R. Part 154 for Clarity and Consistency. In New York State, the official legislation that governs the instruction for MLLs is known as Commissioner's Regulations Part 154 (NYSED, 2015). The language of these regulations can be difficult for districts to interpret and often results in glaring differences in how MLLs are serviced from district to district. In order to support the implementation of the regulation, NYSED has released additional Q&A documents. Unfortunately, the ambiguity of the language provides an easy out for district leaders to implement the bare minimum in support of the SIFE population. For example, C.R. Part 154 requires all districts to submit an annual plan which should include,

The district's philosophy regarding the education of its English Language Learners, including but not limited to program types offered in the district, including programs, if they exist and/or instructional practices, specifically for subpopulations of English Language Learners (Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education, English Language Learners with Disabilities, Newcomer English Language Learners, Developing English Language Learners, Long-Term English Language Learners, and Former English Language Learners). (NYSED, 2015, p. 34)

The concerning language in this excerpt of the regulations is "if they exist," which may be interpreted as though districts have the option to develop a SIFE-specific program despite the research that consistently recommends implementing a unique program just for the SIFE population. Alternatively, district leaders may not be aware of the differences between a standard program for English language learners and programs designed specifically for SIFE, which leads them to support the SIFE population in the same way they do all ELLs/MLLS. Without clarity in the regulatory guidance and enhanced mandates, New York State will continue to see districts that are not providing equitable services to SIFE as well as inconsistencies across the state.

SIFE Specific Program Models for Districts to Follow. The findings of this study revealed that districts not only struggled with the pedagogical practices that were most appropriate for SIFE but also had a limited understanding of how best to individualize student schedules to increase graduation rates. In this study, the three high schools provided SIFE with different course options which were not always equitable. Garden Oaks did not have any SIFE specific classes or programming as they did not

formally identify SIFE. Port Manor had one teacher with formal SIFE training, however the small number of SIFE in the district meant these students were grouped with other newcomer MLLs in courses designed for students at the entering and emerging proficiency levels but without much consideration to the interruptions in their formal education. Lastly, Sur Beach implemented the Bridges Program which is specifically designed to meet the needs of SIFE, especially those with low literacy in their native language.

NYSED recommended the Bridges program, which was funded by NYSED, in order to support the growing population of SIFE in NYS. Although there is no cost for the curriculum or training to support SIFE in grades 6-12, there is an associated cost for the materials. Some districts may not find this additional cost to be necessary.

Additionally, access to the curriculum is only provided once teachers and administrators participate in an orientation. This single option does not meet the needs of all districts. I propose that NYSED provide a variety of sample programming options for SIFE and courses that should be offered to SIFE. For example, providing districts with sample schedules for SIFE would be helpful as districts are looking for guidance as to which courses are most appropriate for this population of students. By sharing sample schedules that have worked in districts that do not subscribe to the Bridges program, there could be more consistency across the state.

Another recommendation would be to provide descriptions of introductory credit-bearing courses districts have developed to meet the needs of SIFE. For example, in Port Manor, one teacher described a new course the district is offering students that considers student interest and experience. According to Mrs. Laffin from Port Manor, this course is

“a pilot program of an agricultural class because we have a new greenhouse. So, it is a class again only [for] ENL students, and I try to incorporate, um, terms and topics as much as I can that will be seen again in living environment.” For instance, this course could potentially be described in the New York State Course Catalog as an agricultural & environmental science course that combines content related to plant production while applying scientific concept principles and theories pertaining to the living environment. This course is designed to support English language acquisition through hands-on content instruction. In this way the course has the potential to infuse ENL, pre-living environment and agriculture into a credit bearing course. By providing introductory credit-bearing courses, students were exposed to content that they would see in their Regents level classes in a scaffolded way that met them where they were linguistically, and provided a solid foundation to build from. Sharing descriptions to these types of courses could take some of the pressure off the state and other districts as they look for ways to support SIFE. The goal is to have appropriate options for all districts, whether or not there is a large population of SIFE. Therefore, the state education department should disseminate materials that would support the implementation of appropriate courses, curricula, programming, and scheduling of SIFE based on their individual needs.

Revisions to ESSA that Consider SIFE. Although the goal of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was to ensure a quality education for all students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), their accountability system can impact the SIFE population in a negative way. ESSA is the nation's current education law that was signed in 2015, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), the new law “maintains an expectation that there will be accountability

and action to effect positive change in our lowest-performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress, and where graduation rates are low over extended periods of time” (para. 7). In this dissertation study, one participant described how she felt pushed out upon initial enrollment and was offered an alternative program instead of the traditional high school. Carolina rehashed this experience and shared, “My counselor, I remember at first telling me, oh, that she wanted, oh, that I go to Wilson Tech, because I was already 18 years old, I was going to be 19, and so on, and, and it wasn't going to look good, and that, uh, I didn't have any credits, how was I going to get 22 credits in such a short time.” Carolina’s experience illustrated how SIFE are pushed out and encouraged to sign discharge papers. This resonates with research that suggests this is a common occurrence for the SIFE population as districts are concerned about their accountability status. According to Lukes (2014), “High schools, under increasing pressure to increase graduation rates in the context of rising standards, tend to view immigrant adolescents with interrupted schooling and limited English proficiency as hard to serve; enrollment data reveal a trend for them to be discharged from high school before they have graduated” (p. 807). Although ESSA is a federal law, each state is responsible for completing their own consolidated state plan in which they describe their statewide accountability system and improvement activities. Currently SIFE are included in the ELL accountability subgroup, despite their unique needs and traits. In light of these findings, one implication for state education departments is to revise their individual ESSA consolidated state plans to consider the SIFE population, which could provide districts with realistic expectations for this subgroup all while still remaining in good standing.

Some possible revisions include multiple pathways to graduation for SIFE. As it stands, there are no alternative pathways to graduation that are specific to the SIFE population. One concern that was highlighted in the data is the age when SIFE enter high school, as students age out of high school at 21 without much consideration given to their age upon enrollment. In this study, Carolina entered high school at 18 and Luis at 17, ages that most of their same-age peers were graduating. However, these two participants still had three to four years of schooling in order to accrue the necessary credits to graduate and pass the Regents Exams. Findings from this study indicate that the student participants were not provided an equitable schooling experience as most students enter high school at 14 and have 6-7 years before they age out of New York State public schools. Additionally, research (Cummings, 1989, 2008) suggests that it can take MLLs seven to ten years to acquire Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This highlights the inequity presented by the English Regents Exam, which requires a command of the English language. Considering this research, one implication is to provide SIFE with extended time to graduate even after the age of 21.

For Practice

The suggested implications for policy could also impact individual school districts in New York State. Some of the proposed changes mentioned above can take a great deal of time to come to fruition. In the meantime, students will continue to face inequities in the K-12 setting. For that reason, some of the following recommendations will serve as an immediate enhancement to better support MLLs and the SIFE population at the district level.

Teacher Preparation. The teaching profession requires that educators be both pedagogical and content experts (Wilson et al., 2001). The majority of teacher preparation focuses on education theory and mastering a specific content, while less emphasis is placed on the pedagogical aspect through clinical practice. The data collected during interviews with the teacher participants revealed that their teacher preparation courses did not include a focus on SIFE. This was true for the content area teachers as well as those with the TESOL certification. Ms. Rivera, a teacher with TESOL certification commented, “I finished Borough College not that long ago, and like I said, you have some teachers that have been teaching probably close to 20 years. I don't remember learning extensively about SIFE. We don't learn it in our master's.” Ms. Rivera's experience has highlighted the limited preparation she received during her TESOL coursework to support the SIFE population. Additionally, the teachers at Garden Oaks shared that they are not provided with training or resources to support SIFE, therefore there are ESOL specialists in the classroom who have never learned about the nuances of SIFE but are expected to provide equitable learning opportunities. One consideration is for teacher preparation to ensure that all prospective teachers have the opportunity for clinical experience with all subgroups of ELLs. Hands-on experience alongside an ESOL expert provides prospective ESOL teachers with a gradual release of responsibility. A clinically-centered program that collaborates with model schools is an ideal scenario to ensure that the mentoring taking place is reflective of research based best practices while promoting an assets-based mindset.

Because the SIFE population is a unique subgroup of MLLs, an additional recommendation is for teacher preparation to include a course that guides prospective

teachers as they learn how to identify SIFE and how to best meet their needs. For example, one district in this study did not formally identify SIFE which left teachers missing crucial information. A SIFE specific course could (a) explore the various definitions of SIFE in the United States, (b) describe how teachers can identify which students classify as SIFE, (c) catalog the various programs used to support SIFE, (d) illustrate sample activities that are appropriate for SIFE, and (e) recount the stories of SIFE to better understand their lived experiences. Furthermore, most TESOL programs include at least one course for teachers to better understand MLLs who are twice identified as a student with disabilities. According to NYSED's Office of Higher Education (n.d.), the program requirements for TESOL include "means for understanding the needs of students with disabilities, including at least three semester hours of study for teachers to develop the skills necessary to provide instruction that will promote the participation and progress of students with disabilities in the general education curriculum" (para. 4). This same attention should be given to SIFE because this responsibility cannot be left to the school districts alone. To ensure equitable outcomes for all MLL subgroups, teachers should graduate and enter classrooms with a clear understanding of who SIFE are and what type of pedagogical decisions are most appropriate.

Pedagogical Shifts. To propel the shifting paradigm in education and dismantle the deficit discourse surrounding SIFE, district leaders should guide their faculty in promoting asset-based mindsets through a reflection of the current practices and narratives impacting SIFE. Much of the data collected from teacher participants in this study was grounded in deficit language and beliefs which led to lowered expectations of

the students and ultimately, had an influence on classroom instruction. The findings in Chapter Six revealed that the students were also aware of the low expectations teachers held. As shared in the previous chapter, Natalia overheard her teacher discuss the limited progress students were making as the teacher made the assumption that students couldn't hear or understand these conversations. These types of comments are not only reflective of microaggressions that can impact the academic success of students (Solórzano & Perez-Huber, 2020) but they also influence teachers' perceptions of students, often viewing and treating SIFE as blank slates when they enter the classroom, rather than recognizing the unique funds of knowledge they contribute. One consideration would be for districts to engage faculty and staff in training surrounding the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education framework, which was released by NYSED in 2019. According to NYSED (2019) the framework is:

intended to help education stakeholders create student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities; foster positive academic outcomes; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; empower students as agents of social change; and contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking (p. 6-7).

This framework was developed with the help of scholars such as David Kirkland, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Django Paris, all of whom are experts in the field of education research with strong ties to CRT. With their guidance, the framework was grounded in years of research and presented small steps practitioners could take to implement asset-based pedagogies.

Another consideration to support the shift to asset-based pedagogies is additional professional development for teachers to meet the needs of SIFE. The teachers at Garden Oaks reported that they had never received any training or professional development to help them support SIFE. For example, one teacher stated, “I’ll be honest with you, like probably all of us ENL teachers should have it. I would not say that I’m trained to teach SIFE or have professional development in it and I feel like I should do more.” This finding demonstrated the need for additional training and professional development at her school district. The need for professional development to support the SIFE population may not be isolated to this district and may require further inquiry. The recommendation to include SIFE specific training is essential as NYSED has stated “all teachers are teachers of ELLs and need to plan accordingly” (NYSED, 2015, p. 2). Teachers cannot plan accordingly without the proper training to do so. This statement sends the message that anyone can teach MLLs with or without the proper qualifications and dismisses the years of coursework and expertise ESOL educators are bringing into the classroom. Districts must ensure that all teachers are prepared to appropriately support MLLs, which includes the SIFE population.

Appropriate Programming and Resources. To ensure SIFE are placed into the appropriate programs and courses, it is imperative that districts screen students properly. In Chapter Six of this dissertation, I reviewed New York State’s ELL ID process, which includes the identification of SIFE through an oral interview, the implementation of the Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS), and a writing screener. The oral interview provides context about the students’ schooling history, interests, and learning preferences. The MLS and writing screener can guide districts with appropriate

placement by providing insight into the students' literacy and math skills in their home language. However, the data collected in this research revealed one district did not identify SIFE at all. Therefore, the programming and instruction of the district's students did not take SIFE status into account. Furthermore, this may lead to the misidentification of SIFE as a student with learning disabilities as there is both an over- and under-identification of students twice identified as both an English language learner and a student with disabilities (Sanatullova-Allison & Robison-Young, 2016; Sullivan, 2011). Teachers may not be aware of the gaps in a student's education and view their low literacy as an indicator of a student in need of special education services. Beyond the identification of SIFE status, research also indicated that educators working with SIFE build upon their prior experiences and funds of knowledge (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Paris, 2012; Shapiro, 2014). The oral interview is a great way to collect this information about SIFE and use it to inform instruction; however, schools that are not using these tools are at a disadvantage.

Another consideration for appropriate programming is the development of SIFE specific curricula across the content areas to ensure equitable access to grade level content instruction. NYSED has worked with CUNY to develop the Bridges program for SIFE, however some schools may choose to develop their own curricula and program. The recommendation is to have ESOL certified educators collaborate with their content area counterparts to create curriculum maps that considers meaningful scaffolds and necessary adaptations for SIFE. A third program consideration for SIFE is credit recovery. In this study, Natalia found great success with credit recovery, however, credit recovery programs are currently a local decision which can lead to inequities for students

who might benefit from such a program but do not have the option at their designated high school. At the very least, districts could provide the option to attend a neighboring school's program.

Cultural Capital for New Entrants and their Families. Research indicated that SIFE are entering schools in the United States with a limited understanding of the cultural norms and systems in place (Lukes, 2014). The data collected in this study highlighted the ways in which this background knowledge, better known as cultural capital (Yosso, 2005), influenced the schooling experiences of SIFE. The findings revealed that students would have benefitted from some frontloading of this type of knowledge upon registering at their respective high schools. For example, upon registering for high school, Carolina was pushed out into an alternative school and while she was unhappy about the guidance she was receiving, she didn't think she had a choice. It wasn't until an educator in the school stepped in and informed her of her right to stay at her local high school that Carolina was empowered to speak up to the school counselor and refuse the alternative school. One consideration for schools is to provide seminars for new entrants to help them transition into their high school in the United States and better understand the expectations and systems that are in place.

This is especially beneficial and appropriate for SIFE because this subgroup is often comprised of young adults who are of legal age to make their own choices about their educational journey but lack the background knowledge to make an informed decision. Because SIFE have gaps in their formal education, their understanding of formal schooling may be limited. SIFE should not be left alone to navigate the education system with little background knowledge or support.

Another consideration is to provide these same seminars for the families of SIFE. Although all school districts are required to lead an orientation for parents of newly identified ELLs, these meetings cover just the basic information about ENL and Bilingual Programs. One recommendation is family sessions that cover topics such as the education system in the United States and requirements for high school graduation in New York. For example, research has shown that Latinx parents “tend to see the school as the main force responsible for their children’s education and academic development” (Valdés, 1996, p. 44). This shows that the parents and families of Latinx students tend to trust the school system and don’t insert themselves in the same ways that non immigrant parents do (Vasquez Heilig, 2011).

Parents should also be made aware that NYSED developed a *Parents Bill of Rights for New York State’s English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners* which is available in 30 different languages. NYSED also partnered with the New York State Language Regional Bilingual Resource Network on the parent hotline which can provide additional guidance in the parents preferred language if they believe that their rights or the rights of their child have been violated.

School counselors are often one of the first faculty members that new students interact with. Counselors are usually responsible for scheduling students into appropriate courses and providing students with guidance on which courses to take and why. The data collected in this research confirmed that each of the student participants worked closely with their counselors to make decisions about their education. For example, Natalia was offered the credit recovery course because of conversations had between herself, her counselor, and Ms. Rivera. Although Carolina felt she was initially misguided

by her counselor, in the end she explained they developed a great relationship as she provided additional guidance throughout the years. Lastly, Luis had shared that his counselor keeps him informed on which Regents Exams he still needs to pass in order to graduate from high school. Another consideration for school districts is to provide school counselors with additional training so they are better equipped to support the SIFE population. This additional training should cover topics such as reading foreign transcripts, appropriate placement/programming for SIFE, and post high school opportunities for all students including undocumented students.

In this study, all three student participants shared a desire to continue their schooling beyond high school, but they encountered challenges doing so. For example, Carolina encountered a barrier to higher education which was the higher tuition rate she was required to pay as an undocumented student. Natalia shared that she feared completing applications for additional schooling because of her undocumented status, and Luis was still in high school at the time of data collection but he did not demonstrate an understanding of the college application process. To provide all students with equitable access to higher education, school counselors should learn more about the opportunities available to undocumented students. For example, Carolina worked closely with a teacher outside of this study who learned about a few scholarships available to undocumented students at Borough College. Unfortunately, this opportunity did not work out for Carolina but she eventually attended a seminar led by a community-based organization which provided a list of possible scholarships she could apply for. Carolina later met with a representative from the organization who helped her complete the applications. The recommendation is for districts to reach out to community-based

organizations to help inform school counselors of the many opportunities available to undocumented students who are considering higher education and who need help with respect to the financial burden.

For Research

Theoretical implications of this study pertain to the utilization of counterstories (Delgado, 1989) as a methodological and narrative tool. I used counterstories to center the voices and stories from a commonly silenced population and to gain better insight into their experiences while exposing the dominant discourse (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Miller et al., 2020). By collaborating with students who have been historically marginalized, I also practiced a more humanized approach (Paris & Winn, 2013) to research in which we can learn from the student participant's input.

Counterstories. Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I worked closely with the three student participants to develop counterstories that highlighted their schooling experiences in a way that was authentic to their perspectives. In addition to sharing the schooling experiences of the SIFE participants, these counterstories revealed a great deal of personal and sensitive information as well. With these revelations the participants demonstrated vulnerability in that they opened up about their lived realities knowing this would be documented and shared with others. For this reason, I believe there is a certain level of responsibility on behalf of the researcher to not only honor the authenticity of the participants' stories but also ensure they are comfortable with the story that is being shared. Therefore, I encourage researchers to utilize counterstories to help dismiss the negative stereotypes and dominant narratives that are perpetuated about the SIFE

population, but I also find it prudent that the participants be included in the writing of the counterstories.

Additionally, the inclusion of the counterstories in this study offers an alternative perspective to inform practice and influence programs designed to support SIFE. Researchers (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Delpit, 2012; Emdin, 2016; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014) have long believed that “the improper education of many minorities, marginalized, and immigrant students in the U.S. is the result of an education system that fails to recognize and embrace students’ experiences and ways of understanding the world and their ideas of teaching and learning” (Olivares-Orellana, 2017, p. 118). With that in mind, the counterstories used the participants’ full repertoire of experiences and knowledge to demonstrate alternative ways of learning and knowing. Despite the deficit discourse that labels SIFE as having insufficient knowledge, these counterstories recognized their assets and supported the argument for increased attention to appropriate practices and programs to support their unique ways of learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Overall, the findings from this study illuminated the need for additional research to better support the needs of the SIFE population. Some implications and recommendations for future research include extending the timeline of data collection to see how the student participants progress in the future, working alongside SIFE from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and comparing the policy and practices surrounding SIFE in different states.

Longitudinal Work

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I grappled with my own concerns for the three student participants. By developing three unique counterstories crafted alongside each of the student participants, I set out to ensure participant voices and their authentic experiences were at the center of this study as a way to humanize the research. In doing so, I found myself wondering what was next for these young people and what I could do as a researcher to guide them as they pursued their goals post-high school graduation. This reality surfaced as Carolina shared her efforts to find funding for higher education. I was confronted with my own internal struggle, considering the intersections of my identity as a researcher and my role within a larger social network with ties to multiple community-based organizations that directly support undocumented students. Therefore, I introduced Carolina to a colleague at U.L. Support, a community centered organization that provides legal representation and community education to undocumented immigrants. We attended a webinar together in Spanish, which not only highlighted over 50 different scholarships she may be eligible for, but also provided a great deal of context about higher education for undocumented students.

After making this connection and scheduling a one-on-one meeting for Carolina with a representative at U.L. Support, I am still wondering about the outcome. Research that follows SIFE after high school would be beneficial to answer questions about their level of preparation for college or careers. Undocumented SIFE are also working to achieve permanent status in this country, but questions remain about what this looks like once they are no longer students in the K-12 setting. Engaging in ongoing research

alongside participants can shed light on ways that educators can prepare SIFE for life after high school.

Diverse Sample of Student Participants

For this study I sought student participants who identified as SIFE from Spanish-speaking countries. I made this decision because I am a native Spanish speaker and wanted to ensure all communication could take place in the language the student participants were most comfortable using. Focusing on only Spanish speakers allowed me to speak with, and work alongside, the student participants without a translator. However, there are SIFE from a wide array of countries who speak many different languages. For example, research conducted by Hos (2012, 2016, 2020) highlighted SIFE from countries such as Thailand, Nepal, and Yemen. The findings from this research suggested that experiences of SIFE vary greatly depending on their home countries and languages spoken. Their stories should also be shared.

Opening spaces for more students to tell their stories can have a positive impact on the SIFE population. For example, as referenced in an earlier chapter, Carolina shared that she was grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this study as she wants to share her story to inspire others and hopes to one day write a book about her experiences. Moreover, by engaging in the writing of her counterstory, Carolina was exposed to a new experience which she will carry with her as she continues her own education. This dissertation can be used as a tool to better understand the experiences of Spanish-speaking SIFE in Long Island High Schools. Similar research with SIFE from different language and cultural backgrounds may yield very different experiences, which is important to reflect on in providing equitable educational opportunities for all SIFE.

Comparative Study

In this study, data collected from student and teacher participants at three Long Island high schools provided insight into the experiences of SIFE. The data also revealed that these three high schools implemented the regulations set forth by New York State with varying degrees of fidelity, perhaps due to vague language in C.R. Part 154 and limited understanding of the supplemental guidance documents. The lack of consistency in implementing NYS regulations and guidance influenced the educational experiences of the SIFE participants. The student participants were exposed to various curricula, divergent programs, differing resources, and educators with inconsistent opportunities to obtain SIFE specific training. These discrepancies revealed a system that does not provide equitable opportunities for SIFE at three different high schools.

Considering that these data are specific to SIFE in New York State, it is important to remember that the regulatory guidance may look very different in other states. For example, a large majority of states utilize the World-Class Instructional Design Assessment (WIDA) standards to support MLLs, while New York does not have specific standards for MLLs. This opens the door to questions surrounding the ways in which SIFE are supported in other states. Do other states have a better handle on how to support SIFE? Do tools like the WIDA standards appropriately consider the needs of SIFE? These questions highlight the need for additional research comparing the regulatory guidance and pedagogical practices in different states. As it stands, there is very little consistency from state to state and the findings may justify the need for federal guidelines to provide equitable educational opportunities for SIFE.

Limitations

Data collected through qualitative research involving case studies is not intended to be generalized. For this reason, I drew on the concepts of transactional validity and transformational validity to ground the “worthiness” of my study (Cho & Trent, 2006). In this section I will acknowledge and explain some of the limitations of this study. The first limitation was the recruitment of student participants who were all Spanish-speaking. Despite the research that has shown SIFE come from a variety of countries and speak multiple languages, the student participants were drawn just from the Latinx community. However, this study took place in the Long Island region where the majority of SIFE are Spanish-speaking and therefore it is important that their voices be heard. Additionally, the choice to focus on Spanish-speaking SIFE was intentional as I am also a native speaker of Spanish and was able to communicate with the student participants in their preferred language.

Another limitation was that the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic which led to unexpected barriers. During this time many school district leaders were simply overwhelmed with the uncertainty of the pandemic and frequent policy changes which created a barrier to district approval. My requests to work alongside participants from seven different school districts were denied, impacting my initial timeline. Moreover, because of the pandemic I was limited to data collection in virtual spaces. All interviews and focus groups were conducted via Zoom and the journal entries were submitted using Google Docs. The enhanced member checking also took place synchronously and asynchronously using both Zoom and Google Docs.

Although gathering data via Zoom allowed for more convenient meetings, as neither participants nor the researcher had to travel, there were times conversations were impacted by audio issues and connectivity. Additionally, camera angles could limit the social cues I was able to observe such as fidgeting and eye contact. However, conducting interviews via Zoom allowed both the researcher and participants to gain insight into each other's personal space which led to an increased comfort and intimacy as we had access to view certain parts of each other's home lives.

Lastly, researcher bias, or *a priori* assumptions, can impact the credibility of the findings (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). By incorporating enhanced member checking, I made sure that the participants were involved in the development of the findings. Additionally, I was able to refine the interview protocols based on the pilot studies I had conducted. I used the two-year period during which I conducted the pilot study to test run the methods of this study and adjust my own facilitator style. Therefore, I had the opportunity to reflect and get feedback in preparation for this research study.

Contribution to the Field

In this section, I identify the contributions of this study to the existing literature on the SIFE population. Chapter Two of this dissertation provided a review of the literature, context to the problem studied, as well as the gaps that highlighted a need for additional research. In particular, there was a deficit of information in the existing literature that highlighted the assets of the SIFE population to counter the dominant narrative. In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I shared the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit that served as the lens through which I analyzed the data and explained

the findings of this study. This study contributes to both the literature surrounding SIFE as well as the theoretical frameworks and concepts used throughout the dissertation.

This study yields immense implications for the field of TESOL, in that it explored and illustrated alternative ways to understand the hurdles and challenges that the SIFE population encountered in their academic settings. Multiple aspects of this study have built upon the work of scholars (Flores, 2021; Hos, 2020; Olivares-Orellana, 2020) who have focused on the academic experiences of SIFE. Furthermore, the percentage of MLLs who are classified as SIFE is increasing in the United States (Salva, 2021), which has put additional pressure on ESOL educators, who are most often tasked with the responsibility to support language acquisition while also introducing new rigorous content. Through the inclusion of the teacher perspective, this study contributes to the literature surrounding the instruction of SIFE and the pedagogical choices that teachers make to support the schooling of SIFE.

The findings from this study also contributes to the research surrounding the immigrant population. Critical research on the educational trajectories of undocumented immigrant youth (Gonzales, 2010; 2015), sought to explore the challenges related to their immigration status and the transition to postsecondary education. This study builds on this foundation of critical work by highlighting the academic experiences of three undocumented students as they navigate and graduate high school in the hopes that they too can continue on to postsecondary education. Moreover, the focus on the struggles and trauma of SIFE in the literature inspired me to reexamine the SIFE journey in a slightly different way. Through this study, I illustrated the experiences of the SIFE participants in such a way that scholars, teachers, administrators, stakeholders, and policy makers can

learn from the counterstories and increase their awareness of the assets immigrant students, such as SIFE, bring to our schools and communities. In this way this work also builds on and expands Paris & Alim's (2014) work on culturally sustaining pedagogies. Paris & Alim (2017) stated "in this work we are committed to envisioning and enacting pedagogies that are not filtered through the glass of amused contempt and pity" (p. 2), instead CSP centers the "rich and innovative linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other youth and communities of color" (p. 2). By sharing counterstories that focus on the assets of the participants, this study contributes to the literature surrounding CSP.

By working with student research participants to craft, develop, and revise their counterstories, I see this study as offering a unique contribution to the theoretical frameworks of CRT and LatCrit. More specifically LatCrit, as the counterstories in this study were co-constructed with Latinx participants to share their schooling experiences in an authentic manner. LatCrit theory works in concert with CRT to challenge the dominant narrative surrounding race and racism and how they impact the education of Latinx students (Solórzano & Delgado, 2001). The three counterstories highlighted in this dissertation are significant because they revealed success stories of SIFE who have successfully graduated high school, proving the dominant narrative surrounding SIFE to be nothing more than a negative stereotype.

Conclusion

This dissertation was inspired by a pilot study I conducted to learn more about the experiences of SIFE at an alternative high school program. My previous experiences working with SIFE contrasted greatly with what I saw at the program. The students,

teachers, and administrators in the pilot study were fully committed to a program that engaged SIFE in culturally responsive and sustaining practices. The students were thriving as a community of learners with similar goals and prior schooling experiences. Feeling ashamed of my own deficit views, I was motivated to continue working alongside the SIFE population in the hopes that I could share their authentic stories with others, in an attempt to shift the dominant narrative I fell prey to.

The purpose of this dissertation was to make sense of the experiences of SIFE in a way that provided scholars and educators with valuable insight to the assets these students bring. Through this study, I have come to understand the dangers of the dominant narrative and the power of counterstories. Carefully crafted counterstories provided participants with the opportunity to share their points of view, enhancing human agency and amplifying student voice (Martinez, 2020). Furthermore, these counterstories illustrated alternative ways to understand the hurdles and challenges that the SIFE population might encounter in their academics settings while also increasing the awareness of the assets SIFE bring to our schools and communities.

The existing research surrounding SIFE is written by educators and scholars without much input from the participants. By engaging SIFE in the research practices, I intended to implement a more humanized approach to conduct the research alongside the student participants. Furthermore, by humanizing the SIFE experience, the individuals and realities behind the dominant discourse are revealed, offering an alternative story to those that are dominant in our society. More research is needed that attends to the experiences of SIFE in high school and beyond, focusing on their accomplishments and assets. Additionally, there is still a need to examine how to close the gaps in the

educational achievement of SIFE to ensure that SIFE are positioned to attain whatever level of education they desire.

I hope that through this dissertation, scholars, educators, and policymakers can become more aware of the ways in which the SIFE population are marginalized and experience inequities in educational spaces in order to avoid replicating those practices. I also hope that through this dissertation, the student participants were empowered by their contribution to academic writing through the counterstories they co-constructed. Ultimately, I hope that the counterstories in this dissertation can serve as a unique contribution to the field of education, where students who have been historically marginalized by the education system collaborate in scholarly research to center their lived experiences and change the narrative.

APPENDIX A STUDENT CONSENT

My name is Erica Flores, a Ph.D. candidate at St. John's University, and I would like to invite you to be a part of my research on multilingual learners who have had interrupted formal education in high school. The goal of this research is to better understand your learning experiences as a multilingual learner/Student with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) in this country. For this study, I am interviewing secondary teachers, administrators and students at your high school.

Your participation in this research would involve completing multiple interviews. The time required for each interview would be approximately 60-90 minutes. I hope to meet through a videoconference platform such as Zoom. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

I will write up the results of all the recorded sessions, which will be used both to complete work for a doctoral dissertation and possibly for publication. I will be happy to discuss with you the findings of this study and share with you insights into your learning and discoveries. As I report your stories, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. In particular, I will not identify you or share your responses with other individuals in your school or district.

Research records will be stored on a password-protected USB drive and a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to the file. All audio recordings will be transcribed and added to the file. Records will be destroyed in approximately 3 years, once the study has been completed. If, when we talk, I hear that

you are thinking of harming yourself or others, I am required by law to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you participate at first, but later discontinue participation, you will not be subject to any penalty or loss of benefits. Further, you are free to not answer certain questions without penalty or loss of benefits.

It can often be challenging for students and educators to discuss issues related to diversity and equity in schools. Thus, great care and sensitivity will be used by the researcher in addressing such topics with study participants in order to minimize any risk associated with discussing them.

Potential benefits include the opportunity 1) to contribute knowledge to the multilingual learner/SIFE community 2) to develop a fuller understanding of the factors that influence student achievement and learning.

Records identifying research participants (including interview transcripts, internal memos, and internal reports) will be kept confidential. After I transcribe the interviews, I will de-identify all research records that identify the subjects. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact the researcher (Ms. Erica Flores at: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D.,

Chair, St. John's Institutional Review Board, at (718) 990- 1440 or via e-mail at digiuser@stjohns.edu.

There is no cost or compensation offered for participating in this research project.

Consent to Participation

I have read the information on the other side and have received answers to any questions I asked.

Signature _____

Name _____

DOB: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

School/Program Name: _____

I consent to participate in this research project

Yes _____ No _____

I consent to participate in meetings using a videoconference platform (e.g. Zoom)

Yes _____ No _____

I consent to having Erica Flores review the audiotaped interview sessions and work related to classroom activities, and using the data in publications and/or conference presentations.

Yes _____ No _____

Permission to Audio Record

Please indicate whether you consent to audio recording for this project. Your name will always remain confidential. (Note: You may still participate even if you choose not to be audio recorded.)

I consent to be audio recorded for this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

I kindly ask that you return this form, by taking photo of the forms or scanning them and emailing them to me at erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX B STUDENT CONSENT (SPANISH)

Mi nombre es Erica Flores, y estoy realizando una investigación sobre los estudiantes multilingües con interrupciones en su educación formal, en la escuela secundaria como parte de mi doctorado estudiar en el Departamento de Currículo y Instrucción de la Universidad de St. John. . El objetivo de la investigación es comprender mejor la experiencia de los estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal en este país. Para este estudio, estamos entrevistando a maestros, administradores y estudiantes de su escuela secundarias.

Su Participación en esta investigación implicaría completar entrevistas. El tiempo requerido para cada entrevista sería de unos 60 minutos. Espero que utilizaremos una plataforma de videoconferencia como Zoom. Las entrevistas serán grabadas por audio solamente.

Escribiré los resultados de todas las sesiones grabadas y, que se utilizará tanto para completar el trabajo de una tesis doctoral como posiblemente para su publicación. Estaré encantado de discutir con usted los hallazgos de este estudio y compartir con usted ideas sobre su aprendizaje y descubrimientos. Mientras informe sus historias, su identidad estará protegida. Su nombre y el nombre de su escuela no se utilizarán en el análisis o informe de esta investigación. En particular, no lo identificaremos ni compartiremos sus respuestas con otras personas en su escuela o distrito.

Los registros de investigación se almacenarán en una unidad USB protegida con contraseña y una computadora portátil protegida con contraseña. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso al archivo. Toda la grabación de audio se transcribirá y agregará al archivo. Todos los registros serán destruidos una vez que el estudio haya sido completado. Si,

cuando hablamos, escucho que está pensando en hacerse daño a usted mismo o a otros, la ley me exige que informe a las autoridades correspondientes.

Su participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Puede elegir no participar sin ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios a los que tendría derecho. Si participa al principio, pero luego suspende su participación, no estará sujeto a ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios. Además, tiene la libertad de no responder ciertas preguntas sin penalización o pérdida de beneficios.

A menudo puede ser un desafío para los estudiantes y educadores discutir temas relacionados con la diversidad y la equidad en las escuelas. Por lo tanto, la investigadora utilizarán gran cuidado y sensibilidad para abordar estos temas con los participantes del estudio a fin de minimizar cualquier riesgo asociado con la discusión de ellos.

Los beneficios potenciales incluyen la oportunidad 1) de contribuir con el conocimiento a la comunidad de estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal 2) para desarrollar una comprensión más completa de los factores que influyen en el rendimiento y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Los registros que identifiquen a los participantes de la investigación (incluidas las transcripciones de las entrevistas, los memorandos internos y los informes internos) se mantendrán confidenciales. Después de transcribir las entrevistas, anulare la identificación de todos los registros de investigación que identifiquen a los sujetos. Su privacidad estará protegida en la máxima medida permitida por la ley.

Si tiene inquietudes o preguntas sobre este estudio, comuníquese con la investigadora (Sra. Erica Flores en: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). Si tiene inquietudes o preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en una investigación, comuníquese con

Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Presidente de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de St. John, al (718) 990-1440 o por correo electrónico a digiuser@stjohns.edu. No hay costo o compensación ofrecida por participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Permiso para Participar

He leído la información y he recibido respuestas a todas mis preguntas.

Firma _____

Nombre _____

Fecha de nacimiento _____

Dirección de correo electrónico _____

Número de teléfono _____

Nombre de la escuela/programa _____

Doy mi consentimiento para participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Si _____ No _____

No doy mi consentimiento para participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Si _____ No _____

Doy mi consentimiento para participar en reuniones utilizando plataformas de videoconferencia (e.g. Zoom).

Si _____ No _____

Doy mi consentimiento para que Erica Flores revise la entrevista grabada sesiones y trabajos relacionados con las actividades del aula, y el uso de los datos en publicaciones y/o presentaciones en congresos.

Si _____ No _____

Permiso para grabar en Audio

Su nombre se mantendrá confidencial. (Note: Puedes participar aunque eliges no ser grabado.)

Doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado por medio de audio para este proyecto de investigación.

Si _____ No _____

Favor de tomarle foto a esta forma y enviarlo a mi correo electrónico
erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX C GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

My name is Erica Flores, and I would like to invite your child to participate in a research study on multilingual learners who have had interrupted formal education in high school, as part of my Ph.D. study in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University. This study will be conducted at your child's school by doctoral candidate, Erica Flores from St. John's University. The goal of the research is to better understand the learning experiences of select multilingual learners/Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education, specifically the ways in which they have attained academic success. For this study, I am interviewing secondary teachers, administrators and students at your child's high school.

Student participation in this research would involve completing multiple interviews. The time required for each interview would be about 60 minutes. I hope to meet through a videoconference platform such as Zoom. Interviews will be audio recorded.

I will write up the results of all the recorded sessions, which will be used both to complete work for a doctoral dissertation and possibly for publication. I will be happy to discuss with you the findings of this study and share with you insights into student learning and discoveries. As I report these stories, your child's identity will be protected. The names of all participants and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. In particular, I will not identify any participant or share responses with other individuals within the school or district.

Research records will be stored on a password-protected USB drive and a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to the file. All audio

recordings will be transcribed and added to the file. records will be destroyed once the study has been completed. The research team and the Institutional Review Board at St. John's University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as required by law; I am required by law to report to the appropriate authorities suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others.

Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. Your child may elect not to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If your child participates at first, but later discontinues participation, they will not be subject to any penalty or loss of benefits. Further, your child is free to not answer certain questions without penalty or loss of benefits.

It can often be challenging for students and educators to discuss issues related to immigration, diversity and equity in schools. Thus, great care and sensitivity will be used by the researcher in addressing such topics with study participants in order to minimize any risk associated with discussing them.

Potential benefits include the opportunity 1) to contribute knowledge to the multilingual learner/SIFE community 2) to develop a fuller understanding of the factors that influence student achievement and learning.

Records identifying research participants (including interview transcripts, internal memos, and internal reports) will be kept confidential. After I transcribe the interviews, I will de-identify all research records that identify the subjects. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact the researcher (Ms. Erica Flores at: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). If you have concerns or questions

about the rights of a research participant, please contact Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D.,
Chair, St. John's Institutional Review Board, at (718) 990- 1440 or via e-mail at
digiuser@stjohns.edu .

There is no cost or compensation offered for participating in this research project.

Permission to Participate

Name of Child: _____

DOB: _____

School/Program Name: _____

I consent for my child to participate in this research project

Yes_____ No_____

I consent to having my child participate in meetings using a videoconference platform
(e.g., Zoom).

Yes_____ No_____

I consent to having Erica Flores review the audiotaped interview sessions and work
related to classroom activities, and using the data in publications and/or conference
presentations.

Yes_____ No_____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email: _____

Permission to Audio Record

Please indicate whether you consent to audio recording for this project. Your child's
name will always remain confidential. (Note: Your child may still participate even if you
refuse permission to be audio recorded.)

_____ I consent for my child to be audio recorded for this research project.

_____ I do not consent for my child to be audio recorded for this research project.

I kindly ask that you return this form, along with your child's signed student assent form, by taking photo of the forms or scanning them and emailing them to me at erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu.

APPENDIX D GUARDIAN CONSENT (SPANISH)

Mi nombre es Erica Flores y gustaría invitar a su hijo a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre los estudiantes multilingües con interrupciones en su educación formal, en la escuela secundaria como parte de mi doctorado estudiar en el Departamento de Currículo y Instrucción de la Universidad de St. John. Este estudio se llevará a cabo en la escuela de su hijo por la candidata de doctorado, Erica Flores de la Universidad de St. John. El objetivo de la investigación es comprender mejor la experiencia de los estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal en este país. Para este estudio, estamos entrevistando a maestros, administradores y estudiantes de escuelas secundarias.

Participación de su hijo/a en esta investigación implicaría completar entrevistas El tiempo requerido para cada entrevista sería de unos 60 minutos. Espero que utilizaremos una plataforma de videoconferencia como Zoom. Las entrevistas serán grabadas por audio solamente.

Escribiré los resultados de todas las sesiones grabadas y, que se utilizará tanto para completar el trabajo de una tesis doctoral como posiblemente para su publicación. Estaré encantado de discutir con usted los hallazgos de este estudio y compartir con usted ideas sobre el aprendizaje y descubrimientos. Mientras informe las historias, la identidad de su hijo estará protegida. Los nombres de todos los participantes y el nombre de su escuela no se utilizarán en el análisis o informe de esta investigación. En particular, no identificaremos a ningún participante ni compartiremos las respuestas con otras personas dentro de la escuela o el distrito.

Los registros de investigación se almacenarán en una unidad USB protegida con contraseña y una computadora portátil protegida con contraseña. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso al archivo. Toda la grabación de audio se transcribirá y agregará al archivo. Todos los registros serán destruidos una vez que el estudio haya sido completado. El equipo de investigación y la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad de St. John son las únicas partes que podrán ver los datos, excepto según lo exija la ley; La ley me obliga a informar a las autoridades correspondientes sobre la sospecha de daño a usted mismo, a los niños o a otras personas.

La participación de su hijo/a en esta investigación es voluntaria. Puede elegir no participar sin ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios a los que tendría derecho. Si su hijo/a participa al principio, pero luego suspende su participación, no estará sujeto a ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios. Además, su hijo/a tiene la libertad de no responder ciertas preguntas sin penalización o pérdida de beneficios.

A menudo puede ser un desafío para los estudiantes y educadores discutir temas relacionados con la inmigración, la diversidad y la equidad en las escuelas. Por lo tanto, la investigadora utilizará gran cuidado y sensibilidad para abordar estos temas con los participantes del estudio a fin de minimizar cualquier riesgo asociado con su discusión.

Los beneficios potenciales incluyen la oportunidad 1) de contribuir con el conocimiento a la comunidad de estudiantes multilingües/ estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal 2) para desarrollar una comprensión más completa de los factores que influyen en el rendimiento y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Los registros que identifiquen a los participantes de la investigación (incluidas las transcripciones de las entrevistas, los memorandos internos y los informes internos) se

mantendrán confidenciales. Después de transcribir las entrevistas, anulare la identificación de todos los registros de investigación que identifiquen a los sujetos. Su privacidad estará protegida en la máxima medida permitida por la ley.

Si tiene inquietudes o preguntas sobre este estudio, comuníquese con la investigadora (Sra. Erica Flores en: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). Si tiene inquietudes o preguntas sobre los derechos de un participante de la investigación, comuníquese con Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Presidente de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de St. John, al (718) 990-1440 o por correo electrónico a digiuser@stjohns.edu . No hay costo o compensación ofrecida por participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Permiso para Participar

Nombre del estudiante: _____

Fecha de nacimiento: _____

Nombre de la escuela/programa: _____

Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo/a participe en este proyecto de investigación

Sí _____ No _____

Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo/a participe en reuniones utilizando plataformas de videoconferencia (e.g., Zoom).

Sí _____ No _____

Doy mi consentimiento para que Erica Flores revise la entrevista grabada sesiones y trabajos relacionados con las actividades del aula, y el uso de los datos en publicaciones y/o presentaciones en congresos

Sí _____ No _____

Firma de padre/guardián: _____ Fecha: _____

Dirección de correo electrónico: _____

Permiso para grabar audio

Indique si acepta la grabación de audio para este proyecto. El nombre de su hijo/a siempre será confidencial. (Nota: su hijo/a aún puede participar, incluso si se niega el permiso para grabarse en audio.)

____ Doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo/a sea recodificado en audio para este proyecto de investigación

____ No doy mi consentimiento para que mi hijo/a sea grabado en audio para este proyecto de investigación

Le pido que devuelva este formulario, junto con el formulario de consentimiento del estudiante firmado por su hijo, tomando una foto de los formularios o escaneándolos y enviándolos por correo electrónico a erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu.

APPENDIX E STUDENT ASSENT

Dear Student:

My name is Erica Flores, a Ph.D. candidate at St. John's University, and I would like to invite you to be a part of my research on multilingual learners who have had interrupted formal education in high school. The goal of this research is to better understand your learning experiences as a multilingual learner/Student with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) in this country. For this study, I am interviewing secondary teachers, administrators and students at your high school.

Your participation in this research would involve completing multiple interviews. The time required for each interview would be about 60 minutes. I hope to meet through a videoconference platform such as Zoom. Interviews will be audio recorded.

I will write up the results of all the recorded sessions, which will be used both to complete work for a doctoral dissertation and possibly for publication. I will be happy to discuss with you the findings of this study and share with you insights into your learning and discoveries. As I report your stories, your identity will be protected. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. In particular, I will not identify you or share your responses with other individuals in your school or district.

Research records will be stored on a password-protected USB drive and a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to the file. All audio recordings will be transcribed and added to the file. records will be destroyed once the study has been completed. If, when we talk, I hear that you are thinking of harming

yourself or others, I am required by law to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you participate at first, but later discontinue participation, you will not be subject to any penalty or loss of benefits. Further, you are free to not answer certain questions without penalty or loss of benefits.

It can often be challenging for students and educators to discuss issues related to diversity and equity in schools. Thus, great care and sensitivity will be used by the researcher in addressing such topics with study participants in order to minimize any risk associated with discussing them.

Potential benefits include the opportunity 1) to contribute knowledge to the multilingual learner/SIFE community 2) to develop a fuller understanding of the factors that influence student achievement and learning.

Records identifying research participants (including interview transcripts, internal memos, and internal reports) will be kept confidential. After I transcribe the interviews, I will de-identify all research records that identify the subjects. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact the researcher (Ms. Erica Flores at: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Chair, St. John's Institutional Review Board, at (718) 990- 1440 or via e-mail at digiuser@stjohns.edu.

There is no cost or compensation offered for participating in this research project.

Agreement to Participate

I agree to participate in this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

I agree to participate in meetings using a videoconference platform (e.g., Zoom).

Yes _____ No _____

I agree to having Erica Flores review the audiotaped interview sessions and work related to classroom activities and using the data in publications and/or conference presentations.

Yes _____ No _____

I agree to be audio recorded for this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

Student signature _____ Email: _____

Date _____

I kindly ask that you return this form, along with your parent's/guardian's signed consent form, by taking photo of the forms or scanning them and emailing them to me at erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX F STUDENT ASSENT (SPANISH)

Estimado Estudiante,

Mi nombre es Erica Flores, y estoy realizando una investigación sobre los estudiantes multilingües con interrupciones en su educación formal, en la escuela secundaria. El objetivo de la investigación es comprender mejor la experiencia de los estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal en este país. Para este estudio, estamos entrevistando a maestros, administradores y estudiantes de su escuela secundarias.

Su Participación en esta investigación implicaría completar entrevistas. El tiempo requerido para cada entrevista sería de unos 60 minutos. Espero que utilizaremos una plataforma de videoconferencia como Zoom. Las entrevistas serán grabadas por audio solamente.

Escribiré los resultados de todas las sesiones grabadas y, que se utilizará tanto para completar el trabajo de una tesis doctoral como posiblemente para su publicación. Estaré encantado de discutir con usted los hallazgos de este estudio y compartir con usted ideas sobre su aprendizaje y descubrimientos. Mientras informe sus historias, su identidad estará protegida. Su nombre y el nombre de su escuela no se utilizarán en el análisis o informe de esta investigación. En particular, no lo identificaremos ni compartiremos sus respuestas con otras personas en su escuela o distrito.

Los registros de investigación se almacenarán en una unidad USB protegida con contraseña y una computadora portátil protegida con contraseña. Solo la investigadora tendrá acceso al archivo. Toda la grabación de audio se transcribirá y agregará al archivo.

Todos los registros serán destruidos una vez que el estudio haya sido completado. Si, cuando hablamos, escucho que está pensando en hacerse daño a usted mismo o a otros, la ley me exige que informe a las autoridades correspondientes.

Su participación en esta investigación es voluntaria. Puede elegir no participar sin ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios a los que tendría derecho. Si participa al principio, pero luego suspende su participación, no estará sujeto a ninguna sanción o pérdida de beneficios. Además, tiene la libertad de no responder ciertas preguntas sin penalización o pérdida de beneficios.

A menudo puede ser un desafío para los estudiantes y educadores discutir temas relacionados con la diversidad y la equidad en las escuelas. Por lo tanto, la investigadora utilizarán gran cuidado y sensibilidad para abordar estos temas con los participantes del estudio a fin de minimizar cualquier riesgo asociado con la discusión de ellos.

Los beneficios potenciales incluyen la oportunidad 1) de contribuir con el conocimiento a la comunidad de estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal 2) para desarrollar una comprensión más completa de los factores que influyen en el rendimiento y el aprendizaje de los estudiantes.

Los registros que identifiquen a los participantes de la investigación (incluidas las transcripciones de las entrevistas, los memorandos internos y los informes internos) se mantendrán confidenciales. Después de transcribir las entrevistas, anulare la identificación de todos los registros de investigación que identifiquen a los sujetos. Su privacidad estará protegida en la máxima medida permitida por la ley.

Si tiene inquietudes o preguntas sobre este estudio, comuníquese con la investigadora (Sra. Erica Flores en: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). Si tiene inquietudes

o preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante en una investigación, comuníquese con Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Presidente de la Junta de Revisión Institucional de St. John, al (718) 990-1440 o por correo electrónico a digiuser@stjohns.edu.

No hay costo o compensación ofrecida por participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Acuerdo para Participar

Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Si _____ No _____

Estoy de acuerdo en participar en reuniones utilizando Zoom.

Si _____ No _____

Estoy de acuerdo que Erica Flores revise la entrevista grabada sesiones y trabajos relacionados con las actividades del aula, y el uso de los datos en publicaciones y/o presentaciones en congresos.

Si _____ No _____

Estoy de acuerdo para ser recodificado en audio.

Si _____ No _____

Firma del estudiante _____

Correo electrónico _____ Fecha _____

Favor de tomarle foto a esta forma y enviarlo junto al consentimiento firmado del padre/guardián, a mi correo electrónico erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX G TEACHER CONSENT FORM

My name is Erica Flores, and I am conducting research on Secondary multilingual learners who have had interrupted formal education as part of my Ph.D. study in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University. The goal of the research is to better understand the experience of select multilingual learners/Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE). For this study, I am interviewing secondary teachers, administrators and students at your high school.

Your participation in this research would involve completing multiple interviews. I hope to meet through a videoconference platform such as Zoom. The time required for each interview would be about 60 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded.

I will write up the results of all the recorded sessions, which will be used both to complete work for a doctoral dissertation and possibly for publication. I will be happy to discuss with you the findings of this study and share with you insights into your learning and discoveries. As I report your stories, your identity will be protected. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. In particular, I will not identify you or share your responses with other individuals in your school or district.

Research records will be stored on a password-protected USB drive and a password-protected laptop. Only the researcher will have access to the file. All audio recordings will be transcribed and added to the file. records will be destroyed once the study has been completed. If, when we talk, I hear that you are thinking of harming

yourself or others, I am required by law to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may elect not to participate without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you participate at first, but later discontinue participation, you will not be subject to any penalty or loss of benefits. Further, you are free to not answer certain questions without penalty or loss of benefits.

It can often be challenging for students and educators to discuss issues related to diversity and equity in schools. Thus, great care and sensitivity will be used by the researcher in addressing such topics with study participants in order to minimize any risk associated with discussing them.

Potential benefits include the opportunity 1) to contribute knowledge to the multilingual learner/SIFE community 2) to develop a fuller understanding of the factors that influence student achievement and learning.

Records identifying research participants (including interview transcripts, internal memos, and internal reports) will be kept confidential. After I transcribe the interviews, I will de-identify all research records that identify the subjects. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact the researcher (Ms. Erica Flores at: Erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu). If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Raymond DiGiuseppe, Ph.D., Chair, St. John's Institutional Review Board, at (718) 990- 1440 or via e-mail at digiuser@stjohns.edu.

There is no cost or compensation offered for participating in this research project.

I have read the information on the other side and have received answers to any questions

I asked.

Signature _____

Name _____

DOB: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

School/Program Name: _____

I consent to participate in this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

I consent to participate in meetings using a videoconference platform (e.g., Zoom).

Yes _____ No _____

I consent to having Erica Flores review the audiotaped interview sessions and work related to classroom activities and using the data in publications and/or conference presentations.

Yes _____ No _____

Permission to Audio Record

Please indicate whether you consent to audio recording for this project. Your name will always remain confidential. (Note: You may still participate even if you choose not to be audio recorded.)

I consent to be audio recorded for this research project.

Yes _____ No _____

I kindly ask that you return this form, by taking photo of the forms or scanning them and emailing them to me at erica.flores09@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX H STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview 1

Informed Consent

Hello, my name is Erica Flores. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. I am a student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University. I would like to interview you to learn more about the experience of multilingual learners/SIFE, and will include the information that I obtain from this interview as part of an academic study.

Risks and Benefits

There is minimal risk in participating in this research. If you feel at all uncomfortable throughout the discussion you may decline to answer. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. All recordings will be erased after transcription.

The potential benefit of this interview is to contribute knowledge about the immigrant/multilingual learner community, specifically factors that influence achievement and learning.

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay?

Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANT). I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question.

Several of my questions today will focus on your experiences in your native country.

Middle

1. In what country were you born and raised?
2. Can you tell me about your life before coming to the United States?
3. What are some of your favorite things about your native country?
4. What was your school experience like in your native country?
5. Can you describe any period of time where you weren't in school?
6. What were some of the reasons why you left your native country?
7. What were your thoughts when first arriving in this country?

Closure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions in the future, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

APPENDIX I STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (SPANISH)

Interview 1

Proposito

Hola, mi nombre es Erica Flores. Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy. Soy un estudiante en el programa de doctorado en Currículo e Instrucción en la Universidad de St. John. Me gustaría entrevistarle para aprender más sobre la experiencia de los estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal, en la escuela secundaria, e incluiré la información que obtengo de esta entrevista como parte de un estudio académico.

Riesgos y Beneficios

Hay un riesgo mínimo en participar en esta investigación. Si se siente incómodo durante la discusión, puede negarse a responder. Su nombre y el nombre de su escuela no se utilizarán en el análisis o informe de esta investigación. Todas las grabaciones serán borradas después de la transcripción.

El beneficio potencial de esta entrevista es contribuir con el conocimiento sobre la comunidad de inmigrantes/aprendices del idioma inglés, específicamente los factores que influyen en el rendimiento y el aprendizaje.

Introducción

Para asegurarme de que tenemos un registro preciso de la conversación de hoy, voy a complementar mis notas grabando en audio nuestra entrevista. ¿Esta bien?

Hoy es (FECHA / HORA), y estoy hablando con (PARTICIPANTE). Te voy a hacer algunas preguntas generales. Si hay algo con lo que no se siente cómodo respondiendo o

al que no conoce la respuesta, eso no es un problema; solo déjame saber, y podemos saltar esa pregunta.

Varias de mis preguntas de hoy se enfocarán en la experiencias en su país natal.

Medio

1. ¿En qué país naciste y dónde te criaste?
2. ¿Puedes contarme sobre tu vida antes de venir a Estados Unidos?
3. ¿Cómo fue tu experiencia escolar en tu país natal?
4. ¿Hubo alguna vez un período de tiempo prolongado en el que no estuviste en la escuela?
5. ¿Cuáles fueron algunas de las razones por las que dejaste tu país natal?
6. ¿Cuáles son algunas de tus cosas favoritas de tu país natal?
7. ¿Qué pensaste cuando llegaste por primera vez a este país?

Cierre

¿Hay algo más que te gustaría compartir?

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy. Realmente aprecio tu ayuda. Si tiene alguna pregunta en el futuro, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo. ¡Gracias!

APPENDIX J STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview 2

Purpose

Hello, my name is Erica Flores. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. I am a student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University. I would like to interview you to learn more about the experience of multilingual learners/SIFE, and will include the information that I obtain from this interview as part of an academic study.

Risks and Benefits

There is minimal risk in participating in this research. If you feel at all uncomfortable throughout the discussion you may decline to answer. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. All recordings will be erased after transcription.

The potential benefit of this interview is to contribute knowledge about the immigrant/multilingual learner community, specifically factors that influence achievement and learning.

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay?

Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANT). I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question.

Several of my questions today will focus on your schooling experiences.

Middle

1. Can you describe a day in school?
2. How long have you been enrolled in this school?
3. What are the main things you like about this school? What are some things that you would like to see changed?
4. Can you describe a perfect class experience?
5. When something is difficult for you in your classes, do you ask for help? If so, who do you go to for help?
6. What do you do after school or on the weekends?
7. Can you tell me about your responsibilities in this country?
8. What do you see yourself doing after high school?

Closure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions in the future, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

APPENDIX K STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (SPANISH)

Interview 2

Proposito

Hola, mi nombre es Erica Flores. Gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy. Soy un estudiante en el programa de doctorado en Currículo e Instrucción en la Universidad de St. John. Me gustaría entrevistarle para aprender más sobre la experiencia de los estudiantes multilingües/estudiantes con interrupciones en su educación formal, en la escuela secundaria, e incluiré la información que obtengo de esta entrevista como parte de un estudio académico.

Riesgos y Beneficios

Hay un riesgo mínimo en participar en esta investigación. Si se siente incómodo durante la discusión, puede negarse a responder. Su nombre y el nombre de su escuela no se utilizarán en el análisis o informe de esta investigación. Todas las grabaciones serán borradas después de la transcripción.

El beneficio potencial de esta entrevista es contribuir con el conocimiento sobre la comunidad de inmigrantes/aprendices del idioma inglés, específicamente los factores que influyen en el rendimiento y el aprendizaje.

Introducción

Para asegurarme de que tenemos un registro preciso de la conversación de hoy, voy a complementar mis notas grabando en audio nuestra entrevista. ¿Esta bien?

Hoy es (FECHA / HORA), y estoy hablando con (PARTICIPANTE). Te voy a hacer algunas preguntas generales. Si hay algo con lo que no se siente cómodo respondiendo o

al que no conoce la respuesta, eso no es un problema; solo déjame saber, y podemos saltar esa pregunta.

Varias de mis preguntas de hoy se enfocarán en las experiencias escolar.

Medio

1. ¿Puedes describir un día en la escuela?
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas matriculado en esta escuela?
3. ¿Cuáles son las principales cosas que te gustan de tu escuela? ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que le gustaría ver cambiadas en su escuela?
4. ¿Puede describir una experiencia de clase perfecta?
5. Cuando algo te resulta difícil en tus clases, ¿pides ayuda? Si es así, ¿a quién acudes en busca de ayuda?
6. ¿Qué haces después de la escuela o los fines de semana?
7. ¿Cuál es tu principal responsabilidad en este país, escuela o trabajo?
8. ¿Qué te ves haciendo después de la secundaria?

Cierre

¿Hay algo más que te gustaría compartir?

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy. Realmente aprecio tu ayuda. Si tiene alguna pregunta en el futuro, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo. ¡Gracias!

APPENDIX L TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Purpose

Hello, my name is Erica Flores. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. I am a student in the PhD program in Curriculum and Instruction at St. John's University. I would like to interview you to learn more about the experience of multilingual learners/SIFE, and will include the information that I obtain from this interview as part of an academic study.

Risks and Benefits

There is minimal risk in participating in this research. If you feel at all uncomfortable throughout the discussion you may decline to answer. Your name and the name of your school will not be used in the analysis or reporting of this research. All recordings will be erased after transcription.

The potential benefit of this interview is to contribute knowledge about the immigrant/multilingual learner community, specifically factors that influence achievement and learning.

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay? Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANT). I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question.

Several of my questions today will focus on the educational experience of SIFE. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Middle

1. Can you describe your current teaching assignment? (grade level, number of students, etc.)
2. How would you describe the students you are working with?
3. How would you describe your philosophy of teaching?
4. Can you tell me about your approach to teaching SIFE?
5. What has influenced your beliefs about SIFE instruction?
6. What assets do you believe SIFE bring to the classroom?
7. How do you capitalize on those in your instruction? Can you give me an example?
8. What kind of role do you believe the community plays in the success of SIFE?
9. How would you describe your goals for the SIFE population?
10. What kinds of supports are available to teachers working with SIFE?

Closure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions in the future, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

APPENDIX M STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PILOT STUDY)

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay?

Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANT). I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question.

Several of my questions today will focus on your educational experience. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Middle

1. How long have you been enrolled in this program?
2. What are the main things you like about this program? What are some things that you would like to see changed?
3. What is the perfect educational experience?
4. What does school mean to you?
5. In what country were you born and raised?
6. What was your school experience like in your native country?
7. Can you describe any period of time where you weren't in school?
8. What were some of the reasons why you left your native country?
9. Did you attend school in any other state besides New York State?
10. Can you tell me about your responsibilities in this country?

11. Did you ever attend a public high school in NY? If so, what was your experience like at your local high school in NY (not Board Of Cooperative Educational Services/BOCES)?

12. What would you like to achieve from this program?

Closure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions in the future, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

APPENDIX N STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PILOT STUDY- SPANISH)

Introducción

Para asegurarme de que tenemos un registro preciso de la conversación de hoy, voy a complementar mis notas grabando en audio nuestra entrevista. ¿Esta bien?

Hoy es (FECHA / HORA), y estoy hablando con (PARTICIPANTE). Te voy a hacer algunas preguntas generales. Si hay algo con lo que no se siente cómodo respondiendo o al que no conoce la respuesta, eso no es un problema; solo déjame saber, y podemos saltar esa pregunta.

Varias de mis preguntas de hoy se enfocarán en la experiencia educativa de los Aprendices del Idioma Inglés. ¿Tiene algunas preguntas antes de que comencemos?

Medio

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas matriculado en esta escuela?
2. ¿Cuáles son las principales cosas que te gustan de tu escuela? ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que le gustaría ver cambiadas en su escuela?
3. ¿Cuál es la experiencia educativa perfecta?
4. ¿Qué significa la escuela para ti?
5. ¿En qué país naciste y dónde te criaste?
6. ¿Cómo fue tu experiencia escolar en tu país natal?
7. ¿Hubo alguna vez un período de tiempo prolongado en el que no estuviste en la escuela?
8. ¿Cuáles fueron algunas de las razones por las que dejaste tu país natal?
9. ¿Asistió a la escuela en otro estado además de NYS?
10. ¿Cuál es tu principal responsabilidad en este país, escuela o trabajo?

11. ¿Cómo fue tu experiencia en tu escuela secundaria local en NY (no en BOCES)?

12. ¿Qué te gustaría lograr con este programa?

Cierre

¿Hay algo más que te gustaría compartir?

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo para hablar conmigo hoy. Realmente aprecio tu ayuda. Si tiene alguna pregunta en el futuro, no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo.

¡Gracias!

APPENDIX O TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PILOT STUDY)

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay?

Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANT). I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question. Several of my questions today will focus on your educational experience. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Middle

1. Can you tell me about the goals and purpose of this program?
2. How long have you been teaching here? Can you describe any other teaching experience you may have?
3. What is your comfort level working with SIFE?
4. Can you describe your approach to teaching SIFE?
5. Can you tell me a bit about the students in the program? What are the strengths of the program? What practices do you believe need to change?
6. How are students' native languages used in class, or on homework assignments, if they are at all?
7. What challenges, if any, do you face with regard to improving academic outcomes of your students?
8. How if at all does your native culture impact your teaching style?

APPENDIX P EMAIL TO DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS

Dear _____,

I hope this email finds you well. As you may know, outside of working at the RBERN I am also a PhD student at St. John's, currently preparing to collect my dissertation data. I am reaching out to discuss the possibility of working with your SIFE population. The purpose of my research is to learn more about the experiences of SIFE, in the traditional high school setting. My goal is to develop counterstories of select SIFE participants, to honor student voices from a commonly silenced population, while simultaneously offering insight to educators.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Erica

Erica Flores

Bilingual/ENL Resource Specialist

NYSED L.I. Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network

APPENDIX Q TEACHER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Introduction

To be sure that we have an accurate record of today's conversation, I am going to supplement my notes by audio-recording our interview. Is this okay?

Thanks again for taking the time to speak with me today. Today is (DATE/TIME), and I am speaking with (PARTICIPANTS). As part of my ongoing research, I would like to get your perspective on what each of you believes best supports the SIFE population you work with.

I am going to be asking you a few general questions. If there is anything you do not feel comfortable answering or that you do not know the answer to, that is not a problem; just let me know, and we can skip that question.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Middle

- 1) Can you tell me a bit about the students in your classes? For example, describe the cultures represented, the levels of prior education, and the language backgrounds.
- 2) How do you go about deciding what you'll teach and how you'll teach it?
- 3) Is there a specific approach you are expected to use for serving SIFE?
- 4) How does district leadership support quality education for SIFE?
- 5) What are the strengths of the academic programs that serve SIFE at this school?
- 6) What practices in your school do you believe are effective in helping SIFE develop linguistically and academically?
- 7) What practices in your school do you believe may need to change in order for SIFE to grow linguistically, and academically?

- 8) What kind of academic supports are available at your school to help SIFE students succeed?
- 9) What kind of social and emotional supports are available at your school to help SIFE students succeed?
- 10) What are resources outside of your school that you leverage to support SIFE?

Closure

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today. I really appreciate your help. If you have any questions in the future, please feel free to contact me. Thank you!

APPENDIX R JOURNAL PROMPTS

1. Why did you agree to participate in this study? What do you hope will come from participating in this study? [¿Por qué aceptó participar en este estudio? ¿Qué espera que obtenga de participar en este estudio?]
2. Reflect on our first interview where we discussed your schooling experiences in your native country. How does it feel to talk about your past? [Reflexione sobre nuestra primera entrevista en la que discutimos sus experiencias escolares en su país de origen. ¿Qué se siente al hablar de tu pasado?]
3. How do you compare your schooling experience in your native country to your experience in the United States? [¿Cómo compara su experiencia escolar en su país de origen con su experiencia en los Estados Unidos?]
4. Describe an average day at school from beginning to end. [Describe un día normal en la escuela de principio a fin.]
5. How did your personal/family life impact your education? [¿Cómo afectó su vida personal/familiar su educación?]
6. Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years? [¿Dónde te ves en 5 años? ¿10 años?]

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