Cross-Cultural Narrative Inquiry into Language, Culture, and Identity Development of Three High School Female Immigrant Students and Their Mainstream Schooling Experience in Atlanta, Georgia

Joanna Stoughton Cavan

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A CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF THREE HIGH SCHOOL FEMALE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND THEIR MAINSTREAM SCHOOLING EXPERIENCE IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

by

JOANNA STOUGHTON CAVAN

(Under the Direction of Ming Fang He)

ABSTRACT

This inquiry explored the experience of three female immigrant students as they acculturated (learned a new language and culture) and enculturated (maintained the heritage language and culture) while developing new identities in an English speaking public high school in Atlanta, Georgia, U. S. A. I used a cross-cultural narrative inquiry method (He, 2003) to examine how these students’ experiences of exclusion, marginalization, and neglect impact their school success. Cross-cultural narrative theory, which is grounded in the works of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Dewey (1938), helped me delve into the everyday life experiences of these female immigrant students. I turned to the works of Carger (1996), He (2003), Soto (1997), and Valenzuela (1999) to critically examine the experience of these students by positioning a specific story into diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.

The participants in the study were from different cultures and backgrounds, but each has faced bias and prejudice in the schooling process. They have been ridiculed about their language and culture heritages as well as excluded from the higher academic course of study, clubs, and sports. Their aspirations of continuing education in college
have been negated, and consequently, they are settling for careers that most likely will be low paying with few opportunities for advancement.

There is much literature on the trials and tribulations of immigrant students, but few studies that allow the student’s voice to be heard. Through their own words, they exposed an intolerant educational system, one contrary to the jargon of an equal education for all. As more immigrant students are silenced through practices of subordination and control, studies such as this become increasingly relevant and necessary. I advocate for a culturally responsive pedagogy where immigrant student voices will be heard, not prohibited or silenced; where their cultural and linguistic heritages should be respected and valued, but not devalued or neglected. I hope that more members of the society will work together to help develop such a pedagogy to provide equal educational opportunities for all students to thrive in their schooling and lives.

INDEX WORDS: Narrative inquiry, Cross-cultural narrative inquiry, Immigrant student, Culturally responsive pedagogy, Acculturate, Enculturate, Marginalization, Exclusion, Voice
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Major Professor: Ming Fang He
Committee: John Weaver
David Alley
Scott Beck

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DEDICATION

To my God and Savior, Jesus Christ, in Whom all things are possible. To my father, Harry James Cavan, Jr., and my mother, Dorothy Hains Cavan, for giving me the love of learning and dedication. To my brother, Mike Cavan, who has always been by my side. To my family, John Lawrence Dawson, III., Joanna Stoughton Dawson Enck and Jeffrey Robert Enck, and James Cavan Dawson for their love, support, and encouragement. To my grandson, Joseph Stephen Enck, who is the light of my life and who fills my heart with joy. To my friend and sister, Nancy Mitchell, with whom I worked, studied, laughed, and cried. And finally to a very special friend who has come back into my life after many years and who has lifted me up and made me know that I can love again.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Multiple interpretations constitute multiple realities; the “common” itself becomes multiplex and endlessly challenging, as each person reaches out from his/her own ground toward what might be, should be, is not yet (Greene, 1988, p. 90).

Our nation was once called the melting pot of the world where many immigrants lost their heritage languages, cultures, and identities through deculturalization, the “educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (Spring, 2001, p. 4). As deculturalization continued, immigrants assimilated, the “process of taking on social and cultural traits of the majority race in the nation in which one resides” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 142). Immigrants began to speak English only and adopted the European culture of whites (Spring, 2001).

Today’s new immigrant faces different, but equally challenging, dilemmas. The immigrants of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are confronting deculturalization and assimilation policies by struggling to maintain their language and culture while being pressed to find an identity in a new world (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990). In the process, they face many obstacles and barriers. Through a cross-cultural narrative inquiry, this study explored language, culture, and identity development and the mainstream educational experience of three high school female immigrant students in an Atlanta suburban high school in order to seek a more equitable education for all of our students.

Context of Study

The 21st century will continue to see an increase of ethnic and cultural diversity in the United States (Naylor, 1997; Sitarem & Prosser, 1998). The highest rate of population
growth in the future will be among the groups who have been served least well by our public schools (Lunenburg & Irby, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Although the majority of today’s American school children are white, the past ten years have seen a rapid increase in the number of immigrant and minority students. According to estimates, nearly one in three American school children will fall into the category of minority student by the year 2010 (United States Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Our nation’s immigration population (legal and illegal) reached a new record of more than 34 million in March of 2004, an increase of over 4 million just since the year 2000 (Unites States Bureau of the Census, 2004). This is the highest number in our history, and, currently, immigrants account for nearly 12% of the nation's total population, the highest percentage in over 80 years. Furthermore, immigration will account for two-thirds of all growth nationwide over the next century with one million newcomers (largely of Latin American and Asian origin) each year. In the year 2030, one out of four Americans will be either Hispanic or Asian in ethnic heritage (United States Bureau of the Census, 2004).

Georgia’s overall population grew by 26% in the last ten years (one-fifth faster than the rest of the nation) adding about 540 people everyday, and 60% of this growth came from migration from other states and countries (United States Census Bureau, 2000). From 2000 to 2004, Georgia’s immigrant population increased 72%, and if these current trends continue, Georgia’s population will reach 11.9 million in 2025 as compared to 8.1 million in 2000. Immigrants and their children will account for 1.6 million of its new residents (Henson, 2001). Georgia is a major destination state for
immigrants, both legal and illegal, due to work opportunities in agriculture, poultry, construction, service, and carpet industries.

Atlanta is one of many metropolitan areas in the nation that is experiencing a massive immigration growth that previously was limited to such larger cities as Los Angeles, Miami, and Houston. From 1990-2000, metropolitan areas with a population of more than one million showed a population increase of 20%; immigrants accounted for a rate increase three times greater than that of non-immigrants. From 1990-2000, Atlanta showed an increase of 273% in foreign-born population while there was only a 30% rate increase in the native-born population (United States Census Bureau, 2002).

Metro Atlanta has experienced an increase in the foreign-born population, largely because the surrounding suburbs have witnessed a similar surge in population growth. For example, for every new foreign-born resident in the city of Atlanta during the 1990’s, the suburbs added 21. The community where I teach is located in a suburb of Atlanta, and like many other communities, is experiencing an increase in the immigrant population which accounts for 15% of the 6000 people living there (United States Census Bureau, 2004). The immigrant student population at our school represents around 8% of the student body (1978), and this figure is expected to continue to rise reflecting the average immigrant growth in the community (Strategic Plan High School Report, 2005-06).

As a teacher of French, I have had the opportunity to teach many Hispanic immigrant students in my classes. This is because our school does not offer a course for native speakers of Spanish, and the students become bored and disinterested in regular Spanish classes. I also have the opportunity to teach immigrant students from other parts of the world. These students choose to take French because of the language’s influence in
Europe, North and West Africa, and several Asian countries. I also work very closely with the ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher who is part of the language department where I am the chairperson. As I began to form a relationship with immigrant students in my classes, I realized that they confront a hostile educational system of ridicule and teacher reprimand which often refuses to recognize or validate the linguistic and cultural heritages these students bring to our schools. This educational system is still predicated on English-only classes, a Euro-centric curriculum, and little or no tolerance for diversity (Loewen, 1995). This rejection of diversities (including language and culture) is pervasive in educational practices throughout the country (Spring, 2002).

This study began from an interview I conducted with a group of immigrant students at my school while I was in a doctoral class at Georgia Southern University. The interview gathered students’ experiences of bias and prejudice in our school. Although I was aware of some difficulties they faced, I was astonished to hear their stories of loneliness, oppression, and silencing. Their stories indicated that they had been pushed to the margins by the system, the teachers, the curriculum, and the administration.

As I delved further into this scenario, I realized the great degree of marginalization to which these students are subjected. Our immigrant students graduate at a rate of lower than 60%, reflecting a slightly higher percentage rate than the Georgia Latino immigrant graduation statistic of less than 54% (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005). Having taught many immigrant students in the past years, I know that they are capable, creative, eager to learn, and intellectually bright. They bring a plethora of knowledge and experience to the learning environment, and they are the leaders in my classroom. However, when I began to talk to the students and research their present and
past course histories, I discovered that few, if any, are in honors classes or in the TAG (Talented and Gifted) program. I have also discovered that many of these students start out in the college preparatory classes, and by the second year of high school, they often change to the technical course of study. As Valenzuela (1999) writes, “Rather than expanding opportunity, tracking reinforces their already weak and tenuous position within the academic hierarchy” (p. 266). Furthermore, the lower academic course of study often teaches these students a hurtful hidden message that they are less than the other.

Aside from academic exclusion, immigrant students are rarely involved in extracurricular activities, clubs, or sports. Research shows that academic achievement correlates with “personal engagement or social integration into the social fabric of the school” (Stanton-Salazar, 2004, p. 22). Immigrant students tell me that they do not feel wanted in clubs and that they rarely receive votes for offices, competitions, or other “popularity contests.” As such, they feel the discrimination and exclusion from those who do have the “power, capital, and privilege” (p. 22). This is especially tragic since extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs become positive motivators to stay in school (Carger, 2005), and they lead to social capital including leadership qualities, bonds with teachers, and high levels of self-esteem which become positive reinforcements for successfully navigating through high school and college (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Conversely, those students who experience rejection and exclusion from these activities often lack motivation and social capital needed to be successful at the high school level and beyond. They become trapped in a system that makes it practically impossible to ever attain a higher social, economic, or political status.
Immigrant students at my high school face multiple obstacles. Language, culture, and identity development often become stumbling blocks for many of the students. When these issues are not addressed by the system, teachers, or pedagogy, the students fall prey to an education that lacks in quality and results in inequality. First, the education system often fails many of our immigrant students by eliminating and degrading their heritage language. This is done partly by refusing to promote bilingual classes and by forbidding these students to speak their native language in class. Georgia’s Official English Laws support such practices, practices which Bourdieu called “symbolic violence” (as cited in Beck & Allexsaht-Snider, 2002, p. 39), and they force our students into passivity, subjugation, and control (Soto, 1997). Anzaldúa (1987) tells us that first language is about “identity, reality, and values” (p. 77). Language is at the very core of who we were and how we become who we are, and by disallowing their native language, the immigrant student becomes more marginalized and silenced.

Immigrant students attend very few ESL classes that prepare them for the core classes such as language arts, history, and science. Many of these immigrant students are mainstreamed (placed into regular classes with other students) after two or fewer years in ESL classes. They often lack the necessary skills in reading and writing to succeed in these core classes. Schnur (in Soto, 1997) says that it takes five to seven years of studying the new language in order to be successful in the core subjects. Because bilingualism is seen as a handicap, rushing the transitional period (from the first language to the second language) leaves students overwhelmed and frustrated in the core subjects (Romo & Falbo, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999).
The second obstacle facing immigrant students is the fact that the educational system regards the immigrant’s culture as a deficiency rather than a resource. Allowing the student to draw upon the strength of her cultural experiences can enrich learning opportunities for all of our students (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). However, lack of cultural continuity and maintenance of a monocultural curriculum pushes these students to the borders where they are “excluded and oppressed” (McLaren, 1995, p. 158). Rejection of cultural diversity creates a boundary between immigrant students and those in the mainstream. This boundary continues to separate and divide; it also disconnects the immigrant student from the educational process (Nussbaum, 1997). On the other hand, acceptance of diverse culture leads to a multiplicity of strengths and resources. Gay (2000) says, “…[C]ulture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education…and gives order to our lives and the lives of others” (p. 8) and is the basis, “the fundamental anchor,” (p. 10) for all other behaviors. According to Gay, robbing our students of their culture takes away many of their behavioral abilities such as thinking, relating, and speaking. Furthermore, when the student’s culture is rejected, the student becomes disconnected and finds little meaning in what is presently taught (Daspit & Weaver, 2000). This disconnectedness undoubtedly leads many to find school nonrelevant or not pertinent to their own lives.

The third obstacle facing our immigrant students is identity development. Immigrant students in the mainstream educational system face a pedagogy that seeks to mold everyone into the same identity for the ultimate benefit of those in power (Apple, 1995). Reynolds (2003) refers to this practice as one which produces robots which become “dehumanized” (p. 43). Stripping away one’s identity is an institutionalized
practice in our educational system and results in an inequitable education for many of our immigrant students whose identity is controlled by those who seek pliable and dependent students for their own purposes (Aronowitz, 1989; Popekewitz, 1988).

Identity issues also include obstacles that the immigrant faces in the acculturation-enculturation process. He (2003) states in her book, A River Forever Flowing, that she became “lost” during this period and her identity was “developed in the midst of … tensions and challenges” (p. 75). He goes on to say that her identity was “constantly changing” (p. 76) resulting in stress and confusion as she crossed cultures. I see this same stress and confusion in my immigrant students as they attempt to cross cultures, and this stress is often magnified as identity development is frequently suppressed by the educational system.

Bennett and LeCompte (1990) say that immigrant students are part of the “stew pot” or “salad bowl” (p. 2) from which our present nation is born. They add a richness of difference, uniqueness, independence, and strength. I cannot fully know what an immigrant in this country experiences, and as Greene (1988) says, “… [W]e cannot truly understand the walls immigrants and minorities face. But we can attend to some of the voices, some of the stories” (pp. 88-89). My dissertation explored and revealed the walls faced by immigrant students in mainstream schooling with implications for change toward a more culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, and school practices.
Research Questions

The general research question is:

- How do language, culture, and identity development of high school immigrant students impact their experience of mainstream schooling and school success?

The specific research questions are:

- How does the high school immigrant students’ experience of learning a new language while maintaining their heritage languages impact their school success?
- How does the high school immigrant students’ cross-cultural experience at home and in the community impact their school success?
- How does the identity development of high school immigrant students at home, in the community, and at school impact their school success?

Autobiographical Roots of My Inquiry

This research topic is intimately connected to my personal and professional life. When I was very young, I never considered the fact that I was privileged or that I had any advantages in life. My parents were school teachers, and I was one of five children. Although I never wanted for food or love from my parents, I always felt somewhat deprived of the finer things in life. We lived in rented houses until I was in high school sharing one bath and one car. I grew up wearing my older sister’s clothes which later became an embarrassment for me when I reached high school. For that reason I learned to design and make my own clothes. They were not store-bought, but they were new and mine. I remember I wanted to attend Agnes Scott, but that idea was far beyond the reach
of my parents’ financial capabilities. Consequently, I chose a state school and tried to finish as quickly as possible to lessen college costs. I worked during high school and college so that I could have a little spending money without having to burden my parents.

Now that I am older and somewhat wiser, I realize that I was very privileged, not in a material sense, but simply because of the color of my skin. McIntosh (1998) says that whites have been taught not to recognize white privilege, “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p.1). White privilege means that I have advantage based on the color of my skin, and it works to overpower others of diverse race, gender, or class. Additional authors also reveal how being white opens doors that are automatically closed to those of color, and whites have an unearned advantage that those of color do not (Sleeter, 1994; Tatum, 1994).

Before entering the doctoral program at Georgia Southern University, I, too, was oblivious to my privilege. Like many Americans, I believed in the myth of meritocracy which supports the belief that everyone has equal opportunity in this land of the free. If one works hard enough, then one will succeed no matter what the situation. I no longer believe this because I realize that doors are open to some of us simply because of our whiteness. The converse of this is also true. I now understand that I have succeeded where others failed simply due to my color, and I have been a participant in racism embedded in standard accepted practices. For example, I have been able to live wherever I please and have not feared that I may be denied a neighborhood based upon my race. Democratic choice is not given to all groups like it is to whites. Understanding this
privilege has made me fervent to bring about change for those who have not been afforded this opportunity based upon the unfair notion that white skin color is better.

Looking back, I no longer have difficulty recognizing my privilege. At an early age, I frequently visited my grandparents in Augusta, Georgia. My grandmother and I would take the bus downtown to visit my grandfather, Solicitor General, at the courthouse or just to go shopping. I remember vividly sitting in the front of the bus while all the blacks sat in the back. The courthouse was also another reminder of the place of blacks in the 1950’s and 1960’s in the South. I drank from the white-only fountain and had privilege to use the white-only bathroom. At that time, it just seemed to be the way things were, and as a little child, I never questioned such unjust practices.

As I became older, my awareness of inequities grew. Our family doctor’s office had two waiting rooms – one for whites and one for blacks. The blacks also had their own examining room. There was a little window that was opened occasionally so that black patients could make their presence known to the receptionist. We privileged ones sat in the large reception room. I knew then that this really was wrong, but I certainly was in no position to challenge such practices and neither were my parents who taught in an all white school in a small community in middle Georgia. However, I know now that my parents did what they could to try to offset some of the horrible practices against those who were attending the black school. My father was teacher and coach for thirty-eight years in Georgia. I will add that he is still remembered for his honesty, commitment to young people, and his sense of right and wrong. He used to take his old sports equipment, have it refurbished, and give it to the black players who had few resources and little money to buy new equipment. He attended their games and encouraged the coach and
players by sharing his knowledge and expertise of football. My father was always
learning from the best and frequently studied from great coaches such as Darrell Royal at Texas University.

My father was very impressed with a young black football player who also caddied at the local golf club. My father was an avid golfer, and David was not only his caddy, he, too, was an excellent golfer. There was nowhere for this young man to play because the golf course was restricted to whites only. My father used to take him out on the course to play golf late in the afternoon when few would be there. David became a friend of our family and often stopped by our house to play tag football with my brothers.

When integration finally came in the 1970’s to this sleepy little mill town, the private school was immediately started and many left the public school system – teachers and students. However, my father and mother stayed the course. My father became a champion for many of his black athletes helping them get tutored (they were behind academically) and searching for college opportunities. Many doors were closed to these student-athletes simply because of color. My parents had few opportunities to make right what was wrong in the decades they were teaching, but they did what they could to give each student an equal chance at education in the hopes that schooling would lead to greater opportunity. I am quite sure that they also believed in the myth of meritocracy, but for many of the black students who finally were admitted to the white high school, meritocracy proved to be a fallacy. Most of the black students who came through this town’s school system in the 1970’s and 1980’s were denied further education as well as higher paying jobs. Most of them continued to work the lower paying jobs in the mills and factories.
My parents set an example for me to follow, but I, unlike my parents, have increased opportunities to try to right the wrong against those of color and diversity. Much has changed toward equal opportunity for all students. Yet, I see that white privilege is still prevalent in our schools and society. I teach in a school where students are disadvantaged economically, socially, and politically. Chapter 2, The Literature Review, explores in detail these disadvantages as well as the oppressive policies which take place in our schools against those of difference. Because I recognize my white privilege and the unjust practices that are inherent within the educational system, I am committed to expose areas of schooling that continue to oppress and dominate those who are marginalized and neglected in our nation.

Secondly, my love for cultural diversity comes naturally; therefore, my study is closely connected to my professional life as a high school French teacher. My paternal grandparents were Canadian, and I spent my summers in Ontario at their home. Although they did not speak French, I was completely fascinated with the French language on the radio and the television. I used to love to go to the grocery store with my mother and read all the different items written in French. I collected labels (on cans, bottles, and wrappers) from wherever I could and used them to study the French language. I even made a scrapbook with those I brought home.

The little town near my grandparents' home was very European. At the local baker’s, we bought our freshly baked potato bread, mouth-watering raspberry tarts, and all sorts of pastries just out of the oven. We visited nearby farms to buy our eggs and pick cherries and raspberries in the orchards. Although some might say we were going back in time, for me, it was an unforgettable cultural experience. During this period of my youth,
I met many young people who were quite different culturally than I, but for me, they were intriguing. I wanted to play with them all the time learning their games and songs. My brothers and I went to dances when we were older, and at the end of the dances, we would all gather around and sing “God Save the Queen.” We played a card game called euchre, and my brothers and I would sit at the kitchen table until late at night playing other newly learned Canadian games. I can remember that I was always very sad to go home at the end of the summer. I had become Canadian in my head and deep in my heart, I was French Canadian. Although I was only part Canadian through my grandparents, I loved to tell people that I was Canadian. As I became older, my Canadian friends wrote to me in French. Although my mother was a Latin teacher, she had also studied French so she would help me write my friends in the French language. As I look back on this period of my life, I know now that my love for cultural diversity began as a very young child and has continued throughout my life.

I have always loved the French language, culture, and people. Some of this devotion comes from the fact that my maternal great grandparents were from Alsace-Lorraine in northeastern France. Although they spoke German, this land has long been a combination of French and German influence. It has also been a contested territory between the two countries that fought over this land for centuries. Whether my ancestors spoke German or French, they came from this land that is rich in French heritage and culture. This is part of my heritage and my very being.

I grew up wanting to speak French and wanting to travel. In college, I majored in French, and because it was a small school, I studied for four years with one professor who was French. This period reaffirmed my desire to master the language and perhaps
one day spend time in the country. This came to pass after graduation when I was hired by Pan American as a stewardess. Based in New York, I traveled all over Europe. As my seniority increased, I would bid for flights to France only. My first trip there sealed my passion for everything the country has to offer.

After my Pan American experience, I became a wife and French teacher for five years. My husband and I traveled to France occasionally, and eventually we began a family. Many years later, after all our children were out of college, I decided to begin taking my students to France so that they could experience the language they had learned in my class. During this period, I also decided to study in France - something I had not had the opportunity to do when I was young. I spent a summer in Tours where I studied at a university. I lived with a French family and became as French as I possibly could. Each subsequent visit to France presents something new and wonderful that I have never experienced before and that I can share with my students.

In recent years, I have relinquished my travel excursions with my students to a younger French teacher. However, several years ago I was asked to join a friend of mine (a former French teacher) in providing French tours for adults only. This was an opportunity of a lifetime. The tours are very small and concentrated in southern France in Provence and the Langue d’Oc region west of Provence. After the group tours, my friend and I spend another two to three weeks seeking out places we have never been. We climb chateaus built by the Cathars (a group annihilated by the Catholic Church), visit little inns and hotels, and taste new food and wines. My friend and I often comment that when we arrive, we feel as if we are home. Like Feuerverger (2005), I think the “texture” (p. 175) of my life begins to “take shape” (p. 175) when I am on French soil.
Having said this, I believe this passion for diversity extends to a deep caring and compassion for my students of diversity. I am a lover of language and culture. In fact, as soon as I finish this program, I would like to learn Spanish and Italian. My passion for diversity extends to my immigrant students who often are prohibited from speaking their first language and denied their culture in mainstream schooling practices (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Such a system of oppression leaves our immigrant students “ineffective and powerless” (Banks, 1981, p. 66). As a researcher, through the cross-cultural narratives of my immigrant students, I hope to better understand and respond to their needs in an often hostile educational system. As my passion for diversity grows, so does my desire to alleviate the bias and prejudice experienced by many of my students in an effort toward an education of equality.

Participants

My research focused upon three immigrant females of high school age. I have taught each of the participants, and we have developed a rapport of trust and understanding. Over the past several years, I have observed some of the frustration and anxiety that each of them has experienced due to marginalization and exclusion. I also interviewed them previously about their experiences in the education system. They all told similar stories of hurt, bias, and prejudice. At this point, I realized that these young students needed an outlet, a safe space, to share their stories. Consequently, I created a female immigrant forum where these students came together, shared their pain, and drew strength from each other. From this group, I chose three females to tell their stories about coming to this country and the obstacles they have faced in mainstream schooling. I chose these three students because they were so willing to share their stories in the open
forum. They also had come to me on previous occasions to seek advice about some of the issues they were facing.

Marcela is 17 years old. She is from Mexico and has been in this country for three years. She still struggles with the English language because Spanish is spoken at home. She is a non-participant in high school activities and is on the technical course of study. She plans to be a beautician.

Sara is 19 years old and recently came from Pakistan. She too struggles with English and has been placed on the technical course of study. She is behind in credits for graduation because she was never credited with previous courses taken in Pakistan. Maria has suffered from verbal abuse because of her origin of birth and her religious beliefs.

Tayo is 17 years old and emigrated from Nigeria when she was in middle school. Like the other females, she is on the technical course of study. She has given up becoming a lawyer in lieu of becoming an investigator. Her English is still heavily accented; she speaks Yoruba at home with the family. Florence has told me horrifying tales about being ridiculed by other students. She longs to return to her native country.

All of the female students have experienced the trials of acculturation-enculturation. Each of them desires to retain her culture and heritage language. They all expressed feelings of not belonging and struggling with identity issues. They are at times still caught in the between area – flowing between languages, cultures, and identities. In spite of their loneliness, isolation, and feelings of strangeness, they are determined to finish school and become successful in this country.
Research Site

The research for this dissertation took place at a high school in a suburb south of Atlanta. The 2005-2006 school enrollment is presently 1978 students. We have a mobility rate (leaving and entering the school) of over 44% annually, and the free or reduced lunch population reaches 42%. The ratio of student population is the following: African-American (87%), immigrant (8%), and Caucasian (5%). The graduation rate for all students is 62% while the immigrant graduation rate is less than 60%. The absenteeism rate for immigrant students is 37.3% while the school’s overall absenteeism is less than 10%.

Although the graduation rate for immigrant students does not appear to be that much less than the overall population, the statistics can be very misleading. For example, neither the school nor the county keeps records on students who leave this school. A student can withdraw, but we have no indicators of that student entering another school or just dropping out. Aside from this, the graduation rate is based upon the number of seniors in the senior class who actually receive a diploma. This figure does not calculate how many students started in the ninth grade and how many actually graduated. The ESL teacher told me that since the spring 2005, 50% of her ESL students have withdrawn from school. They may have gone elsewhere or they may have dropped out completely.

The school is somewhat isolated because public transportation here is minimal. There is also little community support for the school because we draw from six surrounding communities within the county. Most of our student body is bused to school. There is little parent support due to the fact that many of our families do not live within
close proximity to the school. The Parent-Teacher Association has fewer than twenty family members.

Story Collection Method

This research is grounded in the theoretical framework of narrative as expressed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who explore narrative as experience revealed through lived stories. John Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience is also examined as the cornerstone of narrative. The theoretical framework also includes other proponents of narrative theory including Bruner (1990), anthropologists Geertz (1995) and Bateson (1989; 1994), psychiatrist Coles (1997), He (2003), Conle (2005), and Phillion, He, and Connelly (2005).

My research uses a cross-cultural narrative inquiry to explore the lives of immigrant students as they struggle to maintain their language and culture while forming new identities in a new culture. My study is grounded in previous studies by Carger (1996), He (2003), Soto (1997), and Valenzuela (1999). Each of these authors addresses language, culture, and identity development of immigrant students and mainstream schooling. The students in these inquiries tell their stories of frustration, anxiety, and loneliness. My research inquiry follows these pathways to uncover the bias, prejudice, and lack of concern that education has for much of the immigrant population. This cross-cultural narrative inquiry reveals the voices of those who are marginalized and excluded from opportunities of an equal education.

Composing Field Texts

Composing Field Texts included 1. a student reflective journal, 2. a teacher reflective journal, and 3. student oral interviews. Students were asked to write in their
journals reflecting upon individual interviews. They were also encouraged to write about any experiences they have in or out of school concerning this research such as reactions toward them as immigrants. I used my journal to reflect upon the interviews as well as what I observed about these students in and out of class.

The interviews were taped and took place mostly after school in my classroom. I interviewed one of the participants at her home. There were three individual interviews each lasting approximately forty-five minutes. All field texts were confidential and fictitious names (which the participants chose) were used for real names. For purposes of anonymity, the field texts were transcribed by me and coded for particular themes involving language, culture, and identity development.

Limitations of the Study

This study had several limitations. One restriction was the student journal writing. Guerra (1998) writes that his participants often had difficulty with writing in their journals. Time factor was an issue as well as some temerity in writing what others may read. The females in Guerra’s study also struggled with writing in English, and eventually, each began to compose in their own native language. This was not the case with my participants. Each of them wrote in English, but the writings were not as prolific as I had hoped. I believe the students could have expressed themselves more clearly and in more depth in the heritage language, but they chose not to do so.

I also believe that my inquiry was limited by the mere fact that I am not an immigrant and there is no way that I can fully understand the struggles of my students. For this reason I approached my inquiry with some trepidation for fear that I would not be able to tell their experiences to effectively bring about needed change in my school.
The third restriction involves a hierarchy of power and constraints in the system and school where I teach. Education is neither “neutral or apolitical” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 375). As a classroom teacher, I am limited in the amount of change that I may be able to bring about for a more equitable education for immigrant students. I am limited to my classroom and my department where I am the chairperson. As long as immigrant students are silenced and excluded, change will not come easily or expediently. Much more political and social activism is needed along with studies such as my own to bring about change.

The fourth limitation is that my study involved only female immigrant students. I chose not to study boys because I believe that the females are more open with me and I have established a rapport with them built on trust and compassion. Consequently, I do not think the study has application for the issues of immigrant boys although I do know that they, too, suffer from prejudice and marginalization. The study also involved only three females. This is a small percentage of the immigrant population at my high school and the community where I teach. Perhaps more students involved in the project would have provided a clearer and more accurate picture of the problems at my high school. However, due to time limitations, this was not possible.

The females I have chosen also represent different cultural backgrounds. Perhaps this is a limitation in that I did not study one group such as Hispanic females. However, having heard these students previously through conversations in my classroom and the female immigrant forum, I believe that they collectively shared similar concerns and were equal targets of prejudice, bias, and exclusion in mainstream schooling.
Significance of the Study

Much has been written about the immigrant student and the barriers she faces in mainstream schooling. However, there are few studies that reveal what the immigrant student is saying about her own experience. My study allowed the immigrant student to tell in her own words and in her own voice what she has felt and how she has experienced the acculturation-enculturation process. This study has potential to encourage educators to seek the voices and stories of their own immigrant students in order to bring about a more culturally responsive education.

This proposed study has implications for my immediate school setting and the system in which I teach. Our diversity of population is on a steady increase throughout the county where I teach. As this diverse population increases, the issues of language, culture, and identity development will also continue to increase. Our society cannot afford to lose a large percentage of our diverse population as students increasingly drop out of school or are forced to settle for a less than equal opportunity to quality education.

My study sought to uncover the subtractive forces of schooling about which Valenzuela (1999) speaks. Furthermore, the study has the capacity “to look at things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1989, p. 63). This capacity to see otherwise could affect changes in administrative policy, curriculum reconceptualization, and teacher practices toward a more equitable education for our diverse students. The study has possibilities to bring about a more accepting environment at my school where we begin to think about the diverse student in terms of care and compassion. Saïd (1993) tells us, “This means not trying to rule others, not trying to classify them or put them in hierarchies, above all, not constantly reiterating how our culture is number one” (p. 336).
As an educator, I am concerned that our educational system continues to neglect the needs of our immigrant student population. I see a lack of understanding toward these students as they undergo the transitional periods between two languages, two cultures, and conflicting identities. The constraints placed upon immigrant students to adapt and assimilate quickly into the mainstream often leave them scared, intimidated, and frustrated.

The lack of understanding and concern for these students frequently leads to their marginalization. As they are pushed to the borders, they are ignored and forgotten. The students become disillusioned and lose hope of attaining an education that will lead to a better life which is, ironically, one of the predominant reasons many come to our nation. As a result, dropping out or following the technical course of study becomes the choice of many in our student immigration population.

This study allows me an opportunity to reveal the hardships and struggles of immigrant students. In doing so, I believe I have the chance to take action in my school to help relieve the stress and frequent pain immigrant students often experience. My study has the possibility to educate the teachers and administration toward change that will address the needs of this population in order to bring about a more culturally responsive education.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Cultural and linguistic diversity of today’s school population is increasing at a rapid pace, yet the resistance of school systems to meet these changing demographics and new demands of diversity remains (Uriarte, 2002). No longer will an education based upon the white Euro-centric values and curriculum meet the challenges education faces today. Educators, administrators, and policy makers ought to accept and validate the linguistic and cultural diversity that immigrant students bring to the classroom, and equally essential, they ought to address a system that marginalizes and disenfranchises these students. In this chapter, I explore five major areas of research addressing issues of 1. language, 2. culture, 3. identity, 4. between spaces, and 5. pedagogy in the context of the mainstream schooling experience. A background of the theoretical framework for this study is also included. Although power is not addressed separately, each section of the literature review reveals how it is embedded in education practices which negate and prevent a culturally responsive curriculum.

Addressing Educational Equality Through Language Issues

Students from non-English speaking backgrounds represent the fastest growing segment of our school-age population. In the decade from 1990 to 2001, the number of English language learners in our schools grew 105 percent (Kindler, 2002), and presently, one in five school-age students is an English-language learner (United States Bureau of the Census, 2000). However, the basic problems which keep immigrant students behind in education still exist where many continue to lack the skills necessary to become successful in core classes such as English, science, and math.
One of our nation’s greatest educational challenges today is how to teach English language learners in Georgia. This undertaking has been assigned primarily to ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers who are specialized in teaching skills for English language learning. ESL classes focus primarily on learning the language, not on learning in the language. There is a large gap between learning how to speak English and how to learn a curriculum in the English language (Beykont, 2000; Freeman, 2004). Most ESL classes do not offer students aid in the core curriculum where many immigrant students are failing due to lack of skills including “how to read, how to take tests, how to mind map, how to ‘be a student’” (Jeannot, 2004, p. 51).

Students often attend ESL classes for very short periods of the day, and many of them are mainstreamed after two years into core classes. Schnur (in Soto, 1997) tells us that studies show it takes five to seven years to learn a language well enough to pursue academic classes in the second language. Aside from rushing the immigrant student into core classes, many teachers accept the assimilation view that all students must learn English as quickly as possible and that the best way to accomplish this is through a speedy immersion program (Bartolome, 2002).

Teachers in the core curriculum treat immigrant students like any other student, and very few accommodate their diversity or the obstacles they face in mainstream schooling. Makkonen (2004) states, “[C]ollaborative structures, attitudes, and relationships that lead to successful outcomes” (p. 83) must begin if immigrant students are to be successful in core classes. The old proverb *sink or swim* can no longer be offered as pedagogical practice. Educators must also look at alternative ways to address the needs of our immigrant population and move beyond ESL classes to a whole-school
approach where all teachers are involved in a culturally responsive pedagogy. As more and more immigrant students fail core classes, teachers, educators, administrators, and policy makers must work together toward change for an equal education for all (Cummins, 1989; Darling-Hammond & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Igoa, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 1996; Valdes, 2001).

Cummins (1989) says our nation sees bilingualism as a handicap rather than a resource. Instead of viewing the immigrant student’s first language as a powerful resource, schooling focuses on what it calls deficiency in the second language where the heritage language is viewed as lower in status (Ayers, 2004; Ndimande, 2004). Around the country, more and more systems are opting for an English-only curriculum. Students are often chastised in schools for speaking their native tongue. Recently this happened to one of my students who was told to speak English in a certain class because we live in America not Puerto Rico. Soto (1997) says that schools are part of a “systematic, repressive system” (p. 27) which denies one’s language or language opportunity. Moser (2002) takes this idea one step further in claiming that abolition of one’s language is close to fascism. The author compares this policy to that of a former Germany that insisted upon a national language and ethnicity disempowering students and forcing them into subjugation.

“Language-minority students face academic challenges within a political context that defines bilingualism as problematic, deficient, and a sign of inferior intellectual and academic abilities” (Beykont, 2000, p. vii). Bilingual programs have been under attack for years, and Proposition 227, which banned bilingual education in California, set the tone for other states to follow. By 1999, twenty-two states (including Georgia) had
adopted English Only laws in order to protect the “power and privileges enjoyed by native speakers of Standard English” (p. ix). These English Only laws exclude a wide population of linguistic minority students by insisting that English is a “superior language” (Macedo, 2000, p. 22). As the global economy expands, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) proclaims that “linguicide…English as a killer language” (p. 14) will increasingly marginalize minorities and their languages around the world.

In spite of this opposition, language teachers and proponents of bilingual education offer much support for the effectiveness of these programs in bringing about English-language learning and easing the cross-cultural experiences that immigrant students face (Beykont, 2000; Macedo, 2000). However, while opposition to bilingual education is much discussed in the public arena, the merits of bilingual education have been censored. Freire (1985) concludes, “The object of interpretation and the content of interpretative discourse are considered appropriate subjects for discussion and scrutiny, but the interests of the interpreter and the discipline and society he or she serves are not” (p. 103). In other words, in a political context, the debate over bilingual education has little to do with the most effective way to learn English. In actuality, the debate over bilingual education is part of a political agenda to continue practices of cultural subordination (Macedo, 2000). Bartolome (2000) states, “Bilingual education threatens to disrupt the existing social order by eventually toppling White English speakers’ ‘rightful’ positions of superiority” (p. 169).

There is abundant research indicating the value of bilingual education (Beykont, 2002; Collier, 1992; Crawford, 1995). In fact, Cummins (1996) argues that students in bilingual programs do not lose out in developing English skills and in fact outperform
their peers in monolingual English programs. This is also confirmed in studies by August and Hakuta (1997) and Greene (1998).

Gibson, Gandara, and Koyama (2004) suggest that students in bilingual classes receive challenging academics, strengthen their own linguistic ability, and learn English quicker and with deeper understanding. The authors also stress that they have a sense of belonging which translates into engagement in academics and school activities and are less likely to drop out of school. Most importantly, bilingual education helps preserve the heritage language and culture leading to a positive identity development.

Bilingualism is “key for the survival and success of language-minority students” (Beykont, 2000, p. 3). Bilingualism allows students to stay connected to their heritage culture as well as retain an authentic voice, a healthy identity, and a positive self-image. Jankie (2004) states, “Language is a means of identity as much as it is a tool of empowerment and representation” (p. 89). However, as Anzaldua (1987) states, many of our immigrant students will forever suffer due to “the psychological scar of disconnection from their heritage language and culture” (p. 108) because “The Anglo with the innocent face has yanked out our tongue” (p. 108). Bilingual education preserves the tongue and prevents many of the scars that immigrant students have today because they have been denied a bilingual education which preserves and validates their heritage language and culture.

Immigrant students who are not afforded bilingual opportunities in our schools quickly lose their native language, culture and values. Espinosa-Dulanto (2004) remembers the pain she felt when not allowed to speak or write in Mestiza, her heritage language. She states, “Then, its sounds and teachings were denied and, over time, the
language of the ancestors, the language in which Muchik traditions were immersed, was lost and has not been spoken at large” (p. 49). If education is to be democratic for all our students, we must provide our immigrant students with “meaningful ways to engage in the struggle to keep their linguistic and cultural knowledge from receding into another kind of distance, that of a fading memory” (Cummins & Sayers, 2000, p. 136).

Contrary to the rhetoric of English-only proponents, students in bilingual education programs learn to read English faster and with greater comprehension than those denied this opportunity (Slavin & Cheung, 2005). This is due in part because students develop a better self-concept when heritage language and culture are valued and not subordinated to the English language. Learning English becomes easier for these students because they have cultural capital and academic skills in their own language which are transferable to a new language (Farah, 2000; Macedo, 2000). In case studies by Kwong (2000), Chinese immigrant students who were more literate in Chinese were able to transfer these skills to English-learning skills. On the other hand, her study shows that if a student is illiterate in her heritage language, this will also transfer to the English language. She states, “A broken Chinese sentence will be translated into a broken English sentence” (p. 45).

Second language learning takes time, and many educators do not understand the process (Nieto, 2000). Students taken out of bilingual classes after only one or two years often find difficulty in the academic track. Those who stay in bilingual programs for longer periods find that learning more about their own first language improves their skills in the English language, including reading, writing, and speaking (Souza, 2000). ESL students are not afforded the opportunity to read, write, or speak in the heritage language,
and many students who come to this country proficient in reading and writing in the heritage language often lose this ability. Those who enter with no skills in reading and writing in the heritage language seldom learn them. In both cases, these students find English–language learning, including reading and writing, more difficult than students in bilingual education (Souza, 2000).

Kwong’s (2000) study reveals many other positive outcomes of a bilingual education which include the following: continued literacy in the native language, learning English faster, continued learning in the core area through heritage language, lower levels of frustration, appropriate levels of academic challenge, student adjustment, healthy bicultural identity, validation of cultural experiences, and connection to others and curriculum. On the other hand, she shows that a monolingual English program indicates the following: a halt in native language, lack of transfer skills, slower English language learning, delayed knowledge in core subjects until adequate English is learned, higher levels of frustration, lower academic curriculum, difficult adjustment to new environment, impeded bicultural identity, lack of validation of cultural experiences, and isolation from peers and connections. Furthermore, many educators and linguists propose that bilingual education has the power to reverse the failure rate so prevalent today among our immigrant population (Kwong, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Souza, 2000).

Although all of these arguments are valid and important, one of the most important benefits of a bilingual education is that students continue to learn in the core areas. In this age of accountability and testing, many of our immigrant students are falling behind in the core areas due to a lack of English skills. Usually, students who begin to fail in other core content classes are left with few choices which include either dropping
out of school or following a lesser academic path lacking in rigor and substance. Dropping out often leads to negative activities as the students search for connection and support that was lacking in the school setting (Vigil, 2004).

However, if immigrant students can be instructed in their own language, they will continue to be engaged academically and can meet the demands of testing and standards. If immigrant students are kept in ESL classes until proficient in English, they fall behind, become disengaged, and lack motivation. As dismal as this picture seems to be, there are some who see ESL programs as deficient in ever equipping students for academic achievement in core classes (Hurd, 2004). Meanwhile some contend that teaching immigrant students in the heritage language while they move toward English-language proficiency means that they are learning the same curriculum as those in the mainstream classes (Farah, 2000). These students, thus, have an equal opportunity for an equitable education including advanced and college preparatory classes. They are able to learn more quickly because they are not struggling with the English language. On the other hand, the reverse is also true. If immigrant students are weak in a certain area such as math, the level of instruction can be guided to meet the student’s needs and at her pace. In a mainstream class with English-only instruction, immigrant students must follow the set instruction and pace in a language which they cannot yet grasp.

Bilingual education offers an emotional support system for immigrant students while they are learning English (Kwong, 2000). They are together with their peers and a teacher who serves as a cultural role model, one who speaks the same language and understands cultural differences and nuances. Positive role models with similar backgrounds strengthen the cultural and identity development of students leading to
assurance and confidence. In these classes, students are engaged, motivated to learn, and academic performance is increased (Ballenger, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Monolingual classes do not offer such support to those of language diversity. Too many immigrant students in mainstream classes are marginalized and on their own to “sink or swim” (Demas & Saavedra, 2004, p. 221). Many of them sink.

In spite of the many positive effects of a bilingual education, there are those who claim that there are no positive results from such a program. There are many studies that indicate bilingual programs do not boost achievement and are not better than the English immersion program (Collier, 1992; Rossell & Baker, 1996). In fact, the National Research Council of the Academy of Sciences encourages future studies which would focus upon the features of effective programs as opposed to the debate over bilingual versus monolingual programs. These studies would be smaller and contribute more to an understanding of the best way to educate language minority students (August & Hakuta, 1997).

Bartolome (2000) says that although monolingual teachers express concern over the academic progress of the immigrant student, few, if any, modify instruction for that purpose. Many teachers have very little cultural or linguistic training to teach diverse students. Consequently, they have little understanding of the obstacles facing immigrant students in mainstream schooling. On the other hand, the bilingual teacher’s understanding and support of diverse students can lead to a sense of “belonging, academic support, and self-esteem” (p. 12). Belonging means that students feel connected and accepted by others. Furthermore, recent studies show a large correlation between academic achievement and a sense of belonging (Osterman, 2000). The reverse is also
true. Students lacking a sense of belonging have fewer expectations of themselves and lower aspirations for success (Gandara, O’Hara, & Gutierrez, 2004).

ESL students and those mainstreamed quickly into core classes do not find this same sense of belonging. As they continue to become marginalized, their sense of alienation deepens as they become victims of a repressive system. Souza (2000) recounts a story of a young Brazilian, Ricardo, who was mainstreamed in a Boston school at age five. He rejected school and cried every day. By the second grade, he was sleeping in class and did not know his letters or sounds in English. His teacher recommended him for special education testing. Immigrant students are often diagnosed with learning disabilities and end up in special education classes (Rubal-Lopez & Anselmo, 2005; Souza, 2000). In reality, many of these students may not be learning disabled at all. They may simply be reflecting the frustration, confusion, and turmoil they experience in a culturally nonresponsive educational system.

Guerra (1998) shows this frustration through the autobiographical writings of three Hispanic females. He also reveals the richness of knowledge these females possess as expressed through the heritage language. These writings dispel stereotypes that depict immigrant students as deficient. In the early encounters, Guerra discovers that the three females, Rosa, Maria, and Isabel, write in English according to what they believe Guerra wants. That is, they exhibit the same qualities of writing that is a product of American schooling including correctness, format, sameness, and restriction. Rosa writes objectively and distances herself from her writings in the way schools distance themselves from the students. As her writings continue, she finds English “stiff and uninformative” (p. 132). Rosa is an example of how many immigrant students find
English writing as “linear and highly controlled” (Jeannot, 2004, p. 56). In her heritage language, she writes “rhetorically and ambiguously” (p. 56). When she switches to Spanish, she finds balance and more detail expressing “emotion, sincerity, and even eloquence” (Guerra, 1998, p. 132).

The third of Guerra’s writers is Malu who was educated in Chicago and Mexico. She is in college and the most prolific writer of the three. Her first writings in English are linear and reflect her feelings of being out of place in American schools. Her Spanish writings are more detailed and complex. In these writings she talks of feeling ignorant in school, being afraid, and experiencing shame. Her writings in the Spanish language are full of emotion and life as she writes with “eloquence that we find in the best of student narrative writing in a university setting…with sophistication and eloquence” (pp. 146-150).

There are several important issues that the females reveal in their writings. The first is the inclusion of autobiography in addressing a culturally responsive pedagogy. Autobiography shows the importance of student experience reflecting her very essence. As Sartre (1943) says, “L’être passe en L’essence” (p. 48). Sartre is describing how Being gives over to Essence which is constituted by experience. Marginalized students have no essence if their own experiences are pushed aside and ignored. Denying experience invalidates the student’s funds of knowledge which is in opposition to Dewey’s (1938) reliance upon experience. He states, “I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience” (p. 25). Dewey further asserts that denial of experience arrests further growth. If pedagogy disconnects the experience of the student,
then the student becomes fragmented and usually remains disconnected from any further experience within the school setting. If pedagogy is to include possibilities, then experience precedes all other encounters. Most importantly, immigrant students must be allowed to express their experiences through their own language. Howard (1999) calls upon us to act for “equity pedagogy” (p. 81) where each child’s life realities are recognized and acknowledged, and during the transitional period from first to second language, students must be allowed usage of the first language including speaking and writing.

Secondly, the females show how schooling is restrictive and structured around English-only practices. Pedagogy generally maintains correctness and a dualistic system which stifle the creative process. In such a system, marginalized groups are silenced through rejection, alienation, worthlessness, and fragmentation. An equitable and just education ought to allow students to use their language and culture in order for academic success. This does not mean denying the importance of learning English (Delpit, 1995; Rubal-Lopez & Anselmo, 2005), but students should be given opportunities to express themselves in their own language as they are acquiring a second one. As noticed from the autobiographical narratives in Guerra (1998), the students show their ability to express themselves vividly through their heritage language revealing a richness of knowledge. Supporting the student’s language builds acceptance and connectedness that often do not exist in pedagogy, and it demonstrates an environment of care which can rid feelings of loneliness and separation within the system. Noddings (1999) states, “Children need…the continuing attention of adults who will listen, invite, guide, and support them” (p. 13) and this support certainly extends to validation and usage of the student’s language.
Another important issue involves the tracking of immigrant students due to English language deficiency. Such a system of tracking is part of a cultural selection where students are grouped by language ability and separated for much of the day. McCarthy (1993) reveals that a power structure of English-only practices determines this tracking. Robert, a student in *Latino High School Graduation* (Romo and Falbo, 1996), is designated at risk because he failed to make a certain score on a test in the seventh grade. The test was given to him in English, and Robert was lacking in English skills. Consequently, Robert was placed in general courses that did not prepare him for college.

James (another student) is discouraged from taking college prep classes and is placed in technical courses. Both students feel frustration and lack of motivation on this track which they know will not allow them to enter college or lead to high paying jobs. Thus “the vocational program …became [becomes] a gateway for dropping out” (p. 29).

Immigrant students who are tracked often know that they do not experience an equal education. They describe themselves as “academically handicapped by opportunities denied, ill equipped to attend a ‘real’ or ‘serious’ college, and embarrassed by limited vocabulary and math skills” (Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004, p. 61).

Immigrant students “have long been disproportionately classified into lower ability tracks in schools in the United States” (Haney, 1993, p. 73). In fact, last year I confronted counselors over two schedules for immigrant students who were incorrectly placed in non college prep classes. They were seniors and needed these courses. The sad part is that these students are but two of many who need someone to advise and mentor them. Many marginalized groups do not have parents with the proper background of knowledge to correct these errors, and many students do not have a mentor teacher to
guide and stand up for them. Furthermore, Romo and Falbo (1996) state that many immigrant parents are perceived as unintelligent and incapable of acting in the best interest of their students. For this reason many parents do not come to the school to oversee the guidance of their children. Schools must do a better job of advising immigrant students and making sure that the students and parents understand their academic placements. Otherwise, they will continue to be oblivious to the consequences of tracking, and in effect, powerless to make any changes.

Our immigrant students placed on a technical track due to English language deficiencies soon develop a low self-esteem and begin to blame themselves for not being smart enough to go to college. Tracking students actually can perpetuate and reinforce poor academic performance (Haney, 1993). Students can become bored with the school process and unchallenged to such a degree that they drop out of school. Tracking has many other consequences. In general, teachers tend to expect less of students who are in lower academic classes, and students placed in these tracks begin to internalize perceived deficiencies and self-fulfill the prophecies of failure placed upon them.

Collier (1992) contends that if students are untracked, positive results will happen. Untracking means that all students have opportunity for enrichment and growth. When immigrant students are placed in higher level classes, they have better self-esteem and begin to perform according to higher expectations. As long as schools follow courses that separate and track immigrant students because of language differences, an inequitable education will continue to be promoted.

Increasing amounts of money are spent on gifted programs, and yet these programs continue to exclude many students, especially immigrant students. The students
in these programs are labeled as deserving of a superior education (Sapon-Shevin, 1993). The IQ test is no longer used for the program and other measures such as creativity have taken its place. However, testing can be naturally biased toward immigrant students who lack proficiency in the new language and culture (Haney, 1993). As educators, we must question why some students are deserving of a more challenging education while others are not. Apple (1995) concludes that such gifted programs are part of hegemony proclaiming that a proportion of the population is born with smarter genes, and as such, schools must nurture the development of these students who will be our leaders and outstanding citizens. Such a system promotes unequal opportunities for success and achievement, especially for immigrant students.

A pedagogy that addresses diversity and the needs of immigrant students is inclusive beyond the white, Euro-centric culture and the English language. Many students in Romo and Falbo’s study (1996) indicate that they are looked down upon because they are not white and struggle with English. A parent exclaims, “This is not a White world…Society needs to change” (p. 192). This white world denies immigrant students their heritage language and culture through practices of assimilation into the dominant culture. Within two generations these assimilation practices can result in a loss of social capital, self-respect, and identity. Furthermore, these practices become major factors in immigrant dropout rates and decreased educational opportunities (Grogger and Trejo, 2002; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

If this is a nation of freedom, schools must affirm the diversity of the immigrant student. Affirming diversity does not mean assimilation but rather building upon the resources our immigrant students bring to the classroom. It means an acceptance which
gives immigrant students the opportunity to express their cultural practices, beliefs, and language in our classrooms. Schools have a responsibility to build communities where difference thrives and where decentering exclusiveness is predominant (Fine, Weiss, & Powell, 1997). Affirming diversity can bring about multiple positive results for a pedagogy that reduces social isolation and prevents linguistic and cultural restraints. Affirmation of difference validates language and culture, promotes self-esteem and self-acceptance, and builds for future knowledge in the classroom. (Freeman & Freeman, 1998; Garcia, 1991; Krashen, 1992; Nieto, 1996; Sleeter, 1996; Valdes, 2001).

Aside from the advantages of bilingual classes, there are proponents of teaching immigrant students their heritage language. In heritage language classes, the teacher uses the immigrant student’s experiences and builds on these for educational success (Ballenger, 2000; Farah, 2000). Heritage language classes promote more opportunity for expression and understanding of experience which is never independent of language. In mainstream schooling, the experience of the immigrant student is often ignored because the student frequently finds difficulty in expressing herself in English. Communication between teacher and student can be difficult due to language problems. In heritage language classes, the immigrant student’s experiences are validated, and as a consequence, they are motivated to learn. Farah (2000) says, “Students [immigrants] possess a great deal of unprocessed knowledge and experience that need to be validated, used, and expressed in a positive way” (p. 69), and heritage language classes promote these opportunities. Nieto (2002) states:

All children come to school as thinkers and learners, aptitudes usually recognized as important building blocks for further learning. But there seems to be a curious refusal
on the part of many educators to accept as valid the *kinds* of knowledge and experiences with which some students come to school. For instance, speaking a language other than English, especially those languages with low status, is often thought of by teachers as a potential detriment rather than a benefit to learning (p. 8).

Heritage language learning allows students to develop their own voice which “is the discursive means to make themselves as active authors of their worlds” (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 214). Heritage language learning opens possibilities for authenticating diverse voices which have for too long been subdued and denied in schools around the nation. Heritage language learning can promote interest, motivation, and academic success (Macedo, 2000).

**Addressing Educational Equality Through Cultural Issues**

Since reconceptualization in the 1970’s, a term used to describe a new paradigm shift in education moving from a Tyler Rationale of technologies, test makers, textbook publishers, and school administrators toward an education inclusive of the aesthetic, ethical, humanistic values and goals, theorists continue to write about the importance of accepting and validating cultural diversity in teaching for educational equality (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000). However, acceptance of diverse cultures is often met with opposition that relentlessly seeks to place other cultures in submission to the dominant culture. Bhabha (1994) says “Liberal democracy…cannot cope with diversity of cultures…different cultures are incommensurables” (p. 120). Liberal democracy in this sense means universalization of the Euro-centric way of life, knowledge, and values where there is no room for difference, newness, or hybridity and where the suppression of
culture and difference maintains the power and privilege of the dominant group (Apple, 1995; 2001; Spring, 2001).

Pinar et al. (2000) state that during the 1970’s, cultural issues affecting curriculum change and policy were not fervently addressed for much of the decade because prior to the 1980’s, immigrants were mostly Europeans who assimilated well into our culture. The importance of culture is more clearly defined in the 1980’s and 1990’s. In the 1980’s, the nation underwent the second largest wave of immigration in our history where immigrants, including many Hispanics, came from parts of the world other than Western Europe. As a consequence, recognition and acceptance of diverse cultures became increasingly important because many immigrants of this wave were not willing to give up their culture or language.

In Culturally Responsive Teaching (2000), Geneva Gay says that “…[C]ulture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education…” giving “…order and meaning to our lives and the lives of others” (p. 8). Gay also states that culture “…mediate[s] the expression of literacy” and “literacy education will also influence and mold an individual’s cultural identity” (p. 9). The importance of culture and ethnicity cannot be denied as they are the foundation, the “fundamental anchors” (p. 10) for all other behaviors. Robbing our students of their culture in essence takes away many of their behavioral abilities such as thinking, relating, and speaking.

A student’s culture is a strong resource that could provide the foundation for success in the classroom. Our students are not empty vessels into which we can pour knowledge. They come to us with previous knowledge and experience that can serve as building blocks for future growth. Like Gay (2000), Sonia Nieto (1996) and McLaren
(1995) also conclude that promoting and maintaining cultural diversity in the classroom lead to academic success. Nieto states that when culture is reinforced in the school, students have less “ambiguity and confusion” (p. 301) because of the connectedness they begin to experience. Weaver (2004) also shows us that when pedagogy has relevance and connects to one’s life experiences, the student is more likely to be participatory and engaged in the learning process. Devine (1995) says, “Educative figures should strive in…engaging the whole student - not just the disembodied mind” (p. 66), and Ayers (2004) defines the whole student as “three-dimensional… [one with] hopes, dreams, aspirations, skills, and capabilities; a body and a heart and a spirit; experience, a history, a past, several possible pathways, a future” (p. 3). Sadly, the school experience often separates the immigrant student from her experiences outside the classroom leaving a large gap in the educational process. Dimitriadis (2003) reaffirms that there is a “strict split between in-school and out-of-school relationship” (p. 54), a split that Cummins (1993) refers to as “bicultural ambivalence (or lack of cultural identification)” (p. 105). When the student is alienated from her own culture through ambivalence, inferior status, and discrimination, academic failure often ensues. Cummins says that the reverse of this is true when the educational system perceives the immigrant’s culture in a positive and reinforcing way.

This connection of culture to curriculum and pedagogy is crucial for immigrant student success. Cultural experiences offer a bridge that gives support to the immigrant students while she is learning a new culture. If the experiences are denied or refuted, then there is no bridge, leaving a gap between what the student knows and what is yet to be known. Such pedagogy soon reveals that without this connection, immigrant students
become disillusioned and ultimately disinterested. Reynolds (2003) states, “Knowledge that is disconnected from the knower leaves us hopeless and often helpless” (p. 56). Many immigrant students today, similar to those whom Reynolds describes, feel disconnected from the standard curriculum because there is no established link to their own lives, experiences, or cultures. Educators must be attuned to the experiences of diverse students and give them control through their cultural knowledge. Tragically, the educational experience attempts to dictate the immigrant student’s ways of knowing, but only they are “the authentic chroniclers of their own experience” (Delpit, 1993, p. 139).

There are other repercussions of cultural denial. Immigrant students, who are stripped of their cultural heritage, including life experiences, begin to view themselves as inferior and unworthy as compared to the dominant culture, the white Euro-centric male culture (Delpit, 1995; Hermes, 2005; McLaren, 1995). Immigrant students become the other who can never measure up to the standards of the Euro-centric culture. Morrison’s (1970) poignant story of Pecola is just such an example where a young black child measures her worth in comparison to the white world. She is ultimately destroyed because she can never meet these standards; she is not of the white world. Adler (2004) recounts a similar story of a Korean student in a class with predominantly white, blue-eyed students. The young Korean was told by the white children that she “was black, so she was the slave” (p. 115). She, like Pecola, began to internalize a hegemony perpetrated by those in power who depict the other’s culture as savage, nonhuman, and in need of reform. Measuring oneself against these standards leads many of our immigrant students to feelings of doubt about their value and worth in this country. Internalization of unworth can also bring about self-blame as the immigrant student may feel as if she
deserves the negative treatment, the unequal education, or failure. She begins to accept her own degradation as justified (Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Perkins-Munn, & Torre, 2004).

Anzuldua (1987) says that cultural issues can become magnified when immigrant students reject acculturation. In *Borderlands La Frontera*, she recounts the cultural conflicts of many Hispanics on the borders between two different cultures. Anzuldua exposes the difficulties that Chicanos experience both economically and socially if they are unwilling to acculturate. One culture cancels out the other and the author says, “... we are zero, nothing to no one” (p. 85). These same feelings are becoming more prevalent today as many immigrant students do not want to acculturate. They are caught in a between space similar to that which He (2003) describes as being lost and lonely between two cultures.

Denying cultural differences disempowers immigrant students (Delpit, 1993). Schooling should be about empowerment, yet as Ayers (2004) says, “The sad thing is that teaching based on...empowerment remains ...dispised by the educational establishment...” (p. 52). Disempowerment is accomplished through institutionalized practices of “sorting and punishing... ranking... obedience and conformity” (p. 9). These practices seek to conform, mold, and integrate students into one mindset and one body, stripping them of their culture and leaving them faceless and invisible (Giroux, 1992). Faceless and invisible students are reduced to nothingness in the educational system. However, there are those of us who recognize that these immigrant students are “valuable beyond measure, each a whole universe” (Ayers, 2004, p. 12). When the educational
system reduces students to nonexistence, our nation loses invaluable resources of
diversity and difference.

No culture translates to no identity. Thus, as we deprive immigrant students of
culture and identity, we push them to the margins where their voices are unheard, and
they are ineffective to challenge the power system. McLaren (1995) tells us that through
disempowerment, we assimilate and homogenize into “a unified racio-national
configuration” where minorities are “excluded and oppressed” (p. 158). Immigrant
students are also marginalized and disempowered through instructional practices and
curriculum. Sonia Nieto (1996) asks us to question these practices which favor a
“…highly competitive and individualistic instructional mode… [in which] dominant-
culture children and males are more likely to succeed” (p.147). Schools reinforce the
dominant American culture which is based on competition where there are winners and
losers (Haberman, 1995). Such a system of winning and losing negates the losers who
feel hopeless and doubtful that they can ever win. Immigrant students are especially at a
disadvantage because they do not belong to the dominant group which has the advantage
in school competition which increases and reinforces the gap between the haves and the
have nots. Schools must become more sensitive to cultural diversity through cooperative
practices which can promote the collectivity of the group and where each participant acts
unselfishly for the good of others (Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1993). Nussbaum (1997)
urges the study and validity of non-Western cultures because they have power to connect
us to the rest of the world. She also says that in learning about others, we come to a
greater understanding of our own culture and of who we are. More importantly,
Nussbaum states that in knowledge of diverse cultures, one begins to realize that one’s
own culture is just one of many in the world. Also, this awakening may lead to the understanding that one’s culture is not superior to the other and the other is not less than one’s own. Voiding and devaluing diverse culture leads us to “…moral and political error, to failures in human sensitivity…” (p. 116). Should we err in no recognition of international cultures, we will never find connectedness to the rest of the world. As we recognize and validate diversity, we can pool the global resources for acceptance of diversity around the world.

Cultural diversity in the classroom has the power and possibility to benefit all students through a reconceptualization of pedagogy and curriculum. One can understand these possibilities by looking at the use of popular culture to enhance classroom practices. Popular culture is an exemplary model for reconceptualizing education, and cultural diversity has the same potential to awaken the classroom. Manovich (1995) urges the use of new media in the classroom. He says, “It is…variable…mutable…liquid … abstraction…twisting…fluid and unstable” (p. 117). Education which includes multiple cultures and perspectives could become like the new media to which Manovich refers. An acceptance of diverse cultures would sharply contrast with today’s curriculum which is stable, concrete, and non hybrid – a curriculum that Doll (2000) calls “ossified” (p. 10). Refusal to accept diversity of cultures is a large part of this ossification.

By opening curriculum to diverse cultures, we find other ways of knowing that can be used in creating new pedagogies. Although Daspit (2000) refers to popular culture in the art forms of rap, music videos, and other multimedia sources, what he says about these forms of popular culture can also include immigrant cultures. Daspit (2000) says, “…[R]ap provides insights and attitudes that can inform radical pedagogies” (p. 177).
Aside from rap, music videos and computer programs offer the ability to “transform and transcend boundaries” (Gough, 2004, p. 94). A curriculum of newness and inclusion is indicative of a culturally diverse classroom. Such a classroom opens worlds of knowledge and new experience, a sharp contrast to a traditional curriculum that is linear, stable, fixed, and one dimensional resting upon the validity and acceptance of some and the rejection of others. Students bring cultural experiences of many natures and types to the classroom settings, and these could possibly “emancipate pedagogy” (Goldfarb, 2002, p. 60).

Weaver (2004) invites us to look at the spawns in science fiction which allow us to “construct worlds based on peace and pedagogy” (p. 34). These spawns can be applied to a pedagogy that is accepting of cultural diversity, allowing possibility and hope for change. These spawns could open worlds with choices that are not available at present to many of our immigrant students. Diversities of cultures are increasing in our nation, and they could well serve us in our classrooms to connect our students to each other, to instruction, and to curriculum. Weaver and Daspit (2000) encourage us with “…decentering critical pedagogy by inviting multiple readings of popular culture texts into our analysis of schooling and seeing many forms of popular culture as critical pedagogical texts” (p. viii). This recommendation could be extended to multiple cultures including diverse readings of language, culture, and identity.

As previously stated, many immigrants today are holding on to their native culture while trying to acculturate into the American culture. Conflicts arrive causing stress and emotional disruption for immigrant students who attend school, experience a new culture, and remain immersed in the heritage culture at home. Teacher knowledge of
these cultural conflicts is a must in helping reduce stress and frustration which often lead to poor academic performance. Many teachers are not aware of these conflicts, and, consequently, the issues are not addressed in relationship to classroom performance. Teachers must begin to understand the cultural conflicts that exist in order to create an environment of care and compassion.

Immigrant students caught in the middle of cultural conflict may experience “silence, isolation, feelings of hopelessness, and feelings of difference, fear of ridicule, inner repression of native culture, and problems in adjusting to the new surroundings” (Igoa, 1995, p. 105). They actually undergo a cultural split which prohibits integration into the new culture and begin to struggle with their native culture due to feelings of being in exile - belonging to neither culture (Carger, 1996; He, 2003; Hong, 1993; Jimenez, 1997, 2001; Soto, 1997; Taylor, 2004; Valdes, 1996; and Viramontes, 1996). Hoffman (1989) affirms that immigrants go through difficult and stressful stages in learning a new culture and language, and too often in the process, they lose their own voice. She states:

I wait for that spontaneous flow of inner language which used to be my nighttime talk with myself. Nothing comes. Polish, in a short time, has atrophied, shriveled from sheer uselessness. Its words don’t apply to my new experiences, they’re not coequal with any of the objects, or faces, or the very air I breathe in the daytime. In English, the words have not penetrated to those layers of my psyche from which a private connection could be processed (p. 107).

This transitional period of exile is similar to looking through a “veil or gauze” (Fine et. al. 2004, p. 18) which alienates immigrant students from the dominant culture.
through separation policies yet protects them from “being torn asunder” (p. 18). Ayers (2004) refers to this space as between earth and heaven where the students must be given possibilities to reach toward freedom. Teachers have a responsibility to allow these spaces to happen without imposing restrictions and barriers upon the students. Only then will immigrant students be able to cross boundaries and obstacles that repress them into conformity and homogenization. By allowing immigrant students to reach toward the heavens, teachers can maximize the immigrant student’s potential.

Addressing Educational Equality Through Identity Issues

Several traditions in education have limited and continue to limit the growth of the individual and her identity development. In fact these traditions have stymied anything not congruent to traditional values and knowledge which reproduce an existing status quo in society where a few have economic control while a large portion of society continues in economic poverty with little control over their own destiny. A reproduction system involves oppression, social stratification, a hidden curriculum, silencing of voices, hegemony, institutionalism, patriarchy, and canons of truth and knowledge. Such a system involves standardization and directed goals with predetermined ends (Pinar et al., 2000). Within such a system of control, immigrant students find difficulty in seeking their own identity development. Early in the 1970’s, Michael Apple began to write about the hidden curriculum that promotes a non-emancipated individual in our schools. His book, *Education and Power* (1995), reveals his theories on how this hidden curriculum reproduces the individual for corporate needs. This individual, as Apple tells us, is far from one with her own identity as she becomes “…part of the state apparatus - one that produces agents with the ‘appropriate’ dispositions, values, and ideologies taught through
a hidden curriculum” (p. 83). Apple is a leader in the theory that schools force students to accept an identity that is conducive to a capitalistic society where the identity of the individual is lost and devalued having no legitimacy except through the confines of one of conformity.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) say, “The structure of social relations in education…develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self image…which are crucial ingredients of job adequacy” (p. 131) where the student has no control over her identity. She is simply part of the technical process that is reminiscent of the assembly line where faces become blank with little expression or animation. In a reproductive school system, students become the workforce for a capitalistic society becoming robots with clone identities that will later replenish a working class destined for with low paying jobs. Reynolds (2003) later stresses this robotic identity by using the word “dehumanized” (p. 43).

Two early leaders in addressing identity issues in curriculum are Pinar and Grumet. In *Toward a Poor Curriculum* (as cited in Pinar et al., 2000), the two theorists encourage a curriculum that promotes the individual as opposed to a curriculum that is fortified with elements that desensitize individuality through the institutionalization of sameness such as standardized tests, a standard-based curriculum, and extreme structure. Recognizing that schools have become a technical process similar to Ford’s assembly line, the two authors call for a *poor* curriculum that is left solely with the development of the individual student to become who she is and who she desires to become. In actuality, such a pedagogy is rich in self-awareness, experience, and self-growth; is unscripted rather than predictable, linear, and structured; and imagines growth and possibility.
Many schools are dehumanizing institutions which is apparent in the use of metal detectors, cameras, and “zero tolerance” (Ayers, 2004, p. 5) that treat individual students as nonhuman. Schooling can be about control, domination, surveillance, and restriction where students represent inanimate objects reduced to compliance as they are regulated by bells, whistles, passes, and the ever-present categories (Foucault, 1979).

The orders and control come from the top down in such an authoritative system, one based on hierarchical knowledge where the student finds herself at the lower end (Martusewitz, 2001). In such hierarchical systems, the knowledge bearers (those at the top end) are valued while those at the lower end are not. The author emphasizes that this type of pedagogy demands “ways of thinking and ways of being” (p. 8). She goes on to say that those at the top have richer lives because they construct their own while those at the bottom have a less rich and full life because their identities have been constructed by conformity to a universal identity.

Our schools are oppressive to many, especially the lower classes. One of the ways the system controls via oppression is refusal to allow others to speak. Silenced voices often discover that those in positions of power and privilege begin to speak for them (Howard, 1999). Freire (1970) and Buber (1970) provide critical insight into the importance of the dialogue in curriculum instruction for it is through dialogue that identity emerges and is validated. Delpit (1993) says dialogue requires our “hearts and our minds” (p. 139) as well as the relinquishing of control (Adler, 2004). However, pedagogy can be about power and control as seen through The School Teacher in Morrison’s book, Beloved (1987). He represents control and management through
“oppression, dehumanization, and exploitation” (Delpit, 1993, p. x.) which are tools used to silence voice.

Dialogue can attend to immigrant voices spawning identity development. A pedagogy that accepts diversity and diverse identities “…values…student voice” (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. 262). McLaren (1995) writes, “Curriculum must attend to …student experience and voice…” (p. 40), and it requires “…discussion, question, and critique…ambiguity, irony, mystery, and growth” (Ayers, 2004, p. 91). Attending to the voices of immigrant students opens possibilities for the student to self-authenticate and become who she is to become (Greene, 1995).

In Working Class Identity and Celluloid Fantasy (1989), Aronowitz says, “… [A] major purpose of schooling is the denial of identity” (p. 200) through conformity of certain expectations, a prescribed curriculum, and mandated pedagogy. This consistency is largely instituted under the guise of attaining upward mobility economically and socio-politically. However, as many now realize, this hegemony is false, insidious, and invasive as it seeps into the victim’s conscious convincing her that she is responsible for her own demise. Some immigrant students may find upward mobility in the work arena because of education, but very few will attain the jobs and positions of those who have power and control over their lives. Much discrimination in the work force still exists toward immigrants, females, and blacks who continue to find themselves receiving lower wages than others with the same or lesser education (Stevenson & Ellsworth, 1993). Even when students do conform, they pay a price by losing their own identity and individuality to conformity and control. He (2003) tells a Chinese fable that her mother taught her and one that has value for us in the classroom. She says that it teaches “not to emulate the
actions of others at the cost of losing unique characteristics which make us individuals” (p. 29). Assimilation practices are not only detrimental to the individual student, they continually promote a monotonous, boring, and unchallenging pedagogy and curriculum.

Popkewitz (1988) and Ayers (2004) argue that stripping immigrant students of an identity is institutionalized and ingrained in educational practices such as a strict schedule, division of knowledge, press of time, efficiency, large classes, hierarchy of authority, control, anonymity, fear, and coerciveness. Whatever autobiography the student brings with her to school, it soon becomes nonpersonal and motivated by a nondemocratic curriculum driven by the ghosts of curriculum past which appear and reappear as force, ridicule, indifference, disconnectedness, and shame (Doll, 2002). Doll urges the more lively ghosts to enter our curriculum space - ghosts with a “lively spirit or creative force [which] permeates the very concept of a postmodern curriculum” (p. 28). These ghosts could possible attend to a more democratic curriculum, one of acceptance and validation of others of difference and one which relinquishes power and control.

In The Practice of Freedom (1994), Martusewitz and Reynolds warn us about the movement toward a National Curriculum and the current National Board for Teaching Standards. The two authors refer to the latter as “a direct move toward the control of thought of the American citizenry” (p. 233) and conclude that schools could find themselves increasingly faced with a curriculum that leaves no space for teacher modality, diversity, individuality, or multiple identities. Verma (2004) warns us of the dangers of national standards for any field stating that the National Science Education Standards are based on the contributions of Western Science as opposed to contributions from other cultures. As such, Western traditions which “describe, explain, predict and
control natural phenomena” (p. 62) are emphasized over other ways of knowing such as “personal belief, myth, religious value, and supernatural forces” (p. 62). In Solitary Spaces (1994), Miller objects to a curriculum that proposes sameness and unity. Instead, she promotes curriculum, teaching, and learning that “…do not posit particular voices and experiences as representative of us all” (p. 205).

As many theorists have shown, schools often continue to educate students to be of one mind, one thought, and one identity. Some students are continually valued while others are not. Wear (1997) says these dualisms are firmly entrenched in our curriculum where there is “objective/subjective, reason/emotion, distance/connection, particular/abstract – the former in each dyad being that which is most valued” (p. 41). Ayers (2004) recounts such practices used by the Australian Government to educate Aborigines who were seen as deficient and lacking. The government tried to destroy their identity and empty them of any cultural differences in order that they might breathe “whiteness” (p. 2). A National Curriculum could have the same effect on all our students, especially our immigrant students who are already forced to breathe whiteness.

Bakhtin (1981) calls our educational system a monological way of thinking, seeing, and knowing, and he warns us of “the danger of reducing what is known to a single consciousness” (p. 288). A nation with a single mind becomes a nation that is frightening. One need only look at the recent past and the history of war to understand the danger of such thought. Germany and Cambodia (the Khmer Rouge) are but two examples of the horrors that develop from one-dimensional thinking.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) refer to schools as “institutions of deprivation” (p. 285) which promote a monoculture and no tolerance for multiple identities. However,
popular culture provides another model toward emancipation of such classroom practices. Theorists who promote popular culture in the classroom recognize that young people are forming identities through pop culture and confirm that young people have long been deprived of an identity in schooling. Reynolds (2003) writes, “Popular culture is not only about media, it is about identity…” (p. 102). Daspit and Weaver (2000) urge us to connect the curriculum to popular culture by decentering the canons of curriculum which validate certain truths, knowledge, and identities while rejecting others. Embracing diverse cultures and identities in the classroom can be just as valuable as the use of pop culture. Immigrant students are not faceless, inanimate objects with no identities. They come to school rich in experience and resources and could breathe life into the classroom and pedagogy if only schools were willing to accept their richness of difference.

In Learning Relations (2002), Sidorkin refutes the belief that a child has no identity and that her identity is yet to be completed. He says, “It is an attitude oriented toward the future, and therefore an identity that undervalues the present” (p.42). Sidorkin also tells us that in this half-existence, the child (student) becomes very dependent on others for her sense of identity and being. As young children begin school, this is very evident in that the teacher is all-knowing and holds the key to the development of the child who is denied any previous experience or knowledge. As the student progresses in the system, it is very likely that she will continue to accept an imposed identity asking few questions of those in power. Questioning what goes on in the universe is part of the process of forming an identity (Ayers, 2004), and immigrant students are often not given this choice. For those who do question and begin to resist, they are often labeled as deviant, lazy, and worthless.
In this same light, Cannella (1997) writes about child-centeredness in schools. Instead of being a liberating education, Cannella says that education is a system of “surveillance and judgment…and adult supremacy over education” (pp. 134-135). The child-centered approach in essence is another way to treat all children in the same way no matter the differences of location or maturation of the child. Cannella continues, “Child-centeredness is the reproduction of the cultural capital of power groups” (p. 135). What Cannella describes is just another way to impose the same identity on all children, an identity based on Euro-centric truths and values which reinforce the institutions of control and power.

In her book, *A River Forever Flowing* (2003), He describes the lives of three Chinese women who leave China to come to Canada. In the process of crossing cultures, He says that the three of them became “lost” and that their identities “were developed in the midst of these tensions and challenges” (p. 75) and “constantly changing” (p. 76). He and her friends at times were stressed and confused crossing between two cultures. Identity issues for many of our young people can create the same stress and confusion, particularly if one’s identity is forcibly suppressed.

Immigrant students face large identity issues in schools where every day they struggle with who they are and who they will continue to become in this nation. Their struggles are often vulnerable to the demands that the school places upon them to assimilate and give up their culture, language, and identity in lieu of generic and national ones. Identity is a process as Greene (1995) says and one that is forever shaping and becoming if it has the space and the passageways to do so. Identity development of each
student should be a major ideology of pedagogy. By allowing identities to become what they have potential to be, we give worth and validity to the individual.

Identity development is also a process which takes time, but many immigrant students are expected to assimilate as quickly as possible. Many express their feelings as being rushed and always in a hurry to make the changes. Igoa (1995) describes the process of identity development as like that of hatching an egg. It cannot be hurried; it must happen in its own time, and all chicks do not hatch at the same time. Integrating two very different worlds takes time as does the egg hatching. Igoa again says that the student needs a “resting period” (p. 67) during the early stages of acculturation. As the egg rests in the nest before maturing, so must the immigrant student rest in the nest which provides a shelter where values and beliefs can be expressed without being ridiculed. Here the immigrant student is allowed to be different. If the classroom teacher or the ESL teacher rushes the student toward a new identity, there are many complications that can arise which deter the learning process. Pedagogy must be attuned to the stages of identity development and let them occur in their natural development. (He, 2003; Igoa, 1995; Serros, 1993).

In Between Spaces

During the cross-cultural experience, immigrant students often willingly locate in between spaces which provide comfort while they experience confusion and disruption (Centrie, 2000). Raley (2004) refers to them as “safe spaces” (p. 151) which are dependent upon the social relations of the members who act as family. These are spaces where students can find “healing and dreamspace of social justice and equity” (Soto, 2004, p. x). They are places “for children to speak their stories, to listen to others’
stories” (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005, p. 271). On the other hand, these spaces can represent a hostile environment where immigrant students are forced on the edge, on the borders between two worlds - the old and the new. In this between, they struggle with balancing identities and cultures while overcoming barriers separating heritage and new language. Both spaces are necessary for student survival.

Immigrant students are often marginalized and find themselves on the borders, the outskirts of school and community, but they are seeking and constructing “alternate venues where they can escape the pressures of a dominant society” (Barry, 2000, p. 84). These spaces “within and outside school contexts” provide opportunities for “possibility, imagination, social critique, outrage, despair, aesthetics, and social action” (Weiss & Fine, 2000, p. xii). Within these spaces, immigrant students are not silenced or deficient; they have freedom to explore and to become who they will become. Centrie (2004) refers to them as “free spaces held together by a biography of oppression, a yearning for freedom” (p. 65). Although no space can be absolutely free or safe, immigrant students can retreat to these places freeing themselves, even if temporarily, from institutions of oppression. It is in these spaces that students have opportunities to become border crossers promoting compassion and tolerance for each other (Giroux, 1992).

Like many working class groups, immigrants have experienced a national assault against them since the 1980’s (Weiss & Fine, 2000) in part because they represent those from places other than Western Europe. Since 9/11 the distrust of immigrants has been on the rise (Cary, 2004). The children of these new immigrants have also been subjected to such an assault as they are stereotyped as deficient, untrustworthy, and unworthy. However, they are beginning to challenge these false notions, and the between spaces
provide possibilities to do so where they collectively challenge stereotypes and weave their stories through the dialectic against exclusion and marginalization (Weiss & Fine, 2000).

Immigrant students are seeking their own identities, and they are finding ways to do so in between spaces which connect them through a sense of belonging. This attachment in turn affirms the identity of immigrant students as they unite with others of the same heritage culture and language (Gandara & Gibson, 2004). Immigrant students are forced to conform to a national identity within the school’s “public places” (Weiss & Fine, 2000, p. 1) where they have little opportunity to challenge or refute this identity. On the other hand, in between spaces, they “grow roots, develop, flourish, engage, critique, and just relax with those in the similar situations” (p. 2). Here immigrant students can construct multiple identities such as a piece of “cloth can be fashioned into any number of garments” (Brodkey, 2000, p. 25). Bhabha (1994) states, “These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity” (p. 2).

As more immigrant students are excluded from the public spaces, they are forming more between spaces which Weiss and Fine (2000) call “construction sites” (p. 32) where immigrant students find places for “breathing, relaxing, or sitting on a couch without the constant arrows of stereotyping and social hatred” (p. 32). Construction sites become spaces of refuge and recuperation from attacks on immigrant students as well as spaces for trusting and sharing common bonds which bind them collectively. Here they “fashion and refashion individual and collective identities… [S]elves are tried on, experimented with, acted on and rejected” (Barry, 2000, p. 35). Elbaz-Luwisch (2005)
and Conle (2005) argue that schools have an obligation to create and support these spaces for our diverse students where they can express feelings such as fear, anxiety, or even anger. Spaces that provide belonging and connections are critical for prevention of dropping out or seeking lesser academic tracks. Fine, Weiss, and Powell (1997) state, “A flight into sameness by a marginalized group may be essential for and not a distraction from integration” (p. 275).

In between spaces allow immigrant students to challenge how they are perceived through the media as lazy, a drain on the national economy, and a menace to education and health care. Derogatory language can be a form of power used to elevate one group of people while imposing inferiority on others, and it negatively impacts identity development (Akom, 2000). In between spaces, immigrant students begin to speak with alternate voices that reject how they have been constructed by the power system. They are learning to critique and question institutions where they identify themselves by checking a box (Barry, 2000). They are also realizing that life can be better than “exploitation and abuse” (Weiss, 2000, p. 46).

Proweller (2000) states, “Constructive identity work ….in space[s] has the potential to seep into the broader public arena and interrupt misconceptions” (p. 116). When and if this potential becomes a reality, the public must confront its own complicity in allowing our immigrant students to undergo discrimination and oppression in mainstream schooling. The public must also face ethical and moral choices toward change for equality. Our immigrant students have lost much in the past decades including a rich cultural and linguistic heritage that has been buried and lost through prejudicial schooling practices. We must also ask ourselves what we have lost as a nation by
allowing oppression of immigrant students and what we have to gain by unconditional acceptance through a culturally responsive education.

Weiss and Fine (2000) state that these spaces provide for cultural “discourses” allowing youth to “be carried across social borders of ‘difference’” (p. 159). This is becoming increasingly important as more districts are becoming segregated through tracking programs. Fine, et. al. (2004) write about a school district in New Jersey that took the initiative to detrack allowing for more student interaction especially among diverse students. The results were quite amazing as students actually began to construct a community of “democracy…across differences” (Fine, Anand, Jordan, & Sherman, 2000, p. 164). In these groups the students challenged socio-political and economic power as well as institutionalized school practices such as a rigorous education for some and not for all. They began to challenge that they were to blame for their own academic tracking.

These spaces of cultural exchange “break down the invisible walls that segregate …privileged…silenced…separate…‘smart’ from…‘slow’, that challenge the categories and ‘right’ answers” (Fine et al., 2000, p. 169). Rather than encouraging these spaces for cultural exchange, schools insist upon “splitting” (p.171) students from each other which perpetuates the falsehood of those deserving and those not. In this same New Jersey district, the students began to cross boundaries of difference that once were limited to the privileged and participate in the disruption of a system that is normally controlled and fixed, excluding those of difference. These spaces provide sanctuaries for immigrant students, promote belonging and care, and, most importantly, provide possibilities for imagining what could be.
The second between space reveals the difficulties immigrant students confront in crossing cultures and boundaries. As they encounter cultural inconsistencies and flux between the heritage and mainstream cultures, they must “face the challenge of recognizing, mastering, and integrating scripts from the diverse ethnic, class, and educational cultures in which they live” (Daiute, 2000, p. 213). Consequently, those in between spaces often lack constancy and coherence resulting in conflict and contradictions. Kramsch (1993) states, “The realization of difference, not only between oneself and others, but between one’s personal and social self, indeed between different perceptions of oneself, can be at once an elating and deeply troubling experience” (p. 234). Mutua and Swadener (2004) also indicate the many intersections in between including “…dual consciousness, multiple identities, and selfhood” (p. 16).

Gibson, Gandara, and Koyama (2004) report that immigrant students often feel “judged” (p. 135) by the mainstream school population especially in spaces dominated by the majority. Simply walking through a space such as a hall can lead to feelings of “alienation, shame, and inferiority” (p. 135). On the other hand, students who feel as though they are a part of the system and belong come into contact with those who have the social capital of resources and knowing which provide greater opportunity for academic success (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). Immigrant students who do not attain this feeling of belonging and connecting rarely experience academic success (Osterman, 2000).

Immigrant students living across cultures experience tension and disruption. They are often condemned to these spaces on the margins where they realize that they cannot become the person they wish to be (Greene, 2000). They suffer great pain of rejection
and barriers to freedom – freedom to make their own choices and to imagine what could be rather than what is. Soto (2004) describes these spaces as “suffocating…forbidding our perspectives, our creativity, and our wisdom” (p. ix.)

He (2003) writes about in between (between the diverse cultures within China and those between China and North America). Further, each of these cultures reflects multiple cultures which are constantly changing. Connelly (as cited in He, 2003) states, “…[S]he again rode a roller coaster between cultures” (p. x). He declares that she does not remain in the complex heritage culture, and she does not adapt or assimilate into the new multiple cultures of North America. She says, “It is not because we do not want to be the people they expected us to be. As always we are, and become people in between” (p. xi). This identity struggle is reinforced by Mutua and Swadener (2004), “… [I]n my identity, all its facets are undergirded by a …halfway between not being defined” (p. 5). As He flows in the river, she deposits into the delta where there are mixtures of past, present, and future components. Connelly (as cited in He, 2003) states, “She is a cultural delta” (p. xii). He’s cross-cultural narrative reveals the complexity of in between cultures which are forever changing and transforming. What was once truth becomes blasphemy. Alexander Dumas’ book, The Count of Monte Cristo, provides a strong example of this cultural flux. During Napoleon’s first rule, supporters of the monarch (against Napoleon) were imprisoned, yet only a few years later (1812), supporters of Napoleon (against the monarch) were imprisoned. Those in both regimes suffered at the hands of a constantly changing cultural order similar to that experienced by He. The stories of lives as experienced during these periods of flux, tension, and turmoil are frequently overlooked
by power structures and pedagogical practices (Hermes, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2005).

He (2003) reveals the pain, suffering, and anguish often felt in between spaces such as seeing the words, “the bourgeois antirevolutionary authority” (p. 31), on the paper hat her father was wearing. This same anguish is felt by immigrant students as they are called undeserving derogatory names, such as *Osama bin Laden* and *anti-American*. Name calling is part of the humiliation immigrant students feel. He describes how the Red Guards began to destroy the cultural habits of the people - changing dress and hair style. Muslim immigrants experience the same kind of humiliation in my own school as they have had their head coverings snatched from their heads by other students and the administration. As Wei, one of the Chinese women in He’s narrative, was prohibited from joining the Red Guards or wearing the uniforms, so are immigrant students often disallowed the privileges of those in the mainstream including being cheerleaders, club presidents, and athletes since many of these activities depend upon popularity.

There are other similarities between He’s story and that of today’s immigrant student. Her father was confined to a compound, separated, and restricted from those in the mainstream. He says she sobbed when she saw her uncle beaten by the Red Guards. Although immigrant students are not physically beaten, they are often beaten emotionally and mentally as they are separated from the mainstream, excluded, and marginalized. They are degraded as much as if they were physically beaten. He’s father was sent to a reform farm to “wash his bourgeois brain” (p. 35). Schooling practices similar political brainwashing of immigrant students as we force them to leave behind their heritage language and culture through assimilation practices. Apple (1995) and Ndimande (2004)
argue that classroom teaching is never neutral because knowledge that is valued is legitimized by the dominant controlling class.

Immigrant students who come to this country have often left everything behind. Like Shiao in He’s (2003) narrative, they have felt a displacement in leaving their home and have felt the pain in their hearts of “broken vases, photos, and paintings” (p. 37). Displacement produces stress sometimes requiring psychological treatment that is not available to many immigrant students. Our counselors are often not available for these students because they are bogged down in paper work and scheduling (Sutner, 2004). Added to this psychological trauma, immigrant students are grasping a new language, learning a new culture, and developing a new identity.

Wei (He, 2003) also talks about the suppression she felt as those she loved were accused of antirevolutionary activities. Not only did her family and she suffer from false accusations, those in power propagandized that they were deserving of any mal treatment. Accusations such as these are rampant today as immigrant students and their families are accused of being traitors or spies in our country and taking away American jobs - jobs that are often the lowest form of menial work.

He’s description of oppression during the Cultural Revolution can also be seen in schooling today. The landlords in her narrative were forced to kneel and imbibe revolutionary slogans. This is also apparent in today’s schooling. Immigrant students do not physically kneel, but they are forced into being pliable and silent. They are often submissive, and, like Wei, they are blamed for their own demise.

He’s tale of the labor force in the factories and fields is reminiscent of the pathways immigrant students are forced to follow. Many immigrant students follow the
same paths of hard labor because they are denied opportunities of higher education through tracking. He and her friends were eventually allowed to enter the university based upon their hard work and commitment to the party. This is not true for many immigrant students today who find that tracking rarely leads to opportunities of higher education or job advancement.

He’s narrative takes us to North America where her cross-cultural experience continues. She says that this was a “cultural process no less of an upheaval than the Cultural Revolution” (p. 53). Her identity formation becomes more complex and difficult. Just as some label immigrant students as half this or half that, they, like He, are neither. He tells us that she was unsure of her identity “always reaching out to the West for a new identity” (p. 55). Just as He had stereotyped images of the West prior to her living there, so do immigrant students who previously envisioned freedom and opportunity in our nation. They are soon disillusioned as they are forced to assimilate and restricted lingually and culturally. Many begin to lose their heritage, their past. However, He tells us that to “craft our own identities,” we cannot relinquish the past (p. 56). In her words, we must “make meaning out of” (p. 56) our past experiences. If immigrant students are to form a new identity, they, like He, must be afforded the opportunity to value and build upon past experience in order to form a new identity.

In constructing new identities in between, He tells us that tension is a necessity. I believe that she means one must struggle with the new and the past. Identity emerges then if the student is willing to challenge and resist the predetermined and the rigid. Immigrant students, like He, experience “cross-cultural, cross-temporal, cross-historical, and cross-
generational aspects of …daily living…It is in this flux…that our cross-cultural identities are crafted” (p. 66).

Some of the tension that immigrant students feel comes from schooling practices which collide with family and community practices. Immigrant students find it difficult to have no authority or voice in education. They have conflicts with rules and regulations that demote them to nothingness, invisibility, and a person yet to be. As He (2003) tells us, these collisions cause splits that can lead to anxiety. However, as He struggled in this new world full of difference, she began, in time, to accept these differences. She says, “Yet the difference could be the starting point for our learning” (p. 71), and she came to know herself through the understanding of others’ difference. There is much to learn here from He’s experience. She says, “We learn about the new culture by putting it alongside our learning of our own culture. It is in this parallel cultural learning experience that we begin to understand who we were, how we become who we are, and who we might be” (p. 72).

He states, “Cultural transformation is ongoing and evolving in both China and Canada: a new place to stand was created between the two cultures” (p. 91). The transformation often involves strangeness which can create boundaries for any cross-cultural experience. He lives through “confusion, conflict, frustration, and finally learned to dance a little bit in this exile flow” (p. 114). In between for He was a temporary displacement similar to that experienced by immigrant students detached from new and heritage cultures. As He tells us, one can become trapped in between with feelings of belonging to neither the heritage culture nor the new one. Yet through all of the displacement and strangeness, He was able to form a new identity and experience a
cultural transformation which continues to change and evolve. Kennedy (as cited in Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005) writes, “… [L]iminal space is the in-between space, the space between what was and what might be, where one engages with future possibilities” (p. 130). The same possibilities can become a reality for our immigrant students as they undergo language, culture, and identity transformation in between.

Addressing Educational Equality Through Pedagogy

Schooling continues to “inculcate dominant modes of social participation and belonging, and to periodically reestablish the ‘once imagined neat fit between language, culture, and nation’” (Olneck, 1995, p. 381) and educate all students toward the goals and ideals of the mainstream. Suárez-Orozco (2001) states that education still promotes the idea that immigrants must ultimately replace heritage language and culture with those of the new nation.

Pedagogy that stresses discontinuity of the immigrant student’s language, culture, and identity often leads to “disengagement and resistance” (Olneck, 1995, p. 399) toward education, and ultimately, these unskilled and uneducated students will face little opportunity in today’s economy (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Doucet, 1999). On the other hand, a pedagogy that is culturally responsive can promote learning, build self-esteem, and create opportunities for economic and social progress.

Since the 1960’s, schooling has addressed teaching the diverse student through various methods. This review explores a pedagogy that promotes more culturally responsive practices so that all students have equal opportunity for success in this nation. Such a pedagogical approach promotes the strength and value of cultural diversity,
human rights and respect for diverse groups, alternative life choices, social justice and equal opportunity, and equity in power distribution

Sleeter and Grant (1999) call for an education that allows “cultural continuity” (p. 47) which develops academic skills. Instituting cultural continuity is also less confusing and frightening for students because it accepts different learning styles, language, and culture and builds upon past experience that can enrich literacy and learning opportunities. (Moll et al., 1992). A pedagogy of equality prohibits coercion and condescension of other’s cultural differences as expressed in laws that prohibit native language use in our schools. Beck & Allexsaht-Snider (2002) refer to the present Georgia language minority education policy process as one of “symbolic violence” (p. 39) based upon Bourdieu’s (as cited in Beck and Allexsaht-Snider, 2002) explanation of how colonization operates on “domina coercion and condescension” (p. 39). Beck (2004) explains how this coercion and condescension are played out in pedagogy. For example, in 1994, Georgia’s newly elected school superintendent “systematically purged the state department of education staff of persons supportive of multiculturalism” (p. 232). There are Official English laws in 19 states (Georgia included) indicative of punitive action toward speakers of other languages (Soto, 1997). Practices such as these lead students into passivity, subjugation, and control. Apparently, language difference generates the same forms of bias and prejudice associated with race such as hate, hostility, intolerance, and violence. Pedagogy must act against practices that exclude, denigrate, and marginalize our immigrant students through cultural discontinuity.

A pedagogy of equality connects to parents and households. Moll et al. (1992) elaborate upon this approach by advocating teaching practices that draw upon the vast
knowledge accumulated in households that are considered poor economically as well as lacking in knowledgeable skills. Most households of working class families, especially those of minority groups, are viewed as “socially and intellectually deficient” (p. 134). Contrary to this belief, Moll et al. emphasize that marginalized groups, such as immigrant students, accumulate vast knowledge based upon work experiences and social history of the family. This broad base of knowledge is referred to as “funds of knowledge” (p. 133).

These funds of knowledge are “flexible, active adaptive, thick and multi-stranded, and involve multiple persons” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). Thus, the child in the home has the advantage of an education that is far more whole-child directed than what she receives in a typical school setting. Most importantly, the child has access to the funds of knowledge within her family and the community in contrast to present pedagogy that rarely involves the student’s funds of knowledge. These funds of knowledge produce trust and relationships that are rarely seen in the classroom. Children in such relationships are active rather than passive participants and become vital to the functioning of the family as a complete unit. In contrast to classrooms, the children are allowed to pursue their interests and are valued as knowledge givers.

Cultural continuity incorporates funds of knowledge which allow oppressed groups the opportunity to participate in their own education. Teachers ought to learn about the student’s family and community in order to bring these funds of knowledge into the classroom. Students from other countries and cultures have many multicultural experiences upon which the teacher can build new learning concepts. Ada (1993) and Igoa (1995) reaffirm that involvement of parents and the home environment are imperative for academic success. However, many parents from diverse cultures entrust
their students to the school and teacher and are often reluctant to participate in the
education of the child. Likewise sometimes the school and the teachers discourage this
participation. Involving the student’s parents in the educational process opens the door to
diverse cultures and provides rich resources for academic advancement. Equally
important, when parents become active participants in the educational process, the child
is more likely to value her own heritage culture and language.

Valentine (1997) states that schooling stereotypes immigrant students by
assuming that all groups have the same experiences. These practices ignore the individual
needs of our students and ultimately compare the minority group to the dominant group.
In these cases, the minority is unfairly designated as lacking in comparison. A pedagogy
of equal opportunity is one void of stereotyping so that the education of the individual
student focuses upon the variables that exist which influence academic performance such
as relations between home and school and teacher and student. McCarthy (1993) says that
schooling must recognize how multiple factors intersect and affect each other in relation
to student’s experience.

A pedagogy of equality is one that encompasses “recognition of the humanness of
people” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 1). It is an approach that teaches we are all human
beings in this world and that we are bound to each other. Nussbaum (1997) teaches that a
human relations approach is one of care for each other. I teach in an urban school setting
in which 87% of the population is African-American, 8% immigrant, and 5% Caucasian
and other. I see dissension almost every day – dissension that includes the same race as
well as against difference races. Aside from the dissension, there is bias and prejudice of
every form and shape but few intervention methods such as peer mediation, conflict
resolution, tolerance, and occasions for working together (Valentine, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

A human relations approach deals with prejudice and how we learn as small children to stereotype others. This stereotyping is often learned through parents, teachers, and the media. A human relations approach would examine every aspect of pedagogy in order to uncover bias and prejudice toward diverse students. Most importantly, the approach is dedicated to the academic and social success of every student. Delpit (1995) says that to accomplish this kind of education we must remove “stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism” (p. 182).

Sleeter and Grant (1999) tell us that school is “a social process” (p. 113). As such it is related to the structure of power and control in our country. Throughout our past, schools have reflected the goals and values of those who control. Apple (1995) positions that schools preserve and transmit economic and cultural power, and as a consequence, schools reinforce a culture and social structure that is reflective of the dominant group. Valentine (1997) notes that “members of all subgroups are thoroughly enculturated in dominant culture patterns by mainstream institutions, including most of the content of the mass media, most products and advertising for mass marketing” (p. 143). Spring (2001) tells us how schools from the beginning have been promoters of assimilation practices and oppressors of diversity. By uncovering the bias that exists, we can then address issues such as tracking immigrant students which separates them from the mainstream and prevents academic advancement or future job opportunities.
The human relations approach attends to the group process called collaborative learning in the classroom where students learn to work together. Many of my own students do not know how to work together and consequently prefer to work alone rather than in groups. Avoiding relationships in the classroom may indicate fear of those of difference. On the other hand, students in cooperative groups must depend on each other and share the responsibilities for the success of the group reducing stereotyping and marginalization (Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Sharan, 1980; Slavin & Madden, 1979).

Students need social skills for building relationships of mutual respect and humanity toward each other (Derman-Sparks, 1989). Students can be taught social skills through role playing and modeling practices which can reduce prejudice and stereotyping. As opposed to punitive measures, which are not long term solutions, students need these positive reinforcements to encourage respect for others (Duvall, 1994).

Students can learn social action that will aid them in becoming socio-politically active. As students learn to make group decisions involving their class and the school, they understand that the group may bring about change more often than the individual acting alone. It also opens possibilities that later in life, diverse groups of race, gender, and class can find strength in working together as a whole rather than acting individually or for one group. Teaching for social action begins at early stages, and as Igoa (1995) points out, it can begin with peer bonding in the classroom. This bonding has two effects. First, students learn to help each other and act together in response to a situation, and secondly, the bonding helps to validate those of diversity. Igoa says that the peer bonding is similar to that of building bridges which connect the diverse student to the new culture.
and vice versa. Students who bond at an early age learn social skills that can later become useful in bringing about social change.

A pedagogy of equality teaches empowerment to oppressed groups that have long been excluded from reaping any economic, social, or political benefits in this nation. Maher and Tetreault (1994) state that such an approach leads to new frameworks of knowing and understanding the oppressive forces inflicted upon certain groups by uncovering institutionalized practices of discrimination against these same groups. Pedagogy must educate students to see how race, gender, class, and ethnicity are used against them by the institutions of power. A pedagogy of equality challenges the hegemony of a curriculum that values the dominant group while devaluing the other. Connell (1993) states, “Social justice requires…reconstructing the mainstream” (p. 44). Proponents of an equitable pedagogy for all argue that the current system of order in society must change by recognizing that our nation is diverse and implementing these ideals into a pedagogy for change which is concerned with “[T]he elimination of oppression of one group of people by another” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 188).

Nieto (1996) says that if oppression is to be eliminated, then a pedagogy of social justice “permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools…the interactions among teachers, students, and parents…the way schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning” (p. 307). There are many theorists who have written about injustices within our pedagogy revealing that our educational system is one of oppression and one that reproduces a static system in order to preserve the power of a few and their control over many (Apple, 1995; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Bennett & LeCompte, 1990; Freire, 1985; McLaren, 1995). In Lies My Teacher Told Me (1995),
Loewen reveals the many distortions of our own history which continually values the white man and Euro-centric ideals in an effort to keep others oppressed. Present pedagogy denies ambiguities in an effort to maintain a ruling class of a few. Our students are controlled and given precluded answers. Thus, history is a “done deal” (p. 35). This done deal, in essence, keeps our students from challenging the inequities of the past and present. Conversely, a pedagogy of equality for all seeks to uncover the lies of the past and present in order for social change.

Democracy is about empowerment, yet there is little democracy in our schools today. Students are subjected to authority and a rigid hierarchal structure which places them on the lower end of knowledge and power. Students can be given occasion to practice democracy through debates, interests, working collectively, and exercising power (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). A classroom that practices democracy is active, and students learn that responsibility comes with empowerment. This is very similar to Greene’s (1995) approach toward teaching for social justice and equality where students are given opportunities to think, act, reflect, and ultimately bear responsibility for whatever decisions are made.

Pedagogy for social justice teaches against oppression and superiority of one over the other. Jelloun (1996) reveals that superiority comes from the incorrect thinking that white skin is more intelligent than dark skin. Thus, it becomes almost duty for the superior race to lead and control those of color who do not have the intelligence to think and act for themselves. One of the methods of reinforcing such power and oppression is that those in power lie to the population about immigrants and those of difference. By doing so, the general population becomes afraid that what they now have will be taken
away from them. I see this fear in my high school as diverse groups steer away from each other and avoid contact of any kind. Cummins (1989) says this fear becomes the enemy, promotes xenophobic attitudes toward language and culture, and is destructive and divisive.

Jelloun (1996) says that we learn to be racist and that pedagogy must address the learned ignorance of one group toward another. We must dispel the fear factor that engulfs our nation by tearing down the hierarchical construct of superiority due to physical differences including language. We must also teach our students to value the sociocultural differences of others, to recognize that one is no more valid than the other, and to respect the “human dignity” (p. 39) of all others. When we do this, we are teaching for social justice and equality.

Equality pedagogy invites students to examine their own lives to uncover experiences of injustice and oppression. Friere (1985) and Shor (1980) both promote this practice in an effort to reveal sources of inequality. One example brought to mind is that teachers and students could examine the influence of Corporate America in our schools. Although most students believe Coke machines on every hall are wonderful, an examination of this practice might reveal some startling discoveries such as control and oppression of students through consumerism and exploitation (Kenway and Bullen, 2001).

In *Chicana Falsa* (1993), Michele Serros writes a potent poem examining the injustice and oppression that minorities must be taught to recognize. The poem is just one of many examples that could be used in the classroom to teach for social justice. It is a poem about whites who feel some guilt toward the neglect of others so they have
fundraisers for their minority “pets…the African, Latino, or Third world kitsch” (p. 55). Serros concludes, “[A]nd that’s the way they like them…As long as they enter through the back door” (p. 56). The poem reveals that no matter what the fundraisers do to raise money and help those in need, they wish them to remain coming through the back door. One can apply this to economic as well as socio-political opportunities.

Sleeter (1994) and Tatum (1994) claim that the privileged students can benefit from self-analysis. McIntosh (1998) says that whites have been taught not to recognize what she calls white privilege, “an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p.1). White privilege means that I have privilege based on the color of my skin, and it works to overpower others of diverse culture and language. As noted earlier, before entering this program, I, too, was oblivious to my privilege. Like many Americans, I believed in the myth of meritocracy. I no longer do. I now understand that I have succeeded where others failed simply due to my color, and I have been a participant in racism embedded in standard accepted practices. Democratic choice is not given to all groups as it is given to whites. Pedagogy must examine and expose this undeserved privilege so that white students can also help reconstruct power systems by understanding their own participation in racist systems.

Students cannot act for social change against a system of power unless they are equipped through the educational process. Delpit (1995) reinforces this idea in concluding that students have no chance of success unless they learn Standard English. By no means does she suggest that the first language should be denigrated. She states, “…[T]he teacher’s job is to…celebrate its [heritage language] beauty” (p. 25), but she
recognizes also that immigrant students cannot succeed unless they are proficient in the English language.

Anzaldúa (1987) also gives us insight into the importance of validating first language. Pedagogical practices can often include negative approaches to these languages such as constantly correcting students and forbidding them to speak the first language. Anzaldúa says that first language is about “identity, reality, and values” (p. 77). She goes on to say that when one’s language is attacked, one feels shame and poor self-esteem because an attack on ethnicity promotes illegitimacy. However, Anzaldúa stands with Delpit (1995) in confirming that people of color who do not acculturate will suffer economically and socio-politically. Students must be taught to recognize the socio-political as well as economic repercussions of not being able to speak Standard English. Equality pedagogy guarantees that all students can perform well in Standard English while at the same time maintaining their heritage language. Otherwise social change remains an ideal and not a reality.

Freire (1985) says it so completely, “…[S]ocial reality is a fait accompli rather than something that’s still in the making” (p. 103). He believes that pedagogy should include teaching our students to question, and in doing so, they will uncover the hidden injustices that are ingrained in our system of education giving them power to seek change. A pedagogy of equality awakens students to injustice and eventually to become active and emancipated (Banks, 1988; Giroux, 1981; Shor, 1980).

Teachers must build for social change by rejecting suppression of diversity and seeking equality for all. If we are unresponsive to our students of diversity, we, in essence, aid in oppression and subjugation. We must be willing to confront the barriers in
education that refuse minorities an equal opportunity for higher education, good paying
jobs, and social acceptance. As Darling-Hammond and Garcia-Lopez (2002) tell us, we
must confront injustice in our teaching practices and uncover the practices that lead to
poor self-esteem and inferiority. We must teach students to recognize oppression in
school, economics, and socio-political practices and ways to act toward social change. “If
diversity is what this nation is all about, then a broad view of its implications for our
methods of instruction, curriculum, and classroom environment is important” (p. 11).

Theoretical Framework

Narrative Inquiry

My research is grounded in the theoretical framework of narrative inquiry.
Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that narrative “begin[s] with experience expressed in
lived and told stories” (p. 40). Many years ago, John Dewey (1938) espoused the
importance of experience which became the cornerstone for narrative theory. His
argument states, “I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of
reference: namely the organic connection between education and personal experience” (p.
24). “…(E)very experience both takes up something from those who have gone before
and modifies in some way the quality of those who come after” (p. 35).

Understanding how Dewey (1938) defined experience helps explain the relation
between narrative and experience. First, Dewey believed that schooling must reflect
social organization such as that found in the family. Here the child is a vital part and
contributes to the well-being of the family unit. Dewey was opposed to the organization
of schools which he referred to as “time-schedules, schemes of classification, of
examination and promotion, of rules of order” (p. 18). Furthermore, students are seen
with little or no experience in schools where textbooks, teachers, and curriculum dictate what the supposedly empty student should know. Dewey (1916) asked the question, “Why is it, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice?” (p.38). Dewey (1938) claimed that this leaves a huge gap between what is to be learned and where the student is in maturity. Much of schooling then is beyond the student’s reach. Dewey defined education as restricting student individuality and “the opportunities of present life” (p. 20). These opportunities of present life acknowledge the experience of the student and the social and cultural factors that are part of that experience. Narrative is also about the individual and her past and present experiences of life. Conle (2005) reiterates this Deweyan concept, “My stories are all about experiential encounters between the old and the new…learning is just that” (p. 220).

Dewey (1938) also believed that past experience must be connected to present and future experience, a practice often neglected in schooling. Yes, students learn an enormous amount of facts and concepts about the past, but these are often learned or studied in isolation from the present. Consequently, the past is viewed as fragments of experiences with little or no effect upon present or future events. On the other hand, in the telling of the personal narrative, the student uncovers her life in stages of experience, each flowing from one to the other and relative to each other. Narrative is about connecting to the past in order to make sense of the present and the future (Bruner, 1990). During the process of storytelling, any disconnection or fragmentation of life actually becomes part of the whole life experience giving meaning and connection otherwise not apparent.
Anthropologist Geertz (1995) focuses upon life changes and how narrative inquiry connects the disconnected and the dismantled. He calls the inquiry of the anthropologist “a grand contraption” (p. 65) unless the inquiry includes the stories and the tales of those being studied. Geertz contends that if the stories are omitted then the inquiry is “unsatisfactory, lumbering, shaky, and badly formed” (p. 65). His answer to the grand contraption is that of narrative and especially mini-narratives “with the narrator in them” (p. 65). Geertz stresses that one event of life must be viewed in the context of the whole life, past and present.

Dewey (1938) says, “Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other” (p. 25). That is, an experience must produce growth if it is educative. Consequently, all experience is not necessarily educative. Experience must be connected and integrated in order for future growth and learning. Present day school experience, for the most part, is disconnected from the student’s experiences and oftentimes does not result in student learning. Conversely, the narrative has the capability to weave together the experiences of the student in such a way that the student sees herself as a whole person. Narrative has the power of continuity from past experience to present and future. Unlike much school experience, narrative integrates and connects, and “Every experience lives on in further experience” (p. 27).

Experience has the power to change future experience. Dewey gives examples of this ability to change future experience such as the discovery of electricity or the invention of the wheel. Narrative also has the ability to change and alter the course of future experience. In this sense, the narrative of a student can become her voice which has often been silenced through oppression and domination. Voice gives over to
individuality and a new identity, one that is not imposed. Having voice through narrative empowers the student to choose who she will become and alter a preconceived and prescribed future.

Dewey (1938) saw two major principles of experience. One is continuity and the other is interaction. He calls these “the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts” (p. 44). This means that all experience is connected, integrated, and interactive. Conle (2005) gives an example of this continuity as when an experiential encounter of another recalls our own past experiences. She says, “The listener unpredictably meets up with the elements of his or her own life” (p. 220). Narrative like Dewey’s definition of experience reflects a continuum and an interaction of experiences that can bring a sense of order to the life of the storyteller in that life experiences become successive, connected, and integrated. Without the telling of the narrative, the immigrant student may feel fragmented and split with little continuity or interaction among her present life experiences and those of the past and future.

Experience leads to new experience rooted in the past which helps explain the present. Dewey believed that to expand the present, the past must be explored. Narrative has the same potential for students. As the student expands the present situation to the past, she realizes the connections and integration of past to present to future. Narrative has the power to reveal the individual’s past and its integration with the present which expands to the future. Narrative opens up the future experience through the connections and integrations to the present and the past. By understanding the connections and integration of past experiences and their relation to the present and future, immigrant
students can make sense out of their lives that often appear to be fragmented and disconnected. Johnson (conversation with author in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) builds upon Dewey’s concept of continuum and interaction with the idea of “knowledge as embodied, embedded in a culture, based on narrative unity” (p. 3). Clandinin and Connelly later begin to think of narrative unity as “a way to think in more detailed and informative ways about the general construct of the continuity in individuals’ lives” (p. 3). Thus, narrative unity of human life is part of a quest that is interwoven “in an interlocking set of narratives…I am part of the story, as they are part of mine” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 203). As stories are told and connections made, narrative creates solidarity between the storytellers (Feuerverger, 2005). The idea of narrative unity certainly connects with that of Dewey’s notion of continuity.

Anthropologist Bateson (1989, 1994) also uses Dewey’s notion of continuity as a central theme of life. Her perspective on narrative is a perspective on life and how it is constantly changing. Most importantly, Bateson sees life stories as always being reinvented because life itself is a constant flux with more than one meaning or interpretation. Bateson (1989) states, “Composing a life involves a continual re-imagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present” (p. 176). Thus, narrative inquiry reveals that there is no certainty, and stories may fluctuate and change. As the inquirer, I must seek to avoid the certainties and realize that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of stories depending upon time, place, and those involved. I must be attuned to the chaotic about which Bateson speaks for it is out of the chaotic that order often reveals itself.
Dewey says, “... [E]very experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality” (p. 47). This means there is growth and continuity involved in experience which is also revealed through narrative. Spaces of possibilities for what could be through the power of imagination are key elements in narrative. Narrative also has the capability to reconstruct the future experience through a different perspective or lens that becomes more apparent through storytelling allowing the individual to reconstruct her life in the present and future.

Dewey states, “When education is based in theory and practice upon experience, it goes without saying that the organized subject-matter of the adult and the specialist cannot provide the starting point” (p. 83). This has direct application to narrative where the immigrant student is the starting point of the story (whether in past or present experiences). Neither the system, the curriculum, the teacher, nor the administration can write the story of the individual or be the starting point of the life of an immigrant. The individual in the narrative writes her story – one that is not prescripted by others such as the adult or the specialist. If the immigrant student is not afforded the occasion to write her narrative, then like the student denied her experience, her life story is written by others.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use Dewey’s ideas of experience as the base for narrative inquiry. The authors believe that narrative is the study of experience and is a way of thinking more than it is a method. Polkinghorne (1997) uses narrative as “the appropriate form of expression to display research as practice” (p. 3). Research as practice reinforces Clandinin’s and Connelly’s practical use of narrative as a way of thinking. Narrative is a way of negotiating the world in unique ways such as taking life as
it comes. This means not placing boundaries or restrictions on the research so that it is open to whatever life brings to the inquiry. Narrative inquiry is “a life-based form of inquiry…a way to think about living” (Connelly, Phillion, & He, 2005, pp. 253-254). “When studying life, as in narrative inquiry, the researcher needs to attend to whatever happens in life” (p. 7).

Clandinin and Connelly (2005) place narrative into three dimensions: personal (social as related to Dewey’s experience), temporal (always moving as the continuum of experience with a past, present, and future), and place (the landscape of the experience). Van Maanen (1988) also states that narrative is not isolated, timeless, or beyond the reach of contemporary society. Thus, Van Maanen reinforces the idea that narrative is personal connection, movement through time, and places of many landscapes.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to narrative as a tale which reveals an individual’s own realities. Narrative is about uncovering the participant’s “lived reality,” sharing “mutual insights,” and opening “new and multiple perspectives (Adler, 2004, p. 113). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explore experience as storied where all life is revealed in story form. The authors believe that people live stories, and as they are told, they are reaffirmed, modified, and even new ones are created. This interactive process becomes the inquiry as the old stories merge into the new or vice versa. The authors stress the importance of the past experience which becomes the anchor for the inquiry and will influence the direction of the inquiry.

The role of the narrative researcher is to collect and write the stories which often overlap and intersect with the present one. The researcher is ever-present in narrative and she has multiple definitions. For example, I, as the researcher, can be teacher, researcher,
friend, and social critic. As such, I am a vital part of the narrative inquiry. Phillion (2002) says that the researcher becomes a part of the narrative rather than someone outside looking in with judgments and criticisms. As the inquirer she flows along with others’ life stories. Psychiatrist Coles (1997) uses narrative in his practice. Coles actually becomes the student of his students as he listens to the stories of his patients, and they become the teachers. Coles says that through the stories, the patient-teacher (student-teacher) comes to knowledge that only comes about when the student (the teacher) is willing to learn. Ayers (2004) reconfirms this idea of teacher becoming student: “Become a student of your own students as a prerequisite to teaching them” (p. 25). Another aspect of Coles’ narrative is the intimacy that results between the student and inquirer. Narrative is “life, learning, and fiction…no mere metaphor for advancing his field” (p. 14). Coles reiterates that as a researcher, we are committed to our participants and their stories. Thus, narrative also allows the listener (inquirer) to enter the life of another. As a researcher/inquirer, I must also position myself as a learner of my participants (Janekie, 2004, p. 94).

There are many reasons that narrative has become a most useful method of inquiry. Narrative inquiry has the potential for the following: “cultural self-discovery, overcoming ambivalence toward one’s cultural group, accepting one’s roots, recognizing important differences, crossing cultural boundaries without acting out an interloper script, and finding common ground” (Conle, 2005, p. 222). Many educators and researchers are finding multiple reasons for using narrative to promote an awareness of needed change in schooling practices which continue to marginalize and oppress many diverse populations.
Nettles (2005) says that narrative has long been about “loss and survival” (p. 19), but through her own experiences of a brain tumor, she found that narrative is about empowerment. This empowerment is built on “…agency, expressed in strivings for power and independence… [and] strivings for love and intimacy (Nettles, 2001, pp. 148-49). Heilburn (1988) also writes about empowerment – how we can live and invent our own lives through narrative. As such, life story attends to the voice of the storyteller. Many immigrant students in our nation have been silenced through practices of bias and prejudice that invalidate voice. Narrative becomes one of those openings that allows the immigrant “to create a self” (Greene, 1978, p. 18) as they reach toward “enlightenment and liberation” (Ayers, 2004, p. viii).

As immigrant students tell their stories, they also realize that life is lived and continuing and that life has not already been confirmed and written by others. “The world never stands still, and neither do her people” (Ayers, 2004, p.1). Narrative becomes the autobiography of the student and as such is tentative and is yet to be discovered. Narrative tends to voice and as such has power to “nourish, encourage, and sustain ourselves” (Cooper, 1991, p. 97). In this way, narrative not only sustains the group, it has power to sustain and care for the self. Narrative nurtures our very being and brings to light our emotions and lives. Voice as addressed by Lorde (1986) is a need to “inhabit the silences with which I have lived” (p. 46). Narrative becomes a tool which can bring out the silenced voices of repression and oppression of one’s life.

Empowerment can transform the student’s behavior so that she has competence and control over her destiny. Villenas (2005) sees narrative as empowerment even though the teller may feel “powerless and stripped of one’s will and dignity in the event, it is in
the retelling of the event that one can claim dignity and satisfaction” (p. 75). She writes the narratives of Latina mothers in North Carolina to show how these women reclaim their dignity in the midst of oppression and personal degradation. Through narrative, these women become empowered to resist the story told by those in power and control.

Narrative, according to Nettles (2005), exists within the framework of the community narrative. She describes the personal narrative as one that is cultural and set in the community. As much as these personal narratives change with the storyteller, so does the story change with the listener. That is, the narrative can be reshaped by the community which receives it. This reshaping of the narrative can be a way to work against the oppressor’s narrative. Nettles uses narrative to show the strengths of students at a school called Stanton. Rather than continuing to depict a school that was deficient, the narratives began to reveal the students’ strengths. Nettles also depicts a community that became involved in the Stanton project. This community began to narrate its own positive stories as well as those of its students. As the community became more involved, the students developed self-esteem and an increased desire to learn. The entire community (parents, school, and students) shared in the new narrative which promoted improvement. Community narrative also results when life stories are shared and others recognize in themselves the same experiences. Sharing one’s life stories can have positive results in creating a community of togetherness. The more experience that is shared, the more we become experienced. Keen (as cited in Feuerverger, 2005) says, “Storytelling is a communal act; it requires community and it creates community” (p. 177). Thus, narrative can become a transformative process for the whole community as well as the individual (Feuerverger, 2005). Carger (2005) and Lawler (2002) refer to
narrative as transformative in that they can promote community action. Lawler states, “They [narratives] are part of the social world” (p. 243).

Helle (1991) also provides insight into the power of collective narrative. Although she is addressing feminist issues of division and fragmentation, her ideas are applicable to any persons who have been marginalized. Helle says that narrative allows for knowing in a collective way. For example, immigrants represent multiplicities of diversity, yet collectively they can tell their stories connecting them to a wholeness. Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2005) also say that there is connectedness in narration. “Family stories, language stories, relationship stories were ways of connecting…” (p. 276). Greene (2000) shows us the strength of connecting with each other. She says, “Survival is about the connections” we make in life (p. 114). Greene uses Eliot’s phrase to clarify this connectedness when she states, “…[R]eality cannot be deprived of the ‘other echoes [that] inhabit the garden’” (p. 114).

The weaving of these stories connects the fragments of lives for empowerment. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) call this “connected knowing” (p. 106) which validates the voices of the connected group, and as Coles (1997) indicates, the connected knowing creates a certain intimacy among the collectivity. Helle (1991) denounces previous theoretical discourse as that which frames, separates, and subjects us to those in power. On the other hand, she asserts that narrative theory allows us to frame ourselves, shape our relations, and connect. Witherell (1991) calls this connectedness as “the self in relation” (p. 86) which is a bond between one another and which gives meaning to life.
Narrative is also an opportunity for the participant to look at her past from a different perspective. Harris (2005) says, “I am able to visit my life as the ‘other’” (p. 36). Narrative also allows her to examine her many identities that have been shaped and molded relative to past personal, historical, and cultural settings. In turn, narrative allows the participant to understand her life and identity in the present. Harris (2005) also says that narrative is about creating one’s own identity, “rather than those formerly created by and promoted by White authors with access to the media” (p. 38). Many immigrant students have had their identities already defined by the dominant power structure. These identities are usually stereotypical consisting of negative labels such as “inability, laziness, and refusal to conform” (Rubal-Lopez & Anselmo, 2005, p. 65). One of my students recently confirmed the negative stereotyping of Hispanic students. The student said to a Hispanic student, “Mexicans will never do anything but yard work.”

Narrative can rewrite and redefine identity, dispelling stereotypes and negative images. Again, narrative empowers the participant. In defying a predefined autobiography, participants are more likely to gain a positive self-esteem. Thus, Harris (2005) says that narrative is therapeutic in that it allows the individual to “free herself from the stereotypical and derogatory images that have been inflicted on her historically” (p. 44). New identities can be constructed through the narrative - identities of being “educated, intelligent, and resourceful” (Villenas, 2005, p. 82). Conle (2005) states, “Individual identities should be able to develop authentically, without aims of expected assimilation, but having their individual and social histories taken into account” (p. 226).

Narrative has a self-reflective aspect, “a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference,” (Harris, 2005, p. 39). Narrative is an examination of the participant’s life and
can reveal things that were previously hidden or obstructed from the participant. Feuerverger (1995) states, “Narrative is a process of making meaning of experience by telling stories of personal and social relevance through conversation and journal writing” (p. 177). Narrative also has the power to make sense of one’s life (Makler, 1991). As we outline our lives, we begin to make connections and piece together the fragments of our lives that can start to make a whole. This is similar to the idea of Stafford’s (1991) quilt composed of “frayed scraps of sensation…pulled apart and pieced together in a pattern that has a name” (p. 15). Piecing together the fragments of life experience produces more self-awareness and can give meaning to one’s life (Bruner, 1986; Coles, 1997; Polkinhorne, 1997). Narayan (1991) also states that narrative “makes sense out of our pasts, plans for our futures, and comprehends the lives of others” (p. 114).

Narrative participants who have previously been marginalized and excluded in society and school can challenge preconceived notions of others about them. Harris (2005) says that narrative is a way of crossing the borders; it is not fixed or bound. As the participant crosses the order, she can move away from exclusion and isolation. The participant can then begin to look critically at how and why she is often on the margins in our nation and schools. The process of narrative is like looking in a distant mirror. The mirror reflects one’s life allowing us to learn from this reflection. Grumet (1991) also refers to narrative as a reflection revealing that there is no one tale of our lives that will entrap us through a “reflection provided by a single narrative” (p. 72). Grumet emphasizes that life is multiple accounts and narrative allows us to reveal these accounts in such a way that we become free from one story framed by the power system.
Challenging existing narratives reveals what is often left out. Rubal-Lopez and Anselmo (2005) state that the narrator must discover what has not been said about her, often leaving a gap or a fracture in her identity. The dominant school story is one that not only silences diversity, it omits one’s very existence (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005). Villenas (2005) also relates the omissions of her life, “Schools and teachers pretended that this life did not exist - at least it wasn’t in the textbooks, the songs we sang, the histories we studied, the families we learned about” (p. 72). Villenas says she experienced anxiety and shame because nothing she studied was about her. She states, “We felt rage at the silence experienced in our schooling…” (p. 72). Rubal-Lopez and Anselmo (2005) describe the same felt shame from the lack of successful images of Puerto Ricans in texts, on television, or in other media forms. As a result, the two authors internalized dominant images “into a desire to be blonde, blue-eyed me, [have] an impeccable home, parents who spoke English, and a mother and father who were not worn down by the everyday drudgery resulting from poverty and racism” (p. 57). Experiences such as these can lead to inferiority and unworthiness which most often leave the immigrant student searching for a life of belonging to a society that does not want to accept her.

Narrative can uncover how many immigrants live on the borders. Villenas (2005) has devoted her life to working in and with Latino communities to write a new narrative for Hispanic immigrants - one that sees their value and worth as opposed to the negative image of immigrant students and their families. Narrative for her has become a way to describe how Latino families negotiate being on the “borderlands that are between nations, between beliefs about ‘proper’ parenting, gender roles, community rights, and
citizenship in terms of who does and does not belong” (p. 73). Narrative empowers immigrant families, especially the mothers, to construct their own stories of dignity and cultural survival in the borderlands where inequality, prejudice, and exclusion abound. Carger (2005) shows how the narratives “help us to invent who we are and fit ourselves into the world” (p. 237). Villenas (2005) and Carger say that these Latino families find empowerment through the telling of their stories. As Latino families tell their stories, they do so through a different lens, a different perspective. Villenas distinguishes between what she calls “the telling and the told” (p. 74). When stories are told by the other, they are usually told from a position of power and dominance. However, as the storyteller retells the story herself, she finds “personal transformation” (p. 75) because she is in control of the story. “Indeed what struck me most about the oral histories and conversations with Latina mothers was not so much the content, but the performance of their words (both passionate and matter-of-fact) in reclaiming dignity in a context where they were often cast in negative ways by majority culture” (p. 76). Immigrants make meaning between the telling and the told. As the telling unfolds, they “forge identities as competent mothers and dignified human beings” (p. 77). As the story unfolds, the immigrant is transformed from what is seen as a problem in our nation (with no right to live or work here) to one who has dignity and a rich life.

Nettles (2005) states that narrative can lead to resilience in spite of the many obstacles that some of our students face. Nettles describes the improvement of the Stanton school students both in academics and in participation in extra-curricular activities. This improvement was largely due to a new narrative that focused upon the student’s strengths and abilities. When autobiography is written by the power structure
either politically or historically, it rarely depicts the resilience of those who have been marginalized and dominated in our schools or society. The voices of domination rarely mention the courage and resilience of many immigrants who have suffered physically and emotionally from poverty, exclusion, and oppression (Villenas, 2005).

Harris (2005) states that narrative is an opportunity to teach others about one’s culture and history. In essence the narrator can actually become “a historian” (p. 43) of her own culture and community. Narrative can thus bring about more understanding and compassion for those of another culture. This sharing can bring about different cultural perspectives for those listening. So once again, stories can change the narrative of the community – in this case the listeners. Soto (2005) says that sharing the diverse narrative with the very young teaches them “to understand and befriend culturally and linguistically diverse people” (p. 151) and could possibly lead to global peace and understanding. “We are always more or less than what we stand for in the polis and what stands for us” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, p. 171). Through narrative, the lived experience, students are better able to see one another individually rather than as a particular member of a group. The individual comes forth and is allowed to be other than a preconception. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) reiterate that the voices in narratives can “inform our sense of lifeways, to extend our understanding of the Other” (p. 1060).

Immigrant students are often silenced in schools and have little opportunity for dialogue. Narrative allows the immigrant to dialogue with those “past speakers who hold anti-immigrant and negative views about Latino families” (Villenas, 2005, p. 77). Buber (1970) states that we can transcend the divisions that exist between us through relation, the “I-thou” relation (p. 28). For Buber, this relation of I-Thou can only be brought about
through dialogue which actually becomes a bridge which serves as a means to cross borders and encounter others of difference. The narrative has power in that it opens spaces for dialogue to occur. We begin to relate to each other through the narrative of lived experience. Through this same relation, Witherell (1991) confirms that we begin to grow and better understand our own lives as they relate to others. Narrative reveals the vast regions of our lives and how they connect to each other as well as to the regions of others’ lives. She says that stories provide "the tapestries of cultural drama that map the territory of possible roles and possible worlds that an individual may enter” (p. 91). Thus as we connect our own fragments in making our own tapestry, we see that we connect to a larger, cultural one of which we are a part. Narrative then not only pulls one’s life together, it brings this life together with others especially in a cultural sense. Narrative may be one of those spaces which provide opportunity for dialogue and authenticates the life of another (Feuerverger, 2005).

Narrative is about caring, social action, and culturally responsive teaching (Carger, 2005). Narrative can bring about understanding between students who have been marginalized and teachers who have little education in teaching those of diversity. Carger uses narrative to “cultivate rich, multifaceted representations of human experiences that might serve as a basis for teachers to understand diverse students” (p. 241). “Narrative, experiential inquiry has potential to foster a lifelike relationship between reader and text” (He, Phillion, & Connelly, 2005, p. 294).

Barthes (as cited in Tappan & Brown, 1991) states, “Narrative is a fundamental human activity…like life itself” and has possibilities to assemble human experience into meaning (p. 174). Furthermore, Bruner (1986) argues that “cognition, affect, and action
cannot be easily separated” (p. 69). From Bruner’s idea, Tappan and Brown conclude that moral dimension must be added to narrative. The reader/inquirer participating in the unfolding story of the narrator is now faced with moral choices of action or nonparticipation in the world of the narrator. Bruner (1990) states, “The Self as narrator…as protagonist is always…pointing to the future” (p. 121). The reader/inquirer now becomes a part of this future. Greene (1995) reveals that choices lead to possibilities for change and that narrative and storytelling open spaces for this possibility. As the narrative unfolds, the researcher/inquirer must choose to act morally or ethically for change or not. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognize that the researcher must engage in the why of the work, the purpose. They also indicate the purpose of the work may change as the direction of the stories often does. Inquirers often discover that the purpose of the narrative work may include awareness that change is needed in order to bring about more equitable practices toward those being studied.

Greene (1978) also shows us that narrative opens possibilities for imagination in which students may be able to transcend the lived world in which they find themselves. Narrative broadens perspective and has possibility of authenticating the lives of those who have been marginalized in schools. Narrative has possibility to give rise to new teaching practices, administrative policy changes, and a reconceptualized curriculum which can “release persons to pursue a fuller humanity" (Freire, 1970, p. 32). Like Freire, Greene shows us that narrative is an opening toward emancipation of those who live in an oppressed society and experience the intolerance of those in power. Narrative can, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state, “open the floodgates to new ideas and possibilities” (p. 3).
Cross-Cultural Narrative Inquiry

This cross-cultural narrative inquiry examines the lives and issues of immigrant students as they wrestle between cultures – the heritage culture and the American culture. The cultural divide in our nation today is becoming larger as many of those coming here do not want to assimilate; they want to become a part of a nation of diversity (Dilg, 1999). This cross-cultural narrative seeks to uncover the forces that silence and marginalize immigrant students and prevent them from opportunities of an equality education.

What immigrant students experience in the classroom is a reflection of what immigrants go through in larger society. This includes marginalization and exclusion which often occur due to misconceptions and a lack of knowing the other, particularly those of difference. Little effort has been made in many of our schools to bring about understanding and inclusion of our immigrant population (Minami, 2000). Schools have a long way to go before they “foster a critical praxis that can eventually transform the conditions that are responsible for the exploitation of the subordinate classes” (McLaren & Munoz, 2000, p. 45).

A cross-cultural narrative inquiry seeks to encourage cross-cultural empathy and “connection to others of different backgrounds” (Nieto, 2002, p. 243). Anyone involved in the education of students of diversity needs to have an in-depth understanding of how language, culture, and identity issues are linked to a successful education. Nieto states, “Cultural and linguistic diversity in educational reform initiatives…can make a difference in student learning and achievement” (p. 59).
My cross-cultural narrative inquiry is grounded in previous studies by Carger (1996, *Of Borders and Dreams: A Mexican-American Experience of Urban Education*), He (2003, *A River Forever Flowing: Cross-cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape*), Soto (1997, *Language, Culture, and Power: Bilingual Families and the Struggle for Quality Education*), and Valenzuela (1999, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*). Through a cross-cultural narrative inquiry, I hope to provide greater insight and understanding into the experiences of three immigrant students as they encounter similar struggles as presented by these authors. I chose these particular authors because their inquiries address the impact of language, culture, and identity development upon immigrant students’ experiences in our educational system. The stories also reveal the determination of many immigrant students and families to succeed in this country through opportunities of equal education. What the narratives often uncover is quite the opposite of an equal education. These stories are testimonies of hope and a will to survive. As Soto (1997) states, “All language-minority families are success stories in light of resilience and an ability to succeed within oppressive community climates” (p. 25). By following the works of these authors, my cross-cultural narrative inquiry will contribute to increased understanding of the issues facing immigrant students and ultimately to a more equitable education for all of them.

Carger (2005) says that cross-cultural is the fourth dimension of narrative inquiry. A cross-cultural narrative is “a comprehensible unfolding and humanizing of cross-cultural situations that elude the fixed, scientifically based terminology” (p. 239) which cannot explain why certain students from diverse cultures act in particular ways. Carger also has a concern for emotion in her cross-cultural narrative. Contrasting research as an
academic exercise where the researcher is to remain objective, Carger allows her self to come through the research. She says, “I have learned not to evade emotion in my inquiry, but to embrace it, to describe it richly” (p. 240). *Of Borders and Dreams* (1996) is a cross-cultural narrative inquiry which delves “into the experiences of one Hispanic student and his mentor, Chris Carger, as he struggles to make it in the Chicago school system. Ayers (in Carger, 1996) states that it is a story of “contrasts and contradictions as well as connection, of borders and boundaries, but also of bridges” (p. ix). Student diversity and its neglect in schooling is Carger’s primary focus. “Education systems …have not adapted successfully to such diversity” (Ayers, 2004, p. 7). Carger’s cross-cultural narrative inquiry stresses that earlier immigrants were not subjected to the racism that we see today against immigrants. These earlier immigrants wanted to be in the melting pot unlike many immigrants of today who want to maintain their language and rich culture. Carger uncovers the prejudice that abounds today against differences of language, culture, and identity. This prejudice often reveals itself in acts of racism which occur frequently in schools.

Carger’s inquiry shows that students like Alejandro Juarez are consistently marginalized in our school system. Teachers are condescending and are quick to chastise these students for being lazy and lacking in ability. What is revealed is a continued system of the “we” and the “they” that continues to push those of difference away from the center to the borders (p. 29). Carger’s physical border between Mexico and the United States becomes a metaphor for the non-physical barriers/borders that many immigrants face in our nation and schools. One of the borders in Carger’s story is the constant pressure to use English and the difficulty this causes Alejandro. Aside from the mandated
usage of English, he is confronted with Western European texts, and he is expected to be able to read, understand, and appreciate such foreign literature. Aside from his mentor, Carger, there is little effort from teachers or the administration to understand his English-language difficulties; there are few or no accommodations made for Alejandro.

Alejandro is also restricted in a school system that demands obedience and compliance. He is placed in a school setting that is quite the opposite from his own family life which is nonlinear and communal. At home, Alejandro is an active participant in family life and decision-making. At school he soon learns to become a passive learner which at the same time leads to his teachers falsely labeling him as disinterested, lazy, and slow.

As Carger demonstrates, there are several types of borders facing our immigrant students in schools today. One is the socio-cultural border where one culture is viewed as more important than another. The second border is a structural border where resources are not adequate to meet the demands of the diverse population (Lewis-Charp, Yu, & Friedlaender, 2004). This may include inadequate numbers of counselors or bilingual teachers. The third border is socioeconomic where students are limited academically because of limited economics (Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998). Immigrant students must navigate all of these borders in order to be successful in school. Being able to navigate successfully means that students have certain skills and especially social capital which many lack (Lewis-Charp et al., 2004).

Greene (1988) refers to these borders as walls. She says, “… [W]e cannot truly understand the walls immigrants and minorities face. But we can attend to some of the voices, some of the stories” (pp. 88-89). Carger’s book is one example of attending to the
voices of immigrants as they acculturate-enculturate here. Carger shows that many like Alejandro will not make it in the education system. Through Alejandro’s voice, Carger reveals that education is failing Alejandro and many others like him. As Carger writes, “…[T]he Juarez narratives offer concrete, poignant examples of what educational jargon often fails to reveal in compassionate and comprehensible terms” (p. 139).

He (2003) uses cross-cultural narrative inquiry involving three Chinese women crossing cultures and languages between China and Canada. He believes that cross-cultural narrative has “a close-to-life, reflective and fluid, contextualized and historicized quality that enables us to explore and portray the shifting, often paradoxical, nature of our cross-cultural lives” (p. 5). He’s cross-cultural work is an example of the inquirer being both insider and outsider as she struggles between the currents of Chinese and Canadian cultures which are constantly shifting and changing. She says she is in between, and one can vision how she is pulled and pushed between the cross-currents. He’s experiences are turbulent as she faces frustration, tension, and anxiety. However, parallel to this turmoil, He’s cross-cultural narrative reflects the same “mobile spirit of the bird” (Connelly, Phillion, & He, 2005, p. 264) in that she is willing to drift and flow with the current as opposed to fighting against it. He’s inquiry is very fluid and one almost gets the feeling of being in the river flowing with the three women back and forth in time and in space. Having minored in history, I have studied the Chinese Revolution through texts and old films. However, I never fully grasped the experiences of those involved until I read this story. As He recounts the story, the reader also begins to feel the dislocation as she tries to go back in time to remember her past, her roots. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that He uses “composite autobiography” (p. 53) to reconstruct her early life and those of
her Chinese friends by “collecting memory records of the cultural revolution” (p. 55) and personalizing those through many avenues such as letters and conversations. She thus reconstructs an autobiography that consists of all three women and how they felt about themselves during the Revolution. As a cross-cultural narrative inquirer, these same methods were useful for me as I asked students to collect memory records in order to reveal how they felt about themselves and their experiences before coming to this country and during the school years. I was then able to reconstruct a similar composite autobiography of my three immigrants as He successfully did.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain the dislocation that He felt moving between these cultures. They state, “Her experience of Chinese and Canadian culture, and her movements back and forth between them, led her to think that much more was at stake here than language and culture adaptation” (p. 53). He says that the dislocation she felt uncovers a third dimension which involves “imaginatively constructing an identity for the future” (p. 55). I am very interested in this third dimension and how my immigrant students also construct a new identity, one for the future.

He’s tale of her early life has importance in multiple ways. Blaise (1993) reminds us that a story like He’s helps us “live in their countries, speak their language, negotiate their streets on their buses and turn our keys in their locks” (p. 201). A cross-cultural narrative inquiry such as He’s leads to understanding and care about the past and present lives of those narrating. This narrative allows us to position ourselves in the past with the narrator and to experience all the trials and triumphs along with the narrator. As Morris (2004) shows us through the readings of science fiction, we can travel the journey with the narrator, get to know her, and begin to understand in a more concrete way the trials
she endures. The traveling that we do with the narrator, like He, “allows us to encounter
the stranger” (Morris, 2004, p. 49). An inquiry such as this gives us insight into the
experiences of the narrator/immigrant that are otherwise left unventured. I believe
through the cross-cultural narratives of my students, others will be able to encounter the
stranger through their stories.

In *Language, Culture, and Power* (1997), Soto’s inquiry reveals the silence that
for generations plagued a steel mill town and its schools. Soto’s book is about twelve
immigrant families struggling against the bias and prejudice in this one community and
school system. I believe her story is relevant to my school and town as well as to others
across our nation. Since the 1950’s, the Hispanic families in this steel mill town have
internalized a silence against the racism that exists. Many thought the silence would lead
to better opportunities for the next generation. They now realize that perhaps the silence
has been detrimental to their children’s future because racism still exists and is pursued
more fervently than ever in the community and the school. The school in Soto’s book is
representative of many of our nation’s schools in that we silence those of difference. We
silence them physically by disallowance of their language and culture, and we silence
them emotionally so that they become passive, unquestioning, and malleable students.

grows.” These words are indicative of the disease that is growing in many of our schools
today. Cancer kills just as silence destroys self-esteem, self-confidence, and
empowerment. Immigrant students in this school like others around our nation become
part of a totalitarian system in which they are forced to remain silent. “Coercive power is
capable of imposing oppression, abuse, inequity, and totalitarianism, and of violating
human rights and freedoms” (Soto, 1997, p. 84). Students who assimilate under such force lose their language, culture, and identity.

Soto also reveals that schools rob immigrant students of empowerment. This is often seen when the immigrant student is thrust into core classes with few English skills to become successful. In Soto’s steel mill town, the superintendent supports an all English curriculum in lieu of a bilingual education. Students are submersed in such a curriculum and must “sink or swim” (p. 27). As educators, we must question the motives of such a system. What Soto reveals is a racist system of oppression wherein many of our immigrant population are literally stripped of dignity and self-worth and become “invisible shadows” (p. 43). A shadow is vacuous; it has no language, culture, or identity. Most importantly, the shadow is powerless.

I am amazed that some of the families in Soto’s book are able to succeed in such racist and intolerant schools and communities. However, like many students I see, these families are resilient and many do make it. Soto says, “…they were [are] successful despite the system, not because of it” (p. 27). However, we must ask ourselves how much more our nation might benefit from immigrant resources if we were tolerant, open, accepting, and caring. Our success stories should include because of schooling rather than despite schooling.

Valenzuela (1999) uncovers what she terms subtractive forces in our schools today. Valenzuela tells us that at Sequin (a fictitious high school) immigrants of later generations are also failing in our school systems. Other studies on a national level indicate the same decline in academic success for these later generations (Grogger &
Trejo, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). There seems to be a cap, a concerted and repressive limitation, on just how far these generations can excel or are allowed to excel.

Valenzuela identifies the reasons for this aberration by examining the extent of subtractive practices in the school. These are the forces that take away what resources the immigrant student brings to our schools. The subtractive forces are part of a system determined to create a homogenous society based upon Euro-centric values and knowledge. Many newly arrived Mexican students at Sequin possess social capital because of past school experiences in Mexico. Valenzuela contends that this social capital helps these students achieve in our schools because they are more motivated and know how to use their past experiences from Mexican schooling. On the other hand, the U.S.-born students of immigrant descent are “socially de-capitalized” (p. 117) in our school systems. Valenzuela describes social capital through the voice of one of Sequin’s Mexican students. The student’s definitions “embody the essential elements of authentic caring: connection, unconditional love, and a comprehensive apprehending of ‘the other’” (p. 157).

High levels of social capital defined as “connections to individuals and to networks that can provide access to resources and forms of support that facilitate the accomplishment of goals” (Stanton-Salazar, 2004, p. 18) are seen in only a few groups at Sequin High. One such group shares a commitment to academic achievement. The students find self-confidence in such a group and are making it academically. On the other hand, schooling in America works against such social capital. For example, the climate in the majority of classrooms at Sequin is described as subdued. There is little encouragement toward self-expression or communication. There is little dialogue or
interaction between students and between students and teachers. Students work independently and often compete against each other creating divisiveness as opposed to nurturing social capital. Social capital has been associated with high levels of academic achievement, occupations, and bilingualism (Stanton-Salazar, 2004).

Subtractive schooling is also apparent in the school process of “de-identification or de-mexicanization” which subtracts cultural resources through assimilation or Americanization (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 161). In such a process, bilingualism and biculturalism are not viewed as worthwhile or expedient (Valdes, 2001). "Language is one of the most powerful resources needed to maintain a sense of self-identity and self-fulfillment” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 169). Despite the Texas abolition of no Spanish laws, students at Sequin still experience negative reactions toward speaking Spanish. Sequin, like many other schools, denies bilingualism and biculturalism.

There is also much division at Sequin among the students. Many of the Mexican students are placed in ESL classes which focus upon speaking and give little attention to reading or writing which are critical for successful performance in the core subjects. Thus, ESL students fall prey to the subtractive practice of cultural tracking. That is, they are disallowed many academic classes needed for college because they are placed in ESL classes. They are denied honors classes and often college preparatory courses. This separation results in an unequal education for those students in ESL classes. Valenzuela states that tracking “excludes the majority of youth” (p. 259). Youth at Sequin have no power to fight against this system of tracking. They, like many others, are powerless in a system of oppression. As they become more separated on this lesser track, they often experience poor self-esteem and may begin to lack any motivation toward academics.
Divisions such as these also reinforce disconnectedness at Sequin. There are especially divisions between the newly arrived Mexican immigrant and the U.S.-born Mexican youth. As opposed to unifying forces, the school reinforces the we vs. they (Mexican vs. U.S.-born Mexican) concept. Division is subtractive and deprives students of the opportunity to work within support networks that can offer growth and opportunity for success. Mexican and U.S.-born youth at Sequin share a rich cultural heritage and language. These positive funds of knowledge could serve as a bonding for the youth. Many of the youth at Sequin could find a community here, one of support and encouragement. Possibilities seem to be endless if only the subtractive elements were replaced with positive elements of acceptance and validation. In conclusion, I believe like Valenzuela that our schools promote this subtractive process, and it has devastating effects upon the U.S.-born youth of immigrant descent. They lose their heritage, in some cases their language, and their identity. Academically, they often fail and drop out of school. It is easy to understand why. Subtractive forces take away their very existence through separate tracks, deculturalization, and indifference.

In conclusion, my dissertation inquiry seeks to uncover the forces that keep many of our immigrant students on the borders and excluded from the benefits of an equal education. Equally important, I hope to expose the change that is needed in school practices and pedagogy in order to bring about a more culturally responsive education for our immigrant students.

Summary of the Literature

The literature review consists of five sections which include issues of language, culture, identity, between spaces, and pedagogy. The sixth section covers the theoretical
framework of the study. There is much research showing that immigrant students are falling behind in school due to language problems. One of the most pressing issues we face today is how best to teach English to the immigrant student. ESL classes have served this function, yet many immigrant students are still placed in core classes without the skills to succeed. Many recommend longer periods in ESL classes as well as teaching core subject skills in these classes (Beykont, 2000; Freeman, 2004; Jeannot, 2004). Research recognizes that second language learning takes time, yet schooling practices force immigrant students to assimilate into English-only classes as soon as possible (Bartolome, 2002).

Other problems arise once the student is placed in the core curriculum. Few teachers accommodate the language transition period, and students are expected to grasp the material as well as an English-speaking student. These kinds of practices force our immigrant students into failure. Research shows that educational practices must address language issues in more culturally responsive ways (Beck & Allexsaht, 2002; Cummins, 1989; Valdes, 2001).

Immigrant students face language bias everyday in our schools. Bilingualism is viewed as a handicap in our nation; and consequently, heritage languages are treated as lower in status and discouraged from use in our schools (Ayers, 2004; Cummins, 1989; Soto, 1997). There are English-only laws that prevent heritage language usage in schools. Georgia is one such state. Students are prohibited from using their heritage language in class, especially in ESL classes. Research shows that denying a student her heritage language results in disempowerment because it is viewed as deficient, problematic, and inferior in comparison to the *supposedly* superior English language (Macedo, 2000). The
student whose language is denigrated often internalizes these feelings of deficiency, unworthiness, and inferiority.

There has been much research also about the power of bilingual programs. Yet despite the advocates, there are few bilingual programs in our nation. There are those who believe that bilingual programs provide the passageway for connection to heritage culture and development of an authentic voice. Language is also about identity, and when schooling denies language, it denies the very existence of the student (Anzaldua, 1987; Jankie, 2004). Denying the immigrant student bilingual opportunity often results in loss of heritage language, culture, and identity. Students who are prohibited from using their language in school often experience pain and exclusion. Cummins and Sayers (2000) insist that schools must provide ways for the immigrant student to keep her cultural and linguistic heritage.

Research shows that the student in bilingual programs learns to read English faster and with more comprehension than those denied bilingual programs. These students also learn good writing skills transferable to English writing. Bilingual programs aid in developing better self-concept and promote social and cultural capital which supports second language learning (Kwong, 2000; Macedo, 2000; Souza, 2000). Research shows that students who continue to learn in their own language while learning English have better skills for learning a second language than if they are denied this opportunity (Souza, 2000). Other advantages to bilingual programs include a continuance of learning in the core subjects. Students often fall behind in core classes because they lack skills to learn in the English language. Falling behind often leads to dropping out of school or seeking a technical track (Farah, 2000; Vigil, 2004).
Bilingual programs offer support systems for the immigrant student. In such programs, there are cultural role models and peers with similar backgrounds. Students are more engaged, motivated to learn, and experience increased academic achievement (Ballenger, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). On the other hand, English-only classes offer little support and care which are positive motivators for academic success (Noddings, 1999; Osterman, 2000).

The immigrant student is often viewed as deficient in the English language rather than rich in her own language. In many cases, this deficiency approach leads to tracking the immigrant student into ESL classes or technical classes where they are separated from mainstream opportunities of academic success and future job possibilities. Research shows that this tracking reflects a power structure that values some knowledge over others. In this case, whatever knowledge the immigrant student brings to the classroom, it is viewed as deficient and lacking. The student is often seen as incapable of following a strict academic course and placed on a lower academic tract. Many soon develop a low self-esteem and begin to internalize a false notion that they are not smart enough to succeed on the academic course of study. The immigrant student becomes disillusioned about possibilities of higher education and job possibilities and often drops out of school (Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004).

Research also indicates that heritage language learning has many advantages. These classes strengthen the student’s skills in the heritage language which can lead to more skills in the second language. These classes also enhance thinking and learning (Nieto, 2002). Students in heritage language classes find validation of the heritage language as well as their own funds of knowledge. They become more motivated to learn,
they are not labeled deficient, and they can develop their own voice thus becoming authors of their own world (Giroux, 1986; Macedo, 2000).

The second area of literature explores cultural issues. As Gay (2000) tells us, culture is “at the heart of all we do in the name of education” (p. 9). Students come to us rich in culture and cultural experiences which are invaluable for classroom learning. Using these funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992) can provide bridges to successful academics.

Much of education today reinforces what Cummins (1993) refers to as “bicultural ambivalence” (p. 105) where the student is viewed cultureless. Research continues to show that when the immigrant student’s culture is denied, she is alienated from the learning process. Acting as a bridge for learning, culture connects the student to the curriculum by validating her own experiences and building for further knowledge.

Literature reveals that the immigrant student’s culture is usually viewed as the other in comparison to the dominant Euro-centric culture. As such, the other culture is viewed as lower in status and unworthy of validation. Students who experience these negative feelings toward their culture begin to internalize their own unworthiness and inferiority which parallel poor academic performance (Delpit, 1995; Hermes, 2005; McLaren, 1995; Morrison, 1970).

Culture can be about empowerment (Ayers, 2004; Delpit, 1993). However, schooling is a reflection of institutionalized practices that are aimed at disempowering students so that they may be more malleable for a working class society. Robbing students of their culture takes away their very being (Giroux, 1992). Nieto (1996) also shows that schools disempower students through curriculum and pedagogical practices.
such as competition which is advantageous to the dominant group and reinforces the gap between those accepted and those not.

Research also shows that acceptance of cultural diversity in the classroom has power to reconceptualize pedagogy so that all students have equal opportunity to succeed. Cultural diversity in the classroom reflects other ways of knowing, it is newness and inclusion, and it spawns worlds of acceptance and choices. Furthermore, cultural diversity can decenter a curriculum that is linear, stable, ossified, and non hybrid (Weaver, 2004).

Immigrant students are impacted everyday by cultural issues that cause anxiety and turmoil. In the middle of cultural conflict, the student may experience feelings of loneliness and isolation (He, 2003; Igoa, 1995). Research shows that teachers and the administration are often oblivious to the tension experienced by the immigrant student. In most cases, there are few accommodations made for the student as she struggles with the acculturation-enculturation process. Consequently, many immigrant students experience schooling in a noncaring environment lacking in compassion which is conducive to learning and success (Fine, Burns, Payne, & Torre, 2004).

The third area of research examines identity formation. During the acculturation-enculturation process, immigrant students undergo an identity transformation often impeded by mainstream schooling which seeks to control and mold all students into an identity fit for the needs of corporate America (Apple, 1995). There are many educators and theorists who claim that school is all about dehumanizing the student so that she can be controlled and used by those in power (Ayers, 2004; Foucault, 1979; Reynolds, 2003).
One of the ways that schools control and oppress is by suppressing the student’s voice. A student with no voice has little identity and soon learns that others in power speak for them (Howard, 1999). Dialogue is critical for a pedagogy of freedom, and it is through dialogue that identity emerges (Buber, 1970; Delpit, 1993; Freire, 1970). As the immigrant’s voice is validated, opportunities for self-authentication arise (Greene, 1995).

Research indicates that some voices are heard while others are not. Silencing the immigrant student limits her identity development, a practice ingrained in mainstream schooling (Ayers, 2004). These dualisms (acceptance vs. no acceptance) are part of everyday education and entrenched in our curriculum and pedagogy (Wear, 1997) which deprive the immigrant student of an identity by promoting a monoculture and no tolerance for diversity (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991).

Research also shows that immigrant students are often confused and lost in the process of developing a new identity while crossing cultures. They often face tension and stress as they are caught between different cultures that are also constantly changing (He, 2003). Schooling practices rarely recognize that identity development is a process and takes time. Immigrant students are expected to assimilate quickly into a new language and culture while forming a new identity. They are often not afforded the stages necessary for identity development (He, 2003; Igoa, 1995). Research indicates that if identity development is rushed, immigrant students become confused and frustrated having a negative impact upon schooling. When identity development is thwarted, the immigrant student lacks self-awareness and self-growth. She is denied the possibility of becoming who she is to become.
The fourth area of research explores in between spaces of two natures. The immigrant student creates the first space, one where she finds comfort, safety, healing, and dreamspace (Soto, 2004). In these venues, students come together to seek possibilities where they are not viewed as deficient and where they are not silenced (Centrie, 2004; Weiss & Fine, 2000). Here the immigrant students free themselves (even if temporarily) from oppression and marginalization as they gather compassion and tolerance for each other and find the strength to become border crossers (Giroux, 1992).

These spaces provide opportunities to dispel stereotyping and prejudice. Here the student can try on different identities as opposed to a generic one. She can flourish in these spaces, grow, and become (Bhabha, 1994; Brodkey, 2004). Research shows that schools do not provide these spaces for the immigrant student, yet they are much needed during the acculturation-enculturation process (Conle, 2005; Weiss & Fine, 2000). These spaces are seen as vital if the immigrant student is to be academically successful (Fine, Weiss, & Powell, 1997).

These spaces have much potential for breaking down walls that segregate and separate the immigrant student from others. These spaces afford opportunities to disrupt a system that is controlled and fixed. They open possibilities for the immigrant student to challenge her marginalization and exclusion. Providing these spaces can promote successful cross-cultural journeys.

The second in between space is often times forced upon the student who is in between cultural experiences. These spaces are inconsistent and fluctuate between the heritage culture and the new culture. Consequently, the student often feels conflict and
contradiction while still expected to master the new language and culture in a short period (Daiute, 2004; Kramsch, 1993).

Immigrant students experience many feelings of rejection from the mainstream population. They feel judged and experience shame and inferiority. Research indicates that students must have a sense of belonging and care if they are to have academic success. Connection to the school, teachers, and other students is a critical component of academic achievement (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002; Osterman, 2000).

One of the reasons the immigrant student feels disruption and rejection in the between is due to the constant change of both cultures (the heritage and new). The dilemma then becomes more complicated in that the student is trying to hold on to the heritage language and culture while these are forever in motion. The same is true for the new culture and language. In the midst of this tension, the student struggles with forming a new identity (He, 2003). He writes about this fluctuation and reveals the pain and suffering she often felt in between. However, for He, the between becomes a necessity and proves to be the foundation for forming a new identity. The in between becomes a place where past experiences can be explored and meaning comes forth. The in between is also a transitional period that allows the immigrant student to focus upon the differences that surround her – differences of language, culture, and identity. He explains that in recognizing difference, she began to understand herself as well as others. Other researchers, like He, indicate that even amidst the confusion and turmoil of in between, there is hope for possibilities of what could be (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005).

The fifth area of literature examines a culturally responsive pedagogy. Foremost, pedagogy must allow for cultural continuity giving validity to different learning styles,
Language, and culture (Beck, 2004; Moll et. al. 1992; Trueba, 1999). Language and cultural issues become paramount in seeking a culturally responsive pedagogy. First language and culture must be included in the school setting so that the immigrant student becomes proud rather than ashamed of her heritage. These practices lead to well-rounded students who can exercise control and power over their own lives (Soto, 1997).

Pedagogy of this nature values the experiences of the immigrant student and future knowledge is built from this foundation. Education thus becomes flexible, adaptive, and multi-stranded based on trust and relationships (Igoa, 1995; Moll et al., 1992). Connecting with the family and community is also part of establishing vital relationships for student success.

Research also indicates that care and compassion are components of a culturally responsive pedagogy. This is often called a human relations approach to education (Nussbaum, 1997) and includes cooperative practices in the classroom (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). It also intervenes with programs such as peer mediation and conflict resolution which can remove stereotyping and racism (Delpit, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

Social action is part of a pedagogy for change and equality for all. Consequently, students must be given choices and be able to make their own decisions which lead toward empowerment. Education has an obligation to reveal oppression and abuse in an effort to uncover bias and prejudice toward those of difference (Connell, 1993; Freire, 1985; Jelloun, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Most importantly, a pedagogy of freedom is one that denounces superiority of one group over another (Jelloun, 1996).
The sixth area of literature explores the theoretical framework, narrative inquiry, for this study. The research examines the importance of experience in narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Bruner, 1990; Conle, 2005; Dewey, 1938). The review also includes the origin of cross-cultural narrative inquiry based upon the works of Carger, 1996; He, 2003; Soto, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999.

In conclusion, there is much literature that reviews what the immigrant student experiences in the cross-cultural process and what type of pedagogy is needed to address these issues. However, there seems to be a lack of literature that actually allows the immigrant student to speak and tell her own story of acculturation-enculturation. My dissertation seeks the voices of immigrant students who have become marginalized even in the literature that seeks to emancipate them. We cannot fully understand and rectify the ills that immigrant students confront unless their voices are at the forefront. My dissertation will help close the gap that is presently in research.
The following is a brief overview of the theoretical framework and the method of inquiry of the study. For a more detailed explanation of narrative inquiry and a cross-cultural narrative inquiry, please refer to Chapter 2, Literature Review. The purpose of this study is to examine how language, culture, and identity development effect immigrant student learning and to investigate to what extent these issues are addressed in mainstream schooling. Equally important, this research opens possibilities for a more culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research is narrative inquiry which has its roots in the works of Dewey (1916, 1938) who believed that personal experience is closely connected to education. From this connection, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use experience as the fundamental cornerstone for narrative inquiry which becomes a conduit for the experiences of the storyteller. Using narrative (personal experience) as the framework for the study allows the storyteller to connect her past to the present and to the future, often connecting the disconnected and the dismantled (Geertz, 1995). Narrative has the possibility to give meaning to the storyteller’s life (Bateson, 1989; Conle, 2005). Most importantly, narrative is about empowerment, allowing the student to write her own story in the midst of preconceptions and bias (Nettles, 2005; Villenas, 2005). Narrative also has implications for imagination and future transformation (Carger, 2005; Feuerverger, 2005; He, 2003; Lawler, 2002).
Cross-Cultural Narrative Inquiry

This cross-cultural narrative inquiry is grounded in previous works by Carger, 1996; He, 2003; Soto, 1997; and Valenzuela, 1999). Carger (2005) states that cross-cultural is the fourth dimension of narrative inquiry (see the Literature Review, Chapter 2, for Clandinin and Connelly’s description of narrative dimension). In this sense, cross-cultural eludes the fixed and the rigid where events and happenings can be explained scientifically. A cross-cultural narrative inquiry does not predict how students may act in different cultural situations because students may react with contradictions and contrasts. He (2003) says that the cross-cultural narrative explores the paradoxical and often shifting nature of one’s life. She also uses the cross-cultural narrative to reveal the frustration, tension, and anxiety often felt by those crossing cultures. At the same time, He says the cross-cultural narrative reflects the “mobile spirit of the bird” (p. 264) which allows itself to drift and flow rather than resist the currents. It is thus, in this between (the acculturation-enculturation experience), that He was able to construct an identity.

The cross-cultural narrative inquiry can lead to understanding and care about those of difference and allows us to position ourselves with the narrator. As we position ourselves with the narrator, we encounter the stranger (Morris, 2004). He (2003) states that this process leads us to understanding difference and in essence, accepting this difference in ourselves and in others. As I collected stories from my students, I focused upon what their experiences meant and how these experiences could lead to better understanding toward immigrant students and their needs in mainstream schooling.
Composing Field Texts

The researcher’s reflective field texts for this study started in spring 2005. The student field texts were collected in fall 2005. These included audio-recordings and student reflective journals. Story collection methods included a school portraiture, participant profiles, student interviews, participant conversations, student reflective journals, and the researcher reflective journal. The participants in the study were three students, two of whom I had previously taught in French. One of these students took only one year of French because she changed to the technical course of study. I chose the participants based upon their willingness to participate in the study as well as that of their parents to give permission. Secondly, I had interviewed these students previously when I was in a class at Georgia Southern University. From those interviews, I discovered that each of these participants had a story to tell, a story of exclusion and marginalization in mainstream schooling.

School Portraiture

The following school portraiture is taken from the 2005-06 Strategic Plan High School Report. I teach in a large metropolitan area in the southern most part of the county. The schools in south county contrast starkly to the northern part of the county both economically and socio-politically. The school’s program of study allows students to graduate either with a college preparation course of study, a career technology preparation course of study, or a dual diploma. Horticulture and aviation mechanics are offered through the career/technology program. The students can also participate in an apprenticeship program offered throughout the school system with the idea that students
will need to have marketable job skills. This program places students on jobs in their field of interest while they are still in high school.

The enrollment at this school is approximately 1978 students. Free or reduced lunches are provided for 42% of our students. Over the last three years, the school has experienced an ever increasing mobility rate which has reached 44%. The majority of the school is African-American (87%) while an immigrant population (8%) and a Caucasian population (5%) make up the remainder.

The students of Creekside are residents of suburban and rural communities consisting of unincorporated South Fulton County, College Park, Fairburn, Palmetto, and Union City. The combined population for these areas is 78,291 (South Fulton Chamber of Commerce, 2005). Business growth in South Fulton County is on the rise due to the affordability of land and building costs as opposed to northern metropolitan Atlanta locations. The business/commercial activity that directly impacts the Creekside community is presented in the table that follows:
Table 1: Business Opportunities in Surrounding Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Union City</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>No. Employed</th>
<th>Pct of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical services/other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmetto</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical services/other</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairburn</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical services/other</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In regards to housing, 64% of students reported living in a single family dwelling, 29% of students’ families rent and live in an apartment, condominium, or mobile home, and 3% of students reside in state or privately operated group homes. 43% of students live with both parents, 42% with their mother, 6% live with the father, 6% live with another relative, and 3% live in a group home. English is reported to be the primary language in 91% of the homes. Over 65% of the students report that two or more children reside in the home.

The failure rate of ninth grade students is over 40%, resulting in many students who can never earn enough credits to graduate. The graduation rates of the school vary from one group to another. The overall graduation rate is 62.9%, but immigrant students
graduate at less than 60%. This statistic coincides with a Georgia Hispanic immigrant graduation percentage of 54% (Bohon, Macpherson, & Atiles, 2005, p. 48). Although this statistic does not vary much from the overall graduation rate, both statistics can be misleading. Neither this high school nor the school system keeps track of the students who drop-out. For example, there are no indicators that show how many immigrant students started here in the ninth grade, and of those, how many finished in the twelfth grade. The same is true for the overall population. Last year there were eleven twelfth grade immigrant students, eight of whom graduated. However, this does not reflect how many have been here and left. We have no method to track these students to record if they quit school completely or reenrolled in another high school. So a graduation rate of less than 60% is in high probability not the reality. In fact, the ESL teacher recently told me that since spring 2005, 50% of the ESL students have left the high school.

Attendance is always of concern for our students. Immigrant students have a substantially higher rate of absenteeism of over 15 days (37.3%) as compared to the general population (10%).

In the area of parent education, it is reported that 82% of mothers and 76% of fathers graduated from high school. Additional education and training are the following:

Table 2: Parent Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical school/other training</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-year college graduate</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four year college graduate</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service/Training</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced degree</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No further training</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Parent Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive/Professional</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/Sales</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Worker/Technical</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled Worker</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/Disabled</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $10,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-$19,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-$29,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$39,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-$49,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $50,000</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the problems Creekside faces is lack of parental and community support because we draw students from six areas within the county. Many of our families have both parents working, and thus they do not have the time to volunteer in school activities. Also, there is a perceivable attitude from the parents that it is the school’s job to educate the child. We also are surrounded by local communities which are lacking in school support. There is a distinct absence of involvement of local government personnel in the school. City officials often do not make their presence known.

There exist other challenges as well. The school is located between two communities, Fairburn and Palmetto. Although the area is growing, the geographic location of the school is still isolated. Economically there are few industries here, but this seems to be changing. There is no easily accessible public transportation. All of these
factors contribute to the school’s constraints. After school programs, before school activities, and parental involvement all suffer because of the school’s isolation.

The English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESL) program is offered in response to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Lau vs. Nichols (which mandated an alternative program of service when students who are English language learners (ELL) are unable to participate in the regular instructional program. Students who score at or above the 25%ile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) and 40%ile or above a designated reading test are considered English proficient and may not be placed in ESL classes. According to the ESL teacher, most students exit the program and are mainstreamed after two years in high school. They are to be closely monitored by the ESL counselor. However, the ESL counselor services four different schools in the school system and frequents our school about once every two weeks. She has admitted that she does not have the time to monitor the progress of the students as closely as needed.

High school grade level placement for an ESL student’s grade level is determined by the ESL teacher and the counselor. This is done regardless of successful completion of formal schooling. For example, a sixteen year old can be placed in the tenth grade and may enroll in high school until the age of 21. There are no sheltered classes (designed to make grade-level content classes accessible to ELL) at my school. In these sheltered classes the content knowledge and skills, as well as English-language learning, are dual goals. Consequently, instruction is delivered in such a way that the linguistic demands of mainstream instruction are reduced, making the language comprehensible for these students with limited English proficiency.
Mainstream teachers are required to differentiate instruction as needed for these students, using appropriate instructional strategies. Both the ESL teacher and ESL counselor tell me that little of this intervention contributes to many previous ESL students failing mainstream classes. NCLB (National Council on Language Board) stipulates that ELL students are to achieve high levels of achievement in core academic subjects at the same time they are attaining English proficiency. For this reason, it is also imperative that these students participate as fully as possible in the regular academic program. As indicated in the literature review, this is one of the major problems with ESL programs and why many immigrant students are failing in core classes. Many are placed into core classes long before they are ready to understand the core material in the English language.

Participant Selection

My dissertation includes three immigrant females of high school age. Like He’s (2003) narrative, these females are in flow from their heritage culture to the American culture, the acculturation-enculturation experience. I have taught many immigrant students in my French classes and over the years and during that time, I have developed a rapport with them because, foremost, I am a language teacher and they know that I am very open to different cultures and perspectives. Secondly, I did an earlier paper in my graduate studies at Georgia Southern University where I conducted a very small interview with some of my students concerning racism in our school. I was astonished to hear their stories of oppression, loneliness, silence, feelings of strangeness, and being outsiders. Some even indicated that they have experienced hatred directed toward them. It was at that point that I realized a dire need for understanding and compassion toward
these students. Having recently read Igoa (1995), I have a better understanding that there are specific stages many immigrants undergo in this cross-cultural process. There is silence, depression and confusion, culture shock, fear, and loneliness. All of my participants have experienced one or more of these stages in the acculturation-enculturation process. Having to undergo these stages combined with the negative feelings of others toward them, these students are in need of a mainstream school experience that supports and aids in the transitional phases.

**Participant Profiles**

Three students were chosen to be the participants in this study. The students are Tayo from Nigeria, Sara from Pakistan, and Marcela from Mexico. Prior to the story collection, the researcher obtained approval to conduct human subject research from the Institutional Research Board at Georgia Southern University. The participants were asked to be a part of the study which I explained in detail to each of them. Parents signed the consent forms, and students signed minor consent assent forms.

**Student Reflective Journals**

The participants were asked to keep a journal reflecting upon the interviews conducted by me or any thoughts they may have on their experience in mainstream schooling. These reflections are included in the story collection method. Putting their thoughts in writing unveiled experiences that might otherwise be left uncovered (Van Maanen, 1988). In addition, the journal served as “self-reflection and analysis” (p. 110) and was instrumental in reclaiming the self (Cooper, 1991). The journal had power to create, transform, and instruct. Soto (2005) states, “Through journaling, my students and I become more familiar with our unique personal perceptions of our place in society”
The journal writing helped the students define themselves and see their value in this world. Another outcome of this type of self-examination was the uncovering of commonality with others. Soto says, “We heard the voices of the other within our lived experiences, and, as a result of this influence, our own stories became reconstructed and retold from a fresh perspective” (p. 183). The participant reflections were documented in the form of narratives.

**Teacher-Researcher Reflective Journal**

I also kept a journal which contained my thoughts and reflections upon the conversations and interviews I had with the participants as well as my observations of student behavior during class or between classes. The journal also included my thoughts on the participants’ journal entries. Self-reflection notes were another form of field texts that served as a rich tool for the overall analysis of the field texts that I gathered from my participants in the study (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Reflections were also useful for aiding others to see into my world – the teacher-researcher. These reflections were documented in the form of narratives.

**Participant Interviews**

Individual interviews were used to record the experiences of the three students. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Tape recordings were used as suggested by Van Maanen (1988). Cole and Knowles (as cited in Meloy, 2002) also encourage the use of audiotapes because “replaying the conversation after the session is often like listening to it for the first time: it is amazing how much the human ear and brain can miss and how the memory can distort” (p. 91). As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggest, the tapes were used repeatedly to transcript for understanding. Using the voices of the participants, the
narratives give understanding and meaning to the participant experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Initially I asked specific questions being attentive to “how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108). This means that the participant’s perspective on the question is more important than my own view or perspective on the question or the response. Marshall and Rossman say that it is vital to convey to the participant that her views are “valuable and useful” (p. 108). Furthermore, as the researcher, I was careful not to make assumptions about the participants’ lives or experiences (Jankie, 2004). I allowed the student to frame the question as she wished. If necessary, I went back and asked the question in a different manner to be sure that the question was understood.

Fontana and Frey (2003) state that “interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated contextually based results” (p. 62). Thus, the focus of my interviews included the activities of everyday life, the “what” (p. 62), as well as the work involving producing order in the everyday life, the “how” (p. 62). This what and how were particularly useful for my dissertation because I wanted to know how these students come to any order in their lives when at times they are surrounded by such chaos and disorder - the entanglements that evolve out of their daily lives as a result of conflicting cultures, languages, and identities.

I also used unstructured interview questions thus allowing for open-ended responses. My questions focused upon many topics that included cultural nuances, perceptions, and interpretations which are more conducive to open-ended responses.
Wolcott (1994) emphasizes that the questions should revolve around a “broadly defined problem” (p. 407) for beginning any data collection. In this case, the broadly defined problem is the process of acculturation-enculturation involving language, culture and identity development in mainstream schooling.

Fontana and Frey (2003) state that unstructured interviewing “attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (p. 75). Through fewer structured interviews, I was able to establish a more “human-to-human relation” (p.75) with the participants and they came to know that I desired to “understand rather than explain” (p. 75). Meloy (2002) states that to be on the human level with the participants, I must also be an active participant in each of the conversations. According to Meloy, I am not just a researcher; I am an “advocate of philosophy-as-integrative-practice” (p. 148). In each interview, I became very involved in the responses and eager to convey my passion for this research.

Individual interviews were conducted after school whenever possible. Interviewing the students in my classroom insured that the environment was friendly and non-hostile. On two occasions I went to a student’s home to interview the student because she was not willing to stay after school. I conducted three interviews with each student lasting from 40 to 45 minutes in length.

Organizing Field Texts

All field texts collected during the research process were stored in a secure location. This included the interview audio-tapes, journals, notes, and other documents.
Once field texts had been transcribed, they were maintained on my computer hard drive. A copy of all field texts was frequently updated and kept in a secure location.

Analyzing Field Texts

In analyzing the field texts, I used thematic analysis as outlined by Shank, 2002. This included looking for themes or particular patterns in the research. First, I had the nine individual interviews transcribed. Because I had someone else transcribe, I again listened to the tapes to verify the accuracy of the transcription. I listened to the tapes a second time usually on my way to work in the car. As I heard or recognized themes or patterns, I would jot these down on a piece of paper. Marshal and Rossman (1999) recommend multiple listenings and readings in order for the researcher to become very familiar with the data.

The second step in the process involved establishing patterns and themes. I read each participant’s transcript with the intent of uncovering patterns and themes. As I read the transcripts, I made notes in my reflective journal. More patterns and themes began to emerge from the transcripts. I began to wonder how I was going to narrow the themes and patterns without compromising what the participants were telling me. However, I knew there were too many themes at this point and that perhaps some of the themes were actually a part of a larger pattern. Preliminary codes would have to be used to sort out the data.

Step three was coding the field texts. Field text coding is the “formal representation of analytical thinking” (Marshal & Rossman, 1999, p. 155). Each theme or pattern was given a coding theme represented by different colors. As stated above, I initially began with several themes or patterns so that none would be overlooked. Several
themes were prevalent throughout the transcripts while others were sporadic. However sporadic they were though, they were coded for meaning.

The fourth step involved looking for connections between the themes or patterns and the original interview questions. In other words, I searched for the texts which might verify my original understandings of the problems that exist in a cross-cultural experience and mainstream schooling. There were instances when some of the field texts seemed to contradict what I had understood to be the case. In these instances, I reread the transcripts to clarify my understanding.

The fifth step involved alternate explanations. Marshall and Rossman (1999) state, “Alternate explanations always exist; the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all” (p. 157). The researcher must give the most reliable explanation for contradictions to previous understandings.

The last step involved writing the report, which was a critical component of the analytical process. Because this is a narrative inquiry, I chose to present the individual interviews in narrative form which began to create a picture of the collected field texts. The narratives were compared and contrasted for further field text analysis.

My Role as a Researcher

I was drawn to this study because of my background and my present teaching position as a high school French teacher. During the past several years, I have had the opportunity to listen to the stories of my immigrant students. Their stories suggested an education of exclusion and marginalization prohibiting any equality or visions of democratic schooling. By using narrative inquiry, I was able to reveal the experiences of
the participants through their own voices. As the inquirer, I entered the participants’ lives through the telling and retelling of their stories. As such, I had an obligation to write their stories with integrity and truth in an effort to bring about change for equal educational opportunity for all students.

My purpose for this narrative inquiry is to provide a space for the voices of immigrant students who have been silenced through neglect and discrimination in mainstream schooling. Although there is much literature on the immigrant experience in schooling, this literature has neglected the voice of the immigrant student. As a consequence, these students and their experiences are often viewed as passive. Narrative inquiry provides the possibility and hope of being known and the need to be known (Ladson-Billings, 2003). The participants in this study provide different stories and experiences, but in the end, each narrative reflects the same phenomena of rejection and exclusion. As the researcher, I had an obligation to provide a safe venue for these participants to tell their stories, find their voices, and validate their worth.

Another dimension for me, the researcher, was the establishment of relationship with each participant. Relationship was obtained through trust and genuine caring for the participant. In such a relationship, the researcher made every effort to establish equality between herself and the participant. Most importantly as the researcher, I had to create an environment that was open and willing to hear the voices of the participants.

In the interviews, I used open ended questions in order for participants to recount complete stories. The questions were framed for exploration rather than preconceived conclusions. The stories were then transcribed for analysis and interpretation. The emergent themes from this analysis are explored in Chapter 5.
Composing Field Texts

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1, Introduction, is devoted to the context of the study involving culture, language, and identity development of immigrant students and mainstream schooling. The research questions pertinent to the inquiry follow. Included also are my autobiographical roots which contain stories of why I am connected to this work both personally and professionally. A participant profile is provided as well as participant selection. The demographics of the high school where the inquiry takes place are incorporated along with a brief overview of the story collection method which includes composing the field tests. The limitations and significance of the study conclude the chapter.

Chapter 2, Literature Review, explores past research involving issues surrounding culture, identity and language development of immigrant students in mainstream schooling. The review also includes the between spaces where immigrant students often locate by choice or exclusion during the cross-cultural process. The fifth area of research covers the importance of a pedagogy that is culturally responsive and which can lead to equality and social change. Finally, the literature review examines the research relevant to narrative inquiry and cross-cultural narrative inquiry. A summary of the literature review is given at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3, Story Collection Method, provides a brief explanation of the theoretical framework which is based upon narrative as theory as used by Clandinin and Connelly, Dewey, and others. Also included is a brief explanation of cross-cultural narrative inquiry supported by theorists such as Carger, He, Soto, and Valenzuela. Composing field texts includes a detailed school portraiture, participant selection, and
participant profiles. An explanation of the usage of participant and teacher reflective journals is provided as well. The chapter follows with organizing and analyzing field texts and my role as a researcher.

Chapter 4, Tales from Tayo, Sara, and Marcela, contains the participant interviews which are presented in narrative form. These narratives are also supported by the researcher’s journal, student-researcher conversations, and researcher observations, which are presented in italics following the participant’s narrative.

Chapter 5, A Cross-Cultural Narrative Analysis: Emerging Themes, is a presentation of the cross-cultural analysis which presents the emerging themes from Chapter 4. These themes are: Silenced Voices in Mainstream Schooling, On the Margins in Mainstream Schooling, Cultural Ridicule and Prejudice in Mainstream Schooling, Identity Formation in Between/in Spaces in Mainstream Schooling, Internalizing Failure in Mainstream Schooling, and A Non-Caring Environment in Mainstream Schooling. The various themes are supported by the participants’ narrative and journal writings which are presented in quotes.

Chapter 6, Conclusions, presents the findings of the study. These are: 1. Silencing leads to alienation. 2. Prejudice and ridicule are forms of oppression. 3. Little space exists in mainstream schooling that nurtures the identity development of immigrant students. 4. All students need empowerment. 5. Language, culture, and identity development is complex, intertwined, and evolving. 6. There is a pressing need for developing a culturally responsive curriculum which meets the needs of diverse curriculum stakeholders to reach a high level of achievement, not only for immigrant students and
minority students, but for all students. The chapter concludes with some reflective thoughts on the story collection method used in the study.
CHAPTER 4

TALES FROM TAYO, SARA, AND MARCELA

This chapter presents the participants’ experiences of language, culture and identity development and mainstream schooling. Three female high school immigrant students, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela, participated in this study. The first section of this chapter begins with each participant’s profile which provides background information for each student. The second section presents in narrative form each participant’s experience in mainstream schooling. The narratives are told in the “I” narrative which provides a powerful and personal account of each immigrant’s experience of marginalization and exclusion in mainstream schooling. I presented the narratives exactly as spoken during the interviews, and, consequently, the vocabulary and grammar may at times be incorrect. Whenever explanation is needed for easier reading or comprehension, this information is presented in brackets. Mispelled words or incorrect tense usage is italicized. Participant narratives are supported by the researcher’s journal writings and thoughts. These entries are in italics and follow the participant’s experience. The narratives begin with Tayo, then Sara, and last Marcela. The participants chose these pseudonyms to maintain their identity; however, each pseudonym is a typical name representing the individual countries of Nigeria, Pakistan, and Mexico.

Three Characters: Tayo, Sara, and Marcela

Tayo is a 17-year old female from Nigeria. She came to America in middle school and lives with her parents and two younger siblings. She has many responsibilities at home including taking care of her sisters after school. She did not reveal much about her family except to say that both parents work at night. Her mother works in a nursing
home taking care of the patients. At home with her parents, Tayo speaks Yoruba, a major heritage language of Nigeria.

In middle school she was placed in ESL classes for one year and then requested her own removal. She still struggles with the English language, and at times, it is difficult to understand her. Her middle school experience was better than high school because she said her grades were much better and she had friends. High school has proven to be more difficult for her because of failing grades and exclusion from the mainstream. She started out in the college preparatory course of study and wanted to become a lawyer. Having failed several core classes including language arts, she switched to a technical course of study and no longer desires to go to college. This year she is taking junior and senior English and is failing them both. She also has not passed two of the Georgia High School Graduation Tests. It is unlikely that she will graduate in June 2006.

I came to know her in my French class, but she stayed only one year because she switched to the technical course of study. She is incredibly respectful, answering me with “yes ma’am” and “no ma’am.” She is also very quiet and seems to stay to herself most of the time. Tayo at times appears to be very sad and alone. She has a longing for her country of Nigeria as she indicates in the narratives. She also has great respect for her heritage and her African ancestors. I interviewed her during school hours because after school she has much responsibility at home. On several occasions I asked if I could come to her home for the interviews, but this never seemed feasible. Consequently, the interviews took place at school during the lunch hour.

**Sara** is a 19-year old female from Pakistan. She came to this country two years ago with her parents and younger sister. She told me that they fled the country due to
several uprisings around their small town. The family came to Georgia because of other family members who live and work in this area. They live in a two-story home in a middle class neighborhood near the school.

Sara is tall, dark-headed, graceful, and beautiful. She is very shy and speaks in very soft tones. Because of her shyness, I was somewhat amazed that she agreed to talk to me. I have never taught her, but I knew her from a previous interview which revealed that she has had some difficulty adjusting here. I did have to go to her home to interview because she refused to stay after school. I met her mother during the home interviews, and she was very gracious and welcoming. The family appears to be doing well economically here. Sara drives her own car to school.

When she came to this school two years ago, she had no records but had already completed high school in Pakistan and was in her first year of college there. Instead of testing her for her academic strengths, the counselor placed her in the tenth grade to repeat courses that she had previously completed in Pakistan. This has delayed her graduation until age 20. Aside from repeating subjects such as Algebra II and chemistry, she has failed junior year language arts. However, she was able to go to summer school to make this up. Because of the repetition of math classes, she is presently behind in math requirements for college. She was in ESL classes for one semester and removed herself from these classes. Her accent is still very strong, and she told me she did not learn to speak English in Pakistan. Her English studies there consisted of reading and writing only. She speaks Urdu (the official language of Pakistan) at home with family members.

She has a most supportive family which stresses the importance of an education. Sara does not have many responsibilities at home, but she works at her father’s gas/food
Marcela is a 17 year old Mexican female. She has been in this country since middle school. Her family and she crossed the United States border into California where there were other members of the family. A few years later the family moved to Georgia because one of her father’s cousins was killed by gang activity, and her father was fearful for his family. Her recollections of Mexico are rather vague, but she told me a sweet memory she has of being on a beach with her father. She was in his arms when he fell on the sand. She said she remembers that she laughed and did not cry because she was with her father. Marcela lives with her mother and two brothers. Her father was arrested recently at work and sent back to Mexico. She told me she misses him very much and hopes he will return.

Her mother cleans houses and often works long hours. Marcela has many responsibilities at home which include taking care of two younger brothers. She cooks and cleans for her brothers. She told me she resents this because they do not thank her or help her out with the chores. However, she wants to help her mother in any way so she performs her duties, even if somewhat begrudgingly.

In middle school, Marcela was placed in ESL classes. She was a good student in middle school, but high school has proven to be more of a challenge. She has failed several core subjects such as language arts and biology. She would be due to graduate this spring but must go to night school if she is to graduate. This will more than likely be
hard for her to do because she has duties at home, and night school is costly. After failing language arts in the tenth grade, she switched from the college preparatory course of study to the technical course of study. At one time she said she wanted to be a doctor, but now she wants to be a beautician.

I taught her French for two years. She is a bright student who is enthusiastic about learning. In my class, she responded without hesitation and was eager to take Honors French III. This was impossible because she had to take technical classes leaving no space in her schedule for French. Marcela has so much potential, yet if she does not finish school, she will probably struggle economically like her mother is presently doing. She hopes one day to return to Mexico, but she knows that if she does, she may not be able to come back here. She is very proud of her heritage, but she realizes there is more opportunity for her in this country. She dreams of having a family one day and hopes that her children will not have to struggle as she has had to do here.

Participant Narratives

*Tayo*

My life in Nigeria is hard. Things like food are very expensive unless you come from a rich family. To make a phone call, whenever my mom wanted to call my dad, you have to pay before you make the call. Whenever we needed money, we called my dad to send money to us. And sometime the money won’t go through because the people were supposed to transport the money to us might take the money. My mom had to sell things in the city. We lived in Lagos - it’s like a city. I [did] not feel really poor there. We had everything we needed you know to survive. I wouldn’t say we *was* poor. We *was* living
in apartments so I wouldn’t say we was poor. But everything is very expensive. If you
don’t have money you can’t go to school.

I have education there. People think we have no school there. But I have good
education in my country. In Nigeria I was speaking Yoruba and English. We have to
learn to speak English in school. If you [do] not speak English, they would beat you so I
try to speak. We was taught all subjects in English. We had to learn how to speak
English. Broken English is what we call it in Nigeria. It’s like English but it has a slang
to it. We would speak both Yoruba and English together. But I [do] not read and write in
Yoruba. My moder [mother] try to teach me some at home now.

Tayo still makes oral and written grammatical errors. She speaks English with a
very heavy Nigerian accent, and during the interview, she had to pause from time to time
in order to find the correct words to express herself. Her lack of reading and writing in
her heritage language may be the reason she struggles with learning a second language.

My dad used to live in Georgia for 23 years and we decided to move to Atlanta
three years ago. He had a new job so we decided to move down here to make a better
living. He come here for a better life. The same reason we come here. My daddy, I think
he come in...he’s been here for about 23 years now. He come cause my uncle used to live
over here so they invited him to come to America. After that he went...then he married
my stepmother and they had one child together. Then he planned to bring us but we
wasn’t able to get our visa card. It took a long time before we was able to get a green card
to come to America. Then when we finally got a green card we landed in Atlanta,
Georgia. After that we move to Nashville, Tennessee. After Nashville we move back to
Atlanta.
My real *moder* was in Nigeria with me and my sister. My daddy was not around when I was little so he *come* and visit us every year in Nigeria. And then he *bring* us all to America. It’s like my dad and my *moder* got married. Then when he came to America he married my step *moder* during that time. But they *was* not married. He *stay* with her *cause* my mom didn’t know about it until we moved down here. My step *moder* died a year ago. She was very nice. She called my *moder* and just talked. The bag I am carrying she bought it for me. She is very nice. She is African-American. But now my dad wants to go back to Nigeria. The reason why we *come* here is for better life. You see on the TV people get killed. It’s not this problem in Nigeria like it is here so he says he wants to go back to Nigeria *cause* of us. I guess he is afraid to live here.

*I questioned Tayo about her legal status here in the United States. She told me that she is legal because her father married a woman from the United States. In the interview she stated that her father was married here and then said he was not. I did not pursue her legal status or the marital status of the father for fear of causing her some uneasiness.*

I speak Yoruba at home with my parents and one sister. My little sister was born in Nashville, Tennessee. She’s the only one who [does] not speak Yoruba. She is 4. So I try to speak English with her. But I think it is sad my little sister [does] not know Yoruba. It is sad. We know how to speak English but we speak Yoruba most of time at home. I take care of her after school and my little *broder*. My parents have to go to work so I come home to take care of the family. I *do* this in Nigeria too. I go home right after school so my parents go to work. *Sometime* I stay home with my *broder* and sister *cause* some days my parents work in day time. I do cooking and *sometime* go to store if other
family take me. I grew up with it. In Nigeria I take care of my sister. I start cooking when I am like 6. I like to cook, clean the house. My little sister. The first words she always call me moder.

*During the interview, Tayo beamed when she talked about her little sister and the fact that she has raised the little girl. She has many responsibilities at home including managing the household while the parents work. These could have been powerful resources to build upon for further educational enrichment. Tayo is also frequently absent because of her duties at home. This certainly negatively affects her grades because most teachers expect make-up work to be done after school or before school and Tayo cannot come early or stay late. Also, if the absence is not excused, then make-up work does not have to be given. This is up to the individual teacher.*

I have lots of family here. My uncle come from Nigeria at the end of week. I have lots of cousins too. We go to Nigerian church and have lot of friends there. My family is very Nigerian and I too. We all get together and like to eat Nigerian food and wear Nigerian clothes to church. My mom and me wear Nigerian clothes at home too. My mom do it all time. I just sometime. We have Nigerian music and videos so we keep being Nigerian. So we [are]still in Nigeria. It’s always going to be my home. I might die today but I’m not going to let them bury me here.

I start school here in 6th grade. I have to take ESL class. I did not stay in class cause I have English in Nigeria. I [was] not tested to get out. I just get out. I want to get out. People make fun of us in this class. Like kids in there are dumb. I don’t know why I was put in this class. Maybe cause I am from Nigeria. Or maybe they feel like every
person from another country should be put in there. But I disagree. They might be thinking we don’t have good education back home but I have good education.

I remember one day one of my teachers was out sick, and I had to divide her students and place them in other teachers’ classrooms. I asked several students to go into the ESL classroom. One student said, “I will not go in there with those people.” I asked her who did she mean by those people and did she even know them. She replied, “No, but I will not go in there. I don’t like them.” On other occasions I have heard students remark that ESL students are just like SPEDS (Special Education Students). Perhaps Tayo did not want to stay in these classes for fear of being perceived in such a negative manner.

But I still speak broken English. I have trouble with grammar and vocabulary. I [do] not talk in class cause of my accent. I [do] not like to read in class. You see people raise up their hand to read. You never see me do that. I fail two language arts classes. I [am] taking these two classes now to make up the failures.

Tayo speaks with a heavy accent, and at times, it is difficult to understand her. Sometimes it seems that she still mixes the two languages unless she is very careful and attentive to speaking correctly. When she speaks rapidly and does not monitor her speech, she makes many mistakes. I recently talked to both language arts teachers who told me that Tayo is failing these classes again. There have been no modifications made for this student in these classes. In fact, I asked the ESL teachers had any teacher approached her for suggestions or modifications for this student. The reply was, “no.”

I thought I know English when we come here. But I still do not. I still have heavy accent and do not know many words. Maybe I make bad decision to stop ESL class. But I
just not like it. Maybe I do much better if I stay in the class. Nobody in high school test me or tell me I need class. So at first I think I am ok but I know my English need help. I used to want to be lawyer but not anymore. I would have to do too much talking in front of people.

Students are allowed to exit the ESL program if they choose to do so. I believe Tayo could have benefited from more English language instruction before she was placed in core classes in the high school. In addition, Tayo should have received modifications in core classes where she had difficulty.

School is hard here and it is terrible. My teachers cannot pronounce my name so they just say, “Whatever it is” or they give me American name. The first time this happen I cry. Everybody turn around and look at me. Like I am not important. I [do] not matter. Now I tell them this is how to say it. But they still don’t try. I [am] not American and I [do] not want American name. They just don’t care what my name is. Yes, like it mean nothing so just [don’t] not bother. They never talk to me anyway so I guess it [does] not matter. I [do] not matter.

When Tayo was in 9th grade, she came to my class crying about the name issue. I remember talking to her about how cruel people can be especially when they do not understand others’ cultures. She was very distressed that teachers and students would not try to pronounce her name and even made fun of it. I also advised her to talk to the counselor about it, but she never did.

In class I just be quiet. Teachers never ask if I understand or anything. I just sit and be quiet. The math. He talk so fast and give one example. I [do] not understand the
material. But I [am] not good in math. Math [is] not my favorite subject. I [am] just poor
in math so maybe that is why I fail. Maybe I [do] not study enough or listen in class.

I wonder why math was a problem for Tayo. She told me that she takes care of the
household such as buying groceries, cooking, and caring for her younger siblings. She
has those funds of knowledge (e.g., Moll et al., 1992) that could have served as a
stepping stone for further academic achievement. Equally important, if the teachers had
recognized her strengths and built upon these, Tayo’s self-esteem and confidence would
have been reinforced.

In language arts class I [did] not know how to do research paper. I feel like maybe
I was dumb and could not do the work. I [do] not do my homework sometime. Sometime I
fail test. I study but things I study [were] not on the test. I [did] not ask for help. I thought
I should do on my own. And maybe it was my fault cause I [did] not study enough. But
when I start slipping in math and English. So I get out of college prep. The counselor
said it would be better. So I just do what she say. I tell her I want to be lawyer but she
say I need to pass to graduate so I just go to technical track. I want to be lawyer. But for
lawyer to do job they have to stand up and be able to talk. For me being shy, I [can] not
do that. So I guess I make good decision. She say I need other things so that I graduate. I
tell my counselor I like computers. I think I am good in computer. But she [did] not
listen.

I remember being very upset that Tayo did not continue with her French. She
dropped the language to take technical courses. She was a good student for me. Taking
another language is a good motivator for a lot of my immigrant students. They excel in
language classes. Taking Tayo out of language in my opinion was a poor decision. She
does not have a lot of self confidence in other classes. Counselors are so busy with paper work and schedules that there is little time to really advise our students. Many students get very poor advice or no advice which adversely affects future plans for college.

Teachers are nice to some and not others. Some of the rudest teachers I have are the black teachers. I guess they just [do] not remember where they come from. The popular kids, the football players, and cheerleader, and the kids in all the clubs, the teachers are nice to them. These kids know things. They know the rules and what to do. They get the scholarships and stuff like that. They know how to get things done. There is a popular center at this school and then there are others like me that are just kind of out here looking in. They are real popular with the teachers. They get all the attention. Most teachers are mean. They don’t care about people like me. I feel like they are just doing their job to get paid. I think they would do anything not to get fired. They can say they care about you, but they don’t. Sometime somebody call you name and the teacher might say that’s not nice. In the back of their head they might want to say the same thing too. I [do] not relate to them. They [do] not speak my language. They know nothing about me. They [do] not want to know. They just think we run around naked and beat drums. They [do] not respect me. They need to find out who I am. Learn about my culture. Everybody just expect you to know everything. I have hard time knowing how to do things. No one explain to me.

I have one class that is good. It’s a business class. We are like a family in there. That’s the type of class I like. We are able to discuss because we are a family. The teacher ask me about my country. She respect my country and me. I feel comfortable. I belong in this class. She [is] always talking to me about Africa and things like that. In
other classes, I just sit and be quiet. We are not family. The teacher just focus on the book. Teacher never ask about my country. It would be good to tell people about my country but nobody is interested. All they see is on TV. They never show good part. They always wanna show people from another country in bad way like dying of AIDS and HIV. They only wanna show the poor part. Maybe people would understand me better, get to know me, not judge me. I feel this way. I feel not so good as other people here. I see other people make fun of us like we do not exist. We have our ways. They are just different.

My classmates joke about Africa. But there is a limit to what you can say. They just pass the limits and really hurt my feelings sometime. And sometime I like to tell people that if they do something wrong, I do not like this. There is limit to what you can say. But it don’t go through their mind and they keep repeating the same mistake like call me booty scratcher. A booty scratcher is like we have a disease so we scratch ourself. People still call me this. They say I stink and stuff like that. We are not smelly, stupid and have diseases. We are just people. They won’t move over on the bus to let me sit down. I feel it is a shame for them cause they don’t know where their ancestors came from. Sometimes they ask me stupid questions like when you were in Africa do you sleep in the woods, do you wear clothes, or do you walk around naked. I just say go home and go ask your moder if your grandmoder sleeps in the woods or if your ancestors sleep in the woods. They should know about their heritage cause they go to school and they take world history and US history. So I know they know.

As we were talking about this subject, Tayo appeared as if she might cry. She is so sensitive and her hurt must be extreme. I have taught these subjects before because I am
also certified in history. There is little time spent on countries in Africa. Most of the focus is still on Europe and the United States. We do celebrate Black History month with an assembly program. This seems to be very little time spent on learning about different cultures.

Students and teachers make fun of my name and my country. Sometimes they say it’s the way you dress, or something. Maybe you don’t have the famous clothes or something. But I [do] not dress to impress anybody. If I dress better then they would like me. But I just come to school, learn, go home. Dress is one thing. Kids here really dress for school. I [do] not. In heels, dressy clothes, name brand. I understand why they say you should put uniforms in school. One day I wear tennis shoes from Payless and everybody in class start laughing. They ask me why I don’t wear Reeboks or fancy name. I cry and the teacher [did] not stop them. But one day they just stop. I would wear African clothes if we have culture day. But only then. People make fun if I do.

The students at this high school place much importance upon clothing. Even as a teacher, I have even been made fun of because I tell the students I shop at K-Mart or Wal Mart. I can understand how this might hurt a student who truly cannot afford the name brand clothes. The clothing issue is an enigma to me because over 40% of our students are on free or reduced lunch, and yet from the way they dress, they spend a great deal of money on clothing.

Well, kids make fun of the food I bring to eat. I [do] not eat in the cafeteria. The food is awful. But now I just [do] not eat. I wait to go home so people [do] not tell me my food stinks and I eat weird stuff. They know nothing about my country and they make fun of my country. I get angry and sad. It’s their country too. Their ancestors but they
make fun. Same thing with my music. They make fun so I just [do] not bring my music. When I first come here I practice respect with teachers. Like I cannot give something to older person with left hand. I give with right hand. This is respect for them. I try to explain and teachers say, “This is the way we do it in America. You [are] not in Africa.” I just try to be quiet. I try to be quiet because I just know it do no good. It just cause problems. Anyway nobody want to hear what I have to say. They might listen for a day but then they forget about it the next day

*I have on occasion had several immigrant students tell me that they have teachers who say the same thing to them. “This is America and this is the way we do things here.” This was even told to a Puerto Rican student whose mother teaches here. Although Tayo frequently told me during the interviews that she is shy and quiet, she had no problem talking to me. In fact she was eager to tell her story.*

High school is terrible. I am a visitor. *Cause* I [was] not born here. If I [was] born here, it would be my home but I [was] not born here. I feel I [do] not belong here. I [am] just a visitor and I’m going home soon. I have no roots here. My home is Nigeria. I will not stay here. I will be buried in my country. I want to go back because I love my country and my people. I am outsider here. Sometimes when I walk down the hall I [do] not feel comfortable around people. Like I am alone and everybody look at me and make fun of me. I am on the outside. People look at me like they think something bad.

*Tayo’s voice was very sad at this moment, and I felt sadness for her also.*

*Remembering my own high school days, I thought about the good times that I had.*

*Perhaps these good times were possible because I was not on the outside looking in. I am sure that there were those like Tayo who were, and I never noticed. I feel ashamed for*
that now. One day last spring, I was teaching my students how to play Boules (a very popular game in the south of France). We were playing outside, but my classroom window was open to the little field where we had made our Boule court. One student was looking at us out of the window. I commented that he needed to come out and play. Another student said, “He looks just like an immigrant.” I asked him what he meant by that expression. He answered, “Oh, you know. Always on the outside looking in. They just don’t belong.”

_Sometime_ I want to be on the inside. It hurts to be on outside looking in. I [do] not do parties _cause_ I [do] not want to be left out. I just [do] not do things. It’s easier that way. I [do] not hurt so much. I [do] not do sports anymore. I used to do track in middle school. I was good. But here they make fun of my shoes. I just stop. And maybe _sometime_ they might say you have to stay after school. But I have to go home. I might join if I [did] not go home.

_We used to have club schedule during the day once per month. This allowed students like Tayo to participate because they did not have to stay after school. The clubs were cut out during the day two years ago. Consequently, students like Tayo cannot participate because of her obligations at home. Although Tayo stated that she has stopped trying to be accepted, I believe she would be willing to join clubs if these were available and easily accessible._

It is so different than what I thought America was going to be. It is confusing _sometime_. At first I try to belong. _Sometime_ I want to be American _cause_ they have more freedom. Their parents allow them to do more things than foreign parents do. But then I know people [do] not accept me _cause_ I am different. People don’t respect me. Then if
you [do] not respect me you [do] not respect my country. I am just Nigerian. I am caring for other people. I am different. I mean if you are different there is nothing you can do about it. Basically I am myself. I am very nice person. I am very sensitive. I would never change for nobody. In some ways I have change. I feel pulled sometime. I want to do these things but I know I can’t. Like maybe go to a party. But my mom, every time she turn on news there is always somebody shooting or something. It is kind of affecting right now. Every time my friend go out she ask if I want to come. I say no and stay at home.

Tayo wants to be like the other kids and go to parties, but she respects her parents’ wishes. Her use of the word affect indicates that it bothers her that she cannot do what the other kids are doing. On the other hand, she seems afraid to step into this culture for fear of rejection which she has experienced on numerous occasions.

I like to run but I run no more. That is something that change me. I love to run. I also have boyfriend. This is not allowed in my culture. So I hide this from my dad. My mom give me cell phone and sometime I call my boyfriend. I hope my parents [do] not find out. One day my boyfriend call my house. My dad [was] so upset. He say never call this house or my daughter again. My dad is very strict about American way. He want me to stay Nigerian way. I feel bad about this cause I [do] not tell the truth to my family. I guess too I give up some thing here. Like I feel ashamed sometime of my culture. Like I [do] not wear my clothes here or eat my food. I [do] not want people to laugh at me. When the teacher say to me this is not Africa I feel bad. I know it is not Africa. But I [am] still Nigerian. I will always be Nigerian. I want people to accept me, to respect me. But that just [does] not happen. I [am] always myself. When I come to school, I am same as at home. I really [do] not worry about it now. I think the more you grow, the way you
think change. When you were young, when people make fun of you, the only way to handle it was to cry. I [do] not cry no more. I just let it go. I am ok to be different.

Tayo makes contradictions during the interview about being herself. It is painful for her to admit that she has changed in some ways and that she cannot be just Nigerian. I think one of the ways she copes with this contradiction is to refuse to admit that she has taken on some things American while she is still very Nigerian. Tayo has in some ways built a wall around herself for protection from hurt. She says she does not care anymore, but other words express some deep hurt and feelings of pain from her rejection and exclusion here.

I have my two friends here. If not, I [would] not make it. I might quit. In beginning I want to quit before I have friends. Now, things just don’t matter so much to me. Like I take things better now. Like when people make fun of me. It still hurts but I [do] not cry. I hang around these two girls from other countries cause we have a better understanding between each other. I can talk about things that upset us. How we get hurt sometime and how we miss our country. We talk it out and sometime we cry it out. They accept me and respect me. I feel other people [do] not accept who I am. I have no friends. Just these two. We can relate to each other. Like the way people say things to us that hurt us just cause we are different. I can be me with them. We help each other. They [do] not laugh at my accent or my music. They [do] not call me names. They [do] not try to change me. We are good together cause we listen to each other and [do] not make fun. It is good to be with them. They accept me.
Sara

My dad use to work for Pakistani Airline. Then he got a visa card for the United States and he came here and after that, after about seven years he applied for our visas. My mom and my sister and me. My dad first went to New York while we were still in Pakistan. There were only two sisters and there is a joint family system so we usually live with our grandparents. I miss living with my grandparents cause we had lot of support. We all watched each other especially my cousins over me cause I am a girl.

In Pakistan when we go to school. I will start with that. There, teachers are really different. If children or students misbehave with teachers they could beat them. They could scold them. Anything. Well, I was used to a [being] good student at school so I did not experience anything like that. I study English in prep school which is like nursery school. In Pakistan we are not use to speak English. We just do writing stuff. So we do not practice speaking - just write and read.

My dad spent 6 years in New York and he came down here to Atlanta in 95. I guess. I came here in 2003. I have been here 2 ½ years. I was in the 11th grade in Pakistan and my dad applied for my visa and I was ok I have to go to the United States. I was in the 11th grade and I took science and I did my others. They are called matriculations over there in Pakistan. I did them in science and after that I started going to college. Then I received a letter from United States ambassador that you need to come over here and interview. I was 16 at the time. I was in college that was Army College. When I started I choose ICS which is like intermediate in computer sciences. So I was taking those subjects. Then I just quit to come over here. I was in army school cause I love army and plus I have good scores so I can go. You have to have good scores to go.
It takes four years to finish at army school. But then I come here. All of us live here now. I have uncles, aunts and cousins here.

Sara had already finished high school in Pakistan which means she had passed her matriculations. These are high school exams to determine if the student is ready to move on to the college level. Sara was only 16 but had already started a 4 year Army College school.

At home we speak Urdu cause my mother does not speak English. Urdu is the official language of Pakistan. There is another language that is called Punjabi. That is also Pakistani language. My mother stays at home. She does not work. My father has a gas and food store. I help him out sometimes with the cashier stuff.

I interviewed Sara at her home, and, she and her mother spoke in Punjabi. I spoke to the mother in English, and we communicated through Sara who acted as interpreter. Her mother was most gracious and hospitable. She offered me Pakistani food on both visits to her home. Sara seemed very pleased that I ate and enjoyed the food.

When I first came here, I was at Creekside. In early part I wasn’t so good with my English so I was really shy to talk to anybody like my teachers or counselor. So whatever they told me I just go with that. My parents could not help cause they don’t speak English so good. The counselor ask me if I have taken English and I say yes. That was that. I was not tested for English or anything like that. What bothered me the most is that I have already finish high school and now I have to go back and repeat classes. When I came here I did not bring any school records with me. The school in Pakistan where I went burned down so there was nothing left to bring. So when I got here nobody ask me what I have or anything. They did not test me. They just told me what to take.
So I have to take tenth grade again. I retake chemistry and other science. I have to do math again and I am taking Algebra II now. But in Pakistan I already have algebra, geometry, and some calculus. They even make me redo some world history class. I will be 20 years old when I graduate from Creekside. I feel I lost a lot of time, but then there is nothing I can do. Just do what they say. It’s not fair, but then it’s their requirement so we can’t do anything. I know another girl from Pakistan and this happen to her. And my cousin just came here. He is in same way. So now I just want to complete my graduation in Creekside and go to college where I found the best opportunity for me. Maybe I would go to medical field. Doctor. I want to be Doctor. I use to want to be cosmetology but doctor has more scope. I mean I can have more opportunity to be doctor. I will try my best but I don’t know. I have to have more math for sure. I try to understand what I need to go to college but it is hard. I ask the counselor and he just gave me papers to read and stuff to study but I don’t understand them. I also have to take the SAT. I am studying that now.

I am very concerned that Sara will not have the credits she needs in math to pursue a field such as medicine. I asked the counselors why testing is not provided for our immigrant students who come here with no records. The general consensus is that this is just not done. The student must take these courses even if she has already completed them. Also, the fact that Sara has not yet taken the SAT or ACT is another indication that perhaps she is not receiving critical information from the counselors or teachers.

I have good grades but I failed 11th grade language arts. I went to school in summer to take this. With the passage of time, understanding the way how American
school goes, I think I finally do good in my classes. When I took this class, I did not know how to do research paper. All that documentation. This is hard. I did not ask for help in that class so maybe it was my fault I failed. It was because of me. That is why I fail. There were a lot of new vocabulary words first of all. That wasn’t easy and plus I guess I never pay attention. It was my fault. But the teacher just explain everything one time, and she all the time leave us alone to do your work. Lot’s of time I feel frustrated because I have to figure it out by myself. I did not ask questions. Well, I was kind of hesitated [hesitant] so I don’t tell my problem. I don’t like people to know that I do not understand.

*Sara is very proud that she was a good student in Pakistan. She told me that her family is determined that she will pursue college here. It is important that she is successful here, and this includes never being seen as not smart. I asked the previous language arts teacher if she had any modifications for students like Sara who were new to the school system and methods of doing things. She told me that she did not have time to make modifications for every single student who was struggling. In defense of the teacher, class size has risen to 32 which does prevent a lot of intervention with individual modifications.

English is not my best subject. Sometimes I cannot find the right word. My grammar is not so good. When I write compositions I make many mistakes. This is another reason I fail language arts. My cousin just came here and he is having same problems. He is in all the subjects but he struggles with English. The first week he came here, he has to write research paper. I try to help him as much as I can.
During the interview at her home, her cousin interrupted us frequently to ask for help with the research paper. He was very agitated and frustrated because he could not do it and needed help from Sara. He had been in class one week when the teacher assigned the research paper. He had the same deadlines as the rest of the class.

I try to help my cousin but I can’t do everything. In class, I have one class with him, I try to explain things in Urdu to help him understand. But the teacher stop me. She said, “He will learn faster if you speak English to him.” So I stop. I do not understand this. If it help him to learn faster then I explain so he can. This makes no sense to me. But I get used to this from teachers and students. Some people are racist here. Some teachers and some students. I feel people look down on me for no reason at all. Just that I am Pakistani. Like when I speak to my sister in Urdu. People stare at us and laugh and look at us in bad way. You can see they don’t want us to speak our language. They make faces like we are weird or something.

People in this country don’t think we are smart. Well, one day I was speaking Spanish with my friend. This other student said, “You speak Spanish and you are Pakistani?” Like the shock on his face. Like he think we cannot speak another language. Like we are not smart. If you have an accent people think you are not smart. They know you come from another country. So you are just not smart. I speak English with accent and people laugh at me. Or when they hear you speak, they look at you like you are from some strange world.

People that are racist do other things to people like me. People call me smelly and stinky and [do] not sit by me. They hold noses and say I stink. Kids started laughing. I was very upset but the teacher she sent me to the office where I talked to a social worker.
She talked to me long time about bathing. I told her I do not stink. I was so angry but I just cried. When I came back to class the teacher moved me. Not the other kids.

Another student told me about the incident, and I wrote the teacher an email to tell her that the students continued to call Sara stinky. She replied that she was not aware of the situation, but other students informed me that everyone in the class knew.

Students here can be so mean. I have been called Osama Bin Laden’s daughter just because I am Muslim. I get called names like that. People tell me I need to go back. This hurts me. I am not his daughter. I am not a terrorist. One teacher called me a bad kid because I went to a program in the auditorium by mistake. I told her I was not understanding [did not understand], but she said I skipped class. I told her I did not skip and I am not a bad kid. But she didn’t listen and sent me to office. The administrator did not listen. He just wrote me up for ISS.

Sara is very astute about world events and politics. She is knowledgeable about the Muslim world and the difference between terrorists and those who are not. We have a teacher here who sometimes wears the traditional clothing of Pakistan. One day I heard a student remark, “Who is she? Osama Bin Laden’s sister?” Sara’s punishment of ISS is a consequence of the discipline policy we have here. Everyone is treated the same no matter what the circumstances. There is no space for understanding, tolerance, or considering the individual circumstances.

I cannot practice my culture here. Like it is hard to go to school during Ramadan month. This is when Muslims fast when the sun rises and sets. So they don’t eat or drink during the day. This is hard for me cause I have to go to lunch room. Everybody ask me why I try not to eat. I try to explain but they make fun of me and laugh. I wish I did not
have to go in cafeteria but I have no where to go. I ask my teacher to let me stay in her room but she said, “No, everybody out. Go, go.”

Food is just one thing. I have problem in beginning cause my father never allow me to wear American clothes. And I wanted to wear them cause people make fun of my clothing. But I have beautiful clothes from Pakistan. I love my Pakistani clothes. It is a cultural thing. It is immoral to show your body so that is why my father [does] not like the American clothes. But finally he said ok cause he does not want me hurt. But he does not like it though. But he don’t have any issue now. I used to cover my head also but I don’t do that anymore. Too much trouble to wear it. Teachers and administration always telling me to take it off. Even one day a student snatched it off my head.

_Sara jumped up and opened the closet door to show me her clothes. They were exquisite, and she beamed at showing me every single dress. I think how much the father is giving up by allowing his daughter to wear clothes that have a certain immorality attached to them. I never met the father, but he must really wish for the success of his daughter to give up this Muslim tradition. It is so sad that she feels she cannot wear what she likes to school. Many complaints were raised about the issue of covering the head for religious reasons. The administration now permits this, and I see several students practicing this right. Sara does not. One has to wonder what the point was in the first place. We wear crosses and other symbols to reflect our beliefs. Why not head covering?_
I graduate I am going back to Pakistan to visit. I will wear my traditional clothes *cause*
my grandfather would not like the American way.

I talk to my cousin everyday about things here. I tell him just to be quiet and not get in trouble. People like us are not popular at school like other kids. Like cheerleaders definitely. They are just cheerleaders and everybody wants to be closer to them. And kids who do sports. They have power from teacher. This is true. Teachers help them to pass. They give them help. Some just have attention from the teacher. She laughs with them and talks. Teachers just ignore people like me. I guess it is because I am shy and quiet. I am different.

*It is a reality that many students do not get the attention as some others. I think this is true for immigrants more than any group. One day last year, several of us asked an organization, which helps immigrant students, to come here and speak about college entrance and tuition cost. The administration refused to let the immigrant students out of other classes to attend. Only the students in our language classes at that hour were permitted to attend. I do not believe that this would have happened to any other group at our school especially the athletes and cheerleaders. In fact, just recently, band members were allowed to be out of class during third period to be measured for uniforms. There does seem to be a double standard here.*

When I first came here, I was very shy. I felt people did not like me. But nobody tried to know me. Teachers and administration they are always busy. The administration. They are just for nothing. Just writing up ISS (In School Suspension) and OSS (Out of School Suspension).
How intuitive of Sara. Many of us teachers say the same things. Most of the administrator’s day is spent with discipline issues. Our ISS is overcrowded and the OSS list increases each week. I have often wondered if discipline might improve if the administrators would spend some time getting to know the students and letting the students know they care about them.

I try at first to be in clubs. But after a while I did not want to stay after school. I like to go home and then sometimes I help my daddy after school at the store. I am here from 8:00 until 4:00. I will not stay after school. Besides I don’t belong here. I never have belonged here. Sometimes I try to know where I belong. At first I have to change myself when I come here. I was starting a deep observation [I observed] of all that. Then I have to forget everything. That I am here now. I left everything behind. I am so sad at times. I left my friends and my culture. So it was hard but I manage. I have to. But you really can’t forget your friends forever. But it was hard to adopt a new culture which is totally different from yours.

Sometimes I guess I am lost. I am half-Pakistani and half-American. Some of the things I have to do American way and some of them Pakistani way. Because now a days I mean it is not just me, everybody. I go with my friends. Whatever they do I sometimes do that and when I come back home, my mom look at me that you are doing some kind of weird thinking. Then I have to compose myself. Oh no I am Pakistani. I don’t have to do that in front of my parents. Like we cannot talk about our boyfriends or love stuff with our parents. It is kind of disrespect in our family. I have to remind myself to be one way or this way. Then I forget sometime. Then I am like stuck. Like I am not really this and
not really that. *Sometimes* I don’t know what to do. It is confusing. But I never lose my culture. I just have to know which way to act.

I am just different in some ways but I am ok with that. That’s how you classify all the people. It’s not a bad thing. It’s just the way you are. I don’t care to be different [she does not mind]. I just care that people respect me. I was so angry the other day *cause* I was trying to help my cousin with his schedule. The counselor just kept interrupting me like I was not there. I did not want him to have same trouble like me when I *come* here. But she was so rude to me. Like I have no sense and cannot help my cousin. But I just have to keep quiet. If I talk back I will get into trouble. I will not go back to ISS. Anyway, my cousin *end* up in Honors Biology *cause* the other classes are full. This is no sense. He is really having hard time.

American way is good sometimes. I like some things American. I have a car here and much more opportunity. I have more freedom. I guess I am both cultures. Yes, some of both. I will always have my culture from Pakistan. I will not give it up. But then I am some American. I don’t like to choose to be one culture. I am both. The only thing I wish is that people know me and my country. Like I am from Pakistan so I read about other people and plus my religion *teach* us a lot about Christian and Jewish people. Why [does] education here not study about us? Students and teachers know nothing about my country. Maybe if they study my culture, they know we are not all terrorists and stuff like that.

Maybe if teachers know about us they would be a little lenient with newcomers, especially for those who can’t speak English so good. They could give more of your attention to these kids because they just don’t know what you all are doing. Like my
cousin just *come* here. He has 3rd period with me. He just *show* schedule to the teacher. She *say*, "Ok, sit down." Then she *give* homework, class work and everything. We all know these things. But not him. He just kept saying, “What [are] they do[ing] now?” The teacher *give* bell work and did not explain. Then she just *sit* down. He is frustrated.

If he didn’t have me, he would not make it. When I was here in beginning, I have my cousins. They helped me. We need more time to see how things work. We do not know American way. Like explain things. Give a little special time. Tell us how to do things. It takes a newcomer a while to understand everything. It is hard to make the change. First I have my cousins. First of all I could not speak English fluently so I was scared to talk to anyone so that was one reason I have no friends. Plus I guess people like to make friends in their own races. So they do not accept me. But now I have friends from Nigeria and another girl from Chile. We come together because the girl from Chile I have three periods with. She is not kind of familiar to the place. That is why. She is sad she was also away from her home. This is another reason why we are all together. We talk to each other about name calling and people looking at us funny. They are from other places like me. They accept me just like I am Pakistani. I would say that I feel comfortable here with them. They respect me.

*Sara says people like to remain with their own race, yet she has extended herself to others of different races. I believe this is in part due to the fact that she has experienced their pain and exclusion. Perhaps if these students were allowed to voice their experiences in mainstream schooling, then others would begin to understand them more and extend themselves out of a sense of humanity toward others.*
Marcela

I come from Mexico. I was born there. My dad decided to come down here. I guess from what my parents told me they didn’t have anymore work so he decided to come down here. He left when I was 2 and my brother was 1. He wasn’t there when my other brother was born. He came back one time and then he had to come back to America. I came here when I was about 12. We came and lived here just because my dad didn’t have any more work over there. He lived in California first, for like a week or two. Then he came here and we just followed. He came to Georgia because one of his cousins was killed there. The cousin was in a gang and got killed by another gang because he was walking down the wrong street.

I don’t remember much about when I was little in Mexico. All I know is that the first time my dad left he took me to the beach. He had on a leather jacket and he was carrying me so I was facing him and my legs were wrapped around his waist. His jacket was zipped up to cover me. He fell. He said that when he fell, I didn’t cry. I was kind of laughing. He fell in the sand with me. I don’t even remember the beach. That was the only time I have been to the beach. Then years later we came to Georgia to meet him. I didn’t even know my dad and I was scared of him at first.

I had a doll I remember. My auntie gave it to me. My auntie was my mother’s sister. The doll was dark-skinned like my auntie. She is Mexican too. When my grandma saw the doll she took it away. She was my dad’s mother. She lives here too. But she is light-skinned and she didn’t want me to have a dark-skinned doll. I miss my auntie sometimes. Most of my mother’s family is still in Mexico. I miss seeing my cousins. I would like to go to Mexico but I don’t have my papers. I want to go because I want to
see. I want to know where I am from. Even though I haven’t seen it, I have my pride and
everything. I want to know more. It makes me feel there is something there I missed out
on that everybody else knows about that makes them full Mexican and I don’t have it.

When I came here first my mom had a friend who helped us get in school. We did
not know how to do it. Her friend took us to school because we didn’t have a car. He
helped my mom translate and stuff like that. I was in like 6th grade. I was so shy and
quiet. They put me in ESL classes. I stayed in the classes two years then they took me
out. But I was glad to get out. It was so boring. The teacher always said we couldn’t
speak Spanish in there. Just like in high school. Teachers say this all the time. Yes, like if
I work on project with my friends. We understand better in Spanish when we work
together. But the teacher says things like, “This is English class. This is America.”

This is a frequent comment I hear from the immigrant students, especially
Hispanics. Aside from this, I have often heard negative comments from teachers who
complain about students speaking Spanish and not English. One of the remarks I hear is
that teachers and students become intimidated when they do not understand what the
diverse students are saying. This could be a great teaching tool to educate the staff and
students in the mainstream toward more understanding of the immigrant experience.

My 10th grade was real hard. I failed some classes. But they were so boring. So I
did not do my work. I didn’t ask for help either because I know the teacher just ignore
me. Like I am not in the class. They would be like, “You’re supposed to know.” The
teacher was always so busy to help. But I guess I fail because I just don’t do my work. It
is my fault. I got out of college prep in 10th grade. My counselor said it would be better.
He said technical would be better. I think he did not expect me to go to college. Most of
us here do not so I guess he just knew I would not. Like most people think we have no brains. I use to want to be a doctor but now I change to a beautician. College prep was just too hard. Some words I don’t know. I try to use context closes but I sometimes cannot figure it out. It is hard to do those classes when there was no instruction. Complete outlines, definitions, a packet to work on. That is all and turn it in. Then a test. And sometimes I do work that she did not grade.

When Marcela refers to we, she always means other Mexicans. Marcela is incredibly bright and has much potential. I wonder to what extent she internalizes a perception that she has no brains. Marcela evidently uses some English language learning skills. Her use of the words “context clues” indicates that she incorporates these skills into the core classes, but perhaps she needs to combine these skills with other reading skills. I teach a Secondary Reading Strategies class for Staff Development so I am aware that using context clues is just one reading strategy. The school system used to require the Reading Strategies Class for all teachers, but the class is now optional. I think all teachers could benefit from this class.

There was not a problem until 10th grade when the other kids started to pick on us. Then I started getting into arguments and problems with the teachers too. Some call us wetbacks and if something was lost they would blame us. A wetback is the worst for us. It means somebody that had to cross the river and come here in the middle of the night. It made me feel angry. They say things like, “Look wetback, you better stop stealing from me.” It’s not so much the wetback part but that you accused me of something I didn’t do and then insulted me on top of that. To insult me is like to make me feel like I don’t deserve to be here. That this is their territory and the only way that we, being Mexicans,
Latins, whatever, the only way we can earn the right to be here is by crossing the river or walking through the desert and almost dehydrating and dying. They don’t see that we can get a scholarship and come and study here and we need to be here. They don’t see that we come here because we need to be fed. They think that this is theirs and we don’t need to be here period.

One day we were in P.E. and these girls came up to us and said, “You need to give her money back. Are you listening to me, you fucking wetback?” They were like, “We are going to call immigration because we don’t steal here. This is America.” I was like, What? It makes me feel like they think that just because we come from somewhere else, we don’t know right from wrong. That we don’t know what to do and what not to do. It makes me feel like we are ignorant.

When they say, “we” to me, it makes me feel different. Like if they say we are humans, it makes me feel like I am not part of the humans. Just because I am from somewhere else doesn’t mean that I am just like you. I just have a different accent and a different way of speaking. But we are taught the same values. We are taught if you say to somebody “Don’t hit your brother” in English it is the same thing as if you say it in Chinese, Spanish, or French. It is just a different way of saying it. The teacher in PE did nothing when they called us wetback and stuff. He said, “You need to give her stuff back. Their money, their purse, their shoes. And another thing, you and your friend need to stop speaking Spanish in my class.” I was like, how ignorant are you? This is America, this is a free country and I can do whatever I want.

So many people here just don’t like us. Especially the administration. Last year me and my friends were accused of being in a gang. We are not, but no one listened to us.
They accused us of fighting with a gang. The trouble is this gang came after us because we would not join. So they fight us. We just fight back. Some administrator expelled us, no one else. My mother came up here to help us. But no good. Mr. P [the administrator] just say we are gone. Mr. P is negative. He is a negative person and anything he can find negative in is bad. Even if it is a good thing, he will find bad in it. He even said to us that he wanted us out of here. He said, “I’m gonna kick y’all out because I’m tired of y’all.” Teachers like you had to write letters for me to come back. We went to Tribunal [this is a system-wide court for students who get into trouble, especially fights]. They said we were kicked out of all Fulton County Schools… period. They said if we could prove that we were good students and that we never got into fights before, they were going to take away the Fulton County punishment. The other students did not have to go to Tribunal.

This was the first offense for these students. Normally a first offense for fighting is 10 days out of school, not Tribunal. I do not understand the punishment here. I thought it was most unusual that the other students were not sent to Tribunal for starting the fight. I talked to a Special Education teacher who attended all the meetings, and she also believes that these students did not get a fair review on what occurred.

This whole place is just discrimination. Just walking down the hall. Stuff people say like, “Oh, I hate these Mexicans” or “I hate the way they walk together.” I hear this many times. I guess cause we hang out together. I don’t know if it is because we are grouped together. I don’t know. It’s obvious they want us to hear them. I feel their breath on my neck when they say it. They are a few feet behind me talking and all of a sudden it is right in my ear, “I hate these Mexicans.” My mind just goes blank. I just get angry. But all I can do is turn around and look at them straight in the eye. Once I do that, they’ll
lower their head and they won’t say nothing else. But if I just keep walking and don’t do nothing about it, they are going to keep on going with it. If I give some kind of reaction back, they will look down, look away, or be quiet.

It seems everybody hates us but then all Creekside is favoritism. A person can get away with anything if he knows the right people to talk to. But people like us, there is no point in wasting your breath and coming in and trying to resolve your problem. Eventually they might say, “Ok, we’ll fix it,” but in the end, you end up losing anyway. The teachers have the authority and do whatever they want. She is believed and trusted. We are not. The teacher, those in authority, and the students that know those people. They have the power over you. The students that go to church with those people. The students who are best friends with people who know those people.

* I cannot help but recall an incident when my own daughter was told in a high school math class that she could not use the bathroom. Two seconds later a cheerleader asked the same question and was allowed. I was furious and wanted to approach the teacher, but my daughter would not let me for fear of reprisal from the teacher. Many of our students do not wish to involve the parents for the same reason. *

We are left out here. I don’t try necessarily, but I do not want to be left out. But you can’t do it, its impossible. It’s impossible to get in and impossible to get treated like others. Teachers and students just don’t want us around. Because try as hard as you might, try to talk to people, to socialize with people. Even if you try to talk to people, they won’t listen to you, they will ignore you. Even if you try to do extra-curricula activities. Anything considered here to be popular. Football, cheerleading, dance team.
You might try out for one of those but just because you are different, they won’t let you in.

I tried the cheerleading squad. Tried the dance team here, the flag team here. They didn’t want me because I was Mexican. They said that it was because I didn’t have the body for it. That I wasn’t the right person for it. I was like, what is that supposed to mean? They said, “You are too tall or you are too fat.” I would see other people taller and fatter. There are judges. You have to practice in front of the judge. They told me. I didn’t make it. They put up the list and I didn’t make it. I went up to them and said why didn’t I make it? They asked why I wanted to know. I was like I want to know for next year. She said, “Well, according to the other people that made it, you’re too tall. The team will look uneven. You are too fat.”

Listening to Marcela’s story conjured up pictures of past squads including flag team, cheerleading, and dance teams. I have seen very large girls on these teams – much larger that Marcela. It did not seem to matter that they were not within the same range of sizes. There have been few (I can only think of one student in the past five years) immigrant students on any of these squads. Perhaps they know, as Marcela said, that they have little chance to make the teams.

But I know I did not make it because I was the minority. I know for a fact they have to let minorities in. They tell me that I am not right, but they turn around and tell other people that nobody signed up for it. I thought this was so unfair but I let it go. Like I said, there’s no use to me wasting my breath when eventually I am going to lose. Really, the only reason I would do one, because I love to dance and two I would be a more social person. But it wasn’t going to happen. I used to belong to a Latin Dance Club.
But they got rid of it. Said it wasn’t a educational club. We had to stop. There were lots of people in the club. Mostly Latinos. We had so much fun dancing and we could be together and be ourselves.

*Latin Dance Club was cancelled for exactly the reason Marcela gave. I personally protested to the administration because at the time there was also a fishing club. I demanded to know why the club was cancelled. I never got a straightforward answer, but the fishing club was consequently canceled. The administration agreed to reinstate the dance club this year because of our protests.*

I am use to being left out. It is just normal around here. Like in most classes I am left out when I don’t have my friends there. Like, if my friends are not in the class, nobody wants to do a project with me. Usually I just do it by myself. But the French class was different. *Cause she call* on me and I know the answer. I was not afraid to speak out in that class. In other classes I don’t speak. Because everybody *look* at you. I feel that people don’t want us to do well. They don’t want me to be there. I don’t want to be there with them. If they had to pick friends, they would pick a class where we weren’t in it. In most classes I never get called on. It is like I don’t know the answer or something. But I do. I don’t raise my hand though. No. I just keep quiet. I keep quiet because I just think everybody thinks I’m stupid because I’m Mexican. I have been called so many names and like people say Mexicans can’t do *nothing* but yard work.

*There was a similar comment made in one of my classes about Mexicans. The derogatory remark was said in front of the Hispanic students. They did not respond. I am amazed at how calm and cool they can be in the face of such stereotyping and*
discrimination. Then again, they have been conditioned to be quiet and at the same time, they do not want to get into trouble.

In the French class, I got praise even when the answer was not perfect. It was fun to participate in there. To show that I am smart. Praise is good but I don’t get it in other classes. Because in that class, we did great. We got the A’s. The other students were so mean to us in this class. They were jealous of us. Now we matter and are something. They have to compete with us and they don’t like it. In other classes, they did not have to compete with us so they were the stars. In that class whoever is doing good they got the praise. The people that are doing good. You don’t praise the people because of popularity status or because of how they dress, how they speak, or your relationship with them. You praise people because of what they do and what they accomplish.

There was a definite divide in my French II Honors class. My Hispanic students sat together and to the left of the room. The African-American students sat together on the right side of the classroom. On several occasions, I had to speak to the African-American students about their reactions toward the Hispanic students. Their behavior was very negative toward them. I saw a real desire on their part that the Hispanics were not to succeed. However, this was not the case. Most of the Hispanics were my A students and were speaking French on a much higher level than the other students. I remember one day an African-American student said out loud, “They (referring to the Hispanic students) do good because they know Spanish and it’s much easier for them.” One Hispanic student replied, “We want to learn the language that is why we do good.” Of course they were both correct, but it seemed that in general the non-Hispanic students attempted to discredit the Hispanic students whenever possible. The previous year, a
student called me a racist because most of my recommendations for French Honors II were my immigrant students.

In other classes, it is just the popular kids who get all the praise. The cheerleaders, the football players. Those that know the teachers and hang around them. People who lead clubs. I am not popular because I’m Mexican. These kids have the power. To me the power that they have is that they are at home. They don’t have to worry about somebody kicking them out. Somebody deporting them if they do something wrong. It’s more like an ability to do what they want and not worry if they do it wrong they will get in trouble and get kicked out. They have privilege to go to work. They have a privilege to be themselves. Everybody here has privilege. Everybody but Mexicans.

It’s most like a privilege. I use to want this privilege so in the 9th and 10th grade I felt like I needed to dress like everyone else. Students here really dress up and I felt bad cause I do not have money to buy all these clothes. I just wear jeans and T shirt. In 11th grade I didn’t care anymore. I got over it. My music. People tell me I listen to wetback music. That hurts, but then I do what I want to. When I was first here I wanted people to like me so I tried to conform. I tried to dress like everyone, talk like everyone, just be like the crowd. I tried to be more American than Mexican. If you don’t conform you are nothing to nobody. But even if I try, I don’t make it.

My family is still Mexican. Everything my mom and dad did there we do here. They said that before being…how do you put it? They were like if you …One day I told them I wanted to be prom queen but that was long time ago. I don’t anymore. But they said, “Before you are prom queen, before you are an honor roll student, before you are a doctor, whoever, you are Mexican. Just because you are not there does not mean that we
can’t bring it here. So they just do everything. It is also basically part of who they are so they can’t help not doing it. Like my mom raised me to be around adults. You see most kids running around doing whatever at 5, at parties. Not me. I was always sitting at the table with the grown-ups, with the ladies. I would just sit and watch. Then when I was older my mom let me talk when I sit with them. I have always been kinda like an adult. I keep my brothers and the house so that my mother can go to work.

Marcela is extremely mature for her age. I have watched her control herself in the face of ridicule, and she accepts her responsibilities at home like an adult. This is due in part because of the way her mother raised her. She has had little occasion to be a child. Now that her father has been deported, her responsibilities have increased.

At home we speak Spanish, listen to Spanish music, and eat Mexican food. We celebrate Mexican things. Sometimes I listen to American music like some rap. But my father use to tell me to turn it off. And like I want to go out with my boyfriend like other girls, but my family will not allow me. I have to have a male from my family with me. Usually my brother or cousin. My parents always want to try new things, but they just don’t want me to forget where I am from. Sometimes my father accuse me of trying to be American. He will say, “You are not white, you are not black. You are Mexican.” Then sometimes my cousins and other Mexicans say, “You’re not really Mexican because you don’t know what it’s like over there.” Other Mexicans tell me this. Some of my cousins too who have been there a long time. They say, “You’re not really Mexican, You’re white.” I feel sad when people say this.

School has been awful. I always felt like people thought my culture was weird. Sometimes they ask me, “Oh, what do you do for Christmas? What do you do for
Thanksgiving? Stuff like that. I tell them and they are like, “That’s weird. I wonder why you do that.” Then they start talking about it like I am not in the room. I wish people knew about my culture. We have many good things. No class except the French class tries to study us or our culture. But it seems like nobody wants to know. We don’t matter. And they just want us to forget. Like we celebrate April 31st. This is Children’s Day. In Mexico, children stay home from school, go out with friends, spend the whole day having fun. I can’t do that. I have to come to school. I come here and I try to celebrate with my friends. You know, like we will give each other little bags of candy or a little present or something. People will be going, “Like what are you doing that for?” I explain to them like the day is and they are like, “That’s stupid.” One day before class, we were doing this and we were all happy. Somebody brought cupcakes and somebody brought juices and we passed them out to each other. The teacher came over and was like, “What are you doing?” We told her and she was like, “Oh, um that is something you should do at home because it doesn’t belong here.” We didn’t know what to do so we were like, “Ok, we’re sorry.” From then on we just bring each other little bags of candy. This made me feel like my culture doesn’t belong here. I am proud of my culture. I think there is much good in our culture. Like respect for parents and teachers and doing good for people.

I always try to ask students from different cultures what they do on certain holidays like Christmas or New Years. My immigrant students love to talk about their holidays and what traditions they practice. On many occasions, I have heard remarks such as “that is so stupid, or that is so not cool.” One thing for sure, I have never had any trouble getting my immigrant students to talk about their culture. They are most willing to share.
I like some things about American culture too. And my culture is important to me. I do not want to lose it. I will not lose it. I always am Mexican. One time I didn’t know who I was. I didn’t know what to do to be accepted. Because either the white and black kids didn’t want me because I was too Mexican. The Mexican kids didn’t want me because I was too not Mexican. I wouldn’t know. Do I act Mexican or do I not act Mexican? Do I speak Spanish or do I not speak Spanish in order to be accepted? Then it came down to what do I wear? If I wear this, do I look too white or if I wear this do I look too Mexican. Then it came down to acting. If I act the way my parents act, I won’t be able to go anywhere or have fun. But if I act how the whites or blacks act, then I just give the illusion that that is me. So basically I just came to act the way I feel comfortable. I feel comfortable learning about my heritage, practicing my culture, doing the things I want to do. Yet then sometimes I think I am a hypocrite cause if I want to do something that is not my culture. Like a hypocrite is like if I like some things about this culture, I feel like I am bad, like I am not true to my culture. I have to compromise so much. I want to do stuff with my Mexican friends. I try to make people happy and comfortable with me and accept me. And then it’s what my mom says and what she thinks I should do. It’s kind of like I don’t know what to do. There are times I just want to be American because people look down on us. We are the lowest. Everybody treat us like the lowest. Teachers, everybody. We just don’t count.

There should be so much change here. People could talk to us and get to know us. People could study about us. One time in English class we were asked what we want to read and I put down some Spanish literature, but it never happen. Nobody really cares. We need teachers where everybody helps everybody. Teachers just talk about their
salaries and they talk about how bad students are. To me it comes out to they are not paying them as much to deal with bad kids. So they don’t have any reason to work harder. When I got into the fight because of the gang. When I came back to school, one teacher said, “I didn’t know you were a bad kid.” Like I am not bad. I told her that. I am not bad.

A teacher that cares would explain something more than twice. A teacher that cares would try to give more examples and try to break down stuff. A teacher that cares would no matter how bad a student is, even if he is progressing a little bit, if he is doing a 65 at the beginning of the year and by the middle of the semester he could be up to a 70, and a teacher would say, “Oh, you’re doing better.” That would show they care. A teacher that don’t care would say that when he hit the 75, “You could of done better than that.” They are positive, in any way they are positive. I know teachers sometimes have their bad times and sometimes they have their good times but when it comes down to helping students they put their feelings aside. They would care what we think. Teachers never ask our opinion. We never get to say what is on our mind. In class it is always the same. We just do work sheets, take notes. Nobody care what we think.

I would like people to know my country, my culture. How we came here. Why we are here. That we don’t want to hurt anybody. Just live and work and go to school. People would get to know me and understand me. They don’t accept me cause they don’t know me. In the end I have to grow up. It doesn’t matter so much to me anymore.

Marcela states that it just doesn’t matter anymore to her. I wonder if she has just put on a tough exterior to survive or not. Earlier in the interview, she said she wanted to
be accepted. She indicated that now it doesn’t matter. Not admitting her hurt is perhaps the only way to survive such rejection.

I have a lot of dreams but mostly I want to be happy. I want to be able to have what I didn’t have, later what I don’t have now. I want to be able to not go without things. If I want to go shopping Saturday, I don’t have to worry about saying to myself, “Oh, you can’t go shopping because if you do, you can’t pay the water bill.” I want to be able to have more than one want. I want to be able to go to the beach when I want to. I want to, if I have a family, to give my kids what I didn’t get. I want to be able to make it. Not be at the just enough line. I want to have more than just enough. I am not going to spoil them. When they deserve what I can give them, then they are going to get it.

Marcela works hard to help her family. She has many duties at home including cooking, cleaning, and taking care of younger siblings. She is very supportive of her mother who is a house cleaner. She realizes that the family does not have much money, and she has already made many sacrifices for someone so young.

I want to go back to Mexico but I don’t have papers. It makes me sad that I can never go back. People here don’t know how good they have it. They don’t know how easy they have it here. They take it all for granted. Over there, if you don’t go to work, you don’t get paid. I also wish that people would accept us for just that we are human. That we are no different from you. I feel there is opportunity here. I just don’t know how to get it. I know there is opportunity for me here that I wouldn’t have over there because of my economic status and how it is down there. I know there is but I just can’t get to it. I don’t have the ability. I mean I don’t know how to make things work. How to get the information I need. I don’t know where it is, how to look for it.
All of the participants stated that they have been excluded and marginalized. The result of this marginalization has many ramifications. One of these is that the participant does not know how to network through the school system. There is a way to navigate through the system, but it seems that students such as Marcela have never had the opportunity to learn how this is done.

The only way for a person, not the only way, but the best way for a person to get through life here is to have your own people backing you up. If you don’t have your own people backing you up and supporting you, you can’t make it. Because you are proving that your people are not useless and your people are not stupid like everybody says. You are working for that nobody will see them like that. Like new students and they are scared and don’t know what to do. They are shy and don’t know where to go. They don’t know anybody. I have my friends here. They are my people. I would not make it without them. We support each other, be who we are. We are Mexican.
CHAPTER 5

A CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS: EMERGING THEMES

This chapter pulls together the emerging themes from the participants’ narratives. These themes are supported by the participant’s voice through interviews and journal writings. Sections of the interviews and journal writings are presented in quotes. Grammatical errors may be present because these are the actual words or journal entries of the participants. Whenever necessary for comprehension, explanations are written by the researcher and offered in brackets. Misspelled words and some grammatical errors are written in italics. The emerging themes are: (1) Silenced voices in mainstream schooling; (2) On the margins in mainstream schooling; (3) Cultural ridicule and prejudice in mainstream schooling; (4) Identity formation in between/in safe spaces in mainstream schooling; (5) English language learning in mainstream schooling; (6) Internalizing failure in mainstream schooling; and (7) A non-caring environment in mainstream schooling.

Theme 1: Silenced Voices in Mainstream Schooling

Silencing in mainstream schooling was prevalent throughout the interviews. All of the students described themselves as quiet, shy, or timid and explained that this is why they did not participate in class. Yet as I explored this silence deeper, I realized that the students were silent not of their own choice but through practices of discrimination and exclusion, they had been somewhat conditioned to be quiet and passive. Tayo speaks what she called broken English which she defined as a cross between English and her heritage language, Yoruba. She speaks with a very heavy thick accent that at times is difficult to understand. She was often ridiculed by other students when she spoke and was
hesitant to speak or read in the classroom. For example, she wrote, “I don’t like to read or speak in classroom because people would not be able to understand me as much and I feel like there is no point if they don’t know what I am saying. I feel embarrassed. I am very quiet person” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, August 2005). She was ridiculed for her English to such a degree that she gave up on becoming a lawyer because she would have to speak in front of others.

She also said that she was quiet in class and did not ask for help because she did not believe that the teachers cared whether she understood or not. She expressed that she was basically ignored in class. Concerning a math teacher, she stated, “He never ask if I understand or anything” (Chapter 4, p. 159). Later she explained, “They [teachers] never talk to me anyway so I guess… I [do] not matter” (p. 159). There was one class she described where she felt comfortable enough to speak. This was a business class where the teacher took an interest in her and her African heritage. Tayo described the class as a family, and most importantly, the teacher listened to her.

**Sara** described her English as not very good when she first came here. Consequently, she was too shy to talk to teachers or counselors about critical matters such as her academic placement in core classes. When she was not tested for academic competence in classes she had already completed in Pakistan, she remained quiet and did what she was told. “So whatever they told me, I just go with that” (Chapter 4, p. 169). Sara also told me that she was told to speak only English in class when she was trying to help explain classroom rules to her cousin (he understood no English) who had recently arrived from Pakistan.
She said she was ridiculed because of her accent and believed that people did not want her to practice her language at school, “Like when I speak to my sister in Urdu. People stare at us and look at us in bad way. You can see they don’t want us to speak our language. They make faces like we are weird or something” (Chapter 4, p. 172). Sara explained that people perceived an accent as not being smart. She wrote, “I feel like just because I am from another country people think I am not smart. I was good student in Pakistan. But here they just think I am not smart” (Sara’s Journal Entry, August 2005). Sara feared that students and teachers would think she was not smart if she asked questions so she remained quiet. Sara said she never asked questions in class even when she was failing, and like Tayo, teachers never asked her did she understand. She voiced that she was often ignored in class. She remained quiet in language arts class even when she did not know how to do a research paper. The fear of ridicule seemed to be overwhelming for Sara who preferred to fail rather than appear less than smart. Sara also expressed the feeling that remaining quiet was the best way to maneuver through the school. If she remained quiet, then she would not cause any trouble.

Marcela was quiet in class, never asked any questions, or drew attention to herself. She said that teachers ignored her and never asked if she understood. “I didn’t ask for help either because I know the teacher just ignore me. Like I am not in the class” (Chapter 4, p. 180). More so than the other two participants, Marcela was often told to speak English, not Spanish, in classes. She said this made her feel like a “nobody…We [her friends and she] understand better in Spanish when we work together. But the teacher says things like, ‘This is English class. This is America’” (p. 180). She was so proud to write that she had recently been hired at a store where there were many Hispanic
customers. Later she expressed that she could finally speak Spanish without repercussions. She wrote,

I am so excited they believe I have a good chance because I speak Spanish.

Finally someone who isn’t going to tell me not to speak Spanish. I feel so good because I believe that I am not being outcasted because I am Mexican. What a big change from school. I am being *embrassed* for my differences here not outcasted.

I really like it here [,] I feel accepted and I am helping people” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, August 2005).

Her story reflected a kind of hopelessness that anyone would ever listen to her at school. She explained, “But people like us, there is no point in wasting your breath and coming in and trying to resolve your problem…in the end, you end up losing anyway” (Chapter 4, p. 185). Marcela felt the sting of discrimination when she tried out for various dance teams. Even though she told me she did not make the teams because she was Mexican, she did not protest. “I did not make it because I was the minority…I thought this was so unfair…Like I said there’s no use to me wasting my breath” (p. 185).

Like Tayo, she had one class (French II Honors) where she felt comfortable enough to speak out, contribute, and ask questions. She said this was because I praised her and wanted to know about her country and her heritage. In essence, someone listened to her. Her journal comments about the interview process with me also indicated that she needed to be heard; she needed someone to listen. “Is like she [the researcher] is doing me a favor by listening to me. Like she is helping me more, just by listening to me, that [than] me helping her. Seems that at school I was always told to be quiet” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, August 2005).
Theme 2: On the Margins in Mainstream Schooling

Being on the margins, left out, was a consistent theme throughout the interviews. When asked if she had ever felt like she was on the margins, Tayo responded, “I am outsider here” (Chapter 4, p. 164). She explained how uncomfortable she felt in the hallways as if she were alone where people glared at her and thought bad things of her. In class, she said no one knew she was there, not even the teacher. She felt that she was ignored or that other students were purposefully cruel to her. She wrote, “I just remember one events that took place on the bus. Some of the seat was not full and everytime I try to seat down my school mate wouldn’t move over for me because they thing that am stinky” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, August, 2005).

Tayo explained in the interview that some students were on the inside at school. These were the popular kids, the ones involved in sports and activities. She told me that teachers paid attention to these students and ignored students like herself. She said, “They know nothing about me. They [do] not want to know... I feel not so good as other people here…like we [do] not exist” (Chapter 4, pp. 161-62). Having experienced the pain that comes with rejection, Tayo often chose to be on the margins, on the outside, because it was less hurtful this way. She preferred not to go to parties or try to make new friends because she had felt rejection many times before. Although she did not want to be left out, she made choices that lead to isolation for fear of being hurt. She wrote,

_Sometime_ some of my _friend_ would be talking in a corner and they would try to call me to come talk to them. But all I will say is that am okay by myself. Some people that they call themselves my friend are the main one making fun of me. _Sometime_ my classmate would ask me do we wear cloth, or take a bath and do
we see wild animal running around our house in Nigeria…People ask me

*sometime* do I have any type of disease in Nigeria. They think we are always the
one that carried disease and they too in America are the main one that has all
this disease. Now I just stay away from people (Tayo’s Journal Entry, August
2006).

One of the reasons she no longer ran track as she had done in middle school or
participated in any extra curricula activities was due to past experiences of exclusion.
“When I was *run* track, people say I look like running in the jungle. I love to run but
never feel part of team” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, August 2005). Secondly, Tayo had
multiple responsibilities after school and was unable to stay to participate in clubs. The
school has a policy of club activities limited to before or after school which virtually
excludes those like Tayo. She claimed that she was only a visitor here because she never
felt as though she was part of the school, and this exclusion was often painful. She stated,
“It hurts to be on outside looking in” (Chapter 4, p. 165).

*Sara* expressed feelings of being left out especially when she first arrived here.
Although she tried to extend herself to others, the reciprocation was often not returned.
She was somewhat hardened to no longer try. “If I do friendship with some one I give my
whole best to them and if they do not respond well then I just leave them alone. I don’t do
that much anymore” (Sara’s Journal Entry, August, 2005). She felt as though people did
not like her because she was different and that no one tried to get to know her or
understand her. She told me that teachers and the administration were too busy to get to
know students like her and that basically they did not care to know who she was. Like
Tayo, she claimed that there were insiders and outsiders at school. She was on the
outside; she was not one of the popular students who had the attention from the teachers and administration. She stated, “Teachers just ignore people like me…I am different” (Chapter 4, p. 125).

Her sense of belonging came from being at home and not at school. She adamantly said that she never felt that she belonged at school. As a result, she told me that she never stayed after school to participate in any clubs or sports. Even though she admitted that she wanted to belong to clubs, her desire to go home where she felt a sense of belonging was a stronger influence.

Marcela described being on the margins as being left out. Sadly, she told me that she tried to be on the inside by being nice and making an effort to get to know people. But her labor was rejected. She said, “But you can’t do it, it’s impossible…It’s impossible to get in and impossible to be treated like others” (Chapter 4, p. 184). Aside from feeling unwanted by the majority population here, she also felt these sentiments from recently arrived Mexicans who did not think she was one of them. She wrote, “At first it was like everybody was okay. All the Mexicans treat us like outcasts now. I can’t wait to get out of here” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, August, 2005). As a result of such typical rejection, she gave up trying to be on the inside because she knew it was to no avail. Like the other two participants, Marcela belonged to no clubs or sports activities. In her interview, she stated that she tried out for several dance teams but that she was always rejected. She believed that she experienced discrimination and was excluded from any teams primarily because she was Mexican. “They didn’t want me because I was Mexican” (Chapter 4, p. 185). “Hardly no one cheared for me but oh well my family did that’s what counts” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, August 2005). At one time she belonged to
a Latin Dance Club, but it was abolished by the administration because it was not an academic club. The club was later reinstated due to protests, but Marcela did not rejoin. Perhaps due to repeated exclusions, she lost her zeal to be a part of anything at school.

Her story was one of being left out in every class except the French class. She voiced that people did not want her in their classes, and if students had had a choice, they would have chosen classes with no Hispanics. “Nobody wants to do a project with me. Usually I just do it by myself…I am use to being left out. It is just normal around here” (Chapter 4, p. 185). Like the other two participants, Marcela stated that there was favoritism at Creekside. She believed that there were teachers who favored inside students which resulted in power for some and not others like Marcela. She explained, “The teachers have the authority and do whatever they want. She is believed and trusted. We are not. The teacher, those in authority, and the students that know those people. They have the power over you” (pp. 184).

Theme 3: Cultural Ridicule and Prejudice in Mainstream Schooling

Tayo is extremely proud of her African name. However, she told me that teachers did not even try to pronounce her name, and they sometimes called her by an American name. She cried because people would not make an effort to pronounce her name. To her this meant that she represented nothing. “I always respect people that are older than me but if they disrespect my name they are disrespect me because my name make me who I am” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005). She also indicated that students made fun of her African heritage, and she equated this to disrespect for her as a person because she is her heritage. “My friends sometime make a joke about Africa and my last name. I don’t know if they knew that what they are saying hurt my feeling. I repeat myself all the time
not to make fun of me but they do as they feel” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005). She was called names like booty scratcher which implied that she had a disease because she was from Africa, and she said that people asked her if she ran around naked and beat on drums. Other names like stinky and smelly were used to disrespect her. She wrote,

One of my family friends that come from Nigeria 2 years ago. He brought his two children from Nigeria to start middle school and sometime they tell me things that happen to them…They told me that they will stand at the lunch line and people in the back of the line would move back from them saying that they stink. They would cry…And for me to see my uncle cry because of they way people treated his children hurt me really bad that people can be that rude in life. I have the same similar thing happen to me and I cry my eye out and there is nothing that I could do about it. If I have to cry I will just cry everyday because people never change. In my heart, I know that I was neat…I know I didn’t have any odor that smell on my body” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

Tayo also stated that she was ridiculed to the point of tears for her clothing, especially her Payless shoes. She came from a poor family and was unable to afford the kind of clothing many of the students wore. She stated in the interview that perhaps if she had dressed better, then people would have liked her. She wrote, “People make fun of me because I don’t wear famous cloth line. They feel just because you wear famous name is going to make them a popular person in school. My parent sometime do not have enough money to be buy us all this famous name of cloth all they can do is put some cloth on my back and my sibling back” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005).
Students also ridiculed her Nigerian food and music. She stopped eating in the cafeteria and listening to her music for fear of ridicule. Teachers also disrespected her culture by telling her, “This is the way we do it in America. You are not in Africa” (Chapter 4, p. 164). Worst of all, she stated that people did not respect her which she saw as disrespect for her heritage and her ancestors.

Sara used the word “racist” (Chapter 4, p. 172) to describe some teachers and students here. She defined this term as looking down on people for no reason such as looking at her in weird ways when she spoke her language with her sister. She also stated that people thought she was not very smart just because she was from another country. She was called a bad kid by a teacher because she misunderstood instructions and went to an assembly program when she should have been in class. Like Tayo, she was accused of being smelly and stinking. When she told me the story, she seemed humiliated that anyone would think she smelled bad. Her biggest hurt came from being called Osama bin Laden’s daughter just because she was a Muslim. She expressed hurt and pain that people told her she needed to go back where she came from.

Sara stated that she was made fun of on numerous occasions and was the butt of many a prank. One day she was tricked into looking at the sky for a period of time because she was told it did not look right. After staring for a while, she was asked if there was something wrong with her eyes. She wrote,

But alas nothing was like that …nothing was wrong with the sky. I felt embarrassing for a moment that why I do that… I feel like to kill those student who were just wasting my time for their own fun but I could not do that because I am afraid of write ups…but it occupied my thoughts and I wanted to get
rid of it as soon as possible. I just want to say stop doing that” (Sara’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

Sara related numerous occasions when she was ridiculed for practicing her heritage culture. The month of Ramadan was very difficult for her because she could not eat or drink during the school day. There apparently was no cultural understanding on the part of the teacher who made her go into the cafeteria where she had to watch people eat and answer questions about her fasting. At times, her clothing was ridiculed, and once, she was prohibited from wearing her head covering. When the administration relinquished the prohibition against religious head coverings, she still chose not to practice this tradition. However, she continued to observe fasting and prayer time no matter what the consequences.

Like the other two participants, Marcela experienced nasty humiliating comments made to her such as being called a wetback. To be called a wetback made her feel as if she had no right to be here. In addition, her friends and she were picked on and accused by both students and a teacher of stealing. She wrote,

All the while there was a (black) teacher laughing along with them. As we were walking back to class we were crying, not because of sadness or because we were afraid, but of ANGER. I know that when some [one] steals your money you comfront them. Students comfront students everyday. But when a teacher get involved and laugh at you and make you feel like crap…I hated that teacher so much…I still do this day” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, September 2005). Accusations of stealing were huge insults to her. She stated, “It makes me feel like they
think that just because we come from somewhere else, we don’t know right from wrong…It makes me feel like we are ignorant” (Chapter 4, p. 182).

Unlike the other two participants, students threatened her with calling immigration and having her deported. These threats hurt her and perhaps kept her silenced on many occasions because of the fear of deportation. Furthermore, she said she experienced discrimination from the administration who accused her of belonging to a gang. Marcela explained to me that an administrator told her that he could not wait for her brothers and her to get out of the school. She wrote, “Then he automatically assumed that we were in a gang. I just wished that he would of taken the time to see that we didn’t start it or even had to do anything with a gang. But there is nothing I can do about it” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

According to her, she received very negative reactions from the administration, students, and teachers who made her feel as though she was not a part of humanity. Even walking down the hall provoked nasty comments from some students who for no reason used derogatory remarks against students like Marcela. She experienced comments such as, “Oh, I hate these Mexicans…I hate the way they walk together” (Chapter 4, p. 183). Sadly, Marcela wrote, “It is just normal around here” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

Theme 4: On Identity in Between/Safe Spaces in Mainstream Schooling

Tayo did not see herself in between cultures or identities. She proudly stated, “My home is Nigeria…I am just Nigerian” (Chapter 4, p. 166). Yet to look at her, she had become very American in her appearance wearing jeans and T-shirts. She told me she wanted to wear her African dresses, but she explained that she did not want to be
laughed at by others. She saved these clothes for home and church. She expressed that she liked some things about the American culture such as having a boyfriend. This caused her some concern because her parents did not know that she had a boyfriend. At her age, her culture does not allow boyfriends. However, she maintained that she was always herself and that she was no different at school than at home. “I will never change for noone. Being who you are and not try to change yourself” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

Whether she admitted to herself or not, she implied that she had to compromise between cultures and her writing indicated this caused her some concern. “Sometime I will sat in my room and just started crying because of what people had make me to become in my life” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005). She no longer brought her Nigerian food to school for fear of ridicule, nor wore her African clothes. She even stopped listening to Nigerian music. Perhaps deep down she knew that at school she was not privileged to be completely African and true to her heritage culture where she found her roots. Being in between meant that she had put down some roots in this country, but this was something she adamantly refused to admit. In her words, she was only a “visitor” (Chapter 4, p. 164) and was going home soon.

On the positive side, Tayo found a space where she was comfortable and was herself; she was Nigerian. She had a few friends, all of whom were immigrants. She described this friendship, “We have a better understanding between each other… We can relate to each other” (Chapter 4, p. 167). She stated that had it not been for these two friends, she might have left high school. They were her support group where she shared her hurt and where she felt acceptance. In this space, she was able to be different without
feeling rejection. She wrote, “How we get hurt sometimes and how we miss our country. We talk it out and sometime we cry it out. Today Sara and me talk about being call stinky. We just laugh about it but it still hurts. Why do people be so mean” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, September 2005). In this group she was different without fear of reprisal or ridicule. She was Nigerian.

Sara, more so than Tayo, admitted her struggle with who she was in between cultures. She loved her heritage country, and she expressed pain at having to leave her past behind. She wrote,

Today is the first day of Ramadan which is a holy month of Muslims. I did not want to get off [from school] today but it just happened when I woke up this morning for Sehri. I just started having flash backs which make me little upset and cry and after praying Fags I just lay down and did not feel like to got up later...When I got up I called my friend in Pakistan” (Sara’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

She refused to wear her Pakistani clothing or head covering because she would have been ridiculed. This was a struggle for her family and her because the American clothing she chose to wear was considered immoral in her culture because much of her body was showing. She also followed some of her religious traditions at school such as fasting and prayer time even though people made fun of her for doing this. She described herself as “lost” (Chapter 4, p. 176) when I asked her who she was. She stated, “Sometimes I try to know where I belong. At first I have to change myself...Then I have to forget everything...I am half Pakistani and half American. Some of the things I have to do American way and some of them Pakistani way (p. 176).
She learned to switch back and forth from one role to the other depending upon where she was (school, home, or work). Aside from the struggles that Sara faced at home and at school in between, she faced the same issues at work. She worked for her father at a food/gas store, and she often wore her American clothes there. She said that when Pakistani people shopped there, they told her she was not American; she was Pakistani. She explained that at times this between was confusing and that she did not know what to do. Unlike Tayo, she admitted that she was in between and different, and she was ok with it. She said, “That’s how you classify all the people. It’s not a bad thing. It’s just the way you are. I don’t care to be different [she does not mind being different]” (Chapter 4, p. 177). Sara made a very astute judgment that if she had chosen to come out of the between, then she would have had to be one way or the other. She said she was not able to choose because she had become both Pakistani and American.

Sara was part of the same group as Tayo. She explained that this group came together to help each other through similar experiences of discrimination and exclusion. They talked about name calling and people looking at them as if they were from strange places. They came together because they were from different countries, spoke different languages, and practiced different cultures. Ironically, they found a common bond of difference which connected them to each other. Like Tayo, she felt acceptance and belonging in the group. She expressed that she was comfortable, and most importantly, she listened to others in the group. “I wish I could do something for my friends but I am so helpless can not do anything for others except of listen to them” (Sara’s Journal Entry, September 2005). In this group, Sara found respect for her culture and her heritage. This group provided Sara the positive reinforcement needed to practice and continue her
Pakistani heritage which she vowed she would never give up. “But I never lose my culture” (Chapter 4, p. 177).

Marcela spoke Spanish and practiced Mexican traditions at home. She tried at times to practice these traditions at school only to be told that they did not belong there. One day her friends and she were celebrating a holiday called Children’s Day when a teacher told her, “That is something you should do at home because it doesn’t belong here” (Chapter 4, p. 190). On the other hand, if she spoke English at home or listened to rap music, her father told her that she was Mexican, not American. “My parents always want to try new things, but they just don’t want me to forget where I come from” (p. 189). She struggled with the reverse of this at school if she spoke Spanish or listened to Spanish music. She had a boy friend, but she had to be accompanied by a member of her family when she was with him. She told me she wanted to do otherwise like other teenagers here. She admitted that she had learned to do some things the American way while still maintaining her Mexican culture.

She, like Sara, had conflicts outside the home and school with who she was. Newly arrived Mexicans told her she was too American and that she was not Mexican. They told her, “You don’t know what it’s like there. You have been here too long. You are not really Mexican. You are white” (Chapter 4, p. 189). She also had identity issues trying to be one way or the other in order to be accepted. The recently arrived Mexican students rejected her as well as whites and blacks. She struggled with speaking her language or not, what clothing to wear or not, and how to act or not. At each turn, she felt as though someone would reject her. She learned to be comfortable most of the time with who she was and the way she was. However she added that she still at times felt like she
was giving others an illusion of her true self and that she was a hypocrite, “I feel like I am bad, like I am not true to my culture…It’s kind of like I don’t know what to do” (p. 191). She stated that she often just wanted to be American so that people would treat her differently. “We are the lowest…We just don’t count” (Chapter 4, p. 191). On the other hand, Marcela wanted to remain Mexican and true to her culture. She learned that this takes compromise. She explained, “I feel comfortable learning about my heritage, practicing my culture, doing the things I want to do” (p. 40). She wrote, “I have never been ashamed of being Mexican. I am proud to be what I am but what hurts me is that ppl [people] are so shallow and STUPID” (Marcela’s Journal Entry, September 2005). Marcela realized that she was ok being in between and that she would always be different. She said that it just took “compromise” (Chapter 4, p. 191).

Although Marcela did not belong to the same group as the other two participants, she too found her safe space with a some Mexican friends. She stated,

The only way for a person, not the only way, but the best way for a person to get through life here is to have your own people backing you up. If you don’t have your own people backing you up and supporting you, you can’t make it. Because you are proving that your people are not useless and your people are not stupid like everybody says. You are working for that nobody will see them like that (Chapter 4, p. 194).

In this group, Marcela worked with her friends to promote a better image of each other to the school. They found support and acceptance. They challenged stereotypical images of themselves. In this safe space, she reinforced her Mexican heritage and culture. She found the strength needed to maintain her Mexican identity in face of the many
obstacles in mainstream schooling that pressured her to be otherwise. Like the other participants, her identity became secure in this space where she found acceptance and validation of who she was and who she would become.

Theme 5: English Language Learning in Mainstream Schooling

Tayo had only two years of ESL classes in middle school and was never tested out of the program. Having studied English in Nigeria, she requested to come out of the program because she did not think she needed the ESL classes anymore. She stated that she did not like being in this class because the students were perceived as dumb, and others made fun of them. She believed that she was placed in ESL classes only because she was from a different country and that people viewed her country as backward in education.

Her English skills were still very poor. She made written and verbal grammatical errors. She expressed concern that she spoke broken English which she defined as a cross between English and Yoruba, her heritage language. She also struggled with word meaning especially in core subjects. She spoke mostly Yoruba at home but was unable to write or read in her heritage language. Her mother was trying to teach her to read and write in Yoruba. Although she spoke English with a small group of friends at school, these friends were also lacking in English proficiency.

Tayo failed language arts classes as well as other core subjects. She stated in the interview that perhaps she failed because she was just dumb. She was trying to take two languages arts classes in order to graduate. Because of her failures, she changed from the college prep course of study to the technical course of study and hoped to do some kind of detective work in lieu of becoming a lawyer.
Of the three students, **Sara** exhibited the strongest English proficiency. She studied English in Pakistan (emphasis on reading and writing) and read and wrote in Urdu, her heritage language. Perhaps she had better English proficiency than the other two participants because of the proficiency in her heritage language (for further explanation, see Chapter 2, Literature Review). In high school, she had one semester of ESL classes after which she exited by her own request. She spoke Urdu at home with her family and at school with her sister and cousins. Like Tayo, she failed language arts classes. She stated that this was primarily because she could not do the research paper, and the teacher assigned much of the work to be done by the individual student. She expressed that she often felt frustrated in these classes because she had to figure out things on her own. However, she admitted that she still had difficulty with the English language, often not able to find the correct words to express herself. Her writing exhibited some incorrect grammar which possibly adversely affected her compositions in these classes. Sara was the only participant on college prep, but she was behind in math classes. She first told me that she wanted to become a doctor, but those plans apparently changed. “I went to visit training school for those who *has* interest in office administration. Lady treat us really well and I decided that I will definitely go *their* for office administration” (Sara’s Journal Entry, September 2005).

**Marcela**, like Tayo, had ESL classes in middle school for two years. She told me that the classes were boring, and the teacher did not allow any Spanish in the class. Marcela was alienated in the beginning from these classes which she described as not very helpful. She added, “I was glad to get out…it was so boring” (Chapter 4, p. 180). She was never tested out of the program and began core subjects in high school in ninth
grade. She failed language arts classes as well as other core subjects. In these classes, she said she was bored and often did not complete the work. Like the other two participants, Marcela did not ask questions for better understanding and was left alone to complete various tasks. She stated that vocabulary in the core subjects was always a struggle. In addition she said that in the classes she failed, there was little instruction, and she worked alone most of the time completing outlines and packets to turn in for a grade. These were followed by a test.

Her English writing proficiency was still at a low level, and she made many grammatical errors. She spoke her heritage language at home and at school with her friends. She had difficulty with reading and writing Spanish because of little schooling in Mexico. This was a possible reason that English proficiency in reading and writing was still lacking (Chapter 2, Literature Review). She tried to use several reading strategies for comprehension, but evidently this was not successful all the time. When she began to fail classes, she was advised to switch from college prep to the technical course of study. She was never encouraged to do otherwise. In fact, Marcela told me that the counselor did not believe she could do college prep work. She decided to become a beautician instead of becoming a doctor.

Theme 6: Internalizing Failure in Mainstream Schooling

Tayo, like the other two participants, internalized some of her failure in mainstream schooling. Although she talked about how teachers did not care about her and how she was ignored and forgotten in the system, somehow she blamed herself for her failure in mainstream schooling. For example, she stated that perhaps she was wrong to get out of ESL classes. Although no one tested her and she left by request, she blamed
herself for this decision. Aside from this, she had very negative feelings about herself in this class because these students were stereotyped as some extension of a special education class. Yet she thought it was her fault that she made a poor decision and believed that perhaps if she had stayed in the classes, she would have been more proficient in English.

She also blamed herself for her failure in math. Although she specifically stated that the teacher never explained or checked for her understanding, she stated, “Math is hard. Today I [do] not do the work. I [do] not understand. I[am] poor in math. I [do] not study so that [is] why I fail” (Chapter 4, p. 160). She also told me that she never asked questions in classes that she failed, and this was partially why she failed. Her feelings of being seen as dumb and being ridiculed kept her from asking questions, yet she stated, “I [do] not do my home work sometime. Sometimes I fail test. I study but things I study [are] not on test. I [did] not study. I thought I should do on my own. And maybe it was my fault cause I not study enough.” (Chapter 4, p. 160).

Sara blamed herself for being shy and quiet in class. Although she did not have the background information needed to do a research paper in language arts class, she stated, “This is hard. I [did] not ask for help in that class so maybe it was my fault. It was because of me. That is why I fail…That wasn’t easy and plus I guess I never pay attention. It was my fault” (Chapter 4, p. 171). Even though she claimed that the teacher did not offer advice or explain in detail, she blamed herself for the failure. “Well, I was kind of hesitated [hesitant] so I don’t tell my problem” (p. 171). During the interview, she continued to self-blame for not being proficient enough in English to pass the class. English was not her best subject so she said she made many grammatical mistakes.
writing compositions. According to her, she failed because of her own shortcomings in the English language and failure to work harder.

**Marcela** has also internalized blame for her own failures. In the classes she failed, she said she did not ask for help or explanations. Even though she expressed that the classes were boring and the teacher ignored her or was too busy to help her, she responded, “But I guess I fail because I just don’t do my work. It is my fault” (Chapter 4, p. 180). Marcela, like the other two participants, was conditioned to be quiet and remain passive in class. However, when she talked about failing classes or not understanding, she blamed herself and the fact that she was shy and too timid to speak in class. She also internalized a stereotypical notion that most Mexicans like herself were not going to college. “Most of us do not so I guess he [the counselor] knew I would not. College prep was just too hard” (p. 181). Her failure to persist in college prep may have been a result of the name calling and discrimination she had experienced in mainstream schooling. She was called stupid and even told that she would never do anything but menial work such as yard work.

**Theme 7: A Non-Caring Environment in Mainstream Schooling**

**Tayo** told me that her experience in high school had been “terrible” (Chapter 4, p. 159). In many of her classes, she had difficulty understanding the subject material, yet teachers never checked to see if she understood or explained things more than once. Her perception of teachers was that they were too busy in general and that she was not important to them. She wrote,

Many teacher as hurt my feelings that I will never forget in my life. *Sometime* I feel like the teacher should be fired from their job. I can understand a student
making fun of me I have to try to do that. But the teacher part wasn’t call for…Some of teacher who have problem with me, half of them are white. Some black teacher are the ruddest people that I have ever met before. Maybe they forget where they come from” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, October 2005).

She stated that some students such as the cheerleaders, football players, and popular students received all the attention. According to her, these students knew the teachers, talked to them, and got help when needed. Others like her were ignored. She wanted teachers to be interested in her culture and her country, but rarely was she asked anything about her heritage. She wrote,

They [television] never show the good part of Africa because I know that [I] am from Africa, they just want us to look bad in front of America and they put things in their mind…If you have never been to Nigeria do not judge my country because of what you see on television. What you see or heard sometime is not always truth as they seem to be” (Tayo’s Journal Entry, October 2005).

For her, this meant that she represented nothing and that people gave her little respect. If she could have told her story to teachers and students, then she would have been been able to show the positive aspects of her heritage. Until then, she articulated that people would continue to judge her - implying that she was less that they were.

Sara recounted a similar story as that of Tayo. In the classes that she failed, she said the teacher explained things only one time, and she was never given any special attention or care. Caring for Sara meant that one looked after those surrounding oneself. Schooling and its lack of care were very difficult for her to comprehend because she had such strong beliefs about how one should treat another person. “Everything you do is just
for others and you ended up [with] nothing but the blessings of others” (Journal Entry, October, 2005).

She, too, told me that some students got all the attention while others like her were ignored. These were the same popular students as told to me by Tayo. She did not believe that she was fairly treated by the administration during an incident resulting from her misunderstanding of rules and regulations. According to her, the administration showed little care toward students, especially immigrant students who were new to the system. “He [an administrator] never ask my side of story. Never ask me nothing. Just give me paper and say go to ISS” (Sara’s Journal Entry, October 2005).

Sara indicated that many things were lacking in this high school that made it difficult for students like her. She said there was no leniency for newcomers especially those who did not speak English well. There was little explanation as to how things worked and how to make the system work for the student. Time was also an issue with her. She explained that students did not have enough time to see how things worked and to understand all the new processes. Students were not given any special time to make the huge transition crossing cultures and languages.

Sara also told me that she wanted to tell people about her heritage so that she would be better understood and accepted, but she added that no one was interested in her culture or her. She did not understand why she knew so much about this country before coming here, and yet little was known about her heritage country. To know about her culture and her background meant knowledge about her. She insisted that no one cared to know about her heritage or her.
Marcela like the other two participants expressed that teachers never asked her if she understood the material covered. Her view of high school was very negative and included exclusion and denigration because she was Mexican. She reported, “School has been awful” (Chapter 4, p. 189). She went on to explain that she felt non-human and believed that she was stereotyped by the administration – resulting in an unfair punishment for something she did not do. Again she said this was because she was Mexican. Marcela also believed there was favoritism at school among some teachers, students, and the administration. Some had privilege and some did not, and for her this indicated power to succeed. She told me that people did not help each other and that teachers lacked care about students. She continued to say that teachers failed to explain enough or give examples for comprehension. Her view of teachers was that they were very negative and rarely reinforced a student’s positive self-image. Like the other two participants, she wanted students and teachers to know about her heritage and respect her enough to ask her opinion on various subjects. She wrote,

I had my first interview with Mrs. Cavan. She asked me some good questions about school and the way I was treated being from a different culture. I feel like I am going to like these interviews. I have never set down and talked to someone (who really cared) about the way I feel. It is nice to do so (Marcela’s Journal Entry, October, 2005).

She stated that if people would listen to her story, then perhaps they would understand and accept her. Sadly, she added that no one really ever cared enough to find out who she was.
Summary

During the interview process, each participant seemed relieved to have someone finally listen to her story of neglect and rejection. Each of them was prolific in the interviews and rarely lacked an opinion or view of the mainstream schooling experience. The journal entries were not as abundant implying that each participant wanted to express herself vocally rather than in written form. Although the journal entries were equally honest and open, the participants did not write as frequently as I had hoped. However, what the participant wrote reinforced what each had expressed orally in the interviews. The two combined painted a picture of exclusion, rejection, and even abuse. Their thoughts and opinions provided insight into the maltreatment of immigrant students. At the end of the interviews, I came away with feelings of sadness and even despair that I teach in a school that provides so little support and care for those who are different from the mainstream.

I am also astounded that each participant had so much resilience and determination to continue in the face of such hostility. Having heard their stories, I am amazed that any of our immigrant students survive in this system of non tolerance for difference. These females are a true testimony to the strength, determination, and hope that they each bring to the nation and in particular, to the educational system. In addition, their stories are evidence of the need for change - the need for more culturally responsive practices in mainstream schooling. The following chapter contains my conclusions.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the acculturation and enculturation (Brown, 1994; He, 2003) process of three high school female immigrant students, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela. Issues surrounding language, culture, and identity development in mainstream schooling were explored through their stories. Six major findings emerged from my study: (1) Silencing leads to alienation. (2) Prejudice and ridicule are forms of oppression. (3) Little space exists in mainstream schooling that nurtures the identity development of immigrant students. (4) All students need empowerment. (5) Language, culture, and identity development is complex, intertwined, and evolving. (6) There is a pressing need for developing a culturally responsive curriculum which meets the needs of diverse curriculum stakeholders to reach a high level of achievement, not only for immigrant and minority students, but for all.

I used a cross-cultural narrative inquiry (He, 2003) to examine how these students’ experience of exclusion, marginalization, and neglect impacted their school success. Cross-cultural narrative theory, which is grounded in the works of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Dewey (1938), helped me delve into the everyday life experience of these female immigrant students. I turned to the works of Carger (1996), He (2003), Soto (1997), and Valenzuela (1999) to explore the experience of these students by positioning a specific story into diverse cultural, linguistic, and identity development contexts.

The participants in the study were from different cultures and backgrounds, but each faced bias and prejudice in the schooling process. They were ridiculed about their language and culture heritages as well as excluded from the higher academic course of
study, clubs, and sports. Their aspirations of continuing education in college were
negated, and consequently, they settled for careers that most likely will be low paying
with few opportunities for advancement.

There is much literature on the trials and tribulations of immigrant students, but
few studies that allow the student’s voice heard. Through their own words, they exposed
a non-tolerant educational system, one contrary to the jargon of an equal education for
all. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela recounted they had been silenced in mainstream schooling
which led to alienation in the school and society (Finding 1). Their high school
experience was difficult and at times unbearable. As I talked to Tayo, she said that her
experience was “terrible” (Chapter 4, p. 164), and Sara called the experience “racist”
(p. 172). Marcela’s story was similar and strikingly more insufferable in that she has felt
“not part of the humans” (p. 182). The alienation they felt was a result of a forced silence,
which is similar to what Anzaldua (1987) calls having the tongue yanked out. Sara and
Marcela were told not to speak their heritage language in school and were ridiculed by
their accent and a less than perfect Standard English. They all told me that because of
ridicule, they remained quiet in class, not trying to draw attention to themselves. There
was a kind of hopelessness in their voices about speaking in class. As a consequence,
they gave up and chose to remain silent. Sara and Marcela also indicated that they did not
speak in class because of a misconception that an accent indicated stupidity. This
misconception of intellectual inferiority of non-English speakers was a powerful tool
which kept Tayo, Sara, and Marcela quiet in class and unwilling to speak (see similar
examples from Beykont, 2000; Guerra, 1998; Macedo, 2000).
As the stories unfolded, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela expressed that they were ignored in class. This was a type of emotional silencing which produced passive, unquestioning, and malleable students who began to feel that they were unworthy of belonging (e.g., Cummins, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). As I listened to them, I thought of the students Soto (1997) calls “invisible shadows” (p. 43) because they were ignored and subdued in class. Tayo, for example, told me, “Teachers never ask if I understand or anything” (Chapter 4, p. 159). Sara also stated, “Teachers just ignore people like me” (p. 175). Marcela’s story was like the other two, “The teacher just ignore me. Like I am not in the room” (p. 190). They all experienced an enormous alienation because they were ignored and silenced in the classroom. The stories they told me also indicated that this alienation led to their academic failures in some classes because they were intimidated to remain quiet.

Language validation can be a strong motivator for academic success (e.g., Cummins, 1996), but as I heard these stories, I became well aware that they were not been privy to this validation.

Aside from this kind of disregard, Tayo, Sara and Marcela told me that no one wanted to hear them. Their stories indicated that they felt insignificant and non-worthy because no one cared to listen to them. I cannot forget the excitement Marcela exhibited when I asked her to be interviewed. She told me that she was so happy that someone wanted to listen to her and how good she felt that someone let her speak. They all had stories to tell about their lives and experiences, yet no one cared enough to listen. I was amazed at how willing the three of them were to talk to me and how candid they were in telling their stories. They seemed to burst open with stories of repression and exclusion. Even if for a short while, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela found their voices in the interviews.
Their stories implied that they had few opportunities for dialogue in mainstream schooling because of alienation and rejection. Tayo elaborated on this rejection by saying that she was just a visitor here and was going home soon (Chapter 4, p. 164). The stories also indicated that each of them became accustomed to such alienation. For example, Marcela told me, “I am use to being left out” (p. 186).

A sense of belonging is critical to the success of immigrant students in mainstream schooling. This sense of belonging increases opportunities to access social capital which increases academic achievement. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela expressed that some students knew how to get things accomplished while others like them did not. As I listened to Sara, I came to realize that she was incredibly bright and had the potential to go to college, yet, she did not know how to access the system for financial aid. She had not yet taken the SAT or ACT. She seemed to be perplexed that she did not know the steps needed to get into a college, and she did not know how to make it happen. Marcela told me a comparable story that some students had privilege because they knew the teachers and how to make the system work to their advantage. My interviews with Marcela made me realize the desperation she felt because people like her lacked the resources to make things happen. She explained, “A person can get away with anything if he knows the right people to talk to” (Chapter 4, p. 184). Sadly, she told me that she did not know the right people. Social capital was necessary for students like Tayo, Sara, and Marcela who needed to learn how to be a student and how to navigate the system. However, their stories indicated that because they were alienated and excluded, they did not possess this social capital (e.g., Jeannot, 2004; Lewis-Charp et al., 2004), which could
have been a powerful tool for academic success (e.g., Grogger & Trejo, 2002; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

As the stories of Tayo, Sara, and Marcela continued, I realized that they all experienced some oppression through prejudice and ridicule (Finding 2). Their stories were about exclusion and devaluation through oppressive practices, which negated them as humans. I saw distress on Tayo’s face when she said to me, “I feel not so good as other people here…like we [do] not exist (Chapter 4, p. 162). There was unbelief on Sara’s face when she exclaimed that people equated her to Osama bin Laden. Although Sara did not tell me this, I conjured images of a criminal who was unwanted here. Marcela told me about the pain and oppression she felt due to threats of deportation. I felt horror and sadness when she implied that she was treated like a hunted animal, “I feel their breath on my neck” (p. 183).

Oppression is all about control and submission in order to maintain the power and privilege of the dominant group (e.g., Apple, 1995, 2001; Spring, 2001). Tayo, Sara, and Marcela described how they were forced to leave many of their heritage traditions at home for fear of ridicule and rejection in mainstream schooling. They were restricted to what they could speak, practice, eat, and wear. They all experienced oppression through denial and validity of language and culture (e.g., Cummins, 1996). The oppression told through their stories indicated that they experienced assimilation practices aimed at destroying cultural and linguistic differences. Such oppression soon finds “linguistic and cultural knowledge…a fading memory” (Cummins and Sayers, 2000, p. 136).

Oppression continued to unfold. They were attacked with oppressive language such as hate, wetback, diseased, smelly, and stinky. Oppressive language and schooling
practices such as these denigrated Tayo, Sara, and Marcela because they were different. They each defined these words in relation to being lesser in value than others were and deficient in some way. Rather than viewed as a resource, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me that they were disliked, stereotyped as insufficient, devalued as humans, and portrayed as detrimental to society (e.g., Nieto, 2002; Soto, 1997).

Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me tales of ambiguity and confusion due to cultural denial. Their stories reflected feelings of inferior status related to cultural and linguistic discrimination. I felt such sadness at Tayo’s words, “I [do] not matter” (Chapter 4, p. 159), and Marcela expressed similar feelings, “They think…we don’t need to be here period” (p. 181). Feelings of inferior status due to cultural and linguistic denial were devastating for their self-esteem as each indicated. The words of Anzuldua (1987) resounded in my ears, “We are zero, nothing to no one” (p. 85).

Oppressive forces can be insidious, and one often does not recognize their presence. One such example is that mainstream schooling often neglects to teach about other cultures and people. This, in fact, denies the history of diverse people, as well as their contributions to society. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela expressed a desire for others to know about them through their cultures and heritages. In her story, Tayo expressed sadness that others did not know about her heritage, “They know nothing about my country” (Chapter 4, p. 161). Sara also expressed these emotions, “The only thing I wish is that people know about me and my country” (p. 177). Marcela added, “I wish people knew about my culture. We have many good things” (p. 192). Each told me that if the teachers and students would study her culture, then they would respect her. Respect was important to Tayo, Sara, and Marcela, but their stories indicated that no one respected
them because of a lack of knowledge about them. The grief that each felt from this
disrespect was reinforced through the words of Marcela, “No one wants to know”
(p. 192). The fact that no one wanted to know about them indicated that diverse cultures
were viewed as unworthy and not in need of study. To study diverse cultures would have
given validity to them as opposed to viewing them deficient and in need of reform (e.g.,
Adler, 2004).

This confirms with what Geneva Gay (2000) states, “Culture is at the heart of all
we do in the name of education…” (p. 8) and cultural and linguistic denial takes away
many behavioral abilities such as “thinking, relating, and speaking” (p. 9). Tayo, Sara,
and Marcela were been robbed of their heritage culture, language, and identity. In reality
their very existence was denied. The stories of these students were testimonies of cultural
and linguistic denial that took away their ability to speak, to relate to others, or possibly
to think. They experienced academic and social failure through a lack of cultural and
linguistic identification similar to what Cummins (1993) calls a “bicultural ambivalence”
(p. 105).

As I continued to listen to Tayo, Sara, and Marcela tell stories of their language,
culture, and identity development, I began to hear and feel the dilemmas they had
experienced in the process. Their experience resonated with what He (2003) had
experienced as she described that she became lost during the cross-cultural process and
was often stressed and confused in the midst of “tensions and challenges” (p. 75). For
example, Tayo expressed anxiety that teachers did not even try to pronounce her name
and often gave her an American name. I could feel her frustration when she told me, “I
[am] not American” (Chapter 4, p. 159). Yet she stated later that sometimes she wanted
to be American. She added, “It is confusing…and I feel pulled” (p. 166). Of the three participants, Tayo seemed to struggle the most with her identity. On the one hand, she adamantly insisted that she was Nigerian and would never be anything but Nigerian. Yet in her writing, she depicted herself as sorrowful that she had become something other than Nigerian. My talks with Sara also indicated struggles with identity development. She explained, “Sometimes I guess I am lost…Then I am stuck. Like I am not really this and not really that” (p. 176). Marcela’s story was similar. Her frustration was very apparent as she described how she felt when people told her that she was not American and others told her she was not Mexican. She stated, “I feel sad…One time I did not know who I was (pp. 176-177). Later in the interview, she stated that she often felt like a hypocrite because she had become a little American in identity.

Immigrant students struggle with their identities each day in schools as they try to discover who they were and how they become who they are. This is, as Greene (1995) describes, a process forever shaping and becoming. Schooling often denies favorable space for identity development (Finding 3). There is ample research that supports ways in which schooling denies identity development. For example, in Anzaldúa’s (1987) study, language is about identity, and in Valenzuela’s (1999) study, “language is one of the most powerful resources needed to maintain a sense of self-identity” (p. 169). For Tayo, Sara, and Marcela, a denial of their heritage cultures and languages is a denial of their identities since “culture…gives meaning to our lives” (Gay, 2000, p. 41).

Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me that there was little favorable occasion for their identity development in schooling since they felt that their languages and cultures were disvalued. They were pushed to spaces that were on the borders where they became
marginalized and excluded. Their stories reminded me of how Soto (2004) describes these marginalized spaces as “suffocating…forbidding our perspectives, our creativity…” (p. ix). As I listened to the stories from these students, I began to feel the difficulties they had experienced as they developed their languages, cultures, and identities in mainstream schooling. Their identity development became indefinable and hard to craft under these circumstances (See similar examples in the work of Mutua & Swadener, 2004).

Schooling must provide favorable spaces that promote immigrant students’ identity development. These spaces would not be restrictive, controlling, or oppressive. They would resemble those between spaces He (2003) describes as fluid and shifting. Even though He describes her cross-cultural experience in between as frustrating, tense, and anxious, she was able to flow between the cross currents and eventually to construct her new identity. He perceives frustrations and tensions as a starting point for developing a new identity. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela, however, were unable to drift and flow, as He was able to do due to their linguistic and cultural restraints. They recounted repeatedly how they were confined during the cross-cultural experience. As I listened, I envisioned He’s river and its flow back and forth from one culture to another - always in motion. I was saddened by the vision that these students had not been able to be a part of the flow. These spaces of fluidity and motion are vital for identity development and construction. These are the spaces “between what was and what might be, where one engages with future possibilities” (Kennedy as cited in Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005, p. 130).

The stories of Tayo, Sara and Marcela seemed to weave together as they continued to talk to me. For example, each had a very little sense of belonging or acceptance in mainstream schooling. Tayo and Marcela found spaces of belonging in two
classes only while Sara’s story pointed to none. Tayo and Marcela had a sense of belonging, felt accepted, and were able to construct their own identities in these classes because the teacher listened and attended to their voices. Tayo even called the class a “family.” While I listened to these stories, I wondered if curriculum stakeholders (e.g., teachers, educators, administrators, parents, policy makers, etc) had ever tried to create such a favorable space for immigrant students to invent their own identities.

A successful cross-cultural identity development can be conducive to student learning and achievement (e.g., Nieto, 2002), while discontinuity of identity often leads to disengagement and resistance (e.g., Olneck, 1995). Continuity of identity can also lead to better self-esteem and promote learning (e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Doucet, 1999). Tayo, Sara, and Marcela indicated they experienced a low self-esteem due to discontinuity of language, culture, and identity development. Tayo lowered her head in shame when she told me, “I [do] not matter” (Chapter 4, p. 159). She added, “I feel not so good as other people here” (p. 162). Marcela reiterated these feelings, “[I] feel like I don’t deserve to be here” (p. 181). A low self-esteem was part of the reason two of the participants were on the technical course of study. Marcela stated, “College Prep was just too hard” (p. 181). Yet, from teaching both of these students, I know they could have made it in college prep with encouragement and academic support. However, on the technical course of study, they had limited access to higher education and professional jobs because of those decisions imposed upon them by the mainstream schooling system. Their stories also implied that they had internalized the false assumption that they were deficient intellectually because they were different (e.g., Moll et al., 1992).
Oppressive practices such as language and cultural denial are ways to disempower students (Finding 4) (e.g., Soto, 1995). Through their stories, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me that they felt helpless and powerless to change anything about their experience in schooling. Tayo’s voice expressed her own inability to change conditions so she just refused to try. “I try to be quiet because I know it do no good. It just cause problems” (Chapter 4, p. 164). Sara expressed this same hopelessness when she told me about academic decisions made for her, “There is nothing I can do” (p.170). Marcela lowered her head and said, “There’s no use to me wasting my breath when eventually I am going to lose” (p. 185).

Teachers can empower immigrant students by promoting dialogue with them and validating their voices. This can be accomplished through listening to the stories of immigrants and attending to their voices that have been silenced through oppressive practices (e.g., Nettles, 2005; Villenas, 2005). Each student expressed a lack of control and power over her circumstances because no one listened or cared to listen. No one listened to Sara about her schooling experience in Pakistan. Tayo and Marcela had ambitions to become a lawyer and a doctor respectively, but the counselors did not hear their wishes. They subsequently were geared toward technical courses of study with thwarted ambitions of going to college. Their stories indicated that they had no control or power over their placements on the technical course of study. Furthermore, I sensed that they accepted this pathway willingly because they had been conditioned to remain passive and subordinated.

Immigrant students should also have occasion to come together to find empowerment as a group. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela belonged to a small group where they
found acceptance and the strength to be who they wanted to become. However, these were very small groups consisting of only a few students. Immigrant students should have possibilities for broader contact with one another through forums and clubs in order to share their stories and find collective empowerment as did the students at Sequin High School in Valenzuela’s (1999) study. Acting together and sharing narratives would connect them and strengthen their positions of power (e.g., Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2005). Tayo, Sara, and Marcela belonged to no clubs or school supported groups that encouraged connectedness. Such groups could have strengthened their sense of belonging and collectivity which were so absent in their stories.

Narrative has power for creating the self. If immigrant students could tell their own stories, they would be able to create their own new identities rather than being preconceived or imposed by others. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me that they were stereotyped as stupid, dumb, and ignorant. The females experienced many false perceptions about them. Marcela’s anger really came through when she talked about being portrayed as a yard worker. Sara appeared outraged that someone would call her a terrorist. However, it was Tayo who expressed deep hurt at the image people had of her and her country. Each of their stories evidenced that they had no control over these negative images. If they had been allowed their stories heard, they could have rewritten, redefined, and shaped their own identities. They might be able to be identified as “educated, intelligent, and resourceful” (Villenas, 2005, p. 82).

Having experienced linguistic and cultural exclusion, Tayo, Sara, and Marcela were pushed to the margins. Throughout our talks, Tayo stated, “I am outsider here…Like I am alone” (Chapter 4, p. 164), and Sara expressed the same feelings, “I
never have belonged here (p. 176)…they do not accept me” (p. 178). Marcela desperately
told me, “It’s impossible to get in” (p. 184). These students were on the margins due to
exclusory practices. Marcela’s tale made me realize that it was been impossible for her to
move to the inside from the margins. Her words mirrored a confinement that was much
like a prison where she had limited freedom. All of the students revealed outside
limitations upon them including academics, socialization, and belonging. However,
through the telling of their stories, they were empowered to liberate themselves (see
similar examples in the work of Harris, 2005). In fact, as I listened to them, I heard that
they were challenging their fixed rigid positions on the borders and the linear frames
around their lives.

Empowerment also includes challenging what is often left out in pedagogy. At
present, we teach little about diversity. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela recounted that students
and teachers knew nothing about their countries or heritages. They also expressed that no
one cared to know. Normal mainstream schooling limits time spent on reading and
studying about cultures other than Euro-centric cultures. Pedagogy often denies the very
existence of some cultures (e.g., Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin, 2005). Marcela talked
about how excited she was when the language arts teacher asked for literature
suggestions. She told me that at last she could read some Spanish literature. However,
this never came to pass. Tayo beamed when she talked about the one teacher who
respected her enough to ask about Nigeria and her heritage. Sara had a puzzled look on
her face when she asked me, “Why does education here not study about us” (p. 177)?
Such gaps in curriculum created shame for these immigrant students whose heritages
were viewed as unworthy of study. Villenas (2005) states that these omissions of life and existence can cause anxiety and result in further exclusion.

Omissions such as these have another negative effect upon immigrant students. When history is omitted, there is also the omission of successful images that can provide models for immigrant students. If successful figures from other cultures are excluded from study, then immigrant students can only see the successful figures from the dominant culture. Most of the students here know very little about African, Pakistani, or Mexican cultures. Consequently, stereotyping is the norm. For example, the false image of Sara connected her to a terrorist. Experiences such as these lead to inferiority and unworthiness. Denial of existence of certain cultures is also a form of oppression. Schooling can empower immigrant students through exploration and validation of diverse cultures. We must modify the curriculum to include the excluded cultures and to empower immigrant students. Such initiatives “can make a difference in student learning and achievement” (Nieto, 2002, p. 59).

Language, culture, and identity development are complex, intertwined, and evolving (e.g., He, Phillion, Chan, & Xu, in press) (Finding 5). Historically, the education of immigrant students has failed to recognize that language, culture, and identity cannot be treated as separate entities. For example, Tayo’s culture demanded great respect for her heritage and ancestors, but she told me that students and teachers made fun of her name, her country, and her heritage. As her story unfolded, I saw that part of her identity confusion and anxiety stemmed from the lack of respect. Her identity was deeply embedded in her culture. When her culture was negated, her whole being became negated. Sara’s story revealed that in her culture, being smart was important, and
an education was expected. Sara stated several times that she did not want to appear
dumb or stupid, and this, in turn, often affected her willingness to speak in class. As a
result, she chose to remain silent. Her self-induced silence increased the chance that she
would be ignored in class as if she did not exist. Her words reinforced that her identity
was somewhat damaged due to exclusion, “The counselor just kept interrupting me like I
was not there…like I have no sense” (Chapter 4, p. 177). Marcela’s story was similar.
She admitted that she had become American in some ways such as liking the music and
the clothes. She also wanted to have a boyfriend. However, this adversely affected her
identity image of who she was. She told me she felt like a hypocrite at times because she
had betrayed her culture. Additionally, her poor self-esteem, which was part of identity,
silenced her on many occasions. She told me that she did not make the dance team
because she was a Mexican (with all of its undeserving negative connotations), yet she
refused to challenge the discrimination she thought she had experienced.

These stories have demonstrated how language, culture, and identity are
intertwined and developed by promoting each other. If we focus solely on the one
without the others, then we fail to recognize this interplay which impacts immigrant
students’ school success. “Examining this interaction of factors contributing to the school
success of immigrant students is of paramount importance, given the fact that two-thirds
of students leave without a diploma” (He, Phillion, Chan, & Xu, in press, pp. 12-13).

Tayo, Sara, and Marcela talked to me openly about many issues of concern. They
all wanted to tell me what was lacking here and how education could be better. Although
they did not use the words “culturally responsive education,” I know this is what they
meant. There is a pressing need for developing a culturally responsive curriculum which
meets the needs of diverse curriculum stake holders to reach a high level of achievement, not only for immigrant and minority students, but for all (Finding 6).

A culturally responsive pedagogy has many different facets. First, teachers need to develop a curriculum and pedagogy to meet the needs of immigrant students. Tayo and Marcela were in ESL classes for two years while Sara was in the program for one semester. The fact that each of them failed language arts and other core subjects may be indicative that they needed more instruction in English language learning in order to be successful in core classes. We must realize that English language learning takes more time than two years to be successful in core classes (e.g., Nieto, 2000; Soto, 1997; Souza, 2000). In addition, we must discontinue the speedy immersion policy that pushes immigrant students into core classes before they are ready (Bartolome, 2002; Cummins, 1996).

Secondly, all teachers must become active stakeholders in the success of immigrant students. “Collaborative structures, attitudes, and relationships” are needed for academic and social success (Makkonen, 2004, p. 83). I recently asked the ESL teacher if any teacher had ever come to her about modifications for Tayo, Sara, or Marcela. She answered, “No.” It is imperative that teachers talk with the ESL teacher or ESL counselor in order to make accommodations for these students. If teachers follow the same “sink or swim” (Demas & Saavedra, 2004, p. 221) policy, then failure will continue (Cummins, 1989; Darling-Hammond & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Igoa, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 1996; Valdes, 2001).

Tayo, Sara, and Marcela told me the same story about failing classes. They recounted that in the classes they had failed, the teachers never asked about whether they
comprehended the content the teachers covered in class. Those teachers never modified their instruction either. Eventually Tayo, Sara, and Marcela felt unwilling to ask for help. Sara declared that teachers only explained things once, and students found themselves working alone most of the time. Marcela told me a similar story that teachers expected the students to know how to do things, especially on their own. Aside from making curriculum modifications for the individual student, teachers need training in pedagogical practices for teaching immigrant students. Teachers must understand the cross-cultural process and the stages of language, culture and identity development in order to teach culturally diverse students.

Each student stressed that she usually worked alone so there was little collaborative work in the classrooms. Collaborative practice can lead to academic improvement. It also helps develop students’ empathy and sympathy toward different others (e.g., Valentine, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Collaborative groups can also create bonds among students and promote a sense of belonging which helps build relations in the classroom. These relations can in turn lead to social capital and empowerment. I became aware during the talks that Tayo, Sara, and Marcela lacked social capital. Their stories indicated that they wanted to know how to navigate the system and be successful, but because of many practices of exclusion, they were unable to do so.

A culturally responsive pedagogy builds upon the immigrant’s experience that has been historically ignored in education (e.g., Hernandez, 2004; Olneck, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Each of the students had much responsibility at home or at work. Marcela and Tayo kept the home in order, took care of the siblings, cooked,
and planned meals. Sara worked for her father at his food/gas store. They came to school with these valuable resources. However, current education tends to disvalue and subtract these resources (e.g., Valenzuela, 1999). Education must connect immigrant students’ experience in the past with that at the present and in the future. This continuity of experience opens possibilities for a deeper and richer education (Conle, 2005). The experience immigrant students hold could become invaluable resources for mainstream schooling. We cannot continue to subtract these resources (e.g., Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, culture, language, and identity are intersecting forces that greatly impact on immigrant students’ education and life qualities. If we exclude their heritage languages and cultures, their identities are denied. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela brought a wealth of lived experience to education. I felt sad that few teachers in our mainstream schooling had tapped into these experiences.

Care is also part of a culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. It is vital for immigrant students’ school success. Tayo, Sara, and Marcela exclaimed that there was very little care toward them from teachers, students, and administrators. Tayo told me, “They don’t care what my name is” (Chapter 4, p. 159). Later she added, “They don’t care about people like me” (p. 161). Sara talked about what teachers needed to do to help those like her. She stated, “Give more of your attention…give a little special time” (p. 177). Marcela was adamant about the lack of care, “Teachers and students just don’t want us around” (p. 184). Tayo, Sara, and Marcela shared the pain and hurt they experienced as they felt that no one cared who they were. They were eager and willing to tell me that the school needed to become more accepting and caring.
A culturally responsive pedagogy of care would stress the continuity of language, culture, and identity. It is evident from their interviews that each participant experienced a discontinuity of language, culture, and identity development. The interviews also indicated that each had withdrawn from social activity and in some cases academic engagement. Perhaps this was due in part to the fact that discontinuity of language, culture, and identity lead to disengagement and resistance (e.g., Olneck, 1995). Tayo stated, “I just [do] not do things. It’s easier that way” (Chapter 4, p. 165). Sara wrote that she quit trying to extend herself to others, and Marcela indicated that she used to want to be on the inside, but that she did not try anymore. We must allow continuity of language, culture, and identity development so that immigrant students will not withdraw from schooling but become a vital part of it (e.g., Sleeter and Grant, 1999).

A culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes and promotes the value of cultural diversity. Most importantly, it prohibits oppression, prejudice, and bias against diverse students. For instance, Tayo appeared appalled that both teachers and students had made fun of her name and her heritage. Sara was amazed that a teacher had refused to do anything to students who called her names. Marcela became enraged that a teacher, students, and some of the administrators had accused her unjustly of wrongdoing. The stories indicated that they faced bias, ridicule, and in some cases punitive action simply because they were different. Sara actually called her experience racist because she was the target of hate, hostility, and intolerance (e.g., Soto, 1997). At present, there has little been done in education to combat acts of prejudice and bias against students of diversity. In fact, several teachers have told me that there is no such thing as racism at this school.
This kind of denial must be confronted in order to take action to prevent intolerance and antagonism against those who are linguistically and culturally diverse.

A culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes that multiple factors intersect and affect each other in relation to immigrant students’ school success (McCarthy, 1993). We cannot assume that all immigrant students have the same experience (Valentine, 1997). This practice ignores the individual needs of immigrant students. For example, Tayo was frequently absent from school due to the care of her younger siblings. She also was unable to stay after school for make up work. These factors influenced her academic performance in a negative way. Marcela was not able to go to night school to make up classes because night school was expensive and not on our campus. Aside from these constraints, she had many duties at home. We used to have a program that allowed students to retake classes before and after school on the campus. It was far less expensive than night school, and many of our students took advantage of the program. A similar program should be considered in order to make accommodations for students who have difficulty trying to make up classes.

We must also recognize relationships between student and teacher. If the teacher has no training for teaching immigrant students who are going through the cross-cultural process, there is most likely little understanding or compassion toward the student. The cross-cultural process is difficult and ever changing (e.g., He, 2003). Immigrant students have often left everything behind including family, home, and possessions. Sara almost cried when she remembered her experience, “Then I have to forget everything. I left everything behind. I am so sad at times. I left my friends and my culture” (Chapter 4, p. 176). He (2003) writes that such displacement of “broken vases, photos, and paintings”
can bring about emotional stress and pain. There can be psychological trauma that goes with this displacement. Added to this trauma, these students are crossing cultures, languages, and trying to develop new identities. Compassionate and caring teachers are a necessity if students like Tayo, Sara, and Marcela are to be successful in the cross-cultural process.

As this nation becomes increasingly multicultural and multilingual, education must be transformed to meet the needs of immigrant students. This is, perhaps, the greatest challenge the curriculum stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, parents, community workers, administrators, policy makers, etc.) face in education today.

Afterthought

Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) was utilized in this study for me to listen to and validate the voices of three immigrant students. Through a cross-cultural narrative inquiry (He, 2003), I explored the stories of Tayo, Sara, and Marcela in order to capture their experience of language, culture, and identity development. Narrative inquiry with its focus on experience is vital for developing an understanding of language, culture, and identity development of immigrant students and their experience in mainstream schooling. The “inquiry was embedded in life and life embedded in constant change” (Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005, p. 1).

I learned through this inquiry that I was not a passive observer. Like Carger (1995), I was not detached from the lives of Tayo, Sara, and Marcela. I immersed myself into their lives and into their stories. They shared with me their experience of pain, anxiety, exclusion, and prejudicial abuse in mainstream schooling. The more I listened to their stories, the more I could hear, and the more I became passionate about them. As I
gradually became part of their life and they became part of my life, I began to develop a sense of agency to act on behalf of these students and all other students of diversity.

I believe my study has the potential to follow the path traveled by Carger (1996), He (2003), Soto (1995), and Valenzuela (1999) whose stories help foster “[crossing] borders…the boundaries of ignorance, the borders of literacy, the frontiers of full participation” (Ayers in Carger, 1996, p. x). I hereby call for the sense of agency from all the curriculum stakeholders. As you, the readers, listen to and hear the stories of pain and oppression from Tayo, Sara, and Marcela and many others, you may awaken, or further develop your understanding of their experience of language, culture, and identity development. You may actively participate in the battle against oppressive policies and actions toward immigrant students and build a community where all the curriculum stakeholders work together and share responsibilities in developing a culturally responsive curriculum that validates and respects the cultural and linguistic knowledge of immigrant students, promotes equity and social justice in mainstream schooling, and cultivates the best potential in immigrant and minority students and all students.
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Hello,

I am Joanna S. Cavan, a graduate student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a study on immigrant girls and their school experience at the high school level.

You are being asked to help me learn about the issues immigrant students face each day in the classroom. If you agree to help, you will be asked to participate in a few interviews where I will ask you some questions about your experiences and feelings in American schools. The interviews will take about an hour and will be done in my classroom after school hours or during the summer in the same place. The interviews will last around one hour. You will need to provide your own way to school and back home.

You do not have to help me with this project. You can stop whenever you want to. You can say no to any of the questions. You can refuse to help me even if your parents say yes.

None of the teachers or other people at our school will see the answers to the questions that I ask you. Only you and your parents may review your answers. All the responses that you give me will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a room at Georgia Southern University. Only I and my teacher will see your answers. I am not going to put your name on the answers you give me, so no one will know which your answers are. After the study, all tapes and notes will be destroyed.

There is little risk in the study for you. You may feel some emotions that may be hard for you such as sadness or hurt. However, you will help yourself and others like you to have a better and more equal education.

If you or your parent/guardian have any questions about this form or the study, please call me at 770-631-9400 or my advisor, Dr. He at 912-871-1546.

If you understand the information above and want to help, please sign on the line below.

Yes, I want to help in the project: _________________________

Participant’s Name

Date: ____________

Investigator’s Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________
PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am Joanna S. Cavan, a graduate student at Georgia Southern University. I am conducting a study on immigrant girls and their school experience at the high school level.

Your child is being asked to help me learn about the issues immigrant students face each day in the classroom. If you agree for your child to help, she will be asked to participate in a two to four interviews where I will ask her some questions about her experiences and feelings in American schools. The interviews will take about an hour and will be done in my classroom after school hours or during the summer in the same place. The interviews will last around one hour. You will need to provide her transportation to and from school. Please consider this before giving your child permission to take part in the study.

Your child does not have to help me with this project. She can stop whenever she wants to. She can say no to any of the questions. She can refuse to help me even if you say yes.

You can be assured that all subject matter is private. None of the teachers or other people at our school will see the answers to the questions that I ask your child. Only you and your child may review her answers. All the responses that your child gives me as well as notes I take will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a room at Georgia Southern University. Only I and my advisor, Dr. He, will see your child’s answers. I am not going to put your child’s name on the answers she gives me. I will use numbers instead of names. After the study, all tapes and notes will be destroyed.

There is little risk in the study for your child. She may feel some emotions that may be hard for her such as sadness or hurt. However, your child will help herself and others like her to have a better and more equal education. Other benefits from participation in the study are:

a. Your child may better understand her past and have a clearer picture of who she is.
b. Your child will have a chance to speak out about issues she faces in school.
c. Your child may feel more connection to her culture after the study.

You and your child have the right to ask questions about the study. Please contact me at 770-631-9400 or my advisor, Dr. He, at 912-871-1546 if you have any concerns or questions. For questions concerning your rights as a participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-486-7758.

You will be given a copy of this consent to keep for your records.

Principal Investigator: Joanna Cavan. Phone Number 770-631-9400. Email: Joannacavan@bellsouth.net

Other Investigators: None

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ming fang He. Phone number 912-871-1546. Email: mfhe@georgiasouthern.edu

Parent/Guardian Signature:
_________________________________________________

Date: ____________________

Investigator’s Signature:
_________________________________________________

Date: ____________________
Interview Prompts

Session One

1. Describe how you came to live in Georgia.

2. Describe your school experience in this country.

3. Tell me what your dreams are.

4. Tell me how you feel about language learning or culture issues you have experienced in this country.
Interview Prompts

Session Two

1. What language does your family speak at home? Do ever speak English at home?

2. I want to know as much as you can tell me starting with your early high school experience here, what was it like?

3. Were you ever in ESL classes? Describe the experience please.

4. Were you ever ridiculed here and for what reason? Please give examples.

5. If so, how did this make you feel?

6. How did the teacher handle these situations of ridicule? Did you ever talk to the teacher about any ridicule toward you? Explain why or why not?

7. Have you been made fun of here? If so, what were the reasons?

8. Tell me about your favorite class here. Why was this your favorite?

9. Tell me about your classes in general. Do you participate in class? Why or why not?

10. In the 9th grade, were you advised about what course of study to follow?

11. What did you want to be professionally? What do wish to do now? Why?

12. Tell me, have you ever failed courses at this school? Which ones? Why do you think you failed?

13. Have you taken the Georgia High School Testes? Did you pass? If not why not?

14. Have you had difficulty in core classes? Please explain if so.

15. Have you had English language difficulty in core classes? If so, did you ever ask for help? Did your teacher provide modifications for you? If so what were they?
16. Have you ever been in Honor’s Classes here? Or AP classes? Or Gifted Program? Were you ever tested for gifted?
Interview Prompts

Session 3

1. Have you ever been told not to speak your heritage language? Describe the experience.

2. If so, how did this make you feel?

3. Do you feel comfortable here at school? Why or why not?

4. Have you ever participated in sports and clubs? Why or why not? Explain if you have ever tried out for any activities.

5. Talk to me a little bit about how some cultural issues have affected you. At home, what would you say your culture is like? At school do you practice your culture? Explain when or why not?

6. Do you ever feel caught between the two cultures? Explain your response.

7. Do you ever feel pressure to be more American? Or at home to be more of your heritage culture? Please explain. Tell me about any times when you may have struggled with cultural issues.

8. Do you think that people at Creekside, that includes teachers and administrators, care for students? Explain why or why not.

9. Tell me about your friends. Who are they and what brings you together?

10. Explain if you have experienced acceptance here.

11. Who are you? Can you think of times when you struggle with who you are? Explain.

12. How have you been able to survive in the mainstream school setting?

13. What could the school do to help immigrant students in the cross-cultural process?