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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

English Learner Policymaking in New and Established Immigrant
Destinations: Technical, Normative, and Political Forces within State Education Agencies

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

in

Education

by

Leslie Gautsch

Committee in charge:

     Professor Megan Hopkins, Chair
     Professor Amy Binder
     Professor Amanda Datnow
     Professor Anita Raj

2023

The Dissertation of Leslie Gautsch is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for

publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation, along with all my endeavors in this life, is dedicated to my beloved daughter,

Phoebe. You will forever be my greatest accomplishment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Agency: State Education Agency

CSSO: Chief State School Officer

DoE: Department of Education

EL: English learner

ESSA: The Every Student Succeeds Act

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

SBE: State Board of Education

SEA: State Education Agency

LIST OF TABLES

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

English Learner Policymaking in New and Established Immigrant
Destinations: Technical, Normative, and Political Forces within State Education Agencies

by

Leslie Gautsch

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California San Diego, 2023

Professor Megan Hopkins, Chair

This dissertation investigated state-level English Learner (EL) policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations in the United States. The study aimed to understand the technical, normative, and political forces that shaped state EL policymaking and how these forces were negotiated within state education agencies across different state contexts. The research employed a multiple case study design and drew on interviews with 50 state policy actors, state policy documents, and archival records.

The findings identified key state policy actors and educational priorities in new and established immigrant destinations, and factors that enabled or constrained the prioritization of

ELs within state policymaking. In new immigrant destination states, factors that enabled or constrained EL prioritization included limited EL-specific staff at the State Education Agency, a focus on "all students," funding allocation, inclusion and influence in SEA decision-making, awareness of SEA staff about EL content, and deficit attitudes towards ELs. In established immigrant destinations, enabling factors included increased staffing and supportive SEA leadership, while constraining factors encompassed SEA awareness and technical knowledge about ELs, deficit attitudes, funding constraints, and sociopolitical context.

The study also examined power dynamics among state policy actors and the impact of partisan politics on EL policymaking. A central aspect of the discussion involved understanding the significant sway that key stakeholders, such as state governors and EL advocacy organizations, held over states' educational agendas. As the research delved into different political environments, it uncovered unique challenges: in progressive contexts, the study revealed misconceptions about ELs and the repercussions of neoliberal politics, whereas conservative settings exposed negative attitudes towards ELs and immigrants, along with concerns surrounding bilingual education. The research also addressed immigration politics and the adverse effects on state EL policymaking.

The study emphasized the importance of context in examining the influence of technical, normative, and political factors on state EL policymaking, highlighting the role of historical and contemporary policy context and demographic changes in both new and established immigrant destinations.

In summary, this dissertation offered valuable insights for stakeholders working to promote equitable education for English Learners. By elucidating the complexities of state EL policymaking in different immigrant destinations, the study identified key areas for stakeholders

to address. These areas include increasing personnel and technical knowledge in SEAs, tackling biases and prejudices in policymaking, acknowledging power dynamics and political influences, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, and recognizing past policies' implications. By investing in capacity building, challenging biases, advocating for education leaders, nurturing partnerships, and learning from past experiences, stakeholders could collaboratively create a more equitable educational policy landscape for ELs.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

English Learners (ELs) are the fastest-growing student population in K-12 public schools, with projections indicating that they will account for 25% of the total K-12 student population by 2025 (Belcher & Hairston, 2020). Although two-thirds of all ELs reside in five established immigrant destination states (California, Illinois, New York, Florida, and Texas), new destination states such as Mississippi, Alabama, North Carolina, and Arkansas are witnessing rapid EL growth (Spees et al., 2016; Sugarman, 2016). With the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* in 2015, much of the responsibility for the oversight and governance of EL education shifted from the federal to the state level (Callahan et al., 2020). While there is evident importance of the role of the state and, more specifically, state education agencies (Hamann & Lane, 2004) in the education of ELs, little is known about how state context mediates the EL policymaking process. Furthermore, research suggests that new and established EL state contexts vary tremendously with respect to political and normative factors (e.g., immigration policy, characterizations of ELs) (Callahan et al., 2020; Dondero & Muller, 2012; Marrow, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Turner, 2020), as well as the educational infrastructures in place to support EL students and families (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Gandara et al., 2003; Hopkins et al., 2015; Lopez & Santibanez, 2017; Massey, 2008).

This dissertation study employed a qualitative multiple case study approach to examine the technical, normative, and political factors of state-level EL policymaking within the mediating institutions of state education agencies (SEA) in both new and established immigration states. In this introductory chapter, I provide a brief overview of the literature

relevant to this dissertation, the guiding conceptual framework, the research questions, and the significance of this dissertation study.

Background

This dissertation study is informed by two areas of literature: (a) EL policymaking and (b) EL education in new and established immigrant destinations.

EL Policymaking

While the literature provides critical insights into other stages of the EL policy process including EL policy implementation (Hopkins, 2016; Lowenhaupt et al., 2020; Mavrogordato & White, 2020, 2017; Parrish et al., 2006; Reyes & Thurston, 2019), interpretation (Harklau & Yang, 2020; Heineke, 2015; Newcomer & Collier, 2015), and evaluation (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Cimpian et al., 2017; Hopkins et al., 2013; Lavadenz et al., 2019; Robinson, 2011), significantly less research has examined the roots of EL policies and the development of such policies. However, studying the EL policymaking process is essential for understanding the ways in which EL policy can (re)produce (in)equity (Diem et al., 2019; Horsford et al., 2019).

Although the literature exploring EL policymaking is scarce, the extant scholarship illuminates some key insights into contextual factors that inform EL policymaking. These studies revealed the ways in which EL policymaking is informed and shaped by normative factors, including the beliefs and attitudes of policymakers and internal and external political pressures. Several studies illuminated how policymakers' deficit beliefs about ELs and their "deservingness" of a public education informs policymaking decisions related to EL instructional programs (Heineke & Davin, 2020; Sampson, 2019; Trujillo, 2012; Umansky et al., 2020) and school discipline policies (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016). These studies extend the concept that policymakers' beliefs and attitudes shape how and why policies are formulated

within school districts. It is thus important to further examine the normative dimension of policymakers within different educational contexts, such as state departments of education, and the ways in which those normative factors are similar or different across state contexts.

Briefly mentioned in the literature were the political pressures from federal, state, and local governments. For example, several studies demonstrated how policymakers' decisions were influenced by the historical presence of anti-immigrant and mono-lingual politics (Heineke & Davin, 2020; Lawton, 2012). Additionally, the research highlighted how policies related to local control practices acted as a barrier for creating new or specific types of policies for ELs (Estrada & Wang, 2018; Lee & Hawkins, 2015; Lowenhaupt, 2015). These studies revealed the nuanced nature of policymaking across and within political (conservative or liberal) and geographic contexts (Hopkins, 2022). Given the limited research exploring the political forces of EL policymaking, more research is needed in exploring this factor and how it informs EL policymaking.

EL Education in New and Established Destinations

Two-thirds of all ELs live in established immigrant destinations (Sugarman, 2016). As such, the majority of research related to the education of ELs has been conducted in California, Illinois, Florida, New York, and Texas. However, as many states have undergone rapid demographic changes, there is a burgeoning focus on the education of ELs in new destinations. These studies' findings illuminated both similarities and differences among three thematic areas pertinent to EL education in these two contexts: 1) educational infrastructure, 2) attitudes and beliefs of the receiving community, and 3) political context.

The rapid changes in student populations in new immigrant destinations often result in a new destination not have the adequate educational infrastructure to support English Learner

education compared to established destinations (Bigelow, 2010; Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Lowenhaupt & Reeves, 2015; Hopkins et al., 2015, Lowenhaupt, 2014; Valenzuela 1999; Wortham & Contreras, 2002). While the literature highlights that established destinations have not always been rigorous in EL teachers' preparation and development, established destinations presently have more infrastructural capacity pertinent to EL education, including instructional programs and linguistic and cultural supports.

An additional difference highlighted in the literature between new and established destinations is the beliefs and attitudes of the receiving community. Much research identified that the context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005) for EL and immigrant students in new destinations differs from ELs and immigrants in destinations with more racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. The research illuminated the ways in which ELs and their families in new destinations experience racism and xenophobia both within and outside of school (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Lee & Hawkins, 2015; Turner, 2015).

Related to the normative beliefs and attitudes of the broader educational context was the presence of inclusive or restrictive politics for EL, immigrant students, and families. Although established immigrant destinations are not without their share of anti-immigrant history and politics (Callahan et al., 2020; Colbern & Ramakrishnan, 2018; Gandara & Contreras, 2009), new immigrant destination states see an abundance of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies that adversely impact ELs and immigrant students' education and opportunities (Arrocha, 2012; Davidson & Burson 2016; Gandara & Ee, 2018; Harman & Varga-Dobai, 2012).

While the findings revealed similarities and differences in these two EL education contexts, there remains a dearth of research that has purposefully compared these two educational contexts. Furthermore, no studies have comparatively investigated EL policymaking

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within these two distinct contexts. As such, scholarship exploring EL policymaking across these two contexts is necessary to build on this growing body of research.

Conceptual Framework

  To examine the phenomenon of state-level EL policymaking within established and new immigrant destinations, I draw on two areas of scholarship: theoretical models of policymaking and the Zone of Mediation framework. I will first begin by describing the typologies of policymaking. Next, I turn to describe the Zone of Mediation framework. I conclude this section on how I will utilize these concepts within this dissertation.

Policymaking

  The policymaking process is one phase within the larger policy cycle. This phase includes the problem identification or agenda-setting stage and the policy formulation stage (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). As shown in Table 1, there are several theoretical models of policymaking. Each theoretical model operationalizes the policymaking process in similar and diverging ways. These theoretical policymaking models are not hierarchical in the sense that one model is better or more correct than the other. Instead, these models serve as a descriptive tool for understanding how problems are defined, agendas are designed, and the ways policies are formulated. Below, I will describe the policymaking models and critical insights into how these frameworks conceptualize the agenda-setting and policy formulation process.

Table 1

Policymaking Typologies

Policymaking Model	Policy Actors	Defining the problem	Designing a Solution
Institutionalism	Institutional norms and procedures	Is this a problem for the institution?	Policymakers are rational actors. Policy is created through formal institutional channels.
Rationalism	Economic and policymakers	There is a right solution: Policymakers use a cost versus benefit approach.	Policymakers are rational actors. They assign "value" to problems and weigh the pros and cons of creating solutions.
Incrementalism	Policymakers	There is no right solution, but policymakers still use a cost-benefit approach.	Policymakers are rational actors and assign value to problems but do not claim it is the right solution. Policy is created through an iterative process.
Pluralism	Interest groups	Problem is defined by the interest groups	Policy is designed collectively with the input of multiple parties. Policy is designed where not all parties "win."
Elitism	Economic, social, or political elite persons or organizations	Problem is defined by the elite groups	Policy is designed and formulated by elite actors using policymakers for their benefit.
Constructivism	Policy entrepreneurs, interest groups, policy networks	Problem is defined by multiple groups of people with ideological, political, and power goals.	Policy is designed through strategy and advocacy of policy networks or entrepreneurs to promote ideological goals. Process is not linear or rational.

Agenda Setting. The agenda-setting process is concerned with the recognition, or lack of recognition, of an issue or problem (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Cobb and Elder (1997) describe the importance of this stage in that "pre-political, or at least pre-decisional processes often play the most critical role in determining what issues and alternatives are to be considered by the polity and the probable choices that will be made" (p. 12). Also pertinent to this phase are the policy actors involved in setting the agenda (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

An institutionalist agenda-setting model is dictated by those policy actors within the institution. The discussion of a problem is only addressed by going through formal institutional procedures. After going through formal and linear procedures, an issue is deemed a problem when a) pertinent to the institution or b) important to the institution. A rationalist agenda-setting model would involve formal, often elected and hierarchical in nature, policymakers. These policy actors would observe the "value" of an issue or problem by weighing the cost and benefits of addressing the said problem. This process is often influenced by economics. A rationalist agenda would seek to find the "right" answer to the problem, and the policymaker decides the right answer. Conversely, an incrementalist approach to agenda-setting would acknowledge that there is no right answer to the problem being addressed; therefore, applying a value is not worthwhile but necessary to make a decision (Lindblom, 1979). However, the policy actors involved in an incrementalist agenda setting process are similar to a rationalist model. These actors, often elected or serve in positions of hierarchy.

The pluralist, elitist, and constructivist agenda setting models diverge from the other models as they involve "outside" actors in the development of the agenda. Multiple groups of influencers would inform a pluralist agenda-setting process (Boyd 1979; Dahl, 1961). These groups may be interest groups (social, economic, racial, ethnic), political parties, or professional

associations. These groups often work with official policymakers to set the agenda. An elitist model would only include social, political, or economic elite persons or groups in the agenda setting process. These elite persons would clearly outline the problem and express their intended expectation to official policymakers on how the problem should be addressed. Finally, constructivist agenda setting theories argue that policy entrepreneurs, who have their own political and ideological agendas inform the agenda setting process. Similar to elitist and pluralist theories, the policy entrepreneurs work with policymakers or are official policymakers themselves (Ball, 1998; Horsford et al., 2019; Kingdon, 1984).

        Policy Formulation. Policy theorists argued that the agenda-setting phase can serve as a road map to understand how policies may later be formulated (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). After agendas have been set and problems have been prioritized or not, policies are created. Policy formulation from a rationalist, institutional, and pluralist approach happens through linear, often hierarchical, processes. The process for creating a policy may be slower than in other policymaking models because of infrastructural constraints (institutionalist) or competing interests of multiple interest groups (pluralism) (Dahl, 1961; Kirst, 1984).

        Similar to an institutionalist or pluralist model, an incrementalist or constructivist policy formation model would also be a non-linear process where official policy actors constantly revise policy solutions. This process is often slow and non-linear and described in the literature as "muddling through" (Lindblom, 1979). However, these models differ from the other models as policymakers constantly revise the solution to the problem often influenced by strategic advocacy and politics. Further, incrementalist, unlike rationalist or institutionalist, policymakers do not definitively declare a policy solution as the correct or best way to address the defined problem (Lindblom, 1979). Finally, elite models of policy formulation are often designed and

created with or by the elite parties themselves. This model does not include non-elites or infrastructural constraints in the policy design process; therefore, this process can happen quickly. As with all the policy cycle phases, the phases of policymaking are not self-contained stages (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Instead, policymakers often move back and forth through these two phases simultaneously as prioritization (new problems), and other constraints emerge.

The theoretical models of policymaking outlined above bring a unique perspective to investigating EL policymaking. While the EL policymaking scholarship (explained in more depth in Chapter Two) identified contextual factors that informed the policymaking process, no studies attended to policymaking's theoretical underpinnings. As such, this study will attend specifically to the key concepts of agenda-setting and policy formulation and how these processes compare across the cases. Further, key theoretical concepts (e.g., influencers, problem identification, solutions, and decision making) of the policymaking models will guide the development of interview questions found in the state policymaker interview protocol (see Appendix A). Exploring the specific phases of the EL policy process including agenda setting and policy formulation will afford critical insights into what "counts" as problems for states and how they are defined (Anyon, 2005; Bacchi, 1999), and further how those in positions of power address problems through policy solutions (Horsford et al., 2019).

Zone of Mediation Framework

I will operationalize the phenomenon of state-level EL policymaking through the Zone of Mediation framework, which illuminates the technical, normative, and political dimensions as drivers of policymaking. In this section, I will discuss the fundamental concepts of this framework. I will conclude this section with how I will use the Zone of Mediation framework to explore state-level EL policymaking.

The Zone of Tolerance

In 1972, McGivney and Moynihan introduced the idea of a "zone" within education politics. The scholars explained how schools are zones that are situated within local cultural boundaries. They further argued that a school and a community's social and cultural boundaries come together in what they coin a "zone of tolerance." However, the scholars argued that the zone of tolerance is threatened when a school's policies are in disagreement with the community. The scholars argued that if a policy is a practice that falls outside of the local community's beliefs and values, then there is a high likelihood that the policy lies outside of the zone of tolerance and will be met with resistance and opposition. Building on this concept, Boyd (1976) echoed the idea that schools are nested within other contexts, but posited that the "zone of tolerance" is not a single set of values and social boundaries, but rather is issue or policy specific, meaning that there are unique zones of tolerance for each issue and policy.

The Zone and Sites of Normative and Political Mediation

In 1992 Lamphere expanded the zone of tolerance to include the concept of "mediating institutions." Institutions are "formal organizations that are hierarchically organized and institutionalized"(pg.4). Lamphere argued that mediating institutions mediate political, social, and economic issues between settings. However, these concepts up until this point maintain that schools were influenced by their immediate environment. Welner and colleagues expanded these concepts once again and introduced the "zone of mediation" framework. They state

> [Schools are] situated within particular local enactments of larger cultural norms, rules, incentives, power relations, and values. These forces promote either stability or change, and they accordingly set the parameters of beliefs, behavior, and policy in schools. The intersection of forces around a particular issue shapes the zone of mediation for that issue. Such forces may include such far-reaching items as legislation, judicial decisions, foundation support, demographics, housing, and nutritional needs, economic and market forces, social/state political climates, educational influence groups (such as teacher

unions), district history, individual players within districts, their political ambitions, and the media. (Welner, 2001, p. 95)

The zone of mediation framework includes the intersection of macro and micro political, social and cultural forces between mediating institutions. Further, scholars argue that we can come to understand the intersecting forces that constitute a zone through technical, normative, and political dimensions that lay within and outside of mediating institutions (Oakes et al., 1993, 2005).

The *technical* dimension includes the structures (e.g. arrangement and organization of people, space, and materials), strategies (e.g. governance), and knowledge (e.g., information pertinent to the subject for example EL educational models or EL teacher licensure requirements) that are pertinent to the policy or reform (Oakes, 1992; Oakes et al., 1993). The *normative* dimension includes conscious and unconscious beliefs, values, and attitudes pertinent to the educational issue (Oakes, 1992). Finally, the *political* dimension includes concepts of power (Oakes et al., 1993), " the authoritative allocation of value" (Easton 1953), and "what gets what, when, and how" (Lasswell, 1936).

The Zone of Mediation framework has been largely applied to understanding the external technical, normative, and political forces within mediating institutions of schools and districts (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2015; Holme et al., 2014; Oakes et al., 2005; Welner, 2001). However, I believe that this framework can extend to institutions beyond school and school districts to include state-level education institutions. Therefore, I will use the zone of mediation framework to investigate the technical, normative, and political forces of EL policymaking within the mediating institutions of state education departments. The zone is the state and the site, or "mediating institution", is the state education agency. I hypothesize that the SEA's EL policymaking processes are shaped by the technical, normative, and political forces of the local,

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state, and national dimensions. When these forces interact, they create the zone of mediation, illuminating the ways in which technical, normative, and political dimensions inform state EL policymaking which can then be utilized to investigate how external forces either enable or deter equitably state policymaking for English Learners

Research Questions

The following overarching research questions and subquestions guided this dissertation.

1. How do technical, normative, and political factors inform state EL policymaking?

   a. Technical: How does the SEA organizational structure, policy actors, and education agendas or priorities of the SEA inform EL policymaking?

   b. Normative: How do beliefs, attitudes, and values of state policy actors related to ELs and EL education inform state EL policymaking?

   c. Political: How does power and politics inform EL policymaking?

2. How do these factors enable or constrain state-level attention towards equity and access for ELs in state policymaking?

To answer these questions, I conducted a multi-site case study. These research questions were examined within and across seven departments of education "sites" in new and established immigrant destination states. I drew on data gathered from in-depth interviews with 50 state policy actors, state archival records, and EL policy documents. Data were analyzed using a three-step approach including, within-site analysis, cross-site analysis, and cross-case analysis.

Significance

The policymaking process is a significant yet under-researched part of the larger EL policy cycle. With the majority of scholarship focused on EL policy implementation, interpretation, or evaluation, the research related to the processes and contextual factors by

which EL policies are created is scarce. Further, the majority of EL policymaking scholarship examines district-level policymaking and the contextual forces informing EL policymaking within school districts. Given the importance of the state in the governance and oversight of ELs education after the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act,* research is needed to understand the EL policymaking process at the state level and across the many state contexts ELs reside. Recognizing this gap in the literature, this dissertation investigated the EL policymaking process within state education agencies in new and established EL contexts. The findings of this dissertation shed light on the context-specific ways in which equity-minded policymaking for ELs is enabled or constrained at the state level and thus provides important insights for theory, policy, and practice in the area of EL education and politics.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters and an appendix section. Chapter One introduces the research study, encompassing the research domain, conceptual framework, research questions, and the significance of this dissertation. Chapter Two reviews pertinent literature related to EL policymaking and EL education in both new and established immigrant destinations. Chapter Three details the methodology, including the rationale for case study design, case selection, data collection methods, and the analytical approach. Chapter Four presents state profiles for the seven 'sites' that constitute the two cases. Chapter Five offers a within-case analysis of how ELs are prioritized in policymaking efforts in new and established destinations. Chapter Six discusses findings from across the two cases, focusing on the role of power and politics in EL policymaking. Chapter Seven examines new contextual forces influencing state EL policymaking. Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation with a summary of the findings and their implications for theory, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This dissertation explores policymaking related to English Learners in state departments of education, both in established and new immigrant destinations. To provide context for the study design, this chapter outlines relevant literature. Initially, the EL policymaking literature is examined, including the normative and political factors that scholars suggest influence the policymaking process. Following this, the literature on new and established immigrant destinations is discussed, beginning with a brief history of each context. Then, education scholarship is analyzed in relation to the technical, normative, and political factors of EL education in these two contexts.

EL Policymaking

The current body of literature on policymaking for ELs is limited. Nevertheless, it provided valuable insights into the methodological approaches used to study EL policymaking and the contextual factors that shape the development of EL policies at both the district and state levels. This review highlights 13[1] studies that focused on either the processes involved in creating EL policy or the technical, normative, or political factors that influenced the creation of such policy. It is important to note that there are many relevant studies on EL policy implementation, interpretation, and evaluation, but they are beyond the scope of this review and dissertation design. To organize the EL policymaking literature, I categorize the scholarship below based on the systems-level.

District-Level EL Policymaking

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[1] To identify pertinent literature, I utilized the Education Resources Information Center, or ERIC. I searched the peer-reviewed literature using terms including "policymaking", "English Learner", and "policy formulation".

The majority of the literature on EL policymaking is situated at the district level. The studies reviewed here all utilized a case study design, with several employing a multi-site case study approach. Policymakers examined in these studies included school board members, district leaders (e.g., superintendents, directors), and community advocates at the district level. All the studies investigating EL policymaking at the district level highlighted the significance of changing demographics as a driver of EL policy development. Other factors influencing district-level EL policymaking included policymakers' beliefs and attitudes, as well as internal and external political pressures.

Normative Factors: Beliefs and Attitudes of Policymakers. The literature highlights the influence of normative factors, such as policymakers' beliefs and attitudes, on EL policymaking. Some studies described how policymakers' beliefs about how ELs should be educated were reflected in district policies.Sampson (2019) conducted a longitudinal multi-site case study of three urban school districts in Nevada, Arizona, and Utah. Sampson utilized a range of data sources, including interviews, district policies relevant to ELs, demographic data, meeting agendas and notes, and formal legislation to investigate the EL policymaking processes of school board members and district-level administrators. The study found that state-level politics and beliefs related to ELs had a significant impact on the districts' policymaking processes, resulting in adverse effects on the ability of districts to provide an equitable education for English Learners. For example, in Arizona, the rhetoric around ELs' cultural and linguistic assimilation was reflected in policymakers' decision-making around English-only policies.

Turner (2015) conducted a multi-site case study of two school districts experiencing rapid demographic changes to investigate the policymaking processes of district policymakers, including school board members, superintendents, and administrators. The study found that

policymakers' racialized attitudes toward immigrants and students of color influenced the policies created, even in politically liberal and conservative districts. Policies were developed using a cultural deficit framework that positioned immigrants and students of color as lacking and in need of remediation. Similarly, Umansky, Hopkins, and Dabach (2020) found that district leaders' beliefs about "positive (i.e., equality via differential treatment) and negative equality (i.e., equality via similar treatment)" influenced policies and guidance related to newcomer EL instructional programs in districts (pp. 36-37).

Several studies also shed light on policymakers' beliefs and attitudes about constructing ELs and immigrant students as deserving or undeserving. Brezicha and Hopkins (2016) argued that school board members' beliefs about the deservingness of ELs influenced the development of district policies related to professional development, staffing, and resource allocation. The authors further suggested that ELs in this district were socially constructed as "deviant" and "in need of controlling." This construction of ELs informed the creation of new student discipline and surveillance policies. For instance, one school board member explained that surveillance measures were implemented in response to "the nature of the population who were concealing things in their pockets and backpacks" (p. 9). These examples of district-level EL policymaking reflect the scholarship on the criminalization of immigrants due to the xenophobic and racist attitudes of policymakers (Chavez, 2008)

Further exploring the deservingness of particular student groups, Trujillo (2012) examined district policymakers' normative beliefs, which influenced policymaking related to ELs, even though the study was not primarily focused on EL policymaking. Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, Trujillo found that educators' negative beliefs about ELs and their ideas about which EL instructional models were more appropriate influenced district

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policymaking. For example, principals faced significant pushback from teachers related to the new policy of de-tracking classrooms to benefit ELs. This pressure led principals to complain to the school board, resulting in a revision of the district's EL de-tracking policies. These studies highlight the critical role of policymakers' beliefs and attitudes in shaping how and why policies are formulated within school districts. Therefore, it is essential to examine the normative dimension of policymakers within different educational contexts, such as state departments of education, and explore how normative factors are similar or different across education systems contexts.

Political Forces. Scholars have emphasized the significant influence of political forces, both external and internal, on school districts' EL policymaking processes. Sampson (2019) found that school board members' decisions to create new policies and practices related to EL instruction, systemic and institutional changes, and community and family engagement were influenced by political pressures from the federal government. Moreover, several scholars have argued that local control politics also inform district EL policymaking (Estrada & Wang, 2018; Lowenhaupt, 2015; Lee & Hawkins, 2015). These scholars have suggested that district-level policy actors' normative attitudes related to English proficiency contribute to the variation of EL classification policies across districts (Estrada & Wang, 2018; see also Linquanti & Cook, 2015). These findings suggest that political forces from multiple systems, including federal, state, and local, affect district EL policymaking. However, research has shown that "non-education" politics (e.g., immigration, economic, transportation, housing) also influence the education system (Anyon, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how "non-education" related political forces impact EL policymaking.

State- Level EL Policymaking

Policymaking for ELs at the state level is a crucial factor in ensuring equitable educational opportunities. Based on analysis of three distinct studies, it is evident that various contextual factors can influence EL policymaking. Therefore, it is vital to understand and address these factors to develop effective and inclusive policies. An exploration of complex dynamics such as political interests, funding availability, external interest holder support, historical legal precedent, and cultural and political landscapes highlights their significance in shaping EL policies..

In a multi-site qualitative case study of the Seal of Biliteracy policymaking process in 23 states and D.C., Heineke and Davin (2020) identified several state-level contextual factors that impacted policymaking. Concern over funding the policy was a major issue in states opposed to creating a Seal of Biliteracy policy. In Georgia, opposition was linked to conflicting political interests among state senators. When policy actors promoted the policy to Georgia state legislators, they framed it as an opportunity for the state's English-dominant population (non-EL) to learn a foreign language. After making political concessions (i.e., no state funding and a change in the policy's primary target population), the bill passed and was signed into law in 2016. Heineke and Davin (2020) also emphasized the significance of external education interest holders' support for the Seal of Biliteracy to become a state policy. In states such as Minnesota, Illinois, and Hawaii, the policy design process included interest holders from the community advocacy and higher education communities to advocate for the state EL legislation.

In a historical case study, Lawton (2012) argued how the historical presence of the 1992 school funding case, *Flores v. State of Arizona,* continues to inform EL policymakers. For example, EL policy Arizona Proposition 203, which followed *Flores,* further solidified the state's political environment that supported monolingual ideologies. Lawton outlined how the

language in Proposition 203 was identical to the language around English fluency in *Flores*. Furthermore, Lawton illustrated how anti-immigrant and anti-Spanish speaking attitudes among Arizona state legislators and external state actors informed the language found in Proposition 203. Lawton argued that the conservative and traditionalist political culture among the 'political elite' and state legislation allowed for the creation of EL state-level policies (e.g., English-only instruction, English as the official language).

In a research-practice partnership (RPP) with SEA leaders, Hopkins and colleagues (2022) examined the ways in which state contextual factors influence the efforts of EL-specific SEA leaders to protect the civil rights of multilingual learners. The researchers identified multiple state contextual factors that affect policymaking, such as structural, cultural, and political dynamics. The scholars argued how these state-level dynamics can either support or hinder the endeavors of EL-specific SEA personnel in safeguarding the civil rights of multilingual learners.

These findings suggest that state-level EL policymaking is significantly influenced by a complex interplay of contextual factors, including funding concerns, political interests, external interest holder support, historical legal precedent, and prevailing cultural and political dynamics. For effective EL policy development, it is crucial for state actors to be aware of these factors and navigate them strategically. Collaboration with external interest holders, such as community advocacy groups and higher education communities, can help build support for inclusive EL policies. Furthermore, understanding the historical context of prior legal cases and legislation can provide valuable insights into the political and cultural landscape that influences EL policymaking. By addressing these contextual determinants and fostering collaborative relationships with key interest holders, state policymakers can create EL policies that better

promote the rights and educational opportunities for ELs. Finally, given the limited research on the EL policymaking processes at the state level, particularly related to agenda setting and policy formulation, further research is needed to explore the nuances among state educational contexts.

EL Education Context: New Versus Established Immigrant Destinations

This dissertation explores state EL policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations. This section provides a historical background of these destinations and the education scholarship conducted within them. Drawing on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter One, I attend to how the technical, normative, and political dimensions differ in new versus established immigrant destinations regarding EL education.

It is important to note that within this literature, English Learners and immigrant students are often conflated. While the majority of ELs are immigrants or children of immigrants, not all immigrants are designated as ELs (Callahan & Humphries, 2016; Garver & Hopkins, 2020). Nonetheless, I include literature in this review that may not differentiate between these two student populations due to critical contextual factors that may impact the education of both groups of students. Moreover, I chose to include literature that does not differentiate between ELs and immigrant students because immigrant growth and EL growth rates were the two variables used to categorize new immigrant destination states, as explained in more detail in Chapter Three.

Established Destinations

Established immigrant destinations, also referred to as gateway states, have traditionally been the states where immigrants arriving in the United States reside (Terrazas, 2011). The five established states, California, Illinois, New York, Florida, and Texas, hold over two-thirds of all English Learners in U.S. schools (Spees et al., 2016; Sugarman, 2016). With a long history of

migration from Mexico and other countries throughout Latin America, the immigrant population in established destinations are majority Latinx and have been living in these states in many cases for generations.

Educational opportunities and outcomes for immigrant students and English Learners in established destination states have varied over the last thirty years, from historical periods of extreme anti-immigrant and monolingual ideologies in California (Colbern & Ramakrishnan, 2018) to the current polarized educational environment for immigrants and English Learners in Texas and Florida. Below I outline the technical (e.g., educational infrastructure), normative (e.g., beliefs and attitudes of the receiving community), and political (e.g., restrictive or progressive political contexts) factors that inform the education of ELs in established destinations.

Technical. The educational infrastructure for supporting EL education varied among the five established states. Further, the EL infrastructure in established destinations has changed over time. The literature highlighted two themes related to the educational infrastructure in established destinations: EL teacher capacity and cultural and linguistic support for ELs.

EL Teacher Capacity. The capacity of EL teachers includes the preparation and professional development of EL teachers. California and Texas, both states that have a rocky past of anti-immigrant education policies- currently have rigorous preparation requirements for teachers of ELs (Lopez & Santibanez, 2017); however, these requirements in California and Texas were not always present. Scholars argued that ELs are more likely than any other student population to have under-prepared teachers (de Jong et al., 2010; Gandara et al., 2003; Zarate et al., 2016). For example, following the passage of California Proposition 227, the state did not establish guidelines or support to prepare teachers of English Learners for its implementation

(Contreras, 2002). Thus, not only were immigrant English learners isolated from their peers, but they were also often taught by monolingual teachers who had not been prepared to implement best practices for working with them (Gandara & Rumberger, 2009).

Cultural and Linguistic Supports for ELs. Scholars argued that there are more culturally and linguistically appropriate supports for EL and immigrant students in established destinations than in new immigrant destinations (Massey, 2008; Spees et al., 2016). ELs in established destinations are more likely than their peers in new destinations to have access to different types of instructional models (e.g., bilingual, dual language, SIFE (students with interrupted schooling), newcomer programs) (Spees, et al., 2016; Umansky et al., 2020). Further, EL students in established destinations are more likely to have a teacher who is also bilingual, adding an additional level of cultural and linguistic support for students and families (Loeb et al., 2014).

Normative. Briefly mentioned in the literature (much more present in the new destinations literature) are the ways in which normative factors, including supportive and positive beliefs and attitudes of the receiving community, informed the education of ELs and immigrant students in established destinations.

Beliefs and Attitudes of the Receiving Community. In established destinations, researchers asserted that the long history of immigration in these contexts might explain why educators are more likely to be aware of emotional, cultural, and legal challenges their students and families face (Dondero & Muller, 2012). For example, in a border town in Texas, DeMatthews and Vela (2020) provided details of how one principal actively offered professional development to the school's staff surrounding topics of immigration and how challenges related to the immigration status of students and family members impact the students of their school.

The principal, in this case, asserted, "the education we provide will never be enough if we don't address the social and emotional needs" (p.104). The situational awareness of school leaders and educators in this study is in stark contrast to school leaders and educators' awareness in new immigrant destinations.

Political. Present in the established destination literature was the importance of the political context for ELs and immigrant-origin students. Scholars described how the immigrant context within a state informs EL policy and educational access for EL and immigrant students.

Immigrant Context and EL Policy. The literature highlighted the importance of the state immigrant context for EL and immigrant education. A study examining the state immigration context and its relationship to EL education policy, Callahan, Gatusch, Hopkins, and Unda (2020) found that the immigration policy context among the established states varied. Using state immigrant policy documents from 2008-2016 (e.g., refugee resettlement, services for and treatment of undocumented immigrants, immigrant employment policies, and policies pertaining to sanctuary cities), Callahan and colleagues argued that New York, California, and Illinois have an inclusive immigrant context, while Florida and Texas have a "mixed" immigrant context which includes both anti and pro-immigrant policies (Callahan et al., 2020, pg 10). The scholars also argued that the state immigration context is positively correlated with the education policy for ELs as evidenced by states' ESSA implementation plans.

Immigrant Policy and Education Access. State EL policy can act as an enabler or deterrent for ELs or immigrant students' physical access to school. For example, In 1976, the Texas State Legislature authorized local school districts' discretion in denying or granting access to school for students who were suspected of being undocumented. Ultimately, federal policy resulting from the 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe* facilitated immigrant students'

physical access to U.S. public schools (Gonzales et al., 2015). The *Plyler* ruling required that K-12 public education institutions enroll all students regardless of citizenship status and not charge tuition for undocumented immigrant students to attend public schools (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2015; Olivas, 2012). While the *Plyler* ruling facilitated physical access to a free public K-12 education for undocumented immigrant students, this ruling did not extend to facilitating physical access to higher education and can create instability for students at the secondary level (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gonzales, 2015; Olivas, 2010).

Higher Education Access. Several studies described the tension that arises when immigrant students learn of their undocumented status upon applying to college only to discover that they, in some states, are barred from attending institutions of higher education or do not qualify for in-state tuition (Gandara & Ee, 2018; Gonzales et al., 2015; Menjivar & Abrego, 2012; Potochnick et al., 2019). Menjivar and Abrego conducted over 200 interviews to understand the ways in which policies have "spillover" effects that affect immigrants' lives. Undocumented students in their study insisted that they "played by the rules," excelled academically, and felt a deep sense of belonging in the US, yet were met with the reality that their access to education might end after 12th grade (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012). Similarly, Gonzales (2015), in his book *Lives in Limbo*, based on 150 interviews with undocumented youth in the Los Angeles area, provided an example of a student whose life "turned upside down" his senior year when he learned about his documentation status and how it would affect his access to higher education: "Everything I wanted to do I couldn't... I felt betrayed by the whole system. The rules had changed on me, and I was on the outside looking in." (p. 330). These examples highlight the limitations of *Plyler* in facilitating immigrant students' access to public schools in the United States. Presently, four out of the five established

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destinations have passed state legislation that ensures higher education access *and* in-state tuition for all students regardless of migration status. Florida, the one outlier, has passed state legislation that guarantees students, regardless of immigrant status, access to higher education institutions but fails to ensure students' access to in-state financial aid (Callahan et al., 2020).

> ***Immigrant Education Policy and Deservingness***. The examples above illuminate how policies and politics can enable or deter educational access in established destinations for immigrant students. However, when policies were enacted to address immigrant students' access to schooling, adverse effects were highlighted in the literature for specific groups of immigrant students. For example, In 2001, California passed Assembly Bill 540. This Bill allowed undocumented students living in the state to access in-state tuition rates at higher education institutions. This Bill positively affected immigrant students who met specific criteria but subsequently categorized students who were "deserving or eligible and thus legitimate while casting others as ineligible" (Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017, p. 768). Scholars have asserted that this higher education policy directed at immigrant students has had trickle-down effects on the K-12 education system by constructing certain immigrant students as "deserving" of educational benefits and services (Gonzales, 2010; Olivas, 2012; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017).

New Immigrant Destinations

New immigrant destinations are those contexts that have undergone significant demographic changes in the foreign-born population, often in a short period of time (Massey, 2008; Terrazas, 2020). Manufacturing, food processing, and agricultural centers in these destinations are driving forces of migration to these new destinations (Leach & Bean, 2008; Massey, 2008). As such, schools in these contexts have undergone rapid demographic changes (Turner, 2020). For example, new immigrant destination states have seen between 162 to 790%

growth in their EL student population over the last two decades. Unlike ELs in established

destinations, EL demographics in new immigrant destinations are racially, ethnically, and

economically diverse (Hall, 2009; Spees, 2016). While the vast majority of educational research

has been conducted in established destinations, there is a growing body of research conducted in

new destinations, particularly in areas in the Southeast, sometimes referred to as Nuevo South,

and the Midwest. The literature highlighted several findings in these 'suddenly diverse' (Turner,

2020) contexts related to immigrant and EL education, including: educational infrastructure,

attitudes of the receiving community, allocation of resources, and anti-immigrant politics.

Technical. The rapid changes in student populations in new immigrant destinations often

result in a new destination not having the adequate educational infrastructure to support English

Learners compared to established destinations (Bigelow, 2010; Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016;

Hopkins et al., 2015; Lowenhaupt, 2014; Lowenhaupt & Reeves, 2015; Wortham & Contreras,

2002; Valenzuela, 1999). This is especially evident in four areas: allocation of educational

resources, preparation and capacity of EL educators, access to interpreters and translation

services, and academic support and outcomes.

Allocation of EL and Immigrant Student Resources. Perhaps a more salient difference

between established and new immigrant destinations is the presence of formal EL education

policy to support ELs, families, and educators. Hopkins and colleagues noted how the lack of

guidance and policy at the state level informed local education agencies' educational

infrastructure (Hopkins et al., 2015). More specifically, Hopkins and colleagues argued that

increased state and federal EL policy or guidance would result in more resources such as funding

allocations for EL education at the district level. Complicating these findings, Kandel and

Parrado (2006) investigated the allocation of resources in two new immigrant destinations: North

Carolina and Mississippi. In Mississippi, Kandel and Parrado found that with the absence of state EL policy support, school districts experiencing rapid growth were dependent on churches and community organizations for financial assistance to supply new immigrant students with resources such as tutoring or EL instruction.

Preparation and Capacity of EL Educators. Several studies noted how new immigrant destinations often do not provide an adequate amount of qualified educators for English Learners (Bohon et al., 2005; Dondero & Muller, 2012; Hopkins & Brezicha, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2015; Lee & Hawkins, 2015; Wainer, 2006; Wortham et al., 2002). In North Carolina, a state that has experienced a 140% increase in its EL population, Torre Gibney and Henry (2020) found that ELs were consistently assigned teachers who have lower value-added scores, principals who have lower principal ratings, and teachers who have less experience teaching ELs. Further, several studies also highlighted how educators in new immigrant destinations do not feel prepared to teach ELs (Hopkins & Brezicha, 2020; Lee & Hawkins, 2015). One educator remarked, "I don't have an ESL degree, so I feel like I'm set up to fail. None of the professional development days that we sit through give me anything I can use" (Hopkins & Brezicha, 2020, pg. 218).

Scholars argued that educators in new destinations lack preparation in supporting their students in response to a hostile political environment for immigrants (Castrellon et al., 2020). A teacher noted how her teacher preparation program had not prepared her for dealing with the aftermath of an ICE raid in their school community. In the same study, the principal explained that she "never imagined that in her own school neighborhood, an ICE raid of this magnitude could happen" (p. 16). The ignorance or lack of school districts' preparation in these new destinations was apparent when immigrant students and families turned to schools for support

(Castrellon et al., 2020; Lee & Hawkins, 2015).

Interpreters and Translation Services. In a school district in Missouri where "seemingly overnight" the demographics of this once all white monolingual community became racially and linguistically diverse, Dorner, Guan, and Theieman (2020) addressed how the district did not have the necessary infrastructure to provide interpreters for families during parent-teacher conferences. Because of the lack of interpreters, students assumed the interpreter's role for their parents and other students. Orellena and colleagues (2003) described this process of students' translating and interpreting as paraphrasing. While language brokering and paraphrasing of multilingual students is documented in the established destinations literature (Orellena, 2017), in new immigrant destinations, the scarce amount of resources for translators and interpreters puts an additional responsibility on multilingual students to engage in this practice (Dorner et al., 2020).

Academic Support and Outcomes. Notably, while EL students in new destinations do not tend to have access to certified EL teachers or additive language supports, studies have demonstrated that the academic outcomes of ELs in new destinations are higher than their EL peers in established immigrant contexts (Clotfelter et al., 2012; Spees et al., 2016). Scholars argued that one explanation for this might be connected to EL families' higher economic backgrounds and/or social capital in new immigrant destinations (Hall, 2009; Massey, 2008; Spees et al., 2016).

While ELs in new destinations may be outperforming their peers in established destinations academically, EL academic outcomes in new destinations remain problematic as their outcomes are lower than every other student group (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010). Dondero and Muller (2012) posited that one explanation as to why EL students in new destinations are

performing worse than their non-EL peers is due to limited linguistic and cultural support services.

Normative. As states and communities underwent a demographic change, the literature highlighted the ways in which normative factors such as negative beliefs and attitudes of the receiving community, district, school leaders, and educators inform the educational environment for ELs and immigrant students.

Community. The 'receiving community' attitudes in new immigrant destinations are often described as less favorable than in established immigrant destinations (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). Lee and Hawkins (2015) argued that the attitudes toward immigrant groups in new destinations are "influenced by the presence or absence of other racialized minority groups" (p. 42). For example, in new destinations with little to no racial diversity, Brezicha and Hopkins (2016) noted that white community members expressed xenophobic and racist remarks about the new immigrant population, "[Chesterfield's] not the same anymore. It's horrible, it's all changed. These new people that came in, these Latinos, they're a disaster. They're just not like us" (p.10). While in new immigrant destinations with more racial diversity, Wortham and colleagues (2009) and Marrow (2011) argued that the white community viewed the new Latinx immigrant population as the 'model minority'.

District and School Leaders. Scholars found that policymakers often failed to acknowledge their personal attitudes related to demographic shifts in the community in several studies. In a new immigrant destination, Brezicha and Hopkins (2016) explained how school board members would avoid using the word immigrant during meetings. The avoidance of policymakers using terms like "English Learner" or "immigrant student" resembles a color-mute (Pollock, 2004) practice in that persons refrain from using race-related speech. The denial, lack

of awareness, or avoidance of EL and immigrant students' status ignores an integral part of their

lived experiences and obscures the development of teacher capacity and educational

infrastructure in this area (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Crawford & Arnold, 2017; Turner, 2015).

Normative and political beliefs of policy actors surrounding EL education also inform the

allocation of resources for EL education. Schools in new immigrant destinations often lack

immigrant and EL-specific resources (Spees, 2016). In a case study of a school district in a new

immigrant destination, a superintendent suggested that ESL teachers be used as translators in

special education meetings (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2015). Brezicha and Hopkins noted that the

superintendent's remark not only revealed a lack of legal knowledge around EL and special

education students' rights to a translator during IEP meetings but also revealed a "resistance to

committing resources to serve ELs" (p. 8).

The literature also highlighted how ELs are often used as scapegoats in schools in new

destinations. One principal noted, "the district has falling reading and math proficiency rates, and

they blame the immigrants again. Immigrants are the scapegoats for everything that's going on in

the community, from crime to district performance" (Hopkins & Brezicha, 2020). Further, the

same study found that principals suggested that immigrant newcomers were "bringing behavior

problems" and that "education is not a priority in their lives" (pg. 217).

Educator attitudes. In new destinations, harmful attitudes and beliefs among educators

about ELs and immigrant students is concerning. One study noted how teachers questioned if

education is a priority or a value among immigrant students and their families (Hopkins &

Brezicha, 2020). In addition to examining immigrant students' and families' educational

priorities, Lee and Hawkins (2015) found that EL teachers made racist comments about

immigrant students' documentation status. Lee and Hawkins posited that teachers' comments

about immigrant students' documentation status are related to whether educators believe immigrant students deserve or have a right to a free public education.

Political. Scholars have argued that the political context within new immigrant destinations is a salient determinant in ELs and immigrant students' education. Specifically, scholars highlighted how an anti-immigrant political environment informs school access policies, school attendance, and academic outcomes for students.

Anti-Immigrant Contexts and School Access. While established immigrant destinations are not without their share of anti-immigrant politics, new immigrant destination states see an increase in anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies that impact ELs and immigrant students' lives and education. In Alabama, where there has been a 249% growth in the EL population, policies enacted at the state level threaten school access for immigrant students. For example, Alabama House Bill 56, or the Beason-Hammon Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, was passed in 2011 and specified the exclusion of all undocumented children from public K-12 and higher education institutions (Arrocha, 2012, p. 275). Created under the premise of "financial" concerns that undocumented students had "adverse effects" on educational resources, the bill required schools to publicly announce how many undocumented and documented immigrant students were in attendance. As a result, thousands of primarily Latinx immigrant students withdrew overnight from schools throughout the state (Davidson & Burson, 2016). These findings are particularly troublesome as Lawton (2012) argued that historical policies lay the foundation for future anti-immigrant/ EL policies.

Presence of ICE in Communities. While federal policies such as *Plyler v Doe* protect a student's right to a public education regardless of documentation status, the policies do not protect students nor their families from the effects of anti-immigrant programs like ICE outside

of schools. These issues are further exacerbated in new immigrant destinations where schools lack immigrant-specific resources, and the context of reception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) can be categorized as anti-immigrant.

Beyond policies that focus specifically on immigrant students' educational access, the literature reveals how the prevalence of immigration enforcement policies has negatively affected immigrant students' school attendance in new immigrant destinations (Burkett & Hayes, 2018; Gandara & Ee, 2018; Sattin-Bajaj & Kirksey, 2019). In one recent study, Sattin-Bajaj and Kirksey (2019) used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to examine the relationship between apprehensions processed by ICE and immigrant students' absenteeism. Drawing on records for 5,170 first- and second-generation immigrant students from kindergarten to 3rd grade, the authors found a significant correlation between an increase in ICE activity in the community and an increase in absenteeism among immigrant students. For example, in 2017, in Las Cruces, New Mexico, after ICE raids were conducted in immigrant communities, nearly 2,000 students did not attend school following the raids (Sattin-Bajaj & Kirksey, 2019). Further, recent ICE raids of poultry plants in Mississippi have also caused an increase in absenteeism among students (Fausset, 2019).

While the studies described above focus on immigration enforcement policies in general, one study tied a specific policy to fear and anxiety among students in the new immigrant destination, Georgia. The study focused on Georgia House Bill 87, which heightened the policing and deportation of immigrants and reportedly triggered anxiety in many immigrant students (Harman & Varga-Dobai, 2012). Students emphasized that they "lived in constant fear" of police "taking away" their parents, families, and community, and some students described fears of "being kidnapped" by immigration enforcement, particularly after witnessing vans

pulling into Walmart and abruptly taking people away (Harman & Varga-Dobai, 2012, p. 2). Castrellon and colleagues (2020) provided clear opportunities for how schools in new immigrant contexts must protect immigrant students and families, including understanding and implementing the federal law that protects both students and families on school campuses and guidance and preparation of school administrators in how to respond to ICE presence in schools and in the community.

__Immigration Politics and Effects on Student Academic Outcomes.__ Notably, the increased fear and anxiety described in these studies were also associated with adverse effects on students' educational outcomes. Gandara and Ee (2018) asserted that immigration enforcement policies adversely affected immigrant students' academic decline and were most prevalent in the US South's new immigrant destinations. A potential explanatory cause of the academic decline among immigrant students is connected to attendance rates. By analyzing survey data from 3,600 K-12 educators from different geographic regions, Gandara and Ee found that educators from the South were more likely than educators from other regions to indicate that immigration policies negatively affected immigrant attendance records.

These findings resonate with other studies showing that, after the passage of Alabama House Bill 56 in 2011, 13 percent of Latinx students in the state withdrew from K-12 public schools due to fear of school administrators checking on their families' immigration status (Davidson & Burson, 2017). Overall, these findings show how increased immigration enforcement has negatively impacted immigrant students' access to K-12 public schools by deterring their attendance.

Conclusion

This literature review examined the EL policymaking and the new and established immigrant destination literature. The findings of the EL policymaking literature revealed how beliefs, attitudes, and values among policymakers and internal and external political pressures informed EL policymaking within districts and states. The new and established immigrant destinations literature illuminated both similarities and differences among three thematic areas pertinent to EL education in these two contexts: 1) educational infrastructure, 2) attitudes and beliefs of the receiving community, and 3) political context.

While the EL policymaking literature is scarce (n=13), there is an evident gap in exploring the state-level as a site of EL policymaking. All but two studies (Heineke & Davin, 2020; Hopkins et al., 2022; Lawton, 2012) in the EL policymaking literature explored district-level policymaking processes leaving the opportunity for future research to expand the limited scholarship of EL policymaking. Furthermore, the policymakers that the scholarship investigated were most often school board members or district leaders (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Sampson, 2019; Trujillo, 2012; Turner, 2015; Umansky et al., 2020). Given these findings and the importance of the state education agency in the governance and oversight of EL education (Callahan et al., 2020; Hamann & Lane, 2004), there is a critical need for future research investigating the policymaking processes of state policymakers within state education agencies and the technical, normative, and political factors that inform those processes.

In the new and established destinations literature findings revealed important technical, normative, and political factors that inform EL education in these two contexts. While historically, more scholarly attention has been given to the established destination states, more recently, much scholarship has attended to the educational context of new immigrant destinations. However, there remains a dearth of research that has purposefully compared these

two educational contexts. Furthermore, no studies have comparatively investigated EL policymaking within these two distinct educational contexts. Research examining EL policymaking is essential for understanding how this phase of the larger EL policy process can (re)produce (in)equities for EL in differing educational contexts. As such, this dissertation contributes to a small but growing body of literature investigating state-level EL policymaking paying particular attention to technical, normative, and political factors.

Further, this study was crucial for equity reasons because it sought to uncover disparities in EL policymaking between new and established immigrant destinations, which may inadvertently contribute to inequitable educational outcomes for ELs. By comparing the different educational contexts and examining the factors influencing state-level EL policymaking, this research aimed to reveal potential barriers to equitable policy implementation that may be unique to each context. Furthermore, understanding the role that state education agencies play in shaping EL policy will help to identify opportunities for promoting equity at the state level, where significant power lies in determining the educational experiences of EL students.

Additionally, this research was necessary for addressing potential biases in policymaking that may result from the attitudes, beliefs, and values held by policymakers in both new and established immigrant destinations. By examining the processes and factors influencing state-level EL policymaking, this study sought to ensure that the perspectives and needs of EL students are adequately represented in the policymaking process. Identifying and addressing these biases can help ensure that EL students have access to equitable educational opportunities, regardless of their geographic location or the prevailing attitudes within their communities.

In summary, this study fills a critical gap in the literature by investigating state-level EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destinations. By focusing on equity and examining the technical, normative, and political factors that inform these processes, this research has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of more inclusive and equitable educational policymaking that serve the diverse needs of ELs across different contexts.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Through a multiple case study design, this dissertation investigated technical, normative, and political dimensions of state-level EL policymaking within the mediating institution of state departments of education in established and new immigrant destinations. The dissertation drew on multiple sources of data, including interviews with state policy actors, state archival records, and policy documents, to investigate the following research questions:

1) How do technical, normative, and political factors inform state EL policymaking?

   a) Technical: How does the SEA organizational structure, policy actors, and education agendas or priorities of the SEA inform EL policymaking?

   b) Normative: How do beliefs, attitudes, and values of state policy actors related to ELs and EL education inform state EL policymaking?

   c) Political: How does power and politics inform EL policymaking?

2) How do these factors enable or constrain state-level attention towards equity and access for ELs in state policymaking?

The following sections describe the multiple case study design and rationale, the data sources, and analytical approaches I utilized in this dissertation.

A Multi-Case Study Rationale

Case studies have a rich history in social science research investigating complex and nuanced phenomena. While there are many different methodological approaches that can be used to examine social issues, a case study design was an appropriate methodology for this study for four reasons. First, case studies enable the study of a phenomenon across blurred or hazy contexts (Yin, 2018). A pertinent example of context blurring is the hazy boundaries of education

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policymaking because education policymaking often involves multiple interest holders, levels of governance, and social and cultural factors that intersect and overlap in complex ways. This complexity can make it difficult to clearly delineate where one aspect of the policymaking landscape ends and another begins. Second, the case study methodology facilitates a more nuanced analysis of individuals' and groups' beliefs and values, as well as the reasons and mechanisms underlying the phenomenon (Sjoberg et al., 1991; Yin, 2018). This approach is crucial for achieving a deep, contextualized understanding of EL policymaking, generating valuable insights that can contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks exploring how normative factors influence EL policymaking processes.

Third, while a single case can provide insight into one unit of analysis in a single context, a multiple case study design is appropriate when a single case may not provide enough depth or nuance of the investigated phenomenon. Further, scholars have argued that intersecting and competing contextual factors such as politics (Sampson, 2020, 2018) changing demographics (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Turner, 2015, 2020; Umansky et al., 2020), and normative beliefs and attitudes (Estrada & Wang, 2018; Heineke & Davin, 2020; Trujillo, 2012) influence EL policymaking necessitating the need for multiple cases to understand the contextual similarities and differences.

Fourth and finally, scholars noted that using more than one case to explore the same phenomenon is more powerful and compelling (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003, 2018). The use of multiple cases also allowed for both comparisons of similarities and differences between the cases, building robust theoretical and empirical evidence (Mills et al., 2012). Therefore, a multi-case study methodology was well suited for investigating the nuanced phenomenon of EL

policymaking across EL state contexts, and further how technical, normative, and political contextual factors enable or constrain efforts towards equity-minded policymaking for ELs.

Generalizability

As with much qualitative case study research, it is not the intended purpose of this case study to provide statistical generalizability. Rather, informed by the EL policymaking and EL established and new contexts literature, I considered how the cases selected are suited for analytical and theoretical generalizability beyond this dissertation. Therefore, the same research questions were asked across the cases. However, the participants, documents, and archival records across the cases differ but were bound within specific state contexts allowing for the possibility of generalizing concrete analytical and theoretical conclusions beyond the cases in this study.

For instance, a concrete analytical conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that partisan politics have significant implications on state EL policymaking in both conservative and progressive environments. This conclusion suggests that in order to effectively promote equitable education for English Learners, advocates, policymakers, and other interest holders must be aware of the political landscape and navigate it skillfully. While a theoretical conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the contextual factors, including whether a state is a new or established immigrant destination, plays a critical role in shaping state EL policymaking. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to EL policymaking may not be effective, and

instead, policymakers must consider the unique context of each state when designing and

implementing policies to promote equitable education for English Learners.

Case Selection

When selecting cases to illustrate the phenomenon of state-level EL policymaking, it was

crucial to select cases both rooted in the literature and theory and cases that demonstrate the

phenomenon's complexity (Creswell, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989). Two state contexts serve as the

cases of the dissertation. Case one investigates EL state policymaking within five state education

agencies situated within the *New Destination States*. Case two investigates EL policymaking

within two state departments of education within the *Established Destination States.* Below I

address how states were categorized into state contexts, state education agencies (sites) sample

size, and participant sample and recruitment procedures.

State Context Categorization

Established States, also referred to in the literature as the "big five" gateway or

traditional states (CA, FL, IL, NY, TX), have a long history (pre-1990s) of immigration and a

large EL population. Presently, two-thirds of all English Learners live in these established states;

however, since the 1990s, immigrants are moving to new destinations resulting in rapid EL

population growth (Capps et al., 2005; Clotelter et al., 2012; Sugarman, 2016). To categorize

states as established states or new destinations, I employed the method developed by Massey and

Capoferro (2008) and later expanded upon by Spees et al. (2016). Massey and Capoferro (2008)

classified states into four categories: the "big five," second-tier, new, and other. Spees and

colleagues (2016) simplified these groupings into three categories: the "big five," new, and other.

To distinguish between "new" and "other" states, they analyzed whether a state experienced above-average growth in its immigrant population and EL (English Learner) student population between the years 1990 and 2000. I adapted the method used by Spees et al. (2016), but updated the data to include more recent years. As a result, I assessed immigrant growth and EL student growth from the years 2000 to 2019.

From 2000- 2019, the US average immigrant growth was 44.4%. However, in new destinations, the immigrant population increased by an average of 96.75%. Further, the EL growth in the US from 2000-2017 averaged 136%, while in the new destination states, the EL population growth averaged 320%. If a state (excluding the five established states) was above the US average for immigration population growth from 2000-2019 *and* EL population growth from 2000-2017, the state was classified as a new destination state.

Table 2

State Classification for Established States, New Destinations, and Other Immigrant Destinations Categories

	State	Immigrant Population Growth (2000-2019) US AVG= 44.4%	EL Population Growth (2000-2017) US AVG= 136%
Established States	California	19.20%	19%
	Florida	69.50%	50%
	Illinois	15.50%	72%
	New York	12.70%	6%
	Texas	70.80%	62%
New Destinations	Alabama	99.30%	249%

Table 2

State Classification for Established States, New Destinations, and Other Immigrant Destinations Categories

	State	Immigrant Population Growth (2000-2019) US AVG= 44.4%	EL Population Growth (2000-2017) US AVG= 136%
New Destinations	Arkansas	109.40%	236%
	Arkansas	109.40%	236%
	Delaware	116.60%	491%
	Georgia	89.10%	139%
	Iowa	95.20%	162%
	Kansas	55.00%	231%
	Kentucky	144.90%	537%
	Louisiana	69.60%	143%
	Maryland	79.30%	229%
	Mississippi	60.20%	491%
	Missouri	73.30%	491%
	North Carolina	105.70%	140%
	North Dakota	157.00%	296%
	South Carolina	148.70%	790%
	South Dakota	169.20%	28%
	Virginia	90.10%	212%
Other	Alaska	57.10%	-19%
	Arizona	48.80%	-33%
	Colorado	47.80%	71%
	Connecticut	42.80%	86%
	DC	40.50%	43%

Table 2

*State Classification for Established States, New Destinations, and Other Immigrant
Destinations Categories*

	State	Immigrant Population Growth (2000-2019) US AVG= 44.4%	EL Population Growth (2000-2017) US AVG= 136%
Other	Hawaii	34.90%	23%
	Idaho	64.70%	108%
	Indiana	82.30%	37%
	Maine	41.70%	18%
	Massachusetts	75.70%	46%
	Michigan	21.60%	23%
	Minnesota	134.90%	69%
	Montana	73.10%	19%
	Nebraska	26.40%	88%
	Nevada	84.40%	81%
	New Hampshire	48.30%	121%
	New Jersey	51.90%	121%
	New Mexico	58.60%	12%
	Ohio	16%	-5%
	Oklahoma	28.60%	16%
	Oregon	60.90%	-1%
	Pennsylvania	92.20%	80%
	Rhode Island	42.80%	140%
	Tennessee	54%	90%
	Utah	33.90%	99%
	Vermont	81.30%	65%
	Washington	52.90%	-59%
	West Virginia	90.90%	107%
	Wisconsin	92.90%	113%

As shown in Table 2 above, sixteen states are categorized as new destinations, and five

states are categorized as established states. Eisenhardt (1989) recommends that multi-site case

studies explore four to ten sites to build robust empirical and theoretical evidence; therefore,

seven state departments of education served as the sites of this dissertation, with states selected

to include representation from either side of the continuum (established and new). This selection

process was purposeful for two reasons. First, the EL policymaking scholarship has highlighted

the importance of the shifting demographics as a force for EL policy creation (Brezicha &

Hopkins, 2016; Trujillo, 2012; Turner, 2015, 2020). Second, as noted in Chapter Two, there

exists a gap in the literature comparing policymaking within these two contexts. Investigating EL

policymaking at both ends of this continuum therefore helped to identify distinct contextual

differences thus affording a more nuanced analysis of states along the continuum. Further,

examining EL policymaking within these two specific contexts builds on the literature informing

both policymaking theory and policy implications.

In the initial sampling plan, all five established destination states were included.

However, two of the five established destination states had to be removed from the sample due to

SEA rules regarding participation in external research studies. The initial sampling plan for the

new immigrant states featured eight states selected for their geographic and political diversity. It

is worth noting that nine of the sixteen new immigrant destinations are situated in the

Southeastern US and lean politically conservative. As a result, the final sample was anticipated

to include representation from this region and political climate.

Acknowledging potential difficulties in securing participation (discussed in more detail below), the research plan was designed to be flexible. If participation from a new destination state could not be obtained due to participant recruitment issues, I would reach out to another new destination state. Ultimately, the state sample for this study was composed of two established destination states and five new immigrant destination states.

Participant Recruitment

Due to the limited research on state education participants, I explored the literature for sampling approaches for "hard to reach populations." The visibility of populations such as police officers, politicians, doctors, and in this study's case state education agency employees, is not of primary concern, but rather the challenge is the accessibility of these populations due to "moral, legal, or social sensitivities surrounding topics" which may result in these populations being hard to reach for researchers (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). When investigating difficult to observe phenomena and sensitive topics such as normative and political factors of state EL policymaking, the literature points towards a snowball sampling approach to gain access to these types of participants (Brewton & Millward, 2011; Hendricks & Blanken, 1992; Snijiders, 1992).

To identify initial points of contact within each SEA, I initiated participant recruitment by targeting key informants to state EL policymaking (e.g., state Title III directors/leaders, migrant education specialists, ELP assessment administrators, English Learner consultants, special populations managers). Following the approach of Faugier and Sargeant (1997), I created tentative participant lists from the initial state sample. These lists were compiled using professional contacts and information obtained from SEA websites and social networking platforms like LinkedIn. Each list contained potential participant names, states, positions, and email addresses.

Next, I sent an email using a template (See Appendix B) to the key informants, requesting their participation in the study and arranging an initial interview (ethical considerations and mitigations are discussed in greater detail below). I emailed these key informants four times before considering a contact a lost participant due to nonresponse. The content of the emails was slightly modified each time I contacted a potential participant. For instance, my first email contained more information about the study, followed by shorter emails requesting 30 minutes of their time.

Several participants expressed interest in being interviewed but cited time constraints as an issue. In such cases, I would follow up with the participant two weeks after the initial contact was made. Additionally, some participants mentioned that they needed approval from their superiors or the SEA Branch of Research to participate in the study. Upon request, I provided the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and study overview for two of the seven states that ultimately served as sites for this dissertation.

Once a key informant from an SEA agreed to an initial interview, I sent a Zoom link to the participants. After conducting the initial interviews with these individuals, the EL key informants acted as "referral chains" (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997), connecting me with other employees within their SEA or identifying state policy actors involved in state education policymaking (government and legislative aides, EL advocacy organization members). This process allowed me to further expand the participant lists. I followed a similar protocol of emailing each person four times before considering a contact 'lost'. In total, I emailed 126 individuals to participate in this study. As displayed in Table 3 below, the final sample included 50 participants from seven states.

Table 3

Participant Information

State	Established or New Destination	Number of Participants	Participants Roles
State 1	New Destination	6	SEA Leadership, EL Specialists, SEA Employees, Government and Legislative Aides
State 2	New Destination	8	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees, External EL Advocates
State 3	New Destination	5	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees
State 4	New Destination	5	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees, Government and Legislative Aides
State 5	New Destination	8	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees, External EL Advocates
State 6	Established Destination	9	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees, External EL Advocates, Government and Legislative Aides
State 7	Established Destination	9	SEA Leadership, SEA EL Specialists, SEA Employees, External EL Advocates , Government and Legislative Aides

Data Collection

This dissertation utilized several forms of data to allow for triangulation (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Yin, 2018). In addition to conducting 50 in-depth semi-structured interviews, I collected state and archival records and relevant policy documents from SEA websites.

State Archival Records and Policy Documents

After securing a state site, state archival records and policy documents were collected to help build a case site and inform interview questions (Yin, 2018). Data collection of archival records and policy documents were ongoing over the 2021-2022 academic school year as more interviews were conducted within that state site. I gathered archival records including SEA organizational materials (e.g., SEA organizational charts), state geographic maps and data (e.g., percentage of ELs in the state, foreign-born percentage), and website pages from state education agencies (e.g., Title III webpages, Special Populations webpages, Licensure and Certification webpages, community and engagement webpages). Pertinent documents relevant to English Learner education and EL policymaking (e.gState EL plans, ESSA EL plans, guidance documents for Title III, SEA mission statements, EL mission statements) were also gathered from SEA websites.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted from June 2021 to January 2022 with 50 state policy actors. When designing the interview protocol I relied on both empirical (Thompkins-Strange, 2016) and theoretical literature (Harvey, 2011, 2010; Hochschild, 2009; Richards, 1996) on 'elite' interviewing. I also explored the education politics and zone of mediation literature (Dorner et al., 2017; Holme et al., 2013; Trujillo, 2012; Turner, 2015) to inform the questions and topics I would probe during the interviews.

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was organized into three main sections: technical, normative, and political, aligning with the driving conceptual framework and research questions. After introducing the study and addressing any participant questions, I began the interview asking participants about their professional background and responsibilities at the

SEA. If a participant was external to the SEA, I inquired about their role and the nature of their communication and relationship with the SEA. Focusing on the technical factors of interest, I asked participants to describe the organizational structure, policy actors, and education agendas of their SEA. Often, I referred to documents such as SEA organizational charts, mission statements, or official SEA education priority lists to verify the accuracy of the information and help guide the conversation. I also asked participants to identify internal and external policy actors and describe the major issues occupying the SEA's time. These responses revealed state priorities, clarified what constituted policy problems, and identified the policy solutions that the SEA was implementing. Next, I inquired about who determined the priorities for the SEA and the extent of their involvement in the process.

To address additional normative factors, I posed questions aimed at understanding the SEA's beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding ELs and EL education. This included asking participants to describe the EL population, the education models employed by the state, and the growth or decline of the state's EL population. The final portion of the interview explored political factors, highlighting issues of political forces, power, and resources. In this section, I asked participants about external political influences on the SEA, including federal, state, and local level politics. Additionally, we discussed the impact of immigration politics on EL policymaking.

Based on the additional data I gathered (e.g., specific state EL policies, previous interview data), the interview protocol was slightly adapted for each participant, depending on their state and position. Each participant was interviewed at least once, with interview durations ranging from 31 to 130 minutes. Interviews were conducted and recorded using Zoom and

transcribed verbatim with participant consent. Upon learning that they and their state would remain anonymous, no participants objected to being recorded for the interview.
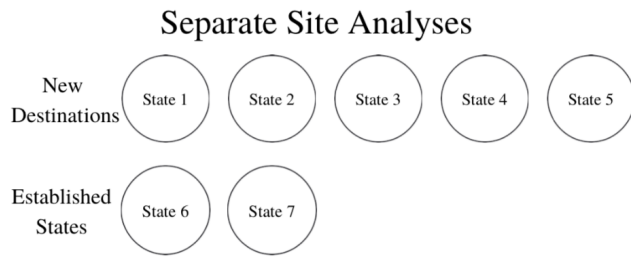
Ethical Considerations and Mitigations

In alignment and approval of UCSD's Institutional Review Board, this dissertation ensured that data collection and analysis was adherent to strict ethical standards. Participants in this study were promised anonymity which proved to be particularly important around discussing sensitive topics of EL policymaking, norms, and values within state agencies. Further, I provided participants with the opportunity to redact any information shared during and after interviews. Before analysis, all identifying characteristics were removed. Participants were represented via a unique identifier kept on a secured server in a password-protected file, accessed only by myself.
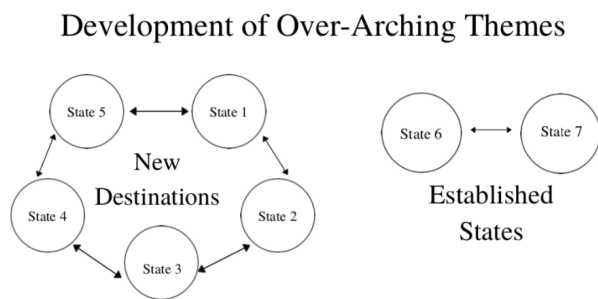
Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process (Hartley, 2004). To guide my analysis, I relied on the multisite qualitative analysis (MSQA) approach represented in Figure 3 below (Jenkins et al., 2018). As described in more detail below, the first phase of data analysis centered on gaining a comprehensive comprehension of each state as distinct locations. To accomplish this, I conducted a thorough examination of the technical, normative, and political influences impacting EL policymaking in each state individually. In the second phase of analysis, I conducted a between-site analysis to develop overarching case themes. In the final phase, I returned to a thematic analysis of the two cases to build on theoretical and political implications of the technical, normative, and political factors of state EL policymaking within the mediating institutions of departments of education in new and established EL state contexts.

PHASE 1: WITHIN-SITE ANLAYSIS

Separate Site Analyses

New Destinations: State 1, State 2, State 3, State 4, State 5

Established States: State 6, State 7

PHASE 2: BETWEEN-SITE ANALYSIS

Development of Over-Arching Themes

New Destinations: State 5, State 1, State 4, State 2, State 3

Established States: State 6, State 7

PHASE 3: CROSS- CASE ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis Across Cases

New Destinations: State 5, State 1, State 4, State 2, State 3
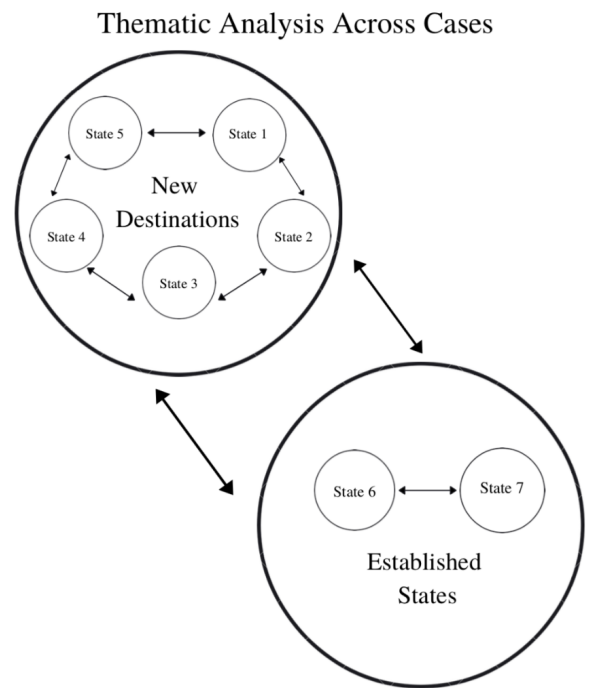
Established States: State 6, State 7

Figure 1
Analytical Approach

Phase 1: Separate Site Analysis

Miles (1982) warned that if case sites are prematurely analyzed before fully understanding the sites in isolation, it can result in 'context stripping' of the sites and ultimately the case as a whole. Therefore, to understand the technical, normative, and political factors and their effects on state-level EL policymaking within each context-specific case, each state's data were analyzed in isolation to create rich thematic state profiles which can be found in Chapter Four. During this phase, I did not compare themes across sites. When I began to notice thematic similarities and/or differences between the sites, I created a researcher memo (Saldana, 2013) to track those emerging thoughts.

I coded the interview data with a set of broad *a priori* codes in alignment with the research questions and conceptual framework (e.g., technical, normative, political). I applied the same broad codes to the state records and document texts which were used to corroborate narrative data later when I am exploring overarching themes of the site data (Phase 2). Next, I created three analytical site memos (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2012) for each site: technical, normative, political. I then extracted the broad-coded data and put the data into the corresponding thematic memos.

Through an iterative process, I then analyzed the data within the memos by using an inductive coding approach to apply new codes.With this approach in mind, I applied a pattern coding technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2012), clustering the codes into larger themes. By grouping the codes and using a constant comparative coding method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Straus, 1987; Straus & Corbin, 1998), I moved progressively through higher levels of abstraction until I ended up with final groupings of themes within each analytical memo. Once I had a final list of themes for each site's analytic memos, I wrote narrative profiles of how technical, normative, and political factors affect state-level EL policymaking within each site. In addition to the state sites' narrative profiles, I included pertinent state contextual demographic data (e.g., percentage of EL in the state, percentage EL growth in the state, immigrant growth percentage) and pertinent political data. Investigating these contextual factors of the sites allowed for more robust patterns of similarities and differences between the sites in Phase 2 of the data analysis.

Phase 2: Developing Overarching Themes Between Sites

The between-site analysis highlights the similarities and differences across the individual cases' findings (Jenkins et al., 2018; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). Jenkins and colleagues (2018) argued that this phase in the analysis will provide the opportunity to understand the cases' contexts in which the sites were bounded (established and new). By utilizing narrative state profiles, contextual site descriptions, and my researcher memos from Phase 1, I examined the similarities and differences in EL state policymaking across the sites. To facilitate organization and synthesis of these similarities and differences, I arranged the findings into three matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for each case: technical findings, normative findings, and political findings. After organizing the findings for each factor, I identified themes and grouped them using a constant comparative coding method,until the final groupings of themes were established.

Upon identifying themes across the sites in each case, such as the limited decision-making power of EL specialists in States 1 and 2, an 'all students' focused agenda in States 1, 2, and 5, and committed SEA leadership in States 5 and 6, I determined an overarching theme between the sites: factors that enable or constrain the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. The findings from this phase are presented in Chapter 5.

Phase 3: Thematic Analysis of the Cases

The final analytical stage involved conducting a thematic analysis across both cases. Researchers can only begin to draw tentative literal or theoretical conclusions and comparisons across cases once this phase of the analysis process is reached (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin,

2018). Yin (2018) advised researchers to "think upward conceptually, rather than downward into the domain of individual variables" (p. 197). As such, I reexamined the themes identified in the individual site memos (phase 1) and the matrices of findings across the individual cases (phase 2), ultimately identifying two "higher plane" conceptual themes in state EL policymaking: the influence of power and partisan politics, and the contextual forces in new and established immigrant destinations. After pinpointing these two themes, I created two memos: the first memo focused on how power and partisan politics shaped state EL policymaking, and the second memo addressing how contextual factors in new and established immigrant destinations influenced state EL policymaking. The findings of this phase are presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

CHAPTER 4

State Profiles

This chapter presents an overall profile for each state included in the study, with each

profile describing the state education agency structure, the key actors involved in educational

decision making, and the focal issues informing the state education policy agenda. These profiles

elucidate both technical and normative factors of EL state policymaking by illustrating the

structural and organizational features of SEAs, alongside the educational priorities that shape EL

policymaking. These profiles are essential for contextualizing the findings presented in

subsequent chapters, which each concentrate on a different aspect of EL-specific policymaking.

A summary of the state contextual information is provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4

State Contextual Information

	State Category	Region	English Learner Demographics				State Political Info					Education Funding		Education Governance	
	Established or New	Geographic Regions	Immigrant Growth (2000-2019)	EL Growth (2000-2017)	Percentage of ELs (2016)	Number of identified English learners in the state	Governor Party (2021)	House Majority (2021)	Senate Majority (2021)	Presidential Election (2016)	Presidential Election (2020)	Per Pupil Spending	Funding per EL student formula	Selection of State Board Members	Selection of Chief State School Officer
State 1	New	South	90%	212%	8%	107,547	R	D	D	Clinton	Biden	$11,432	FTE Allocation: 17 instructional positions per 1000 EL students	Governor appoints; General Assembly confirms	Governor appoints
State 2	New	North central	95%	162%	6%	27,240	R	R	R	Trump	Trump	$11,150	Flat Weight: 0.22 Funding is capped at 5 years.	Governor appoints; Senate confirms	Governor appoints
State 3	New	Mid-Atlantic	117%	491%	8%	9,690	D	D	D	Clinton	Biden	$14,713	FTE allocation: 1 unit for each 250 full time students enrolled.	Governor appoints; Senate confirms	Governor appoints
State 4	New	South:	60%	491%	3%	9,572	R	R	R	Trump	Trump	$8,702	Not found in statute or regulation.	Governor appoints 5; lt. gov. appoints 2; speaker of the house appoints 2	SBE appoints
State 5	New	South-	89%	139%	7%	90,595	R	R	R	Trump	Biden	$14,713	Flat Weight: 2.5892	Governor appoints, with consent of Senate	Partisan Ballot
State 6	Established	Southwest:	71%	62%	17%	892,000	R	R	R	Trump	Trump	$9,016	Multiple Weights: (1) Students classified as EL: 0.10 (2) Students classified as EL who are in a bilingual education program using a dual language immersion/one-way or two-way program: 0.15 (3) Any student in a bilingual education program using a dual language immersion/two-way program model: 0.05	Partisan ballot	Governor appoints
State 7	Established	West	19%	19%	20%	1,397,841	D	D	D	Clinton	Biden	$11,495	Flat weight: .20	Governor appoints with advice and consent of Senate	Nonpartisan ballot

New Immigrant Destinations

State One

  State One's SEA is distinguished by a hierarchical leadership structure that prioritizes collaboration among diverse policy actors in the policymaking process. The SEA is dedicated to equity and serving all learners, using a data-driven and research-based approach to fulfill its mission. The state's education agenda centers around cultivating a "life ready graduate" profile and advancing the deeper learning initiative to foster student-centered learning experiences. Furthermore, State One places significant emphasis on recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality educators to ensure a well-prepared workforce that can address the diverse needs of its 1.3 million students.

  SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State One SEA employs over 700 people to serve over 1.3 million students. The SEA follows a top-down leadership structure. One participant remarked there is "a lot of top-down leadership and influence at the [state] DoE." The Agency is led by the chief state school officer of public instruction. Below the chief state school officer is the Chief of Staff, who oversees three deputy superintendents of divisions, followed by eight assistant superintendents who oversee the Agency's departments, and 16 directors who oversee the Offices. The Agency houses EL-related services within the Department of Student Assessment, Accountability, and ESEA Programs. Specifically related to EL services and policies, State One employed three people at the time of data collection.

  State Education Policy Actors. In State One, a variety of key education policy actors contribute to the policymaking process. Interviews with SEA employees revealed that the State One education policy agenda is developed through a collaborative process that involves interest

holders such as educators, parents, administrators, and policymakers. This process typically includes "research, data analysis, public input, engagement, and legislative action." Participants explained that the State One Board of Education, the State One SEA employees, and the Governor's office all play significant roles in shaping the state's education policy agenda.

Within the SEA, several key policy actors were identified, including the chief state school officer, deputy and assistant superintendents, and division and department leads. As one SEA employee noted, "Division and department leads appear to be influential policy leaders." However, another employee observed, "I don't think of all [state] SEA employees as policy actors. Some hold a lot more influence in policymaking than others."

Further, participants revealed that the State One School Board of Education (SBE) members serve as the "state's regulatory-making authority" and are "crucial" policy actors. One employee stated, "The Board of Education... is our regulatory-making authority and regulatory body... we are two separate entities, so I, of course, would consider them interest holders in our work as well to make sure that what we're doing is also aligning with the board's vision for public education in State One." The SEA website states that although SBE members are appointed by a governor, their tenure is based on their own appointment cycles, which may not align with the governor who appointed them. Further, participants revealed that SBE members collaborate with multiple interest holders to develop a comprehensive plan outlining priorities and goals for the state's education system.

The state governor and their team are also significant education policy actors in State One. As one SEA employee remarked, "as an executive agency, we really follow the [policy] lead of the governor... ultimately the governor's team gets to decide what he would like to carry

the torch on." Further, SEA participants remarked that the SEA collaborates with the Office of the Attorney General for legal advice and interpretation.

Furthermore, the SEA works with the state General Assembly members, aides, and education advocacy organizations. SEA participants explained the State One General Assembly plays a role in developing and implementing education policy through the legislative process, which involves "introducing and passing education-related bills." Additionally, education advocacy organizations are considered important state policy actors. One SEA participant explained, "we [SEA] do really leverage our relationships and partnerships with those [advocacy] groups, who have within themselves, the ability to collect and synthesize information from teachers on the field and administrators and leaders." Lastly, participants remarked how parents contribute to shaping policymaking and the SEA agenda, particularly in areas such as critical race theory and equity issues.

What's on the Agenda: SEA Issue Attentiveness. In State One, the state board members created a "comprehensive plan" that outlines *their* priorities. The first priority of the State One State Board is to provide high-quality and effective learning environments for all students. This includes "ensuring all students have access to the resources and support needed to succeed" in their education. This includes providing resources for students with special needs, increasing funding for schools in low-income areas, and implementing policies that support student success.

The second priority of the state board is to advance policies that increase the number of candidates entering the teaching profession and support the recruitment, development, and retention of well-prepared and skilled teachers and school leaders. This includes providing incentives for individuals to pursue careers in teaching, supporting the professional development

of current teachers, and implementing policies that support the retention of highly qualified teachers.

The third priority of the Board is to ensure the successful implementation of a "life ready graduate" and the accountability system for school quality as embodied in the revisions to the Standards of Accreditation in 2015. According to one SEA employee, the State One education agenda centers on "this initiative."[2] This profile outlines the skills and knowledge sets the state expects its public school graduates to have upon leaving the education system. The employee stated that the profile includes the "five Cs," which are critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship. These five areas are the main focus of the education agenda in the state and are prominently featured on the department's website and materials.

To achieve these priorities, the Agency has implemented several strategies, including a focus on data collection and research and promoting equity for all learners. These strategies are not standalone priorities but are integral to achieving the official priorities set by the State Board. The focus on data collection and research is aimed at informing policy decisions and producing recommendations and guidance documents that support educators in the field. According to one SEA participant, "there's been a lot of interest in data collection, getting a better sense of where practices currently exist in reality, to help us inform future policy decisions." Another employee stated that the Agency also conducts project-oriented work such as research, convening work groups, and collecting information to produce reports, recommendations, or guidance documents that support the education agenda and educators in the field.

Further, the State One SEA emphasizes the importance of "equity" and "serving all learners" in its approach to the official priorities. This includes addressing the achievement gap,

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[2] The official name of this policy initiative has been removed to protect the state anonymity.

which has been included in the state accountability system "for the first time in 20 years." According to one employee, "The department is obviously, part of its mission and vision is to serve all learners, so I mean, our focus is really kind of equity-oriented and making sure that we're serving the entire K-12." The department's recent takeover of oversight of early childhood and child care also expands its focus to pre-K-12 education. As the employee further elaborated, "making sure that we're equitably serving all populations." It was emphasized by multiple participants that the department does not have a particular focus or emphasis on any one student group or subset. One employee stated, "and in that, we touch on all of the different subsets and student demographics, but no particular focus or emphasis on any one subset or student group."

Additionally, the Agency is focusing on the concept of "deeper learning" and has reframed its standards to focus on this concept. The employee stated, "We are doing a lot of branding and work around State One, 'Is For Learners,' and really focusing on deeper learning competencies across the State, and had really reframed our standards in the State to really hone in on this thing that we called deeper learning". According to the SEA website the deeper learning initiative encourages teachers to facilitate profound learning, by designing genuine opportunities, comprehending their pupils' contexts and requirements, emphasizing significant concepts and benchmarks, and presenting a guiding inquiry to their learners. The deeper learner initiative does not clearly identify how this serves or should be applied to specific student groups like ELs, but does encourage educators to be mindful of students' backgrounds and specific needs.

In summary, the State One State Board and SEA have outlined a comprehensive plan focusing on three main priorities: providing high-quality learning environments, increasing the number of well-prepared educators, and implementing a "life ready graduate" profile. These

priorities are supported by an emphasis on data collection, research, and equity, which are considered essential elements in achieving the stated objectives. Additionally, the state has introduced the deeper learning initiative, which encourages educators to adopt a more student-centered approach. By addressing these priorities and initiatives, the state aims to develop an education system that meets the diverse needs of its student population.

State Two

The State Two SEA Organizational Structure reveals a complex landscape encompassing governance, policy focus, and equity concerns. The hierarchical leadership structure and significant influence from the governor's office potentially limit agency autonomy in the policymaking process. The primary policy focus is centered around a career-oriented initiative that aims to promote equity and enhance socioeconomic vitality. Nevertheless, equity remains a contentious issue, with differing opinions on its prominence within the department's agenda and priorities. Recognizing the need for change, the State Two SEA has shifted from a compliance-only approach to an improvement orientation, fostering collaboration and support between state agencies and local schools. Despite this progress, challenges in addressing equity continue to persist due to a lack of structure and the presence of political and structural barriers.

SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State Two SEA employs around 200 people to serve over 500,000 students. The State Two SEA is led by the Governor appointed Chief State School Officer. The Agency has three subdivisions: Learning and Results, Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation, and Finance and Support Services. EL education is housed in the Federal Programs Office within the Learner and Results Division. There is one specific employee within State Two who is responsible for EL-related issues.

State Education Policy Actors. In State Two, the creation of education policy involves a collaboration of various internal and external actors. State Two SEA employees work closely with external actors, including the Federal Government, the state governor, and their team, the state legislature, local school districts, and teachers.

The SEA participants in this study indicated that the State Two's policymaking process is heavily guided by hierarchical leadership structure. An Agency employee stated, "Anything that I want to create or push has to go all the way up the chain. It used to only have to go to the Deputy Director. Now, it has to go to the [Agency] Director, and then she, I think, even sends it up the chain further. I think she sends it up to the Governor's office." Further, this hierarchical structure is further reinforced by the Governor's appointment of the Agency chief, which some participants insisted limits the Agency's "autonomy."

This governance structure contrasts with other states like State Four, Five, and Seven where the SEA is a constitutional agency, and the state governor does not have direct control over the SEA leadership. One SEA employee illustrated this relationship:

> What I found from moving from [a different state] was the structure of government was quite different, and so that's taken some getting used to for me. Because it's very top-down here, so the governor appoints the director of the Department of Ed, as well as the school board here. So there's little autonomy apart from the governor, so if the political winds change, then the departments...And [the state I used to work in] was the opposite because their Department of Ed was a constitutional agency alongside what the governor... The governor doesn't have direct control. The board is elected by the people of the State who hire the chief state school officer, which is the director. And so they can fire the chief state school officer, but it has to be by the board, and the board enacts all of the standards and all of this.

The strong connection between the Governor's office and the SEA in State Two is further corroborated by another SEA employee who stated that Agency leadership "works closely with the governor's office to set the state's policy agenda and establish agency priorities." Another

employee added, "we work at the behest of the governor," further highlighting the relationship between the Governor and the SEA.

What's on the Agenda? SEA Issue Attentiveness. According to State Two participants, a career-oriented initiative was the primary agenda focus within the State Two SEA, spearheaded by the Governor. This initiative aims to create "equity initiatives for all" to "increase socioeconomic vitality" and "remove barriers to enter the workforce". Further, it "targets to have 70% of the population have some sort of training beyond high school by 2025". Other priorities mentioned in the interviews with SEA employees, such as COVID-19 recovery, accelerating learning, closing achievement gaps, and social emotional-behavioral health, are "addressed and organized under the career-oriented initiative" as this initiative was the SEA's "main priority". It should be noted that this initiative is similar to those found in State One and State Two which focus on 'all students', but fails to specify how it will impact specific student groups like ELs.

Additionally, the issue of equity was a prominent topic among participants; however, their opinions varied widely regarding its actual presence on the Agency's agenda and priorities. One employee described how equity was traditionally viewed in the Agency "through the lens of 2010, that period that's distilled through the standards-based reform movement of time, so this is prior to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. So standards were still kind of a big piece, accountability". This statement reflects the traditional understanding of equity in education, which emphasizes the importance of setting standards, ensuring accountability, and monitoring progress.

Another participant highlighted a recent "policy window" for equity which has "now closed" and noted that there has been a lack of structure in addressing the issue within the agency. The participant opined that the lack of structure in the Agency and consensus on what

equity means to the Agency has made it difficult to achieve meaningful progress in the realm of equity. Additionally, the participant expressed a pessimistic outlook and speculated that change would only come about through one of two scenarios: a change in the political party or a large catalyst requiring action. This perspective suggests that the issue of equity has not been adequately addressed by the SEA, and that there may exist significant structural and political barriers to making substantial progress in this area. The differing perspectives on equity highlight the need for a more cohesive and focused approach to address this issue within the department. As the State Two SEA works to achieve its priorities, including the career-oriented initiative, addressing equity must be a central concern to ensure that all students, including specific student groups like ELs, benefit from these efforts.

To meet these education priorities, the State Two SEA has recognized the importance of adopting specific approaches, including shifting from a compliance-only approach to improvement orientation and addressing (in)equity. Compliance with federal regulations is crucial for the State Two SEA, as it ensures the necessary funding and resources are available for their operations. However, one State Education Agency participant emphasized that compliance should be seen as a "starting point rather than the ultimate goal."

Participants argued that the State Two SEA has shifted its perspective on compliance, moving from a heavy-handed approach to one that emphasizes improvement and support. This approach involves "identifying schools' strengths, areas for improvement, and non-compliant areas." While compliance remains essential, particularly for specific student groups like English learners, it is crucial to focus on a supportive improvement process that fosters a more collaborative relationship between state agencies and local schools. Compliance also plays a critical role in building upon the state's priorities, ensuring that initiatives and programs adhere to

federal regulations, ultimately securing necessary funding and support for their implementation. By focusing on compliance in the context of equity, the State Two SEA can work to ensure that federal regulations concerning specific student populations, such as ELs, are not only met but exceeded. In doing so, it can contribute to the development of targeted strategies that benefit all students, including ELs, within the broader career-oriented initiative framework.

State Three

The State Three SEA has embraced a collaborative approach to policymaking. Working closely with multiple interest holders, including the Governor, advisory boards, and various educational organizations, the SEA seeks to shape education policies, laws, and regulations that reflect a shared vision for a more inclusive and equitable education system. Driven by recent events and legislation, the Agency has made equity a central agenda item, acknowledging the need to dismantle systemic barriers and address the root causes of inequality. To ensure the success of every learner, the State Three SEA has identified key priorities that include engaged and informed interest holders, rigorous standards and assessments, high-quality early learning opportunities, equitable access to excellent educators, and safe and healthy learning environments.

SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State Three SEA employs around 300 people to serve over 120,000 students. The State Three SEA is led by the Governor appointed Chief State School Officer. Below the CSSO are the Deputy Secretary, Chief Equity Officer, and Chief of Staff/Policy Analyst. The Agency has five subdivisions, Student Support, Workforce Support, Early Childhood Support, Operations Support, and the Academic Support Division. EL education is situated within the Academic Support Division. At the time of data collection, the SEA employed two EL specialists.

State Education Policy Actors. According to State Three participants, policymaking involves "multiple interest holders", including the Governor, the newly established Governor's Advisory Board, the State Board of Education members, the Professional Standards Board, the State Three Interscholastic Athletic Association, and the broader community, which encompasses higher education institutions, local LEA parents and teachers, and education think tanks such as WestEd. The State Three SEA website acknowledges this collaborative approach, stating that education policies, laws, and regulations are often "developed in partnership" with these interest holders. Discussions with SEA employees helped to clarify their roles and responsibilities in setting the education agenda. Several participants highlighted the significant influence of the State Governor, noting that their vision and priorities play a pivotal role in shaping education priorities. One participant remarked that the newly created Governor's Advisory Council was created to help implement the Governors strategic education plan. This council is "made up of a variety of different people in positions, both in education and outside of education" and all members are selected by the Governor. Further, the state Governor appoints the CSSO, and most recently the Governor created a new position in the SEA, Chief Equity Officer.

What's on the Agenda? SEA Issue Attentiveness. The State Three SEA has a mission to ensure that "every learner in the state is ready for success in college, career, and life." To achieve this goal, the Agency has identified several key priorities, including: "engaged and informed families, schools, districts, communities, and other agencies; rigorous standards, instruction, and assessments; high-quality early learning opportunities; equitable access to excellent educators; and safe and healthy environments conducive to learning." SEA participants emphasized that the Agency is "dedicated to working closely with all interest holders to create a comprehensive and inclusive education system that prepares students for the future."

Like State One and Two, State Three's SEA has placed a strong emphasis or "push" on equity in recent years. This shift, initiated by the state governor and the commissioner, has been influenced by events such as "George Floyd's murder and related legislation, including a bill on black history in schools." Since 2020, the Agency has appointed a Chief Equity Officer and established clear objectives centered on equity in K-12 education. Consequently, the Agency is defining equity more tangibly through efforts like "developing resources to fill gaps in black history within social studies curricula and implementing culturally responsive education."

Another SEA employee clarified that "equity is often thought of as simply giving everyone the same resources, but this is not always the most effective way to achieve equity." This employee used the metaphor of giving everyone the same size shoe, which doesn't account for different foot sizes, as an example of how equity must be tailored to the specific needs of different populations. Agency employees recognized that addressing and dismantling systemic barriers is essential to achieving equity. As one employee explained, "We need to look at the systems and structures in place that have led to the current disparities in educational outcomes and work to dismantle them. It's not just about providing equal resources; it's about addressing the root causes of inequality."

Other agenda issues that were highlighted by participants is the governor's literacy initiative. One participant explained, "this new governor has big picture priorities. One is literacy. His big thing is the idea that every kid needs to be reading on grade level by third grade." Participants explained that this initiative is supported by the Chief State School Officer, however, internally in the SEA "everybody's all over the board about what that [literacy] means and if they agree or not, but nonetheless, that's his [the governor] vision." Further, another

participant remarked that the Agency "wants to put most of their energy on early literacy initiatives in order to boost" the Governor's initiative.

State Four

The State Four SEA consists of a hierarchical organizational structure. The education policymaking process is complex, involving various policy actors like SEA employees, State Board of Education members, state legislators, and the state governor. The State Board of Education holds a critical role in forming the state's education agenda, as they are responsible for developing a five-year strategic plan with six universal education goals aimed at improving educational opportunities for all students.

SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State Four SEA employs around 400 people to serve 450,000 students. The State Four SEA is organized in a hierarchical manner, with the appointed Chief State School Officer at the helm and four executives "chiefs" of divisions. The divisions include 1) Early Childhood, Elementary Education, and Reading, 2) Secondary Education, Career and Technical Education, and Professional Development, 3) Special Education, and 4) School improvement. Four persons within the Agency are responsible for EL education which is housed in the Early Childhood, ELementary Education and Reading Division. One participant explained, "EL isn't big. It isn't a standalone office. We are kind of mixed in all over the place…even though we're not necessarily a team, we've created a team because we're all focused on the same group of students".

State Education Policy Actors. During extensive interviews conducted with Agency employees in State Four, participants shed light on the myriad policy actors involved in the intricate process of crafting education priorities. These key policy actors include SEA employees, State Board of Education members, State Four state legislators and the state

governor. Collectively, these actors constitute a diverse group of interest holders, each of whom exerts their own unique influence on the policymaking process within the SEA.

The State Board of Education members, in particular, occupy a critical position in the formation of State Four's education agenda. According to the SEA website, SBE members are appointed by the Governor. Further, these Members are tasked with appointing the State Four chief state school officer. The SBE members are tasked with devising a comprehensive five-year strategic plan that informs the Agency's annual goals and priorities. In other words, the State Board of Education members are the primary driving force behind the policy initiatives that emerge within the Agency.

In addition to the State Board of Education members, State Four state legislators and the state governor also play significant roles in education policymaking. As elected officials, they have the power to "propose, support, or oppose" policy measures, thereby shaping the overall direction of the state's education system. According to one participant, the "yearly" agenda items "come generally from the higher levels...what they call the chief levels here." However, ideas for policy initiatives are often "percolated at the, I'd say lower, to mid-lower, mid-levels," as one participant pointed out. This statement highlights the fact that while the upper echelons of the Agency are responsible for setting the overarching agenda, input from various levels within the organization is crucial for the development of well-rounded and effective policies.

In summary, the education policymaking process in the state of State Four involves a complex interplay of multiple external SEA policy actors. State Board of Education members, state legislators, the governor, all contribute their unique perspectives and expertise to the formation and execution of State Four's education policies. The resulting dynamic fosters a rich

environment for policy innovation and ensures that a wide range of interest holders interests are considered

What's on the Agenda? SEA Issue Attentiveness. According to the Agency website, "[state] is dedicated to improving the educational opportunities for all students and ensuring a bright future for every child through the Board's strategic goals that are centered on achievement on every level of State Four's public education system, including districts, schools, classrooms, and individual students." State Board members release a five-year strategic plan with six goals. These goals include:

1) Ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency and make progress in all areas assessed.

2) Guarantee that every student graduates from high school and is prepared for success in college and career.

3) Provide every child with access to a high-quality early childhood education program.

4) Ensure that every school is staffed with effective teachers and leaders.

5) Support every community in using a world-class data system to improve student outcomes.

6) Raise the rating of every school and district to a C or higher, indicating effective performance.

Similarly to States One and State Two, several State Four SEA employees remarked that the agenda items are to "serve all students". When pressed on how these agenda items service specific student populations like ELs, one participant explained. "Our chief state school officer is fabulous about recognizing our ELs need support. When [CSSO] says "all kids", she means "all kids." However when asked how these strategic goals are differentiated for specific student groups such as ELs, participants reiterated that these agenda items are for "all students".

As with other states such as State 2, 5, and 7, every participant in this state expressed concern about a SEA issue: COVID-19. One participant stated, "I feel that many things have been put on hold due to the pandemic, and our primary focus has been on ensuring that students are adequately served in general."

In conclusion, the State Board of Education in State Four has developed a five-year strategic plan with six goals aimed at improving educational opportunities for all students. The agenda emphasizes serving all students, which raises concerns about how it caters to specific student groups like ELs. Furthermore, similar to other states, COVID-19 has emerged as a significant issue of concern for everyone in the SEA, with a focus on ensuring that students receive adequate support during these challenging times

State Five

State Five's collaborative policymaking process involves multiple internal and external actors, ensuring education policies are developed with diverse perspectives and responsive to interest holders' needs. The SEA prioritizes flexibility, local control, holistic student support, and reduced emphasis on high-stakes testing. Their education agenda aims to reimagine K-12 education and provide access to 21st-century learning opportunities for all students.

SEA Organizational Structure. The State Five SEA employs nearly 400 people to serve over 1.6 million students. The SEA is led by the elected Chief State School Officer. The SEA has five Divisions including, Policy and Charter Schools, Assessment and Accountability, Teaching and Learning, Federal Programs, and School Improvement. EL education falls under the Division of Federal Programs. Specifically related to EL services, State Five employed nine people at the time of data collection. The duties of these employees encompassed a unique range of responsibilities and tasks that are specific to this state context, and it is important to note that

they carry additional responsibilities beyond what is typical for their roles in other states. These include the distribution of EL funding, strict adherence to state and federal regulations, and serving as essential liaisons for academic support (math, science, and English language arts) for EL teachers in specific regions throughout the state.

State Education Policy Actors. The policymaking process in State Five is a complex and collaborative effort that involves a diverse group of internal and external policy actors. According to SEA employees, this group includes a range of external policy actors, such as the US Department of Education, the state legislature, the state governor, the Board of Regents, the Professional Standards Commissions, parent, teacher, and student advisory boards, various advocacy organizations, Association groups, teacher-specific organizations, and local LEA superintendents.

Rather than being created unilaterally, the education agenda in State Five is developed collaboratively among multiple policy actors. As one SEA employee explained, "there is no unilateral decision-making in [State Five] education policy." However, the office of policy and external affairs, in conjunction with the chief state school officer, plays a significant role in developing the agenda and setting priorities for the state. This involves "working closely with the state governor, the state legislature, and the Board of Education with the goal of a clear understanding of the chief state school officer's vision" for the Agency and the State.

The collaborative nature of the policymaking process in State Five is reflected in the involvement of numerous external policy actors who provide input, guidance, and feedback, as well as advocate for the interests of their respective constituencies. For instance, the state legislature, the governor, and the Board of Education are responsible for enacting laws and regulations related to education, while advocacy organizations and foundations represent various

groups and work to influence education policy by lobbying policymakers and conducting research.

In addition to these external actors, local LEA superintendents and teacher-specific organizations play a critical role in implementing education policies at the local level and providing feedback to policymakers on their effectiveness. As one employee noted, "superintendents from larger LEAs have a lot of influence on the policymaking process because they represent a large number of students and have a lot of expertise in implementing policies."

Overall, the collaborative and multi-interest holder approach to policymaking in State Five ensures that education policies are developed through a range of perspectives and are responsive to the needs of students, teachers, and communities across the state. The involvement of external policy actors, such as the U.S. Department of Education, the state legislature, and local LEA superintendents, in addition to advocacy organizations and foundations, ensures that education policies are informed by a diverse range of interests and perspectives.

What's on the Agenda? SEA issue attentiveness. What's on the Agenda? SEA Issue Attentiveness. When I spoke with State Five leaders, I was referred to the official State Five agenda items, which they referred to as "the roadmap." The document, A Roadmap to Reimagining K-12 Education, was described by SEA employees as the "formal priorities of the department." These priorities were created by the chief state school officer "post-COVID" to start at the beginning of the 21/22 school year. The priorities included:

1. Ensure that every child, regardless of their location, has access to a comprehensive education.

2. Adopt an approach to teaching and learning that is tailored to the needs of individual students, rather than their grade level.

3. Create several paths to graduation, so that every student has the opportunity to pursue their desired career or educational pathway.

4. Guarantee that every high school graduate is prepared for success in post-secondary education or the workforce.

5. Continue to reduce the emphasis on high-stakes testing and provide teachers with more formative assessment tools.

6. Establish an accountability system that reflects the unique priorities of local communities and supports schools.

7. Modernize the state's K-12 funding formula to ensure that all schools receive adequate resources.

8. Provide access to a 21st-century classroom for every teacher and student, whether in a physical school building or through remote learning.

9. Ensure that flexibility is a standard expectation, rather than a privilege.

10. Revamp the teacher evaluation system and elevate the teaching profession to attract and retain the best educators.

In addition to the State Five 'roadmap priorities', participants identified several key areas of focus that serve as supporting measures to achieve the official priorities. These supporting measures included addressing student barriers, balancing testing, and maintaining local control.

To ensure that every child has access to a comprehensive education (Priority 1), the SEA recognized the importance of addressing non-academic barriers that may affect student achievement, specifically identifying "school closures" as an academic barrier for students in State Five. Several policy actors explained the "crucial role" that in-person instruction plays in student learning, and there is "a big push to get [all] schools back open."

To support the official priority of reducing the emphasis on high-stakes testing (Priority 5), the Agency focuses on the administration and analysis of standardized tests, including both federally mandated tests and district-level assessments. According to one employee, "This focus on testing helps to measure student progress and inform educational decision-making."

In alignment with establishing an accountability system that reflects unique priorities of local communities (Priority 6), several participants recognized the Agency's commitment to preserving local control in decision-making processes that affect schools and students. According to one employee, "The chief state school officer has emphasized the need to maintain local control and has set guidelines that the Agency should defer to local districts, even if the chief state school officer disagrees with the decisions made." Further illustrating the Agency's commitment to supporting local control, a policy actor stated, "Fighting for regular... Putting regular pressure on lawmakers to make sure that local control remains in effect, the chief state school officer specifically has set out these guidelines that we're here to serve these districts, and a lot of times, that means deferring to them, even if he doesn't agree with the decision that they approved."

In summary, the State Five SEA established a roadmap to reimagine K-12 education, focusing on ten official priorities that aimed to create a more inclusive, flexible, and supportive educational system for all students. To effectively achieve these official priorities, the Agency also emphasized supporting measures that addressed student barriers, balanced the role of testing, and maintained local control in decision-making processes.

Established Immigrant Destinations

State Six

State Six's SEA is characterized by an organizational hierarchy and structured roles for supporting multilingual learners, with a policymaking process involving a diverse range of internal and external actors. The Governor appointed Chief State School Officer plays a critical role in shaping the education agenda, using a data-driven approach to prioritize key issues, such as improving literacy for all students. The policy agenda for fiscal years 2021-2025 emphasizes strengthening the teaching and leadership pipeline, enhancing foundational literacy and numeracy skills, fostering career and college readiness, and addressing underperforming schools and achievement gaps, with the support of key enablers like accountability and legislative compliance. The significant focus on literacy across all subjects demonstrates the importance of early literacy for academic success and the value of evidence-based decision-making in education policy.

SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State Six SEA employs over 1000 people to serve over five million students. According to one participant, the SEA is organized as "a hierarchy" of authority, with the elected chief state school officer and seven deputy superintendents. EL specialists are included in the Special Populations Division. At the time of data collection, there were five employees whose roles and responsibilities were related to the education of multilingual learners. The ESL Program Coordinator oversees all aspects of English language education, which falls under educator certification and preparation. The Bilingual Program Coordinator manages the bilingual education allotment fund and supports Title III grants. The Dual Language Program Coordinator supports and manages dual language education programs with an asset-based model for student outcomes. The Title III Coordinator administers Title III grants, and The Director of EL Support oversees the work of the Bilingual, ESL, and Dual Language Program Coordinators.

State Education Policy Actors. State Six's education policymaking process involves numerous internal and external actors. The chief state school officer and seven deputy superintendents are internal policy actors, while the Dual language Guidance Committee serves as a significant policy actor specific to EL policymaking. External policy actors include the state governor, state legislature, advocacy groups, researchers, regional service centers, and LEA superintendents.

Interest holders in the education policymaking process have lauded the chief state school officer for his intelligence, authority, and leadership in shaping State Six's education agenda. Despite lacking an education background, the chief state school officer is a data-driven individual with a "laser vision" that informs the Agency's priorities. One participant described the chief state school officer as "an amazing chief state school officer....He's one of the top five smartest people I've ever encountered in my life." Another participant noted that the chief state school officer holds immense authority and is responsible for setting the priorities of the Agency. Participants emphasized the chief state school officer's importance in prioritizing EL issues, given the growing number of English Language Learners in State Six.

The State Six State Board of Education officially creates the policy agenda and priorities, but the chief state school officer is the "real person" behind State Six's education agenda. The chief state school officer identifies the needs of the state through a data-driven approach and consultation with interest holders. External policy actors also play a crucial role in shaping State Six's education agenda, with specific legislators holding leadership positions on the Senate's Education Committee or having a personal investment in EL issues.

In summary, State Six's education policymaking process involves numerous internal and external actors, including the chief state school officer, the Dual language Guidance Committee,

the state governor, state legislature, advocacy groups, researchers, regional service centers, and LEA superintendents. While the State Six State Board of Education is responsible for creating the policy agenda and priorities, the chief state school officer plays a critical leadership role in shaping State Six's education agenda. The interest holders' insights provide valuable knowledge into the importance of the chief state school officer's authority and leadership in determining the priorities of the state.

What's on the Agenda? Issue attentiveness. Policy actors detailed the priorities and strategic enablers of the chief state school officer as outlined on the State Six website. The priorities are intended to last for a specific amount of fiscal years and are released to the public in June of the year before they are to take effect. The priorities and enablers for fiscal years 2021-2025 included:

- Priority 1: Strengthen the Teaching and Leadership Pipeline
- Priority 2: Enhance Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- Priority 3: Foster Career and College Readiness for High School Students
- Priority 4: Address Underperforming Schools and Achievement Gaps
- Enabler 1: Enhance Accountability and Performance Measures for Districts and Campuses
- Enabler 2: Ensure Legislative Compliance and Inform Policy Development

While the Agency highlighted four priorities, during interviews, participants emphasized one specific priority: literacy. One participant stated plainly, "For the chief state school officer, the top priority has been improving literacy for all students. It's not just his preference, he has a laser vision... Again, he is incredibly data-driven. So, as kids are only 40% of kids are reading on

target, and he is not... He doesn't like that. So, we have a mission and a vision to increase reading."

Another participant reiterated, "his [the chief state school officer] priority right now is or has been, since he's been here, is literacy, improving literacy for all kids." The chief state school officer's focus on improving literacy for all children is a "reflection of the importance of early literacy for academic success." With the implementation of reading academies in English and bi-literacy strands, as mentioned by the participant, "there's also, like I said, a bi-literacy strand for that," the chief state school officer aims to provide teachers with the necessary tools to teach reading and language skills effectively to all students.

Moreover, the expectation that all K-3 teachers, including those in theater and PE, learn the science of reading within a specific time frame reinforces the idea that literacy is a crucial Agency priority. According to another participant, "all teachers, K through three, whether you're a theater teacher or a PE teacher, need to learn the science of reading," which highlights the significance of literacy across all subjects.

State Seven

State Seven's SEA operates under the leadership of an elected chief state school officer and seven deputy chief state school officers, who oversee seven branches. In the realm of state education policy-making, various actors, such as State Board of Education members, state legislators and aides, the state governor, non-profit education research centers, academic researchers, and advocacy organizations, play a significant role. The State Board of Education holds the primary responsibility for policymaking, while the chief state school officer creates yearly initiatives that direct the Agency's resources and day-to-day operations. The Agency's main objective is to achieve "school transformation" and provide a high-quality education to all

students, including multilingual learners. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has created competing demands for the Agency and increased pressure to prioritize the State Board of Education's priorities concerning accountability and state assessments, the Agency remains committed to addressing crucial issues like mental health support, anti-bias education, and closing the digital divide, emphasizing the importance of equity and innovation in education policy.

SEA Organizational Structure. According to the SEA website, the State Seven SEA employs over 2700 people to serve nearly six million students. The organizational structure of State Seven is "very different from other departments of education because it is not under the umbrella of the [state] governor". Another participant explained that the chief state school officer of the State Seven SEA is a "constitutionally elected officer, and the SEA is a stand-alone entity". Other participants describe this governance structure as one that has been attempted to change through state elections; however, "voters have rejected it every single time" and that the Agency is "best kept as a free-standing, independent body". Underneath the chief state school officer of Education are seven deputy chief state school officers who lead seven 'branches'. Within these branches are 22 divisions.

EL education falls within the Opportunities for All Branch and under the Division of Multilingual Support. Within the Multilingual Support Division, "which was established in 2010-2011 under the chief state school officer at the time, there are several departments, including the Language Policy and Leadership office, Title III, Migrant Education Program, and Technical Assistance and Monitoring. In total, over 40 people are employed within the Multilingual Support Division. As one participant remarked, "we have 1.2 million English learners. So we need 40 people." It's important to note that the Multilingual Support Division in

this state is quite unique compared to other states in this study, as they have over 40 employees specifically dedicated to EL support. In contrast, the other states in the study have only 1-9 EL specific employees. The responsibilities of those within the Multilingual Support Division range from dissemination of federal and state funds, compliance, overseeing the state seal of biliteracy programs, development of EL state standards, and technical LEA support.

State Education Policy Actors. State Seven's education policymaking process involves numerous actors, including those internal and external of the SEA. Within the SEA, the chief state school officer plays a key role as the head of the Agency. Further, branch leaders play a "crucial position" in policymaking when bringing forth ideas and updates to the chief state school officer. Specific to EL policy actors- folks that have been at the department for many years were cited by other participants as having "particular policy[making] power" and influence among Agency leadership.

Adjacent to the Agency, key policy actors include the State Board of Education members. Ten of the 11 members are selected by the state governor and serve for four years. The 11th member is a student member who serves for one academic year. The duties of the state board include appointing one deputy and three associate superintendents upon the nomination of the chief state school officer and the adoption of textbooks for use in grades one through eight. Furthermore, according to the SBE website, the SBE members have significant policy influence over issues of regulation, standards, curriculum, waivers, assessment, district reorganization, charter schools, ESSA, funding allocation, and improvement plans.

External to the Agency, state legislators and aides, as well as the state governor, are influential policy actors. Non-profit education research centers like WestEd and the Learning Policy Institute also play a key role. Further, participants identified key academic researchers

from universities in the state as being policy actors and influential specifically on topics of ELs. Finally, advocacy organizations that have operated and organized around EL education in the state for over three decades were identified as being important state policy actors.

Based on the interview data with state education policy actors, it appears that there are several entities involved in creating the education agenda for State Seven. The State Seven State Board of Education members take on the responsibility for developing the education policy as one participant explained, "the State Board of Education really is the body that develops policy." Further the Agency's website further corroborates this statement by clearly stating, "By statute, the SBE is the governing and policy-making body of the State". Policy actors explained that the State Board is influenced by various interest holders, including state legislators and the governor's office. While not holding the primary responsibility, state legislators play a crucial role in shaping the education policy agenda in State Seven, as the State Board relies on their support when pursuing education issues through legislation. As one SEA leader emphasized, "the legislature is key."

While the SBE and the legislature play key roles in the formulation of legislation, the chief state school officer of the Agency creates yearly initiatives that drive the Agency's resources and the day-to-day work of the employees. These initiatives are often outlined during the chief state school officer election and are further elaborated and expanded after their election in collaboration with the SBE and other interest holders.

What's on the Agenda? SEA issue Attentiveness. The mission of the State Seven SEA, as stated on their website, is to provide a world-class education to all students, from early childhood to adulthood, through innovative collaboration with educators, schools, parents, and communities. They aim to prepare students for success in a highly connected and multicultural

and multilingual world. Notably, the State Seven SEA is the only agency in this study to explicitly mention the importance of multilingualism in their mission statement. To attain its objectives, the present chief state school officer of the Agency formulated an educational agenda focused on "school transformation." As part of this endeavor, the SEA pinpointed various priority areas, including community schools, professional learning to support teachers and mentors, mental health support, universal pre-kindergarten, universal meals, anti-bias education to prevent, address, and eliminate racism and bias, expanded learning programs that promote education beyond the classroom, a task force to enhance Black student achievement, literacy and mitigating learning loss, and closing the digital divide.

Several participants noted that attending to the State Board of Education's priorities creates "competing demands" of the Agency. Specifically, several participants explained how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic added increased pressure on the Agency to respond to the SBE's priorities around "accountability and state assessments". One participant remarked specifically about the SBE's priority around state assessments, "I've seen the State Board President a lot of talk about learning loss and assessments. So they're concerned…Are we [Agency] gonna administer the State assessment or not because of COVID? and if we are, what's that gonna look like? And if we're not, what's the policy?... All of this takes a lot of work of the Agency."

Other participants noted how the COVID-19 pandemic had inevitably shifted the demands of SBE's priorities. One participant remarked, "and on top of that [state assessments], there was all this SBE guidance around COVID and reopening schools. What does that look like? What is the guidance gonna look like? Testing, vaccinations, distance learning?" The participant went on to explain that "all these things took precedence" over the agency's other priorities.

In conclusion, the State Seven SEA has set forth an ambitious and comprehensive agenda to transform education, with a clear emphasis on multilingualism and preparing students for a diverse, interconnected world. The various priority areas outlined by the agency reflect a commitment to fostering a well-rounded, inclusive, and equitable educational environment. However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has created competing demands, as the agency grapples with challenges related to accountability, state assessments, and the safe reopening of schools. This has inevitably led to a shift in focus, with the urgent need to address pandemic-related concerns taking precedence over other priorities.

Conclusion

The new immigrant destination states' SEAs exhibit both similarities and differences in their organizational structures, policy actors, and education agendas. All states have a hierarchical leadership structure, but the extent of collaboration among policy actors varies. While States One, Three, and Five adopt a collaborative approach, involving multiple interest holders in the policymaking process, State Two's governance is notably influenced by the governor's office, potentially limiting agency autonomy. State Four's complexity in the education policymaking process lies in the involvement of various policy actors, with the State Board of Education playing a critical role in forming the state's education agenda.

In terms of education agenda focus, State One and State Four prioritize preparing students for life after graduation, with State One promoting the "life ready graduate" profile and deeper learning initiative, and State Four focusing on a five-year strategic plan with six universal education goals. State Two, on the other hand, emphasizes a career-oriented initiative aimed at promoting equity and enhancing socioeconomic vitality.

Furthermore, equity concerns were central to the mission and agenda of States One, Three, and Five. State One is committed to serving all learners using a data-driven and research-based approach, while State Three places equity as a central agenda item, acknowledging the need to address systemic barriers and root causes of inequality. State Five emphasizes flexibility, local control, and holistic student support, aiming to provide access to 21st-century learning opportunities for all students. Conversely, State Two faces challenges in addressing equity due to political and structural barriers, and equity remains a contentious issue.

In the established destination case, State Six and State Seven share similarities in the involvement of various actors in education policymaking, including State Board of Education members, state legislators, governors, advocacy groups, and researchers. Additionally, both states prioritize equity and innovation in education, addressing issues like mental health support, anti-bias education, and the digital divide. They also place significant emphasis on literacy, foundational skills, and preparing students for college and career readiness.

However, there are notable differences in the organizational structure and priorities of the two SEAs. State Seven's SEA is a stand-alone entity, not under the state governor's umbrella, and has a unique Multilingual Support Division with over 40 employees dedicated to EL support. In contrast, State Six's SEA is organized as a hierarchy with five employees whose roles and responsibilities are related to the education of multilingual learners. Another distinction is State Seven's explicit mention of multilingualism in its mission statement and its more comprehensive agenda focused on "school transformation."

State Seven's SEA also faces competing demands due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has shifted its focus towards addressing pandemic-related concerns, such as reopening schools and managing state assessments. This has inevitably led to a change in the

prioritization of some of the SEA's objectives. In summary, while both State Six and State Seven

share common goals and involve multiple actors in their policymaking process, they differ in

their organizational structures, the extent of support for multilingual learners, and the impact of

external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on their education policy priorities.

In summary, this chapter delineates the seven state site profiles that constitute the New

and Established Immigrant Destinations Cases, which serve to explicate the technical forces of

EL state policymaking. Specifically, the profiles detail the structural and organizational

characteristics of the SEA and the education agendas and priorities that exert influence over EL

policymaking. In the subsequent chapter, I interrogate the extent to which ELs are prioritized in

education policy agendas and actors across both new and established immigrant destinations.

CHAPTER FIVE

English Learner Prioritization in State Policymaking

This chapter presents an in-depth within-site analysis of the prioritization of EL

policymaking as observed through examining state policy actors and education agendas across

the seven state sites that comprise the new and established immigrant destination cases. Despite

the recognition of the importance of supporting English Learners, the question of whether they

are prioritized at the state level remains complex and varied across states. Examining the

technical elements, such as the key individuals (policy actors) and their educational agendas and

priorities, offers vital understanding of the underlying normative and political factors that

determine *who* and *what* are deemed important in state policymaking.

The first part of this chapter introduces key themes related to factors that enable or

constrain the prioritization of EL education policy actors and ELs within state education actors

and agendas in new immigrant destinations. These factors include staffing, a focus on all

students in education priorities, funding support and allocation, inclusion and influence in SEA

decision-making, and awareness of SEA staff about EL content and deficit attitudes towards ELs.

In the second part of this chapter, the attention shifts to the prioritization of ELs in established

immigrant destination states. This section highlights factors such as staffing and supportive SEA

leadership, organizational EL awareness and deficit attitudes, funding, and the sociopolitical

context.

Prioritization of EL Policymaking in New Immigrant Destinations

In the preceding chapter, the five new immigrant destination states' SEAs exhibited both

commonalities and distinctions in their organizational structures, policy agenda priorities, and

policy implementation strategies. While all states have hierarchical leadership structures, the

degree of collaboration among policy interest holders varies. States One, Three, and Five adopt a

more collaborative approach, whereas State Two's governance is significantly impacted by the governor's office, potentially limiting agency autonomy. Similarly, State Four's policymaking process is intricate due to the engagement of numerous policy actors, with the state governor appointed State Board of Education members holding a pivotal role. Student equity is a central agenda priority for States One, Three, and Five, while State Two encounters challenges in addressing equity due to political and structural obstacles. States One and Four education agenda's emphasize life readiness for students, while State Two concentrates on career-oriented initiatives. Moreover, State Two is undergoing a transition from a stringent compliance approach to an improvement-oriented model, fostering collaboration and support between the SEA and LEAs.

Building upon the examination of the organizational structures, policy agenda priorities, and policy implementation strategies of the five new immigrant destination states' SEAs, it is important to examine the factors that enable or constrain the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. These factors presented below include staffing and capacity building, program and policy focus, financial support and allocation, involvement in decision-making, and organizational awareness and attitudes.

Staffing

The role of staffing in SEAs is critical when examining the prioritization of ELs in policymaking, as highlighted by data from state policy actors. As the EL student population expands, state agencies are faced with the challenge of allocating adequate resources and personnel to address these students' unique needs. State policy actors shared insights on the effects of investments in staffing and capacity building, revealing how they can lead to improved support for ELs and staff, as well as more informed and effective policymaking. Conversely,

policy actors also noted the potential consequences of inadequate resources and personnel on the prioritization of ELs in policymaking.

Growth in the EL student population has created momentum for some new destination SEAs to build out personnel to support this new and growing student population. For example, State Two's SEA has changed its leadership and office structure to better align its efforts with EL students and staff needs. According to one SEA leader, *"Over the last year, the Department changed its leadership and office structure to better align our work and effort with indicated student and staff needs and Department priorities. This revised Agency structure allows my office to address student needs more quickly, including those of ELs."*

Similarly, State Four is making efforts to build staffing capacity at the SEA level to support ELs and their teachers. Regarding the capacity of the state agency to support ELs, the policy actor stated that their team works well despite its small size, but having additional field support would be beneficial. The policy actor remarked, "It would never hurt. As State Four continues to grow with our EL population, it would be nice to have additional field support because [participant name] and I are the only ones." Another State Four policy actor emphasized SEA support on expanding specific EL related personnel. They state "I think support is growing...I think the fact that they decided that they needed somebody [EL specific], who [then] was hired by the Department." The creation of a specific role to focus on ELs demonstrates the department's commitment to improving the education of ELs.

However, not all SEAs are keeping up with the growth, as a leader in State Three explained:

> Staffing-wise, we haven't really kept up, and then in terms of folks really realizing that we're... Over 10% of our student population are English learners, so every educator really should have a background in working with English learners so that we can be meeting the students' needs that we... It should be at the forefront of the conversation, not sort of lagging behind, 'cause if they are in your classroom, they are part of English Language Arts and mathematics and science and social studies.

Moreover, some Agencies heavily depend on one person to be the EL-specialized employee. Several participants from State Four described one employee within their Agency as a single point of failure for the Agency. This person is the "hub of the EL team," keeping team members informed and connected. She was described by her colleagues as "the core" and plays an essential role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Department. Further, she is the primary source of information flow between team members and acts as the central pin from which the EL team's web of work extends. The reliance on a single individual as a central "hub" presents a potential problem because it creates a vulnerability in the system. If this individual were to quit or be unavailable, it could result in a disruption of the flow of information and coordination among the EL team and the broader SEA concerning ELs. Having a single point of failure for all things ELs can have negative consequences and highlights the importance of ensuring a robust infrastructure for state agencies.

In conclusion, state policy actors emphasized the significance of staffing in SEAs for prioritizing ELs in policymaking. As the EL student population continues to grow, it is crucial for state agencies to allocate sufficient resources and personnel to address their unique needs. Successful efforts by some states, such as State Two and State Four, demonstrate the positive impact of investing in staffing and capacity building, leading to better support for ELs and SEA staff, as well as more informed and effective policymaking. However, the challenges faced by other states, like State Three, underscore the potential consequences of inadequate resources and personnel. Furthermore, the vulnerability created by relying on a single EL-specialized employee highlights the importance of establishing a robust infrastructure within state agencies to ensure the consistent prioritization of ELs in policymaking.

All Students Focused Education Agenda

All-student-focused education agendas may constrain SEA's efforts to prioritize the needs of ELs. ELs face unique linguistic, cultural, and academic challenges in schools, and without specific attention to these needs in policymaking, achieving equity for them may be difficult. For instance, in State One, although policies promoting equity for students are in place, such as standards of accreditation and accountability, a state education employee notes that "there are actually maybe some barriers to equity for English learners because there has not been that specific lens applied." The employee highlights the importance of applying an "English learner lens of equity to any policy" to ensure that these policies are effective in practice.

State Two's education policy agenda emphasizes fairness and inclusivity for all students. However, when asked about a specific focus on ELs, several participants indicated that the agenda does not target this population explicitly. One participant said, "They'll [State Two SEA] have an initiative where their focus is on learning gaps and opportunities... And I can't always speak to their initiatives, but it's certainly well-intentioned for all students, but I would not say it's specifically focused on English learners." Another participant mentioned that the SEA's vision does not prioritize ELs, stating, "I'm not sure they're [SEA] in particular coming up with something specific to English learners. So no, I wouldn't say there's a larger vision specifically for English learners other than thinking about all students."

Despite these concerns, some SEA leadership positions in State Two assert that the Agency prioritizes closing achievement gaps for all students, including ELs. An SEA leader explained, "I see these [agenda] items serving students and ELs very well. Our Agency's work is structured around providing and supporting evidence-based practices that improve student outcomes. This includes providing professional learning and direct coaching to district, school,

and program personnel to effectively implement evidence-based practices to close achievement gaps for not only ELs but for all students in State Two."

In State Three, employees acknowledged that they have not done a good enough job of prioritizing ELs. One employee stated, "I don't think we've done a good enough job of prioritizing ELs," and another employee reiterated this belief: "some of the largest [SEA] initiatives are really focused on high-quality instructional materials, not necessarily as it relates to English learners, just on a broader scale and currently like accelerated learning and... But again, where English learners are mentioned within, that is fairly nonexistent."

State Five presents a similar situation, with several policy actors arguing that ELs are not prioritized in the state's education agenda. One participant explained that "When you talk about priorities...ELs are not yet on the agenda of the priorities." This participant further explained that State Five's agenda priorities address "all subgroup populations," including those requiring targeted support from "federal requirements." Another participant echoed this remark, stating that State Five's goal and agenda priorities are "to ensure the success of all students." In summary, while promoting equity and success for all students is a commendable goal, all-student-focused education agendas may unintentionally constrain SEAs' efforts to prioritize the unique needs of ELs.

Funding Support and Allocation.

Participants emphasized that funding support and allocation play a crucial role in prioritizing ELs in state policymaking. One SEA participant contended that "the state's budget reflects the SEA's priorities." Adequate funding allows SEAs to offer necessary programs and interventions, while insufficient funding or resource misallocation limits the ability of SEAs to effectively address ELs' unique needs in policymaking.

Funding allocation for ELs in some states is hindered by political and normative factors. For instance, a policy actor from State Five discussed funding allocation for ELs in a state's K-12 budget, noting that the State Chief State School Officer and the SEA are reluctant to mention race and language in legislative budget requests. This reluctance may indicate a lack of prioritization for ELs' needs due to political concerns. The policy actor suggested a more structured allocation of EL funds but acknowledged that their state would not support such a proposal. They also recognized the role of districts in decision-making, stating that while individuals may agree with the need for accountability, the idea would not gain traction due to local control politics. A policy actor in State Three echoed this concern, pointing out that EL funding is political and that there was a "backlash politically that we [SEA] shouldn't be spending money on immigrants." Similarly, a policy actor in State Three echoed this concern and noted that EL funding is often politicized and that there was a "backlash politically that we [SEA] shouldn't be spending money on immigrants." These examples highlight the constraining factors in funding allocation decisions.

Despite political constraints affecting states' ability to prioritize ELs through funding, some states are taking steps to allocate sufficient funds to support ELs. For example, the State Three SEA recently prioritized EL funding as an agency priority. Previously, State Three had a "zero funding line" for ELs; the state introduced a three-year funding pilot, and due to a lawsuit during the pilot, the funding for ELs became a permanent part of the SEA funding.

Overall, funding plays a critical role in policymaking, determining the priorities of policy actors and their ability to address the needs of specific populations, including ELs. The extent to which funding can enable or constrain the prioritization of ELs in policymaking is evident in the various challenges and successes in supporting ELs within SEAs. Political factors, particularly

partisan political factors (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six), can complicate the process of funding allocation for ELs.

EL Policy Actors' Inclusion and Influence in SEA Decision Making

Inclusion and influence in decision-making processes within SEAs are essential for prioritizing ELs in education policymaking. Individuals with direct experience working with ELs can provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and needs of these students when shaping policy. However, a lack of representation and influence may result in EL-related issues being overlooked or inadequately addressed, limiting the effectiveness of SEAs.

For example, the State One SEA has three positions directly related to Title III, addressing the education of ELs. However, some participants noted a lack of representation for EL policy actors within the State One SEA leadership. A former employee who was the only person advocating for ELs at the decision-making table said, "I think the biggest hole that is there [at the SEA] now is that there is no one sitting at that decision-making table. Who is going to ask the hard question? There just isn't anybody there." This participant's position has not been replaced since their departure, highlighting the need for greater representation in such discussions. Similarly, EL-specific employees within the State Three SEA reported a constant struggle for inclusion in policy conversations and decision-making. One employee remarked, "the need to constantly be coming behind and be like, 'How do we get part of that conversation? Has anybody thought about it or ELs?... So, just the voice on the table isn't really there.'"

In contrast, a participant from State Four described a more positive experience, explaining that they are seen as the "expert" by SEA "higher-ups." They remarked, "The [SEA] higher-ups don't really necessarily come to us and say, 'This is what we wanna push out,' they

trust us as the professionals and experts with the content knowledge to say, 'This is the issue, we need to talk about it.' So, it's a little bit different than your typical agenda roll-out."

Despite this positive example, a participant from State Two expressed frustration with the lack of attention and support for EL issues within their department and the SEA overall. They felt unheard when raising concerns or making suggestions for improvement. Another participant agreed, stating that their voice was only heard when they actively informed others, but it was not actively sought. This participant also described difficulties in changing language related to ELs in the law and being restricted from offering suggestions. These experiences emphasize the systemic challenges that hinder those with direct experience working with ELs from influencing policy and decision-making, although some cases, such as State Four, demonstrate positive engagement.

In conclusion, the experiences of EL policy actors in various states highlight the importance of their inclusion and influence in SEA decision-making processes. The lack of representation and influence can result in EL-related issues being overlooked or inadequately addressed. The experiences from various policy actors demonstrate that when EL-specific personnel are involved in SEA decision-making processes, they can provide valuable insights into the unique needs of ELs. Positive examples show that some SEAs such as State Four trust EL-specific personnel as experts with content knowledge and engage with them in meaningful discussions. However, systemic challenges, such as the absence of EL representation in SEA leadership and the struggle to be included in policy conversations, still hinder the involvement of EL policy actors in decision making processes.

Organizational Awareness, EL Technical Knowledge, and Deficit Attitudes

Organizational awareness, EL technical knowledge, as well as attitudes towards them, were identified as critical factors enabling or constraining the prioritization of ELs in policymaking within SEAs. Participants remarked on the success of policy and program initiatives aimed at supporting ELs largely depends on the buy-in and technical understanding of employees within the agency, and resistance and a lack of value placed on EL initiatives can significantly impact the prioritization of English learners within the broader education state agenda.

Highlighting the factor of buy-in from SEA employees, a State Three SEA participant shared their experience with an SEA initiative focusing on the responsibility of all teachers to support ELs. They stated, "when it [the EL focused initiative] was happening, to be honest, I feel like people [at the SEA] just really ignored it and didn't put much value in it."Additionally, misconceptions about the unique needs of ELs at the SEA level can impede their prioritization in policymaking efforts. For example, the same State Three participant explained, "I don't know that there was necessarily resistance to the initiative, but I still think there's a very strong... Just an unknown... There's still so many people, even in our own work group, who believe high-quality instructional materials is it. That's gonna be the whole fix for Els. It's for everybody, and they don't realize the amount of scaffolding and support we have to do for Els." Such misconceptions can prevent the adequate allocation of resources and support for ELs, further marginalizing them within the broader education state agenda.

Furthermore, negative stereotypes and misconceptions about ELs also serve as enabling or constraining factors impacting the prioritization of ELs in policymaking. Several participants described the challenge of changing perspectives related to English Learners. Several State Four SEA employees noted how they are working towards creating a culture where language

proficiency is just"one key to success." Further, these SEA leaders noted they are trying to

change the negative stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding ELs and their families both

inside and outside of the Agency. One participant described a phone call from an LEA to the

SEA:

> I had a call from a school district, and… the person said on the phone, "I have one of them", and I'm like, "Hmm. I am like, One of them?"... And I was trying kinda send the message in a nice way… But I guess it came across badly. But I said, "Oh, ET landed in your backyard?" And I was like, "Okay, come on, mate, you're gonna have to explain this one." Like, I think then the person realized that he weren't talking to someone that was... There wasn't the person he was expecting. But it kind of made its point in its way because that's a very derogatory way of addressing a person, in my opinion.

The participant went on, "it's been a process to…change the perspective, and that's something

that all of us are involved in… We're all involved in that process to change the perspective, to

make this a truly viable workable program that is just as important."

These findings underscore the importance of organizational awareness and attitudes

significantly impact the ability of SEAs to prioritize ELs in policymaking. The examples address

resistance, misconceptions, and negative stereotypes about ELs within and external to the

agency. By doing so, policymakers and educators can ensure that ELs receive the support and

resources they need to succeed academically and socially. Failure to address the misconceptions

and deficient perspectives concerning ELs may result in the continuation of ELs not being

prioritized within the broader state education agenda.

EL Prioritization within Established Immigrant Destinations

The previous chapter outlines the organizational structure, policy actors, and education

agenda and priorities for State Seven and State Six. These SEAs share similarities as established

immigrant destination states, with both agencies focusing on the education of multilingual

learners and involving various internal and external actors in the education policymaking

process. However, the organizational structures and priorities of the two SEAs differ. State Seven's SEA is a stand-alone entity, not under the state governor's umbrella, and has a comprehensive agenda emphasizing multilingualism and addressing various priority areas, such as community schools and anti-bias education. In contrast, State Six's SEA follows a hierarchical structure and places a strong emphasis on improving literacy for all students, particularly in early grades.

While both SEAs prioritize the education of multilingual learners, their organizational structures and specific policy priorities showcase the distinct approaches each state takes in addressing the needs of their diverse student populations. Additional analysis outlined below highlight salient findings regarding factors that enable or constrain the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking in established immigrant destinations, including, organizational support and capacity, organizational awareness and deficit attitudes, funding, and the sociopolitical context.

Staffing and Leadership

The ability of SEAs to provide adequate support and build capacity is a crucial factor that enables or constrains the prioritization of ELs in policymaking. One enabling factor is the investment of SEA leadership in EL education, while another is the SEA's ability to hire and staff personnel with expertise in supporting multilingual learners. In this regard, the following sections highlight how State Six and State Seven have built capacity through staffing and leadership investment, as well as the impact of these efforts on EL policymaking.

Staffing. The State Six and State Seven SEAs have made building the capacity of their SEA personnel a top priority, specifically to support multilingual learners. These SEAs have created multiple new roles such as the Bilingual Program Coordinator, Dual Language Program Coordinator, and ESL Program Coordinator. An employee from State 7 SEA remarked that the creation of new roles were due to the "chief state school officer's initiative." In State Six the SEA

has focused on hiring directors with experience working with ELs. One participant from State Six noted, "whether these people who are new hires come from public schools or charter schools, no matter where they have experience with English learners, with emergent bilinguals, and to be sure they've had experience with what works and what doesn't work." Such initiatives demonstrate the departments' commitment to providing specialized support.

However, budget cuts can constrain the efforts of building SEA personnel capacity. The State Seven SEA has struggled with staffing since budget cuts in 2007-2008. Participants explained that the Agency now faces an increasing workload due to various shifts in educational practices. A participant explained, "we have not recuperated yet from that, and we're now in '21...when you don't grow government and every day you receive new work, at some point, there's a breaking point."

Invested SEA Leadership. Invested SEA leadership is critical for incorporating ELs into the state education agenda in a meaningful way. In State Six, the Director of English Learner Support is a key leader who is "fully vested" in ensuring support for ELs. In State Seven, the chief state school officer is instrumental in recognizing the value of bilingualism and the potential of ELs in the education system. These leaders prioritize diversity and equity, helping to create a more inclusive education system.

Several policy actors have acknowledged the significant progress that State Seven has made in incorporating ELs into the state education agenda, thanks to the work of previous chief state school officers. The state education policy actors have been praised for their efforts in defending the values of State Seven for ELs against any kind of hateful rhetoric coming from outside of the state. One participant stated, "Even when the President [Trump] put out some [negative] statements, our chief state school officer would also put out statements. They've [SEA

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Leadership] been pretty strong as far as defending what the values of State Seven are for all our students.

However, it is important to note that there are still barriers related to leadership that can impede the progress of EL prioritizing. One such barrier, as identified by participants in State Six, is the leadership turnover within the SEA. A participant noted that the change in leadership affects the integration process and progress of supporting English learners. They went on to say that having the "right relationships" with SEA leaders and being at "the right place and time" are critical for the process of systematizing the integration process of EL support and aligning it with other units in the Agency.

The importance of SEA support and capacity in prioritizing ELs in state policymaking cannot be overstated. Hiring and staffing and invested leadership are key factors in creating an infrastructure that enables prioritization of EL policymaking. The examples provided by the State Six and State Seven Departments of Education demonstrate the significant impact that invested SEA leadership and capacity building can have on the education agenda for ELs.

Organizational Awareness and Deficit Attitudes

Similar to the States in the New Destination case, SEA organizational awareness of EL's unique needs and the attitudes surrounding ELs are crucial elements to consider in the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. A key challenge faced by policy actors is the lack of understanding and recognition of ELs' specific needs among SEA leadership and employees. Below I describe the issue of organizational awareness at SEA and the concern noted by participants about deficit attitudes towards ELs and the implications of such attitudes on state EL policymaking.

SEA Awareness. One of the more significant obstacles described by participants in state EL policymaking is the lack of awareness and understanding of ELs among SEA leaders and employees. Participants in State Six have observed that ELs are not at the "forefront of people's minds" unless they actively bring attention to them. This barrier is further exacerbated by the fact that many people, including decision-makers, do not fully understand who ELs are and their specific needs. This lack of understanding extends to various program models and their goals.

Despite the challenges in raising awareness about ELs, specific EL focused initiatives such as the [EL initiative[3]] in State Seven, is a potential enabler for prioritizing their needs in state policymaking. However, the successful implementation of the initiative requires the active involvement of all staff members across various offices and divisions within the SEA. As one State Seven SEA participant noted, "there's still some maybe offices that probably don't know much about the [EL initiative]." To address this issue, the SEA is working to expand support to other offices and divisions, such as food services and facilities, by providing resources and promoting discussions about the principles of the [EL initiative].

Deficit Attitudes. Deficit perspectives concerning ELs can significantly impact the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. These perspectives are often rooted in outdated and stereotypical views about language learning and the academic capabilities of English learners, leading to resistance to bilingual education programs and a lack of support for the linguistic and academic development of ELs. One key aspect of deficit perspectives is the issue of (mis)labeling ELs. This is a pervasive issue of concern in State Six that has occupied a significant amount of time and resources for the Agency. While there has been progress made in changing the terminology used in the SEA from "English learners" to "emergent bilinguals," this change is seen by participants as "insufficient" to address the larger issue of

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[3] Name of the EL initiative was removed to protect the anonymity of the state.

"deficit-mindedness" and the need for an "asset-based and additive mindset" in statute related to ELs.

Legislation plays a critical role in the labeling of ELs, and the Agency is limited in its ability to change the state legislation. As one policy actor noted, "The section of [state policy], they went in and basically did a Control F, so every time it said 'English learner', they changed it to emergent bilingual. So that now emergent bilingual is within this really deficit-minded sentence. So it says emergent bilinguals that cannot comprehend basic English." This highlights the need for a more nuanced and thoughtful approach to the terminology used to describe ELs in educational policy and practice. As one State Six participant explained, "I think my general hope is to really see an asset-based and additive mindset infused in our statute related to English learners, so I think, yes, changing the name of English learners is a small step, but I think if we don't really change everything else about the way we describe who our English learners are, recognizing the assets that they bring to the table." This highlights the need for a more inclusive and supportive system for ELs that takes into account their needs and assets, and ensures that they are at the forefront of everything the Agency puts out. Addressing deficit perspectives is critical for the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. This requires a shift towards an asset-based and additive mindset, as well as a more nuanced and thoughtful approach to the terminology used to describe ELs.

Funding

Participants argued that the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking is heavily influenced by funding allocation for specific initiatives. Insufficient funding for EL initiatives not only presents significant challenges for states and policy actors but also raises concerns about equity and the capacity for innovation. In particular, policy actors described barriers to starting and maintaining bilingual programs, the exacerbation of existing inequities, and the limitations

faced by policy actors in developing ideas and creating new strategies to support multilingual learners

In State Seven, the insufficient funding for EL initiatives poses significant challenges to schools and policy actors who strive to improve educational outcomes for multilingual learners. One of the main challenges is launching and maintaining bilingual programs, as they face high costs and bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining funds. As one participant commented, "funding is a barrier, and schools are apprehensive about starting a bilingual program due to the associated expenses." Furthermore, the lack of funding hampers policy actors' ability to innovate, as they have limited capacity for developing ideas and creating new strategies. According to one participant, "if an office [at the SEA] has funding, they have space to develop ideas and create. And if they don't have funding, then they have to request funding from an authority."

Additionally, the inadequacy of funding raises equity concerns. Participants explained that more affluent White families have greater access to funding resources which perpetuates existing inequities in the education system. As a result, the SEA may be unable to provide equal access to bilingual education for all students. One participant mentioned the convoluted process of even small initiatives from the SEA, stating, "it requires all this paperwork that has to go over to the Department of Finance and the Legislature. And this is very, in my mind, I thought it was very convoluted." Overall, the inadequate funding for EL initiatives in State Seven significantly affects the broader education agenda, creating barriers to starting and maintaining bilingual programs, exacerbating existing inequities, and limiting policy actors' ability to innovate strategies for supporting multilingual learners.

Furthermore, funding for ELs in State Six is also a major challenge, primarily due to political and racialized processes that prioritize certain groups over others. This issue is also

evident in State Three and State Five. Despite the passing of the school finance overhaul bill, House Bill 3, in 2019, which created a dual language weight, the primary beneficiaries were white students. Meanwhile, the majority of ELs enrolled in transitional language programs or English as a Second Language (ESL) did not receive adequate funding. According to one participant, "It [EL funding] is a highly political and racialized process. They prioritize policymaking for it. And, I think that that is very evident through the most recent school finance conversations." Such funding decisions have led to concerns regarding the prioritization of ELs and the marginalization of certain groups.

In conclusion, funding plays a pivotal role in shaping the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking. The cases of State Six and State Seven highlight how insufficient funding can hinder the implementation of bilingual programs, perpetuate educational inequities, and stifle policy actors' capacity to innovate

Sociopolitical Context. Participants from State Six argued that racialized power structures have a significant impact on prioritization of ELs within the state's educational agenda. Racialized power structures refer to the systems and institutions that maintain and perpetuate racial inequality, often privileging certain racial groups over others, which can directly affect the prioritization of ELs in policymaking. This influence has been maintained by a system deeply embedded in State Six's history. As one SEA participant pointed out, "the policies concerning English learner education are deeply racialized and rooted in the racial sense-making of predominantly white political bodies, which often perpetuate white supremacy." Another participant observed that State Six's policies are still "heavily rooted in the narrative of white rugged individualism and Anglo settler colonialism and that communities of color, including English learners, bear the brunt of these power structures." For instance, one SEA participant

explained that Mexican-American families in State Six have endured a "long history of discrimination and marginalization, which is often mirrored in education policies". As one participant highlighted, these families are often associated with immigration and migrant stories, with racial histories complicated by borders drawn across people. This complex history has shaped bilingual education policies, which could benefit Latinx students but frequently remain unimplemented "due to resistance from those who want to maintain the status quo."

Participants argued that racialized power structures also influence leadership within State Six's SEA. While some individuals within the agency are working to promote change and equity, the agency as a whole might resist such efforts. As one participant expressed, "some individuals with long-standing positions want to preserve the status quo, echoing the sentiment of "Make America great again" but applied to State Six's Department of Education." However, State Six's rapidly changing demographics may force the education system to adapt. Another participant explained that the system would worsen if it fails to change alongside the demographic shifts. Despite these challenges, there is optimism for change. As one participant observed, progress is happening "little by little." The efforts of individuals within the system make a difference, and more voices are joining the conversation. In conclusion, racialized power structures can shape the prioritization of ELs in state policymaking by perpetuating biases and disparities, often to the detriment of historically marginalized communities.

Chapter Summary

This within-case analysis explored the factors that enable or constrain the prioritization of English Learners (ELs) in education actors and agendas across new and established immigrant destinations. Both contexts share common factors that influence EL prioritization in state policymaking, such as the availability of a sufficient number of staff, adequate funding, and the organization's awareness and attitudes towards EL students. However, there are also notable

differences between these two settings.

In new immigrant destinations, the focus on all-student education agendas and the lack of inclusion in decision-making processes tend to be more significant factors. Conversely, the sociopolitical context plays a more prominent role in shaping EL prioritization in established destinations. Factors such as public opinion, political leadership, and historical patterns of immigration and integration contribute to the approach taken in EL policymaking.

In both contexts, organizational support and capacity are crucial for effectively prioritizing EL students in policymaking. Additionally, securing adequate funding and resource allocation is essential for creating and maintaining programs that address EL needs. Importantly, policy actors in both new and established destinations recognize the unique challenges that ELs face and advocate for avoiding deficit thinking that views them as a burden or problem

Overall, this chapter provides important insights into the intricate and multifaceted landscape of EL prioritization in state policymaking. The subsequent chapter will delve into themes of political power and partisanship across the state sites.

CHAPTER 6

Power Play: Unraveling Influence, Political Forces, and Partisan Prioritization in State [EL] Policymaking

This dissertation contextualizes the theoretical framework of technical, normative, and political forces on EL state policymaking. Delving deeper into this framework, this chapter unpacks political forces that inform state EL policymaking across new and established immigrant destinations. In Chapter Four, I identified state education policy actors involved in creating the education agenda. I identified the chief state school officers and state education board members as primary actors responsible for formulating the educational agenda. In this chapter, I discuss findings from additional data analysis revealing that the creation and influence of the education agenda differ in practice. This chapter explicitly highlights the political factor of power that specific individuals hold in the influence over state EL education policymaking. In the latter half of this chapter, I illustrate the impact of broader political and normative forces, as evidenced by partisan issues, on the [lack of] prioritization of EL education in state policymaking. Consequently, these findings emphasize the importance of taking into account both political and normative factors when analyzing state policymaking for EL education.

Who Holds the Power in (EL) Education Policymaking

A nuanced understanding of power dynamics in state education policymaking is pivotal as it enables comprehension of policy development, implementation, and decision-making authority. Study participants identified two policy actors who had significant influence on the state education agenda: state governors and EL advocacy organizations. Analyzing the complex

power dynamics among these actors is crucial for illuminating the underlying factors that shape (EL)[4] policymaking at the state level.

State Governors

In the realm of education policymaking, state governors wield substantial power and influence. They are crucial actors in shaping the education agenda and play a significant role in policymaking. One participant even boldly declared that SEAs "work at the behest of the governor," highlighting governors' critical role in influencing and creating the education agenda. For example, in State One, participants explained that the governor holds the primary power to influence the education agenda, and the state education agency follows the governor's lead. One SEA employee emphasized that the SEA "serves at the pleasure of the governor." Similarly, in State Two, the governor holds ultimate authority in shaping education policy and priorities, including state English Learner education. Several participants acknowledged the governor's role in setting policy and establishing agency priorities, noting the "political heavy-handedness from the Governor's office to the agency." The chief state school officer in State Six was even described as someone who "works for" the governor, and SEA employees noted that governor-appointed executive positions are driven by "the politics of the day," indicating that these officials are beholden to the political agenda of the governor, highlighting the hierarchical nature of the power structure in the state. Below, I describe two ways in which the governor exercised influence in state education policymaking.

Governor's Influence on Education Chief State School Officer Appointments and Policy Priorities. One way in which state governors exercise their influence over the education

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[4] In this paragraph, "EL" is enclosed in parentheses to signify that although the main emphasis is on EL policymaking, the examples and power dynamics under discussion have wider implications beyond ELs. They apply to broader education policymaking contexts and offer valuable insights into the general education policy landscape.

agenda and priorities is by appointing the chief state school officer, who is responsible for overseeing the state education agency. As shown in Table 5, in four of seven states in this study, the state governor has significant discretion in choosing the chief state school officer. For example, the chief state school officer is chosen by the governor in States One, Two, Three, and Six; in State 4, while the chief is appointed by the school board, the majority of board members are appointed by the governor.

Table 5

Governor Appointments of State Education Chief State School Officers and State Board of Education Members

State	State Governor Appoints Chief State School Officer	Chief State School Officer is Elected	School Board Appoints Chief State School Officer	State Governor Appoints State Education Board Members
1	X			X
2	X			X
3	X			X
4			X	Governor appoints 5 of 9 members
5		X		X
6	X			
7		X		X

Participants noted that the governor's appointment of the chief state school officer can significantly impact education policymaking because the chief often sets the tone for the agency's priorities. As one participant explained, "when you're appointed by the Governor and the Governor's your boss, you do the governor's will." In State Three, the governor's priorities guide the agency's focus through the appointment of the chief state school officer. For instance,

the current governor of State Three publicly stated goals for improving literacy and math education, and particularly ensuring that every child is reading on grade level by third grade; thus the agency has focused much of its energy on early literacy initiatives.

In State Seven, the governor can assert their agenda through the school board, given that they have the power to appoint all but one member of the State Board of Education. In the past, some governors in State Seven have appointed conservative State Board members with a bias against immigrants, resulting in discriminatory policies that hurt ELs. One participant explained this history:

> The Governor appoints the members of the State Board of Education. So when [language policy] passed, [previous Governor], [previous Governor] and... Who's the other one? [previous Governor]. They were very conservative, and they appointed, especially under [previous Governor] and [previous Governor], they appointed State Board members that were so conservative and, in my humble opinion, discriminatory against immigrants. They had that bias, I should say. They had that bias. That they were truly in support of [language policy] and really felt that these kids needed to learn English longer. And so all of the policies that were developed by the State Board of Ed[ucation] reflected that belief.

As these examples show, the governor's priorities and agenda can guide state policymaking, especially for populations like ELs, when these issues are heavily politicized in conservative states.

Expertise vs. Politics: The Power Struggle for State Education Chief State School Officers. Chief state school officers are often used as pawns to push governors' political agendas, influencing education policymaking in many states. In some cases, governors rely heavily on their chief state school officers' expertise, but political considerations often temper this authority. For example, in State Five, the Governor "respects the chief state school officer and his expertise, and the fact that he is an experienced educator and in a lot of ways, he has... leaned on his expertise, and I think just respected that." However, the participant described that even though this chief state school officer is elected, the Governor and the chief state school

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officer align politically. One participant explained, "The chief state school officer's position is strengthened by the fact that he was the top Republican vote-getter in the last election…and he feels a little involved in knowing that he's gotten more votes than the Governor and has no serious political challenge... And so he has a little bit more of that authority to set the priorities." Yet the chief state school officer is also aware of the need to avoid public fights with the Governor or "be in the newspaper." One participant gave the example of when the chief state school officer released an "ESOL plan" without checking in with the Governor, and then the "Governor publicly called out [chief state school officer] for the ESOL plan, his reaction was just like, a boilerplate quote and then meeting with the governor, not apologizing, but definitely just trying to downplay the entire thing."

Similar challenges were described in other states as well. In State Six, the chief state school officer plays a crucial role in shaping education policy, but political considerations also constrain their authority. The chief state school officer must navigate the relationship between the governor and the agency, and decisions are often made based on the optics of the situation rather than on educational considerations. Several participants from State Six argued that the governor's political ambitions significantly impact education policymaking. One participant suggested that the governor's desire to run for president in 2024 affects their decisions regarding education policy, potentially putting political gain above the needs of students and educators in the state. This influence is exemplified by a recent executive order that bans mask mandates in schools. One participant remarked that this executive order "pretty much tied the hands of the chief state school officer" and limited the State Six chief state school officer's authority in education policymaking, preventing them from supporting school districts that wish to implement such mandates.

In an example pertinent to ELs in State Six, one participant described how the state had "an influx back in March of some unaccompanied minors from Central America". One SEA leader remarked to their superiors about the student group,

> Hey, we need to do something ... .Like an intra-agency group, we need to at least say something to the field," people were asking, emailing us and asking us, "Hey, what do we... Are there any new resources for these newcomers?" and SEA leadership said, "Can't do it. Can't do it. The chief state school officer decides, "No, we're not doing it," or, "Yeah, we can do it," right? 'Cause he knows his relationship with the governor, and what that might look like optically… it's political. I know that our chief state school officer is sensitive to it to a degree, but it's political.

This quote shows that the SEA was unable to react to the new unaccompanied minors enrolling in the state schools because of the Governor's politics.

In conclusion, the chief state school officers play a critical role in shaping education policy, but political considerations often constrain this authority. While there are examples of education officials who have made a difference despite these challenges, the tension between expertise and politics remains a significant issue in many states.

Advocacy Organizations

In addition to the Governor, EL advocacy organizations were described as playing a significant role in influencing EL policymaking in states Five, Six, and Seven. Participants noted that the perspective and voice of these groups are highly valued by SEA officials, who often seek their input and insights on EL education issues. As one SEA policy actor explained, "advocacy groups bring a real important lens to us [SEA], because they're in the field. And they're in the field, not as an entity that controls the field."Expanding on this idea, one SEA leader explained the two ways in which these advocacy organizations influence policymaking in their state:

> I think advocacy has two ways to influence policy. One, they [advocacy groups] could go straight to the legislature and convince someone to carry a bill for them where they define the parameters of that bill and work with us to help inform the bill, or, "What would it take in order to get this kind of," whatever they're proposing, "Implemented statewide?"

So that's one door. The other door is to work directly with us [State SEA] and inform our work by participating in our networks and participating in the different connectors that we have with the field.

Although advocacy organizations can work directly with SEAs, conflicts may arise when SEA leadership is not aligned with advocacy groups' opinions or proposals. In such cases, advocacy groups may become vocal and challenge SEA officials. One leader of an advocacy organization explained how they approach SEA leadership when they disagree with the SEA's approach to EL issues: "So I think we have enough pull at this point, and we're loud. And like I said, we can be the thorn in your side when we don't agree, or we feel that this is something that could hurt our kids." While SEA officials are sensitive to advocacy perspectives, they remarked that sometimes advocacy groups sometimes do not see the whole picture. One SEA leader said,

And I have to tell you, even I am amazed, and I consider myself an advocate, and even sometimes I'm amazed at, how did you deduce that? How can you say that with all of the work that we do, that [State DoE] is the big bad wolf? How can you portray that perspective, knowing that that's politics and that's just how it is?... We remember that we are really all working for the same thing. Our angle might be slightly different, and our hands might be tied in different ways, but we're really all... We all care about the interests of multilingual learners. That's why we're in the work we are, you know.

To summarize, the power dynamics that shape EL state policymaking in various states are complex and multifaceted. State governors and EL advocacy organizations both play significant roles in influencing education policies and priorities, but political considerations and conflicts often constrain their power.

How Partisan Politics Shapes Attention to EL Education in State Policymaking

For states in the study, the education of ELs was subject to the influence of partisan politics and partisan issues in state policymaking. Below I explicate how partisan politics manifested in various facets, including the broader political context of conservative and progressive environments in which EL policy is formulated, beliefs and attitudes towards ELs

and immigrants and immigration, bilingual education, and how 'equity' is now a partisan term. The elucidation of these factors enables a more comprehensive understanding of how ELs are perceived and treated in state policymaking and how political considerations may affect their (in)equitable access to resources and opportunities.

In Chapter Four, Table 4 displays the SEAs that were analyzed in this dissertation study. The political climate of each state was determined by the political affiliation of the elected state governor. States with Republican governors, such as States 2, 4, 5, and 6, were identified as having conservative political environments. On the other hand, states with Democratic governors, including States 1, 3, and 7, were classified as having progressive political environments..

Conservative Political Environments

Navigating the complex world of conservative political environments poses significant challenges for SEA policy actors, particularly when addressing the needs of ELs. In such contexts, SEA actors must walk a delicate tightrope, carefully phrasing their concerns and balancing their advocacy to avoid backlash. The politicization of EL policy issues, driven by conservative Republican Governors and partisan divides between Republican and Democratic state legislators, exacerbates the challenges faced by SEA actors. Below I describe the intricate dynamics of conservative political contexts in relation to EL policy issues, exploring the challenges faced by SEA actors, the hindrances imposed by conservative Governors, and the impact of the partisan divide on EL policymaking. Despite these obstacles, many SEA policy actors remain dedicated to advocating for ELs, illustrating the resilience and determination necessary to support this vulnerable student population within the constraints of a conservative political environment.

Conservative SEAs: Walking on Eggshells. In conservative political environments, SEA actors felt the need to take a more discrete approach when addressing issues related to ELs. One SEA leader explained their experience in discussing concerns about ELs, stating, "there is some politics involved with the way we phrase things and the way that we address it." The challenge of navigating political sensitivities in addressing issues related to ELs is further compounded by the highly politicized and contentious nature of these policy issues in these state contexts. For example, SEA staff faced a delicate balance in addressing EL policy issues, as taking a political stance or not phrasing things carefully can also lead to a backlash. As one state leader observed, "sometimes I feel like we're walking a bit on eggshells because those topics have become so politicized, or maybe they always were, I don't know, but because they're so politicized, it is a bit of a delicate balance, and there is some politics involved with the way we phrase things and the way that we address it."

The politicization of EL policy issues creates a challenging environment for SEA actors to address these topics effectively while avoiding political stances. This is particularly true in states with conservative political climates, where advocacy for ELs may be viewed with suspicion or even outright hostility. As one employee noted, in "rural" and "conservative" states like State Three, handling these issues in a more low-key manner may be necessary to avoid controversy and backlash within the SEA. Another state policy actor echoed this sentiment and described their conservative SEA political environment as a game of "tiptoe politics." The explained, "it still is a bit of a tiptoe game because you never really know who understands, and it's not just about taking a political position, it's more so like, who really understands the [EL] student population, and knows how to advocate for them, regardless of their political position, and I think that's the tough part".

In the face of such challenges, it becomes increasingly difficult for SEA leaders to ensure that the needs of the EL student population are met. As one SEA employee noted, "Sometimes when we were trying to advocate for these things, then it's like, 'Oh well, we can't say that because then we're gonna be grouped with this liberal political group,' but we're just trying to give appropriate guidance about this population." This is further exacerbated when the political agenda of a conservative governor comes into play, hindering EL policymaking and creating additional obstacles for those who aim to support and advocate for these students.

Conservative Governors: Hindering EL Policymaking. While the section above highlighted the challenges SEA actors face in conservative political environments when trying to address EL policy issues, EL policymaking is especially hindered when driven by the political agenda of a Republican Governor. For example, participants explained how State Two's chief state school officer's relationship with the state governor and lack of experience in the "nuances of policy and politics" could result in a lack of advocacy and support for ELs in the Agency and more broadly the State. One participant described the chief state school officer's approach as "I'm not gonna screw this up. I'm just gonna do what my boss tells me to do and what they're saying and leave it at that." Another employee from State Two expressed concern about their new boss's attitude, who is under the direction of a conservative chief state school officer appointed by the governor. They noted that their SEA leadership "doesn't give a rat's ass about English learners" and that the department is becoming increasingly "restrictive" regarding meetings and who is allowed to attend them. The participant also mentioned the "ban on equity teaching in schools" and the department's efforts to present a single "voice" and "one set of ideologies."

Changing these restrictions would require a significant change in the state's political climate, a participant from State Two expressed that for progress to be made in the realm of EL policymaking, "either there's a change in political party, or there is some type of large catalyst that requires them... For it to be necessary. Either some event happens, or the feds say something, but those are the only two."

In another example of a political context created by a conservative governor, State Four participants highlighted the impact of the Governor's political agenda on the availability of EL teachers in the state. They explained, "'it's like, Unless you live here, why would you move here if you're gonna teach English learners? Because we have a very conservative Republican Governor who's just made it unpleasant." The Governor's policies or actions have resulted in a shortage of EL teachers, making it challenging to provide adequate support to EL learners. The shortage of qualified teachers is a significant problem that the Governor's political beliefs and actions may directly influence.

In addition to the impact on the availability of qualified EL teachers, data analysis revealed further challenges created by the negative attitude towards bilingual education in conservative political environments. As one participant stated, "Our legislators do not like bilingual education, but they do like dual language...most of them have a maintenance or some kind of bilingual program that doesn't benefit their students. So that's why they're so against bilingual education". Similarly, another participant contented on why State Six is facing a bilingual teacher shortage:

> There's a lot, in my personal view, there's a lot of racist thinking about learning Spanish. We [State Six] have this bilingual program. The kids come in bilingual, and they leave monolingual, Subtracted all the Spanish out of them. And then we don't know why we can't get a bilingual teacher. We're having to go to Puerto Rico and Spain…We've subtracted. Why is there such a shortage? Well, here's what our system has done, we're reaping what we have sown.

The negative attitudes towards bilingual education create a challenging environment for EL policymaking. It highlights the consequences of the politicization of EL policy issues, which conservative Republican Governors may drive in the state.

Republican Legislators: Reluctance and Partisan Divide. In addition to the challenges posed by conservative governors hindering EL policymaking, there were also broader implications of the partisan divide between republican and democratic state legislators. Participants argued that Republican legislators were generally less receptive to EL policies than their Democratic counterparts. One participant remarked, "Well, I don't think the Republican legislators really wanna address anything. I think it's the democratic that wanna address things like more quality instruction, and they put out a lot of great things, more quality teachers, more quality training, more types of... Better types of bilingual programs".

Additionally, Republican legislators may be less supportive of EL policies due to a lack of understanding of the benefits and a focus on spending money on programs that directly benefit their constituents. As one participant explained, "Democrats they're the kinds of people that, they're willing to spend money on people they never will ever meet. Republicans, they're willing to spend money, basically, on only people that they know." The partisan divide exacerbates the difficulties SEA actors face in advocating for ELs in conservative political environments, highlighting the need for effective advocacy to bridge this gap. One participant who actively works with their state legislature on EL policy explained the importance of effective advocacy, "At first, I didn't really lobby Republican members because I knew what their answer was gonna be… [but] You do need to speak to Republicans. Key Republicans, not every Republican, but key Republicans and their consultants..it looks good once it gets to the governor's desk… That

he sees, "Oh, wow. This must be a very good bill, 'cause even the Republicans voted for it". Similarly, another SEA leader stated, "You know, to do things like that in [State Six], you're definitely playing... You have to have... You're in the [political] minority. So you have to find friends and ways to advance over your side of the aisle that are gonna speak to that in some regard and... It's a dance".

Moreover, policymakers' personal experiences and relationships were described as influencing their support for EL policies. For instance, one participant explained how they would work with Republican legislators to move forward EL legislation in the State Six Legislature, "Tell me if there are any Republican members that have kids in bilingual programs... Or let me know if someone is married to a Latina or a Latino. I said we can use that. I hate to sound so, I don't know, opportunistic or whatever, but it was an opportunity, it was an opportunity 'cause that would give me sort of an idea of how to approach them, approach their staff when I go in to speak to them on a piece of legislation". This finding underscores the importance of understanding policymakers' backgrounds and using this knowledge to tailor advocacy efforts. The example also shows that, despite political challenges in the SEA, Governorship, and State Legislature, many SEA policy actors in conservative environments remain committed to advocating for ELs and finding ways to support this population. As one SEA actor aptly stated, "we have to be very careful about not taking political stances on certain things, but these are our kids."

Progressive Political Environments

Although states with progressive environments and politicians may seem likely to prioritize the needs of ELs, the education and policymaking concerning ELs remains a contentious and often overlooked issue. Below I describe three critical aspects affecting EL policymaking within such contexts: (1) the political sensitivities surrounding EL education,

where despite progressive politics, ELs are often sidelined due to the sensitive nature of the topic, leading to a significant achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs; (2) the impact of neoliberal narratives on resource allocation and success, with misconceptions exacerbating the problem and perpetuating the belief that resources allocated to ELs are being taken away from other low-income students, while also promoting a focus on easily measurable outcomes at the expense of a comprehensive and individualized approach to EL education; and (3) the role of supportive policymakers and multilingualism in fostering a more inclusive environment for ELs, emphasizing the importance of having policymakers who are open to the benefits of multilingualism in advancing EL policies and promoting educational equity.

Political Sensitivities of EL Education: A Political Hot Potato. Despite the progressive political environment in certain states, ELs and EL education may be perceived as a politically 'sensitive' topic. This phenomenon occurred in State Three, where EL education is regarded as a "political hot potato." When asked about the disconnect between the progressive politics of the state and the (lack of) prioritization of ELs, one SEA employee stated, "I wish I had the magic answer to that question, really...I think it's [EL education] a political hot potato sometimes for folks." This suggests that the issue of ELs is not a priority for some political actors in State Three, possibly due to the political sensitivity of the student population. Another employee further described this phenomenon, stating, "it's sort of always been known as like the State Three way that people get along. [chuckle] The [well known political leader] way, that people get along and the things are sort of somewhat bipartisan, even though it's democratically controlled, that folks work together, and nobody really would ruffle a ton of feathers around English learners".

Thus, in states where EL education is a political hot potato, ELs may continue to be left behind in the broader education agenda. Despite the political progressiveness of the state, EL education has not received the necessary priority, resulting in a significant achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs. Failure to address this issue may result in continued educational disparities for ELs in states where partisan politics shape policymaking.

Challenging Neoliberal Narratives: The Impact of Misconceptions on Resource Allocation and Success. A neoliberal approach to education often prioritizes competition and efficiency, which can inadvertently perpetuate misconceptions about equity (Apple, 2017). This ideology, by emphasizing resource scarcity and the need for strategic allocation, can lead to divisions among interest holders and contribute to the ongoing marginalization of certain student populations. Neoliberal policies frequently reinforce the notion that educational resources are insufficient, particularly when it comes to supporting student populations such as ELs.

 In progressive states like State Three and State Seven, misconceptions about the backgrounds of ELs further exacerbated the issue. One State Three SEA employee discussed how many people in the community "do not understand what an English learner is'" and that the majority of ELs in State Three are born in the United States. They remarked, "I think 80% of our kids were born in the United States. So they live in [State Three]. They're second or third-generation English learners. And we do have some kids that are coming here from other countries, and who are coming illegally, or who are immigrants, but I think just people just don't understand". The participant went on to describe how people within and external to the SEA often conflate these students with recently arrived immigrants, leading to negative perceptions and questioning the allocation of resources to them. They further explained:

> Why are they getting the money? The money is also split between low-income and
> English learners, and it tends to be when we talk about it that gets mentioned the low

income part, but it seems to get mentioned a lot more that it's for English learners, and I think that has its own connotation…I do think that sometimes there's this mentality that those are resources that need to be allocated to other students as well. "We have poor students in the [State Three City], we have poor students in [State Three County]. Why are we taking money for immigrant students to do that?" I've heard things like that stated.

This misunderstanding extends to the belief that resources allocated to ELs are being taken away from other low-income students. In reality, the funding is split between low-income and ELs. As the SEA employee explained, "The money is also split between low-income and English learners, and it tends to be when we talk about it that gets mentioned the low-income part, but it seems to get mentioned a lot more that it's for English learners". Initiatives that support ELs often benefit all students. The employee further emphasized, "anything we're doing to support our ELs is gonna support all learners."

Furthermore, a neoliberal agenda also plays out in State Seven with respect to the SEA conversation and emphasis on the reclassification status of ELs. One SEA leader expressed concern that "the idea that the end goal is reclassification" is a "really bad thing to focus on" because it neglects the importance of ensuring that students "become owners of their own achievements." This focus on reclassification as the ultimate measure of success exemplifies neoliberalism's emphasis on quantifiable outcomes and standardization, often at the expense of a more comprehensive and individualized approach to EL education.The same SEA leader elaborated on their concern by questioning whether EL reclassification is sufficient for ensuring success for ELs remarking, "What's the purpose of reclassification? That they learned English, is that sufficient? I don't think it's sufficient." This statement underscores the potential pitfalls of an education system that prioritizes easily measurable outcomes, such as reclassification, without adequately addressing the specific needs and potentials. This approach to reclassification may inadvertently promote a system that leaves EL students with academic deficits or unprepared for

higher education, as one SEA State Seven leader argued: "If this kid wants to go to Harvard and we didn't prepare him, that way, because he was an English learner for seven years, that's not good enough for me. He should be Harvard-ready."

Finally, State Seven participants discussed the SEA's role in determining reclassification criteria, which can be seen as an extension of neoliberalism's influence on education policy. The state's push for standardization and uniformity in reclassification criteria may contribute to the problem identified by one SEA leader who suggested that the SEA should focus on "what practice are we using or implementing that makes it the gatekeeper? That's the question. It's almost like, is this a symptom, or is this the actual illness? We have to get to the actual illness." This calls for a deeper examination of the policies and practices that create barriers for ELs and reflects a resistance to the neoliberal approach to education, which tends to prioritize market-driven policies and easily quantifiable outcomes for ELs.

Supportive Policymakers and Multilingualism. One of the benefits of EL policymaking in progressive states is that policymakers and legislatures are often open to the benefits of multilingualism. One State Seven policy actor illustrated the supportive EL policymaking environment:

> When we [State Seven] wanna move a [EL] bill forward, we always have a sponsor, and it's easy to find someone in the legislature who wants to move it forward. The governor seems pretty on board with a lot of this stuff, which is really helpful. [The] chief state school officer is really supportive of multilingualism. Our State Board is really phenomenal. I think we're very fortunate that the appointees [of the school board] that these people are putting in place and that the elected officials are all pretty, almost universally open to multilingualism, and that helps us a lot.

This quote illustrates how having supportive policymakers can make a significant difference in advancing EL policies and promoting educational equity.

The advocacy for multilingualism exhibited by policymakers in progressive states, as previously described, not only expedites the progression of EL policies but also cultivates an atmosphere in which affirmative attitudes and perceptions concerning ELs and immigrants can flourish. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the diverse range of attitudes and ideologies that exist and their consequential bearing on EL policymaking.

Attitudes and Ideology about ELs and Immigrants

Beliefs and attitudes about ELs and immigrants/immigration significantly impact EL policymaking. These beliefs, which can be either positive or negative, influence policymaking and create various challenges for state policy actors. Below I describe ideological and partisan dimensions of this debate and how they impact state education agendas, focusing on the attitudes towards ELs and immigrants, the politics of immigration, and the contentious issue of bilingual education.

ELs and Immigrants. Interviews with SEA employees revealed insights into the attitudes toward ELs within and outside of the Agency. One SEA leader revealed that negative attitudes towards immigrant populations often extend to ELs, as they are frequently seen as synonymous. They stated,

> There are folks, and I think sometimes the nastiest cry can be the loudest. [chuckle] So, when we see this, when we see things come out, again, like you said, not all English learners are immigrants, but they often are. For somebody on the outside that maybe has a negative attitude about immigrant populations, they may feel like when they hear English learners as well, 'Get them all to speak English, and they shouldn't be here anyway,' kind of things. And those are the types of comments that you see more loudly put out there.

This perception is not limited to those outside of the education system but also exists within state agencies and even the governor's office. As one participant remarked, "I even had the governor's office one time ask me like, 'What are some other words that we can use when we're putting

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these things out to try and help people understand that it's not... We're not saying immigrants. We're saying our students who are learning English". The connotations of language and terminology used when discussing ELs can perpetuate these negative attitudes and create a hostile environment for these students.

    Immigration Attitudes. The politics of immigration is a complex issue within the broader context of education, particularly in states like State Five and State Six. Immigrants are often heavily demonized, and partisan politics play a significant role in shaping this discourse. This is evident in the case of State Five's governor, who is not afraid to pander to anti-immigrant sentiments for political gain. One SEA leader stated, "The fight in the demonization against immigration, a lot of that... You saw our governor who is not afraid to pander to his base. This is particularly concerning considering the "friendly" and reciprocal relationship described by participants between the governor and chief state school officer.

    While not squarely in the realms of the K-12 system, the issue of in-state tuition to universities for immigrant students to institutions also highlights the resistance to change among certain groups of politicians, regardless of party affiliation. According to one policy actor within the SEA, "If you follow the hearings around in-state tuition, you would have really the guys from ruby-red districts who would say like, 'Okay, we gotta do something,'" about in-state tuition. This statement highlights the recognition among some conservative lawmakers of the need to address this issue, but nevertheless, there is still resistance to change among certain groups of politicians.Further, in State Six, a state education leader remarked on how the partisan political environment creates a hostile atmosphere for ELs and immigrants.

> I have a Ph.D., but when these certain... And I call them neo-conservatives when they look at me, they just see an immigrant, they see a [racial slur], an undocumented. That's what they see. So they do have some... Just look at what our governor is doing here in Texas. That'll give you a sense of the hardcore right-wing agenda that they have I

think it's psychologically they're vilifying a group of people and everybody that looks like me, regardless of your educational attainment. So yeah, I think, to go back to your original question, yeah, it does have a lot of impact, and I'd probably say more negative than positive on a lot of good things that are happening that are just overshadowed by this ultra neo-conservative thinking.

In addition to partisan immigration politics creating hostile environments for ELs and immigrants alike, federal immigration policies can also impact EL education. As one SEA leader explained, a challenge their state faces, *"Not all English learners are showing up to school, and that has a lot to do with our immigration policies. When you look at the federal policies, and it's gonna have impact on the states, especially when you're a border state"*.

Ideological and Partisan Dimensions of Bilingual Education. Bilingual education has long been a contentious issue in the United States, with conflicting views on its efficacy and value for students (Baker & Wright, 2021). While not all ELs benefit from program models like bilingual education, several states have implemented this approach. Despite the research-based benefits of bilingual education, negative attitudes towards bilingual education, particularly in states like State Six, have made it difficult to implement effective bilingual programs. As one state leader noted, "I think our biggest problem is not so much the teacher shortage which there is, but I think it's the whole atmosphere and attitude that's negative in nature towards bilingual education in general." The teacher shortage is compounded by the negative attitude toward bilingual education, an ideological issue that has yet to be resolved.

Further complicating the matter, misconceptions about bilingualism and the allocation of resources feed into the negative attitudes towards bilingual education. As some legislators prioritize dual language programs, it becomes clear that the political landscape plays a significant role in shaping the debate around this issue, with decisions often influenced by personal interests rather than a more equitable approach. As another SEA leader explained,

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Our legislators do not like bilingual education, but they do like dual language, and the reason for that is because when it's say 50-50, their kids get to... What I mean by their kids is the white population. Their kids get to benefit from this, but the problem with dual language is that it's only in so many school districts, most of them have a maintenance or some kind of bilingual program that doesn't benefit their students. So that's why they're so against bilingual education.

This selective distribution of resources highlights the political nature of the debate, as politicians are more likely to support policies that benefit their children, often not ELs, rather than a more equitable distribution of resources.

Moreover, the belief that bilingualism undermines English proficiency and national identity fuels the resistance to bilingual education. As one participant explained, "I think part of it is why should these kids get the benefit of a bilingual education program? And I think what they're missing, they're missing the overall picture that when these kids get educated, when they transitioned from Spanish into English, that economic citizenship-wise and everything you can think of, it's gonna benefit society as a whole". Bilingualism is often viewed as a liability rather than an asset, particularly in states where English is the dominant language. This perception of bilingualism as a threat to national identity has led to policies that limit bilingual education opportunities for students.

Nevertheless, there is a glimmer of hope as bipartisan efforts emerge to promote the value of bilingual education. As one education advocate noted, "Republicans are only willing to spend money on people that they know. So once we began getting them [republicans] to understand the value of dual language and they begin slowly enrolling their children in the programs, they say, like, "This is great. This is fantastic". This bipartisan effort to make bilingual education more accessible and effective has the potential to benefit all students, not just those who are bilingual.

Negative attitudes towards bilingual education are an ideological issue that has yet to be resolved in many states. The misconceptions about the benefits of bilingualism, the selective distribution of resources, and the perception of bilingualism as a threat to national identity are some of the factors that contribute to the negative attitudes towards bilingual education. Despite these challenges, efforts to make bilingual education a bipartisan issue have the potential to benefit all students, regardless of their linguistic background.

Equity as a Partisan Issue. 'Equity' in education has become an increasingly polarizing issue in many states across the United States. State policy actors often hold different views on the concept of equity, which can lead to divergent policy decisions and practices. This is evident in the interviews with state policy actors from State One and State Two, who provided insight into the challenges and opportunities of addressing equity in education.In State Two, the lack of support from the SEA on equity issues has left SEA leaders in a difficult position. One SEA actor noted that despite acknowledging the need for support in the realm of equity, individuals at the SEA are choosing to maintain the status quo and avoid any real support for it. This lack of support is indicative of the highly politicized nature of equity in the state, as the governor has actively spoken out against equity and "banned anything resembling critical race theory in schools." As one SEA participant noted, "equity…let's just say not a priority for the Governor and her advisors." One participant linked the fight against equity to former President Trump: "Basically, it's the Executive Order that President Trump had in place around banning diversity training. Well, our governor literally took that and just scratched out the United States and put State Two in, right? Yeah, so that actually passed in our last legislative session, which literally put a halt to any and all things race and equity-related." Another SEA participant expressed that for progress to be made in the realm of equity within State Two, "either a change and/or, there's a

change in political party, or there is some type of large catalyst that requires them... For it to be necessary. Either some event happens, or the feds say something, but those are the only two".

Similarly, equity has become a highly politicized issue in State One, with different policy actors holding divergent views on the concept and how to address it in schools. The governor's announcement to "fix racism in State One " following the controversy surrounding his blackface yearbook photo and the national reckoning on racism following the murder of George Floyd opened up a public policy window for action to be taken on equity issues. However, the lack of resources dedicated to addressing equity issues has hindered progress in the state. The participant noted, "the demand on equity intervention...has tripled basically, not a single addition of resources deployed to our office." However, one SEA participant said as soon as equity became a partisan "political issue," the chief state school officer's opinion changed. They explained, "As soon as Fox News called me an educrat and criticized the language we [SEA] were using, all of a sudden, it was like a 180." The participant argued that the chief state school officer's handling of the equity issue has been disappointing, particularly in the education advocacy space. They said, "I think there are a lot of individuals...Influential individuals, particularly in the education advocacy space, who are incredibly disappointed in the way the chief state school officer has handled these situations, this situation in particular." The politicization of equity can have significant implications for EL policymaking. When equity becomes a partisan issue, there is a risk that policies aimed at supporting ELs may become subject to political whims and partisan interests.

Policy actors who view equity through a partisan lens may be less likely to prioritize the needs of ELs, particularly if those students are from communities that are not seen as politically powerful or of political concern to policy actors. This can lead to a situation where resources and

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support are not distributed equitably across schools and districts. Moreover, when equity is seen as a partisan issue, it can also impact the ability of policy actors to advocate for policies and practices that support ELs. As seen in the case of State One and Two, SEA actors may find themselves constrained in their ability to advocate for equity, particularly if their advocacy is seen as conflicting with the priorities of those in power. This can lead to a situation where education professionals are unable to fully support Els, which can have significant implications for the success of those students.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter delves into the political and normative factors that shape state EL policymaking. Power dynamics among key interest holders in the education policymaking process, such as state governors and EL advocacy organizations, are central to the discussion, revealing their considerable influence on the educational agenda.

Moreover, the chapter explores how partisan political and normative forces impact EL policymaking in conservative and progressive environments. In progressive contexts, misconceptions about ELs and the impact of neoliberal politics are evident. At the same time, conservative environments center on the ramifications of attitudes and ideologies towards ELs and immigrants, including the contentious issue of bilingual education. The analysis also addresses topics such as the politics of immigration and its effects on EL policymaking.

Finally, the chapter underscores the importance of supportive policymakers and positive attitudes towards multilingualism in advancing EL policies and promoting educational equity. It stresses the need to overcome challenges through effective advocacy, understanding policymakers' backgrounds, and cultivating relationships to tailor advocacy efforts. Despite potential political challenges and equity becoming a partisan issue, numerous policy actors remain committed to advocating for and supporting ELs. In the subsequent chapter, I argue for

the need to enhance the factors (technical, normative, and political) examined through the zone of mediation framework by including context. This addition allows for a holistic evaluation of state EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destinations.

CHAPTER 7

Context as Catalyst: Deepening the Zone of Mediation Theory

In this study, the Zone of Mediation Theory was used to understand the phenomenon of state EL policymaking by examining technical, normative, and political factors. To illuminate pivotal determinants directing these factors, I augment and expand the Zone of Mediation Theory by deepening the observed scope of each factor to account for contextual forces within state-level EL policymaking. Contextual forces, including past and present policies and demographic changes, potentially function as driving forces in the trajectory of the Zone of Mediation factors shaping EL policymaking. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the importance of the contextual dimension by evaluating the influence of past and present policies and demographic shifts, specifically contrasting new and established immigrant destinations.

Policy

Past and present policies play a pivotal role in shaping the educational priorities and trajectories of state EL policymaking. Policies provide guidance and direction for educational initiatives, and their effects can be far-reaching and long-lasting. Participants offered insightful observations on the effects of past and present federal and state policies. In the following sections, I explore how various policies, such as local control, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), and restrictive language policies, have informed present-day state EL policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations.

Local Control

In both established and new immigrant destinations, local control politics significantly impact the balance of power between state-level interest holders and local-level interest holders

in EL policymaking. In established destinations like State Six and State Seven, local control

politics play out by balancing state regulation and local decision-making in EL education.

In State Six, a SEA leader emphasized, "We [the SEA] have to be very clear about what

is state regulation and what is local control, local decision... We make that distinction by saying,

'This is regulated, and this is best practice.'" This approach allows for specific responsibilities to

be regulated by the state, while other aspects of EL education and policy are left up to local best

practices. However, local control practice can become contentious, particularly in the area of

bilingual and EL education. As one State Six policy actor noted, "When it comes to bilingual and

EL education, that it is marginalized and it is in many ways so politicized for people that it does

become a "we're gonna do our own thing, or we know what's best anyways, or whatever."

Despite these challenges, State Six policy actors argued that they balance state regulations and

local control to provide the best education for ELs.In State Seven, local control policies have

made it challenging for SEAs to drive state policy change. One SEA leader noted, "we're limited

in our influence," reflecting the sensitivity of the state education agency to perceived

infringement of local rights. This emphasis on local autonomy and sensitivity to the infringement

of local rights can make it challenging for the Agency to mandate policies for LEAs to

implement with respect to EL education.

Similarly, in new destinations such as State One, State Four, and State Five, local control

politics are manifested through the unique structures of their public education institutions. In

State One, a SEA leader described the education institutions as characterized by "equal division:

equal footing of state-level interest holders and local-level interest holders." This grants LEAs

significant discretion in how/if they implement SEA policy that is not an official state statute.

Similar to State Seven, the emphasis on local control and sensitivity to perceived infringement of

rights by the state can make it difficult for the SEA to drive policy change. As another SEA leader in State One stated, "State One is locally controlled, and my [SEA] leadership is very sensitive to LEAs feeling that their rights have been infringed upon. We're very clear to say we cannot make recommendations as a member of the Agency."In State Four, actors highlighted the importance of accountability in local control, affecting the role of state-level actors in providing guidance to districts and ensuring compliance with federal regulations. According to a SEA leader in State Four, "where there's a little pushback is in regards to accountability." They noted that "the one thing the superintendents look at is [EL] accountability," as it is tied to their funding. Any indication that could hurt them, particularly in terms of EL accountability indicators, is where pushback from local actors is likely to occur.

Turning to State Five, local control is held in high regard, with the state constitution explicitly outlining the role of local boards in managing schools. As one SEA policy actor in State Five stated, "local control is gold," and another participant echoed their colleague and explained, "State Five is a very local control state...in our state constitution, it's very clear about the role of local boards and their management of the schools and their counties and districts." Participants in State Five warned about how local control policies can harm students such as ELs. One participant explained,

> I see the pros and I see the cons of [local control] too, because I think that we end up running into issues of equity, especially when it comes to EL's, because we just don't have a lot of leverage over decisions that individuals will make, Principals have a lot of autonomy in our school district, and unless they have firewood underneath them in the sense that it forces principals' hands to make sure that they are doing what they need to do.

The implications of local control politics on EL policymaking demonstrate the importance of fostering collaboration and communication between state and local interest holders. By working together, state and local interest holders can develop policies that are both sensitive to local

autonomy and responsive to the needs of ELs, ultimately ensuring that these students have access to the best possible education regardless of their location or linguistic background.

The Every Student Succeed Act

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) has brought about considerable changes in EL policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations in the United States (Callahan, 2020; Sugarman & Geary, 2018; Hakuta, 2017) Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the focus of state education policy was heavily on compliance, accountability, and state oversight, (Weiss & McGuinn, 2017) which was criticized by many participants in this study for not adequately addressing the unique needs of ELs. ESSA, however, has shifted the focus towards the State providing effective services to ELs and moved the State to a supporting institution for LEAs (Dunn & Ambroso, 2019; Sugarman & Lee, 2017). As one SEA leader explained, "when you're a state official… you are there for support…I think what's fascinating about our government is that when we make changes in policy and law, the change of one word can make a huge impact on outcomes and our focus."

In new immigrant destinations, participants reported that ESSA has facilitated increased collaboration, support, and accountability within SEAs, enabling them to serve ELs better. This change in approach is evident in the way state agencies now handle reports of noncompliance related to EL education, focusing on a distributed system of support and working with districts to address issues and improve EL outcomes. As one state education leader explained, "We are a distributed system of support, so we really are not in the role of, Yes, this is what you should do, or you're in trouble, no. There was a time that that kind of philosophy existed, but it is not the case now."Many state agencies have restructured their organizations and built personnel capacity to serve ELs, leading to a shift in the state's perspective toward their education. One participant

attributed this broader reorganization or "change in perspective" to ESSA, saying, "I think it's a whole new perspective... I attribute all this change to all of that. Now, it's something that the districts really do have to focus on ELs very heavily." The adoption of ESSA has placed a greater emphasis on ELs as a priority student group, and as such, increasing the hiring of personnel specifically dedicated to servicing and overseeing the needs of this student group is a direct outcome of this policy.

In established destinations like State Six, ESSA has brought significant changes to the education agenda by emphasizing the importance of coordination and guidance when allocating funding to improve academic achievement and support ELs. The implementation of ESSA has impacted the state's plan for Title III. Participants also remarked that there was a 'tone shift' with respect to ELs from the federal government following the passage of ESSA and specifically under the Cardona administration. The tone set by the Secretary of Education at the federal level is also important in how states approach ESSA implementation. Consistent guidance and leadership at the federal level are necessary to ensure that ESSA is effectively implemented across states, benefiting ELs in both new and established immigrant destinations. The employee emphasized the importance of consistent guidance and leadership and said, "I think tone is a huge piece of it as well. You think about the DeVos era versus Cardona. I've already seen Cardona at multiple present keynotes and different addresses at multiple conferences, which is another thing, and of course, having a seasoned educator like Cardona who actually not only has lived it but also knows about English learners."

In conclusion, the implementation of ESSA has led to a more supportive and collaborative approach in both new and established immigrant destinations, ultimately better addressing the unique needs of ELs. The Act has facilitated a shift in focus from compliance to

providing effective services, leading to increased collaboration, support, and accountability at the SEA level.

Comparative Impact of English-Only Policies on Language Education: A Tale of Two States

Restrictive language policies have significantly influenced EL policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations. Below I elucidate the similarities and differences in how these policies have affected EL policymaking in State Four, a new destination, and State Seven, an established destination.

State Four is an "English-Only" state, meaning English is the only official and recognized language in the state and in institutions such as schools. This policy, passed in 1987, has had a significant impact on present and future policies and practices related to language education in the state. One State Four participant gave an example of how bilingual education is complicated by the state's English-only policy. They remarked, "Choctaw is a dying language in our state, and our kids are English speakers, [but] we wanna preserve Choctaw. So, [SEA employees] are coming at it as "We have to preserve Choctaw. So, we're kind of like, how do you save your language…while recognizing we're an English-only state?" Moreover, this restrictive language policy has adversely affected teacher recruitment in the state, as one participant explained that there is a "lack of a sufficient teacher population to support bilingual education".

Additionally, the English-only policy often contradicts federal policies, obligating education policy actors at the state to identify loopholes or workarounds to fulfill federal educational expectations while still adhering to the state's policies. As one SEA leader explained this predicament, "how do we meet [EL] expectations of the Feds while also recognizing we're an English-only state? So, [employee] and I do a lot of work trying to find loopholes" This

predicament underscores the challenges of advancing multilingualism within the state's policy context.

In contrast, State Seven has encountered a unique policy window, partially attributable to a shift from a language-restrictive policy landscape to a language(s) as an "asset" policy context. However, the English Only movement in the state cannot be overlooked as it substantially influenced the Agency and EL policymaking. One participant explained how during the height of the English Only movement in the state, ELs in bilingual education programs experienced a dramatic decline, plummeting from 30% to 5%. Additionally, the participants described how the English Only movement resulted in hostile relationships and hostile language directed toward communities that do not speak English. One policy actor recounted, "I know that there were things where people would come and speak at our board meetings and public meetings and say awful things, hateful things." Such behavior fostered a hostile environment for these communities, complicating policy actors' advocacy efforts. However, participants explained that the movement's effects have diminished over time, and its momentum has waned because of reactive "pro-multilingualism" policies.

In spite of the enduring repercussions of the English Only movement on policymaking, policy actors in State Seven have consistently advocated for multilingualism and the enhancement of EL student outcomes. Their unwavering commitment to improving language education is evident. One policy actor highlighted a shift in approach, wherein SEA leaders transitioned from overtly advocating for multilingualism to advancing it through more discreet means. This policy actor elaborated, "We don't talk about bilingual education or multilingual education in the same way that we did before. We talk about it more in terms of promoting literacy and improving student outcomes." This strategic shift suggests that policy actors may

have perceived a need for increased caution in their multilingualism advocacy to circumvent attracting adverse attention.

Presently, bilingual education is no longer perceived as a pejorative term, and policy actors demonstrate an increased willingness to formulate policies in support of ELs. As another policy actor observed, "That pendulum has changed...it's not a bad word. Bilingual education is not a bad word." This attitudinal shift toward bilingual education represents a favorable development with the potential to yield improved policies and practices for ELs in State Seven.

In conclusion, English-Only or other restrictive language policies have produced varying effects on EL policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations. State Four's English-only policy has generated challenges in preserving languages and delivering biliterate instruction. In contrast, State Seven has witnessed a shift in attitude toward bilingual education and a more strategic approach to promoting multilingualism. Both states have contended with the consequences of restrictive language policies, but their unique policy contexts, responses, and time have led to distinct outcomes for their respective language education programs.

Demographic Change: Shifting EL Landscapes. Unique Challenges and Affordances in Context

As shown in Table 2 in Chapter Three, there have been significant demographic changes in student populations across various regions of the United States in recent decades. As such, certain states have experienced rapid EL growth, presenting both challenges and opportunities for state education policy actors. This demographic transformation not only affects the composition of the student population but also emphasizes the necessity for SEAs to adapt and address the diverse needs of ELs. While acknowledging that established immigrant destinations

continue to face challenges, the focus below is on the strategies these destinations have

implemented to overcome such issues, without overlooking the difficulties they may encounter.

As noted in Chapter Two of this dissertation, more scholarly attention has been given to

the established destination states. However, no studies have comparatively investigated EL

policymaking within these two distinct educational settings—established and new immigrant

destinations. Through interviews with state policy actors, unique challenges faced by new

immigrant destinations and the strategies or affordances employed by state policy actors in

established immigrant destinations were identified as related to the issues of growth awareness

and EL distribution, quality education, and building a robust SEA infrastructure. By examining

these strategies, I aim to provide insights for emerging immigrant destinations grappling with

their own unique and pressing challenges, while recognizing the ongoing challenges faced by

established destinations and contributing to the comparative understanding of EL policymaking

in both contexts.

Growth Awareness and EL Distribution

The growth of ELs in various states' education systems highlights the importance of

understanding the differences and responses between established and new immigrant

destinations. As noted in this dissertation introduction, the presence of ELs is not a recent

phenomenon in established immigrant destinations. These states have long-standing immigrant

populations and often have the resources to address the needs of ELs. On the other hand, new

immigrant destinations are experiencing rapid growth in their EL populations, leading to a lack

of awareness of this growth and challenges related to the distribution of EL growth.

Challenges Faced by New Immigrant Destinations. New immigrant destinations are

grappling with the rapid growth of students identified as ELs, which poses significant challenges

to their education systems at both the state and local levels. One of the main issues faced by these states is the lack of awareness of this growth at the SEA level. A State Five participant remarked on the SEA's unawareness of this new student population, saying, "I honestly don't know if the state is aware of how our numbers [of ELs] look." Another SEA participant from State Two responded with similar concern, "they [people at the SEA] have an awareness of it [EL student population growth], but it's at a very... It's at an initial level. I don't know that they are really keeping track of it; maybe they are, but I haven't heard that."Echoing a related challenge, a State One SEA leader noted that the biggest challenge for LEAs in their state is not knowing "what to do with an English Learner first time coming into the country" and stated that "often school divisions get challenged when they have a student that comes in that has a significant deficit that they don't know what to do with it, they're [LEAs] not equipped to work with those students. This lack of awareness concerning population growth and the unique needs of this population can lead to inadequate resources and support, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided to ELs.

Additionally, new immigrant destinations face challenges related to the uneven distribution of EL growth. Several participants remarked that the influx of ELs has been significant in some districts, while in others, the growth has been more modest or nonexistent. For example, the population of ELs in State One varies depending on location within the state. One SEA leader noted that one specific county, the ninth or tenth largest division in the country, has 35,000 ELs-90% of the state's ELs. In contrast, many divisions in the southern area of State One do not have full-time EL teachers because of the small population of ELs in that area. SEA participants argued that this disparity makes it challenging to implement a single or broad SEA policy to address the needs of all LEAs.Similarly, State Four is facing a growing diversity of

ELs. According to one participant, "We've grown in the number of English learners, but we've grown in the diversity of English learners." This can be seen through the increasing number of different languages EL students speak. According to another participant, "When I came on board [at the SEA], I think there were about 80 languages spoken in our school district, and without staying in the capital, it's the largest school district. Now there's, oh gosh, probably 150 or so languages that are spoken." One participant stated that the majority of EL students used to be "Spanish or Vietnamese speakers," but now the state is "getting a lot of students from Honduras and Guatemala, and they speak many different dialects."

The distribution of ELs in State Four also varies by location. Some areas with high EL populations include the coast, near the [neighboring state] line, and near chicken and furniture factories. Another policy actor further described the diversity and distribution of ELs, "We're starting to get kids from all over the world. We have communities where there's one kid in the entire county that speaks Māori… It's like a more rare language or one that you don't expect to find in the State Four [location] or in Central State Four, in the [State Four location]". Similarly, State Three leaders also remarked that in some areas of the state, the EL population is growing much faster than others, with the southern and western parts of the state seeing the highest numbers.

Strategies Employed by Established Immigrant Destinations. Established immigrant destinations, such as State Seven and State Six, have a long history of ELs in their school systems. One participant from State Seven commented, "We have had a growing population of ELs for many years now. Over time, we have learned what works best for our students and have been able to fine-tune our programs and services to meet their needs". To address these unique challenges, new immigrant destinations can look to the strategies employed by established

immigrant destinations. One effective strategy is the development of strong professional development programs for educators to address the unique needs of ELs. The EL Coordinator from State Seven stated, "Our professional development programs for teachers have been instrumental in helping them understand the unique needs of ELs and develop the skills needed to teach them effectively."Further, as one State Six participant underscored, "the Agency is committed to providing guidance and support to the state as to what are the most effective English learner programs that move beyond simply checking the box and instead focus on the instructional and implementation side of EL programs." In this regard, the Agency has developed a range of programs and resources, including professional development opportunities, access to online materials, and technical assistance, that are designed to support LEAs as they implement effective instructional strategies for EL students." By investing in professional development, new immigrant destinations can build the capacity of their local educators to provide high-quality education for ELs.

In order to address the challenge of the distribution of ELs throughout the state, both State Six and State Seven have deployed regional support centers to aid districts with higher EL populations directly. As one State Seven employee explained, "we have our EL specialists who are part of our bilingual coordinator's network, and they're from county offices, and they work with a region, basically. And so they're a great disseminator of information resources and help." Similarly, a State Six SEA representative noted that "with our regional service centers, we've leveraged them a lot when it comes to dissemination of information, training, etcetera." These centers are staffed with EL specialists who provide valuable resources and support to disseminate information and deliver training, as the State Seven employee stated that the EL specialists are "great disseminators of information, resources, and help."

Quality EL Education

New immigrant destinations face significant challenges in providing quality education to their growing EL population. These challenges include limited resources, high teacher attrition rates, and a limited (qualified) teacher workforce. However, established immigrant destinations have developed effective strategies that can serve as a model for new destinations to follow. Strategies employed by established destinations include the integration of ELs into other areas like curriculum and assessment, prioritizing community partnerships and research, and utilizing data and research to inform EL policies and practices.

Challenges Faced by New Immigrant Destinations. As new immigrant destinations experience rapid growth in their EL populations, they often struggle with the challenge of providing adequate resources. One participant highlighted the issue, stating, "So as their [EL] populations increase, they are not seeing an increase in the allocation of teacher resources. So basically more kids, same number of teachers…." One key theme that emerges is the issue of limited resources. With the increasing number of EL students, schools are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the necessary support and services to ensure these students receive a quality education. The lack of resources is felt in terms of state and local funding and qualified educators. This resource deficiency makes it difficult for new immigrant destinations to serve their growing EL populations effectively and can hinder the development and implementation of appropriate EL programs.

Another challenge faced by new immigrant destinations is the high teacher attrition rates. One participant explained, "because of the [DoE] management, there's a lot of teacher turnovers" and quoted an LEA leader as saying, "The day that you realize that you are always going to be a revolving door is the day that you will start to find a little bit more contentment in your

position." Teachers are often overwhelmed by the increasing workload, lack of support, and political climate, leading to many qualified educators leaving the profession. This issue is further exacerbated by the challenge of limited resources. Teachers are faced with larger class sizes and fewer resources, leading to burnout and a revolving door of teachers. The ongoing teacher shortage leaves new immigrant destinations struggling to provide quality education for their growing EL populations and contributes to an ongoing teacher shortage. The teacher shortage also limits the potential for more specialized programming, such as bilingual education or other more specific program models for ELs.

In addition to the challenges of limited resources and high teacher attrition, new immigrant destinations often face issues related to uneven funding distribution for EL programs. One participant highlighted the burden faced by EL teachers in these communities, stating, "In a lot of these communities, you are the only teacher in the entire district who has an English learner. You don't have a peer to bounce ideas off. You don't have any EL support. There is no EL Coordinator, [and] there is no EL teacher." One major challenge is the limited (qualified) teacher workforce available to serve EL students. This uneven distribution of funding can lead to disparities in the quality of education provided to EL students across different schools and districts. In such situations, EL teachers may feel overwhelmed and unsupported, which can further contribute to teacher attrition and undermine the quality of education provided to EL students.

Strategies Employed by Established Immigrant Destinations. Established immigrant destination states have developed and implemented a range of EL policies and programs that can serve as a model for new immigrant destinations. These states have dedicated significant time and effort to develop effective EL policies and programs, incorporating diverse program models,

integrating EL programs into other areas like curriculum and assessment, and prioritizing

community partnerships and research. As a result, they provide valuable insights for new

immigrant destinations to follow.

One State Seven SEA leader explained the depth of commitment and continuous

improvement required in the process of developing EL policies and programs:

> Our [State Seven SEA] hands have been in the dough for a lot longer, so we know that dough, we know how to feel it, and we know how to bake it. Having said that, it's taken a long, long time for EL matters to infiltrate. It's been a struggle and an effort to infiltrate all the divisions so that they continually remember not just the EL perspective but the depth of commitment that's necessary in order to make the EL programs and that connection to their programs solid. Now, are we there yet? It's always continuous improvement, it's one of our best efforts, and we're always gonna be working on it.

One of the key strategies employed by established immigrant destinations is the integration of

EL programs into other areas like curriculum and assessment. By weaving EL-focused initiatives

into the broader educational framework, these states create an environment that is more inclusive

and responsive to the unique needs of EL students. This comprehensive approach helps to bridge

gaps in learning, promote language acquisition, and foster academic achievement. Furthermore,

it encourages collaboration among educators as they work together to develop and implement

curricula that cater to the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students, ultimately

ensuring a well-rounded and equitable education for all learners.

Another strategy employed by established immigrant destinations is partnering with

higher education institutions to create pipelines for bilingual educators. These partnerships

ensure a steady supply of qualified bilingual candidates who are prepared to meet the unique

needs of ELs. As one State Seven SEA leader explained, "we have partnered with local

universities to create bilingual teacher preparation programs, which helps us recruit and train

future bilingual educators." By fostering relationships with local universities, these states can

create bilingual teacher preparation programs that help recruit and train future bilingual educators, addressing the demand for skilled professionals in this area.

Additionally, established immigrant destinations place a strong emphasis on data and research to inform their EL policies and practices. By actively engaging with evidence-based approaches, these states can continually refine and improve their programs to better meet the needs of ELs. This wealth of knowledge and experience allows them to make informed decisions, avoid common pitfalls, and implement innovative solutions that ultimately benefit their EL populations. For example, one SEA leader explained,

> "It [EL praxis and program models] stems from a reaction to the law, but when you have that conversation, it really goes way beyond law and what's good, and we have other divisions who are telling us, 'Yeah, well, that would meet the letter of the law, but it would really be better to... ' And then fill in the blanks for English learners, and I'm like, 'Shut my mouth. Why didn't I think of that?' Of course, they know their program, they know what's good for kids, and once they have that awareness and data, it can't go away."

This statement highlights the emphasis that established destinations place on data and research to ensure that their EL programs are effective and meet the needs of their students. As a result, new immigrant destinations can learn from these evidence-based practices and apply them to their own contexts, ensuring that their EL programs are effective and responsive to the needs of their students.

Finally, the specific affordances of established immigrant destinations significantly contribute to the success of their EL programs. These states have already undergone the process of trial and error, refining their policies and practices over time. As one State Seven SEA leader aptly described, "There's so much learning. There's so much out there that they [new destinations] can... They don't have to go through the motions of building the car. They can go to the store and buy one. They can go and emulate what other people have done and skip all of that

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pain of trying to figure it out." This accelerated learning process enables new immigrant destinations to develop and implement effective EL programs more efficiently, reducing the time and resources required to navigate the initial stages of program development. By tapping into the wealth of knowledge and expertise provided by established immigrant destinations, new destinations can create a strong foundation for their EL programs, ultimately ensuring better outcomes for their students.

In conclusion, the experiences of established immigrant destinations offer valuable insights into developing and implementing effective EL programs. By incorporating diverse program models, integrating EL programs into other areas like curriculum and assessment, and prioritizing community partnerships and research, these states have set a strong example for other states to follow. As new immigrant destinations continue to grapple with growing EL populations, they can learn from the experiences of established destinations and develop effective EL programs that meet the needs of their EL students.

Building a Robust SEA Infrastructure

Growth in EL student populations can pose significant challenges, particularly for new immigrant destinations that lack the resources and SEA infrastructure. Established immigrant destination states have had the advantage of time and resources to build robust SEA infrastructure to address the needs of ELs. In contrast, new destinations need help to catch up. Participants in established destinations argued the importance of collaboration, communication, and staffing in supporting ELs and concluded that investing in the infrastructure needed to support ELs can help to address the challenges and opportunities presented by demographic shifts in student populations.

Challenges Faced by New Immigrant Destinations. While established immigrant

destinations have had the advantage of time and resources to build robust SEAs to address the

needs of ELs, the same cannot be said for new immigrant destinations. As one state policy actor

noted in our interviews, "Staffing-wise, we haven't really kept up," and another added, "We've

got some new hires in her [EL] area, but it's just starting. We're not there; we have a lot more

people to hire." These regions face unique challenges due to their sudden and often unexpected

growth in EL populations, which can strain existing infrastructure and resources. However, it is

important to note that despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition among state policy

actors in new immigrant destinations of the need to build a solid infrastructure to support their

EL populations.

Strategies Employed by Established Immigrant Destinations. A robust SEA

infrastructure is crucial to ensuring that EL policymaking is effective and that EL students

receive the support they need to succeed. One participant noted the importance of having an

established department within the SEA that is dedicated to EL policymaking and issues. This

department can provide a centralized location for EL-related work, allowing for greater

efficiency and coordination among various divisions and branches. In State Seven, for example,

an entire SEA division is dedicated to the support of multilingual learners. The creation of this

division ensures that EL concerns are elevated and integrated into the development of Agency

initiatives, preventing the issue of EL as an "afterthought." Moreover, having a dedicated team to

support ELs can also help to ensure that EL concerns are integrated into broader education

initiatives and that their unique needs are taken into account from the outset. One participant

noted that EL concerns were often an afterthought in the past, resulting in inadequate or

ineffective support. However, with the establishment of a dedicated team, EL concerns can be integrated into the initial stages of policy development.

Another aspect of building a robust SEA infrastructure is ensuring sufficient staffing capacity to support ELs at the SEA level. This can include hiring individuals with the expertise of Els' assets and needs. One State Six participant noted that their team was able to increase its staffing capacity by hiring individuals with bilingual backgrounds. They explained the importance of this hiring decision, "bilingual staff members serve as a cultural broker between the state and the ELs' families."

Established immigrant destination states have gained valuable insights into the importance of collaboration and communication. As a SEA leader in State Six stated, "collaboration is key. We are all in this together, and we need to work together to find the best solutions for our EL students." Strong communication and collaboration among SEA employees and interest holders are essential for EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destination states. By learning from these experiences, new immigrant destination states can build a more robust SEA infrastructure that addresses the unique needs of ELs.

In conclusion, building a robust SEA infrastructure dedicated to supporting EL is essential for ensuring that these students receive the support they need to succeed. A dedicated SEA, collaboration among various state actors, and sufficient staffing capacity to support ELs can help to integrate EL concerns into broader education initiatives and prevent EL concerns from being an afterthought. By investing in the infrastructure needed to support ELs, states can help to ensure that they are equipped to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the demographic shifts in their student populations.

Chapter Conclusion

The preceding chapters have analyzed the interplay between technical, normative, and political factors that shape state policymaking for ELs. This chapter, however, highlights the contextual forces that influence these processes, including the impact of past and present policies and the demographic changes occurring within states on state EL policymaking.

This chapter investigates how historical and current federal and state policies, such as local control politics, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), and restrictive language policies, have shaped contemporary state EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destinations.

Moreover, the chapter emphasizes the significant demographic shifts taking place in the United States, which have expanded the English learner population. These changes present both opportunities and challenges for SEAs and state education policy actors. To fully comprehend the impact of these demographic shifts, it is essential to distinguish between established and new immigrant destinations. Established destinations are states with long-standing immigrant populations and extensive experience addressing ELs' needs, while new immigrant destinations are experiencing rapid growth in their EL populations and may be less familiar with the unique challenges they present.

By examining these contextual forces, past and present policies, and demographic change, scholars and policy actors can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in state-level EL policymaking within these contexts. In the subsequent chapter, I will present policy and theoretical implications of this study and direction for future research.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion and Implications

This dissertation aimed to understand technical, normative, and political factors of state EL policymaking, specifically through the mediating institutions of SEAs in new and established immigrant destinations. Using a multiple case study design of seven SEA sites in new and established immigrant destinations, this dissertation drew on interviews with 50 state policy actors, state policy documents, and archival records. Analysis of the data provided insight into how these factors enabled or constrained efforts toward equitable policymaking for English Learners.

The findings of this dissertation were presented across chapters four through seven. Chapter Four described the individual state profiles for each SEA site within the new and established destination cases, uncovering various technical factors of state EL policymaking. This chapter included an overview of the SEA organizational structure, identified state policy actors, and outlined each states' education agendas and priorities.

The organizational structures, policy actors, and education agendas of new immigrant destination states' displayed similarities and differences. All states featured hierarchical leadership structures, but the extent of collaboration and influence among policy actors in the policymaking process varied. States One, Three, and Five adopted a collaborative approach, involving multiple interest holders, while State Two's policymaking process was heavily influenced by the governor's office, and State Four's complexity arose from the involvement of various policy actors, with the State Board of Education members playing a pivotal role.

In terms of their SEA agenda focus, State One and State Four prioritized preparing students for post-graduation life. State One emphasized the "life ready graduate" profile and

deeper learning initiative, while State Four focused on a five-year strategic plan with six universal education goals. Conversely, State Two emphasized a career-oriented education agenda aimed at promoting "equity and enhancing socioeconomic vitality." Furthermore, equity concerns were central for States One, Three, and Five, with State One committed to serving all learners using a data-driven, research-based approach, State Three addressing systemic barriers, and State Five emphasizing flexibility, local control, and holistic and district specific student support. However, State Two faced challenges in addressing equity in the broader education agenda due to political and structural barriers, making it a contentious issue.

In the established immigrant destination states, State Six and State Seven exhibited similarities in their approach to education policymaking, with various actors involved in decision-making, including SEA leadership, State Board of Education members, state legislators, governors, advocacy groups, and researchers. Moreover, both states prioritized equity and innovation in education and addressed crucial issues such as mental health support, anti-bias education, and the digital divide. Additionally, both states emphasized literacy, foundational skills, and preparing students for college and career readiness. Another distinction between the two states was the explicit mention of multilingualism in State Seven's mission statement.

Despite these similarities, there were notable differences in the organizational structure and priorities of State Six and State Seven's SEAs. State Seven's SEA operated as a separate entity and not under the state governor's umbrella. It also had a unique EL specific division that employed over 40 staff members dedicated to EL support. In contrast, State Six's SEA was organized hierarchically under the state governor's leadership and employed five EL specialist employees responsible for the education of over one million multilingual learners.

Chapter Five delved into factors that enabled or constrained the prioritization of ELs within state policymaking in new and established immigrant destinations. A thorough examination of the technical factors involved in state EL policymaking from the previous chapter, which included the identification of key policy actors and educational agendas and priorities, was essential to comprehend the underlying normative factors that shape the determination of *who* and *what* is deemed important in state policymaking. The analysis identified several factors that enable or constrain the prioritization of ELs in policymaking in new immigrant destinations, including limited EL- specific staff at the SEA, a focus on "all students" in education initiatives, funding support and allocation, inclusion and influence in SEA decision-making, awareness of SEA staff about EL content, and deficit attitudes towards ELs. In the established immigrant destination case, factors such as increased staffing and supportive SEA leadership were identified as enabling factors that help prioritize ELs in the policymaking process. On the other hand, constraining factors such as SEA awareness and technical knowledge about ELs, deficit attitudes towards ELs, funding constraints, and the sociopolitical context hindered the prioritization of ELs within broader state policymaking.

Chapter Six scrutinized the intricate normative and political factors that shaped state EL policymaking across new and established immigrant destinations. The chapter discussed the power dynamics among critical interest holders in the policymaking process, such as state governors and EL advocacy organizations, demonstrating their considerable influence on states' educational agendas and priorities. Additionally, the chapter investigated how partisan political forces impacted EL policymaking in conservative and progressive environments. Progressive contexts exposed misconceptions about ELs and the consequences of neoliberal politics, while conservative contexts centered on the implications of negative attitudes and ideologies towards

ELs and immigrants, including the contentious issue of bilingual education. The analysis also addressed immigration politics and its effects on state EL policymaking.

Finally, Chapter Seven explored the contextual factors influencing state EL policymaking, building upon the technical, normative, and political factors elaborated in previous chapters. This chapter emphasized the importance of context when examining these factors' influence on state EL policymaking, particularly in new versus established immigrant destinations. The chapter assessed how the policy context, both historical and contemporary, and demographic changes, such as fluctuating populations, affected the technical, normative, and political forces shaping state EL policymaking.

Revisiting the Literature

This dissertation substantively advances our understanding of state-level EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destinations. It explores the intricate web of technical, normative, and political dynamics that inform these processes, offering a significant expansion of our knowledge on how these factors shape the creation of policies for English Learners. Addressing a notable gap in scholarly literature on state-level EL policymaking, this study shines a light on potential disparities and biases in these processes, earmarking areas where further exploration and policy modification may be vital to fostering equitable educational opportunities for ELs across different contexts. This research's focus on equity ensures that the unique requirements and viewpoints of ELs are integrated into the policymaking process, enhancing a more inclusive and representative body of research on this subject.

In relation to prior studies that examined the role of district-level actors in shaping EL policymaking (Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; Sampson, 2019; Trujillo, 2012; Turner, 2015; Umansky et al., 2020), this dissertation probes more profoundly into the frequently neglected

sphere of state education agencies. Through examining the role of state education agencies in EL

policy formation and addressing potential biases in the policymaking process, this dissertation

offers actionable insights for fostering equity at the state level - a level wielding substantial sway

over the educational experiences of ELs. Consequently, this study not only broadens the

expanding body of literature on state-level EL policymaking but also potentially guides future

policy development. In essence, it is a significant stride towards cultivating a more equitable and

inclusive educational landscape for ELs across diverse educational contexts.

This study offers a purposeful comparison between new and established immigrant

destinations, uniquely focusing on the EL policymaking process in these varied contexts. The

existing literature underscores various technical, normative, and political elements that shape EL

education in these regions. Key aspects include educational infrastructure (Bigelow, 2010;

Brezicha & Hopkins, 2016; de Jong et al., 2010; Hopkins et al., 2015; Gandara et al., 2003;

Lowenhaupt, 2014; Lowenhaupt & Reeves, 2015; Valenzuela, 1999; Wortham & Contreras,

2002; Zarate et al., 2016), the attitudes of the receiving communities (Dondero & Muller, 2012;

Marrow, 2011; Portes & Rumbaut, 2005; Turner, 2020), and the impact of anti-immigrant

politics (Burkett & Hayes, 2018; Callahan et al., 2020; Gandara & Ee, 2018; Gonzales, 2010;

Olivas, 2012; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017; Sattin-Bajaj & Kirksey, 2019). Building upon this

foundation, this dissertation elucidates the potential differences and hurdles faced by SEAs

within these distinctive educational environments. This study specifically identifies the

challenges, strategies, and opportunities employed by state policy actors in new and established

immigrant destinations in relation to EL policymaking. These aspects are further connected to

the issues of growth awareness and EL distribution, quality education, and the establishment of a

robust SEA infrastructure. Through an examination of these components, this study unravels the complex dynamics that shape EL policy formation and implementation across diverse contexts.

Addressing the Research Questions

Below I will address the dissertation research questions, *1)How do technical, normative, and political factors inform state EL policymaking*, this dissertation study directly.

Technical: How does the SEA organizational structure, policy actors, and education agendas or priorities of the SEA inform EL policymaking?

  SEA Organizational Structure. The organizational structure of the SEA plays a crucial role in shaping EL state policymaking. Specifically, the variations in governance structures, autonomy levels among policy actors, and the size of SEA organizations affect EL policymaking. There are notable differences in the governance structures and degrees of autonomy among the SEAs. In States One, Two, Three, and Six the policymaking process is heavily guided by a hierarchical leadership structure, with the state governor having significant influence and control over the SEA leadership and organization. This contrasts with states like State Four, Five, and Seven, where the SEA is a constitutional agency, and the state governor does not have direct control over the SEA leadership. In these states, chief state school officers have more autonomy in shaping the organization and education policy agenda for their state.

  Additionally, states with smaller SEA organizations, such as State Two, State Three, and State Four, rely heavily on a limited number of staff members for EL policymaking. In these states, the few, but dedicated employees, are responsible for managing state EL-related issues and providing support to schools and districts. This may result in a more constrained capacity to address the diverse needs of EL students as well as having an influence on the policymaking process. In contrast, states like State Five and State Seven have a larger number of staff members

specifically dedicated to EL services, with nine and over 40 employees, respectively. This increased workforce allows for a more comprehensive approach to state EL policymaking.

Policy Actors. Collaboration between various internal and external policy actors, including state governors, state legislators, state boards of education members, chief state school officers, and SEA employees, was a common theme among all SEAs in this dissertation. These key policy actors work collectively with other interest holders, such as local education agencies, educators, parents, and advocacy organizations, to shape the education agenda priorities. The involvement of multiple interest holders ensures that education policies are informed by diverse perspectives and are responsive to the needs of students, teachers, and communities. The different policy actors involved in state EL policymaking, including SEA employees, state education board members, chief state school officers, state governors and legislators, and LEA leaders, exert varying degrees of influence on state policymaking.

Education Agendas and Priorities. Consequently, the agendas and priorities of state education agencies often reflect the competing goals and priorities of various policy actors. As demonstrated in the state profiles presented in Chapter Four, education agendas and priorities vary across states. In States One and Four, the emphasis lies on "life ready graduates" and universal education goals, respectively. Meanwhile, States Two, Three, Five, Six, and Seven prioritize equity as a central concern. State Two focuses on a career-oriented education agenda, while States Six and Seven address mental health support, anti-bias education, and the digital divide. Additionally, States Six and Seven emphasize literacy, foundational skills, and college and career readiness.

While state education agencies' agendas and priorities inform EL policymaking by addressing various aspects of education, it is crucial to acknowledge that ELs were explicitly

mentioned in the education agendas of only State Seven. This omission may lead to gaps in the consideration and implementation of policies tailored to ELs' specific needs. Although the focus on preparing students for life after graduation, promoting equity, and enhancing socioeconomic vitality benefits all students, including ELs, the lack of direct mention of ELs in these agendas and priorities could result in inadequate attention to their unique needs.

Normative: How do state education policy actors' beliefs, attitudes, and values related to English Learners and EL education inform state EL policymaking?

The beliefs, attitudes, and values of state education policy actors play a pivotal role in shaping EL policymaking. Policy actors, such as SEA employees, state education board members, state politicians, and advocacy organizations, possess varying perspectives and ideologies influencing their approaches to EL policymaking.

Firstly, policy actors' beliefs about the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity can impact the prioritization of ELs within education policies. Those who view multilingualism and multiculturalism as assets, like the State Four SEA employees working towards creating a culture where language proficiency is just "one key to success," are likely to support policies that promote bilingual education, provide resources for EL programs, and foster inclusive learning environments. In contrast, state policy actors who perceive linguistic and cultural homogeneity as desirable may advocate for English-only policies or resist efforts to accommodate ELs' unique needs, as illustrated by the State Five participant describing the derogatory phone call from an LEA leader concerning EL students.

Secondly, policy actors' values concerning educational equity and social justice can significantly influence EL policymaking. Actors committed to reducing achievement gaps and providing equal opportunities for all students may work to develop policies and initiatives

addressing the specific challenges ELs face, such as targeted funding or professional development for teachers. However, those who prioritize other educational issues or adhere to a one-size-fits-all approach (i.e. "all students") may inadvertently overlook or marginalize the needs of ELs. Furthermore, equity in education has become an increasingly polarizing issue in many states across the United States, affecting EL policymaking. As evident from the findings of this dissertation, state policy actors often hold different views on the concept of equity, which can lead to divergent policy decisions and practices. This polarization is evident in interviews with state policy actors from State One and State Two, who provided insight into the challenges and opportunities of addressing equity in education particularly for students like ELs.

Thirdly, the politics of immigration play a significant role in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, and values of state policy actors related to EL education. Negative attitudes towards immigrant populations, as exemplified by one State Three SEA leader's description of the "nastiest cry" and the negative comments often put out loudly, often extend to ELs, leading to the perception of them as synonymous. Language and terminology used when discussing ELs can perpetuate these negative attitudes and create a hostile environment for these students, as demonstrated by the State Three governor's office asking the SEA for alternative terminology to ELs. Further, federal immigration policies can also impact EL education, further complicating the broader context of education, particularly in states where immigration is heavily demonized, such as State Five and State Six.

Finally, state policy actors' political beliefs and party affiliations can also shape EL policymaking. Progressive policy actors, such as those found in State Three and State Seven, may be more receptive to policies that support immigrant inclusivity and language access. In

contrast, conservative actors, like State One, Two, Four, Five and Six, may focus on assimilation and be more cautious in allocating resources to EL programs.

In summary, state policy actors' beliefs, attitudes, and values towards EL education, immigration, and bilingual education are complex and influenced by political ideologies and perceptions of national identity. These factors play a critical role in informing state EL policymaking, which in turn impacts the educational opportunities available to ELs.

Political: How does power and politics inform EL policymaking?

Power and politics considerably inform EL policymaking at the state level. The findings of this study, presented in Chapter Six, highlight the substantial influence state governors have in EL policymaking. In some state governance contexts, such as States One, Two, Three, and Six, governors appoint the chief state school officer responsible for overseeing the SEA, further illustrating their impact. These appointments can profoundly affect EL policymaking, as the chief state school officer sets the Agency's priorities.

Political considerations may constrain the chief state school officer's authority, revealing a delicate balance between expertise and politics. Governors' political ambitions can influence education policymaking, potentially prioritizing political gain over the needs of students and educators. For instance, in State Six, the governor's aspiration to run for president in 2024 was perceived to affect their decisions regarding education policy. This influence manifested in an executive order banning mask mandates in schools, which curtailed the State Six chief state school officer's authority in education policymaking.

Moreover, EL advocacy organizations play an influential role in EL policymaking, particularly in established immigrant destinations. Effective EL policymaking requires robust

relationships between advocacy organizations and SEA officials; however, conflicts can arise when SEA leadership's stance diverges from advocacy groups' views.s.

Finally, power and politics can also shape EL policymaking in conservative and progressive political environments. For example, in State Two, the chief state school officer's relationship with the conservative governor and limited experience in policy and politics had hindered advocacy and support for ELs. In State Four, participants argued that the conservative governor's political agenda adversely affected the availability of EL teachers, making it difficult to offer sufficient support to EL students. Moreover, in State Three, political sensitivities caused EL education to be seen as controversial, leading to a deprioritization of ELs in policy decisions. Furthermore, misunderstandings about ELs and neoliberal narratives, as observed in State Seven regarding resource allocation, aggravated the issue. However, the presence of supportive state policy actors who recognized the advantages of multilingualism significantly improved EL policymaking and promoted educational access and equity for these learners.

Research Question 2: How do these factors enable or constrain state-level attention toward equity and access for ELs in state policymaking?

The factors that enable or constrain state-level attention toward equity and access for ELs in state policymaking are intricate and manifold. These factors encompass organizational and governance structure, policy actors' beliefs and values, and the influence of power and politics. A thorough understanding of these elements is vital to cultivating an environment that fosters educational equity and supports ELs.

Technical Factors: Organizational and Governance Structure of SEAs. The organizational structure can both enable and constrain equity efforts in state policymaking for ELs. Hierarchical leadership structures may limit the autonomy of chief state school officers and

other interest holders, constraining their ability to advocate for ELs. In contrast, more autonomous decision-making structures in constitutional agencies empower policy actors to address EL needs more effectively, enabling equity efforts even when facing opposition from higher authorities. Moreover, larger staff numbers dedicated to EL services can enable a more comprehensive approach to EL policymaking, while smaller SEA organizations may constrain the capacity to address EL students' diverse needs.

Normative Factors: Policy Actors' Beliefs and Values. The beliefs and values of policy actors, such as state governors, legislators, SEA employees, and advocacy groups, can either enable or constrain equity efforts in EL policymaking. When policy actors appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity and prioritize educational equity, they drive policies that enable equity efforts by supporting multilingual education, allocating resources for EL programs, and creating inclusive learning environments. Conversely, policy actors who favor linguistic and cultural homogeneity can constrain equity efforts by advocating for English-only policies or resisting efforts to accommodate ELs' unique needs. Political beliefs and party affiliations often sway policy actors' attitudes toward ELs, significantly affecting the enabling or constraining of equity efforts in EL policymaking.

Political Factors: Power and Politics. Power dynamics and political factors can profoundly enable or constrain equity efforts in EL policymaking. Politicians who recognize the benefits of multilingualism and educational equity collaborate with SEAs and advocacy organizations, enabling the advancement of EL policymaking. However, political ambitions and sensitivities can hinder progress, constraining equity efforts and causing conflicts between policy actors, advocacy organizations, and SEA officials. In such situations, EL education becomes a

contentious issue, potentially leading to a lack of prioritization and resource allocation for ELs, further constraining equity efforts.

In conclusion, understanding the intricate interplay between organizational structure, policy actors' beliefs and values, and power and politics is crucial to promoting educational equity and supporting ELs in state policymaking. A robust organizational structure fostering collaboration and communication, along with state policy actors who value linguistic and cultural diversity and prioritize educational equity, can enable equity efforts and create an environment conducive to EL success. In contrast, a limited organizational structure, unfavorable attitudes, and competing political beliefs and ambitions can constrain equity efforts and adversely impact EL policymaking. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure equitable and accessible educational opportunities for ELs in state policymaking.

Implications for Policy and Policy Practice

Based on the finding of this dissertation, there are several policy and practical implications for policy actors that can be derived to enable state attention toward equitable policymaking for ELs, including increasing personnel and EL technical knowledge, addressing biases and prejudices in policymaking, acknowledging power dynamics and political influence, fostering collaborations among interest holders, and recognizing the implications past and present policies.

Increase Personnel and EL Technical Knowledge For State Education Agencies

State policy actors ought to ensure that SEAs possess the requisite personnel and resources to devise and efficacious and equitable policymaking. This encompasses investment in capacity building including staffing and technical knowledge for SEA employees and other state policy actors. One way to achieve this is by hiring specialized personnel to provide targeted

support to multilingual learners. States Two, Four, Six, and Seven are good examples of SEAs that are taking steps to build capacity and provide specialized support for ELs at the state level. However, it is important to avoid relying heavily on one person to be the EL-specialized employee, as this creates a potential problem of vulnerability in the system.

It is essential to address the issue of EL content awareness at SEA and the concern noted by participants about deficit attitudes towards ELs and the implications of such attitudes on state EL policymaking. A key challenge faced by policy actors is the lack of understanding and recognition of ELs' specific needs among SEA leadership and employees. Therefore, it is crucial to promote initiatives that raise awareness and understanding of ELs. Misconceptions about the unique needs of ELs at the SEA level can impede their prioritization in policymaking efforts, preventing the adequate allocation of resources and support for ELs. Therefore, policy actors , internal and external to the Agency, must enhance their content knowledge about ELs to overcome these challenges and ensure that ELs are not marginalized within broader education state agendas.

Address Implicit and Explicit Biases and Prejudices in the Policymaking Process

Addressing implicit and explicit biases and prejudices in policymaking is essential for fostering equitable and inclusive policies for ELs. SEAs and policy actors must proactively work to recognize and challenge these biases, prejudices, and power dynamics within their organizations. This effort may involve the following steps:

Incorporate diverse perspectives: Ensure that a broad range of voices and experiences are represented in policymaking. This includes involving ELs, their families, educators, and community members and incorporating research and evidence from diverse sources. Including a wide range of perspectives can challenge biases and foster more inclusive and equitable policies.

Provide training and education: Offer ongoing professional development and training opportunities for policy actors to learn about and confront their biases and prejudices. This may include workshops, seminars, or trainings on cultural competence, implicit bias, and equity-focused decision-making.

Develop bias-conscious policies and practices: Assess existing policies and procedures to identify any that may perpetuate or exacerbate biases and prejudices. Revise or develop new policies to promote equity for ELs.

Acknowledge Power Dynamics and Political Influences of Governors

State Policy actors should recognize and address the significant role governors play in setting the education agenda, which can impact the equity and responsiveness of state EL policies. The power dynamics in States One, Two, Three, Four, and Six exemplify the influence governors have in shaping education policy. By appointing education leaders such as the chief state school officer or school board members, governors often guide the work and priorities of the state education agency. It is crucial for education advocates to ensure that governors appoint education leaders who will prioritize the needs of all students, especially those from historically marginalized communities.

Education advocates must remain informed about gubernatorial appointments and advocate for leaders who share their priorities. For example, in State Three, the governor's public goals for improving literacy and math education led the state education agency to redshift their focus away from other initiatives to early literacy initiatives to align with the campaign goals of the elected governor. By doing so, education advocates can ensure that education policymaking is equitable and responsive to the needs of ELs.

Governors also have the power to shape education policy through their influence on state boards of education, as seen in State Four and State Seven. In State Seven's case, historically, the governor's appointment of conservative board members with a bias against immigrants led to discriminatory policies that hurt ELs. Education advocates must be vigilant in monitoring such appointments to ensure that the interests of historically marginalized populations are protected.

Furthermore, the political ambitions of governors can also significantly impact education policymaking. In State Six, the governor's desire to run for president in 2024 affects their decisions regarding education policy, potentially putting political gain above the needs of students and educators in the state. Education advocates must be aware of such political influences and work to ensure that the needs of all students, including ELs, are prioritized.

Finally, advocates, researchers, and policy actors should consider the larger argument surrounding the democratic implications of governors having unilateral control over the education agenda. The appointment of non-elected state superintendents of education may pose a threat to democracy, as it may lead to the perpetuation of silos of political partisanship that shape public education. Engaging in critical discussions on this matter is essential for promoting democratic principles in education policymaking and safeguarding the interests of all students, including ELs and those from historically marginalized communities.

Cultivate Collaboration and Consensus-Building Among Diverse Interest Holders

Policy actors should proactively pursue opportunities to collaborate with a range of interest holders, including educators, community organizations, and ELs' families, to construct consensus and develop policies that accommodate the needs of all students. For instance, as seen in states Five, Six, and Seven, EL advocacy organizations play a significant role in influencing EL policymaking, and their perspectives are highly valued by SEA officials who often seek their

input and insights on EL education issues. These organizations can work directly with SEAs or through legislative channels, as one SEA leader explained, to inform policy decisions and ensure that the needs of EL students are taken into account.

Establishing formal and informal partnerships, networks, or coalitions to foster dialogue and disseminate best practices can also help manage conflicts when they arise between advocacy groups and SEA officials. In cases where disagreements emerge, advocacy groups may challenge SEA officials by being vocal and persistent, as one leader of an advocacy organization described. It is crucial for both parties to remember that they are working towards the same goal: promoting the interests of multilingual learners, as one SEA leader pointed out.

Expanding collaboration beyond state borders, cross-state cooperation presents a valuable opportunity for policy actors to learn from one another and tackle common challenges. By leveraging organizations such as the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Association of English Learner Administrators (NAELPA) and the National Governors Association, state policy actors can foster productive dialogue surrounding the challenges and opportunities inherent in state-level EL policymaking. This collaboration promotes sharing best practices and effective strategies, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes for ELs.

Incorporating this cross-state collaboration into policymaking processes can facilitate the development of more effective and informed EL policies, allowing states to learn from one another's experiences and successes. In the case of state-level policymaking, it is essential to recognize the complex power dynamics that shape education policy, involving state governors, advocacy organizations, and other interest holders. By understanding and navigating these dynamics, as well as fostering strong relationships between these actors, states can develop more

equitable educational opportunities for ELs nationwide, benefiting both individual students and the broader educational landscape.

Recognizing the Present-Day Implications of Past Policies

Policy actors must acknowledge the enduring ramifications of historical and contemporary policies on EL education and demographic shifts. Recalling specific policy examples from this dissertation, State Four's restrictive language policy has significantly impacted language education policies and practices in the state, complicating bilingual education and the preservation of endangered languages, such as Choctaw. Contrastingly, State Seven has overturned restrictive language policies, leading to a systemic shift from negative to positive attitudes towards bilingual education and multilingualism. This transformation showcases the potential for policy actors to learn from past experiences and develop improved policies and practices for ELs. Recognizing the historical context of EL policymaking enables policymakers and advocates to more effectively address systemic barriers and cultivate equitable policymaking opportunities for ELs. Learning from the past allows policy actors to formulate policies that ensure the successes and failures of previous efforts inform subsequent policies.

Theoretical Implications

As evidenced by the findings of this dissertation, contextual forces, specifically the influence of past and present policies and demographic changes in new and established immigrant destinations, serve as a critical catalyst in molding how technical, normative, and political factors intersect and influence one another. This extended theoretical framework contends that context operates not merely as a passive backdrop but rather as an active factor that modulates the interplay between the technical, normative, and political dimensions. The extended Zone of Mediation framework facilitates a more robust and holistic analysis of state-level EL policymaking by incorporating context as a driving force. This offers valuable

insights for researchers and policymakers alike, illuminating the intricate nexus of forces at play in state EL policymaking.

Direction for Future Research

Future research in EL policymaking can take several potential directions. One is to expand the sample size to include more states and explore those on the verge of becoming new immigrant destinations. Another direction is to investigate the potential impact of far-right politics on EL education in Republican established immigrant destinations. Additionally, research can examine governors' decision-making processes in education appointments. Lastly, researchers should explore new contextual factors that could impact EL education policies and practices.

Expanding Sample Size in New and on the Cusp New Destinations

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of EL policymaking in new immigrant destinations, future research may expand the scope of this dissertation study to include a larger sample of states. Ten additional states are currently classified as new immigrant destinations, and analyzing these states could provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities they face. Another important area for future research is to examine the dynamics of states that fall between new and established immigrant destinations. These states may offer a unique perspective on the evolving nature of EL policymaking, as they may be grappling with a range of issues related to immigration and language diversity that are not as acute in established destinations.

Additionally, future research might focus on states that are on the verge of becoming new immigrant destinations. This includes states such as Idaho, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. By studying these states, researchers can gain a better

understanding of the factors contributing to their potential transition and prepare for the subsequent impact on EL policymaking

The Influence of Far-Right Politics on EL Education in Republican Established Immigrant Destinations

As political polarization intensifies in the United States, it is crucial to investigate the potential impact of far-right politics on English Learner education and policy in Republican established immigrant destinations. States like Texas and Florida may face significant challenges in maintaining a robust educational infrastructure for ELs due to the growing influence of extreme political ideologies that often undermine multilingual education and vilify ELs and immigrant-origin individuals. Although the findings of this dissertation shed light on how established immigrant destinations tend to have a more robust education infrastructure to support EL and immigrant-origin students, it is essential to study the possible dismantling of EL education infrastructure and its implications for ELs, irrespective of their destination status. This research could provide policymakers and education advocates with insights into the impact of political ideologies and the status of education infrastructure on EL education in various regions.

Exploring State Governor's Decision-Making Process in SBE and CSSO Appointments

There is a pressing need for future research to investigate the decision-making processes and factors influencing governors' appointments of state board of education (SBE) members and chief state school officers (CSSOs). As evident from the findings of this dissertation, state governors hold significant power in shaping education policy, and their decisions can impact the equity and responsiveness of state education policies, particularly for English learners and historically marginalized communities. A deeper understanding of the underlying motivations, political ambitions, and power dynamics that drive these appointments can inform education

advocates and interest holders, empowering them to take appropriate action to promote equitable and responsive education policies for all students.

Furthermore, future research addressing the democratic implications of governors having significant control over the education agenda and the appointment of non-elected state superintendents of education is crucial for preserving democratic principles in education policymaking. Investigating these issues will foster critical discussions and contribute to a broader understanding of the potential risks associated with political partisanship in shaping public education. This future research would not only highlight the significance of transparency and public engagement in the appointment process, but also underscores the importance of safeguarding the interests of students, such as ELs and those from historically marginalized communities, in the realm of education policymaking.

Exploring New Contextual Factors in EL Policymaking

This dissertation's findings shed light on the importance of contextual factors, such as political climate, past and present policies, and demographic shifts, in influencing state EL policymaking. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies involved in EL policymaking, it is crucial for researchers to identify and examine a diverse array of new contextual factors that may significantly impact the process.

One critical factor to consider is the economic condition of a state. This includes factors such as the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), sources of funding for education, and the methods by which education budgets are allocated. By investigating these elements, researchers may gain insight into the financial constraints and opportunities that shape EL policy decisions. Furthermore, understanding how states prioritize and distribute educational resources can help

elucidate the potential challenges and trade-offs faced by policymakers when addressing the needs of ELs.

Concluding Thoughts

This dissertation offers a robust examination of the intricate process of state-level EL policymaking in both new and established immigrant destinations, providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates committed to promoting equitable education for English Learners. The study highlights the multifaceted interplay of technical, normative, and political forces and their impact on EL policymaking.

The findings demonstrate that technical forces, such as organizational structure, personnel capacity, and agency support, can either enable or hinder the development and execution of effective and equitable state EL policymaking. Consequently, it is crucial for SEAs to invest in building their capacity and ensuring adequate resources are available to support the needs of EL policy actors and educators. Normative forces, including internal and external to the SEA beliefs, values, and attitudes towards ELs, play a critical role in shaping policy priorities and determining the extent to which equity is considered in policymaking. SEAs must acknowledge and address the presence of deeply ingrained biases, prejudices, and power dynamics within and external to their organizations to foster a culture that prioritizes and values the needs of ELs. The study also reveals the significant influence of political forces on state EL policymaking, with partisan politics, power dynamics among key interest holders, and attitudes toward immigrants shaping educational agendas and priorities. Policymakers and advocates must navigate these political forces strategically, leveraging opportunities for collaboration and consensus-building to advance equitable EL policies.

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Furthermore, the dissertation underscores the importance of context when examining the influence of technical, normative, and political forces on state EL policymaking. It demonstrates that contextual forces, such as past and present policies and demographic shifts in both new and established immigrant destinations, play a crucial role in shaping how these dimensions intersect and influence one another. The research posits that context is not just a passive background element but an active force that mediates the relationship between technical, normative, and political factors.

By elucidating the complexities of state EL policymaking, this dissertation provides a foundation for further research and practice in the field. Future studies can build upon these findings to explore additional dimensions of the policymaking process, examine the long-term effects of various policy approaches on EL outcomes, and investigate innovative strategies for fostering collaboration among diverse interest holders. Practitioners, policymakers, and advocates can use these insights to inform their work, enhance their understanding of the intricacies of state EL policymaking.

In conclusion, this dissertation serves as a catalyst for ongoing discourse, inquiry, and action in the realm of state EL policymaking. As demographic shifts continue to reshape the educational landscape, the pursuit of educational equity for English Learners remains a critical and timely imperative for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates alike. By understanding the interplay of technical, normative, political, and contextual forces and their impact on state EL policymaking, interest holders can work collectively toward fostering equitable educational opportunities for English learners.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Opening.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. To provide some background information about myself and my research, I am a Ph.D. candidate in education studies at UCSD. Before pursuing my degree, I worked as a Sife/SLIFE teacher in my hometown of Nashville. My research focuses on understanding the policymaking processes related to English Learners (EL) within [STATE] and other states. I am particularly interested in exploring the factors that influence policymaking, including support, politics, and social concerns that find their way into policymaking especially in education!

During our discussion today, I would like to learn more about the structure of your state agency and how your EL agendas are set. Additionally, I am interested in learning about who is involved in the policymaking process within your department, and your perceptions and opinions about how others in the state may feel about ELs and their education.

I mentioned this in my email but want to reiterate that our conversation today will be completely confidential meaning that nothing you say in this meeting will be traced back to you. [State] is also anonymous in this study as well. .

If it is okay with you I would like to record our conversation today and after our interview, I will remove any identifying information connected to you. If at any time you would like to stop the interview you can do so without any repercussions. Upon your request, we can delete the recording or any of the data collected. Do you have questions for me before we start?

Technical Factors
(structures and organization of the SEA)

Participant Background.

I'd first like to begin with a few questions about your role and responsibilities within [state].

1. On the SEA website it says that you are the [participants role]- is that the correct title?
2. How long have you been in this position?

3. Are you the first person to hold this position?

4. What position were you in before this position?

5. What are your primary responsibilities?

     a. Do you have any responsibilities directly related to EL education?

Roles and Responsibilities at the State Education Agency.

Next, I would like to learn more about how your SEA is structured specifically pertaining to the English Learner student population. *[when possible, show the evolving SEA organizational map to fill in missing information/gaps]*

1. Who (people) or what divisions are responsible for EL education.

     a. Curriculum and Instruction-

     b. Assessment- how many people are on your team?

     c. Professional development

     d. Compliance-

     e. Engagement --falls within their division (family empowerment- coordination regional service centers)

     f. Data-

     g. EL funding

     h. Essa plans

Communication across the SEA.

1. What does communication look like within [state] SEA? Within your office?

2. How are conversations initiated? Weekly meetings? Who leads meetings?

3. How are disagreements about EL education handled?

4. How are policies communicated across the different divisions within SEA?

Agenda setting

So now moving to the more policy side of things- I'm curious to learn more about the two aspects of policy 1) the backstory behind policies like agenda-setting and 2) how the policies are actually formulated.

1. What issues/problems are currently "on the agenda" in [state]?

     a. How did these issues become on the [state SEA] agenda?

     b. How are these issues communicated across the department? To the public?

     c. Who is involved in setting goals/framework in [state]?

        d.   Are their specific EL priorities? [*refer to state EL mission statement of EL ESSA plan language*]

               i.   Who is involved in setting those priorities?

2. Are there issues or problems not on the agenda but you think they should be addressed?

        a.   What are the barriers or constraints that you see holding back the SEA in addressing those issues?

Policy Formulation.

Next, I would like to learn about how policies are formulated for ELs in your SEA.

1. What does the process of creating an EL policy look like in your state? *[If the participant has referred to a policy during the interview (e.g. teacher licensure for ELs, SIFE programming) use that policy as an example to understand the process]*

2. Are the people who are involved in the agenda-setting also involved in the formulation of the policy?

External Interest Holders.

1. Who are the external interest holders involved in EL policymaking at State DoEs? Do these external interest holders differ for other student groups? *[ideally refer to ones that are known (sometimes referred to in state ESSA implementation plans: parents, communities, business organizations)*

2. Are there external consultants or non-profits that work with [state] SEA? Specific to EL education?

        a.   Who?

        b.   What roles do they play in EL policymaking?

Allocation of Resources

1. What are the expectations/goals/objectives for ELs in your state? [*if possible, refer to state's mission often found on the state education website*]

        a.   What resources are needed to achieve those goals? Are there any barriers to those resources?

        b.   Are resources more readily available for specific student populations? Why do you think that is?

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Normative Factors

(beliefs, attitudes, and values of ELs and EL education)

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Beliefs/Attitudes about EL Population.

1. Can you describe the EL population in [State]?

   a. Demographics of ELs

      i. Race, ethnicity, geographic location in [state], immigrant/refugee/asylee?

   b. Academic trajectories

2. *[refer to EL % growth from 2000-2019]* How has, or has, the growth of ELs in [state] informed your role and responsibilities?

   a. How would you describe the growth of the EL student population?

3. What do you think it's like to be an EL in [state]?

Language Attitudes and Instructional Model Beliefs *[refer to the instructional models available for ELs in that state when applicable]*

Political Factors
(political forces, power, and resources)

Immigration Attitudes.

While not all immigrants are ELs, nearly all ELs are immigrants. I would like to hear a bit about your thoughts about the immigration context in [state] and any personal opinions you have on this topic.

1. How would you describe the topic of immigration in the [state]?

   a. How does that impact your job?

   b. How does the immigration context impact the state department of education?

2. Do you think immigrants today are similar to the immigrants who have come to the state in the previous years? How so? How do you think people in your Agency or state would answer this question?

3. [*when applicable, refer to current immigrant politics in the state and ask their opinions on how that shapes their role/responsibility*]

External Political Forces.

1. *[if applicable to the participant (worked at SEA since 2016)* Did the national political context under the Trump/Devos administration influence EL state policy in [state]? If yes, how so?

2. How do you expect the Biden/Cardona administration to influence EL state policy in your state?

3. Does the political majority in the state senate/house affect state EL policy? If so, in what way?

4. How does the local political context within LEAs inform state policymaking? *[if possible, refer to a local political issue such as a more conservative state with a more liberal capital center*]

5. Does local control governance inform state policymaking for ELs? How so?
   a. Is this unique to EL policymaking? If so, how?

6. Are there any other issues related to English Learners that have been politicized in the state?

Closing thoughts

Before we close today, I want to leave some time to return to any topics we discussed today.

1. Is there anything that you want to expand on that we talked about today?

2. Is there anyone in your Agency who you think would be willing to have an interview with me about policymaking processes within your department

Appendix B
Recruitment Email

Dear [State education employee]

My name is Leslie Gautsch and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of California, San Diego. I am writing to invite you to participate in my dissertation research project exploring state-level English Learner policymaking. This study is being conducted across several states and will explore topics of state education agency structure and how and why EL policies are created within state departments of education. You are being contacted because [insert reason: referral, role in state department, etc].

If you agree to participate, we would have an informal conversation covering topics of your role and responsibilities at [STATE] department of education, EL politics, and policies within [STATE NAME]. Your interview with me will be completely anonymous. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom or telephone and will last between 45 and 60 minutes.

If you are willing to participate in an interview, **please respond to this email. If you are ready to set up an interview time you can follow this link** to set up a time and date for an interview. Additionally, if you have anyone who you think would be interested in this study please forward this message to them or let me know how I can contact them.

Thank you in advance for considering participating in this study! If you have any questions please feel free to contact me by email at lgautsch@ucsd.edu.

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