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Seguir Hasta Donde Pueda Seguir: High School Newcomer Youth's Underexplored Future Aspirations

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Sophia Loren Ángeles

2022

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2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Seguir Hasta Donde Pueda Seguir: High School Newcomer Youth's Underexplored Future Aspirations

by

Sophia Loren Ángeles

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Marjorie E. Orellana, Co-Chair

Professor Cecilia Rios Aguilar, Co-Chair

In recent years, hundreds of thousands of adolescents have migrated to the United States, and many are not native English speakers. In schools, these "newcomer youth" are labeled "English learners." Educational practitioners (e.g., researchers) have primarily focused on examining and implementing educational practices targeting learners' acquisition of English language skills. Little is known about how newcomer youth make sense of their educational experiences or their college aspirations. My study addressed this gap in the literature. Informed by the theoretical frameworks of multilevel intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a) and illegality (De Genova, 2002), I investigated how school practices create differential high-school-to-college trajectories for newcomer youth of diverse backgrounds across race, social class, age, gender, and legal status. Three questions guided this dissertation:

1. What are newcomer youth's college and career aspirations?
2. How do school organization and services for ELs affect newcomer students' access to college preparatory coursework and shape their college and career readiness (CCR)?
3. What barriers do newcomer youth encounter in moving toward their future goals?

To explore the future aspirations of newcomer youth and how their aspirations are informed, guided, and supported by educators in high school, I drew from a variety of data sources, including field notes, ethnographic interviews, and school artifacts (e.g., high school transcripts). Findings revealed how the heterogeneity of newcomer youth's social identities creates divergent educational trajectories. Their divergent pathways begin with the legal statuses the government used to categorize their arrival to the United States and the decisions school staff make during the enrollment process. These enrollment decisions involve newcomer youth's graduation plans, which consider past educational experiences and age. I also found, despite the school's best intentions to address the exclusion of newcomer youth because of their English learner label, students continued to be mistreated because of their indigenous identities and status as language learners. Finally, I detail how newcomer youth experienced limited access to explore their future college and career aspirations. This dissertation concludes by addressing how these findings inform theory, hold implications for policy and practice, and affect how educators prepare newcomer youth to be college and career ready.

This dissertation of Sophia Loren Ángeles is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles 2022

DEDICATION

Para todos los jóvenes que han cruzado fronteras con la esperanza de un nuevo mañana.

Para todos los jóvenes a quienes he tenido el privilegio de conocer desde Greensboro, Carolina del Norte hasta Santa Cruz, San José, y Los Angeles, California.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION ii

DEDICATION v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES x

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

VITA x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

Background of the Problem 2

Purpose of Study and Research Questions 4

Scope of Study 5

Personal and Pedagogical Reflections on Language and Youth 6

Significance 8

CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE 10

Multilevel Intersectionality Origins and Definitions 11

Intersectionality 11

Multilevel Intersectionality 13

Research on Newcomer Youth 14

First Level: Social Categories and Relations 15

Second Level: Domains of Power 22

Third Level: Historicity 28

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN 33

Research Setting and Collaborators 34

Esperanza High School 34
The Uniqueness of the 2020–2021 Academic Year 38
My Participation and Prior Work at Esperanza High School 40
Collaborator Recruitment 43
Ms. Bevan's Classroom 45
Newcomer Youth at EHS 48
School Staff at EHS 55
Data Collection 59
Participant Observations 61
Ethnographic Interviews 67
School Artifacts 68
Data Reduction Analysis 70
Methodological Questions and Limitations 73
CHAPTER FOUR: NEWCOMER YOUTH'S MIGRATIONS TO THE UNITED STATES 76
Newcomer Youth From Latin America 76
Newcomer Youth's Varying Legal Statuses 80
The Five Categories of Legal Status 83
Complicated Migration Histories 88
Conclusion 98
CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEGINNINGS 100
Enrollment Trends of Newcomer Youth at EHS 100
Overview of the Enrollment Process 104
Determining Grade Placement 107

Grade Placement Based on Age ... 108

Grade Placement Based on Past Educational Experiences ... 109

Porque Como Soy Una Persona Que Habla Español ... 115

Unintended Consequences of Enrollment Processes ... 119

Implementing AB 2121 at EHS ... 121

The Allures of the 3rd Year High School Graduation Plan ... 125

Conclusion ... 128

CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES ... 130

EHS Language Program ... 130

The Cultural–Historical Context ... 131

The Organizational Shift ... 134

Integrating EL Students - Same Difference ... 137

Within-Classroom De Facto Segregation ... 137

Linguistic Violence ... 139

Linguistic Sanctuaries ... 146

Conclusion ... 150

CHAPTER SEVEN: UNDEREXPLORED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS ... 151

Newcomer Youth's Aspirations ... 152

How Multiple Social Identities Influence Varying Aspirations ... 154

Intersectional Contextual Influences on Newcomer Youth's CCR ... 158

Defining CCR ... 158

The Burden of Learning English and Being an Immigrant ... 172

Porque Como No Sabía Inglés ... 172

The Consequences of Illegality 173

Conclusion 178

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS 180

Summary of Findings 182

Research Question 1: Newcomer Youth's College and Career Aspirations 182

Research Question 2: School Organization and Services for ELs 184

Research Question 3: Barriers Impeding Their Movement Toward Their Imagined Futures 186

Discussion 187

Nonmonolithic Immigrant Experience 188

The Need for Linguistic Sanctuaries 189

Implications 190

We Are All Language Teachers 190

College *and* Career Ready 191

Future Directions 193

Conclusion 193

APPENDIX A 196

APPENDIX B 197

REFERENCES 198

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 3.1 A Collage of Tatiana's Future Goals 42
Figure 3.4 Ms. Bevan's Agenda for September 29, 2020 47
Figure 3.5 A Social–Emotional Lesson in Ms. Bevan's Classroom 48
Figure 3.6 Newcomer Youth's Projected Graduation Year 50
Figure 3.7 *Gender by Class Year* 51
Figure 3.8 EL Status of Newcomer Students 52
Figure 3.9 Languages Spoken by Newcomer Students 53
Figure 3.10 Newcomer Students' Age of Arrival 54
Figure 3.11 Role of EHS School Staff 55
Figure 3.12 Linguistic Skills of EHS School Staff 58

Figure 4.1 Origin of Migration 78
Figure 4.2 Legal Status Among Newcomer Youth 82
Figure 4.3 Newcomer Youth's Legal Statuses by Country 83
Figure 4.4 Differences Seeking Asylum as Newcomer Youth 94

Figure 5.1 Newcomer Youth's Age of Arrival 101
Figure 5.2 Household Composition of Newcomer Youth 102
Figure 5.3 Newcomer Youth's Age Upon Arrival 108
Figure 5.4 Newcomer Youth's Past Educational Experiences 111

Figure 6.1 Screenshot of Luna's English Assignment 140

Figure 7.1 Word Cloud of Esperanza High School's Newcomer Youth's Future Aspirations 153
Figure 7.2 Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Plans by Grade Level 154
Figure 7.3 Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Plans by Legal Status 155
Figure 7.4 Returning Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Aspirations 164
Figure 7.5 EHS is College Bound 179

Table 3.1 Student Demographics of EHS During 2020–2021 Academic Year (Student Group) 35
Table 3.2 Student Demographics of EHS During 2020–2021 Academic Year (Race/Ethnicity) 35
Table 3.3 Number of Referrals Office of Refugee Resettlement Received From the Department of Homeland Security 39

Table 5.1 Second Through Eighth Grade Level Placement Chart 109

Table 6.1 Four-Year Graduation Rates at EHS 133
Table 6.2 English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy Performance 133
Table 6.3 College Readiness Rates 133

Table 6.4 2019–2020 School Experience Survey 134

Table 8.1 Newcomer Youth’s Career Occupation Interests 182

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I often talk about how the birth of the burning questions I have decided to dedicate a career trying to answer began in high school. Indeed, it did. If it were not for Ms. Alcalá, who asked me to assist in a World History Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English class because the history teacher needed help providing instruction to a mostly Spanish-speaking classroom, I would not have been privy to my peers' very different schooling experiences. I am not sure how much help I provided as a high school senior, but I do know this experience forever changed me. I walked away from this experience knowing that not all students had access to the same opportunities. Beyond access to opportunities, I, too, realized that not all of us were deemed worthy of dreaming futures.

In the pursuit of my dreams of being a college graduate, I chose Cornell University to pursue my undergraduate studies. Never having left home, I, alongside my father, traveled a few thousand miles and arrived on campus for the first time ever the day prior to my official move-in date. I was awestruck by the beauty of the campus, but my time at Cornell was not always as beautiful. To survive this reality, I found refuge in mentors like Dr. Sofía Villenas, who exposed me to the world of educational anthropology, and Dr. Ella Maria Diaz, who fostered my intellectual curiosity as a psychology major and Latino studies minor. Of the many student groups, I was a part of, my time as an honorary member of the Latinx Graduate Student Coalition remains one of my most treasured memories. My late-night conversations with Omar, Nancy, and Esmeralda sustained me as I navigated Cornell.

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chosen as a field placement for our multicultural counseling class, I knew I wanted to return there to complete my internship. Dr. Hines made this a reality for me. I began my internship under the supervision of Ms. Campbell. Quickly, she became my mentor. I observed how she welcomed new students and their families, asking them what their goals were and reassuring them that the plan they would create together would allow them to achieve their goals. I never saw her turn away a newcomer youth, even if they were older. Her rule was that so long as they were committed to finishing by the time they were 21 years of age, she would create a plan to allow them to attain their high school diploma. Immigrant youth from all walks of life showed up in her office. They spoke a multitude of languages, and though she was a monolingual English speaker, she always found a way to communicate with them, whether it was through the school interpreters or Google translate, which has improved so much since the early 2010s. She was one of the few school counselors I have seen work tirelessly to translate dreams into reality.

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As I tried to make sense of what it meant to pursue a doctoral degree, I am thankful to the community I found in the School of Education and Information Studies and across campus. I am grateful for the time I was able to spend with Lilia at Bruin Club. I will never forget how you made sure to connect me with resources like the Graduate Undergraduate Mentoring program or the ways you fostered a sense of belonging, such as when I attended AERA in 2019. I am equally grateful to Janelle for the ways you provided mentorship as a fellow colleague, whether it was on the coteaching team for 409 or as a mother–scholar as I was finishing up the dissertation. Aún de lejos, me seguiste apoyando.

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VITA

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Franco, J., **Ángeles, S. L.**, Minkoff, A., & Orellana, M. F. (2019). Language manifestos: Preparing pre-service teachers to work in linguistically diverse contexts. *California Council on Teacher Education CCNews, 30*(3), 25–27.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Sophia: ¿Tus metas cuáles son?

Ricardo: Um, pues, poder estudiar mecánica.

Sophia: Okay. Y cuando tú te pones a pensar de cuando recién llegastes, ¿han cambiado tus metas?

Ricardo: Oh, pues, sí, porque antes quería ser policía y pues, ahora ya no.

Sophia: ¿Y eso cuándo fue que cambió eso?

Ricardo: Oh, cuando llegué aquí pues, me empezó a gustar más la mecánica, las cosas de los carros.

Sophia: Ya. ¿Y tú has podido, cómo dices tú, con lo de los carros, tú has podido trabajar en carros o dedicarte a la mecánica? No sé si hay un curso en [Esperanza High School], algo así que tú has hecho.

Ricardo: No.

Sophia: No. Mm-hmm. ¿Hay algo que te hubiera gustado tener como un recurso como para, relacionado a lo de tus metas de estudiar mecánica que no has podido tener mientras que has estado en [EHS]?

Ricardo: Mm-hmm. Pues, creo que sí.

Sophia: ¿Qué? ¿Qué te gustaría haber tenido?

Ricardo: Mmm, pues como, pues, alguien que me hubiera platicado más sobre todo eso de la carrera y cosas así.

Like Ricardo,[1] there were many other newcomer youth at Esperanza High School (EHS) who had specific career aspirations. They shared his uncertainty about how they would achieve their future goals. To further complicate matters, educators at EHS were largely unaware of the diversity of the newcomer youth population at EHS and how these differences shaped them and their families.

Background of the Problem

There are about 5.1 million English learners (ELs) in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). Approximately a quarter of these students are foreign born (Bialik et al., 2018). Among those attending secondary schools, a third tend to be noncitizens (Bialik et al., 2018). The majority live in California (NCES, 2021). Many recent arrivals speak little to no English and are identified as ELs upon enrollment in school; I refer to them as newcomer youth. Upon arriving, newcomer youth are expected to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, decipher new institutional practices, and catch up on a new high school curriculum in a short span of time—all while struggling to survive economically and recover from what is often a traumatic journey to the United States. Though their EL label may secure them tailored language instruction, support services, and accommodations, it may also limit their opportunities in other areas, such as access to college preparation and career readiness classes (Callahan, 2005). More problematic is how the EL label obscures the diversity within this group in terms of their educational background, linguistic ability, social class positioning, age, race or ethnicity, and legal status. The invisibilization of their multiple identities due to their EL label results in a missed opportunity to better attend to their complex needs as high school students preparing to transition to college.

---

[1] Newcomer youth's names appear as pseudonyms.

Scholarship paints a bleak picture for high school ELs. Quantitative data at the state level has demonstrated ELs have low levels of college and career readiness (CCR; Murillo & Lavadenz, 2020). Regardless of newcomer youth's college and career aspirations, many continue to have little access to opportunities to develop their CCR (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, 1989; Yip, 2013). Newcomer youth's limited access to CCR opportunities has resulted in many dropping out (Callahan, 2013; Flores et al., 2009; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2001), entering the workforce, or attending community colleges (Kanno, 2018a; Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019), where they continue to encounter barriers to a postsecondary degree (Núñez et al., 2016).

Little is known about ELs' transitions from K–12 to college, including the transitions of newcomer youth. In fact, much of the scholarship on ELs has focused on how to accelerate their reclassification from "EL" to "English proficient" and improve high school graduation rates. There are few conversations about transitions to college and careers (Núñez et al., 2016). This silence is alarming, given the vast majority of 21st-century jobs require some form of postsecondary preparation (Carnevale et al., 2016). Ironically, the primary cause for this lack of college readiness may be the programs designed to help ELs. English language development (ELD) programs segregate newcomer youth from their peers (Allard, 2013). This programmatic segregation impedes their ability to access college preparation courses (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). In addition, school counselors may inadvertently limit newcomer youth's access to college readiness opportunities by preventing their enrollment in AP courses (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Only recently have educational scholars begun to include linguistic minority students or former ELs in their studies examining the transitions of first-generation college students across K–16 (Núñez et al., 2016). They have found newcomer youth are graduating high school without

being ready for college or careers (Kanno, 2021; Kanno & Cromley, 2015).

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Discussions of newcomer youth in educational research tend to focus on only one dimension of their multifaceted lives: their EL label or their immigrant experience. For example, there has been little focus on within-group differences in the newcomer youth population due to legal status, including other liminal legal statuses (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Consequently, there has not been an intersectional analysis investigating how different aspects of their social positioning, as both immigrant youth and ELs, shape their experiences in school.

My study explores how newcomer youth's unique identities and access to opportunities to develop their CCR shape their future aspirations. This is a departure from previous studies, which have looked at high-achieving newcomer youth and their transitions to college (Kanno, 2018b; Sadowski, 2013). Moreover, I sought to contribute to a better understanding of the distinct ways systems of power—the legal and educational systems—intersect in the lives of newcomer youth to better serve them by improving school counseling practices. The overarching and subresearch questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are newcomer youth's college and career aspirations?
    a. What differences, if any, are due to their race/ethnic background, gender, age, social class, language, and legal status?
2. How do school organization and services for ELs affect newcomer students' access to college preparatory coursework and shape their college and career readiness (CCR)?
    a. What type of relationships do newcomer youth have with their teachers and school counselors? What differences in the type of relationships newcomer youth

have with them, if any, are due to their race/ethnic background, gender, age, social class, language, and legal status?

   b. What type of access do newcomer youth have to opportunities that develop their college and career readiness (CCR, e.g., college presentations, career counseling, financial aid workshops)?

3. What barriers do newcomer youth encounter in moving toward their future goals?
   a. What differences, if any, are due to their race/ethnic background, gender, age, social class, language, and legal status?

Scope of Study

In the remainder of the introduction, I share personal and pedagogical reflections on newcomer youth and supporting their future aspirations. I end by laying out the significance of this work for educators working to prepare newcomer youth to be college and career ready. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the theoretical frameworks used to guide this study, including multilevel intersectionality and illegality. Chapter 2 also includes a review of the literature detailing what we know about newcomer youth's multiple identities as both ELs and immigrant youth. Chapter 2 also addresses the gaps in these research areas. In Chapter 3, I outline the dissertation study's methodological framework, describe the setting and participants involved, discuss the data collection methods and analysis, and address the methodological concerns and limitations. Chapter 4 explores school staff's understandings of newcomer youth as immigrant youth and highlights the diversity within the newcomer youth population along the lines of legal status. Chapter 5 focuses on the reception newcomer youth received upon enrolling at EHS and how this began to shape the futures available to them. In Chapter 6, I discuss how newcomer youth experienced language learning and how these experiences were impacted by the decision

making of the school's EL team. In Chapter 7, I discuss the ways school staff and their services helped shape the college and career aspirations of newcomer youth. In Chapter 8, I discuss how findings from this study inform theory regarding language learning and developing newcomer youth's CCR. I conclude the chapter by discussing implications for policy and practice.

Personal and Pedagogical Reflections on Language and Youth

My interest in learning more about newcomer youth and improving school practices began early in my life when I began to compare the different experiences classmates around me had to mine. These differences became quite apparent when I was a senior in high school assisting a history class designed to deliver instruction to EL students only. Most of these students were native Spanish speakers from Mexico and Central America. We shared similarities, but unlike them, I was never labeled an EL, even though I was not a native English speaker. Like my peers in the history classroom, Spanish was my first language and the one I used daily to communicate at home. I acquired English through my interactions with monolingual English-speaking children at my mother's daycare out of the necessity to communicate as we played together.

Despite the commonalities I shared with my peers, there was one stark difference—I had not recently migrated to the United States. On the contrary, I had lived my whole life in the United States as a child of Mexican immigrants. Only when I was in middle school and my mother received her permanent residency did I experience the act of migrating from one country to another on a visit to Mexico. Yet, my experience was different than my peers. More than anything, it was temporary.

After spending a year helping the class as well as I could as a teenager with no training in second language teaching, I realized my fellow peers—who were labeled as ELs and had

recently migrated to the United States—and I did not have the same access to opportunities to develop our CCR. I was college bound. They were not. As we approached high school graduation, I began to wonder why we would embark on different trajectories. I would be attending an Ivy League institution, and they would enroll in a community college or join the workforce.

I continued to work with immigrant children and youth during my academic and professional career across the United States. On the East Coast, I was exposed to a different set of realities immigrant children and youth encountered. In upstate New York, I became aware of the variation in resources available to newcomer youth due to legal status, racial and ethnic background, language, and class. Some newcomer youth identified as refugees, while others were children of international students at the local university. Working in a kindergarten classroom, I noticed how, even as early as elementary school, educational pathways started to diverge.

Then, I arrived in North Carolina, known as a new immigration destination (Callahan, 2013; Gándara, 2017; Marrow, 2020). Here, I witnessed once more the contrasting migration journeys of youth. Class differences had not only shaped newcomer youth's previous educational experiences but also their migration journeys to the United States. I became attuned to the ways students from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia became racialized and how that led to disparate treatment on behalf of educators. Interning as a K–12 school counselor, I became intimately aware of the many obstacles that arose in the lives of young newcomers. Although the school had a primary focus on language development, I began to wonder what it meant to see newcomer youth beyond their EL label. What were their lives like before they arrived here? What were their dreams for their future?

Listening to the dreams they had and the futures they envisioned for themselves, I began to wonder what the possibilities might be if educators took the time to transform educational spaces to be more attuned to their complicated realities. Returning to California, I continued to wonder why it seemed harder for newcomer youth to attain their college and career goals. I began to collaborate with ELD teachers, coordinators, and administrators at the school, district, and county level. I wanted to learn more about what could be done to cease the "wasted talent" (Gonzales, 2007, p. 1) among newcomer youth at the hands of the educational system. Now, as a researcher, I have spent the last 3 years volunteering in local schools to learn more about how newcomer youth fare in this new context and how a large urban school district seeks to address their many needs.

Significance

At a time when K–12 schools across the United States are confronted with continued and new incoming waves of immigrant youth from Central America, Afghanistan, and Ukraine, there is an increased urgency to ensure educators, teachers, and school counselors move beyond viewing newcomer youth solely as ELs. As this dissertation shows, the newcomer youth population is quite diverse, especially as it relates to the varied legal statuses assigned to them once they arrive in the United States. The intra-group diversity within this population merits attention given how multiple social identities intersect in different ways with the educational and legal systems. This dissertation calls on educators to recognize how these two systems coalesce in ways that marginalize newcomer youth for their identities as language learners and immigrants; this marginalization prevents their "access [to] equal opportunities, resources, and rights" (Zhou & Gonzales, 2019, p. 385). When educators are able to recognize the ways educational and immigration policies intertwine, they can better address the many ways

newcomer youth are susceptible to being overlooked and underserved (Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2001) in their schools. Ultimately, this dissertation was grounded in the belief that newcomer youth are worthy of imagining different futures and worlds for themselves, and educators must help prepare them achieve their life goals.

CHAPTER TWO: RELEVANT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE

To better understand the postsecondary opportunities newcomer youth have, this study employed two theoretical lenses: multilevel intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a, 2014b) and illegality (De Genova, 2002; Menjívar & Kanstroom, 2014) to attend to how newcomer youth's multiple social identities, school structures, and practices shape their academic and career aspirations. Using both theories helped create a nuanced description of newcomer youth's experiences as they navigate high school while the United States focuses on controlling the border and criminalizing immigrants (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Waters & Kasinitz, 2015). Although the conceptual lens of intersectionality is useful in understanding how systems of oppression intersect and further marginalize individuals who occupy multiple social positions, scholarship has failed to "address the role of structure as well as individual agency in shaping life chances and developing associated strategies necessary to effect structural social change" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 85). To account for the rich diversity within the newcomer population and examine how the educational system combined with the immigration system "creat[es] and perpetuat[es] educational inequities" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 87), I employ multilevel intersectionality. This framework "enhance[s] the analytic potential of intersectionality . . . [by examining] how one's multiple identities intersect with other micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 87). The theoretical framework of illegality helped achieve this multilevel analysis in relation to newcomer youth's multiple identities.

In what follows, I discuss the value of multilevel intersectionality for this kind of analytical work, and cautions brought forth by scholars like Collins and Bilge (2016), Crenshaw (2020; as cited by Steinmetz, 2020), and Knapp (2005). I reviewed literature from K–12 education, higher education, and migration studies to discuss how various systems of oppression

and associated social markers can shape immigrant youths' educational experiences and futures (Núñez, 2014a). Thus, the focus of this chapter concerns how newcomer youth's diverse array of educational trajectories are shaped by their various social markers as these intersect with larger structural processes, resulting in a diverse array of educational trajectories.

Multilevel Intersectionality Origins and Definitions

Before I explain how multilevel intersectionality was a helpful analytical tool for this dissertation project, I explain its origins from intersectionality.

Intersectionality

> These days, I start with what it's not, because there has been distortion. It's not identity politics on steroids. It is not a mechanism to turn white men into the new pariahs. It's basically a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts. (Steinmetz, 2020, para. 2)

Intersectionality stems from the work of Black feminists from the Combahee River Collective (1977) who noted how their experiences were left unaccounted for in the larger social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Collins (2015) added that other women of color, including Chicanas, other Latinas, Indigenous, and Asian American women worked to complicate understandings of their lived experiences. They sought to move beyond what Knapp (2005) called the triad of race-class-gender. As a result, intersectionality as a theoretical framework allowed for an analysis that moved beyond simply "pointing to race, gender, sexuality and class oppression" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 70) and accounted for the compounding nature of

oppression. As such, intersectionality "treats oppression as resulting from the joint operations of major systems of oppression that form a complex social structure of inequality" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 70).

These ideas were further developed by legal scholar Crenshaw (1989, 1991), who, early in her career, analyzed the discriminatory practices Black women were experiencing in the workforce as well as their experiences with domestic violence. Crenshaw (1989, as cited in Cole, 2009) delineated three different types of discrimination experienced by Black women on account of their "similar experiences [to white or Black men], additive or multiplicative effects (double discrimination or double jeopardy), and experiences specific to their status as Black women" (Cole, 2009, p. 171). These varying reasons for Black women's marginalization called for the abandonment of "a single-axis framework" in favor of one capable of capturing Black women's multidimensional experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). Collins and Bilge (2016) identified four important contributions of Crenshaw (1991)'s work:

> (1) Draw[ing] links between individual identity and collective identity; (2) keep[ing] a focus on social structures; (3) theor[zing] from the ground up (versus from the top down) the case of violence against *women of color* as a set of experiences with structural, political, and representational links; and (4) remind[ing] readers that the purpose of intersectional scholarship lies in its contribution to social justice initiatives. (pp. 83–84)

By understanding individuals' identities in relation to collective identities, opportunities arise for scholars to analyze the "historical and continuing relations of political, material, and social inequality and stigma" (Cole, 2009, p. 173) found across social categories like race, gender, social class, and sexuality. Historizing and contextualizing social categories is necessary work to achieve a structural analysis that centers power relations (Cole, 2009; Collins & Bilge, 2016;

Crenshaw, 1991).

Multilevel Intersectionality

Since the 1990s, scholars have wrestled with exactly how to use intersectionality when studying the experiences of marginalized people and communities. Multiple scholars (Knapp, 2005; Núñez, 2014a) have noted how intersectionality as a theory has moved quickly through academia, appearing at times to be a "theoretical 'buzzword'" (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 129). At the core of these critiques is the overwhelming focus in scholarship on how individuals, because of their multiple social identities, experience power and oppression, "rather than how social structures themselves shape these individuals' experiences" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 46). To be able to examine how the educational and immigration systems coalesce and shape the future academic and career aspirations of newcomer youth, it is useful to employ multilevel intersectionality as it better delineates the different types of analysis possible.

Informed by the work of Anthias (2013), Núñez (2014a, 2014b) posited there are three levels of analysis to which intersectionality lends itself. Each analytical level is focused on addressing the original goals of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). The first level involves identifying the multiple dimensions of identity and how these are related to one another. For this study, race/ethnic background, gender, social class, age, language, and migration journey were the social categories I used to examine how they shape newcomer youth's future aspirations.

The second level highlights the "different arenas of investigation" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 87) that are possible with intersectionality. These are the "domains of institutional power" (Núñez et al., 2020, p. 100). The four arenas of investigation include the "(a) organizational (e.g., position in structures of society such as work, family, and education), (b) representational (e.g. discursive processes), (c) intersubjective (e.g. relationships between individuals and members of groups),

and (d) experiential (e.g. narrative sensemaking)" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 88). This second level allowed me to "focus on how multiple environmental factors in educational settings organize" (Núñez et al., 2020, p.) structures and practices, shaping the experiences of newcomer youth.

The third level concerns the larger sociopolitical context in which these "social categories, associated concrete relations, and arenas of practice" (Núñez, 2014b, p. 89) occur. Of importance are the ways the United States legally excludes immigrants and, consequently, prevents their full incorporation into U.S. society (De Genova, 2002; Waters & Kasinitz, 2015). The theoretical framework of illegality further informed analysis at this third level and throughout the other levels, given how illegality materializes.

By using multilevel intersectionality, it was possible to "identify dynamics within and across societal 'domains of power'" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 47) that create divergent educational trajectories for newcomer youth while still acknowledging their unique experiences as a result of the interactions occurring in the broader context. In the following section, I review the social categories I used to examine newcomer youth's differing experiences, access to educational opportunities, and the varying perceptions held by educators (Cole, 2009).

Research on Newcomer Youth

The framing of this study's literature review is mirrored after how Núñez (2014a) used multilevel intersectionality to discuss Latinos' access to postsecondary opportunities. As such, the literature review begins with a discussion about what educational scholars and others know about how newcomer youth's multiple social identities shape their K–16 educational trajectories. I then discuss how "power relations, practices, and social systems enhance or constrain educational equity" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 90) for newcomer youth while accounting for the greater sociopolitical and historical context. To do the latter, I also use the theoretical framework of

illegality to help attend to how legal and structural barriers "shape [newcomer youth's] life opportunities" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 85).

First Level: Social Categories and Relations

Recognizing newcomer youth's multiple identities is important to carrying out an analysis using intersectionality and illegality. Not accounting for them would further diminish how newcomer youth are "multiple-burdened" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) by various sources of marginalization. Newcomer youth's invisibilization is evident in the confusion arising when data on English learners (ELs) is referenced at the local and state level. A publication from Migration Policy Institute (2020) highlighted this dilemma very well. Sugarman (2020) argued, "States often fail to make clear how variations within the EL population, such as level of English proficiency and prior schooling, can contribute to significant differences in student outcomes" (p. 1). Missed opportunities to capture these differences have clouded the visibility of newcomer youth, whose experiences and needs get lost within the larger, collective group of ELs. Sugarman (2020) explained how the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) has no provision calling for the disaggregation of EL data based on newcomer status. The inability to disaggregate data on ELs is especially problematic because the needs of newcomer youth are understudied (Sugarman, 2020). Both intersectionality and illegality allow for a complete embrace of newcomer youth's complex experiences along the lines of race/ethnicity, gender, age, social class, legal status, and language (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Race/Ethnic Background

Immigrant youth who migrate from Latin America come from predominantly Spanish-speaking countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The term used most frequently to refer to people from Latin America are the socially constructed ethnic terms Latinx

or Hispanic (Núñez, 2014a). Yet, these terms do not account for the different racial backgrounds of peoples from Latin America. This is important to note because of newcomers' unique experiences as Indigenous or Afro-Latino youth (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). In the school context, Indigenous youth have been invisibilized because they are seen only as "Mexican" or "Hispanic" (Pérez et al., 2016). Instead of being recognized as emergent trilinguals, they are "incorrectly classified as Spanish heritage speakers" (Pérez et al., 2016, p. 259). Misrecognizing their linguistic resources and racial backgrounds further marginalizes Indigenous youth. Other scholars who study immigration have also documented how Indigenous people from Latin America are simply viewed as "Mexican" or "illegals" (Gómez Cervantes, 2021). Moreover, both Indigenous youth and Afro-descendants are subject to the process of racialization in the United States, which builds upon—even as it may sometimes diverge from—the racialization process that has already occurred in the countries from which newcomer youth are migrating (Herrera, 2016). One example of the latter is how "Afro descendants and indigenous people occupy the lowest rung of a racial order that privileges *mestisaje* (race mixture) and whiteness" (Herrera, 2016, p. 323) in Latin American countries. Others, such as Heidbrink (2020), have been able to provide a more nuanced understanding of how unaccompanied youth, mostly Guatemalan Mayans, experience migration to the United States and deportation. Heidbrink (2020) provided a focus on how the Guatemalan indigenous community has been subject to oppression in the last several decades. Examining newcomer youth's experiences calls for an interrogation of how their racial backgrounds, vis-à-vis the pan-ethnic category of Latino, in relation to the other identities (e.g., legal status; García, 2017; Gonzales, 2011), have shaped newcomer youth's educational trajectories.

Gender

There are not many studies that investigate the various types of gender challenges newcomer youth are susceptible to as they navigate high school and postgraduation.
The few scholars who have focused on immigrant youth's school experiences have documented how young, Latino, newcomer men tend to face more obstacles as they navigate high school (Hopkins et al., 2013). To this point, Suárez-Orozco and Qin (2006) argued many studies examining immigrant youth's experiences are gender-blind. With a focus on immigrant youth within families, they reviewed literature addressing gender and migration across "family relations, well-being, identity formation and educational outcomes" (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006, p. 169). In spite of the dearth of attention paid to gendered experiences of immigrant youth, Suárez-Orozco and Qin (2006) found immigrant boys tend to be academically behind immigrant girls. Specifically, immigrant boys tend to receive lower grades, be less engaged, and have lower academic and career expectations than immigrant girls (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Qin-Hillard, 2003). In the higher education literature, Sáenz and Ponjuan (2009) wrote the Latino male is vanishing in higher education. Latino boys fall behind Latina girls in high school and college graduation rates (Núñez, 2014a). There has been a widening degree attainment gap between Latino boys and girls (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Yet, Latinas are less likely to attend selective colleges or attend college away from home (Núñez, 2014a). College access for newcomer youth will have to account for their gender, as there are differences that seem to be a result of how their educational experiences and family expectations are shaped by gender, including beliefs about what girls and boys should be allowed or expected to do (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006).

Gender merits attention, given that most English language development (ELD) classrooms are overrepresented with male unaccompanied minors. More adolescent boys than girls cross the U.S.–Mexico border, though the number of adolescent girls has increased over time (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022a; Park, 2014). While the percentage of adolescent boys has fluctuated around 70%—ranging from 77% in fiscal year 2012 to 66% in fiscal year 2021—the percentage of adolescent girls has steadily increased from 23% to 34% in the last 9 years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022a). Furthermore, the age of most unaccompanied minors ranges from 15–17 years according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement (2022a). Attending to the gendered experiences of newcomer youth is helpful in analyzing how their future aspirations are shaped by gender norms and expectations.

Age

Even though immigrant youth have been given the right to attend K–12 schools, their identity as older adolescents has, at times, resulted in them being barred from accessing K–12 education. Across the United States, K–12 school attendance is compulsory until at least the age of 16 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2020). Additionally, many states have granted students the right to remain enrolled in K–12 schools until the age of 21 (NCES, 2020). Nevertheless, in 2017, the Associated Press found that "at least 35 districts in 14 states" had denied "hundreds of [migrant youth]" (Burke & Sainz, 2017, para. 4) the right to enroll in K–12 schools. Instead, students were being encouraged to enroll in alternative programs, whether that be adult school or general educational development programs (Burke & Sainz, 2017). This is especially troubling because many EL immigrant youth are eligible and entitled to receive

special accommodations and services under federal law (Konings, 2017).

Social Class

Analyzing Salvadoran parents' decisions to migrate to the United States, Abrego (2014b) noted social class matters for how and when "[families] wanted to pursue migration" (p. 36). For some, being middle class afforded them the opportunity to acquire visas and avoid "the consequences of United States produced illegality" (Abrego, 2014b, p. 36). This intersection between class and (il)legality has greatly shaped the experiences of newcomer youth prior to, during, and postmigration, including those who are unaccompanied minors, refugees, or undocumented, since many are leaving contexts of poverty and unemployment (Ataiants et al., 2018; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014; Women's Refugee Commission, 2012; Zamora, 2014).

The Production of Varying Legal Statuses

In the public media, newcomer youth's varying legal statuses and the mechanisms behind the production of these varying legal statuses tend to be invisibilized. For example, journalist Thorpe (2017) mistakenly described a whole group of newcomer adolescents attending a public high school in Colorado as refugees. This generalization obscures the reality that adolescent newcomers are youth who can be "naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, [. . .] those admitted under refugee or asylum status, and persons residing without authorization in the United States" (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2019, p. 2). In contrast, journalist Fishman (2021) acknowledged the fact not all newcomer youth arrive as refugees by naming the differences between those who do and those who arrive seeking asylum. Within educational policy, the term "newcomer" is used as "an umbrella term that includes various categories of immigrants who are born outside of the United States" (United States Department of Education, 2017, p. 3).

However, this definition excludes newcomer youth who are U.S. born but have lived most of their lives outside the United States (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Hamann et al. (2010) reminded educators that newcomer youth can include those who have U.S. citizenship but have never attended a school in the United States; instead, these students have been socialized in the Mexican school system. Though the latter make a small minority, they bring to light how diverse the newcomer youth population is across legal statuses. In other words, newcomer youth do not share a monolithic immigrant experience (Abrego, 2011). Although certain groups of immigrant youth, such as DACA-eligible or undocumented students, have garnered national attention (Abrego & Negrón-Gonzales, 2020; Allard, 2015; Benuto et al., 2018; Gonzales, 2009; Gonzales et al., 2014, 2019; Hsin & Ortega, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019), the heterogeneity of the newcomer youth population regarding legal status requires more scholarly investigation. Such research is imperative because legal status has been shown to determine how immigrant youth are socially integrated and the educational trajectories in which they embark (Zhou & Gonzales, 2019).

Language: The EL Label

The United States has long tried to address the needs of immigrant children, albeit for varied reasons (Gonzales, 2011). Raftery (1992), an educational historian, argued that at the turn of the 21st century, schools in urban communities like Los Angeles were a tool to promote immigrants' assimilation to the United States by focusing on teaching the English language, among other things. Issues of language and immigration have always been intimately intertwined. During the Civil Rights movement, Chinese parents in San Francisco voiced their concerns about inaccessible curriculum their not-yet-English-fluent children experienced. This led to the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) Supreme Court case decision, which "chartered schools to

support EL students as they learned English and mastered academic content *in* English" (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016, p. 464). In 1981, *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) expanded on *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) by creating "three-step action [to] determine whether school districts were taking 'appropriate action'" (Ovando, 2003, p. 10) to ensure equitable access. As these cases were being reviewed in 1978, the U.S. Department of Education reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965; later known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015; U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a), which defined ELs as individuals:

1. ages 3 through 21;
2. enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
3. whose native language is not English or whose use of a language other than English at home has a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency; and
4. whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English may deny them the ability to meet challenging state academic standards, succeed in classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or participate fully in society (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, n.d.).

Because of this legal definition, most U.S. schools report asking "about home language use and then testing potential ELs for English proficiency" (Sugarman, 2020, p. 3). Youth who have recently migrated to the United States are assessed by school districts to determine their English proficiency so resources can be allocated to help them acquire English proficiency and succeed academically. Any student with the EL label will remain identified as such until they reach a score of fluent English proficient on an annual English language proficiency exam (Sugarman, 2020). In California, there are four criteria that can be used by school districts to reclassify a

student from EL to fluent English proficient. These include (a) an assessment of language proficiency using a standardized instrument like the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) approved in 2018, (b) a teacher evaluation, (c) parental opinion and consultation, and (d) comparison of an EL's performance in basic skills with that of their English proficient peers (California Department of Education [CDE], 2022e). Attaining reclassification as a newcomer in high school becomes a difficult task to achieve when acquiring English proficiency takes an average of 5 to 7 years (Hakuta et al., 2000). Though the EL label provides much needed resources, it is also a marker of difference. This has serious ramifications for the educational opportunities available to newcomer youth.

Second Level: Domains of Power

In this section, I focus on the way recent scholarship illustrated how domains of power—organizational, intersubjective, and experiential—shed light on "the effects of power structures on educational equity" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50) for newcomer youth. Though the scholars whose work I cited did not employ the theoretical framework of multilevel intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a), their findings speak to the ways this analytical tool illuminates the compounding effects of various power structures newcomer youth encounter in their day-to-day life.

Experiential

The experiential domain of power draws our attention to marginalized individuals' "internal interpretation and lived experience(s)" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 50). There are various scholars who have dedicated their careers to examining how newcomer youth's various social identities materialize in different ways and how they engage in sensemaking.

Heidbrink (2014) examined how unaccompanied youth understand and experience the legal system as they navigate their way through "immigration detention, border station,

immigration and family courts, and underground communities" (p. 12). In other work, Heidbrink (2020) turned her focus to Mayan youth returning to Guatemala after being deported from the United States and how they make sense of their experiences as young migrants. In a similar vein, sociologist Canizales (2018) explored how unaccompanied and unparented minors navigate multiple institutions, including church and work, and how their multiple social identities as parents or youth lacking legal status shapes their social incorporation in the United States. Related to how legal status shapes the lives of young migrants, Galli (2020) examined how the state legal categorization of Unaccompanied Alien Children has informed unaccompanied minors' understanding of how the legal system both protects and criminalizes them for being undocumented youth migrants.

There are other scholars who have studied how newcomer youth make sense of their experiences as they navigate unfamiliar educational systems in pursuit of their future goals (Gándara & Contreras, 2008). Suárez-Orozco (1989) investigated the psychosocial experiences of recently arrived Central American immigrants attending two different high schools in California's Bay Area. His was one of the first studies I came across that examined how "their marginal legal status directly interfere[d] with their school functioning" (p. 47) and how newcomer youth navigated around "school-imposed barriers" (p. 6). His was one of the first studies documenting how newcomer youth "aimed high but were sometimes at a loss when it came to translating their dreams into deeds" (Suárez-Orozco, 1989, p. 8). Since then, researchers have continued to find that newcomer youth lack information about how to achieve their postsecondary goals (Hos, 2013, 2020; Hos et al., 2019). Hos and colleagues (2019) confirmed once again how all the newcomer youth she interviewed had future goals but continued to "lac[k] sufficient knowledge of the U.S. educational system to project realistic future career trajectories

and what would be necessary for them to do to achieve their goals" (p. 1036). Lack of information is not the only factor impeding newcomer youth from realizing their future aspirations. Their familial obligations, which at times includes entering the workforce or advocating for their families given their newly acquired English skills, hampers their ability to move toward reaching their future goals (Leo, 2022). Newcomer youth's capacity is further constrained by high-stakes testing, which can impede a student from obtaining their high school diploma, a necessary first step for enrolling in college (Leo, 2022). Others have found that newcomer youth who struggle to pass high-stakes exams opt to drop out (Blaise, 2018). As Blaise (2018) wrote, "For [newcomer youth] the challenge is too great to continue without any hope in sight" (p. 1176). In spite of the great optimism newcomer youth might possess when they first start their educational journeys in the United States, newcomer youth report great pain for "failing" to attain their postsecondary goals (Bartlett et al., 2018; Leo, 2022). The reality is that the degree to which newcomer youth can attain their future goals is not just dependent upon their individual actions but is impacted by the "wider sociopolitical and economic context which can put constraints on students' imagined futures" (Leo, 2022, p. 41).

Intersubjective

It cannot be understated that relationships between educators and newcomer youth play an important role in shaping newcomer youth's academic success. Speaking to issues pertaining to the second arena of investigation—intersubjectivity—scholars have examined the ways teachers and school counselors' assumptions and beliefs about immigrant youth and ELs materialize and, in turn, contribute to educational inequity (Dabach et al., 2018; Núñez, 2014a).

When adolescent newcomers arrive in high school, they have a formidable task ahead of them (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Yip, 2013). They are expected to acquire and become

proficient in English while learning a complex secondary school curriculum (Allard, 2016; Callahan & Shifrer, 2012). Researchers' concerns for adolescent newcomers' language development has led to the identification of several factors that can negatively affect their educational outcomes. One factor impacting their ability to acquire English is their placement with high school teachers who have little to no training teaching basic literacy skills like phonics and fluency (Short & Boyson, 2012). Students' instruction tends to be from early-career teachers with limited experience and who lack specialized preparation (Santibañez & Umansky, 2018). Callahan and Shifrer (2016) also noted how teachers tend to operate from a deficit perspective when serving adolescent newcomers because they equate "limited English proficiency with limited intelligence" and thus become incapable of recognizing their "students' strengths—the linguistic, social, and cognitive resources— [which they] bring [. . .] to the classroom" (p. 468).

The access newcomer youth have to opportunities for relationships and learning with and from U.S.-born or English-proficient peers is also impacted by the way schools structure their language programs, which I will discuss in the next section. ELs are often isolated and confined to classrooms where the teacher's primary focus is to develop their English proficiency (Callahan, 2005). Newcomer youth not only suffer from the lack of linguistic exposure to more English-proficient peers (Allard, 2013), but their ability to interact with other students who are more familiar with U.S. culture is constrained. Not being able to form relationships with peers who have more experience navigating the U.S. educational system causes newcomer youth to be "less expos[ed] to socialization into mainstream high school practices that can leave them uninformed about" (Allard, 2013, p. 20) graduation and college requirements. The lack of access newcomer youth have to others outside of the ELD classroom is problematic given the benefits this access could have on their academic engagement and school performance (Suárez-Orozco et

al., 2009). Consequently, questions arise about the type of access newcomer youth have "to clear and timely information about higher education options" (Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019, p. 49) as they navigate high school and work toward high school graduation and college readiness.

Organizational

Much scholarship has been dedicated to this third arena of investigation. According to scholars Núñez et al. (2020), this third domain "addresses behaviors in an organization that may perpetuate marginalization" (p. 105). Because newcomer youth are a small minority of the approximately 1 million ELs in California (CDE, 2022f), it can be easy to ignore their many and particular needs (Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2001; Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Examining how language programs are designed and implemented and the access newcomer youth have to CCR opportunities is a burgeoning area of scholarly focus.

There are various educational programs that are available to newcomer youth once they enroll in school. Sugarman (2018) attested to this diversity, stating that even if programs for ELs look similar, "they may have different names since there is no government or education authority that defines these program types nationally" (p. 2). In California, programs aim to:

> (1) ensure that English learners acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible and attain parity with native speakers of English; [and] (2) ensure that English learners, within a reasonable period of time, achieve the same rigorous grade-level academic standards that are expected of all students. (CDE, 2022b, para. 1)

This includes dual-language immersion, transitional or developmental, and structured English immersion programs (see Sugarman, 2018 for a more detailed explanation on these types of programs). In the early 2000s, Short and Boyson conducted the first national study on programs

for newcomer students that existed across the United States, identifying the different types of programs and gathering evidence of their effectiveness. With data from 115 newcomer secondary programs, Short and Boyson (2003) concluded there were three program models. These newcomer programs were offered as a “program-within-a school, a separate site, and a whole school” (Short & Boyson, 2003, p. 8). The most popular model was the program-within-a-school, which accounted for 77% of the programs, followed by the separate site model (17%) and a whole school model (6%; Short & Boyson, 2003). The program-within-a-school model was defined as one in which newcomer youth receive a “full day, half day, or less than a half day of newcomer course instruction in their home school or designated attendance area school” (Short & Boyson, 2012, p. 14). In these programs, most newcomer youth attend ELD courses in addition to mainstream courses with their peers (Short & Boyson, 2012). The variation of programs available to newcomer youth has been based on a number of factors, including “educational goals, site options, length of program enrollment, length of daily contact, instructional and assessment practices, staffing, parent involvement, and resource allocation” (Short & Boyson, 2003, p. 7). The structure of programs and resources available to newcomer youth upon their arrival determine the type of relationships they have with their peers as well as educators and access they have to college-prep curriculum. This ultimately makes a difference in determining their educational and life trajectories.

Though not always recognized, the services provided to address adolescent newcomers’ language development have much larger consequences for their educational trajectories, especially as they concern the negative—albeit unintended—consequences of placing students in ELD classes. Enrolling newcomer youth in ELD programs places the burden of learning English in English-only classrooms as opposed to learning English through content integration in more

academically rigorous classrooms (Allard, 2013; Callahan & Shifrer, 2012; Sherris, 2008). This programmatic segregation extends to other academic subjects like math or science, leading to low levels of access to a college preparatory curriculum (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Mosqueda, 2012). The inability to access mainstream courses can potentially place students in:

> Instructional environments that include [. . .] hostile or apathetic peers, a paucity of interactional opportunities around instructional topics and tasks, low workloads and teacher expectations, and training in literate behaviors which focused on cognitively undemanding decoding, memorization, and mechanical repetition. (Harklau, 1994, pp. 351–352)

Ultimately, their differential access to rigorous academic experiences leads to lower levels of college readiness (Callahan & Shifrer, 2012).

What happens in K–12 schools requires examination given that most newcomer youth are "more likely to be [academically] behind and not graduate" high school (Morse, 2005, p. 2). Those who pursue postsecondary education tend to attend community college rather than a 4-year university (Gándara, 2017; Kanno & Harklau, 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019). As Gándara (2017) wrote, this trend is troubling since some type of postsecondary preparation "is a prerequisite for gaining access to the middle class" (p. 5). How newcomer students fare in K–12 educational contexts has important implications for the different types of postgraduation opportunities available to them (Flores et al., 2009; Kanno, 2018b; Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Marks & Pieloch, 2015; Ruiz de Velasco et al., 2001).

Third Level: Historicity

In the third level of multilevel intersectionality, scholars have focused on the "macro-level influences that affect [newcomer youth's] postsecondary access and success" (Núñez,

2014a, p. 71). Particular to analysis at the third level in this model is accounting for the fact "that the construction of social categories, context of reception for different groups, development of hierarchies, and allocation of resources for different public or private societal goals are neither natural nor given" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 73). Indeed, the context of reception matters greatly in defining newcomer youth's educational and life trajectories (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou & Gonzales, 2019).

The Average School Newcomer Youth Encounter

Scholars examining the experiences of immigrant youth often have focused their attention on the role K–12 schools play in their lives. Schools play an important role in the lives of newcomer youth as they provide access to "sustained, meaningful, and enduring participation in an institution of the new society" (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, p. 2). However, many of the schools newcomer youth attend are woefully burdened by poverty and, ultimately, under resourced (Allard, 2013; Kanno & Harklau, 2012; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine [NASEM], 2017; Orfield & Ee, 2014; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Silver et al., 2008).

Regarding the first point, the schools newcomer youth attend are not only contending with concentrated poverty but are segregated along racial and linguistic lines (Orfield & Ee, 2014; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Newcomer youth are susceptible to experiencing the compounding effects of "segregation by race, poverty, and language" which "is related to unequal opportunities and unequal outcomes" (Orfield & Ee, 2014, p. 57). Additionally, as a consequence of schools' access to limited resources, the great majority of newcomer youth attend overcrowded schools with overwhelmed teachers (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco,

2001). The lack of access newcomer youth have to quality schools has dire consequences for their academic success and college readiness.

Ever-Occurring Migrations

Because of changing circumstances, nationally and globally, numbers of migrating youth have been on the rise since the early 1990s (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2017). In 2017, 30 million of the 258 million people who had left their country of birth were children (UNICEF, 2018). Depending on the definition of “child” that is used, the number of children on the move differs. Using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child definition (i.e., anyone under the age of 18 is a child), “12% of the total migrant stock in 2019 were child migrants” or about 33 million children (Migration Data Portal, 2021, para. 4). Many of these minors are traveling along the “largest international corridors of human migration today” (Suárez-Orozco, 2019, p. 1) taking place in the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia (UNICEF, 2017). They are fleeing “violence, poverty, and exploitation in their home countries” (Ataiants et al., 2017, p. 1000) as well as “changing, ever harsher climates” (UNICEF, 2017, p. 13). These forces have resulted in youth undergoing catastrophic migrations (Suárez-Orozco, 2019).

An Ever-Changing Legal System That Criminalizes

Criminalizing the mobility of people migrating to the United States and within the United States has been a practice that spans more than a century (Hernández, 2010, 2017; Ngai 2004). National discourse focused on illegal immigration has obscured this fact.

In the last couple of decades, migration and legal scholars have traced the ever-changing nature of immigration policies and their impact on both U.S.-born and immigrant communities in the United States (Abrego, 2014a; Boehm & Terrio, 2019; Castañeda, 2019; Gonzales, 2016;

Heidbrink, 2014; Hernández, 2010, 2017; NASEM, 2015; Ngai, 2004; St. John, 2011; Vogt, 2018). Of particular importance to these conversations is the idea that "the law has moved to encompass increasingly more immigrants under the category of 'illegality'" (Menjívar, 2017, p. 93). Anthropologist De Genova (2002) defined illegality as a mechanism used to denote the relationship one has to the state. One of the consequences of illegality is that those in power have the ability to constantly redefine who is deemed "illegal" (Menjívar, 2017; Ngai, 2004). The material consequences of illegality have resulted in a range of immigration statuses, resulting in immigrants having different integration experiences (NASEM, 2015). This means immigrants experience differential access to social benefits and institutions such as education (NASEM, 2015).

Burgeoning scholarship has focused on the effects of migrant illegality on the everyday lived experiences of immigrants. For example, scholars Menjívar and Abrego (2012) argued immigration and criminal law have converged and, consequently, enact legal violence in the workplace, community, and school, further contributing to immigrants' social stratification (Asad & Clair, 2018; Flores & Schachter, 2018; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012). They raised attention to how illegality has spilled over to affect U.S. citizens, given the large number of mixed-status families in the United States. Abrego (2014a) further examined how illegality affects immigrant families and entire communities in diverse ways. Using intersectionality, she investigated how generation status, gender identity, and local context coalesce with illegality to create different realities for immigrant and U.S. citizens alike. Examining local context and policies are important to consider when studying the ways illegality impacts individuals and families (Menjívar et al., 2017). The experiences of immigrants in one sociopolitical context like the greater Los Angeles area (Menjívar et al., 2017) might look different for those living,

working, and studying in new immigration destinations (Marrow, 2020). As such, the effects of illegality on the lives of individuals shifts over time and place. Centering how immigration policies “produce categories of illegality” (Menjívar, 2017, p. 93) helps account for the differential treatment immigrant youth experience as they arrive in the United States, enroll in K–12 schools, and embark on their educational journeys in their attempts to achieve their life goals.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

> Intersectionality focuses awareness on people and experiences—hence, on social forces and dynamics—that, in monocular vision, are overlooked. Intersectionality fills out the Venn diagrams at points of overlap where convergence has been neglected, training its sights where vectors of inequality intersect at crossroads that have previously been at best sped through. (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1020)

In this case study, I employed ethnographic methods to understand the gendered, raced, classed, and age-based experiences of newcomer youth who are labeled as English learners (ELs; Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Yin, 2006). By designing this dissertation as a case study, I was able to investigate a "contemporary phenomenon [the low CCR rates of newcomer youth] in depth and within its real-world context" while attending to the many "variables of interest" to the study (Yin, 2018, p. 15). To examine the various ways newcomer youth were categorized, stereotyped, and classified as ELs and as "immigrants," I used the ethnographic methods of participant observations, semistructured interviews, and document analysis. This allowed me to shed light on "the dynamic intersection" (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1023) manifesting at a comprehensive urban high school in south Los Angeles because of ever-changing language and immigration policies. In solidarity with other scholars whose work has been informed by migrant illegality and who use ethnographic methods to study the experiences of undocumented people, I, too, aimed to "examine the mechanisms that produce and sustain" (Gonzales & Raphael, 2017, p. 11) marginalization along the lines of language and legal status. My goal was to attend to the different ways educational and immigration policies shaped the CCR opportunities afforded to newcomer youth. In what follows, I describe the setting for my study, my role as a researcher,

the youth and school staff collaborators, recruitment methods, data collection and analysis, and methodological questions and limitations.

Research Setting and Collaborators

In this section, I describe the changing student body of Esperanza High School (EHS)[2] as it relates to recently arrived immigrant youth. I detail the rationale for choosing ESH as a research site. In addition to providing some information on the newcomer youth and school staff that partook in the study, I also describe the different spaces in which I collected data.

Esperanza High School

The study was conducted at ESH, a comprehensive high school located in south Los Angeles that served approximately 1,800 students. Given that most newcomer youth attend comprehensive high schools, it was important to examine the experiences of newcomer youth at a school like EHS versus a school that specializes in teaching newcomer youth such as the San Francisco or Oakland International High Schools. Having access to an educational program purposefully designed to serve multilingual students and recent immigrants is not the norm across California or the United States (Short, 2002). In fact, the demographics of the student population reflected some of the concerning trends occurring in public schools at the time of this study; EHS was experiencing segregation based on race, class, and language (see Table 3.1 and Table 3.2; Orfield & Ee, 2014). Considering this reality, I proceed to highlight why EHS was chosen as a site for this dissertation study.

[2] Esperanza High School is a pseudonym.

Table 3.1

Student Demographics of EHS During 2020–2021 Academic Year (Student Group)

Student group	%
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	98
ELs	19
Students with disabilities	16
Housing insecure youth	1
Foster youth	<1

Note. The student groups account for groups of students which are allocated special funds to provide targeted services (e.g., free or reduced lunch).

Table 3.2

Student Demographics of EHS During 2020–2021 Academic Year (Race/Ethnicity)

Race/Ethnicity	%
Hispanic	93
African American/Black	6
White	1
Asian	<1
Two or more races	<1

Note. The Hispanic ethnic category used by the California Department of Education (CDE) does not consider the racial diversity among students who might have a connection to Latin America. I recognize the use of the term "Hispanic" invisibilizes the indigenous and Afro-Latino identities of students who do not identify as Hispanic or Latino/a.

First, EHS is in a large school district in Los Angeles County in California. Compared to other states, California serves the largest population of ELs (CDE, 2022f). At the time of writing, there were 1.1 million students identified as current ELs making up 17% of the K–12 student population; another 1 million students had been reclassified as fluent English proficient (CDE, 2022f). Similarly, many ELs are concentrated in Los Angeles County schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-b.) Of the many school districts in Los Angeles County, the home district of EHS serves the largest number of ELs (Hill, 2012; Ruiz Soto et al., 2015). ELs at EHS, like many of the neighboring schools, account for 19% of the population, mirroring the state average (CDE, 2022f.).

Although newcomer youth are often identified by their EL labels, they are more than their language label. It is important to note the diversity of the newcomer youth population. As stated in Chapter 1, I define newcomer youth differently than the federal government because I include U.S.-born youth who have lived and studied abroad for more than half of their schooling experiences; the federal government only recognizes ELs who are foreign-born (U.S. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, n.d.). I do this to be inclusive of the immigrant experiences of youth regardless of their legal status while also attending to how their experiences differ because of their legal status.

To better contextualize EHS, I provide a brief overview of important key facts about newcomer youth in California. First, California received the largest number of monies allocated for Title III, special funding used to deliver services to enhance the state's newcomer youth's schooling experiences (U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). Second, Los Angeles County and the home district of EHS served the largest number of immigrant students in the state (CDE, 2021). In Fall 2020, Los Angeles County served 39,022

students (CDE, 2021). Although it is hard to decipher the legal status of immigrant youth receiving Title III funds, the largest numbers of unaccompanied youth in California settle in Los Angeles County (Stavley, 2019; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022b). Moreover, across California, the top three countries of origin for immigrant students were Mexico (n = 32,631), Guatemala (n = 15,186), and El Salvador (n = 11,303; CDE, 2021). These numbers provide a good representation of how many and from which countries newcomer youth migrate from, but do not account for the differing migration experiences of newcomer youth, including those who recently migrated back to the United States as U.S. citizens and are labeled as ELs upon their return.

Like many high schools across the school district, EHS is committed to increasing the number of CCR students. This reflects the current efforts led by the state to prepare high school graduates for college or a career (CDE, 2022a). To ensure all students in California are "completing rigorous coursework, passing challenging exams, or receiving a state seal" (CDE, 2022a, para. 1), a new measure of accountability was created to assess the performance of educational institutions. EHS has greatly increased their students' access to CCR opportunities in part due to a special partnership they have with a local nonprofit organization. Of the many high schools across Los Angeles, EHS is unique because it has been selected to receive additional funding, training, and support services after struggling to eradicate persistent educational inequities upon its founding several years ago. This has allowed it to increase its graduation and CCR rates over the last few years. As of 2019, EHS's graduation rate was about 80%, whereas California's was 86%. EHS's CCR was around 40% compared to California's 44% of high school graduates being "prepar[ed] for [likely] success after graduation" (CDE, 2019a, p. 1). Despite this progress for the general student population, only 18% of the school's EL population

was CCR (California School Dashboard, 2017). Though this percentage is quite low, it sadly mirrors the reality of ELs across California, as only 17% of the greater EL population is prepared for postsecondary education or training (California School Dashboard, 2017).

Because of the substantial number of newcomer youth and the low CCR rates, EHS was an ideal site for this ethnographic study because I was interested in examining the "people, situations, events, and the processes" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29) underlying this educational trend. Carrying out this study at EHS using qualitative methods allowed me to understand (a) newcomer youth and school staff's perspectives, (b) the influence that context (i.e., EHS's language programs and school services) had on newcomer youth's actions, and (c) the process leading to the outcome of low CCR rates among newcomer youth (Maxwell, 2013). Using ethnographic methods, I was able to produce a "rich, thick description" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 114) of newcomer youth's experiences of navigating high school in pursuit of their future goals.

The Uniqueness of the 2020–2021 Academic Year

To understand the findings from this dissertation study, it is important to acknowledge the larger sociopolitical context and the particular historical moment in which I collected data. Data was collected during the end of the Trump administration. Scholar Montange (2022) categorized the Trump administration's immigration politics as "vengeful [and] xenophobic" (p. 3). Under the Trump administration and its transition to the Biden administration, immigrant communities experienced high levels of fear and feelings of uncertainty (Artiga & Ubri, 2017; Ee & Gándara, 2020; Rogers et al., 2017). These feelings were further exacerbated with the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Quickly, COVID-19 spread from Wuhan, China around the world (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). This resulted in many countries

closing their borders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Connor, 2020). In late March, the United States declared its borders closed to tourists, recreational travel (Rosenberg & Hesson, 2020), and asylum seekers, including unaccompanied children (American Bar Association, n.d.; Loweree et al., 2020). Asylum seekers were denied entry to the United States through the Migrant Protection Protocols or "Remain in Mexico" program which was implemented in January 2019 (American Immigration Council, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Loweree et al., 2020). This health crisis had ramifications for K–12 schools and the immigration system.

I collected data during the era of online learning, an atypical time never experienced before, or what became known as "Zoom" school. Additionally, the newcomer youth population at EHS did not grow as it had in previous years. It was not until Spring 2021, after the inauguration of President Joe Biden, that a rapidly increasing number of newcomer youth arrived, most of whom were seeking asylum. In fact, during the fiscal year of 2020, the Office of Refugee Resettlement served the lowest number of unaccompanied youth since 2012 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022a; see Table 3.3). Despite these unexpected changes to the data collection plan, I was able to modify the use of ethnographic methods to capture newcomer youth's experiences during this time.

Table 3.3

Number of Referrals Office of Refugee Resettlement Received from the Department of Homeland Security

Fiscal year (October 1–September 30)	Number of referrals
FY 2021	122,731
FY 2020	**15,381**
FY 2019	69,488

Fiscal year (October 1–September 30)	Number of referrals
FY 2018	49,100
FY 2017	40,810
FY 2016	59,170
FY 2015	33,726
FY 2014	57,496
FY 2013	24,668
FY 2012	13,625

Note. FY 2020 is in bold to highlight the drastic drop in the number of unaccompanied minors entering the United States during the COVID-19 global pandemic, resulting in fewer enrollments across K–12 schools.

My Participation and Prior Work at Esperanza High School

Prior to conducting this study, I had been a volunteer at EHS since October 2019. As an outsider, given my positionality as both a non-native to Los Angeles and a university student, I initially encountered some difficulties gaining access to a comprehensive high school. Yet, a professor in the UCLA Teacher Education Program was able to broker a relationship with a graduate of the program, Ms. Martinez.[3] I was also able to meet with the manager of the district enrollment center who provided a general overview of the newcomer population across the school district. For example, she noted how two particular neighborhoods in Los Angeles (i.e., Westlake and San Fernando Valley) were experiencing an increased number of unaccompanied youth; at the time, they made up the majority of newcomer youth in Los Angeles. This fact was

[3] All names of ESH school staff and newcomer youth are pseudonyms.

corroborated by two district administrators I met with prior to volunteering at EHS. Finally, because of my relationship with the UCLA Community School, I knew of additional staff members working at EHS, such as Ms. Bevan, one of the two English language development (ELD) teachers.

Ms. Martinez arranged a meeting with her direct supervisor, Ms. Rico, one of the six administrators at EHS, and members of the EL support team, Ms. Cantúa and Mateo. I then began to volunteer on a weekly basis, splitting my time with Ms. Bevan in her ELD classroom and Ms. Martinez's two sections of world history where she had the largest number of newcomer youth in the school. These weekly visits continued until the March 2020 shutdown of schools due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

My weekly visits to the ELD and the history classrooms differed from one another. In the ELD classroom, I was able to work more closely with newcomer youth as I assisted students working in pairs and small groups on their vocabulary and reading assignments. With the permission of Ms. Bevan, I was also able to engage a small group of students in an art activity; students selected images from magazines to curate paper artifacts mirroring their future goals (see Figure 3.1). In the ELD classroom, I formed more close-knit relationships with the students, while in the history class, I found myself acting as more of a teacher's assistant, performing comprehension checks and translating instructions and historical documents so students could complete their classwork. Translating historical documents, such as poems written in old English about imperialism in Africa, always proved to be the hardest. More will be said about these types of challenges in Chapter 5.

Figure 3.1

A Collage of Tatiana's Future Goals

Not expecting a global pandemic to cause a shift from in-person to remote learning, the time I spent in the ELD and history classrooms proved to be valuable to forming relationships with the newcomer youth at EHS. With the onset of the pandemic, my relationship with the EL support team shifted. Prior to the shift to remote learning, I had very little contact with EL team members, and after the shift I began to assist with biweekly meetings as they assessed how newcomer youth were faring with attending online classes. This led me to discontinue volunteering in the ELD and history classrooms and instead begin volunteering alongside Mr. Romo, an EL team member, during after-school online tutoring sessions.

Collaborator Recruitment

Having received institutional review board approval from the school district at the end of May 2020, I informed the EL team I could begin data collection. In the spirit of collaboration, Ms. Cantúa and I discussed beginning to interview newcomer youth who would be graduating in June 2020. Ms. Cantúa was particularly interested in assessing how EHS was preparing newcomer youth to be CCR. A week after the students graduated, I reached out to their families to let them know about the study and ask for their permission to invite their child to participate. I informed them EHS was interested in learning what had worked for their child as they learned English and prepared for life postgraduation and what could be improved. After being given permission to talk to their child, I reiterated the purpose of the study, reviewed the eligibility criteria of (a) their child being enrolled in at least one ELD course during their high school career and (b) their migration to the United States as a teenager. I also let them know participating in these interviews was completely voluntary. Those who decided to participate were excited to share their insights and discuss their experiences. We met online via Zoom during the months of June and July of 2020.

Once the 2020–2021 school year began, my dissertation study was modified to only collect data in the Zoom classrooms (or meetings) of the ELD teachers and the EL team. Most of my observations occurred in Ms. Bevan's room and the EL's dedicated after-school tutoring sessions. At the beginning of the year, I introduced myself and told them I was a volunteer who would be assisting Ms. Bevan on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I also let them know I was a researcher at UCLA who studied the experiences of youth like them who were learning English and were new to the country. After obtaining permission from UCLA to collect data in an online setting, Ms. Bevan allowed me to review the consent form with students. I screenshared the

Spanish version of my consent form and informed them I was collecting data for my dissertation study to complete a graduation requirement. To be sure they understood what "collecting data" meant, I explained I would be conducting observations, which meant I would take notes about their day-to-day activities and the conversations they had related to college and careers. I made sure to let them know they could opt out if they did not feel comfortable with any aspect of the study. Ms. Bevan made sure to post the informed consent form to Schoology, a learning management system used by the school district. Although I did not invite any students at that time to participate in interviews, I did let them know that later in the semester I would go around asking who would like to be interviewed.

It was not until the end of the fall semester, after students acclimated to the online environment and I became familiar with them, that I asked students if they would be interested in being interviewed. I was provided a list of newcomer students who were enrolled at EHS as of October 2020, which meant some newcomer youth with whom I had previously worked during the 2019–2020 school year were unable to participate; they had made the decision to not return for the 2020–2021 school year. At the end of November, I began to reach out to parents and guardians to obtain permission to ask their children if they were interested in participating in the interviews. I first invited seniors graduating at the end of the 2020–2021 academic year who had experienced the first wave of the college application season. I continued to interview juniors, sophomores, and freshmen next. The interviews with newcomer youth concluded in May.

In addition to recruiting newcomer youth, I also sought out school staff perspectives to ensure I would be able to analyze the decision-making process behind the programs and services made available to newcomer youth via their language program and general coursework. Because the conceptual frameworks of multilevel intersectionality and illegality recognize it is people in

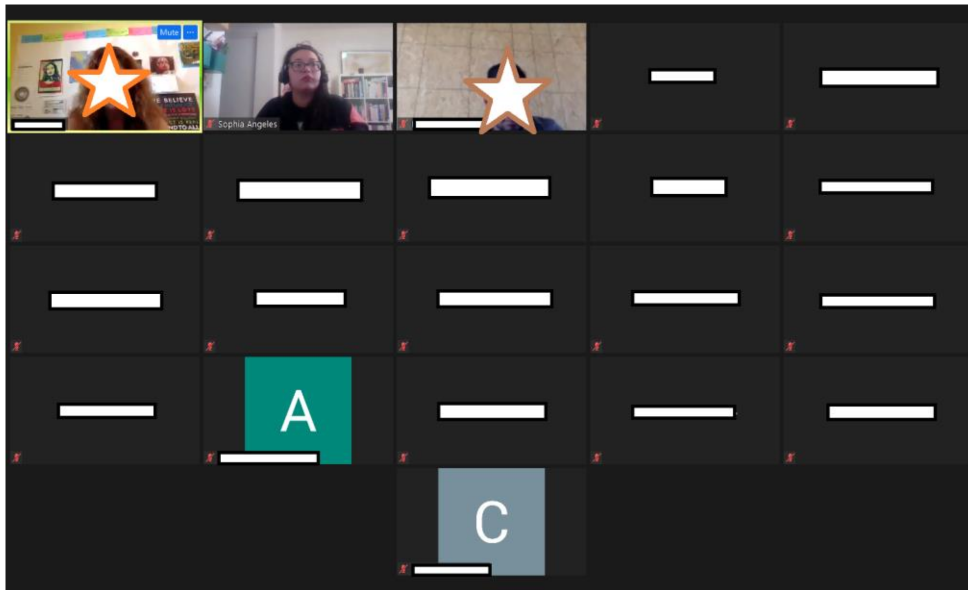
power, in this case school staff, that help keep systems in place, their voices were essential to illuminate how language and immigration policies informed their practice and, in turn, shaped the experiences of newcomer youth. Given the ever-changing school policies on COVID-19 and online learning, which led to a high degree of teacher burnout (MissionSquare Research Institute, 2021), I was extremely cognizant of not wanting to burden school staff with another request. Attempting my best to not add to their teacher load, I asked one of the school administrators to send out an email invitation to participate in interviews for my dissertation study. He sent this out to staff members he had identified as having the most interactions with newcomer youth. These included ELD teachers, content-area teachers, teacher assistants, and members of the EL team. Of the 27 educators he identified, 14 participated in interviews. Although my initial intention had been to capture the experiences of newcomer youth as they navigated the physical space of EHS, I was limited to capturing what it meant to teach and learn online. However, both students and school staff were able to speak about their experience during 2020–2021 compared to previous school years.

Ms. Bevan's Classroom

During the 2020–2021 school year, Ms. Bevan's classroom went from being a repurposed science classroom with ample space to move around to what was often a screen full of black squares with student's names in white text (see Figure 3.3). This blacked out classroom was a result of school administrators allowing students to turn off their cameras to mitigate the lack of access to high-speed internet. As a result, those with cameras on were the adults in the classroom consisting of Ms. Bevan, Ms. Bevan's instructional assistant, Mr. Zapata, and I.

Figure 3.2

Ms. Bevan's Zoom Period 1

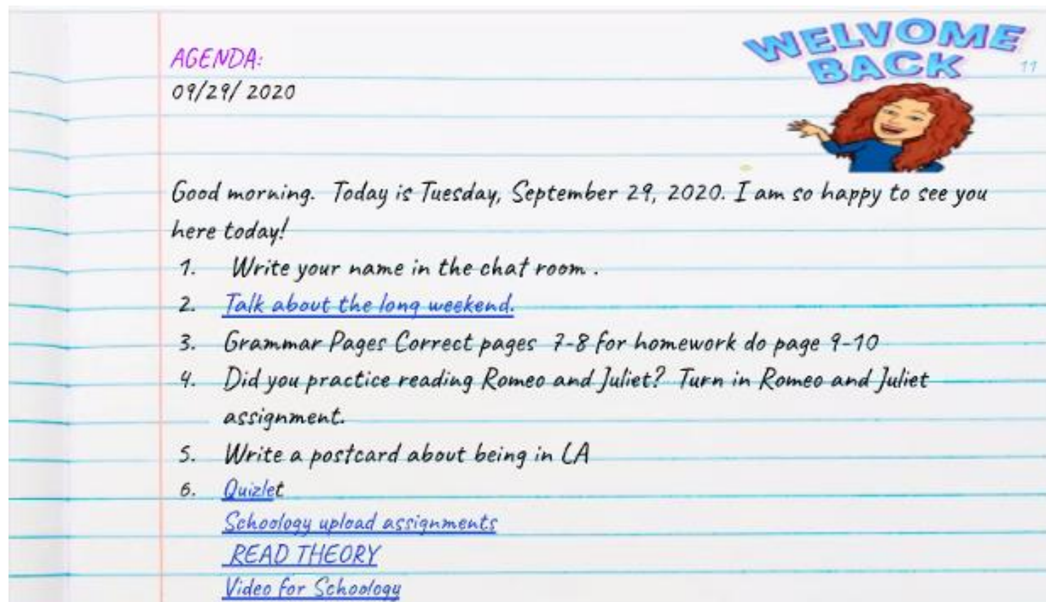


The ELD/English Classroom

The typical class session included an overview of the agenda (see Figure 3.4) followed by a series of activities. Because Ms. Bevan taught ELD 1, English 9 for ELD students (I discuss how this ELD 1/English 9 course differed from the English 9 course in Chapter 5), and two sections of ELD 3. Depending on the class, Ms. Bevan reviewed different aspects of English grammar, facilitated a group reading and discussion of various short stories from their assigned textbook, and introduced students to new vocabulary, often related to the texts they were reading in class.

Figure 3.2

Ms. Bevan's Agenda for September 29, 2020



Advisory Period

Ms. Bevan also taught two advisory periods. All school staff, including administrators, were asked to teach an advisory period or, at the minimum, coteach. During these class periods, Ms. Bevan would review school announcements and check-in on students by inviting students to engage in some social–emotional learning activities provided by the nonprofit organization with which EHS was partnered (see Figure 3.5). These lessons were always provided in English. To facilitate students' access to the curriculum, Ms. Bevan translated the slides and accompanying activities. When Ms. Bevan was not reviewing the social–emotional curriculum, Ms. Bevan and I would engage in conversation with students about home life, their work, weekend plans, and their experiences with other teachers. As time progressed, Ms. Bevan allowed me to hold small group tutoring sessions to help newcomer youth complete their class assignments, which were

often assignments for science and English classes. Her advisory classroom was also a space where conversations about college and career occurred.

Figure 3.3

A Social–Emotional Lesson in Ms. Bevan's Classroom

In the following section, I introduce the 75 newcomer youth in my study. I show how diverse they were as a student group. Though I invited all of them to choose their own pseudonym, explaining this was to ensure their anonymity, only a handful selected a pseudonym. For the rest, I chose a pseudonym on their behalf.

Newcomer Youth at EHS

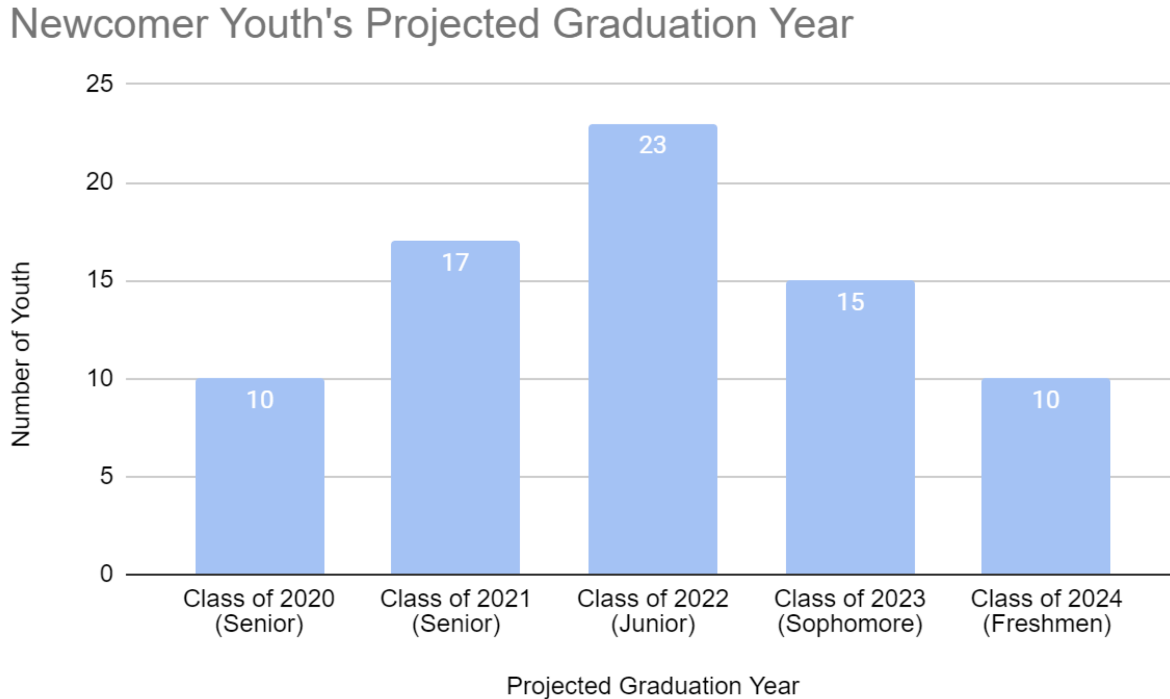
There were 75 newcomer youth who participated in the interviews. Almost all of them were also students in Ms. Bevan's class. The few who were not taking classes with the other ELD teachers and other members of the EL team. There were also students who did not participate in the interviews but who I observed in Ms. Bevan's classroom. Throughout the recruitment process, I tried to interview at least 50% of newcomer youth from each class and do

so in a way that represented the gender make-up of the total number of newcomer youth from each class. It was important to invite newcomer youth across ninth to 12th grade to see if they had access to CCR opportunities or were engaging in conversations about college and careers. Although some might argue interviewing high school graduates or even upperclassmen would suffice to answer the study's research questions, the literature on college readiness finds that aspiring to attend college prior to beginning high school positively influences the attainment of said goals (Mariani et al., 2016; McDonough, 1997). The purpose of this study was to investigate not whether freshmen or sophomores would commit to a particular career or attend a specific college but to examine the opportunities ninth to 12th grade newcomer students had to explore their college and career aspirations.

Because I collected data in June and July 2020, I was able to include the senior class who graduated at the end of the 2019–2020 academic year (see Figure 3.6). Two sets of senior classes were interviewed for a total of 27 senior newcomer youth. The largest group of newcomer youth I interviewed was the junior class, which mirrored the total population of newcomer youth graduating June 2022. I interviewed 15 newcomer youth from the sophomore class and 10 from the freshmen class. Again, the total number of ninth grade newcomer youth was the smallest due to migration restrictions put in place by the Trump administration.

Figure 3.4

Newcomer Youth's Projected Graduation Year



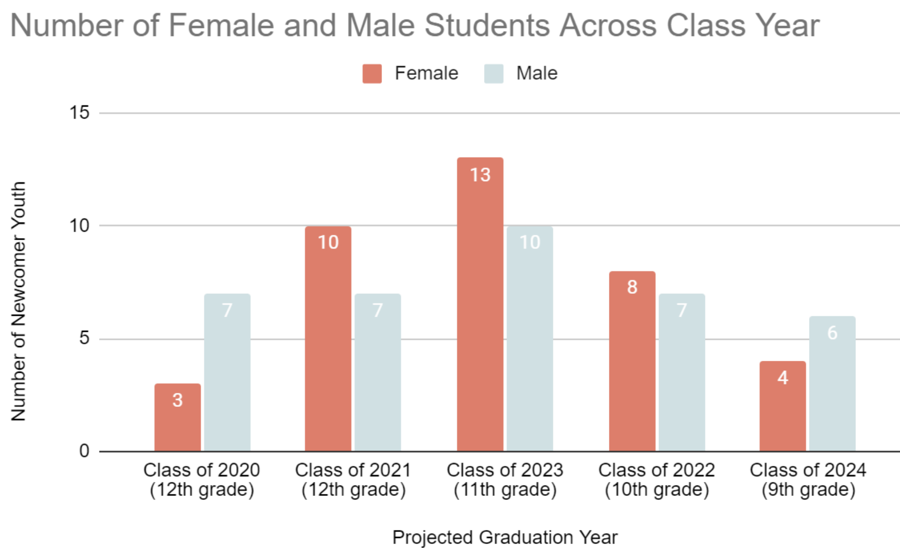
Not all the newcomer youth who were interviewed remained in school throughout the 2020–2021 academic year. Some of the youth I invited to participate in interviews had already dropped out. Yet, I let them know they were still eligible to participate given they began the school year as enrolled students. Both students (i.e., Bravo and Pablo) who dropped out during the fall semester cited COVID-19 and its impact on their finances or learning experience as the reason for deciding to leave school. Each of these students was from the Class of 2021 and Class of 2022. The only other student who did not graduate high school (i.e., Lizbeth) did so for failing to pass coursework. Despite attending class every day, she was not able to pass the required

English credits. Although she attended summer school in 2021, she was still short of English credits.

There were almost the same number of female ($n = 38$) and male ($n = 37$) newcomer youth participating in the interviews. Yet, when one looks closely at the gender distribution across graduation years, it can be seen that some classes were unevenly represented based on gender (see Figure 3.7). Some of this was because the overall class had a larger number of male students, as was the case for the Class of 2020 and 2024. For the Class of 2022, there were more female students who participated despite there being more male students in the pool of newcomer youth who were eligible to participate in the study. This might be because I, as a woman, was more approachable to female students than male students. In fact, there were a couple of male students with whom I had rapport from interacting with them as a volunteer the year prior, and they let me know they did not feel comfortable speaking with me about their experiences.

Figure 3.5

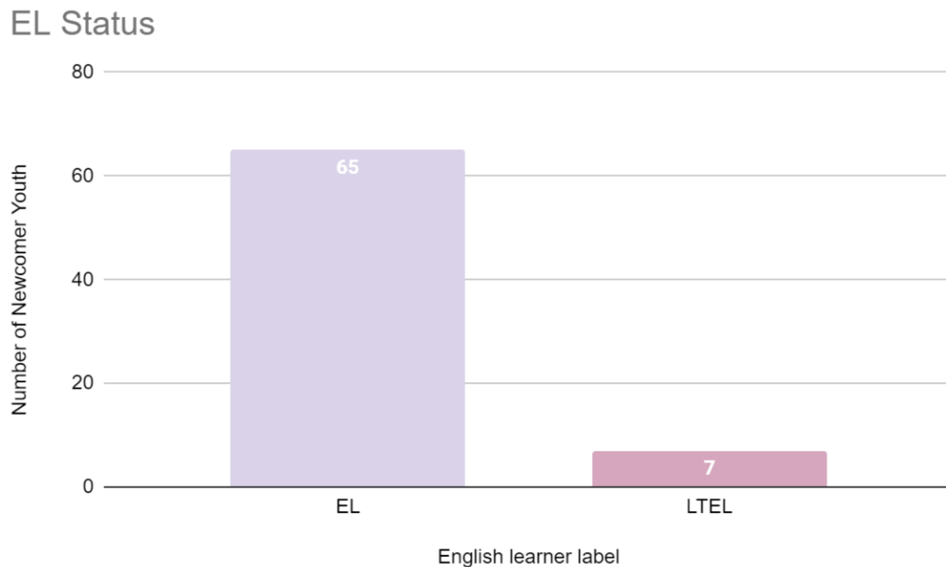
Gender by Class Year



Because the eligibility criteria to participate in the study included (a) newcomer youth who have taken at least one ELD course during their high school career and (b) students migrated to the United States as teenagers, not all participants at the time of the interview were identified as ELs (see Figure 3.8). Instead, there were some youth who the school had deemed proficient in English and others who had transitioned to being a long-term English language learner (LTEL). The LTEL label was common among the newcomer youth who arrived to the United States in time to complete at least 1 year of middle school. Despite not being current ELs, it was important to include their perspectives, as they were still part of the official count of ELs at EHS. Doing so would allow me to examine the diverse set of experiences among newcomer students.

Figure 3.6

EL Status of Newcomer Students

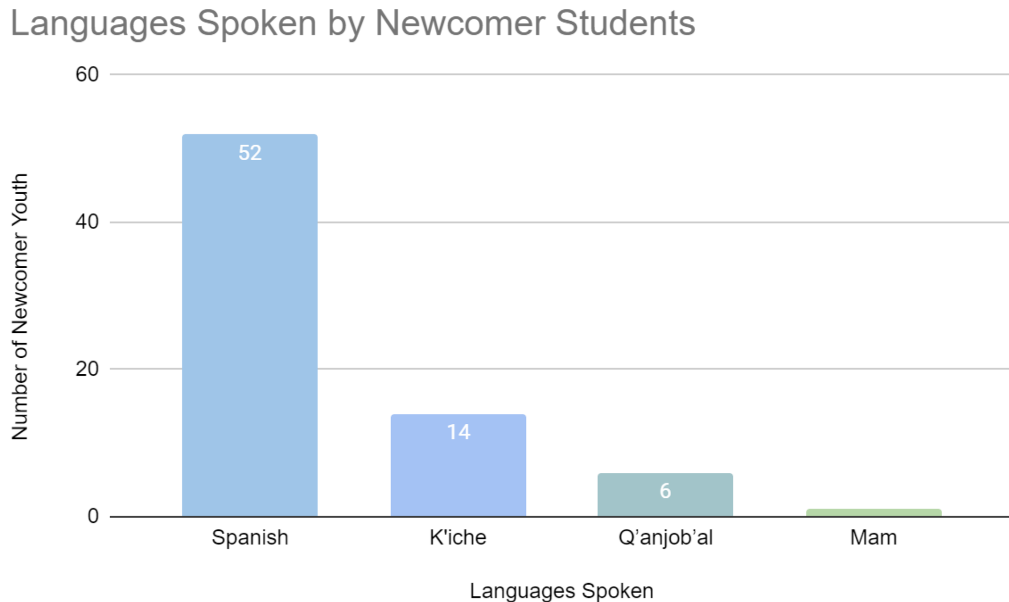


Although newcomer students were often known for their identity as learners of the English language, they spoke a variety of languages (see Figure 3.9). The latter spoke an

indigenous language (i.e., K'iche, Q'anjob'al, or Mam) in addition to Spanish and learning English.

Figure 3.7

Languages Spoken by Newcomer Students



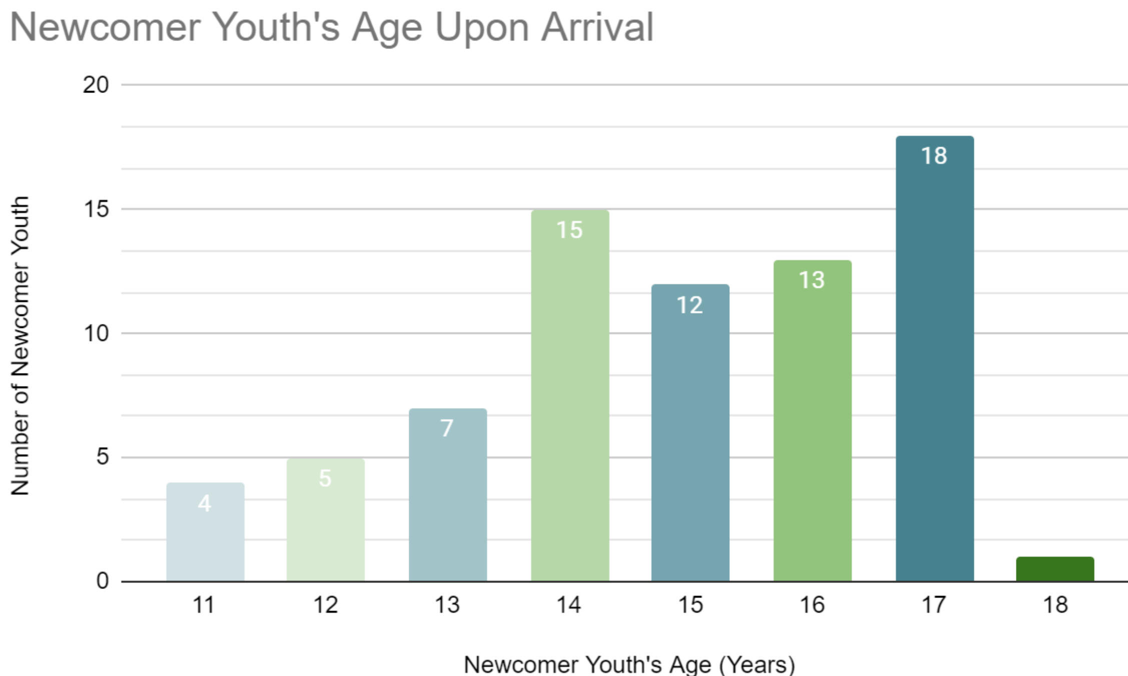
Newcomer students migrated from several countries in Latin America. It is important to note I refer to these countries as the origin of their migration journey to be inclusive of those students who were born in the United States. Nevertheless, the majority migrated from Guatemala (n = 37). The other half of the newcomer students migrated from Mexico (n = 15), El Salvador (n = 14), Honduras (n = 8), and Nicaragua (n = 1). The countries from which they migrated seemed to be correlated with newcomer youth occupying certain legal statuses: permanent, temporary, discretionary, or undocumented, in addition to U.S. citizen. In Chapter 4, I go into greater detail about how EHS staff made sense of newcomer youth's identities as immigrant youth and the importance of the rich diversity as it relates to their legal statuses. In

Chapter 7, I discuss how newcomer youth's legal status seemed to shape the access to opportunities they had to develop their CCR.

Although I discuss the importance of age of arrival on the educational trajectory of newcomer students more in Chapter 5, I now bring attention to newcomer youth's age of arrival (see Figure 3.10). The majority arrived at age 13 or older. Although, nine did not. Sixty-six of them were part of the 1.25 generation, which Rumbaut (1997) defined as the generation who "seem[s] closer to the experience. . .of the first generation" (p. 29).

Figure 3.8

Newcomer Students' Age of Arrival



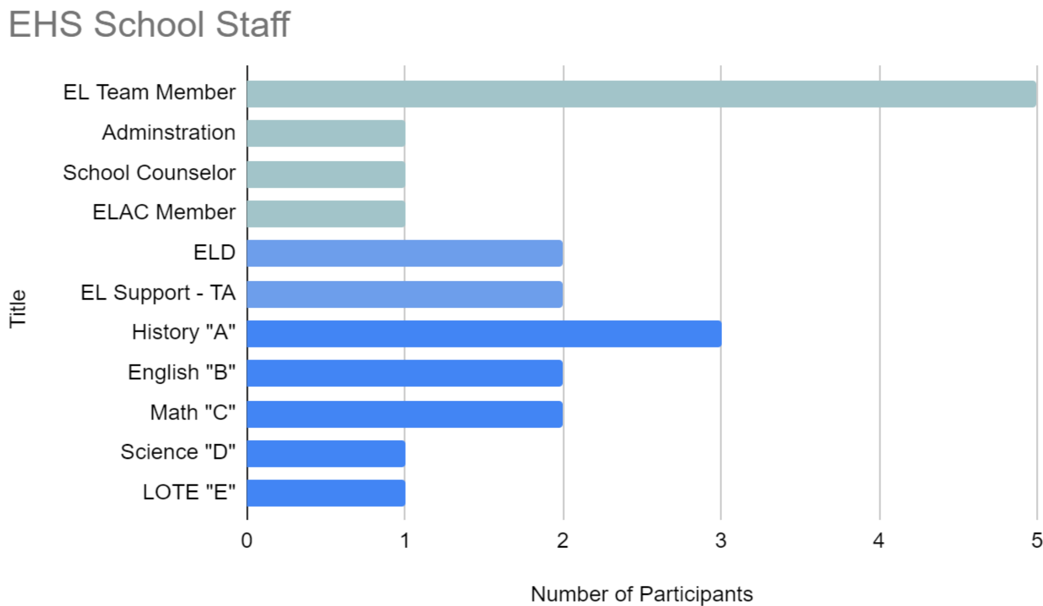
In the next section, I highlight the adults who participated in interactions I observed and/or interviews on which I focused my analysis.

School Staff at EHS

A total of 21 EHS school personnel participated in this study (see Figure 3.11). The majority were members of the EL team. This included one school administrator, three instructional coaches, and one school counselor designated to work only with EL students. One of the two ELD teachers was also part of the EL team. I met with this group of school staff on a regular basis over Zoom meetings throughout the 2020–2021 academic year to discuss the progress of EL students throughout the year. Once EHS returned to in-person learning, I was unable to continue meeting with them. However, I continued to have conversations with them during the weekly after-school tutoring sessions, advisory periods, and monthly English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings.

Figure 3.9

Role of EHS School Staff



In addition to the core EL team, there were a few others who participated in interviews only. The first group consisted of out-of-classroom personnel, which included the main school principal during the 2020–2021 school year and one general school counselor. Although I attempted to recruit the participation of the large administrative and school counseling team (*N* = 13), three chose to participate. Of the seven school counselors, I was particularly interested in hearing from the college counselor. Despite sending her a personal invitation and being in correspondence with her over a period of a month, I was never able to confirm a time or date to meet. Her last email came the day recruitment of participants closed with her apologizing she was unable to participate in the study. In addition to these out-of-classroom personnel, I also included a member of the ELAC team who was a mother of two EHS students. One had recently graduated in 2020 and the other had just begun his high school career during the 2020–2021 academic year.

Of the school staff who worked in the classroom, I distinguish them based on their affiliation to the EL student population. As already stated, one of the ELD teachers was part of the EL team, whereas the other, Ms. Bevan, was not. In addition to the ELD teachers, two teacher assistants who worked to support students in the ELD classroom and their A–G courses[4] took part in the interviews. The EL team attempted to assign a teacher's assistant to A–G courses in which a high number of newcomer students were enrolled. Although the great majority of EHS teachers interacted with at least one newcomer youth, only a few responded to the call to participate in the interviews.

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[4] A-G courses are the "high school courses approved for admission to the university," including the University of California and California State University systems (CDE, 2022d, para. 2).

There were three teachers who let me know they would not be able to participate. Interestingly, these teachers were from the English department. Differences between newcomer students' experiences in the ELD and English classes is a finding I discuss in Chapter 5. One teacher cited her lack of knowledge on how to best teach EL students as her reason for not feeling comfortable participating in the interviews. Another teacher who was helping upperclassmen (i.e., 11th and 12th graders) with their transition from ELD courses to English courses cited not having "any close encounters with newcomer students." Finally, another teacher who also taught upperclassmen, and was praised by school administrators and the nonprofit organization as being an advocate for newcomer youth, replied, expressing interest, but citing her running a nonprofit prevented her from finding a time to meet during the data collection period.

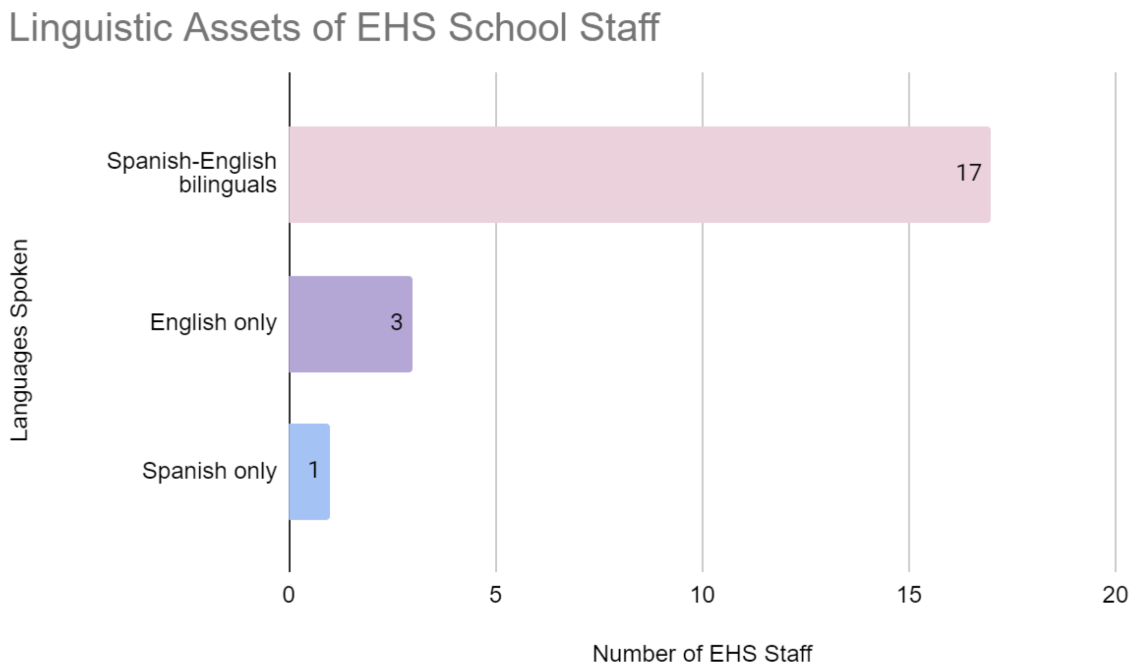
I made it a point to recruit teachers who taught the A–G subjects, including History "A," English "B," Math "C," Science "D," Language other than English (LOTE) "E," Visual and Performing Arts "F," and College Prep "G" because the performance of students in these courses is one of the determining factors for eligibility to California's 4-year public universities. Though I made efforts to recruit more teachers to capture their perspective, I was only able to hear from those teaching in the history ($n = 3$), English ($n = 2$), math ($n = 2$), science ($n = 1$), and Spanish (LOTE; $n = 1$) departments. I was unable to recruit teachers who taught the visual or performing arts. The conversations I had with teachers informs Chapters 5 and 6.

Given the importance of having teachers who mirror students' experiences, I highlight a few key demographic characteristics. The majority of EHS staff who participated in the study identified as Latinx ($n = 16$). Four participants identified as White. The other participant identified as multiracial; she was the daughter of a Mexican father and a White mother.

Mirroring the fact that the teacher workforce has been dominated by women (Ingersoll et al., 2018), most participants identified as women (n = 14). I also made note of the differences between the various linguistic skills of EHS school staff (see Figure 3.12). It is important to note there were some Spanish–English bilinguals who felt more comfortable speaking in Spanish than others. For example, one of the instructional coaches felt more confident running ELAC meetings when she had a translator from the district office. When a translator was unavailable, she often asked if I could translate sections of her presentation from English to Spanish. At other times during the ELAC meeting when parents voiced their concerns, she would ask me to translate from Spanish to English so she was sure to capture their concerns accurately.

Figure 3.10

Linguistic Skills of EHS School Staff



Finally, given the newcomer students had recently migrated to the United States, it is important to note how some school staff members were either immigrants themselves or children of immigrants. Four staff members identified as immigrants, plus the ELAC team member who was a parent from Mexico. Of the staff members, two arrived as adults. One was the Spanish teacher, and the other was Mr. Romo, the instructional coach. The third staff member was the math teacher who arrived as a middle school student and spoke to great lengths about how she identified with the newcomer student population. The fourth staff member arrived as a young child and did all her schooling in the United States. Of the remaining staff members, 12 identified as children or grandchildren of immigrant parents. Those who did not mention a familial experience to immigration were the teachers who identified as White ($n = 4$). However, two of these staff members, Ms. Bevan, the ELD teacher, and Mr. Fisher, the administrator and member of the EL team, had extensive experience working with the immigrant community. Both had worked with immigrant students and their families since the 1980s.

Data Collection

To explore the future aspirations of newcomer youth and how these aspirations were informed, guided, and supported by high school educators, I drew from various data sources, including field notes, ethnographic interviews, and school artifacts, including high school transcripts. The methods I employed were guided by the research questions:

1. What are newcomer youth's academic and college/career aspirations?
   a. What differences in their academic and career aspirations, if any, can be seen due to their race/ethnic background, gender, social class, language, and migration journey?

2. How do school organization and services for ELs affect newcomer students' access to college preparatory coursework and shape their college and career readiness (CCR)?
    a. What type of relationships do newcomer youth have with their teachers and school counselors? What differences in the type of relationships newcomer youth have with them, if any, are due to their race/ethnic background, gender, social class, language, and migration journey?
    b. What type of access do newcomer youth have to opportunities that develop their college and career readiness (CCR; e.g., college presentations, career counseling, financial aid workshops)?
3. What barriers do newcomer youth encounter in moving toward their future goals?
    a. What differences, if any, are a result of newcomer youth's race/ethnic background, gender, social class, language, and migration journey?

Because of the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 global pandemic on my ability to observe newcomer youth's daily interactions with each other and school staff across a variety of classrooms, I focused on the 75 ethnographic interviews with newcomer youth and my 21 interviews with EHS school staff as the central data sources for this study. The ethnographic interviews were informed by the fieldnotes I took when observing and collecting artifacts from the ELD classroom, advisory classroom, after-school tutoring session, EL team meetings, and ELAC meetings. The high school transcripts and other school artifacts allowed me to contextualize what newcomer youth and school staff shared with me. Following this section, I describe each method in more detail.

Participant Observations

I wrote detailed fieldnotes focused on the conversations and activities newcomer students engaged in with EHS school staff and each other (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I observed twice weekly from September 2020 to June 2021. My days consisted of attending Ms. Bevan's Periods 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 in addition to her two advisory periods. EHS operated on a block schedule, which meant I attended Periods 1 and 5 on Tuesday and Periods 2, 4, and 6 on Thursdays. I was unable to attend Period 6 beginning in April due to a work conflict. On Fridays, Mr. Romo held "Career Fun Fridays" during his advisory period. Whenever I could, I also attended those advisories. In addition, I attended the tutoring sessions that took place Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons and the EL team meetings occurring during lunch time. ELAC meetings were monthly and took place Wednesdays afternoon or evening. In the following sections, I describe more details about my participant observations across these five settings.

Ms. Bevan's Class

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, I intended to observe EHS's ELD classrooms, given that newcomer students spent at least two class periods with any one of three ELD teachers. However, what I did not expect was having to do so online and being unable to follow students throughout their day as they left the ELD classroom to attend their other core classes (e.g., math, science, history, art, Spanish). I was unable to follow students due to the logistical nightmare that would have caused as each class period had their own unique Zoom link. More importantly, teachers—like students—were overwhelmed as they navigated online teaching. For these reasons, I remained in Ms. Bevan's class.

When attending her class, I made sure to sign in to Zoom 1 or 2 minutes before class officially started to be sure I was allowed to enter her class (or Zoom meeting). She always

greeted me, and, depending on the class period, we would sometimes engage in small talk as students logged in. The dynamics of teaching online prevented us from the usual small talk we were used to when I volunteered in person. Throughout the class period, I paid close attention to the "setting, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and [my] own behavior" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 141).

At first glance, the setting could come off as being a Zoom meeting full of black screens, not being able to see students or the physical space they inhabited on the other side of the screen. Yet, there were other elements I could observe through listening versus seeing that let me gain insight into newcomer students' living-quarters-now-turned-learning spaces. For example, during one ELD 1 class period dedicated to ninth graders on April 8, 2021, I made a jotting of what I observed not through sight, but by ear, "As they are working on the grammar, you keep hearing a rooster in the background. And I think this is Enrique's background."

At other moments, I was able to observe students like Justo make an appearance on Zoom as I caught him turning on and off his camera on February 23, 2021. I do not know if this was done intentionally, but I reflected on instances like this one where students would show their face. For example, Lizbeth, a senior in Ms. Bevan's first period ELD 3 class, once sent me a message via Zoom chat sharing, "I would like to show you my face." Ms. Bevan had put us both in a breakout room so I could help her with her economics class, which she was failing, she ended up turning on her camera. On January 14, 2021, I met Lizbeth for the first time despite knowing her since September 2020.

As I became accustomed to attending EHS via Zoom, I began to write fieldnotes as soon as the class period ended, and I had been able to review my jottings (Emerson et al., 2011). My jottings consisted of notes concerning the activities students and staff were carrying out, the

conversations and silences that took place between them, and their reactions to each other and class instruction (Emerson, 2011). My fieldnotes expanded upon these first impressions and focused on the "social and interactional processes through which [newcomer youth] construct, maintain, and alter their social worlds" (Emerson, 2011, p. 27).

Advisory Periods

In what follows, I describe the two advisory periods in which I collected data.

Advisory With Ms. Bevan. EHS offered two advisory periods—Period H and Period L—per school day. Starting times would alternate between the two. On Tuesdays, Period L would commence at 11:10 a.m. and Period H at 1:20 p.m. On Thursdays, Period H began at 11:10 a.m. and Period L at 1:20 p.m. Alternating periods and start times proved to be a point of confusion for students during the year of online learning. Even after weeks of attending EHS over Zoom, students would periodically log in late or confuse the date and time for when they were supposed to meet.

In these advisories, Ms. Bevan often reviewed a curriculum provided to her by the nonprofit partner organization and school announcements. School announcements might include upcoming deadlines for 6-week grade reports. As winter break approached, Ms. Bevan spent a lot of time discussing the protocols set by the district to help students make up assignments and avoid receiving a failing grade that semester. On other days, Ms. Bevan would have casual conversations with students both in English and Spanish. We often discussed students' weekend plans, extracurricular activities—playing on the soccer team or working after-school—and their progress in other courses.

Given that EHS delivered instruction via Zoom throughout the school year, Ms. Bevan's advisory period and that of Mr. Romo's, which I discuss next, were the few places I got to

observe the discussions and activities EHS staff had with newcomer youth to develop their CCR. For example, at various points in the school year, Mr. Sandoval, the EL-designated school counselor, joined Ms. Bevan's class to review important information concerning grades in relation to college eligibility. In the spring, he joined advisory (and the other ELD courses) to review next year's course offerings and the course options available to the students, depending on their postsecondary plans. Observing these small group meetings provided valuable insights into ways the school counselor attended to students' aspirations, given their current situation.

Career Fun Fridays. Mr. Romo, one of the members of the EL team, partnered with Ms. Marin, the other ELD teacher, to create "Career Fun Fridays." Career Fun Fridays were advisory periods on Fridays dedicated to hosting a speaker who would discuss their career with newcomer youth. Speakers were asked to create a presentation in which they could discuss their pathway to postsecondary education, their day-to-day interactions at their current job, and the credentials or preparation their job required. Speakers also offered suggestions about possible opportunities students might want to pursue if they were interested in exploring that career. These presentations were 15 to 25 minutes long and held in Spanish. Most of the participants who were invited were former newcomer youth or children of immigrants, and they often spoke about the importance of being bilingual. Two speakers were the exception; they did not identify as Latinx. One of them was the assistant administrator, who learned Spanish as an adult, and the other was my partner, who was Portuguese American and learned Spanish as his third language in high school.

Most of the students appreciated these presentations. Some of the most common questions students asked concerned the pay speakers received in their current industry and the length of time it took them to prepare and secure their job. In Chapter 7, I discuss some of the

thoughts newcomer students had about Career Fun Fridays in relation to the opportunities they had to explore careers.

After-School Tutoring Sessions

Early on in the academic year, the EL team became aware of the struggles newcomer youth were experiencing with their online courses. Some of these struggles revolved around limited access to the internet due to affordability issues or faulty devices provided by the school district. Some newcomer youth let me know their parents or guardians never purchased internet plans and instead relied on their mobile network's internet connection. To complicate matters, many newcomer youth reported needing assistance to understand and complete their class assignments. As such, Mr. Sandoval recruited teachers, many of whom were already working with EL students or were bilingual, to provide tutoring on Thursdays after school. The goal was to recruit one teacher per subject. A group of four teachers, including Mr. Romo, Ms. Marin, Ms. Bevan, and Mr. Sosa, consistently provided after-school tutoring. Because I did not have a specialty, Mr. Romo usually assigned students to me if they needed assistance with science, history, or English. Science, specifically biology and chemistry, were two courses newcomer students struggled with during the school year. In addition to Thursdays' after-school tutoring sessions, Mr. Romo decided to add an extra day of tutoring on Tuesdays. For Tuesdays, he recruited a math teacher who met with both EL students and her own students. I would also join their group of two to help. Throughout the year, the same group of students attended these tutoring sessions.

The after-school tutoring sessions served to complement what I saw and heard throughout the school day. I did not have the ability to follow students throughout the day as they moved from classroom to classroom—or in the world of online learning, logged into one class and

another—but attending after-school tutoring sessions made me privy to the struggles newcomer youth encountered throughout their school day. This was also a space where I could interact with youth from across all grade levels and where I was able to form more intimate relationships with them.

EL Team Meetings

EL team meetings were scheduled to be held on a biweekly basis. However, EL team meetings were often canceled if there were conflicting school events or if there were weeks that were particularly hectic for teachers. This resulted in EL team meetings occurring approximately monthly. For the most part, all EL team members attended these meetings, including one administrative assistant, two support specialists, one ELD teacher, one EL school counselor, and me. The year prior there were three support specialists, but one of them transitioned into a new role and was no longer a part of these meetings, though she oversaw the ELAC meetings. The issues the EL team meeting deliberated ranged from discussing different data points related to EL's grades to discussing upcoming professional development opportunities for ELD teachers and content-specific teachers. This was also the time when EL team members raised concerns about specific students or student issues with the administrative assistant to see how they might better advocate for students. My role throughout these meetings was primarily as a note-taker and a consultant of sorts, being able to provide additional insight based on EL research, especially when discussing programmatic decisions on increasing access to CCR opportunities.

ELAC Meetings

I began to attend ELAC meetings in November after the ELAC board had been established. Because Ms. Cantúa knew I was interested in gaining parent perspectives and learning more about how EHS served ELs, she extended an invitation to these meetings. These

meetings were only attended by the ELAC board members. In January, Ms. Cantúa and I had a discussion concerning inviting more parents to attend these meetings given ELAC's purpose is to address the concerns of parents and guardians of EL students and advocate on their behalf with school administrators. Although we discussed the possibility of having ELAC board members create a phone tree to invite families of the almost 300 EL students, this never happened, as Ms. Cantúa did not want to overwhelm board members with extra labor. For the remainder of the school year, attendance at ELAC meetings consisted of four to six parents plus Ms. Cantúa, Ms. Mateo, and me.

Although I was only successful in interviewing one of the ELAC board members, attending these monthly ELAC meetings allowed me to hear the concerns of a small group of mothers. Because issues requiring parent input were often raised by Ms. Cantúa, these mothers also offered solutions to address problems like the lack of CCR among EL students and the academic struggles EL students faced with subjects or specific teachers.

Ethnographic Interviews

To better understand the high school experiences of newcomer youth and the access they had to develop their CCR, I engaged in semistructured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) with the newcomer youth and school staff. I invited newcomer youth to speak about their experiences as recently arrived immigrant youth, including their experiences prior to migrating, their arrival to the United States and the school, and their experiences learning English. I also invited them to discuss their future aspirations and the support they received from EHS to prepare for their postsecondary goals. With EHS school staff, I asked about their experience integrating language learning into their content teaching in addition to their general experiences with newcomer students. Depending on the teacher, the semistructured interviews (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015; Seidman, 2013) I conducted were informed by the observations I made in other spaces. For example, I was able to reference a class or school activity or an interaction I observed among or between students and teachers to gain clarity about a particular experience.

All the interviews were audio-recorded via Zoom cloud. I was able to capture both video and audio data, though I clarified to participants that I would only analyze the audio recording in written form (i.e., transcript). There was only one instance when I lost part of an interview due to not hitting the "record" button. I attempted to write down as much information as I could recollect from the interview as soon as it ended. I realized this grave mistake 30 minutes into the interview. Because these interviews were held over Zoom and required internet connection, not all the audio recordings were clean of background noise or complete because the internet had cut out and disrupted the audio recording. I also made sure to hold these interviews in whatever language the students or staff felt comfortable speaking: Spanish, English or a combination of the two. Although this was an attempt to honor how speakers of different languages might feel more comfortable talking about complex issues in one language over another (Seidman, 2013), I recognize this felt short of being inclusive of those who were more comfortable speaking an indigenous language.

School Artifacts

Given the online environment, the artifacts I collected took the form of links to class activities (e.g., Google Slides, Google Docs) and screenshots of pages from a particular text or workbook. I had to resort to taking screenshots of certain class activities because I was never given access to the EHS's Schoology account. This meant I was unable to access the various links or textbooks students used across their classes. I collected these artifacts as I observed in the classroom, advisory periods, tutoring sessions, and the various site meetings.

I also collected documents like the running notes of EL team meetings or documents shared at the ELAC meetings. At the EL team meetings, I became the unofficial notetaker. These notes capture the end of the 2019–2020 academic year up until April 2020 when EHS resumed in-person instruction, including the EL team meetings, which I was no longer able to attend.

Finally, I was able to collect the high school transcripts of the students who were interviewed. I asked for copies of these transcripts at the beginning of August 2021 to capture the 2020–2021 academic year, including the summer term that did not end until the end of July 2021. Cognizant of the time it takes for grades to be processed, I waited until the start of the 2021–2022 academic year. This, unfortunately, led to the loss of four students' transcripts as they were no longer enrolled at the beginning of the 2021–2022 academic year. It was important to include their transcripts as part of the collection of artifacts because they reflected valuable information on the courses they had taken as EHS, the grades they received, each term GPA and the various cumulative GPAs (i.e., School district official GPA, School district [Weighted] GPA, School district [Unweighted] GPA, Athletic Eligibility GPA, University of California [UC; Capped] GPA, UC [Weighted] GPA, UC Eligibility Local Context GPA, California State University [CSU] GPA, National Collegiate Athletic Association Core GPA, Financial Aid GPA, State Seal of Biliteracy English Language Arts Coursework GPA), and their results on the AP, SAT, and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) exams in English and math. It also included information about the career pathway they had discussed with their school counselor at their annual graduation planning meetings. The high school transcripts helped me gain a historical understanding of newcomer youth's educational trajectories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The high school transcripts also provided insight into the different types of academic obstacles that negatively affected their CCR.

Data Reduction Analysis

The data collection methods described produced a large corpus of data. This included transcripts of a total of 97 interviews, including 75 interviews with newcomer youth and 22 with EHS school staff, a digital notebook of fieldnotes based on 9 months of participant observations, hundreds of photos depicting classwork and academic and college-related presentations, and 72 high school transcripts. Except for interviews and high school transcripts, I organized the data chronologically.

Given that data analysis begins once data collection starts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), I found it important to reflect in my digital notebook after participating in any of the school activities or conducting an interview. In addition to my fieldnotes, I wrote analytical memos once I started conducting a more in-depth analysis of the interviews.

All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews with newcomer youth were transcribed in their original Spanish, whereas the interviews with educators were transcribed in English and a few in Spanglish. Though I used a transcription service, I made it a point to review the audio recordings and accompanying transcripts. This was a helpful exercise as it allowed me to note similarities and differences among the schooling experiences of newcomer youth and the teaching experiences of EHS educators. There were two different analytical methods I used to analyze the interviews with newcomer youth and those with EHS staff.

I analyzed the interviews with newcomer youth using an inductive and deductive approach (Saldaña, 2016). In the first-level coding or open coding, I used the categories in the interview questionnaire to develop preliminary codes, while allowing the space for the emergence of unforeseen student experiences (Bazeley, 2013; Merriam et al., 2015; Saldaña,

2016). In this first round of descriptive coding, I attended to how youth verbalized different aspects of their experiences as students and immigrant youth learning English, participating in extracurriculars both at school and the community as workers, and applying to college. I then consulted the literature and research questions to develop a codebook to systematize coding. This allowed me to develop categories, identify themes, and create assertions (Saldaña, 2016). During second-level coding, I combined related codes together and constructed meaningful clusters (Bazeley, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, I also took note of differences in experiences due to newcomer youth's multiple social identities. Because of this process, I was able to identify when students formed their college aspirations, with whom they shared that information, what support they received to plan for their futures, and the obstacles they encountered at school and in their personal lives.

I analyzed the interviews with EHS staff a little differently given the small sample size across their differing roles. The coding process was recursive and circular (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013). I created a codebook for these interviews with codes that emerged from the data after I had reviewed all 22 interviews, reflecting a more bottom-up approach (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013). I paid close attention to the ways educators spoke about who they perceived newcomer youth to be and the knowledge they had about teaching ELs. Differences emerged between educators' perceptions of the future goals newcomer youth had and EHS's responsibility to newcomer youth and their families to make those aspirations come true. Overall, I found it to be "more meaningful to understand and track the different perspectives of th[is] group via analytic memoing and recursive reading" (Ruecker, 2021, p. 18) of the interviews.

Throughout the process for both sets of interviews, I wrote analytical memos to

supplement the data analysis process and engage in the practice of reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Through these reflective memos, I documented the analytical decisions I made along the way (Orellana, 2019). Writing these memos made visible "the big picture and the particulars" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 207).

The fieldnotes and varying artifacts I collected (i.e., photos, high school transcripts) allowed me to triangulate what participants, both students and educators, shared with me. Moreover, it allowed me to account for the school structures and practices that shaped the educational patterns of newcomer youth. For example, the high school transcripts allowed me to make note of when programmatic shifts occurred in the last 5 years at EHS with their language program and the decisions made to provide college-readiness opportunities to newcomer youth. On the other hand, the fieldnotes helped me examine the relationships newcomer youth had with teachers and school counselors and the type of college and career information they were receiving from school personnel. From these fieldnotes, I identified the different types and number of conversations newcomer youth had with EHS staff about their future goals.

The following academic year, I checked in with a small group of the newcomer youth and a few EHS educators to clarify tentative findings (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Member checking with the newcomer youth (Rudestam & Newton, 2007) involved meeting with students who participated in the study last year over pizza to review (anonymized) excerpts from the newcomer youth interviews (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). Using Google Jamboard, I shared four to five excerpts from the interviews with newcomer students pertaining to the enrollment process, language learning experience, and future goals. I invited them to review the excerpts individually and use the post-it notes function to make note of the reactions they had when reading the words of their peers. Using Spanish, they responded by reflecting how they shared

similar sentiments to their peers. Member-checking with educators happened more informally. The first time I checked in with an EHS educator was when I finalized indexing the newcomer youth interviews with demographic information. Excited about the diversity captured in the sample, I reached out to Mr. Romo to discuss these findings. To my surprise, he was intrigued by how newcomer youth occupied a variety of legal statuses. Later in the 2021–2022 school year, I reached out to the EL team to share a presentation I created after meeting with the students in the fall, showcasing some preliminary findings. This led to another informal check-in with Ms. Cantúa as we discussed the programmatic structures that seemed to inhibit or facilitate newcomer youth's access to CCR opportunities. Gaining students perspectives helped keep my own biases in check and "contribute to the data analysis, and ultimately, knowledge construction" (Simpson & Quigley, 2016, p. 389).

Methodological Questions and Limitations

I want to bring attention to how my positionality and the sociopolitical context when I conducted the study might have shaped the data collection process. Because there is a long history of researchers "not questioning their own privileged positions" (Villenas, 1996, p. 713), I make visible my relationships with those with whom I collaborated as I carried out this study (Halle-Erby, 2022).

As a Latina educational researcher, I was aware of the fine balance between my positionality as an outsider and insider to the EHS school community (Halilovich, 2014). In many ways, I considered myself to have insider knowledge concerning the challenges working in a large, comprehensive public high school, having worked in a variety of urban public school districts. These experiences made me highly aware of the number of stakeholders supporting newcomer youth from working with administrators, family-community liaisons, interpreters,

social workers, attendance clerks, school nurses, school counselors, and teachers. However, I also recognized how, as a former educator, I worked in an educational system that placed limitations upon certain youth while, at times, granting others a multitude of opportunities and a quality education. I often acknowledged my "complicity" in having worked and continuing to work, albeit as a researcher, in schools functioning as "oppressive structures" (Villenas, 1996, p. 716) when reiterating the purpose of this study with newcomer youth. My goal was to be transparent about why I valued their perspectives as I sincerely believe youth perspectives can and should inform educational policy, practice, and social change.

Along the lines of race, gender, legal status, and age, there were differences I shared with newcomer youth. First, as a child of Mexican immigrants, I tend to identify as a Latina, whereas most newcomer youth identify with their indigenous identity. Unlike some of the youth in this study, I have not experienced marginalization for being indigenous or speaking an indigenous language. A limitation of conducting this study online was being unable to examine what it meant for indigenous youth to navigate high school alongside their U.S. born Latinx peers. Second, I was aware my identity as an adult woman might have influenced the decisions newcomer youth made to participate in interviews and the stories they might have told. I also wondered if my identity as a former school counselor, one passionate about college access, might have influenced the stories students told about their future aspirations. To triangulate their responses to their interviews, I relied on their high school transcripts and the data Mr. Sandoval collected when holding his annual meeting with newcomer students. Though the newcomer youth population at EHS occupied a variety of legal statuses, with the majority subjected to a liminal status, they had all migrated to the United States as teenagers, an experience I did not share. My border crossing experiences were limited to crossing state lines, which occurred

within a very privileged set of circumstances of pursuing higher education. Although I can relate to the experience of family separation due to studying thousands of miles away from home, my experiences were not in any remote way like those of newcomer youth who have been displaced due to violence and poverty. Finally, I acknowledge the power differential between I, an adult, and the newcomer youth I worked with throughout the year. Although I had the power to advocate on their behalf, which I often did when I raised issues with the EL team, I also recognized my power was limited because I was not an official EHS staff member. Thus, I had more power than newcomer youth, but EHS staff members held the most power as they had the ability to make systemic changes in their day-to-day lives.

Regarding collecting data amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, school closures, the school's switch to online learning and then back to in-person instruction, all in the span of a year, I understand there are limitations to the data I collected via online platforms like Zoom and Google suite. Staring at black screens is by no means the same as observing students' facial expressions or the ways their bodies move and occupy certain spaces on campus. The nature of using digital tools resulted in missed opportunities as well as new insights in this "digital ethnograph[ic]" study (Murthy, 2008, p. 838). As such, I do not pretend to have been able to capture the complexity of newcomer youth's lived experiences as they navigated EHS and the larger Los Angeles community in pursuit of their future aspirations.

CHAPTER FOUR: NEWCOMER YOUTH'S MIGRATIONS TO THE UNITED STATES

Newcomer youth have multiple identities. Often these identities are in flux depending on the context in which they find themselves. Upon enrolling in K–12 schools, it is often their identity as an English learner (EL) that is at the forefront of teachers' minds. This in turn invisibilizes their identity as immigrants and the ways the immigration system differentially positions them along the spectrum of precarity. In this chapter, I reveal the varied understandings school staff at Esperanza High School (EHS) had about the newcomer youth population and their migration trajectories to the United States. I then identify differences existing among them as youth migrating from various countries with complicated sociohistorical relationships with the United States. Afterward, I explain how these differences begin to shape their divergent educational trajectories as newcomer youth. Their differing identities and experiences as immigrants matter for understanding the variance among their experiences as students, specifically ELs. ELs are a group often seen as a monolith when in fact they are not. Accounting for the differences in their migration trajectories and the different ways they are legally positioned will help contextualize how newcomer youth are doubly marginalized for being immigrants and ELs.

Newcomer Youth From Latin America

At EHS, during the 2020–2021 academic year, the population of newcomer students had all migrated from Latin America, specifically Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. This was reflected in the sample of newcomer youth with whom I interacted during the school year. Yet, in years prior, newcomer youth at EHS had also migrated from Venezuela. EHS administrator, Ms. Rico, described this influx of Venezuelan students as one that stemmed from "when Venezuela was undergoing their whole re[volution], whatever mess is going on in

Venezuela, right." The "revolution" to which Ms. Rico was referring stemmed from the "hyperinflation, violence, and food and medicine shortages stemming from recent years of political turmoil" (Reid, 2022, para. 2) in Venezuela since the onset of Nicolás Maduro's presidency. Indeed, Ms. Rico was not wrong to note the fact millions of Venezuelans were seeking refuge (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.).

Although five countries were represented as migration starting points, newcomer youth mostly hailed from Central America, specifically Guatemala (*n* = 37; see Figure 4.1). Acknowledgment of this fact seemed to be shared among EHS staff. Mr. Ponce, a former English language development (ELD) and English teacher at EHS, shared:

> So when I was doing more ELD those kids were definitely all from Guatemala, I'm sure you know, Central American, mostly. I had one Venezuelan kid when all that crisis was going on. But Guatemala, Salvador, not as many from Mexico, and what's the other one? Honduras.

The contrast between the number of students who came from Mexico and Central America was noted by other educators like Mr. Romo, who reflected on the migration origins of newcomer youth, saying:

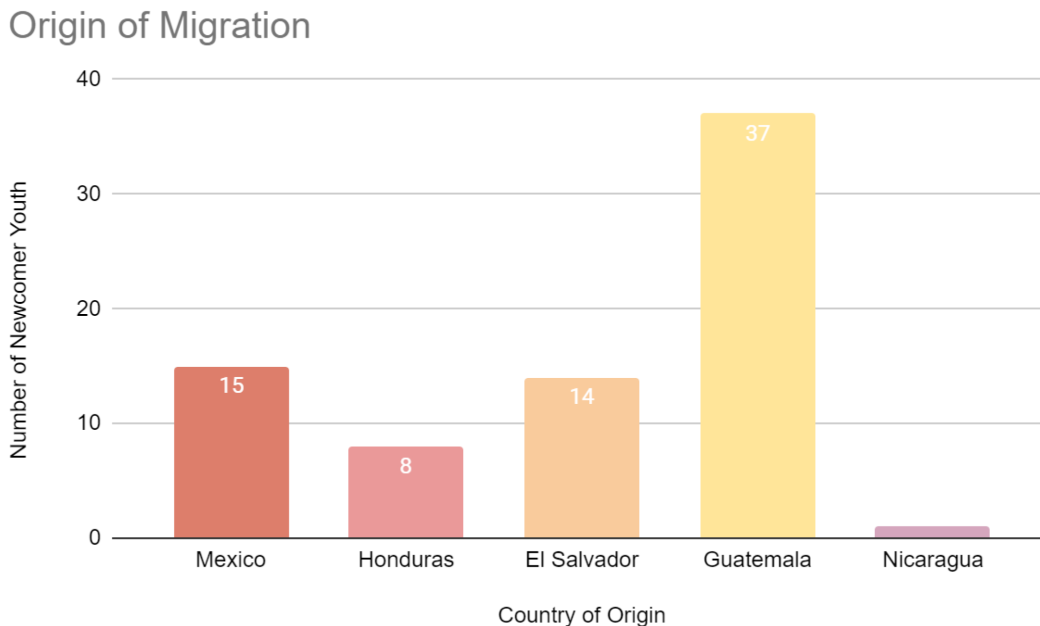
> Coming to [this district], most of the kids that are coming, newcomers are from El Salvador, Guatemala, most of the students are from there. Very little from Mexico. But I will say the majority are from Central America . . . No, it's been very steady, especially. It's been mostly Central Americans, mostly Guatemalans, Guatemalans. And Salvadorans. And, once a few Central Americans, you know, who come in, I mean, Mexicans who come in. One, a couple of Hondureños who come in. Most of them are from Central America. It hasn't changed, I would tell you, like "Oh it's kind of switched

to Mex[ican], some more Mexican versus more Central Americans." But it's been stable with Central Americans.

The contrast noted by both Mr. Ponce and Mr. Romo regarding the countries from which newcomer youth have been migrating reflects migration trends of the last decade. They were not wrong in observing how there has been increased migration from Guatemala and El Salvador and decreased migration from Mexico. In fact, "The number of Mexican immigrants in the United States [has] declined by more than 779,000 between 2010 and 2019, representing the largest absolute decline of all immigrant groups" (Esterline & Batalova, 2022, para. 13). Indeed, ever-changing sociopolitical situations in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua in addition to the diplomatic relationships between the aforementioned countries and the United States has led to changes in the observed migration trends.

Figure 4.1

Origin of Migration



EHS educators seemed to have varied understandings about the sociopolitical situation in countries from which newcomer youth migrated. For example, Mr. Zapata, an instructional aide, reflected on conversations he had with students, saying:

> Well, what mainly some other students that can open up with me which was a little bit hard for me to listen or understand, which I kind of expected but not, mainly I confirmed what their stories was how students came from impoverished cities and from way in the like, I want to say like, not tribes, but they were deep in, in the *cerro*, deep in the forest, not even living [i]n the cities, in the mainland. So for them even like I said, mentioned, for them even speaking Spanish is challenging, but they wanted a better life with the whole situ-, with the whole caravan. They thought they might have a second chance here. Better than being over there with the whole poverty. They don't want to die from hunger. They don't want to die from starvation at times or even once again with the whole crime rates over there in their countries.

Mr. Zapata alluded to poverty being a major factor which prompts newcomer youth to migrate to the United States. He seemed to make references to the fact some youth lived in rural towns. Although he did not name these youth as those who have migrated from Guatemala, he signaled to their indigeneity by referring to them as "not tribes . . . not even living [i]n the cities" and that "for them even speaking in Spanish is challenging." Unlike Mr. Romo and Mr. Ponce, Mr. Zapata did not seem to differentiate between sociopolitical contexts newcomer youth inhabited prior to migrating to the United States. Like other EHS educators, Mr. Zapata had some awareness of newcomer youth's prior living situations.

In what follows, I highlight the awareness EHS school staff had about their growing newcomer student population. I also touch upon how their knowledge regarding the

sociopolitical context vis-a-vis migration was limited. Very few educators at EHS were able to voice the different histories of migration that existed within the newcomer youth population and the subsequent consequences that had on migration pathways available to newcomer youth. I then illustrate the varying legal statuses occupied by newcomer youth and how this differed by migration origin. I end by discussing how these differences begin to set up newcomer youth to experience divergent educational trajectories.

Newcomer Youth's Varying Legal Statuses

Not all newcomer youth shared the same migration pathways to the United States. Varying affordances shaped the migration journeys they embarked on to the United States and, subsequently, their arrival to the United States. The context of reception that newcomer youth encountered also varied, mostly due to the legal status they came to occupy. I show how their legal status, in addition to their EL label, shaped their educational journeys and informed their future aspirations in subsequent chapters. Here, I detail the EHS educators' understanding of the migration journeys on which newcomer youth embarked and their varying legal statuses.

Reflecting the popular discourse concerning migratory patterns occurring at the U.S.–Mexico border, EHS educators' talk alluded to "the caravan" as one of the migration patterns experienced by newcomer youth. Four of the 21 EHS educators referenced the migrant caravan of 2018 as the reason for why there had been an influx of newcomer youth. For example, Ms. Mateo, an instructional coach, credited the caravan as being responsible for the increasing number of immigrant youth, saying:

> Okay, so one time. Um, my, the first year I was at [EHS], I had to teach a newcomer class ELD one. And because we, that year was, a year of the caravan, remember, when the caravan came? Okay. And we were getting kids left and right. I mean, our ELD one class

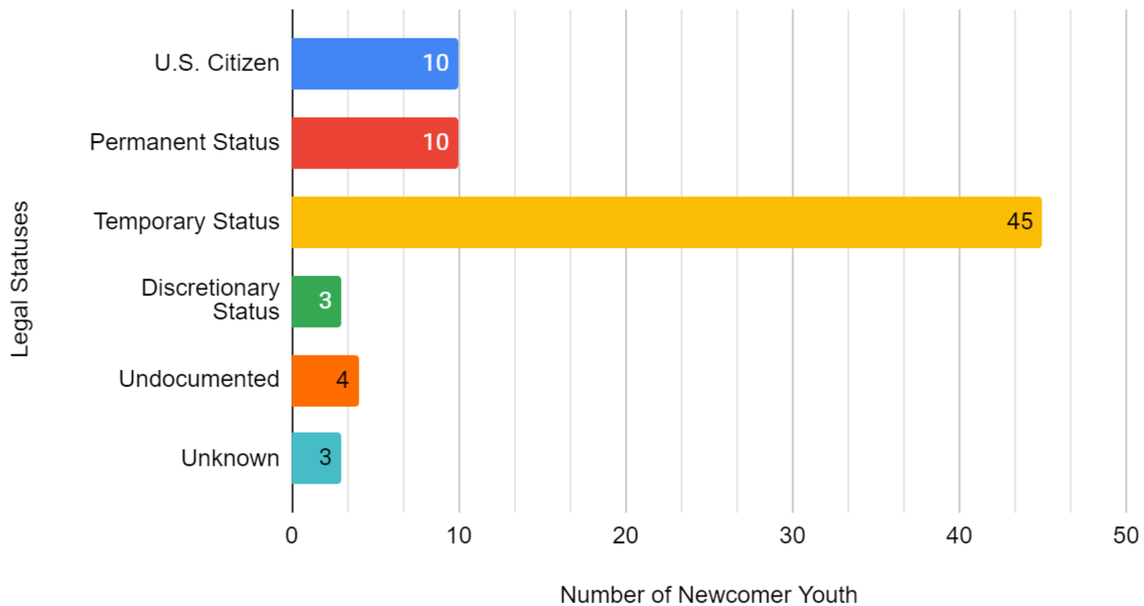
> like, it grew, and we had to create a new one. And then we had to split that new one in half. Like, that's how much, how many kids were getting.

Like Ms. Mateo, Mr. Romo referenced the occurrence of not just one caravan, but multiple caravans when he stated, "The caravans are coming from [Latin] America." Yet, the migrant caravan they referenced originated in Honduras (Lind, 2018). As news correspondent Lind (2018) wrote, "But the caravan is real. The migrants in it—mostly Hondurans (with some Guatemalans), half of whom are girls and women, many intending to seek asylum in the US—are real people" (para. 3).

Despite this reality, the newcomer youth I spoke with never referenced joining a migrant caravan nor were the great majority of them from Honduras. In fact, only 8 out of the 75 students I spoke with were from Honduras. Although EHS educators knew their students had migrated from Latin American countries, they seemed to have little awareness of the migration journeys newcomer youth had embarked on and the array of legal statuses to which these journeys led (see Figure 4.2). Instead, some of them seemed to have internalized the popular rhetoric of that time, a moment in American history marked by anti-immigrant sentiment (Gessen, 2018).

Figure 4.2

Legal Status Among Newcomer Youth

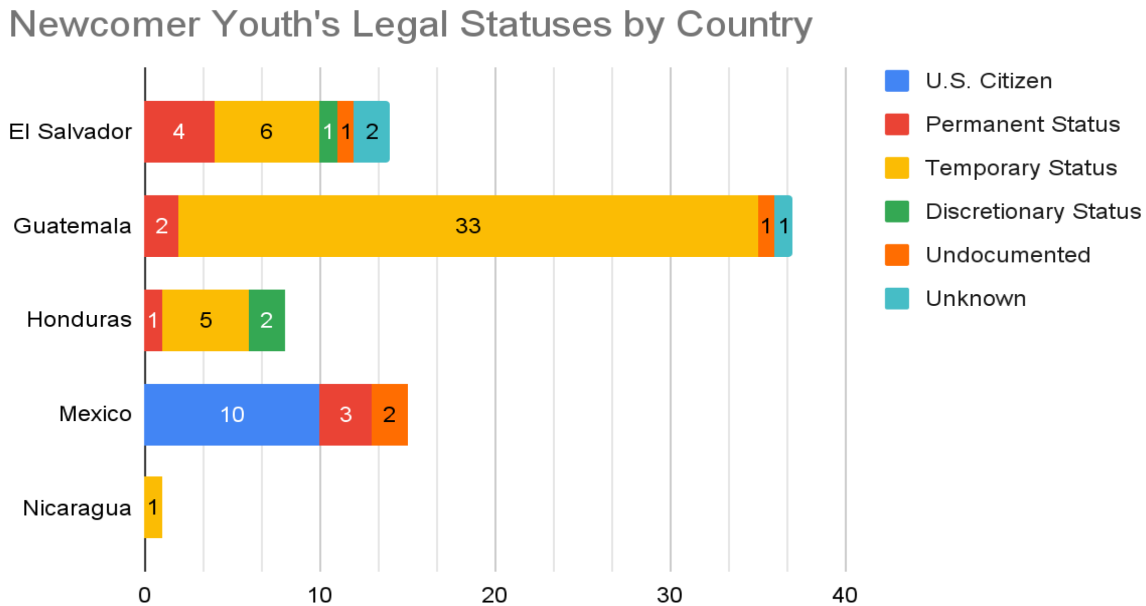


Newcomer youth were quite a diverse group along the line of legal status (see Figure 4.2). This diversity of legal statuses reflected "the complicated system of statuses that exists [which] today is unprecedented in U.S. history" (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine [NASEM], 2015, p. 43). Additionally, there were within-group differences among newcomer youth who had migrated from the same country, except for Nicaragua (see Figure 4.3). These differences are important to note because oftentimes schools categorize students with labels like "international student" (i.e., the preferred label for newcomer youth at EHS) or EL, which creates the illusion of homogeneity. In what follows, I first explain the differences that exist between the five categories of legal statuses I chose to describe the variation newcomer youth occupied. I then briefly discuss how these varied legal statuses reflect complicated

histories of migration between countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and the United States.

Figure 4.3

Newcomer Youth's Legal Statuses by Country



The Five Categories of Legal Status

Migration scholars have long noted legal status shapes immigrant integration and varying legal statuses lead to different integration patterns (NASEM, 2015). In this study, I used five different categories—U.S. citizen, permanent, temporary, discretionary, and undocumented—to capture the differences newcomer youth encounter upon arriving in the United States. The latter four legal statuses are pertinent to immigrants and:

> Lie on a continuum of precariousness and security, with differences in the right to remain in the United States, rights to benefits and services from the government, ability to work,

> susceptibility to deportation, and ability to participate fully in the economic, political, social, and civic life of the nation. (NASEM, 2015, p. 8)

In Chapter 7, I show how these differences in legal status have significant effects on college and career aspirations and access to CCR opportunities.

Before discussing the four immigration statuses of newcomer youth, I bring attention to the fact a handful of newcomer youth were U.S. citizens (*n* = 10). All 10 newcomer youth who were U.S. citizens began their migration journeys in Mexico. In fact, these youth had experienced at least two migration journeys: that of migrating to Mexico as young children and that of migrating to the United States as teenagers. As I detail later in this chapter when discussing the complex history underlying Mexico–U.S. migration, newcomer youth, despite the many privileges afforded to them for being U.S. citizens, were still susceptible to the precarious nature of the legal system as they, too, were affected by family separation caused by illegality (Menjívar & Gómez-Cervantes, 2016).

Now, I define the four immigration statuses in order of the security afforded to immigrants. Affording the greatest amount of security for immigrants is permanent status "because it allows labor mobility, confers significant constitutional rights and access to some public benefits, and can lead to naturalization provided that the lawful permanent resident (LPR) meets a set of additional requirements" (NASEM, 2015, p. 94). Ten newcomer youth occupied the status of lawful permanent resident or held a "green card" as they described their legal status. These youth had migrated from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. The remaining immigration statuses were more precarious in nature.

The second category occupied by newcomer youth was that of temporary status. In this study, temporary status included the statuses of asylum-seekers (*n* = 45) and tourist visa holders

(n = 1). Although NASEM (2015) categorized the status of asylee as a permanent status, I do not, given that all the newcomer youth in this study were seeking asylum upon arriving to the United States. Doing so would negate the cruel reality asylum seekers face; they lack any guarantee they will indeed attain asylum and a pathway to lawful permanent residency. Haas (2017) argued, "Asylum claimants occupy an ambiguous dual positionality while waiting for the outcomes of their cases" (p. 76). They are both "citizens-in-waiting and deportees-in-waiting" (Haas, 2017, p. 76). Many of the newcomer youth seeking asylum were from Central America - Guatemala (n = 36), El Salvador (n = 6), Honduras (n = 5), and Nicaragua (n = 1). In recent years, asylum seekers from Central America have experienced backlogs during the review process of their case, thus extending the time in which they find themselves in legal limbo (Haas, 2017). In 2019, "Nationals from three Central American countries—El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala—combined represented more than 16% of all [46,500] asylum grants" (Monin et al., 2021, para. 33). More than 148,956 new applications were submitted that year, and 549,290 applications were still pending (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Indeed, several of the newcomer youth reported not knowing what the outcome would be regarding their asylum case.

Discretionary status is the third immigration status that only three of the study's participants occupied. Two were from Honduras and one was from El Salvador. All three had participated in the Central Americans Minor (CAM) program. The CAM program provided "children from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras who have parents or relatives with legal status in the U.S. with a way to apply for protective status in the U.S. from within their country of origin" (National Immigration Forum, 2021, para. 1). They would either be determined eligible for refugee or parole status. The United States defines a refugee as someone who:

> (1) Is located outside of the United States; (2) is of special humanitarian concern to the United States; (3) demonstrates that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group; (4) is not firmly resettled in another country; (5) is admissible to the United States. (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2022, para. 1).

Importantly, refugees are eligible for reception and placement assistance, which includes access to a "one-time payment per refugee to assist with expenses during a refugee's first three months in the United States" (U.S. Department of State, n.d., para. 4) as well as access to federal social programs (i.e., Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Supplemental Security Income; Broder et al., 2021). The process for how parole is granted is dependent upon the ability of the USCIS to "us[e] its discretion to authorize parole" (USCIS, 2021a, para. 10) and to do so for a temporary period. Whereas refugees have been formally admitted into the United States, parolees have not (USCIS, 2021a). None of the three youth received refugee status; instead, they were allowed to enter the United States with parole status. Granting parole status was a more common determination as only "29% of the children or qualifying relatives were granted refugee status" compared to "70% [being] granted parole, and 1% [being] denied" in 2017 (Greenberg et al., 2021b, p. 2).

Parole status is not an immigration status, nor does it offer a pathway to residency (Greenberg et al., 2021b). Instead, parole allows Central American youth to "lawfully enter and live temporarily in the United States and apply for work authorization" (USCIS, 2021b, para. 3). CAM applicants may be authorized for 3 years of parole (USCIS, 2021b). Given what parole meant for participants in CAM, I categorize it as a discretionary status. Furthermore, CAM's

existence was up to the discretion of the federal government who could decide to either implement or terminate the program. Having been established in 2014 by the Obama administration, the Trump administration terminated the program in 2017. Later, in 2021, the Biden administration "announced that it was restarting the CAM program" (National Immigration Forum, 2021, para. 10). Eddie, a senior who graduated in June 2020, captured the discretionary nature of the CAM program perfectly as he reflected on how he did not qualify for financial aid because he became "illegal" overnight, saying:

> Pero estaba allí como de mala fe, porque mi permiso se venció, ya que el presidente canceló todo eso de los migrantes, dreamers y todo eso, y los programas que había dejado el presidente anterior; entonces prácticamente me convertí en una persona ilegal en este país.

Eddie stated it was in bad faith when he lost parole as a high school student. Noting the transition between administrations, he noted how he, too, moved or *became* "una persona ilegal en este país." Like Eddie, the CAM program positioned him and his peers in a position of "liminal legality" (Menjívar, 2006, p. 1000). All three in a span of 3 years experienced moving from one status to another. At the time of this manuscript being written, Jose and Memo went from having parole to undocumented to lawful permanent status, whereas Eddie went from having a temporary status to an undocumented one due to the discretionary nature of the CAM program. Now, I discuss the last category of undocumented status.

Today, newcomer youth are often described as either refugees or asylum seekers. Yet, as I have shown, the newcomer youth I spoke with occupied a range of legal statuses, including undocumented status. These youth had migrated from Mexico (*n* = 2), El Salvador (*n* = 1), and Guatemala (*n* = 1). They crossed the U.S.–Mexico border undetected and arrived unbeknownst

to the U.S. government. In the United States, "more than three-quarters" (NASEM, 2015, p. 9) of undocumented immigrants are from North and Central America with "52% being from Mexico" (NASEM, 2015, p. 9). This status is the most precarious and less secure "because the undocumented are at constant risk of deportation, which poses significant barriers to immigrant integration" (NASEM, 2015, p. 71).

The great diversity of legal statuses among newcomer youth resulted from the migration journeys that were possible to them due to current immigration laws. Yet, EHS educators spoke very little about the legal consequences that resulted from the migration journeys newcomer youth embarked upon on their way to the United States. For example, Ms. Quispe, a Spanish language teacher, spoke of newcomer youth as arriving, saying:

> Mainly what I've seen is from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and the latest has been the caravan from that was crossing the border to here, the United States. Some of them have expressed, experienced detention centers in Texas. And they ended up here in LA, South Central LA. I have a few from Mexico, but not too many.

Ms. Quispe captured the heterogeneity among newcomer youth in terms of countries of origin. However, she spoke of newcomer youth's migration journeys as being that of an asylum seeker, traveling in a caravan, being detained, and then arriving to south Los Angeles. The reality is that newcomer youth have experienced a variety of migration journeys which ultimately end up shaping their ability to integrate and access opportunities, including educational and employment opportunities.

Complicated Migration Histories

In this section, I discuss how newcomer youth tended to occupy different legal statuses, reflecting complicated migration histories between the countries from which they migrated and

the United States; this resulted in differing forms of family separation. Newcomer youth who migrated from Mexico tended to occupy the least precarious and more secure legal statuses—U.S. citizen and lawful permanent status—whereas those arriving from Guatemala tended to occupy the more precarious legal status of asylum seeker. With their temporary status, Guatemalan newcomer youth were vulnerable as they waited to hear if they would be granted asylum. If they were not granted asylum, they would be forced either to return home or remain in the United States without documentation. Few Guatemalans arrived with a green card (n = 2). The largest group of asylum seekers (n = 33) were from Guatemala. Those arriving from El Salvador and Honduras occupied a greater range of legal statuses, including permanent, temporary, discretionary, and undocumented. Upon arriving in the United States, youth who migrated from Central America were more susceptible to legal liminality. How legal liminality impacted their educational trajectories is a topic of discussion in Chapter 7. I briefly discuss the disparate impact of immigration policies on Mexican, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran newcomer youth's legal statuses and family dynamics.

Mexico

Movement of Mexicans across the southern border has a long history (see Lytle Hernández, 2010). Mexicans once had the ability to engage in circular migration (Passel et al., 2012), but since the 1950s, Mexicans have encountered increasingly criminalizing immigration policies, which have placed them at risk of deportation for being deemed "illegal" (Gándara & Ee, 2021). The attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 dramatically shifted the conversations concerning immigration policies in the United States, resulting in a hyperfocus on the U.S.–Mexico border. Fueling this hyperfocus on the southern border was the illusion that "immigrants, [were] not just as takers of jobs and failures at assimilation . . . but as existential

threats to the average American" (Gándara & Ee, 2021, p. 21), specifically immigrants who had arrived without documentation. As a result, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was created during the Bush administration, which resulted in the over-policing and increasing number of deportations of Latinx immigrants. The overwhelming number of deported undocumented immigrants were from Mexico and Central America (i.e., El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) even though they made 73% of undocumented immigrants (NASEM, 2015). As scholars Gándara and Ee (2021) noted, "Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, but mostly Mexican or Central American, have been the targets of terrorizing raids, abuse, detentions, and removals for most of the twentieth century and almost all of the twenty-first century so far" (p. 23). Many who were deported were individuals in mixed-status families, the most common scenario including families composed of parents who were undocumented, parents to U.S.-born children, or children who had lived in the United States for most of their lives (Gándara & Ee, 2021). Some had entered the country without documentation and others had moved into the status of being undocumented.

The 10 newcomer youth from Mexico experienced migration once as children and a second time as teenagers. In the first instance, they had traveled back to Mexico with at least one parent and sometimes both. In the second instance, family separation occurred. There were various reasons why newcomer youth reported their families returning to Mexico. The most cited reasons were economic and familial problems that required their attention in Mexico. Across all cases, newcomer youth of Mexican descent reported how their parents were cognizant that leaving the United States would mean they would be unable to return or, if they chose to return, they would have to do so clandestinely. For example, Jimena, a senior who graduated in 2020,

described the process of returning to the United States as one marked by family separation, sharing:

> Okay, yo, eh, soy afortunada porque yo soy residente aquí, yo tengo papeles, pero mi familia no. So yo a los ocho meses de nacida tuve que irme a México y básicamente me crié allá. Después cuando cumplí los once años, me vine aquí a los Estados Unidos…mi papá fue el primero que se vino aquí en los Estados Unidos, so él pasó igual que mi mamá y mi hermano, que fue por tierra. Ya después pasó un tiempo y era momento de que mi mamá, yo y pues, mi hermano fuéramos con mi padre, so entonces como yo tengo papeles, fue más fácil pasar para mí, pero ya mi mamá y mi hermano pasaron igual que mi padre, so ya después de que yo viví un tiempo con mi tía, ya que mi papá, vivía con sus hermanos y como no había ninguna mujer y por respeto, decidí que yo viviera con mi tía por el momento.

Jimena described how leaving as a mixed-status family affected their return. Whereas Jimena could enter the United States without any problems, her mother and brother had to cross the U.S.–Mexico border on foot. As she noted:

> Mi familia se separó, mi mamá tuv[o] que pasar, pues, por tierra ya después y yo pasé con mis tíos, solo revisaron . . . y con mi perro (risas) . . . solo revisaron, pues, si era residente y todo eso, pasé normal y ya había entrado aquí a los Estados Unidos.

Her family separated as they embarked on two different migration journeys. Although her father was already in the United States when she arrived, she did not stay with him, instead leaving with her aunt and thus experiencing another moment of family separation. Once her mother and brother arrived in Los Angeles, they could all reunite as a family.

For other newcomer youth, migrating from Mexico meant leaving their parent(s) behind. Candy, who had migrated to Mexico as a young child, returned at the age of 17 without her mother because she yearned to learn English and pursue her studies. Though she was able to arrive and stay with her grandparents, she experienced family separation upon her return to the United States because, as she explained, "Pues yo nací en Los Ángeles, pero mi mamá no entonces . . . porque hace tiempo mi mamá le quitaron la visa y ya no pudo venir conmigo." Like Candy, newcomer youth like Elena left her parents behind in Mexico. Elena left the United States as a 6-year-old because her father had been deported, thus prompting her whole family to relocate to Mexico. It was not until she was a teenager that she returned to stay with her *madrina* and her siblings.

Staying with extended family was a common experience for those returning without their parents. Roque, a junior at the time of the interviews who had moved to Mexico as an infant, explained his mother could not *cruzar* (i.e., enter the United States). As such, he returned to the United States to stay with his great-aunt, a sister of his grandmother. For other youth like Lizbeth, whose family was composed of siblings who were U.S. citizens and others who were Mexican nationals, returning to the United States meant reunifying with her father. However, she was forced to leave her mother and younger siblings behind, given her mother was undocumented when she had resided in the United States, and there was no legal pathway for her younger siblings to be reunited with their father.

Mexican newcomer youth were subjected to harsh U.S. immigration policies as they often belonged to mixed-status families. Though not all parents of Mexican newcomer youth were deported, the majority left the United States as undocumented residents. Only Jimena's

mother decided to reenter the United States without documentation at a time when crossing the southern border had become increasingly dangerous (De León, 2015).

Guatemala

The overwhelming number of newcomer youth migrating from Guatemala occupied the temporary status of asylum seeker. The majority did so as unaccompanied minors (n = 24), whereas only a handful had arrived with at least one parent (n = 6; see Figure 4.4). As unaccompanied minors, they were protected by two U.S. legal standards:

> The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA), which applies to all unaccompanied alien children (UAC) under the age of 18; and (2) the 1996 settlement agreement in Flores v. Meese (Flores Settlement), which covers all children (whether accompanied or not) under the age of 18 who are in federal government custody. (American Civil Liberties Union [ACLU], 2014, pp. 1–2)

TVPRA has different implications for unaccompanied minors depending on their country of origin. Youth migrating from noncontiguous countries with the United States (i.e., from all countries other than Mexico[5] and Canada) who are determined by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents to be unaccompanied must be transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement within 72 hours after they have been apprehended (ACLU, 2014). Because UAC are "guaranteed an immigration court hearing" (Zamora, 2014, para. 5), they are eligible to access the following: safe placement, suitability assessment, legal orientation, legal counsel, and

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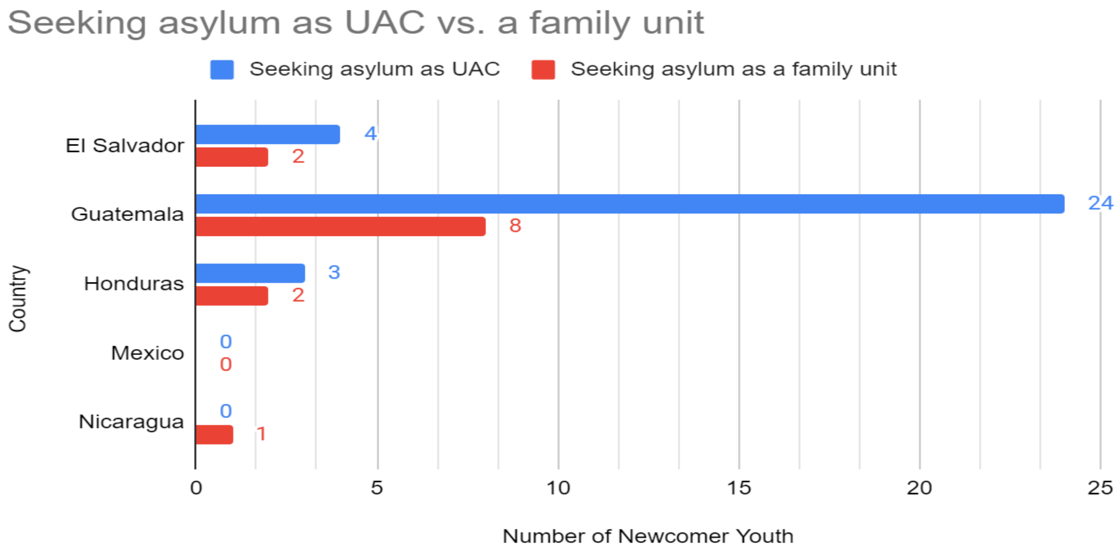
[5] UAC from contiguous countries like Mexico are required to be screened to determine "(1) whether the child is unlikely to be a victim of trafficking; (2) whether the child has no fear of returning to her country of origin; and (3) whether the child has the ability to make an independent decision to withdraw her application for admission into the United States" (ACLU, 2014, p. 3). If they respond to all three questions with a "yes," the unaccompanied minor can be immediately repatriated to their native country. If they respond to any one question with a "no," they must be transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, where they will be treated like any other UAC (ACLU, 2014).

a child advocate. Safe placement either entails “placement with a parent, relative or other sponsor” or “placement in a shelter or foster home” (Zamora, 2014, para. 9).

Figure 4.4

Differences Seeking Asylum as Newcomer Youth



For newcomer youth migrating from Guatemala who arrived on their own, safe placement often meant being reunited with a parent, an older sibling, or a distant relative. As such, there were newcomer youth from Guatemala who were reuniting with their parents after suffering family separation because their parents had long ago migrated to the United States. Others experienced family separation because migrating to the United States on their own inherently meant leaving their parents behind. The latter shared the experience of being unparented with their Mexican counterparts, albeit for different reasons. For example, Agustin, a sophomore at the time of interviews, described his family situation as one involving reunification with his older siblings but separation from his parents and younger siblings. Here was our exchange:

Agustín: Yo vine solo a, entré a la migración y, pues, estuve en un albergue como un mes, mis hermanos me sacaron de ahí y, pues, estoy con ellos ahora . . . Y, pues y ahora es- lo único que estoy haciendo es esforzarme en la escuela y echarle ganas para aprender inglés y todo eso para en el futuro tener un buen trabajo y salir adelante en todo lo que veo en allá en Guatemala, ser el cambio a mi familia.

Sophia: Y entonces dijistes que llegastes aquí con tus hermanos.

Agustín: Sí.

Sophia: Ah, okay. ¿Y eres el más chiquito de tú familia o incluso tienes hermanos allá en Guatemala también?

Agustín: En Guatemala tengo cinco hermanos todavía pequeños.

Since his arrival to the United States and enrollment in school, Agustín had been motivated by his desire to "esforzarme en la escuela y echarle ganas para aprender inglés y todo eso para en el futuro tener un buen trabajo y salir adelante." Despite his commitment to improving his family's well-being, his move to the United States resulted in their separation.

For other newcomer youth, migrating to the United States meant reunifying with their parents. Ruby, a sophomore at the time of the interview, shared that coming to the United States meant no longer being separated from her mother, who "ya estaba aquí de hace mucho tiempo." Luna, another newcomer from Guatemala, experienced family reunification and separation. Luna described the complicated feelings she experienced when she decided to migrate to the United States to reunite with both her parents but without her brother and grandmother, saying:

Sí, sólo tengo un hermano. Se quedó allá. Este, la verdad, es que yo quería que él viniera para que pudiera lograr sus sueños aquí, pero él no quiso, porque como le dije, mis papás

> me, nos dejaron con mi abuelita desde pequeños y mi abuelita, e-ella fue las, lo que nos cuidó y todo.
>
> Sí, sólo tengo un hermano. Se quedó allá . . . Porque como le dije, mis papás me, nos dejaron con mi abuelita desde pequeños y mi abuelita, e-ella fue las, lo que nos cuidó y todo. Este, nosotros la vemos como una mamá para nosotros, porque como ella estuvo en las buenas y en las malas con nosotros . . . Y él no lo quería dejar, no lo quería dejar sola, porque se iba a quedar sola, pero la verdad, yo tampoco la quería dejar, pero . . . Este, tenía un sueño, o sea que, el sueño que yo tenía es ser una doctora, mis metas es ser eso y tal vez viniendo aquí y trabajando, este, logrando ser lo que yo quiero, podría ayudarla a ella, este, mandándole dinero tal vez. Porque ahí el dinero no, no da para mucho, pues las cosas son muy caras, este, aquí, como por ejemplo, es un poco, yo lo veo un poco bara-baratas, pero allá son muy caras . . . Así que, este, la verdad, es-es el sueño que tengo de ayudar a mi abuelita, pagarle a alguien que lo ayude y todo y que ella descanse.

Luna explained how she struggled with the idea of reuniting with her parents without causing further family separation. Highlighting the tensions she confronted when deciding to not only migrate to the United States but migrate without her brother revealed the ramifications a broken immigration system has for families. Continual family separation, despite partial family reunification, is an imposed reality by the United States.

Newcomer youth from Guatemala experienced changing family systems. Reuniting with some family members while being kept apart from others transpired as they awaited a decision on their asylum case. Though the *Flores* settlement established "regulations for the humane detention and treatment" (Zamora, 2014, para. 3) of unaccompanied minors, other immigration policies were simultaneously responsible for the fact that some unaccompanied minors were

seeking to reunify with their family members, given their inability to move freely between Guatemala and the United States. Seeking to reunify with family was a shared experience for the next largest group of newcomer youth seeking asylum, those from El Salvador.

El Salvador

In comparison to newcomer youth from Mexico or Guatemala, newcomer youth from El Salvador cited reuniting with family members, who had long been living in the United States, as their reason for migrating to the United States. There is a long history of Salvadoran parents migrating to the United States to provide greater financial stability to their children, albeit from afar. Abrego (2014b) referred to the act of parents sending remittances to improve their family's livelihoods in their native countries as a transnational family strategy. Yet, this transnational family strategy has resulted in lengthy family separations due to immigration policies that limit individuals' abilities to move freely across borders (Enchautegui & Menjívar, 2015). For example, many immigrants from El Salvador are relegated to temporary protected status (TPS). TPS grants "temporary protection to individuals who are unable to return to their home countries because of an armed conflict, environmental disaster, or other condition that is deemed temporary" (NASEM, 2015, p. 70). With TPS, Salvadorans are able "to legally reside and work" (Abrego, 2014b, p. 14). However, many remain "with no clear pathway to legal permanent residency and no way to reunite with their families" (Enchautegui & Menjívar, 2015, p. 44). Indeed, "Salvadorans make up the second-largest unauthorized immigrant population in the United States" (Migration Policy Institute, 2015, p. 1).

In recent years, as a response to increased intrapersonal violence due to structural violence imposed by the state (Abrego, 2017; Osuna, 2020), youth from El Salvador have migrated to the United States to flee from unsafe conditions and reunite with their parents. It was

the mass exodus of unaccompanied minors from Central America, including El Salvador, that captured the attention of national media in 2014 (Restrepo & Garcia, 2014). Reina, a junior during the 2020–2021 school year, recounted her experience as unaccompanied minor and the concern her mother expressed as she navigated the process of being detained and reunited, "Me llamaba a ver cómo estaba . . .pués, como se preocupaba mucho a ver cómo estaba, siempre le llamaba. Les llamaba a las psicólogas con las que estábamos nosotros, del albergue, quién nos cuidaba . . . Siempre llamaba ella, mi mamá."

Many of the newcomer youth who arrived unaccompanied minors shared the experience of communicating with their parents as they awaited reunification. Gera, another junior, described how he had a lengthy stay at a shelter because his mother had difficulties arranging his release to her. He was finally allowed to be reunited with her after spending a little more than 60 days at a shelter in Texas and being separated for 12 years. Unlike those migrating from Mexico and Guatemala, Salvadoran newcomer youth tended to be reunited with their parents, although many occupied legal statuses that were precarious.

Conclusion

Newcomer youth, as I explain in the next chapter, came to be solely identified by their EL label upon enrolling in school. This hyperfocus on newcomer youth as ELs invisibilizes who they are as immigrants and their shared migration experiences. Though they share the common experience of migrating to a new country and subsequently learning a new language, there are within-group differences among the newcomer student population that bear attention. In this chapter, I shed light on the diversity that exists concerning migration trajectories newcomer youth embarked on as well as the legal statuses that are imposed upon them once they arrive in the United States.

As I continue to show, these differences have implications for youth's experiences as they navigate high school and integrate into the larger community. For many of the EHS educators I spoke with, these details were unknown, as many tended to see newcomer youth as unaccompanied minors. Indeed, almost half of the newcomer youth arrived as unaccompanied minors, but the experiences of the other half of the newcomer youth require attention as well. As I show in the coming chapters, how newcomer youth are received can determine the opportunities they are afforded. Before newcomer youth have even set foot on school grounds, they are already embarking on their educational trajectories from different starting points. These starting points, shaped by their migration trajectories and legal statuses, intersect with their EL identity and set them on divergent trajectories.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEGINNINGS

In the previous chapter, I analyzed how newcomer youth at Esperanza High School (EHS) did not experience the same welcome upon arriving to the United States because of their different migration trajectories. In this chapter, I draw attention to how their experiences coalesced as they enrolled in schools and were labeled "English learner (EL)." In reality, the varying circumstances underlying their migration led to different schooling experiences, beginning with the enrollment process. In this chapter, I first describe how migration trends shaped the demographics of the newcomer youth student population at EHS. I then outline the enrollment process at EHS. Afterward, I discuss how their ages and previous schooling experiences played a role (or not) in determining their grade placements and academic plans. I also highlight how newcomer youth made sense of their grade level placements in relation to their (in)ability to speak English. Finally, I bring attention to the different opportunities afforded to newcomer youth for being both ELs and newcomer youth. Although these decisions made at the time of enrollment might seem trivial, they seem to have unintended consequences with the potential to limit newcomer youth's access to college.

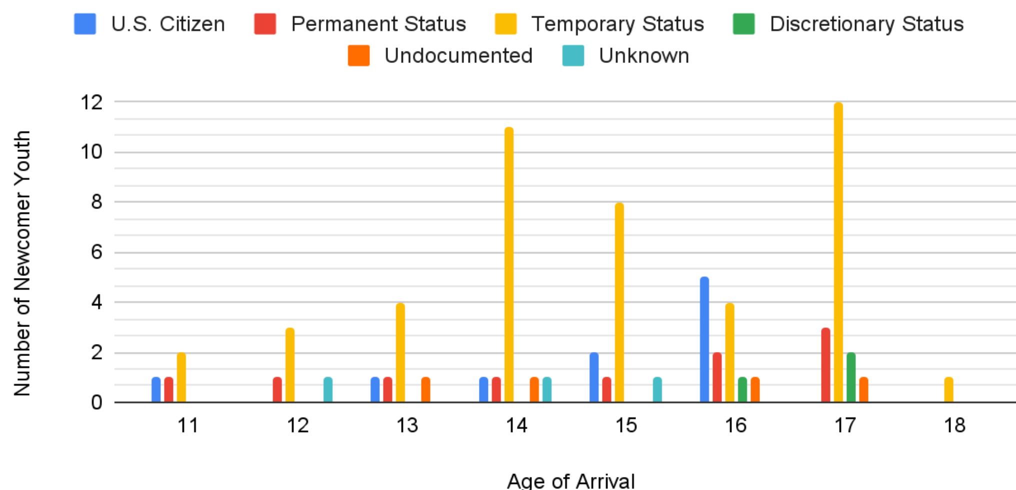
Enrollment Trends of Newcomer Youth at EHS

In the United States, most students start their high school careers between the ages of 14 and 15. Yet, the newcomer youth population tends to be older when they first enroll in high school. This reflects the migration trends among immigrant youth. For example, 38% and 39% of immigrant youth who are unaccompanied minors arrive in the United States at the ages of 15–16 and 17 years old, respectively (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2022a).

Reflecting this trend, newcomer youth enrolling at EHS tended to be older.[6] This was expected because most newcomer youth enrolling at EHS were asylum seekers who arrived as unaccompanied minors. Many of the newcomer youth I spoke to during the 2020–2021 academic year enrolled at 17 years old (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

Newcomer Youth's Age of Arrival



In addition to the different ages when newcomer youth began their high school careers at EHS, their household compositions differed from each other (see Figure 5.2). There are two important trends that emerged related to age and household composition. The first is that

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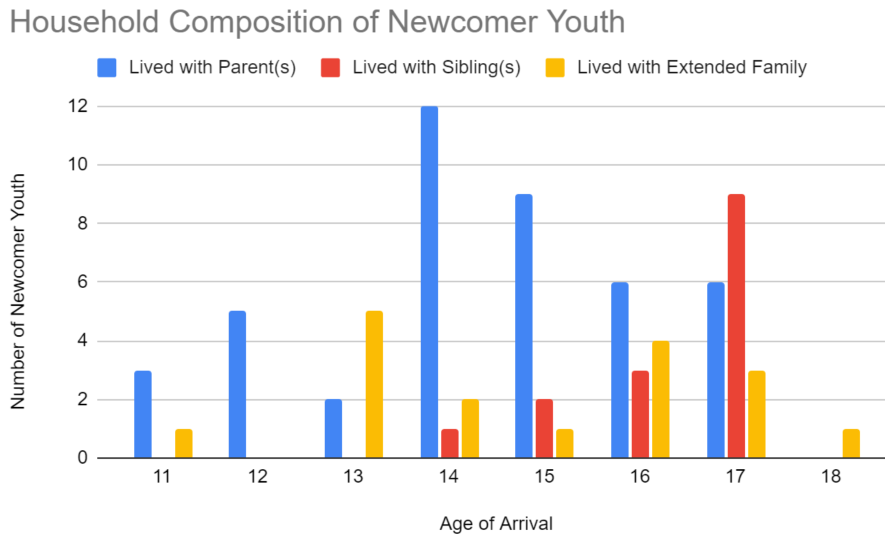
[6] I included newcomer youth who arrived at the age of 11 and 12 years old in the study because under federal requirements, they would have qualified to receive benefits aimed to assist newcomer youth in high school. They are eligible to receive funds for 3 years, which would have included their 1st year in high school. These students also took at least one ELD course during their high school career.

newcomer youth who arrived when they were 14 years old or younger tended to live with at least one of their parents. The opposite was true of those who arrived 15 years or older. Instead of living with parents, newcomer youth who arrived as older teenagers lived with siblings, who, though older, were not much older. Additionally, newcomer youth reported living with grandparents, great-aunts, aunts, uncles, or cousins.

Figure 5.2

Household Composition of Newcomer Youth



It is important to note these differences in household compositions because newcomer youth enter an institution that relies on parents and guardians to make educational decisions, starting with the enrollment process. This expectation of parental involvement conflicts with the lived experiences of newcomer youth. For example, Mr. Sandoval, the designated EL school counselor, was aware of this; he described parental involvement as:

> A very dynamic situation. The adults are the kids in a lot of cases. Okay. So like I mentioned earlier, yeah, mainly living with an aunt. But it's a distant aunt like, "Hey, you

> gotta work to provide your, you know, tool you're waiting around here. And then unfortunately in a lot of cases, I may get a hold of an uncle, I may get a hold of an aunt, maybe a mom, maybe a dad, very rarely both parents. It's just a reality.

Newcomer youth at EHS are seen as living on their own because they physically live outside of their parent's purview (Canizales, 2018, 2021a, 2021b). Perhaps Mr. Sandoval's close relationships with the newcomer student population at EHS informed his perceptions of newcomer youth as "the adults," especially when describing the household compositions of those who arrived as unaccompanied minors. But as Bravo, an unaccompanied minor from Guatemala, noted, not all educators shared this perspective and incorrectly assumed they had access to familial support and resources. He shared:

> Muchos de los maestros igual piensan que uno llega acá y lo recibe pues su familia, ¿no? Le da de comer, bueno principalmente yo, bueno, a muchos maestros yo, yo escuché, ¿no? Fue en la escuela donde ya dicen, "Oh llegaste, oh qué te llevó tú familia, o qué te, ¿a dónde te fueron a llevar tú familia? ¿Qué te dieron de dinero? ¿Qué te compraron ropa?"

This diversity of household composition not only shaped the lived and schooling experiences of newcomer youth (Diaz-Strong, 2020), but also the interactions between school and family. As I discuss in Chapter 7, these varying household compositions seemed to determine newcomer youth's access to CCR opportunities and shaped their life aspirations.

Overview of the Enrollment Process

The enrollment process began in one of two locations, the district enrollment office or at the school site.[7] Newcomer youth reported having their parents or guardians (e.g., grandparents and aunts) accompanying them at time of enrollment. These visits to the district office or school consisted of filling out paperwork, verifying their vaccination status or receiving vaccinations to update their vaccination status, assessing their English language proficiency, and inquiring about their past educational experiences. The last step was of particular importance in determining the high school experiences of newcomer youth, particularly those who arrived at 14 years of age or older.

At EHS, various members of the EL team carried out different duties related to the enrollment process or what Ms. Mateo, the Title III teacher, referred to as the "routing process." Ms. Mateo oversaw the language assessment, whereas the designated EL counselor, Mr. Sandoval, formally welcomed students, reviewed their past educational records, and created a schedule and academic plan. Both these procedures were crucial in determining the educational pathways newcomer youth would embark on at EHS. Ms. Mateo explained, "As EL designee, I'm in charge of testing. I'm in charge of ELPAC [English Language Proficiency Assessments for California]. I do the initial assessments when the kids come in, I'm in charge of all the paperwork." She explained how students were referred to her, saying:

> If they're from out of state, then we need to look at or if they're from out of the country, we need to look at their home language survey. On the home language survey the parents

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[7] Not all newcomer youth immediately enrolled at EHS. Some enrolled at nearby middle schools if they arrived as 11-, 12-, or 13-year-old students. Others had first enrolled in high schools across the city (including charter schools), the state (e.g., California's Central Valley), and the United States (e.g., Texas).

> put, you know, right? Okay, so if the home language survey indicates that they might be English learners, then they call me and I come over, and I would assess them.

Because many newcomer youth have never been enrolled in U.S. schools, and this is the primary indicator used per district policy to "determine a student's initial ELD course level" (Name Withheld, 2019a, pp. 1–2), Ms. Mateo gathered data from the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC), one of three district-approved data sources. Yet, assessing newcomer youth's English language proficiency was not an easy task given the delays in processing paperwork. As she explained, she could not officially assess a student until she received a state student identification number. Given the urgency to determine a student's grade level and create a course schedule, she resorted to using the:

> Edge[8] placement test, you know, how they use the Edge curriculum, placement test, and that's pretty cool. Because, like, it'll place them like, you know, it'll tell me which, what level they're at.

She reflected on how this was not a comprehensive assessment because it mostly focused on students' abilities to read close passages versus the combination of their writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills. Hence, she supplemented the Edge placement test by engaging in conversation with students and asking for a writing sample. Once she finished her assessment, she informed Mr. Sandoval of her recommendation concerning the English language development (ELD) class a newcomer student should enroll in. Her understanding of what Mr. Sandoval did next was captured in the following excerpt:

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[8] Edge is a district-approved "leveled core reading/language arts program designed for striving readers and ESL students in grades 9–12. Edge is designed to help prepare all students for college and career success with dynamic National Geographic content and authentic and multicultural literature" (National Geographic Learning, n.d., para. 1).

> Once I recommend, like, I'll say, put them in an ELD 2 class, I take that and the kiddo over to Salazar, who talks to them about their, you know, educational background, and like, tries to come up with a transcript for them, make one up if they can't access it, so that he knows like, so we can try to get them to graduate on time. Because, you know, he can give them credit. We can't give them the grade points, but we can give them the credit so that they don't come in as freshmen.

Ms. Mateo brings light to the importance of evaluating newcomer youth's educational histories as it helped inform students' academic plans. The process for which international transcripts were validated was contested by newcomer youth and proved to be a point of confusion, especially among those who arrived as older youth. I discuss this point in greater detail in the next section.

Mr. Sandoval reiterated the importance of having the "ELD department see what level of English they are." He relied on their recommendations to begin to create a course schedule. How EHS structured their language program is a point of discussion in Chapter 6. Prior to creating a course schedule, he spent time welcoming students. He described this encounter as "the initiation process, the initial interview or meet and greet." Of his first meeting with newcomer youth, he shared his goals, saying:

> I try to build a relationship. A lot of the students, obviously, they don't understand the language so they're in a different environment, different culture, so my goal is to make them feel as comfortable as possible. And to make them feel safe and let them know that I am here to represent them and guide them and help them out with what's going to happen. So I slowly just build that. And it all starts with an initial meet and greet when they enroll on campus. And so that's it, you know, it's it's, it's just a simple get-to-know-

> you kind of situation, you don't want to pry or make them feel uncomfortable. So that's all that's my goal is to make them feel comfortable, and let them know what my role is, and how I can support them.

The initial meetings with both Ms. Mateo and Mr. Sandoval set the foundation for the academic trajectories embarked on at EHS. In what follows, I delve deeper into the ways newcomer youth's past educational experiences and their age factored into the decision-making process of EHS school counselors, newcomer youth, and their families when determining grade placement and developing graduation plans.

Determining Grade Placement

Before sharing how school staff used enrollment policies to inform newcomer youth's grade placement, it should be noted youth have the right to attend public K–12 schools until the age of 21 in most states across the country, including California (Diffey & Steffes, 2017; NCES, 2020). In other words, students are not to be discouraged from enrolling in public K–12 schools. Moreover, because of their EL identity, district policy stated:

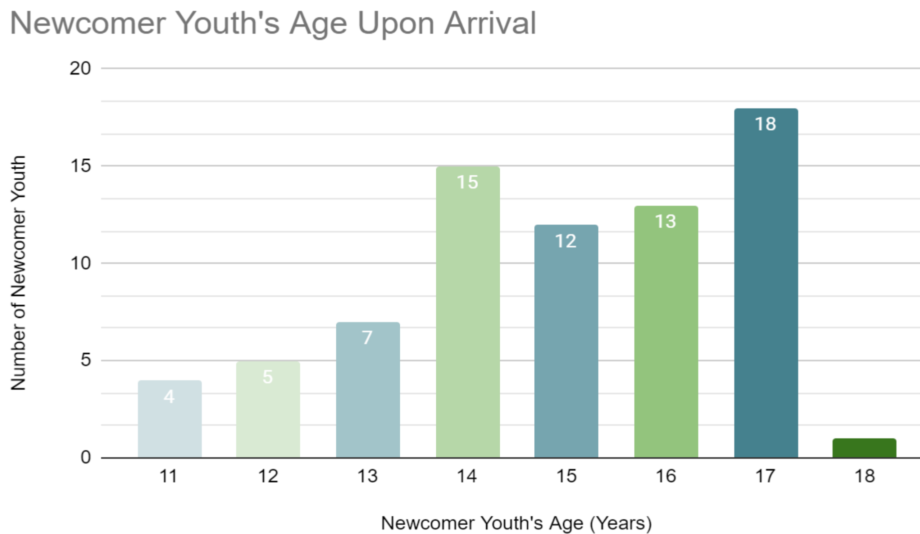
> ELs should be afforded the opportunity to meet graduation requirements in 4 years to the greatest extent possible. ELs may remain in high school until requirements are met or through the age of 21 as long as satisfactory progress is maintained. (Name Withheld, 2019a, p. 3)

Only a few of the newcomer youth I spoke with reported being encouraged to attend adult school due to their older age. As such, factors used to determine newcomer youth's grade placement varied depending on their age at the time of enrollment. I explain what these different factors were for newcomer youth who arrived between 11 and 13 years of age and those arriving between 14 and 17 years of age, focusing on the struggles older newcomer youth faced as they

started their high school careers, given they were most of the newcomer student population at EHS (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3

Newcomer Youth's Age Upon Arrival



Grade Placement Based on Age

For the 16 newcomer youth who arrived between the ages of 11 and 13 years, their grade placement was determined by their age. District policy states that school staff are to use the 2nd to 8th grade level placement chart to determine a student's grade placement if youth are 14 years or younger (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Second Through Eighth Grade Level Placement Chart

Grade	Minimum age as of August 1 during the current school year	Maximum age
2	6.9	8.8
3	7.9	9.8
4	8.9	10.8
5	9.9	11.8
6	10.9	12.8
7	11.9	13.8
8	12.9	14.8

Note. All ages displayed in the table refer to a student's age as of August 1 of the current school year. All ages are displayed in year.month format (e.g., 4.9 indicates the age of 4 years and 9 months).

Of the younger newcomer youth who participated in the interviews, the majority had arrived at the age of 13 and, thus, were enrolled as eighth graders. Many reported completing only a few months of schooling at their local middle schools. As I discuss next, their school enrollment process was less contentious than the one experienced by newcomer youth who arrived at 14 years old or older.

Grade Placement Based on Past Educational Experiences

Newcomer youth who were 14 years or older at the time of enrollment encountered a different district policy used to determine their grade placement. Instead of age, district policy stated "high school grade placement is based on the educational history and academic credits earned by each student" (Name Withheld, 2019b, p. 113). Additionally, a memorandum focusing

on the procedures school staff should take to ensure students arriving from other countries "receive appropriate credit for courses taken" abroad (Name Withheld, 2015, p. 1) articulated "the educational background is of particular importance . . . and will be part of the grade placement decision to assure the orderly development of the student's educational plan" (Name Withheld, 2015, p. 5). The memorandum went on to explain the "the evaluation process of schoolwork on a year-for-year basis" (Name Withheld, 2015, p. 5) should be carried out by the principal and assistant principal in charge of secondary counseling services "so as not to disadvantage the student in progressing toward graduation" (Name Withheld, 2015, p. 3).

Considering these district policies concerning enrollment procedures, ELs, and international transcripts, older newcomer youth reported EHS staff did not always take into consideration their previous schooling experiences when determining their grade placement. This action resulted in their automatic placement in ninth grade because they were perceived to have completed zero credits of high school education prior to their arrival at EHS. Indeed, some EHS staff were under the impression the great majority of newcomer youth were students with interrupted, limited, or inconsistent formal education (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2020; Potochnick, 2018; WIDA Consortium, 2015). As Spanish teacher Ms. Quispe shared that her understanding was:

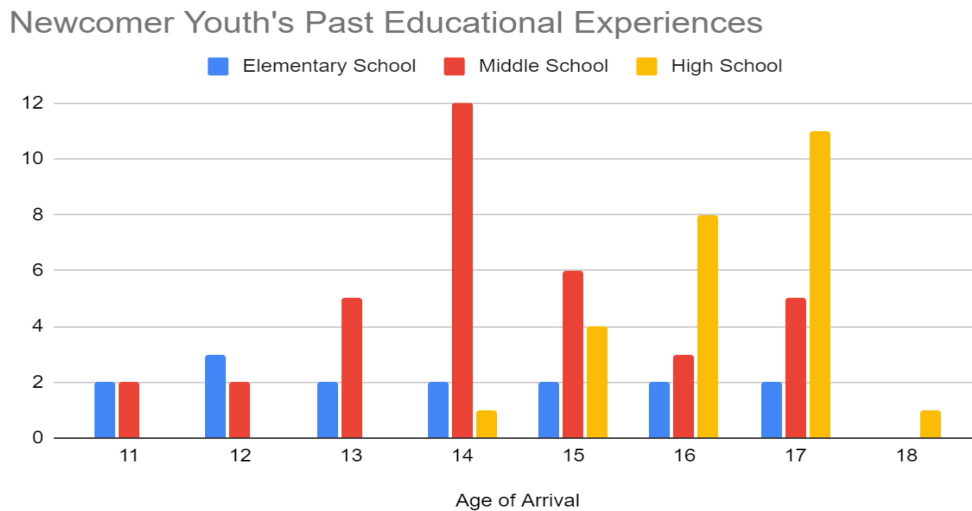
> Most of them are because in Honduras, Guatemala, most of these kids, like you said, have skipped grades in their home country in Central America. So yes, they're from Guatemala, from Honduras, from El Salvador, but have not through the education system steadily, like ongoing.

She implicitly contrasted what she perceived as differential access to education among newcomer youth based on the countries from which they were migrating, sharing, "Mexico

seems to be more steady. They don't seem to show that they haven't been skipping grades or not attending school in Mexico when they come here." Yet, many newcomer youth arrived at EHS having completed at least 1 year of secondary education (see Figure 5.4). Of the eight older newcomer youth who arrived with an elementary school education, all were from Guatemala.

Figure 5.4

Newcomer Youth's Past Educational Experiences



Recognizing many newcomer youth's migration trajectories were clandestine, one might wonder if the lack of consideration for their educational background was due to lack of documentation. However, district policy allowed for a "reconstruction of transcripts," noting how:

> Students from other countries enrolling in district schools may not have or may not be able to obtain school records because of political unrest, loss, destruction, or other factors. When such circumstances exist, an opportunity will be given for students to

reconstruct their school experiences to determine the appropriate credit to be granted. (Name Withheld, 2015, p. 4)

The opportunity to reconstruct their transcripts and receive credit for coursework they completed prior to arriving in the United States was not mentioned by newcomer youth during interviews.

Instead, the great majority of newcomer youth reflected on their experience submitting international transcripts to be reviewed by school staff. Those who enrolled at EHS prior to the arrival of Mr. Sandoval, the designated EL counselor, reported feeling frustrated when they realized they would begin their high school careers as ninth graders. Dulce, a graduate from the class of 2020, expressed her disappointment when her educational history was not considered to determine her grade placement and graduation plan, saying:

> No, allá, allá ya solamente me faltaba un semestre, tres semestres solamente me faltaban para terminar la prepa. Y fue por eso que yo ya había tomado todas esas clases allá. Y cuando yo vine aquí yo traje como comprobante, algo de que yo sí había tomado unas clases, tal vez para que aquí ellos me dieran otras clases o así, pero nunca las quisieron aceptar. Me dijeron que por ley se tenían que, se tenía que volver a repasar todo porque estoy en aprendices y tengo que estar aquí los nueve, los cuatro años seguidos. Igual me dijeron que si traía mi certificado de la secundaria, de las middle school, me podían subir a un grado más para poder graduarme más pronto. Entonces si fue igual, lo traje y todo, lo llevé y no me quisieron subir a un grado más, a pesar de que había traído eso, o sea, lo que ellos me pidieron y las materias que ya había tomado allá no quisieron. Quisieron que, o sea todo desde el principio, de un solo otra vez. Y no se me hizo bien porque dije, o sea ¿qué es un año? lo puedo hacer como, en vez de tomar esas clases que ya había

> tomado, puedo tomar otras, qué sé yo, tutorías de inglés o ELD o algo así, como algo que me beneficiara más a mí, pero no, sí tomé todo de regreso.

Dulce did not understand why, despite having a transcript, she had to start as a ninth grader and why she was denied the opportunity to take other classes, whether that be more English classes or classes that would benefit her versus having to repeat past coursework like she did for 4 years. As she recalled, the reasoning behind these decisions was because she was an EL (*aprendice*). I expand on this idea of newcomer youth being subjugated to restarting their high school careers due to their (in)ability to speak English shortly. These types of incidents tended to occur between newcomer youth and the general school counselors assigned to a particular grade level.

Teachers, too, felt frustrated by the lack of consideration given to newcomer youth's former schooling by the general school counselors. For example, Ms. Valera, a former EL herself who arrived in the United States as a middle school student, expressed her frustration when she shared:

> Now, some of them were like, yeah, like, you know, the advanced [newcomer students]. But the problem was that [school counselors] were really, really bad at tracking those kids, like figuring out where they belong, they would just basically dump them in wherever, without really checking like their transcripts and looking at their history and figuring out okay, this kid is actually like, advanced, or this kid is actually driven.

Unlike general school staff, EHS school staff who were part of the EL team viewed the issue of honoring past schooling experiences differently. Mr. Fischer, the EHS administrator on the EL team, reflected on this period when newcomer youth's educational histories were not being considered as a driving point for hiring a designated EL counselor, saying:

> Well, you have to understand international transcripts, because we're getting more and more students from Central America, countries and regions, speaking different dialects and so one thing that we did was when we hired the EL counselor, it was with a focus on "Hey, what we really need help [with], and it's not just that kids need an extra counselor, it's that we adults [need] someone who can become proficient in reading international transcripts and understanding the transcripts from other countries look like, and then really understanding AB 2121. . . " During that 1st year, the thing that we needed help on immediately was understanding international transcripts and understanding a new law that had come out so that we could make the right recommendations to kids.

Like Mr. Fischer, Mr. Romo seemed to advocate for the inclusion of past schooling experiences to help determine the appropriate grade placement of newcomer youth and inform their graduation plans, sharing:

> [A] couple of things that, that I always tell my newcomer students, is, if they ever went to school, or any type of schooling at their own native land, to bring in documentation that proves that. As now the district is giving credits for any of those classes that can be translated in kind of a similar or alike and give them credits. And I believe there's up to 60 credits, so they don't have to be a ninth grader, when they come in, they could be a 10th grade. That's one. And also AB 2121, which is, depending on the student, they could graduate on time, because of the credits they have earned. And also, the credits for graduation are less than the regular students. The only backdrop about that is that they have to go to community college if they want to continue to higher education, which is fine. I mean, some students want to graduate in 3 years, and that's fine. They could qualify for the program, but also, we transition them to go to community college as well.

> So we have that, that connection with their college counselor and kind of guide them and say, okay, you didn't finish, let's see, what's your, let's plan out your goals, and what is it? What is it that you want to do after this? So there's a couple of things that, um, that we could focus on and not really hold the student back and say, "No, you have to finish in 4 years. And you'll have to be here until 21, 22 years old, you know?"

Ms. Varela, Mr. Fischer, and Mr. Romo felt it imperative to consider newcomer youth's past schooling experiences to make informed decisions about the grade in which students should be enrolled and the courses they should be scheduled to take. Lastly, Mr. Fischer and Mr. Romo referenced that enrollment decisions, like grade placement, had consequences for newcomer youth's educational trajectories, specifically their graduation plans and access to postsecondary education given the newly adopted California Assembly Bill 2121. I delve into this topic of discussion next after highlighting the role language played in determining grade placement according to newcomer youth's sensemaking.

Porque Como Soy Una Persona Que Habla Español

Though neither district policy concerning grade placement considered English proficiency, instead focusing on age or educational histories, newcomer youth reported otherwise. Many perceived they were made to repeat coursework they had completed before they arrived in the United States, beginning their high school careers as ninth graders, because they were ELs. Students like Eleazar, who arrived at the age of 17 as a high school graduate from Guatemala, shared his feelings about what it meant for him to restart high school as a freshman, saying:

> Me sentí como que tuve que retroceder años y aparte estaba algo grande. Que realmente, como no me veo tan mayor de cara ni de cuerpo, no importa. Me veo pequeño también de

> cara. No aparento la edad . . . Ya fue así como no tenía mucho conocimiento, es así como "Ok, voy a empezar del nueve." Creo que también porque como soy una persona que habla español, y por eso. Creo que iba a costar [inaudible 00:07:23] y aprender inglés. Hasta el momento me cuesta porque como tuve mis clases de español realmente, clases en español durante el año del 9 y el 10 y hasta en el 11 lo tuve todas mis clases en inglés.

Eleazar attributes his presumed lack of knowledge of the U.S. school curriculum and his identity as a Spanish speaker as the reasons why he was made to "retroceder años." This seems to have been a difficult reality to accept when Eleazar "en el año que me vine de Guatemala, ese año me tocaba entrar a la universidad, pero me vine para acá."

Eddie, who arrived at the age of 17 having completed his high school studies in El Salvador, alluded to his lack of English proficiency as resulting in him retaking high school coursework. Reflecting on the enrollment process, he shared:

> Eddie: Yo traía como la boleta, la hoja de de todas mis calificaciones de mi país, porque yo en El Salvador, porque soy del Salvador, entonces ya había terminado high school que en El Salvador se conoce como bachillerato. Entonces lo terminé el año anterior de que había llegado, entonces y traía mis calificaciones, traía el diploma y todo eso, pero me dijeron bueno, pienso que fue por el nivel de inglés, para poder tener una oportunidad [en el] college o universidad. Entonces me dijeron que me iban a poner de nuevo en high school. Pero yo traía comprobantes de toda mi calificación y todo.
>
> Sophia: ¿Y te bajaron hasta el noveno grado?
>
> Eddie: Hasta noveno grado. Y fue, pienso, por el mismo, por el nivel de inglés, para que después tuviera más oportunidad para aprender[lo].

Sophia: Entonces llegas tú aquí a los diecisiete, ya habías terminado ya el bachillerato y te dicen vas a estar en el noveno grado y ¿qué es lo que piensas?

Eddie Yo estaba pensando, estaba, no estaba molesto, pienso de que sí me molesté un poco porque pues repetirlo de nuevo, pero más que molesto estaba preocupado porque ya tenía, me preocupaba el hecho de yo ser mayor en medio de los demás.

Eddie explained he made sure to bring his high school transcripts “y todo eso” from El Salvador, but he hinted EHS did not honor the coursework he completed in El Salvador; instead, he was enrolled as a ninth grader. When I analyzed his EHS high school transcript, it is true that Eddie began his educational trajectory at EHS as a ninth grader, though they honored his 3 years of high school studies by giving him elective credits for courses he took in mathematics, bio science, social science, computer, and foreign language. EHS honored his past coursework by granting him 140 elective credits. However, these credits would not count toward college eligibility. Eddie did not recall his past educational history being recorded on his EHS transcript. Consequently, he seemed to be more bothered by the fact that completing high school did not translate to starting high school at EHS as an upperclassman instead of a freshman. Yet, as he explained, the fact he did complete past coursework would not have mattered, as school staff made decisions about his grade placement because his lack of proficiency in English overrode his past educational accomplishments.

A conversation with Rivera, who arrived from Mexico at the age of 16, revealed a similar situation as he reflected on what the enrollment process was like for him; it went:

Rivera: La conversación en sí no fue muy larga. Solamente me preguntaron que, que si yo traía calificaciones de mi escuela anterior y les dije que sí. Y ya les envié las calificaciones y me dijeron más que nada que estas calificaciones se me iban a poner en

mi, en mi boleta de aquí, por así decirlo. Y que me iban a poner créditos, pero que los colegios y las universidades no querían ver una P de pass, de haber pasado, si no querían A, B. Querían unas A o querían ver unas B. Entonces me dijeron: "Si quieres las podemos, podemos poner las calificaciones de tu anterior escuela y si no quieres, pues no." Y yo les dije: "Sí, sí las quiero." Yo quiero que estén ahí.

Sophia: Entonces sí te dieron crédito y te pusieron la P de que pasastes.

Rivera: Y me preguntaron si yo sabía hablar inglés y les había dicho que no. Entonces, pues, técnicamente me hicieron volver a recursar tercero de secundaria.

He shared how he negotiated to have his previous coursework validated by the school counselors even after being told it would not count toward college. He finished recounting the enrollment process by noting that because he let school staff know he did not speak English, he was made to retake the last year of middle school, which he understood to be the equivalent of the 1st year of high school. As such, he began high school not as a 16-year-old sophomore but as a 16-year-old freshman. This resulted in him feeling *desanimado*; He shared:

Porque dije: "Yo ya había cursado tercero de secundaria" que aquí es noveno grado. Pero también empecé a hablar eso con mi papá y le decía: "No, pues es que yo ya debería estar en décimo grado" Y me dice: "Sí, pero ve el lado positivo: tienes cuatro años. Esos cuatro años los puedes aprovechar para aprender inglés. Y por eso fue que ya no había decidido decir nada de que si me podían pasar a décimo grado cuando estaba en noveno . . . Me quedé [en noveno]. No dije nada porque yo quería aprender más inglés, pero no es lo mismo."

Rivera was not satisfied with being placed in ninth grade, a sentiment he shared with his father as he attempted to decide how to renegotiate his grade placement at EHS with school staff. His

father managed to show Rivera the silver lining in having 4 years to study high school; he could make the most of that time by learning English. Rivera accepted the fact that he would be graduating at the age of 20 compared to most EHS students who graduate at 18 years old. Though he did not complain, he hinted at his dissatisfaction when he revealed how he remained silent and said nothing because he wanted to "aprender más inglés, pero no es lo mismo."

For Eleazar, Eddie, and Rivera, among the other newcomer youth at EHS, it was not lost on them that they were not (yet) proficient in English upon enrolling at EHS. The reason they were placed into ninth grade was their (in)ability to speak English, despite being older than the average freshman. Though the conversations happening during the enrollment process were described as brief, it seemed like the decisions made in that moment, based on available information, brought up a mixture of unexpected feelings. Many newcomer youth noted it was their lack of English proficiency that took precedence over their previous schooling experiences. As I discuss next, the decisions during the enrollment process seemed to have unintended consequences for the types of postsecondary opportunities newcomer youth had.

Unintended Consequences of Enrollment Processes

Like the rest of their peers, newcomer youth at EHS, regardless of their age, were given the opportunity to complete their high school studies within the span of 4 years. Newcomer youth who were older upon enrolling at EHS seemed to experience high school differently than those who enrolled at the same age of their grade-level peers. Older newcomer youth were more aware of their age and how this affected the plans they (once) had for themselves, especially because many began to realize they would graduate high school at the age of 20 or 21 years old.

Given newcomer youth have been graduating high school at lower rates than their counterparts, educational policymakers in California have recently attempted to tackle this

problem with the passage of Assembly Bill 2121 (AB 2121). This bill granted migratory children and students in newcomer programs, those in their 3rd or 4th year of high school, the same privileges as students in the foster care system, for example. As such, AB 2121 has granted newcomer youth the ability to be exempt from having to complete “all locally adopted high school coursework and requirements that are supplemental to statewide coursework requirements” (CDE, 2022c, para. 4). In other words, EHS newcomer youth in their junior or senior year who were deemed in jeopardy of not graduating with their class were given the opportunity to solely focus on completing California state graduation requirements. Students could do this rather than focus on district expectations reflecting college eligibility requirements. AB 2121 resulted in the creation of a high school graduation plan of 3 years.

However, AB 2121 also created a 5th-year graduation plan. AB 2121 stated, “[schools] are required to take action when they determine that a migratory child or newly arrived student is reasonably able to complete local graduation requirements within a fifth year of high school” (CDE, 2022c, para. 11). School staff would have to present a 5th-year graduation plan to students and their parents or guardians and explain how this would impact the student’s access to postsecondary opportunities.

Multiple graduation pathways were possible for newcomer youth with the passing of AB 2121. Whereas some schools have been granting newcomer youth the opportunity to finish high school in 5 years (Murillo et al., 2021), newcomer youth at EHS spoke about graduating in 3 or 4 years, but not 5. The 3-year graduation plan was especially intriguing for older newcomer youth, even though it meant they would not be eligible to apply to 4-year universities. This was because California state requirements for high school graduation differ from the “minimum set of courses required for admission as a freshman” (CDE, 2022d, para. 2). In 2005, the district school board

approved “the resolution to Create Educational Equity in Los Angeles Through the Implementation of the A–G Course Sequence as Part of the High School Graduation Requirements.” (Name Withheld, 2016, p. 1). This meant the district would “alig[n] its graduation requirements with the California State University A–G requirements” (Name Withheld, n.d.-b, para. 1). Despite the fact newcomer youth would be ineligible to matriculate directly to a 4-year college if they chose the 3-year graduation plan, EHS EL team members like Mr. Fischer welcomed this alternative academic plan. Mr. Fischer justified his approval of this plan because he reported hearing from newcomer youth, “I’m not going to come back for a 5th year. I don’t want to be here till I’m 19 either.”

In what follows, I first highlight EL team members’ understandings of what AB 2121 meant for their students. I then focus on newcomer youth’s sensemaking regarding graduating in 3 years versus 4.

Implementing AB 2121 at EHS

Ms. Rico, the school principal during the 2020–2021 school year, who had previously carried out the duties of the EL team members, reflected on the difficulties newcomer youth encountered as high school students. She described the low high school graduation rates, saying:

> It’s so hard. They graduate. I want to say that more than half graduate. However, it’s really hard for, depending on that home life, what the circumstances, whether or not they have to get a job, right, whether or not they have to pay their bills, or whatever it might be. So it really depends on that home life. Those students who came with their families who are being pushed to study, they’re going to study and they’re going to finish. They might have a job, but they’ll finish but it just depends on that home life, I want to say over more than a half graduate. And then it also depends on their age as well because

> some of them are 17 and a half when they get here, and then they're just here because, you know, the court told them they have to be in school, but they don't want to do the school. So it just really depends on the kid, on the student.

As I highlighted at the beginning of the chapter, Ms. Rico explained newcomer youth's household composition and age were factors that shaped their educational trajectories. First, she drew attention to how newcomer youth who arrived to live with at least one parent benefited from financial support. Recent scholarship has pointed to the fact that newcomer youth living with at least one parent seem to experience greater financial stability (Diaz-Strong, 2020). Additionally, parents seemed to affirm their educational goals (Diaz-Strong, 2020). As Ms. Rico stated, newcomer youth are "being pushed to study" by their parents, which in turn means that "they're going to study and they're going to finish." Yet, she contrasted this with those newcomer youth who have to "pay their bills." She seemed to implicitly allude to the fact that some newcomer youth struggle to "cove[r] major needs such as rent and food" (Diaz-Strong, 2020, p. 13), which puts them at risk of dropping out of school.

Finally, as Ms. Rico pointed to age as a contributing factor shaping newcomer youth's educational trajectories, she simultaneously brought to light how the legal system forces schooling upon newcomer youth. Noting the "court told them they have to be in school," she was implicitly speaking about the experiences of newcomer youth who have arrived as unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. Indeed, scholars like Canizales (2021b) seem to corroborate Ms. Rico's observations regarding how age, in addition to legal status, shaped the goals newcomer youth had upon enrolling in school, as many unaccompanied youth who are living on their own "pursue employment as a matter of individual and familial survival" (Canizales, 2021b, p. 10).

Because newcomer youth at EHS were still struggling to graduate high school, it makes sense members of the EL team would be excited about exempting newcomer youth from completing local graduation requirements. Here we see again how Mr. Fischer, the administrator on the EL team, viewed the passage of AB 2121 in a positive light. According to him, AB 2121 allowed EHS the opportunity to address the problem of newcomer youth leaving EHS without a high school diploma. He explained:

> [AB 2121] is now a part of our conversation. Both when kids arrive, and then throughout the year, presenting them options and choices. This is the long path, right? This is the standard path to 210 credits. Here's a shorter path that's available to you. And often kids aren't necessarily ready to make those choices right away. But as they mature, and as they spend time in the school system, then they're more likely to make those choices.

For Mr. Fischer, AB 2121 became a tool for the EL team to expand the paths that were available to newcomer youth toward attaining a high school diploma. However, others like Mr. Romo, also on the EL team, saw that AB 2121's plan to allow newcomer youth to graduate in 3 years foreclosed opportunities for students to attain college eligibility at the time of graduation. He noted AB 2121's drawbacks included:

> [Newcomer youth] hav[ing] to go to community college if they want to continue to higher education, which is fine. I mean, some students want to graduate in 3 years, and that's fine. They could qualify for the program, but also, we transition them to go to community college as well. So we have that connection with their college counselor and kind of guide them and say, "Okay, you didn't finish, let's see, what's your goals, and what is it? What is it that you want to do after this?" So there's a couple of things that we could focus on and not really hold the student back and say, "No, you have to finish in 3

> years. And you'll have to be here until 21, 22 years old, you know?"

Newcomer youth opting to graduate in 3 years would not meet the eligibility requirements set forth by California's 4-year university systems. Mr. Romo recognized this would mean newcomer youth wanting to pursue higher education would need to start their careers at community college. Embarking on their postsecondary journey at a community college is the norm for many newcomer youth (Kanno, 2021; Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019; Teranashi et al., 2011). Given the fact students did not finish or complete the school district requirements that are reflective of the minimum requirements for college eligibility, he reiterated the importance of college counselors asking what newcomer youth's goals are to make sure they "do not hold back" students as they move towards their goals.

Furthermore, the EL-designated counselor, Mr. Sandoval, discussed the importance of implementing AB 2121 in conjunction with validating international transcripts so as to accelerate a newcomer youth's ability to graduate high school, saying:

> Right as I mentioned earlier, we get students from different age groups and different educational experiences. So I can have 1 day a 17-year-old student from Central America check in who practically got his high school diploma in his or her native country. So what I do is I ask for them to give me that information. So I can translate it into our system, and possibly give them credit. And it also it's a guide to see what like, what level of education they have. There's some students that have actually graduated in their native country. And a lot of the credits, a lot of the classes that they've taken there can transfer over whether it's elective physical education, so I get those credits, and I translate them into our system to give them enough credits to work, I can get them on an accelerated path to graduate sooner. Because as everybody knows, you know, if you're 17, you don't

> want to be a freshman at EHS and 17 years old, you're going to be 21, 22 by the time you graduate. So the transcript, that's where the transcript process comes in where you try to analyze it and translate as many credits as possible, get them accelerated and then in a graduation pathway there. So transcripts play a huge role for a lot of our students. It makes a difference whether or not they stay. And it makes them feel really, validates that what they've been through in their home countries, it validates what they're going to go through and what they want to achieve.

Mr. Sandoval told me it was important to honor newcomer youth's past coursework as it can be demoralizing to not have those schooling experiences validated. Additionally, like the other staff members, he noted how being older might sway students from continuing to remain enrolled. For these reasons, it was important to review transcripts and discuss the various pathways available to newcomer youth to encourage them to graduate high school and avoid "a lot of kids . . . dropping out" —what Ms. Cantúa described as the "model for education [which] was, 'I have to stay here for like, a year or 2, and then I get to drop out.'"

The Allures of the 3rd Year High School Graduation Plan

For older newcomer youth, there was great urgency to graduate high school as soon as possible, especially for those who had experienced continuous enrollment in school. Chuy, a student from Mexico who arrived as he was about to turn 17, discussed the back-and-forth conversations he had with Mr. Sandoval about validating the coursework he completed in Mexico and his options for graduation. He mentioned Mr. Sandoval let him know that youth who turn 18 years of age and have not yet graduated high school may remain enrolled "pero que sí tenían que [tener] buen comportamiento los alumnos y no sé que tanto, que los podían dejar a que terminaran bien bien." Chuy was reassured by Mr. Sandoval when he was told he would be

able to remain enrolled at EHS, despite being much older than his grade-level peers, so long as he was well behaved. Again, age became a factor taken into account when making decisions about newcomer youth's graduation plans. Chuy was aware remaining in high school as a legal adult has different implications given that his behavior would be monitored. For Chuy's peers who find themselves in more precarious situations, engaging in good behavior as legal adults navigating the legal system has a different set of implications. There has been an increasing number of reports of immigrant youth who turn 18 years of age being pushed out of school via the school-to-deportation pipeline (Dillard, 2018; Hlass, 2018; Verma et al., 2017) and subsequently "detained, prosecuted, and deported" (Stewart, 2018, para. 10). Whether or not Chuy was aware of the risk that older newcomer youth, especially male students, seem to be exposed to if they opt to remain enrolled past the age of 18 years old, he did not seem to be intrigued by that plan once Mr. Sandoval explained the shorter graduation timeline available to him, sharing:

> Pues si ya, este, este luego me, pues este me dio como ciertos, este, maneras que podía o como estar en las clases. Y si ya, este, ya luego me puso en una forma pues para que lo terminara en 3 años. Como que recortó unas clases para hacerlo mucho más rápido y le dije que, que mejor sí, que lo hiciera de esa manera para terminar en 3 años.

Though Chuy did not go into greater detail about why he wanted to graduate in 3 years, he mentioned that were he to stay enrolled at EHS for 4 years, he would graduate at 19 or 20 years old, implying this was not something he saw as favorable. As such, he agreed to be exempt from completing district graduation requirements to "hacerlo (finish high school) mucho más rápido."

In line with members of the EL team reporting how they began to inform newcomer youth upon enrollment about their multiple graduation pathways, newcomer youth began to

make decisions about their graduation plans soon after enrolling. Elizabeth, who arrived at the age of 17 from Guatemala having completed some high school coursework, shared how she arrived at the decision of graduating in 3 years after talking with Mr. Sandoval:

> Elizabeth: Bueno, me dijeron que, que yo tenía que, que graduarme a los 2023. Entonces hablé con el [consejero] porque ya, a esa edad, creo que ya soy más mayor, pues entonces, le dije que si tenía otra opción para que yo me graduara un poco antes de ese, del año. Entonces, me dijo que, que sí, nomás no se puede, así estar en un colegio, o sea en una universidad, ¿cómo se llama?
>
> Sophia: Sí. Sí, universidad.
>
> Elizabeth: Ajá. Entonces "Y si estás de acuerdo con eso, no hay problema," me dijo. Pero sí puedes ir a una universidad, pero era otro, no era igual que el otro, creo. Ya no me acuerdo bien, pero entonces, desde ahí le dije que sí está bien y ahora, creo que estoy--
>
> Sophia: ¿Te vas a recibir el próximo año?
>
> Elizabeth: Ajá. Así

Similar to Chuy, Elizabeth seemed to be concerned about the fact she would be graduating high school as a 20-year-old. Without explicitly mentioning why being older troubled her, she shared how upon hearing she would graduate with the class of 2023 if she remained enrolled for 4 years, she inquired about an alternative plan and asked if she could graduate earlier. Mr. Sandoval let her know that she could but she would not be able to "estar en un colegio, o sea en una universidad." Knowing this, she still opted to graduate in 3 years. As she explained, she would still be able to pursue higher education, though she seemed confused about the differences between *el colegio* and *la universidad*. For older newcomer youth, age, as a marker of their multifaceted identities, intersected with their legal status and their EL label to inform decisions

they made about their futures as high school graduates and, possibly, college students.

As I have shown, AB 2121, though it foreclosed the opportunity for newcomer youth like Chuy and Elizabeth to immediately enroll at a 4-year university upon graduating high school, allowed them to exert their agency as they developed graduation plans with Mr. Sandoval that met their needs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how the first meetings between newcomer youth and school staff began to shape their educational trajectories and, subsequently, access to CCR opportunities. Although decisions concerning enrollment, grade placement, and academic plans might seem insignificant, I showed how newcomer youth at times contested these decisions and exerted their agency when interacting with the EHS school staff, specifically the school counselor, as they negotiated certain aspects of their high school academic plan. Because many of the newcomer youth had completed high school coursework, they seemed to be aware of how their past could impact their present and their future. They seemed to imply their past educational experiences should be accounted for because these courses informed their understanding of various academic subjects, those they again saw at EHS. Moreover, they seemed to be cognizant of the fact the decision making they were involved in at different points in the present was shaping the futures possibly available to them. On the other hand, the idea of possible futures—graduating high school or not, pursuing postsecondary education or not, attaining asylum or not—seemed to inform their present-day decision making when meeting with Mr. Sandoval or other EHS school staff to discuss their graduation plans. In other words, newcomer youth were "constantly [engaged in] constructing other possible worlds and imagining new futures" as they altered their present (Brescó de Luna, 2017, p. 282).

In a similar manner, EHS school staff seemed to be preoccupied with the possible futures they might discuss with newcomer youth at the time of enrollment and when discussing graduation plans. EHS school staff's disclosure of the possible futures available to newcomer youth could be described as a proleptic moment (Toolan, 2001). Whereas EHS school staff were preoccupied with the futures newcomer youth might encounter, depending on the decisions being made at the time of enrollment, newcomer youth wished for EHS school staff to attend to their past lived experiences as they made decisions that would affect their everyday schooling experiences and, subsequently, their futures. As I show in this chapter, newcomer youth also were contending with the varying aspects of their identities—their language labels, household composition, legal statuses, and older age—as they engaged in thought about how their present might inform their futures. Finally, these decisions situated in the present seemed to have negative consequences, albeit unintended, for futures available to them postgraduation as they related to their access to college. As I discuss in the following chapter, the ways EHS structured language learning seemed to either improve or limit newcomer youth's access to opportunities to become college ready.

CHAPTER SIX: LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Changing rules so that ELs can win in a game not intended for their success.

—Esperanza High School English Learner Team, 2021

Employing the framework of multilevel intersectionality helped remind me the institutional practices and recurring interactions I observed were influenced by a larger sociohistorical context in which the language program was developed. As such, I begin this chapter by discussing the sociohistorical context in which the Esperanza High School (EHS) language program evolved. This analysis at the third level—historicity—allowed me to identify how school staff at EHS made sense of macro-level influences affecting newcomer youth's access to college. Moving down a level to analyzing arenas of influence, I explain how the English learner (EL) team reorganized their language program to address the marginalization newcomer youth experienced because of their EL label regarding their lack of opportunities to access college. The second half of this chapter is spent addressing how this programmatic shift did not fully change the culture of marginalization newcomer youth were subject to because of their language learner label and racialized identities. By focusing on the interactions newcomer youth had with their teachers and peers, I shed light on how newcomer youth experienced linguistic violence vis-a-vis the spaces where they experienced refuge, which I call linguistic sanctuaries.

EHS Language Program

In what follows, I describe the sociocultural context that led the EL team to make programmatic changes to their language program. I then detail the program shift that occurred at EHS in their attempt to increase college access. This sets the stage for discussion about how EHS's efforts to minimize the ways in which newcomer youth were excluded addressed

curricular exclusion; however, it did not address the other ways newcomer youth were marginalized for their language learner label and racialized identities.

The Cultural–Historical Context

Before discussing the specifics of the language program at EHS, I want to foreground how the first newcomer youth the EHS, those welcomed in 2015, arrived when California was still governed by Proposition 227 (Legislative Analyst's Office, 1998), otherwise known as the English for the Children Initiative. This program effectively eliminated all K–12 bilingual programs (Gullixson, 1999). In the 2010s, several educational policies aimed at better serving ELs emerged. The first included California English language development (ELD) standards, which were adopted in 2012 (CDE, 2012). Among others, one of the most decisive was overturning Proposition 227 in 2016 with Proposition 58, also known as the Language Education, Acquisition, and Readiness Now Initiative. This initiative "open[ed] up avenues for multilingual education for all of California's students" (Hernandez, 2017, p. 134). These educational language policies undergirded the language program at EHS.

In the last decade, the EL team at EHS began to note how newcomer youth were at an academic disadvantage because of how EHS had designed their language program. In an effort to develop newcomer youth's language proficiency, EHS enrolled all students in ELD courses: specifically, two periods of ELD. This practice mirrors that of many schools across the country. For example, ELs in Arizona receive 4 hours of daily ELD instruction (Arizona Department of Education, 2014). Consequently, newcomer youth were excluded from taking college preparatory English courses.

In 2017, the EL team came to realize enrolling newcomer youth in double-block ELD courses was negatively affecting their ability to be college-ready. Conley (2012) defined a

college-ready student as one who “can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without the need for remedial or developmental coursework” (p. 1). Yet, enrolling newcomer youth in double-block ELD courses prevented them from accessing college preparatory content (i.e., college-preparatory English courses; Callahan & Shifrer, 2012; Rodriguez & Cruz, 2009). The language program seemed to treat “language proficiency [as] a prerequisite for content instruction” as opposed to “an outcome of effective content instruction” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018, p. 10). In other words, EHS had not yet developed a language program that prioritized teaching “language and content . . . in tandem, not separately or sequentially” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018, p. 10).

This realization led the EL team to submit a petition asking their school district for authorization to implement a different language program, Language and Literacy in English Acceleration Program (L^2EAP). Armed with school data, EHS argued that the current language program of double-block ELD resulted in the following disparities between the overall student population and ELs: lower graduation rates (see Table 6.1), lower proficiency rates in English language arts (see Table 6.2), lower college readiness rates (see Table 6.3), and lower future aspirations (see Table 6.4).

Table 6.1

Four-Year Graduation Rates at EHS

Student population	Academic school year				
	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020
All students	81%	81%	77%	79%	97%
ELs	65%	62%	46%	54%	54%

Table 6.2

English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy Performance

EHS student population who met or exceeded standard for ELA	Academic school year				
	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020
11th grade students	35%	61%	68%	60%	–
11th grade ELs	5%	10%	10%	10%	–

Note. 2019–2020 results are not available due to the suspension of testing because of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Table 6.3

College Readiness Rates

Student population identified as prepared	Academic school year				
	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020
12th grade students	–	33%	35%	39%	44%
12th grade ELs	–	15%	7%	18%	12%

Note. The California School Dashboard (CSD) was unveiled in Spring 2017.

Table 6.4

2019–2020 School Experience Survey

Survey item	Percentage of EHS students agree	
	EHS students	EHS ELs
School is important for achieving my future goals	82	87
I intend to graduate from a 4-year college or beyond	68	40

This brief historical timeline helps contextualize the language program at EHS I observed in effect from 2019–2021. I now analyze the second level of multilevel intersectionality (Núñez, 2014a) to illustrate how the EHS EL team, important social actors with power, engaged in reorganizing the language program to address the exclusion from college-preparatory coursework experienced by newcomer youth.

The Organizational Shift

Because the organizational domain of institutional power is concerned with examining which behaviors or practices perpetuate marginalization, I focus on how the EL team made sense of how the double-block ELD course requirement was hindering newcomer youth's access to opportunities to develop their college and career readiness (CCR) and the solution they proposed.

Mr. Fischer explained in an interview how the district master plan for ELs was responsible for newcomer youth's limited access to college preparatory coursework, saying:

> So the [district] master plan for EL students, is actually gonna, at least their first 2 years, it's going to, by design, it's going to keep their A–G access lower . . . So one of the problems with the A–G access is actually structural, it's in in the pursuit of language proficiency in students' first years in this country, they're going to be on a slower track

> than peers. So that's one component of the A–G . . . And then the other piece, a large piece, too, is I think, the language part. Of course, there is a relationship so that the sooner the students become, can become proficient in English, the sooner they'll experience confidence, and increased capacity in some of their content level classes, which are primarily in English. . . . So we're trying to give kids more A–G access earlier in their high school careers while still asking their ELD teachers to show language gains.

Mr. Fischer explained the design of the language program at EHS was a result of decision making occurring at the district level. These district-level decisions in turn shaped school site level practices. At EHS, the design of the language program resulted in the exclusionary tracking of newcomer youth. Umansky (2016) defined exclusionary tracking as "students' inclusion or exclusion from academic subject areas" (p. 1796). Prior to the implementation of L^2EAP, newcomer youth, on the basis of their EL classification, were unable to access English language arts courses early in their high school career. In his explanation of the structural issues resulting from the ELD program, Mr. Fischer seemed to allude that prior to enrolling in academic courses, newcomer youth were in need of designated ELD instruction. The California Department of Education (2019b) has defined designated ELD instruction as "instruction provided during a time during the regular school day for focused instruction on the state-adopted ELD standards to assist English learners to develop critical English language skills necessary for academic content learning in English" (para. 4).

Moreover, Mr. Fischer moved away from explaining how newcomer youth's low college readiness is a result of exclusionary tracking, a structural problem, to one that is a result of their lack of English language proficiency. In other words, he seemed to imply "students cannot profit from instruction in core content until they are English proficient" (Estrada, 2014, p. 539). As he

reiterated, the faster newcomer youth acquired proficiency in English, the more confident and more successful they would be in core content courses.

To address how the language program was hindering the ability of newcomer youth to attain CCR, the EL team proposed to implement a new language program, the L^2EAP model. In their letter to the school district, they described the new language program as follows:

> In the L^2EAP model, [EHS] students are double-blocked with an ELD 1/ELA 9 teacher and ELD 2/ELA 10 teacher and travel in cohorts of 7–10 EL students the rest of the day for integrated ELD (iELD) instruction. Double-blocked ELD/ELA teachers adhere to Edge curriculum throughout the double-block but collaborate with ELA grade-level colleagues on common standards and assessments. This instructional design assures ELD students receive a foundation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy while simultaneously experiencing increased A–G access and mainstream literacy best practices associated with it. (EHS, 2020a, p. 4)

Although double-block English instruction would still be mandated, EHS would shift their practice from offering two periods of ELD to two periods of English instruction, ELD and ELA. To them, this programmatic shift would ensure that at least one of the two English courses was a college-preparatory course (i.e., ELA). This programmatic change was an attempt on behalf of the EL team to provide newcomer youth "equal access to grade-level curricula and content standards" (Walqui et al., 2010, p. 51) and promote their integration into the mainstream. In spite of the EL team's efforts to address inequity by "changing rules so that ELs can win in a game not intended for their success," newcomer youth continued to experience marginalization for being seen as language learners and for their racialized identities (personal communication, EHS EL Team, 2021).

Integrating EL Students - Same Difference

In this section, I detail how the EL team's decision to implement a new language program to address one aspect of educational inequity revealed other ways newcomer youth were marginalized. Informed by an analysis occurring at the experiential and interactional dimensions of the second level of institutional power (Núñez, 2014a), I reveal how newcomer youth were susceptible to experiencing within classroom de facto segregation and acts of linguistic violence, especially in integrated classrooms. I contrast this to the experiences newcomer youth had in classrooms where their language learning was fostered, which I describe as linguistic sanctuaries. I posit that the implementation of the L^2EAP model, which sought to address one form of linguistic marginalization, created new ways of marginalizing newcomer youth.

Within-Classroom De Facto Segregation

One of the goals the EL team sought to accomplish with the new language program was to provide integrated ELD instruction to its newcomer youth. Integrated ELD is defined as "instruction in which the state-adopted ELD standards are used in tandem with the state-adopted academic content standards" (CDE, 2019b, para. 5). In talking with the EL team and reviewing the 2019–2020 Logic Model: EL Programs, it was clear EHS hoped to provide "specifically designed academic instruction in English" (CDE, 2019b, para. 5). Their rationale for integrating newcomer youth into mainstream courses was based on the understanding that doing so would create opportunities for newcomer youth to socialize and learn from and alongside their English-speaking peers (Allard, 2013; Estrada, 2014). Second, newcomer youth would now have the opportunity to develop their language proficiency while acquiring academic content knowledge (Callahan & Shifrer, 2012; Sherris, 2008). This new language program sought to address de facto linguistic segregation at the school level (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Harklau, 1994; Lillie et al.,

2010; Mosqueda, 2012), but resulted in within-classroom de facto segregation (Carhill et al., 2008).

Despite the EL team's best intentions to fully integrate newcomer youth into the school community, "ELD ghettos" were formed in mainstream classes, something multiple content-area teachers observed occurring in their own classrooms. For example, Ms. Azuela, an English teacher, described what had occurred the year prior when she had the first small cohort of newcomer youth in her now-integrated English class, saying:

> I [had] a Spanish speaking [teacher's assistant (TA)] before, that helps, you know . . . the TA can help the ELD kids but I also had one TA who wanted all the ELD kids to sit together because it was easier for the TA. And then I'm pretty sure it was the principal who observed and was like, no, it shouldn't have, I don't know, somebody observed and said, "It shouldn't be like that, because that's like, you know, making a little ELD ghetto. You need to intersperse them so that they're hearing English," which I kind of agree with, and I was just like, it shouldn't be the TA's decision. It should be what's best for the students to actually learn English.

Reflecting on the incident of de facto segregation within her classroom, Ms. Azuela attributed this as an unintended consequence of her TA wanting to group students in a way that would allow the TA to better facilitate student's access to the class content. Without naming the power or role she or her TA had as class instructors, she shared how the principal pointed out how they were creating a "little ELD ghetto" instead of "interspers[ing] them so that [newcomer students were] hearing English."

The creation of the "little ELD ghetto" was not the intended result of the new language program at EHS. In fact, this was an unintended consequence of how integration was occurring

within mainstream courses. The EL team had intended for newcomer youth to have access to opportunities to interact with their English-speaking peers so that they could "develop the interactional competence necessary to participate in the social context of the classroom: negotiating, constructing, and even resisting norms of interaction governing various typical classroom participation structures" (Kibler et al., 2015, p. 14). However, newcomer youth were still experiencing separation from their English-speaking peers. Even though the new language program provided newcomer youth access to college-preparatory courses, students were still experiencing de facto segregation, this time within mainstream courses.

Linguistic Violence

How newcomer youth experienced language learning in mainstream courses was not always a positive experience. These moments were not just negative but examples of what I refer to as linguistic violence. A growing number of scholars have begun to examine language weaponization (see *International Journal of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education*, 2022). Pentón Herrera and Bryan (2022) defined it as "the process by which words, discourse, and language in any form have been used or are being used to inflict harm on others, and how language education practices, policies, programs, and curricula are weaponized" (p. 3). I instead frame linguistic violence as harm inflicted upon minoritized individuals because of their perceived language learner identity by those with more power (i.e, teachers, linguistically privileged students, or individuals who inhabit whiteness; see Rosa & Flores, 2017).

By examining language practices in microlevel level social interactions, I made note of how the most frequent occurrence of linguistic violence reported by newcomer youth was bullying and subsequently feeling intense shame (Galmiche, 2018; Mendez et al., 2012; Parra et al., 2014) when they interacted with their U.S.-born, more English-proficient, or linguistically

privileged peers. Another handful mentioned teachers and peers would withhold help. This was especially painful for newcomer youth when they were aware the person from whom they sought help was capable of helping them in Spanish. In what follows, I draw attention to those interactions in which linguistic violence occurred between newcomer youth and their teachers as well as between newcomer youth and their peers.

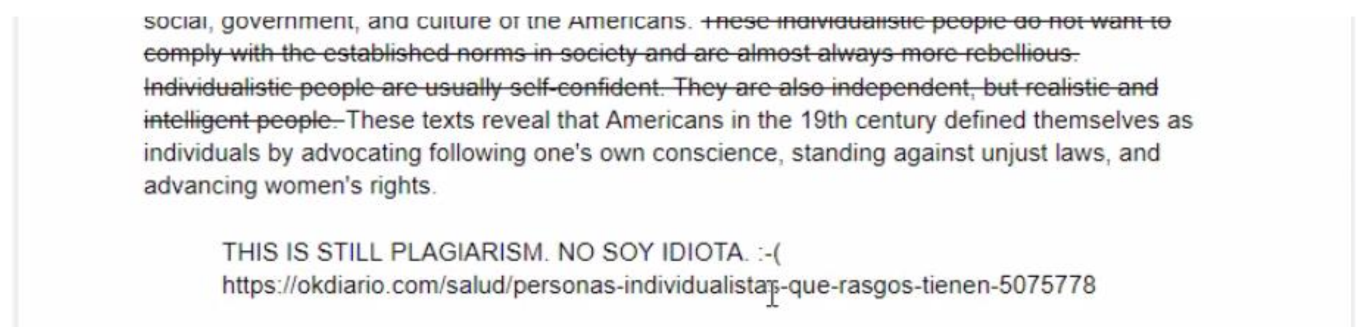
Teacher–Student Interactions

An interesting way linguistic violence was enacted by teachers was by accusing newcomer youth of cheating. Two similar, yet different, instances of teachers accusing newcomer youth of plagiarizing or having someone else do their work are examined in this section.

In this first interaction, I focus on the comments left by Ms. Azuela on Luna's homework assignment (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1

Screenshot of Luna's English Assignment



social, government, and culture of the Americans. ~~These individualistic people do not want to comply with the established norms in society and are almost always more rebellious. Individualistic people are usually self-confident. They are also independent, but realistic and intelligent people.~~ These texts reveal that Americans in the 19th century defined themselves as individuals by advocating following one's own conscience, standing against unjust laws, and advancing women's rights.

THIS IS STILL PLAGIARISM. NO SOY IDIOTA. :-(
https://okdiario.com/salud/personas-individualistas-que-rasgos-tienen-5075778

From my fieldnotes dated November 3, 2020, I recorded this moment as follows:

Following my usual ways, I greeted Luna and asked how she was and when she responded and said *que bien y mal*, I could hear it in her voice, that mal meant *mal*. I

> asked her what happened. And she began to explain to me that she was called out by a teacher and accused of *plagio*. You could hear in Luna's voice that she understood how serious plagio was and she explained that she had gotten help from City Year after school yesterday and that she had done some research on Google and also used Google Translate to assist her in writing up the introduction paragraph. Yet, she received a comment on her paper that read "THIS IS STILL PLAGIARISM - NO SOY IDIOTA :-(" with a link to here. Luna shared how as soon as she read that comment on her paper she began to worry and quickly emailed her teacher, and apologized. That she had never intended to plagiarize. I asked her if she heard back and Luna said no, because it was late at night, I think 9 p.m. As Luna finished her story, I could tell she was shaken up.

Though this interaction occurred over the internet (e.g., Google Docs, email), it is still a poignant representation of how Ms. Azuela inflicted harm upon Luna by accusing her of plagiarizing and attempting to willfully deceive her teacher. There is no doubt Luna did understand that an accusation of plagiarism was very serious.

Trying to make sense of how Ms. Azuela arrived at the conclusion that Luna had used Google Translate to plagiarize sentences from a webpage titled, "Personas individualistas: Qué rasgos tiene" (Burgues, 2020), I, too, used Google Translate to translate the identified sentences. Yet, Google Translate did not produce the sentences Luna had written on her homework assignment, with the exception of one sentence, "They are also independent, but realistic and intelligent people." Instead, what I deduced from this situation was that Luna had used a variety of resources to help her complete her English assignments, including Google Translate, researching the web, receiving help from a City Year tutor, and attending tutoring that morning with me. However, despite her efforts to navigate the language demands for this assignment,

what she encountered was an accusation of plagiarism and, worse yet, intentionally trying to deceive Ms. Azuela.

Months later, I again observed how a teacher engaged in similar behavior to that of Ms. Azuela when evaluating a newcomer student's work. When Ms. Schoning, a senior English teacher, questioned Lizbeth about who had helped her on an assignment, Lizbeth began to panic as she did not know how to respond. She seemed to be aware that Ms. Schoning's question was alluding to the fact that someone else had completed her assignment.

That morning, Lizbeth arrived to Mr. Romo's after-school tutoring sessions, which I attended. Lizbeth, who for some time was struggling in her senior English course, often frequented the after-school session. She almost always asked Mr. Romo to place her in a breakout room with me. That day was no exception. Like other days, Lizbeth expressed her frustration with Ms. Schoning because, despite her best efforts to complete assignments, she always received failing marks. Aware she was at risk of not graduating, she asked me to help her complete an assignment. When I reviewed the work she managed to complete on her own, I could tell Lizbeth was struggling to make sense of the questions; her responses did not answer the questions being asked in the assignment. In the little time we had together, we worked on making sure her responses addressed the questions. Not having enough time to revise her answers and having to quickly log out of our Zoom meeting to join Ms. Schoning's online class, she shared her updated assignment.

Soon after joining class with Ms. Schoning, Lizbeth began to text me the screenshots of the questions she was fielding from Ms. Schoning. I recreated the conversation captured in the screenshots here:

Ms. Schoning: I'm asking who helped you.

Lizbeth: in what

Ms. Schoning: You turned in the Charles Blow assignment twice. One was all wrong and the second one was a little better. So I'm asking who helped with the second one.

Lizbeth: with Mr. Romo in the home room with Ms. Angeles in Romo tutoring in the morning at 9 a.m. because he has tutoring on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

She sent me a combination of chats and voice messages telling me how Ms. Schoning was questioning her and asking me how she should respond. I told her to speak the truth: She had attended tutoring that morning to receive help on her assignment.

As a volunteer, in addition to my role as a researcher, I wrote in my fieldnotes how the questioning EHS school staff inflicted upon newcomer youth made me doubt whether I was doing a disservice to students like her who were seeking help. On April 13, 2021, I wrote:

> I never know how to take this. Because clearly her English is better when she gets supported, but isn't that what you would want, for kids to see how to improve their writing. And I know the balance is fine between doing something for them and teaching them/guiding them/scaffolding them.

Similar to Luna, Lizbeth sought help from tutors who were college educated, like me, to help her navigate her homework assignment. Yet, in seeking and receiving help, her updated assignment, which "was a little better" than the first one that was "all wrong," triggered suspicion from Ms. Schoning about who had helped her. It is interesting to note how Ms. Schoning did not take the time to address Lizbeth's efforts to turn in a revised version of her first assignment or that it seemed Lizbeth was proactive and sought out help. Instead, Ms. Schoning saw the differences and assumed that another person—not Lizbeth—had been responsible for the updated version. This interaction, albeit taking place online, led Lizbeth to become so distracted and worried that

I, too, worried about whether or not we both would be reprimanded—I for helping her, she for seeking help.

Like Ms. Azuela, Ms. Schoning seemed to be aware of Lizbeth's identity as an EL. This language learner identity seemed to influence how both teachers interacted with Luna and Lizbeth. Both students' attempts to engage with the academic content by seeking out help, whether via online or at EHS, were met with suspicion. This led to harm; Luna's identity as a hard-working student who yearned to learn English and Lizbeth's identity of being resourceful to accomplish her goal of passing her class and obtain her high school diploma—something she was unable to do even after attending summer school that school year—were damaged. These types of interactions newcomer youth experienced with teachers are what I call linguistic violence.

Peer Interactions

To bring to light how linguistic violence played out between newcomer youth and their peers, it is important to note how newcomer youth who migrated from various parts of Latin America became racialized as Latinx. This racialization leads to "erasing differences of intra-group diversity" (Chávez-Moreno, 2021, p. 168), particularly newcomer youth's indigeneity. Teresa, a Mayan newcomer youth, shared, "Yo siento que [EHS school staff] me ven como, así, como una persona Latina." Her preference was that EHS schools staff acknowledge her indigeneity, that they say, "Teresa es Maya." I make note of this because newcomer youth's various social identities (e.g., their racial background as Indigenous and their Indigenous languages) at times "result[ed] in grave material consequences" (Chávez-Moreno, 2021, p. 177), such as when they experienced linguistic violence when interacting with their non-Indigenous newcomer youth peers.

Next, I describe an interaction between a Mayan newcomer youth and his Mexican peer, illustrating how the linguistic violence newcomer youth experienced was due not just to their identity as a language learner but compounded by their identity as Indigenous.

In the final weeks of the spring semester, EHS began to see their enrollment of newcomer youth increase. As Mr. Fischer and Ms. Rico reminded me, EHS knew to prepare to receive a huge number of newcomer youth given the news about unaccompanied minors being transported from the U.S.–Mexico border to the Long Beach Convention Center (Castillo, 2021). It was only a matter of time before youth arrived at their South Los Angeles community, Mr. Fischer said. This influx of newcomer youth at EHS (and across the United States) was due to the Trump and Biden administrations having made decisions to either expel (or not) immigrants arriving at the U.S.–Mexico border (Congressional Research Service, 2021; Greenberg, 2021; Hansen, 2021; Montoya-Galvez, 2021). Within this larger sociopolitical context, newcomer youth arrived at EHS, most of them as unaccompanied minors.

Though I am unsure of how many days Brayner had officially attended EHS—I only attended EHS twice a week—I knew Brayner had not been there for long given what happened next. In my field notes, I wrote the following:

> From Belinda to Everyone: 12:14 PM
>
> De donde es Brayner :0
>
> Ms. Bevan asks if he would like to unmute, and answer. He does and says "Soy de Guatemala." Ms. Bevan asks if Belinda has other questions. She says "No, es que su nombre es muy raro." Ms. Kemp does not acknowledge this comment. Instead, she proceeds to ask him about whether he played for a soccer team back home. He responds by saying no. She then tells him about Esperanza High's soccer team.

To protect the student's identity, I kept Brayner's last name anonymous as well as Belinda's. Had I provided them, you would see that Brayner's last two names served as markers of his indigenous identity. Given the context of learning over Zoom, names of students are all that was made visible. Students' faces were never shown. Brayner's names caught Belinda's attention because, as she put it, era un "nombre raro." This interaction between Belinda and Brayner represents what I call linguistic violence. Belinda inflicted harm by alluding to Brayner as a racialized other due to his indigenous names. Scholars Rosa and Flores (2017) argued how raciolinguistic ideologies led to indigenous languages being "described in animalistic terms as a way of denying indigenous populations their humanity" (p. 624). By ascribing "raro" to his names, Belinda seemed to otherize him and deny him his humanity. In addition to being susceptible to acts of linguistic violence for being an EL, newcomer youth like Brayner were more vulnerable to such acts because of their indigenous identity.

Linguistic Sanctuaries

For the last finding, I share how newcomer youth experienced learning English in spaces I refer to as linguistic sanctuaries. I borrow the term "sanctuary" from the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s in which religious organizations and social activities provided refuge to Central Americans fleeing the civil wars (Chinchilla et al., 2009; Perla & Coutin, 2010). As such, I define linguistic sanctuaries as those spaces that allowed newcomer youth to find refuge from marginalization due to their language learner identity. These spaces also created opportunities for youth to freely engage in languaging Swain (2006) defined as "an activity, a process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (p. 98). Next, I detail the specific components of that made up the linguistic sanctuaries newcomer youth encountered at EHS.

Nestor, a senior who had just graduated from EHS when I interviewed him, detailed what it was like for him to learn English in the ELD classroom, saying:

> Father Dunn, él es de ELD 3. Nos hacía leer bastante para que mejoráramos en nuestra pronunciación que para que fuéramos desenredando nuestra lengua y así hablar mejor y fluyente . . . Nos dejaba que habláramos español, y si hablábamos español era porque no sabíamos cómo decirle y él nos hacía, "no sé cómo decir esta palabra" "¿cuál palabra?" decía, en español "Esta," "Okay, se dice así, haber, dila" . . . Y ya después nos hacía que habláramos con él en inglés para que nosotros nos sintiéramos cómodos al ir hablando inglés, para que perdiéramos ese miedo, porque muchos de nosotros allí, los hispano hablantes, teníamos muchísimo miedo de hablar inglés.

Nestor expressed in detail how he encountered safe spaces for him to engage in languaging. Although this particular safe space happened to be in the ELD classroom, I am not arguing the ELD classroom was the only space that served as a linguistic sanctuary. I use this example to draw attention to three things happening in that classroom that led to the creation of a linguistic sanctuary. The first is that Nestor's teacher created opportunities, in this case, engaging in reading to improve pronunciation of "desenredar la lengua." The second component is the fact his teacher allowed for students to use all their linguistic repertoires and engage in translanguaging (Vogel & García, 2017). Interestingly, none of the teachers I spoke with referenced the work they were doing as translanguaging. Translanguaging allowed Nestor to use Spanish as a tool to gain access to information (e.g., new vocabulary) as he was learning English. Finally, this was a classroom where students were allowed to experiment with language without fear of judgment or, as Nestor said, a learning space where students like him could "perder el miedo" that came with using the English language.

As I paid attention to how newcomer youth experienced learning English, I began to see how translanguaging was one of the key features of a linguistic sanctuary. Like Nestor, Hanna, who was from El Salvador and aspired to study law or join the military, used Spanish as a tool to access help as she navigated the language demands of her classes:

> Hanna: Exacto. Sí, todas mis maestras hablaban español o los alumnos eran nada más gente que hablaba español o sea que tenía el problema que yo, que no hablaban inglés. Pero eso me ayuda[ba] porque me sentía como, cómo se dice en español, se me olvido ahorita a mi, confiada.
>
> Sophia: Ajá.
>
> Hanna: Me sentía confiada, porque si yo me equivocaba con el idioma o no entendía algo, yo sabía que había otra persona que lo podía ayudar a uno. Que es, nos podíamos comunicar, ¿me entiendes?

As she reflected on her experiences taking classes at EHS, she credited the presence of newcomer youth like her who spoke Spanish and were learning English for allowing her to feel more confident in her language abilities (Swain & Watanabe, 2019). As she shared, "Si yo me equivocaba con el idioma o no entendía algo, yo sabía que había otra persona que lo podía ayudar a uno. Que es, nos podíamos comunicar." She had the freedom to make mistakes, and she also had the ability to use her Spanish to seek help from her classmates.

Newcomer youth were allowed to not only leverage their Spanish to gain clarification or ask for help but also to engage with academic content. For example, Jorge, who was from Guatemala and aspired to become a doctor, explained how after checking in with his monolingual biology teacher about his hard time understanding the course content, he was given permission to submit assignments using Spanish. He said, "Apenas el jueves que dije que no

entiendo mucho, me dijo…si entiendes un poco la tarea entonces si quieres hazla en español me dijo, si es fácil para ti."

Ms. Martinez, like Jorge's biology teacher, also allowed for the use of Spanish, but she seemed to focus more on the idea of writing in Spanglish or facilitating translanguaging in the classroom, saying:

> And then I had tutoring three times a week, that year, in the library. So students who could stay and wanted to stay would, there were students who would work Wednesday. And so what I told them is that they could write it in Spanish and Google Translate it, or they can write it in Spanglish or they can write it in Spanish.

Ms. Martinez, like Jorge's biology teacher, saw Spanish as a tool newcomer youth had at their disposal, which allowed them to engage with the academic content of her history class.

Although I have described the various components that capture the essence of learning spaces as linguistic sanctuaries, I want to draw attention to one final point about how at the core of these linguistic sanctuaries was the idea of seeing newcomer youth for who they are and supporting them in their learning journey. I end with the words of Ms. Martinez who captured this sentiment well, stating:

> And I think that they're going to be able to develop English in other classes. And they might not have access to, to using their critical thoughts in the same way in other classes. And so my goal wasn't always English language development, I want them to feel supported, to feel loved, to feel seen, and to feel comfortable enough to like, resist any systems of oppression that they encountered in this country.

Ms. Martinez was aware of the limitations of her instructional strategy. Indeed, she confessed that as a history teacher, her "goal wasn't always English language development." Instead, she

preferred to focus on developing newcomer youth's critical thinking, even if it meant doing so in Spanish instead of developing their English language skills. More importantly, she wanted newcomer youth "to feel supported, to feel loved, to feel seen, and to feel comfortable enough to like, resist any systems of oppression that they encountered in this country." Though she did not name the systems of oppression newcomer youth would have to contend with, she acknowledged their existence. Perhaps it is the recognition of the brutal reality newcomer youth encountered in their day to day that motivated Ms. Martinez to care for them and validate them for who they are.

Conclusion

There is no denying that newcomer youth as ELs "need various kinds of support to acquire the language of instruction that will open for them the doors to better academic and labor market opportunities" (Rios Aguilar et al., 2012, p. 76). Because of the various educational disparities between ELs and their counterparts, the EL team at EHS rethought and revamped their language program. In a series of unfortunate events, the EL team's efforts to address de facto segregation or exclusionary tracking at the school by promoting integration into mainstream courses led to de facto segregation within those courses. Additionally, despite the programmatic shifts to provide a language program addressing educational inequities newcomer youth experienced as language learners, these efforts fell short of addressing the ways they were still marginalized for being ELs and, at times, for their indigenous heritage, too. As I demonstrated, these social interactions at the micro level are what I referred to as linguistic violence because of the harm enacted upon newcomer youth. The silver lining to this new reality was that newcomer youth were able to find refuge with a couple of teachers across a variety of classrooms I refer to as linguistic sanctuaries. This chapter depicted how newcomer youth experienced learning in light of their language learner and racialized identities.

CHAPTER SEVEN: UNDEREXPLORED FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

I begin this chapter by drawing attention to the varied aspirations of newcomer youth at Esperanza High School (EHS) voiced across the interviews I conducted and more informally in the different classroom contexts I observed. These aspirations were as diverse as the newcomer youth student population at EHS, seemingly shaped by their different social identities along the lines of legal status, race/ethnicity, language, gender, and age. In my analyses, these aspects of newcomer youth's identities emerged as most salient. It is also important to note how, at times, newcomer youth simultaneously held privileged and marginalized identities (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2019. As such, I delve into these differences as they relate to the barriers youth encountered as they moved forward in their high school careers.

Recognizing that newcomer youth's membership in multiple social categories, along with institutional practices, limit their access to 4-year colleges, I draw attention to the three domains of institutional power to focus on "how multiple environmental factors in educational settings organize environments that can hinder participation of historically underrepresented populations" (Núñez et al., 2020, p. 100). To do this, I first analyze the organizational domain "or how pedagogy and curricula are organized" (e.g., school counseling services, college and career presentations; Núñez et al., 2020, p. 100). I situate how EHS framed their conversations with newcomer youth about college eligibility and access to financial aid within the broader sociopolitical context of anti-immigrant policies in California and the nation. While still examining the role of institutional power, I focus on the interactions between EHS school staff and newcomer youth and the conversations that took place (or did not) concerning the

postsecondary[9] pathways available to them. I conclude this chapter by drawing from newcomer youth's insights to reveal how they made sense of their own future aspirations vis-a-vis how their own social identities shaped access to CCR opportunities (Núñez, 2014b).

Newcomer Youth's Aspirations

The future aspirations of newcomer youth at EHS shared with me during interviews represented a wide range of careers (see Figure 7.1). Eleven students wanted to pursue careers in medicine as pediatricians or anesthesiologists. Others wanted to train as mechanics. There were some who aspired to become business owners. Many, if not all these career aspirations, required postsecondary education or training. This reflects the fact that most 21st century jobs now require some degree of postsecondary education (Carnevale et al., 2016; Savitz-Romer, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

[9] I used David T. Conley's (2012) definition of postsecondary education which "refers to any formal setting in which an individual pursues additional instruction beyond high school. This might include two- or four-year degree programs, certificate or licensure programs, apprenticeships, or training programs in the military" (p. 1). Given this definition, I used postsecondary education and college interchangeably.

Figure 7.1

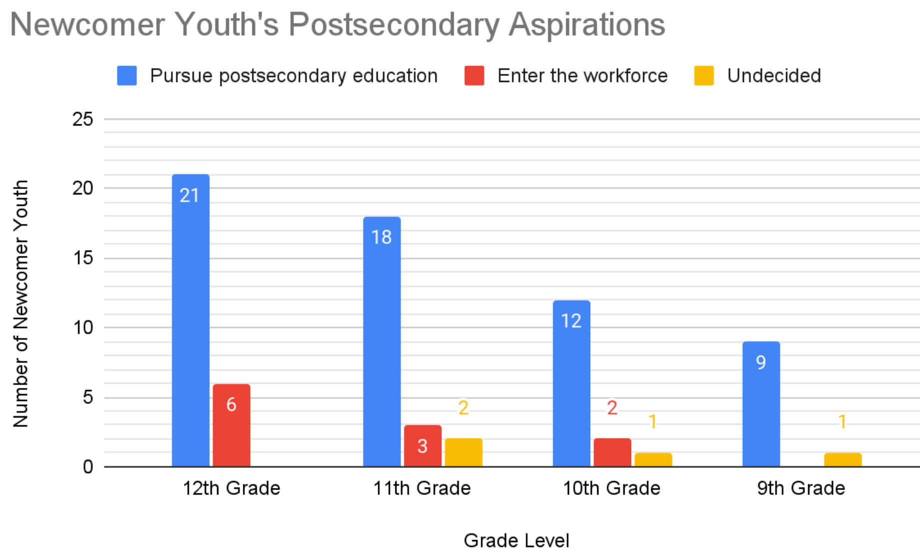
Word Cloud of Esperanza High School's Newcomer Youth's Future Aspirations

Although not all 75 newcomer youth wanted to pursue postsecondary education, the majority did (*n* = 60). Of the 75, 11 stated they wished to enter the workforce immediately after graduating high school. Only a handful (*n* = 4) were unsure of what they wished to do after high school. This trend was true for newcomer youth despite being enrolled in different grades. For example, among those barely beginning their high school career as freshmen, nine had already formulated ideas about whether they wanted to pursue postsecondary education or training (see Figure 7.2). There was only one student who was unsure about what they wanted to do after high school graduation. This was significant because educational researchers have long argued that "educational aspirations are critical to educational attainment because people cannot achieve what they do not dream" (Asha Cooper, 2009, p. 616). Moreover, scholars have found that most youth, prior to starting their high school careers, have already formed ideas about their college aspirations and their ability to attain a college education. For example, examining the aspirations of middle school students, Kao and Tienda (1998) found, among a cohort of minority youth,

college aspirations were high in eighth grade but declined in 10th and 12th grade. Others have found the likelihood of attending college increases by 21% when students have formulated college aspirations before the 10th grade (Alexander & Cook, 1979). Acknowledging that newcomer youth are engaging in thoughts about their aspirations from the moment they enroll in high school is significant. Literature pointed to how the college-choice process is a lengthy one that begins with "the earliest inculcation of college aspirations" (McDonough, 1997, p. 3). Often at the center of the nurturing of students' expectations are adults like parents, teachers, and school counselors (McClafferty et al., 2002).

Figure 7.2

Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Plans by Grade Level



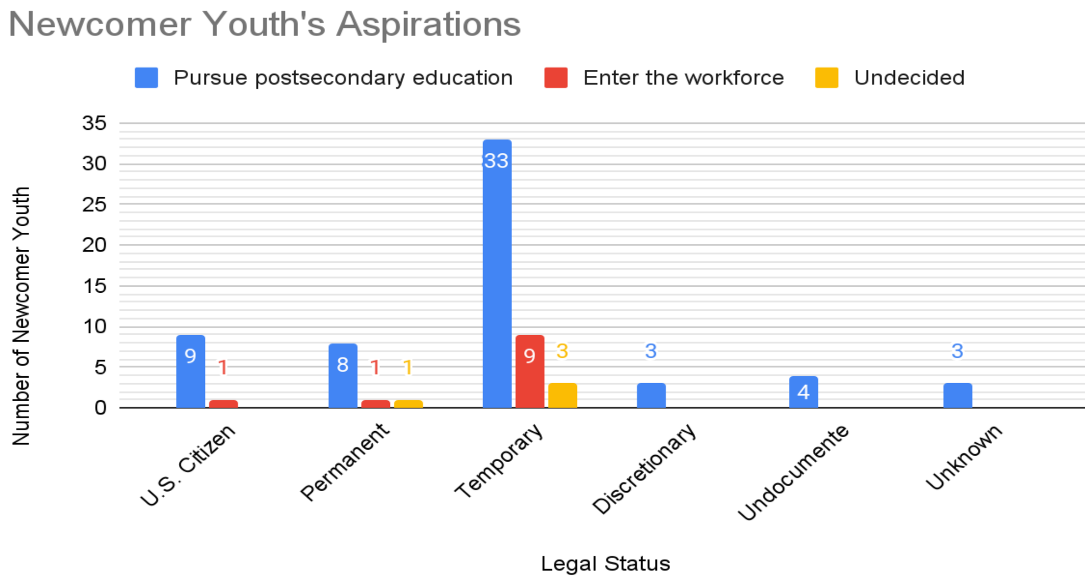
How Multiple Social Identities Influence Varying Aspirations

Before discussing the role various domains of institutional power (e.g., organizational and interactional) have on shaping newcomer youth's access to CCR opportunities, I consider

how the type of aspirations newcomer youth had seemed to be influenced by a variety of social identities, including their legal status and gender. Newcomer youth who were seeking asylum and, thus, occupied a temporary status were more likely to express their desire to enter the workforce immediately upon graduating high school (n = 9) when compared with newcomer youth who held different legal statuses (see Figure 7.3). Many of these youth had an ongoing asylum case. Of the nine, six were living either with an extended family member or an older sibling. With the exception of three students, all of them identified as male.

Figure 7.3

Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Plans by Legal Status



For example, Manuel, who was from Guatemala, was more certain about entering the workforce than immediately seeking training to be a barber, a career that did interest him. To be sure, Manuel did have posthigh school aspirations, they just did not include pursuing

postsecondary education or training. When I asked what goals he hoped to accomplish upon graduating high school, he referenced wanting to *tener papeles* and contribute to his family's well-being, saying:

> Mi sueño es de . . . No sé, aquí . . . estar aquí en los Estados Unidos. Tener mi propia casa y viajar. O sea, tener papeles y visitar a mi mamá. Ayudar también a mamá para, con los recursos, con todo.

Even as he voiced his desire to obtain *papeles* or move out of a temporary status to a more permanent status, Manuel seemed to be uncertain about obtaining his goal of having *papeles* by prefacing it with a "no sé." His uncertainty about remaining in the United States, gaining eligibility for permanent residency, and having the privilege to travel the world, including visiting his mother, should not come as a surprise, given the "low refugee admissions [from Latina America] despite high need for humanitarian protections" (Monin et al., 2021, para. 14). In other words, Manuel's uncertainty speaks to the fact that many unaccompanied minors like him have "received some form of immigration relief, though in the majority of those cases, the relief came in the form of termination of immigration court proceedings and no other relief, leaving the unaccompanied child with no legal status" (Greenberg et al., 2021a, p. 13).

Before I ended the interview, I asked Manuel what he envisioned himself doing in 10 years when he would be 25 years old. He again reiterated wanting to "tener papeles y tener una casa. Aquí en Estados Unidos." For Manuel, his priority was not to attend college but to gain a more permanent status and the ability to remain in the United States. Furthermore, he wanted to be financially secure to provide for his mother who was still in Guatemala. His long-term goal was to be a homeowner. As he shared with me, his reason for migrating to the United States was because "no tenía mucho . . . dinero, no." Informed by his past and current low-socioeconomic

background, Manuel was clear about his own hierarchy of needs and that of his family, which meant prioritizing entering the workforce versus enrolling in postsecondary education.

I want to contrast this with one of the two newcomer youth who aspired to enter the workforce. I do this to shed light on how newcomer youth's multiple social identities at times offered them privileges their peers (like Manuel) did not have. There are different levels of precarity to which newcomer youth were susceptible. This is key to how intersectionality sheds light on the ways interlocking systems of oppression differentially affect individuals of varying multiple social identities. For example, Lizbeth was a senior who was a U.S. citizen. Despite the many conversations she had with school staff like Mr. Romo, she was adamant about entering the workforce upon high school graduation. To be clear, this was her future aspiration. In fact, she voiced many future aspirations, including securing multiple jobs and working *las 24 horas,* or around the clock, to move out and rent an apartment with her older sister, which I noted in my field notes on March 3, 2021. As Lizbeth shared with us, she was opting to work full time instead of working while going to college because the latter was frowned upon by many employers. As she told us, employers turned down applicants who had limited availability. Unlike Manuel, Lizbeth was secure in her legal status. She was not at risk of being exploited due to her legal status as many unaccompanied minors are (Canizales, 2014, 2017), given that she was a U.S. citizen. At the same time, she was at risk for being employed in precarious work or "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky" (Kalleberg, 2009, p. 2), which is currently common for young workers (Orellana et al., 2020) and those with lower educational attainment (Ross & Bateman, 2019). Whereas Lizbeth would be susceptible to working in low-wage jobs by not pursuing postsecondary education or training, Manuel would be negatively impacted by both lack of *papeles* and his lack of a college education.

Intersectional Contextual Influences on Newcomer Youth's CCR

In this section, I focus on how domains of power, specifically the organizational and interactional arena, shaped newcomer youth's college and career readiness (CCR). I draw attention to the access newcomer youth at EHS had to school counseling services where conversations about college or careers took place. Conversations about college includes presentations and small group meetings I observed Mr. Sandoval holding with newcomer youth. I also explain how the Career Fun Friday workshop series, which Mr. Romo and Ms. Marin organized, exposed newcomer youth to a diversity of college pathways and careers. As I shed light on the organizational arena, I interweave the interactions that occurred between school staff and newcomer youth. Doing both simultaneously highlights how the institutional practices were informing conversations taking place between school staff and newcomer youth as they discussed their future aspirations.

Defining CCR

Depending on the context, CCR might have different meanings. In California, students who are considered college and career ready are those who have "complet[ed] rigorous coursework, pass[ed] challenging exams, or receiv[ed] a state seal" (CDE, 2022a, para. 1). More specific measurements used to determine a student's CCR include career technical education pathway completion, Grade 11 Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments in English language arts and mathematics, Advanced Placement exams, international baccalaureate exams, college credit courses (formerly called dual enrollment), A–G completion, state seal of biliteracy, or military science or leadership (CDE, 2022a). More comprehensively, "a student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs without

the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (Conley, 2012, p. 1). I used this definition because it spoke to the fact that not all students will "requir[e] the same proficiency in all areas" (Conley, 2012, p. 1) and instead considers how "a student's interests and post-high school aspirations influence[s] the precise knowledge and skill profiles necessary to be ready for postsecondary studies" (Conley, 2012, p. 1). CCR as a multifaceted concept is made up of four "keys" which include: (a) key cognitive strategies, (b) key content knowledge, (c) key learning skills and techniques, and (d) key transition knowledge and skills (Conley, 2012). For example, "knowledge about how to navigate the postsecondary system and how to apply for financial aid" (Jackson & Rodriguez, 2017, para. 5) exemplifies what Conley (2012) described as key transition knowledge and skills. For the purposes of this study, I focused on the activities at EHS that developed newcomer youth's understanding of "which courses to take in high school in order to be admitted to an appropriate postsecondary program, understanding financial aid options and procedures" (Conley, 2012, p. 2) and college-career pathways.

Developing CCR of All Students, Newcomer Youth Too?

Before I discuss how Mr. Salazar worked to develop newcomer youth's college readiness, I want to shed light on the department of school counseling at EHS: both how and to whom they delivered services. In particular, the school counseling department engaged in a practice of delivering information about college without providing translation of any kind. Ms. Varela, the biology teacher, was particularly frustrated with the lack of attention given to ensuring newcomer youth had access to critical information about college, saying:

> Because a lot of the times, for example, you have, and I also had an issue with this with with the administrators, you know, they would have meetings where you're just handing out information like this is, you know, you have that presentation, I'm like, this is what

you need for college. And you have the Spanish speakers in there, but they're doing a presentation only in English with no translation. So I'm like, so you just made those kids sit there for 60 minutes, and maybe a couple of them understood what you were saying? Like, what's the point of that? If you're gonna hand out facts, factual information, I don't know, translate a worksheet, you know, so that at least they get it. But it was things like that, they were going to an assembly where, by the way, you're not going to understand anything, because we were going to do everything in English. So being more careful about doing, you know, school wide things where, again, you include the students. Yeah, maybe we won't translate the verbal presentation, but we'll translate the resources for you.

This practice of delivering college information without accounting for the linguistic abilities of students, like newcomer youth, occurred time and time again. Mr. Romo, for example, was so accustomed to this school practice that he shared how he took it upon himself to translate all the materials shared with the general student body, especially presentations regarding college, saying:

Mr. Romo: So I'm always constantly talking to our supervisor or admin, or any little announcements for the student body, and then I try to get them so I could try to translate them if I need to, and give them to our students. So those are some of the ways I'm trying to get our students involved, especially in the college going awareness. Those are the information I try to have translated. And also sometimes, I have my own presentation for them as well.

Sophia: Like your own? Like you create—

> Mr. Romo: I create my own presentation from the information I get from them. And kind of make it simple where they can understand it. So they could get involved and get the information, especially because I, from my experience, nobody helped me. And I'm trying to get them, you know, get the information before them so they could go on [to college].

The school practice of only delivering college information in English put newcomer youth at a disadvantage given that they were unable to fully access the information being presented to them. Though the school sought to prepare students' key transition knowledge, they inadvertently left out newcomer youth from being able to develop their understandings about college by not accounting for their languages.

Developing Newcomer Youth's CCR

In this section, I focus on the small group meetings Mr. Sandoval had with the newcomer youth as they selected their courses for the next year, a presentation about grades and college eligibility, and one of three workshops delivered by the Central American Resource Center entitled "Importance of Education," which Mr. Sandoval helped organize. I do so to show newcomer youth's "contextual knowledge of the entire process of college admissions [and] financial aid" (Conley, 2007, p. 21) was developed. I then detail how a workshop series called Career Fun Fridays sought to promote college and career awareness (Conley, 2012). I analyze how Career Fun Fridays were a tool to "help students understand the connection between school and the world of work" (American School Counselor Association, 2014, p. 2). Throughout this section, I also highlight conversations that took place between school staff and newcomer youth to demonstrate how school staff helped newcomer youth "plan for . . . a successful transition

from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work and from job to job across the lifespan" (American School Counselor Association, 2014, p. 2).

Siempre los Grados. Across the conversations I had with newcomer youth at EHS, whenever I asked "qué conversaciones has tenido tú con el consejero sobre la universidad?" many answered that Mr. Sandoval discussed grades. At times, the conversation revolved around their need to "subir [los] grados." Other times, it was a reminder that grades mattered for *becas*. Some seniors who were preparing to apply for college shared how Mr. Sandoval also discussed the type of colleges to which they were able to apply. Yet, newcomer youth like Gael shared how their individual meetings with Mr. Sandoval focused "solamente de notas y grados y ya, de ahí de college, no." He would go on to explain that even though Mr. Sandoval's *charlas* with newcomer youth were about college, it was mostly about grades, and had little to do with the individual goals they had. Indeed, this was what I observed as Mr. Sandoval interacted with newcomer youth in small group meetings and one of the few college presentations I observed.

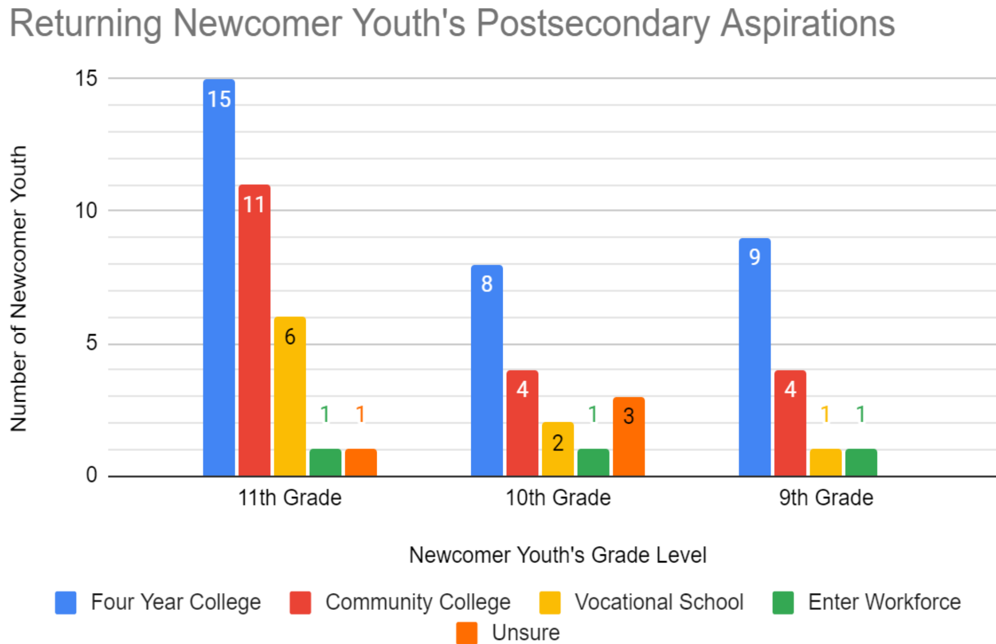
Early in the spring semester, Mr. Sandoval came to the advisory periods to review students' transcripts. He stated his goal was twofold: to teach the students to (a) read their transcripts and (b) calculate their GPAs, according to my field notes on January 14, 2021. As he explained, the expectation was that "desde ahorita deben de saber su GPA para [saber] si son eligible [a la universidad]" because EHS was trying to "cambiar la cultura . . . que piensen en la universidad desde el principio." During those two advisory periods, he had newcomer youth access their transcripts and learn how to calculate their Fall 2020 semester GPA. After helping address the confusion that came with converting letter grades to numerical points (e.g., A = 4), adding them up, and dividing them up by the number of courses taken, Mr. Sandoval reiterated the importance of grades in determining college and scholarship eligibility. Because many

students struggled academically with online learning (Cardoza, 2021; Hong, 2020), there were many newcomer youth who began to announce they had multiple Ds and Fs. Because Mr. Sandoval had emphasized the importance of passing courses with a C to be college-eligible (University of California, 2021), he shared they would be able to enroll in Apex Learning (2021) or summer school to make up those courses. The emphasis on grades as it related to college eligibility was present across the small meetings Mr. Sandoval had with newcomer youth as they were choosing their course offerings for the following year.

Later that semester, Mr. Sandoval again visited the classroom to begin to hold small group meetings with two to three students at a time. As he reviewed their transcripts, he walked them through the course offerings available to them based on their academic performance (i.e., grades). However, before he did that, Mr. Sandoval asked all the newcomer youth with whom he met, "¿Qué quieres hacer cuando te gradúes de la escuela secundaria?" (see Figure 7.4). Perhaps this was because EHS was committed to promoting a college-going culture (McClafferty et al., 2002). At times, students like Carlos, a freshman from Guatemala, would reply with silence. Mr. Sandoval seemed to interpret this silence as a testament to a student being uncertain about their postsecondary goals. Because Mr. Sandoval did not seem to have extensive time to engage in a conversation about why students like Carlos were uncertain about their futures, Mr. Sandoval simply responded to Carlos's uncertainty by telling him to "si no sabes, pon [universidad de 4 años], porque queremos que vayan a la 'uni[versidad]'" as I noted in my field notes on March 25, 2021.

Figure 7.4

Returning Newcomer Youth's Postsecondary Aspirations



As the only EL counselor for a caseload of more than 300 students, it is easy to understand why Mr. Sandoval zipped through his small group meetings with newcomer youth. He had many students to see and limited time for student meetings. On a good day, it seemed like he was able to meet with three groups of two to three newcomer youth in one class period, dedicating about 15–20 minutes to each small group as noted in my field notes from March 23, 2021. His reality reflected the higher than recommended 250:1 students-to-school counselor ratio recommended by the American School Counselor Association and California having the second highest school counselor caseload in all the United States (American School Counselor Association, 2022). Newcomer youth like Jimena noted it was difficult for school counselors "que se sienten contigo y en plan te dan todo y ¡vamos a hacer tu vida! No, no creo tampoco

porque son un buen de niños." Indeed, Jimena recognized that life planning or planning for the future is hard to do with so many students and so few school counselors. Yet, the newcomer youth at EHS might have benefitted from having individual conversations with school counselors more frequently (Savitz-Romer, 2019).

Like Carlos, who was unable to engage in a more in-depth conversation about why he was uncertain about his postsecondary goals, other newcomer youth reported how little attention was given to conversations about their specific college and career goals. They instead shared how conversations about college were quite general. Perhaps because of the precious resource of time, Mr. Sandoval, like the other school counselors, much preferred a quick check-in regarding whether students wished to pursue a postsecondary education. Ricardo, a senior when I interviewed him, shared his thoughts on the matter, saying:

Sophia: ¿Qué consejo les darías tú a los que acaban de recién llegar?

Ricardo: Oh, pues, que, la verdad no sé, no soy bueno dando consejos.

Sophia: ¿Qué es lo que tú te dirías a ti mismo hace cuatro años?

Ricardo: Qué, pues que, que investigara bien lo de la carrera que yo quisiera hacer para después no estar ahí que ya es muy tarde y cosas así.

Sophia: Bien. Y cuando dices que ya muy tarde, o cosas así como sientes ahorita que estás muy tarde o nomás como que lo tienes presente de que—

Ricardo: Más o menos. Más o menos, siento que estoy algo tarde pero porque ya pues, ya casi va a terminar mi año escolar y pues no he hecho nada.

Sophia: Ya . . . ¿Crees que la responsabilidad cae solamente en tí o que la responsabilidad cae en otros o no sé si sea un equipo de que—?

Ricardo: Pues no porque, pues con esto de la pandemia pues, todo ha sido diferente, con lo de la escuela y pues, nada, la verdad hay unos que ni-no ponen atención y, pues está muy feo y pues también la escuela deberían de dar más información sobre las carreras que uno quiere porque solo le dicen de qué aplican los colegios y cosas así, no les dicen nada sobre las carreras.

Sophia: Ya, entonces, como dices tú que hablan muy en general, que uno, ya, "ponte a aplicar" pero, como dices tú, no hacen la conexión de la carrera o donde—

Ricardo: Ajá.

Sophia: Ya, de que no te dicen como, no es solamente [de] ir a estudiar, es de que tienes que ir a un lugar para prepararte para equis carrera.

Ricardo: Sí, porque solo dicen "¿cuántos años quieres estudiar, dos o cuatro?" Pues nomás le dicen, "pues aplica para esto." Pues, no le dan más información a uno de sobre las carreras, pues que uno quiere tomar y cosas así . . . Nomás es "¿quieres estudiar dos o cuatro años?" Pues, quizás sí quisiera estudiar dos, cuatro años pero qué quisiera estudiar ahí, pues si no hay nada que me interesa, o cosas así. No, no vale la pena.

As he gave advice to his past self, Ricardo emphasized school counselors focused on determining whether he wanted to pursue postsecondary education instead of helping him "plan the transition from school to postsecondary education and/or the world of work" (American School Counselor Association, 2017, para. 4). He pointed to the irony of asking students whether they wanted to pursue postsecondary education at 2- or 4-year colleges without providing any information about the specific requirements needed to pursue their careers of interest. He summed up his response to a situation in which he pursues postsecondary education for the sake of going to college, with a "No, no vale la pena." This institutional practice of hyperfocusing on

students pursuing postsecondary education was evident in multiple spaces—individual check-ins, small group meetings like the course scheduling meetings, or the college presentations. However, this hyperfocus of pursuing a college degree without conversations about college-to-career pathways left newcomer youth like Ricardo in the unknown about the possible pathways they could take to attain their career goals.

¿Qué sabes tú de la ayuda financiera? No sé. It is necessary to situate how EHS sought to address newcomer youth's concerns about access to financial aid. Access to financial aid is one of the determining factors for why students apply to college (or do not), persist, and ultimately attain their degree (Asha Cooper, 2009; Kao & Tienda, 1998). Currently, California has several:

> Laws that support the educational endeavors of California DREAMERS. State laws (such as AB540, SB 130, SB 131, AB 1899, AB 2000, SB 1210) have increased access and equity to financial resources that make a post-secondary education much more attainable within the state of California and its three tiers of public institutions. (Name Withheld, n.d.-a, para. 1).

California is one of a handful of states that allows "undocumented students, DACA recipients (valid or expired), U Visa holders and students under Temporary Protected Status (TPS)" (California Student Aid Commission, 2021, p. 1) to access state aid and pay in-state tuition through the California Dream Act (The State of California University System, n.d.). More recently, in 2015, state lawmakers voted to provide undocumented students "with the option to borrow loans to help cover the cost of attending [of college]" (University of California, n.d., para. 1). This was a direct response to the fact that undocumented students are "ineligible for federal aid (including federal loans)" (University of California, n.d., para. 2). How California

lawmakers have enacted state laws to address the ways federal policies marginalize immigrant students is an example of how the legal system creates policies that oppress the immigrant community.

Two other pieces of California legislation that are worth mentioning directly affect the career readiness and opportunities available to the undocumented community. These are Assembly Bill 595 (California Community Colleges: Apprenticeship Programs) of 2019, which allowed any undocumented student enrolled in a community college class, an apprenticeship training program, or an internship training program to “use an individual tax identification number for purposes of any background check” (California Legislative Information, 2019, para. 4) and SB-1159 (Professions And Vocations: License Applicants: Individual Tax Identification Number) of 2014, which expanded the eligibility of those who can obtain a professional licensing from more than 40 licensing boards (California Legislative Information, 2014; De León, 2016; Huang, 2014).

Though all these state policies have been passed in the last 20 years, it is important to recognize California has a history of enacting policies that are a result of xenophobic and nativist sentiments (Pérez Huber, 2011). Moreover, at the federal level, the passage of Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 resulted in prohibiting “conferring a residency-based benefit on an undocumented immigrant when that same benefit is not available to non-resident citizens” (Hernandez, 2012, pp. 528–529). Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising when immigrant students continue to wonder if they are eligible for benefits such as in-state college tuition. Given this sociohistorical reality, Mr. Sandoval invited youth organizers from the Central American Resource Center (or CARECEN, as they are

commonly referred to) to deliver workshops about several issues impacting the immigrant community including access to financial resources to ease their transition to college.

However, newcomer youth still encountered barriers to accessing college because of the material consequences of their socioeconomic situation at home. Concepción, a junior at the time I interviewed her, was candid about her father's lack of support towards her pursuing a postsecondary education. When I asked her about her plans for college, Concepción shared:

> Bueno mi papá, no me ha, como, no me apoya en eso, para la universidad, o sea me manda a trabajar. Entonces ya como que, ya me agüité y ya no estoy pensando en ir a una universidad, si me gustaría, pero, creo que no va a ser posible.

When I probed further to see if she had any idea about what she wanted to study, she mentioned how in Honduras she was interested in nutrition, and this was a career she continued to want to explore. Yet, she continued to share that her father expected her to help him *económicamente*. While she was one of the few students who was aware of the financial aid available to her, she shared that her father was not. Despite her efforts "de hablar con él [de las becas] y decirle que me gustaría [estudiar] . . . siempre me dice que, si te dan la beca te van a ayudar, pero, ese dinero otra vez tienes que volverlo a pagar."

Because I was not able to converse with parents, I wonder if her father's uncertainty about accepting financial aid was reflective of the fact that Concepción had yet to gain status as an asylee or the fear common among immigrants that accessing social benefits negatively impacts their immigration cases (Haley et al., 2021; Protecting Immigrant Families, 2021). As Concepción finished her junior year, it was clear that workshops like the one CARECEN provided were much needed, not just for newcomer students but also for parents. These workshops could reassure them that in current times California had policies seeking to eliminate

barriers immigrant youth had for decades encountered as they moved toward attaining their college and career goals.

Career Fun Fridays. Considering school closures, EHS staff members like Mr. Romo and Ms. Marin took advantage of the possibilities tools like Zoom afforded them. Realizing Zoom was a tool many professionals could access if they had access to the internet and a computer, laptop, or smartphone, they created a workshop series to showcase the various postsecondary pathways professionals had taken to achieve their career goals. As Ms. Marin shared, newcomer youth were gaining insight into the "diverse learning experiences" adults had embarked on, given that not all presenters "start[ed] college right away. And then there were some that said they did community college first, and so on. So they started and then left and then came back." Because all advisory periods were invited to attend Career Fun Fridays, most of the newcomer youth attended at least one presentation.

Curious to hear their thoughts about this new initiative, I asked those I interviewed what suggestions they had to improve the program. I let them know this was the first time EHS had carried out this workshop series, and the EL team recognized there was room for improvement. The majority let me know they had no suggestions to make, and they were appreciative of these presentations. The few who did share their thoughts suggested EHS tailor these presentations to students' individual career interests. Candy, a junior when I interviewed her, who was interested in the field of dentistry, reflected on her experience attending the Career Fun Friday workshop series, saying:

> Candy: He ido a las sesiones donde una persona comparte de que es lo que está estudiando o qué colegio.
>
> Sophia: Ya. ¿Y qué te parece ese . . . eso que han hecho? Porque es nuevo.

Candy: Pienso que está bien porque te dicen de la carrera que . . . que está ejerciendo y qué era lo que necesitaba.

Entrevistadora: Ya. Okey. ¿Y hay algo que tú quisieras ver como diferente?

Candy: Pienso que, ah . . . es que nada más dan una carrera a todo el grupo o a un cierto grupo. Pero pienso que estaría bien que hicieran varios links de cada carrera y la carrera que le guste a cada alumno fuera la carrera al link, al zoom que le indica o que él quiera. Porque la otra vez dieron creo que de cirujano, doctor. Y luego de un, no sé, como que construye . . .Y pienso que no muchos les gusta y otros sí. Y sería mejor que cada quien fuera a su [grupo] y así te informaras y fueran menos alumnos y dieran mejor información o investigación o preguntas, más que nada.

Candy shared that while she appreciated the information provided by presenters, the careers they pursued and the colleges they attended, the institutional practice of not taking stock of students' specific career interests to bring professionals who could provide tailored information was something EHS school staff could take the time to address. This specific recommendation was a common one among all those who had a suggestion to make. How students experienced EHS's organizational practices is important because though EHS was working to promote CCR among newcomer youth by building their key transition knowledge about colleges and careers, Career Fun Fridays could not attend to newcomer youth's interests in learning about specific postsecondary pathways for particular careers.

In the final section of this chapter, I conclude with an analysis of how newcomer youth made sense of their future aspirations given their identities as ELs and immigrants with differing legal statuses.

The Burden of Learning English and Being an Immigrant

As I conclude discussing the access to CCR opportunities newcomer youth at EHS had, I want to focus on "how [newcomer youth] construct[ed] narratives about their educational possibilities" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 89) as related to their identities of being labeled EL and categorized with a range of legal statuses.

Porque Como No Sabía Inglés

Despite the many English classes newcomer youth were taking, students seemed to be preoccupied about their proficiency levels. Whether they spoke it or understood it well enough to engage in conversation with others or engage in academic tasks, newcomer youth were burdened with these worries when thinking about their future. I argue that how they made sense of their future educational trajectories reflected how they perceived their status as language learners shaping the opportunities available to them. For example, Estefanía, who was from Guatemala, arrived to EHS after briefly studying in Texas, and was quite proficient in English, shared that becoming proficient in English was important if she wanted to achieve her goal of enrolling in a 4-year college. As she stated, "Si no estoy preparada con el inglés, no creo poder estudiar nada." As Estefanía saw it, her ability to pursue postsecondary education hinged on her ability to be "preparada con el inglés." If she was unable to achieve English proficiency, it was her belief she would not be able to "estudiar nada."

This internalization—not having achieved English proficiency meant newcomer youth could not access postsecondary education—was evident in the interviews I had with newcomer youth, especially among those who were thinking about the postsecondary options. Marin, who was a senior when I interviewed him and ended up committing to UC Irvine in the spring of 2021, shared how initially he had no postsecondary plans, saying:

> La verdad, mi única meta era solo graduarme de high school. Después que sea lo que Dios quiera. Pero, eh, desde que estoy en la high school he estado aprendiendo sobre lo que puede haber después de high school. Que puedo entrar a universidades, community college. Entonces vine yo y platiqué con mis padres y les pregunté qué era todo eso. Y me dijeron que mi mejor opción era un community college. Porque como no sabía inglés y no se iba a gastar mucho.

It was not until Marin began to spend more time in high school that he became aware of the college options available to him. This prompted him to reach out to his parents about his desire to go to college, which led to a conversation about how it would be best for him to enroll in community college "porque como no sabía inglés." Had he chosen this route, he would be one of many immigrant youth who opt to enroll in community college immediately after high school (Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019). Both similar to and different from Estefania, Marin expressed an internalization of negative stereotypes about ELs and their academic abilities, though these were admittedly his parents' sentiments.

The Consequences of Illegality

Attending to the ways the legal system shapes the trajectories of newcomer youth has been one of the goals of this dissertation study. To do so, I have centered on the sociocultural context in which current state policies are embedded as it relates to increasing the access immigrant youth have to college. I now turn to two narratives of newcomer youth, who in "recast[ing] their experiential narratives" shed light on the "interlocking systems of power that have constrained their ability to actualize their potential" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 89).

The Need to Work

Many of the teachers working closely with newcomer youth were aware of the competing demands they encountered in their day-to-day work. Of the many responsibilities newcomer youth had, teachers like Ms. Bevan were aware of their need to work "because [they] ha[d] to pay off this debt and [they] ha[d] to take care of these families that [they] left in [their] country." Of the 75 newcomer youth, 32 worked while attending EHS. One of these newcomer youth was Bravo, who had migrated from Guatemala at 17 and was of indigenous background. In the weeks prior to interviewing him, I had been helping him with his college application; he had the GPA to apply to a California State University school. The one day we met over Zoom to fill out his "brag sheet" for his English class, where he would detail his postsecondary goals in addition to his high school accomplishments, he let me know he was interested in pursuing the following careers: automotive technology, culinary studies, or math education, which I had recorded in my field notes on October 15, 2020. Though he had been a semester away from graduating from EHS, everything changed with the second lockdown due rising COVID-19 cases in California (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2020). Though he had managed to go to school during the day and work at night, he no longer was able to do so when the second wave of COVID-19 arrived. Bravo shared:

> Pero no, cerró lo que es todo los restaurantes, muchos lugares, ¿no? Pues y como yo me mantengo por mí mismo. Pago todos mis billes, renta, ¿no? Mis cosas, y ayudando a mi familia pues, si no tengo trabajo, ¿entonces cómo? No, no puedo vivir, estando estudiando, el estudio no me paga a mi, bueno a lo mejor me puede dar un dinero, pero sería más en el futuro, pero ahora no me puede dinero, estudiando y como que no, no, sin trabajar, no.

Bravo's need to work mirrored that of other unaccompanied, undocumented youth who were responsible for their own housing and food (Canizales, 2021b). As he explained to me, "Desde el momento que pisé en este país empecé a trabajar." Bravo worked to sustain himself, to pay off a migration debt, and to support family back in Guatemala. The migration debt youth like him must pay off can be anywhere between "$3,000 and $11,000, which is often accumulating interest with each day the lender goes unpaid" (Canizales, 2021b, p. 10). The COVID-19 global pandemic impacted his ability to juggle both work and school because the restaurant industry was forced to shut down by 10 p.m., which resulted in him losing work hours and wages. Whereas at one point he had been able to pursue his studies while working, the negative impact the COVID-19 global pandemic had on those employed in low-wage work forced him to place his aspirations for personal and familial economic well-being first. As an unaccompanied minor and undocumented worker "in [a] secondary labor market" (Canizales, 2021b, p. 18), he was susceptible to precarious work conditions. Bravo's story illustrated the ways identities as unaccompanied and undocumented youth resulted in material realities constraining their ability to thrive and attain future aspirations. In light of his current and future educational goals, his need to work to provide for himself and his family at a time of great economic vulnerability forced him to drop out of high school. As he told me:

> Ahora no más pienso, ahora pues, así como le digo tomé una decisión de dejar la escuela, pues bueno, lo dejé por un lado ahora, no quiero estar pensando y tal vez, porque . . . me deprimo yo solo y no quiero que eso pase.

Indeed, Bravo's decision to forfeit the opportunity to obtain his high school diploma was not an easy decision to make. Rather, it was a painful one he did not wish to spend too much time contemplating.

Algo Fijo. Algo Estable. The Uncertainty of Illegality

I was privy to talk about illegality in the context of the interviews I had with newcomer youth and teachers as well as one of the three CARECEN workshops held in the spring of 2021. For example, the status of asylum seekers was discussed when newcomer youth would notify their teachers they would be absent from school because they had a court appointment. One newcomer youth was very aware of his legal status and how that shaped his future aspirations. I began to take note of this when CARECEN presented a workshop on "Changes in Immigration Law." As the presenters discussed the two versions of the Dream Act Congress had introduced in early 2021—the Dream Act of 2021 (S. 264) and Dream and Promise Act of 2021 (H.R. 6) (American Immigration Council, 2021)—Rivera was engaging via chat, asking questions such as how he could continue to remain informed and if an undocumented child's age at the time the Dream Act might be approved would impact their eligibility to gain legal status as I noted in my field notes on March 11, 2021. A couple of days after this workshop was conducted, Rivera confided he was undocumented, which perhaps influenced the attention he gave and questions he asked of the CARECEN presenters.

During the interview, Rivera shared the goals he had for himself, both educational and life goals, and how those goals were impacted by the various legal statuses the government assigned people. Rivera spoke to a great extent about his life goal of being a homeowner here in the United States. In fact, one of the Career Fun Friday speakers discussed how as a government employee, she was able to qualify for certain benefits that allowed her to purchase a home. Hearing this, Rivera told me, "Me ha abierto más la mentalidad, por así decirlo. Porque cuando escuché a la señora decir que el estado ayuda (risa), la ayudó, los ayuda a comprar casa. Me gustaría que me ayudaran." As he spoke about his second goal, he prefaced it by stating:

> Y segundo, pues, sería en el que no estoy, de alguna manera, legalmente aquí. Creo que yo podría tener un trabajo decente en el que sí me pueda dar el tipo de vida que necesito. No una vida de lujos, pero sí de la que me gustaría tener. Comprar una casa, por mi estatus legal.

Here, he embedded the access to a decent job and his ability to buy a house as dependent upon his ability to attain his second goal, which was to obtain the right to be here legally.

As we discussed the various financial aid applications that existed in California, Rivera let me know he was only eligible to apply to the California Dream Act. This prompted a conversation about the meaning he attributed to having *papeles*. He went on to share the awareness he had about the specific privileges certain legal statuses afforded immigrants, particularly *permisos* (e.g., TPS) and U.S. citizenship. He understood that a *permiso* allowed you to "estar aquí, quedarte aquí y de ir y venir a tu país de origen." He also believed that with a *permiso* you could "comprar una casa, pero no te dejan votar." In another instant, however, he noted a *permiso* like TPS was "exactamente eso, un permiso temporal," which at any point in time could be rescinded by the federal government. Instead, he hoped to gain access to "algo, pues, estable. Algo fijo." Like scholars who have written about how uncertain the futures are of youth who occupy a liminal status (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010), Rivera noted the same, saying:

> Yo siento que me daría como un motivo para, de alguna manera, ponerme más atento en la escuela. Porque digo: "Okey, ya tengo la oportunidad de ir y venir. Tengo la escuela entonces tengo la oportunidad de ir a ver a mi familia."

With U.S. citizenship, Rivera would gain motivation to stay focused in school because he would have access to the opportunity to come and go between the United States and Mexico to see his family. Though he expressed interest in possibly studying biology or marine biology, he also told

me, “yo realmente no sé qué hacer ahorita con mi vida.” For Rivera, like Bravo and others at EHS, legal status shaped access to postsecondary education and future aspirations. These aspirations not only revolved around attending college but included finding a decent job, securing a home, visiting family, traveling between the United States and Mexico, and being lawfully present here. Rivera saw his lack of citizenship status as a barrier, naming it as one of three *obstáculos* he was confronting in his life.

Conclusion

Sitting at one of the last EL team meetings I attended in February 2021, Mr. Sandoval began to share the initial college acceptances of some of the newcomer youth. He let the EL team know that as of that time, two students had been accepted to several California State Universities. One of their seniors even applied to UC Berkeley like another newcomer youth the year prior and was accepted to the College of Environmental Design. However, as Ms. Cantua, who ran the EL advisory council meetings, reminded me, EHS had not yet “hono[r] that, you know, that (tearing up) that we make good on the promise that we advertise.” The promise she was referring to was depicted in the banners decorating the physical campus that exemplified how EHS would prepare all its students to be college bound (see Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5

EHS is College Bound

The reality, she reminded me, was a different one for newcomer youth, given that the majority graduated high school. Few went on to college.

In this last chapter, I revealed how EHS sought to develop newcomer youth's CCR. I highlighted the various organizational or institutional practices of EHS that focused on increasing newcomer youth's key transition knowledge and skills (Conley, 2012). I also revealed how the racist nativist sentiments of the past were still very much affecting the present realities of newcomer youth and their families as they made sense of their access to resources were they choose to embark on the college journey. Finally, I showcased how the interactional and experiential arenas of institutional power brought to light the conversations newcomer youth had with school staff or how newcomer youth themselves made sense of the access they had to college given their gender, age, multiple social identities as ELs, and immigrant youth of varying legal statuses.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this dissertation, I demonstrated how newcomer youth have college and career aspirations that garner little attention from school staff. Applying the multilevel intersectionality conceptual framework, I was able to identify the "multiple individual and contextual dimensions affecting [newcomer youth's] postsecondary opportunity" (Núñez, 2014a, p. 82). I drew attention to how diverse the newcomer youth population at Esperanza High School (EHS) is across age, race/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, language, and legal status. At the same time, I also honed in on the ways the language program at EHS coalesced with the legal system to shape the opportunities newcomer youth had to explore and prepare for their postsecondary goals. By attending to which social identities became more salient, depending on context, or how their multiple social identities intersected with the school practices and looming legal policies, this dissertation study illuminated how newcomer youth's access to college continues to be negatively impacted.

I carried this study out at the advent of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Though I had once envisioned carrying out an ethnographic study like the ones I first read in my undergraduate days about the lived experiences of immigrant youth and families (Dyrness, 2011; Foley, 2010; Hall, 2002; Olsen, 2008), I had to reimagine what using ethnographic methods online would entail. Although I no longer had access to spaces that would have allowed me to engage in an in-depth investigation of how, where, and with whom newcomer youth had conversations about college and careers, I took full advantage of the opportunities remote learning provided. I proceeded to interview 75 newcomer youth in addition to the 22 school staff members at EHS. These interviews were informed by the participant observations I conducted on a weekly basis and the artifacts I gathered throughout the year. My research drew on critical methodologies and

theoretical framework to "examine the mechanisms that produce and sustain" (Gonzales & Raphael, 2017, p. 11) marginalization along the lines of language and legal status.

In this study, I explored separate but related aspects shaping the access newcomer youth had to develop their college and career readiness (CCR), taking the form of three research questions:

1. What are newcomer youth's college and career aspirations?
    a. What differences, if any, are due to their age, race/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, language, and legal status?
2. How do school organization and services for English learners (ELs) affect newcomer students' access to college preparatory coursework and shape their college and career readiness (CCR)?
    a. What type of relationships do newcomer youth have with their teachers and school counselors? What differences in the type of relationships newcomer youth have with them, if any, are due to their age, race/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, language, and legal status?
    b. What type of access do newcomer youth have to opportunities that develop their college and career readiness (CCR; e.g., college presentations, career counseling, financial aid workshops)?
3. What barriers do newcomer youth encounter in moving toward their future goals?
    a. What differences, if any, are due to their age, race/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, language, and legal status?

This chapter considers the study's most prominent findings, situating the discussion in conversation with existing research to illustrate the experiences of newcomer youth as more than

their English learner (EL) label, attending to their legal status and many other social identities. The chapter concludes with implications for policy and practice, discussing how educators can better attend to newcomer youth's future aspirations.

Summary of Findings

Within the next section, I highlight key findings for each research question, which build on one another to describe how newcomer youth's multiple social identities intersect with EHS school practices and the larger sociopolitical context responsible for the illegalization of immigrants (Menjívar, 2017).

Research Question 1: Newcomer Youth's College and Career Aspirations

Newcomer youth's future aspirations are as varied as they are diverse. About one third of them (*n* = 26) were undecided between two or three careers they might want to explore. The others were pretty confident about the careers they would like to pursue upon graduation. Newcomer youth aspired to be anesthesiologists, art teachers, barbers, business owners (*n* = 4), doctors, information technology specialists, mechanics, military officers, nurses, pilots, therapists, and veterinarians. Their career interests fell into 19 out of the 25 occupational categories used by the U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics (2022).

Table 8.1

Newcomer Youth's Career Occupation Interests

Career occupations	Number of mentions
Healthcare	22
Business and Financial	13
Education, Training, and Library	7
Military	7

Career occupations	Number of mentions
Architecture and Engineering	6
Computer and Information Technology	6
Life, Physical, and Social Science	6
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	5
Entertainment and Sports	4
Protective Service	4
Arts and Design	3
Food Preparation and Serving	3
Legal	3
Transportation and Material Moving	3
Community and Social Service	2
Construction and Extraction	2
Media and Communication	2
Personal Care and Service	2
Office and Administrative Support	1
Building and Grounds Cleaning	-
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	-
Management	-
Math	-
Production	-
Sales	-

All careers required different postsecondary pathways. Some careers, like nursing, required a range of years of schooling and training. Newcomer youth might need to enroll in a 2-year program at the local community college or a 4-year degree from any of the local California State Universities or University of California campuses.

Although all their careers required postsecondary education, not all required attendance to a 4-year college. It was not lost upon newcomer youth that there were different types of existing postsecondary educational institutions. The extent of their knowledge stopped at what was shared with them—there were 2-year or 4-year colleges. Period. As Ricardo told me, what good is the question, "¿Cuántos años quieres estudiar, dos o cuatro?" when little to no information is provided about the type of education or training a particular career requires?

Newcomer youth, especially seniors who had already experienced the college admissions process, were also very much aware that EHS prioritized helping students who wished to attend a 4-year college immediately after high school. My conversations with the EHS EL team confirmed what newcomer youth shared about how EHS school staff were preparing or not preparing newcomer youth for their transition to community college. The needs of newcomer youth who wished to embark on "alternate" college pathways (i.e., those that did not involve a 4-year degree) seemed to be overlooked.

Research Question 2: School Organization and Services for ELs

This dissertation study confirmed how placement in English language development (ELD) courses is associated with limited opportunities to access college-preparatory courses and thus opportunities to develop their CCR (Kanno & Harklau, 2012). At the secondary level, the EL label does not seem to have the same benefits newcomer youth in elementary school might reap as they move toward acquiring proficiency in English (Johnson, 2019). At EHS, enrolling newcomer youth in double-block ELD courses prevented them from taking required courses needed to become college eligible for public 4-year university systems in California. Though much focus has been attributed to the access newcomer youth have to college-preparatory courses, I also found enrollment in double-block ELD courses negatively impacted their ability

to take elective courses that would have allowed them to explore their career interests. Because of the hyperfocus on developing newcomer youth's English proficiency, enrolling them in double-block ELD courses prevented them from taking courses that would have begun to prepare them for their future careers. The exception to this trend was Nestor, who enrolled in all culinary art courses offered at EHS. Upon graduation, Nestor earned a scholarship for his talents. A year after graduating he returned to talk with newcomer youth about his postsecondary journey and shared how he was beginning his career as a junior chef at a local country club.

In contrast to other studies that have found newcomer youth have limited access to exposure to talk about colleges and careers (Kanno, 2018a), newcomer youth at EHS were exposed to conversations about college pathways and careers on a regular basis during the 2020–2021 academic year because of the Career Fun Friday Mr. Romo and Ms. Marin initiated. The EL team attributed this to the fact that Zoom, the teleconferencing tool, made it easier for invited guest speakers to visit EHS. All they had to do was hop on a computer, log into the meeting, and share a little about their educational and professional experiences. At the same time, newcomer youth revealed how this year-long career workshop series, though insightful, was not as helpful as receiving targeted information that spoke directly to their career interests.

The college-for-all ideology (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010) was prevalent at EHS and one espoused by EL team members like Mr. Sandoval. As such, during his regular check-ins with newcomer youth, Mr. Sandoval would inquire once per semester about the college plans students envisioned for themselves. Throughout the spring semester, I observed how Mr. Sandoval framed his conversation with newcomer youth about their academic progress by starting off with a question about college. However, the conversation about college often stopped once Mr. Sandoval gathered a "yes" or "no" response from newcomer youth about whether or not they

planned to go to college or after they described their desire to attend a 2- or 4-year college. Being that Mr. Sandoval was one counselor with a caseload of almost 400 students, almost double the recommended student caseload per school counselor (American School Counselor Association, 2022), individual conversations about college were pretty general. Talking about college was not the same as providing newcomer youth specific information about the various existing postsecondary pathways (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010)

Research Question 3: Barriers Impeding Their Movement Toward Their Imagined Futures

There were several barriers constraining newcomer youth's movement toward their future goals. Some of these barriers were related to educational practices (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010), whereas others were a material consequence of how newcomer youth's legal statuses shaped their lived experiences (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012). As might be expected, not all newcomer youth encountered the same barriers given their different multiple social identities.

One of the most interesting findings was how the age of newcomer youth intersected with other social identities such as their legal status or linguistic skills. These identities materialized in ways that foreclosed newcomer youth's opportunities to be CCR. This dissertation study included information on how decisions made at the beginning of a newcomer youth's educational career mattered for postsecondary trajectories possible upon graduation. Although newcomer youth are allowed to remain enrolled until they turn 21 years old, many newcomer youth took advantage of Assembly Bill 2121, which allowed them to forego attaining college readiness by solely working to meet state graduation requirements (CDE, 2022c). Older newcomer youth stated how being older than their grade-level peers was unappealing. They much preferred to graduate as fast as possible, even if their college plans would include

beginning their journeys at a community college, the only available option for them should they choose to graduate in 3 years (CDE, 2022c).

Older newcomer youth tended to be multiple-burdened (Crenshaw, 1989). Those most burdened were newcomer youth who, in addition to being older and having a shorter timeline to graduate from high school, occupied a liminal legal status, including that of asylum seeker as an unaccompanied minor, undocumented migrant, or Central American youth admitted on parole. As such, the decisions and aspirations older newcomer youth made were shaped by these identities. For youth like Bravo, who arrived as a 17-year-old unaccompanied minor from Guatemala, his career interests in automotive technology and desire to master the English language were put on hold when his need to financially provide for his mother and younger siblings in Guatemala took precedence. On the other hand, older newcomer youth with more secure legal statuses could move more confidently toward their future aspirations knowing that they had access to financial aid. Like Lizbeth, a U.S. citizen returning from living in Mexico and unable to attain her goal of graduating high school, older newcomer youth with more secure legal statuses were at times still vulnerable to working precarious jobs given their educational background or proficiency in English.

Discussion

Over the past couple of decades, educational researchers and practitioners have examined the K–12 educational trajectories of ELs without attending to their transitions to postsecondary education (Núñez et al., 2016). From the little known, newcomer youth are overrepresented in community colleges (Kanno & Harklau, 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Osei-Twumasi, 2019) and underrepresented in 4-year colleges (Kanno, 2018a, 2021). To achieve a more complete understanding of newcomer youth's K–16 trajectories, scholars need to attend to

their lived experiences as more than just language learners. Scholars should also account for the ways migration policies and other social identities materialize and shape access to CCR opportunities and, ultimately, their ability to attain their future aspirations.

Nonmonolithic Immigrant Experience

The findings of this dissertation speak to the need to acknowledge the diversity within the newcomer youth population. In this dissertation study, I show how newcomer youth are diverse across the lines of age, race/ethnic background, socioeconomic status, language, and legal status. Not acknowledging the within-group differences of the newcomer youth population negatively impacts how educational practitioners and policymakers attend to their varied needs. Moreover, these differences intersect in unique ways with "larger structures of inequality" (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2019, p. 3), including language and immigration policies. The framework of multilevel intersectionality has been particularly helpful in showcasing how by "acknowledg[ing] an individual's multiple social identities . . . a more complete portrayal of the whole person" can be constructed (Wijeyesinghe & Jones, 2019, p. 10).

Of particular concern is the attention newcomer youth's immigrant identities received or did not receive by K–12 educators at EHS. At a time when the legal system criminalizes immigrants and differentiates among them by using different categories to denote what privileges they have or lack (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine [NASEM], 2015), it is concerning EHS had fragmented knowledge about the diversity of migration experiences across their newcomer youth population. Instead, sweeping generalizations were made about who newcomer youth were as immigrants. This was done without accounting for the fact the majority of newcomer youth at EHS tended to be subjugated with liminal legal statuses that were temporary and discretionary in nature (NASEM, 2015). This finding confirmed the

troubling trend of certain teachers knowing little about immigration practices or wanting to avoid discussing topics related to immigration (Gallo, 2014). Perhaps teachers not wanting to attend to a student's immigration status is an unintended consequence of *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), which affirmed the right of immigrant students, regardless of their legal status, to a free K–12 public education (Olivas, 2005). Figueroa (2011) also made note of the contradictory legacy of *Plyler v. Doe*, which "protects the rights of undocumented children to an education" (p. 263) while simultaneously invisibilizing their identities as undocumented migrants. In other words, not asking about a student's legal status "has meant that educators and researchers have comparatively little knowledge about the specific needs and experiences of undocumented students and their families" (Figueroa, 2011, p. 263). Continuing to ignore this important aspect of newcomer youth's lives obscures how complex their lived experiences are as immigrants who hold a range of legal statuses.

Educational scholars and practitioners must follow in the footsteps of migration and legal scholars; for years, these scholars have taken into account how legal status shapes the lived experiences of immigrants for better or for worse. I invite educational researchers and practitioners to be aware and critical of the ways immigration policies intertwine with educational policies. It is necessary to understand newcomer youth are more than ELs and recognize how their immigrant identity matters for their access to develop CCR.

The Need for Linguistic Sanctuaries

The findings from this study contribute to the literature on language learning in two ways. First, there were struggles the EL team encountered as they evaluated the unintended consequences of their language program on newcomer youth's access to opportunities to develop their CCR. This finding reflects the concern voiced by scholars who find "services for students

learning English, and the labeling of students by English language ability, creates a hierarchically tiered education system that parallels social inequalities outside of the educational setting" (Umansky, 2014, p. 178). In light of the negative ramification ELD programs pose for newcomer youth, I found addressing the marginalization newcomer youth encounter because of their language learner identity is not as easy as some might believe. It is not as simple as granting them access to college-preparatory coursework as EHS sought to do when they redesigned their language program starting in 2019–2020 academic year.

I found integrating newcomer youth into mainstream courses was beneficial to their language learning when students had access to learning spaces I refer to as linguistic sanctuaries. Linguistic sanctuaries are those spaces where newcomer youth described feeling safe enough to engage in languaging (Swain, 2006) without shame or fear of bullying. One of the key features of a linguistic sanctuary was the teacher's ability to facilitate translanguaging in the classroom as a way for newcomer youth to draw on their linguistic features and access and engage with the academic content. As such, this study adds to the growing body of research on translanguaging.

Implications

One of the goals of this dissertation study was to examine the way school services for ELs were structured and the impact this had on newcomer youth's access to opportunities to develop their CCR. Based on the findings of the dissertation, I discuss the importance of embedding language teaching within content teaching and call on high schools to reconsider their college-for-all ideology.

We Are All Language Teachers

The fact that all teachers are teachers of language and content cannot be understated (García & Sylvan, 2011). Yet, the teachers I interviewed at EHS struggled with this idea. The

growing multilingual communities across the United States require teachers to own this identity. For teachers to be successful as facilitators of language learning, they must understand that:

> Language does not exist apart from the content of life and the world, and language is more readily remembered when it has meaning and when it is in context. Content-based language development suggests that language use is an out-growth of content; that is, by experiencing and learning new concepts, students extend their language base. Language and content integration means that "content is the driver." Teachers pay attention to the language load and provide systematic support for students who are developing an additional language, but the content is not driven by the aim of teaching a particular linguistic structure, nor is the language simplified and sacrificed to content. Instead, content is rigorous and expressed in authentic and rich language that is scaffolded by collaborative structures that allow for peer mediation and teacher support. (García & Sylvan, 2011, pp. 396–397)

This approach to language learning by integrating with academic content holds much promise for newcomer youth. Moreover, it allows for teachers to create opportunities where newcomer youth can leverage their linguistic resources to access course content. Furthermore, as García and Sylvan (2001) explained, acquiring proficiency in academic language does not equate to sacrificing content. Integrating language and content in this way would open up opportunities for newcomer youth to meaningfully engage in the coursework and gain the CCR skills necessary for them to be successful in the postsecondary education institution of their choice.

College *and* Career Ready

A great majority of high schools across the United States find themselves espousing a college-for-all ideology, which "blindly advocat[es] bachelor's degrees as the only valuable

[postsecondary] option” (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010, p. 30). EHS is one of those high schools that actively promotes attendance to a 4-year college. In the pursuit of creating a college-going culture (McClafferty et al., 2002), an unintended consequence is neglecting to prepare students for postsecondary pathways that do not require a 4-year college degree (Holland & DeLuca, 2016). This in turn marginalizes those youth whose aspirations fall outside the 4-year college plan (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010). As I have demonstrated, newcomer youth’s future aspirations reflected a range of possible postsecondary pathways; yet, very few of them had access to specific information about what those pathways entailed. This was further impacted by the lack of future-orientated conversations in which newcomer youth were engaged with their school counselor. The counselor’s primary responsibilities, as defined by the American School Counselor Association (2014), are to “help students understand the connection between school and the world of work” (p. 2).

As such, the findings from this dissertation contribute to scholarly conversations critiquing “policy makers . . . promot[ing] increasing college access for disadvantaged students as a way to reduce social inequality” (Holland & DeLuca, 2016, p. 261). Although my interviews with newcomer youth revealed they do indeed have college and career aspirations, even when they were unsure of what their futures might look like—because they were stuck in legal limbo (Menjívar, 2006)—newcomer youth continued to suffer from “information poverty” (Holland & DeLuca, 2016, p. 263). Consequently, educational policymakers and school leaders, including school counselors, must work toward “creating structured, supported routes from high school and subbaccalaureate education into the workforce in ways that do not foreclose options for more advanced levels of schooling” (Deil-Amen & DeLuca, 2010, p. 30).

Future Directions

My study contributes to the small body of research examining high school newcomer youth and their access to CCR opportunities. Nevertheless, much remains to be known about the ways students navigate the transition from high school to college. Future scholars might want to consider longitudinal studies that examine how newcomer youth's experiences change over the course of time and place, especially as they leave high school as ELs and arrive on college campuses as linguistic minority students. To date, there have been a handful of longitudinal studies focused on newcomer youth, with most taking place within the K–12 context versus the K–16 context (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008; Kanno, 2021). A longitudinal study would also help illuminate how changing immigration policies have impacted the lived experiences of newcomer youth to account for the fact immigrants tend to move between legal statuses over the course of their lifetime (NASEM, 2015).

Future investigations would benefit from attending to the ways newcomer youth's identities are invisibilized within the larger sociopolitical context. For example, indigenous Mayan newcomer youth's lived experiences tended to be overshadowed by the emphasis on Latinidad (Chávez-Moreno, 2021). One other important consideration future researchers might consider is how the unaccompanied minor label obscures the role parents and families continue to play in the lives of newcomer youth. For example, attention to the formation or reconfiguration of transnational families would help provide insight into the shared or differing aspirations between newcomer youth and their family members.

Conclusion

> Human rights are human rights because they are inalienable; afforded to people on the basis of their humanity, not because they have been proven as worthy or because they

> make "good" decisions. Children's rights, as a part of a broader human rights framework, allows us to escape the trappings of the "worthiness" debates we so often get ensnared in immigrant rights work and allows us to unapologetically and fully call for humanity and dignity for migrant and border communities. This recasting both serves as a reminder that we need to do this more often and is an invitation to imagine what the possibilities are—for accountability, for solidarity, for intervention—when we do. (Negrón-Gonzales, 2022, pp. 22–23)

Because newcomer youth are impacted by two larger institutions—K–12 schools and immigration bureaucracies—there is an urgency to transform such institutions and their practices. Intersectionality calls on those who seek social justice to do so by addressing social problems (Collins & Bilge, 2016). As a response to this call, it is paramount to understand the intersectional experiences of newcomer youth and center their voices to best address the questions and concerns stemming from problematic school practices (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

It is my sincere belief that by listening to newcomer youth, educators will be able to better determine what next steps must be taken to transform our schools and honor newcomer youth's whole selves, including their imagined futures. In wrapping up interviews with newcomer youth and listening to their final comments, I was further convinced that centering their voices is necessary work educational researchers and practitioners must do. As Angie, who graduated from EHS in 2020, reminded me, "nadie habla sobre nosotros." It was not just the fact newcomer youth—who they are and their lived experiences—receive little attention, but conversations about their dreams were few and far between. As Enrique, a freshmen and older newcomer youth, shared, "A veces hace falta hablar bastante con alguien de las metas de uno y todo."

I hope educators can rise to the occasion and make time to see newcomer youth "in complex, humanizing ways" (Ángeles et al., 2020, p. 136) and for more than just their labels, whether that be their EL label or the various legal statuses imposed on them. More importantly, I hope educators recognize newcomer youth as worthy of the dreams they envision for themselves.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Newcomer Youth

Life Story and First Encounters

1. Tell me about your experience arriving to Los Angeles
2. Tell me about your experiences as a newcomer student at Esperanza High School (EHS)?
   a. What was the enrollment process like?
   b. What orientation did EHS provide?
3. How do you remember your first day at the school?
   a. What has changed since you first arrived as a student at this school?

School Experiences

1. Tell me about your experiences as an ELD student at EHS.
   a. How would you describe your experience learning English?
2. Tell me about the classes you are taking right now?
   a. What has it been like to be in online school?
3. What other classes have you taken throughout high school?
   a. How do those compare with previous classes you were in back home?
4. What were the biggest challenges you had in your classes?
   a. Was there a particular class/subject that was hard? What made it challenging?
   b. Was there a particular class/subject that was easy? What made it easy?
5. What extracurriculars were you involved with? (e.g., sports, clubs, work, caring for family)

Academic/Career Aspirations

1. What conversations have you had with the school or college counselors about your future postsecondary goals (e.g., college, career).
2. What are your current academic and/or career goals?
   a. How have these changed? What were they when you first arrived?
3. What do you know about financial aid? (e.g., FAFSA, CA Dream Act)?
4. How has the school helped you prepare for your future goals?
   a. What obstacles have you encountered or do you foresee encountering?
   b. What resources have helped you or would help you best prepare?

Reflection & Future

1. Tell me about the advice you would give other students like you who are new to the United States and arriving at this school?
2. Tell me about the advice you would give school counselors (or teachers) who work with newcomer youth like you?
3. Tell me about how you envision yourself in ten years?

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Educators

Focused Life History as an Educator

1. Tell me about your journey working with newcomer youth.
    a. What led you to your current role at this school/district/county?
    b. How do you define your role?

Detailed Experience Working as an Educator with Newcomer Youth

2. Tell me about your work with high school newcomer youth.
3. What would you say are the biggest challenges newcomer youth arriving in high school face?
    a. What support services are available to help high school them throughout their high school career?
4. Based on your experience, what are newcomer youth's postsecondary goals?
5. What type of resources do you think high school newcomer students need to achieve college-and-career readiness?
    a. How could their transition to postsecondary institutions i.e. two year college programs, four year college programs, or vocational programs be better facilitated?

Reflections as an Educator Working with Newcomer Youth

1. Given everything you have said, tell me what does it mean to be (interviewee's role) in the lives of newcomer youth?
2. Given everything you have said, tell me about how you envision your ideal/future work as it relates to working with newcomer youth?

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