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*SABES QUIÉN SOY Y DE DÓNDE VENGO: LATINO NEWCOMER PERSPECTIVES*  
ON THEIR MIGRATION JOURNEY AND PERCEIVED IMPACT  
ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES  
AND ACCULTURATION TO  
U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS.

by

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to our immigrant youth, who must silence their voices and shoulder the weight of their trauma as they struggle for a sense of belonging.

## **Acknowledgements**

There are many factors that influenced my decision to apply to a doctoral program; however, the most impactful was my family. As a first generation Mexican American, I have always felt an obligation to make my parents proud and to work hard so they knew how much I valued their sacrifices, support, and their love. Despite the challenges they endured coming to a country, where they didn't know the language, didn't know the culture, and it was a daily struggle to fit in, they grounded us in Faith and made sure that we always knew who we were and where we came from. My mother passed twenty years ago, but I hold her memory in my heart. Since her passing, my father has been by our side giving us strength and keeping our family together. Este logro es en honor a mis padres y los sacrificios que hicieron para asegurar que sus hijos alcanzaran sus metas.

I thank God for his guidance and my family for their love, patience, and continuous support throughout this journey. I want to express how truly blessed I am for my husband and my children, because I know this was not an easy journey for them either. To my children, Sandro, and Dora, I hope my journey has served as a reminder that even though our goals may seem challenging, our faith in God and with the love and support of family, anything is attainable.

I would also like to thank the rest of my family for their encouragement, support, and love. I especially want to thank my siblings, Criselda, Yuridia, and Alberto, for being my pillars. After our mother passed, it was difficult to find balance in a world without her, but I see a piece of her in each of you and her memory lives on through the moments that we spend together as family.

I met an incredible group of individuals who started this journey with me. Cohort five became family and together we struggled and persevered. Thank you all for your

support, encouragement, and friendship. A special thanks to Laurita and Dolores, for allowing me to share my vulnerability and never holding it against me.

I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. Márquez, Dr. Tello, Dr. Cooper and Dr. Gauna, for their guidance. They understood that the focus of my dissertation was much more than just a research topic to me, and they encouraged me to use my voice to tell my participants' stories.

ABSTRACT

*SABES QUIÉN SOY Y DE DÓNDE VENGO: LATINO NEWCOMER PERSPECTIVES*  
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The purpose of this study was to examine Latino newcomer student perspectives on their migration experiences and their perceptions of the impact migration has on their learning and acculturation to U.S. high schools. The participants for this study were three Latino adults who attended high school as newcomers: enrolling within three years of arriving in the United States. A qualitative narrative inquiry design was utilized for this study. A narrative research inquiry design focuses on learning about people's experiences through individual accounts of stories from their own perspectives, memories, and social interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Participant narratives demonstrate that our immigrant students continue to have high educational aspirations despite their legal status and the educational inequities they experience when they enroll in U.S. schools. Their

willingness to share their journey and experiences demonstrates that our newcomers' stories are worth retelling, not only to share their culture, memories, and traditions, but as a form of healing, growth, and survival. Their accounts stress the importance of establishing support systems to navigate social networks, lack of connection to a nurturing family and community. Above all, participant narratives indicate the desire and need for newcomers to feel seen and heard, so they have a sense of belonging.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“¿Habla español? No sé con quién hablar porque me pusieron clases con maestros que no hablan español?”

“¿Me puede cambiar de clases? Porque no hay nadie que hable español y los estudiantes hispanos no me quieren ayudar.”

“No voy a poder venir a la escuela porque la señora con la que vivo necesita que trabaje.”

“¿Puedo hablar con usted? es que no he estado asistiendo a la escuela porque mi tía no me quiere llevar porque tengo que cuidar a mi primito.”

Immigrant students who enroll as newcomers in secondary schools in the United States are often “underserved...compared with younger immigrant English Learner students (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). More specifically, there is a strain in providing ample “linguistic, academic and social emotional support [for] newcomers who arrive at the secondary level” (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). In recent years, the Emergent Bilingual (EB) population has become a major part of accountability ratings across school districts. The adoption of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act highlights the significance of this population and how vital it is for schools to enact and implement instructional models specifically aimed at language learner needs (Olsen, 2014). In turn NCLB tasked schools with establishing instructional models that provide equitable opportunities for Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) to succeed. In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed and replaced NCLB. The passing of ESSA prioritized “the commitment of the federal government to advancing equity in education...and provided states with more autonomy and flexibility in policy making” (Chu, 2019, p.1)

However, despite these changes, EB students continue to fall behind their native-English speaker peers with higher dropout and lower graduation rates (Olsen, 2014).

Furthermore, newcomers who have recently arrived in the country and enroll in high school must complete the same academic and curricular requirements as their native-born counterparts, while simultaneously working on mastering a new language and shouldering the stress that accompanies migration. Throughout their journeys, immigrant students and their families experience a multitude of stressors which impact their emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Ornelas & Pereira, 2011). Moreover, research indicates that if initial identification and placement in language services do not start until the ages of 12-15, it is more difficult for students to meet language proficiency standards (Collier, 1987; Artiglieri, 2019). This study examined newcomer students' perceptions of the social emotional learning support systems needed and accessible within the first year of arriving in the United States (U.S.) and the perceived impact of those learning support systems on language proficiency, academic achievement, and social and cultural transition to U.S. high schools.

### **Research the Problem**

Emergent Bilinguals (EB), also known as English Learners (EL), are the fastest growing group amongst students enrolling in United States (U.S.) schools. According to the Department of Education, there are over 5.1 million English learners throughout the country (Department of Education, 2022). Amidst the growing number of EBs are students classified as newcomers. Newcomers are students who are newly arrived in the U.S. and who have been enrolled in U.S. schools within the first three years in the country (Umansky, 2018). The number of students classified as EBs continues to grow. Considering the increasing pressure their academic success affects educational accountability, EBs continue to struggle with language proficiency and achieving the

secondary requirements aligned to academic success, as outlined by state accountability standards. United States graduation rates amongst Emergent Bilinguals are at 67%; and, out of those graduating, less than 20% attend a higher education institution after high school (Johnson, 2019). Research suggests that, when comparing ELs and non-ELs, there is an imbalanced and inequitable distribution of quality instruction for English Learners which contributes to their achievement gaps (Johnson, 2019). Furthermore, aside from the struggle of academic achievement, EBs must also contend with the stressors of balancing emotional and social factors along with learning a new language (Rosenbloom and Way ,2004).

In 1974, the United States (U.S.) Supreme Court held that school districts must take affirmative steps to help students overcome language barriers so that they can participate meaningfully in each school district's program (Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563, 1974). Federal guidelines state that school districts are required to provide services for EBs and although there have been attempts to delineate what those guidelines are, such as the *Castañeda v Pickard* (1981) decision which stated that districts must ensure that the program adopted to provide language services is founded on a sound education theory, afforded sufficient funding and resources, and that districts "staff their programs with language minority education specialists" (Castellanos et al., 2022, p. 4), they fell short on specifications on how they should be implemented. Considering that the EB subgroup has become a critical component of a school's accountability rating, there is a need to look beyond the educational expectations and delve into understanding the social emotional factors that impact EB students' learning, transition, and acculturation.

In addition to fulfilling secondary guideline requirements for graduation, EBs face an additional challenge of concurrently acquiring and learning another language, without additional time to fulfill those requirements and transition to a new culture. (Olsen, 2010;

Mungia, 2017). However, despite the federal requirements mandating schools to support EBs with their language and literacy needs and ensure they receive equitable instruction, there is still an apparent achievement gap when compared to native English speakers. This achievement gap in a secondary setting translates to lower academic achievement and a decline in graduation rates, which in turn affects the campus accountability ratings (Slack, 2019). Emergent Bilinguals require instruction that is structured with accommodations to fit their language and academic levels (Slack, 2019). Furthermore, federal requirements are primarily aimed at the academic needs of this population and do not address their social emotional needs nor how those needs impact their transition to U.S. schools and their learning.

Although federal guidelines require schools to implement programs of study on their campus that are aimed at addressing newcomer instructional needs, currently no regulations exist to ensure newcomers are prepared to adjust socially and culturally to high schools in the U.S. (Lasso & Soto, 2005). Therefore, it is critical to identify and establish social emotional learning supports to complement academic and language protocols that assist students in attaining language proficiency and academic criteria while simultaneously addressing their acculturation to U.S. high schools. If campuses have the responsibility to ensure that English learners are receiving equitable instruction that meets their content and language needs, what constitutes an effective social emotional learning (SEL) support system to aid with their learning needs and cultural transition to U.S. high school?

## **Significance of Study**

Research indicates that EBs dropout of high school at a higher rate than non-EBs (Huang et al., 2016). Guidelines established by the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA) call for state education agencies (SEAs) to provide educational programs that allow EBs to participate both meaningfully and equally and that ensure they receive equitable instruction that supports their academic and language needs. However, these guidelines do not address the multiple emotional, mental, and physical stressors these EBs may encounter during their journey to the U.S., nor do they focus on the challenges of acculturation and the impact these challenges have on their transition and learning. Newcomer students are thrust into a foreign educational environment where they are required to meet academic expectations, acquire a new language, adjust to social expectations, all while coping with the effects of their own traumatic experiences and culture shock (Lasso & Soto, 2005). Further research indicates that EBs are susceptible to prolonged emotional, physical, and mental health disorders as a result of their migration experiences (Pereira & Ornelas, 2011; Li, 2015; Cohodes et al., 2021). This study will examine newcomer perspectives on their migration experiences and their perceived impact on learning, social emotional learning, and acculturation to U.S. high schools.

## **Research Purpose, Questions, and Hypothesis**

The purpose of this study was to examine Latino newcomer student perspectives on their migration experiences and their perceptions of the impact migration has on their learning and acculturation to U.S. high schools. This study addressed the following questions:

How can we understand the migration journey and cultural experiences of Latino newcomer high school students?



How do high school Latino newcomer students perceive their learning experiences and transition to U.S. schools?

How can we understand the challenges high school Latino newcomers face with acculturation and their perceived impact on learning experiences?

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

Acculturation. The cultural exchange that presents after groups perpetually interact with each other (Ko & Perreira, 2010).

Emergent Bilinguals. Students who speak languages other than English at home and receive instructional support services, such as “English as a second language (ESL), bilingual education, or language immersion programs” (Trainor et al., 2016, p.147).

Newcomers. Students who are born outside of the United States and who have been in the country less than three years (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

No Child Left Behind. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title III established federal formula grants for states to support the needs of English learner students aged 3–21, with the goal of helping them attain English language proficiency (Barrow & Markman-Pithers, 2016).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process by which individuals learn and implement skills needed to understand and maintain management of their emotions (Billy & Garriguez, 2021).

Unaccompanied Children. Children, under 18 years of age, who enter the United States without a parent or guardian (Wylegala, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

There is limited qualitative research on EBs at the secondary level, and the impact their immigration experiences have on their learning and cultural transition to U.S. high schools. Although there are studies that address the impact specific stressors have on an

EB's health (Fortuna et al., 2008; Marshall et al., 2005; Steel et al., 2002), there is a gap in the literature that is focused on how migration experiences may contribute to an EB's social emotional learning. This narrative inquiry study aimed to explore students' perceptions of their migration stories and how they perceive the impact those lived experiences have on their social emotional needs, their learning, and their transition to U.S. schools. In the following chapter, an overview of literature that establishes the premise for the study is presented.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the last few years, there has been an increase of immigrant families and unaccompanied youth entering the United States from Central America and Mexico (Cohodes et al., 2021, p.1). The decision to immigrate to a foreign country, leaving any semblance of familiarity in the shadows, is triggered by multiple factors including, but not limited to poverty, violence, fear, and loss (Ee & Gandara, 2020). Furthermore, children, whose families are forced to separate to make the journey, are faced with added stressors and trauma throughout the migration process and after they arrive in the new country (Ee & Gandara, 2022). As of 2014, there have been over 50,000 unaccompanied children arriving every year at the United States border (Lopez, 2021). Some of these children succumb to further traumatic events and emotions that activate psychological and sociological memories. This chapter will examine literature that outlines stressors that some immigrants experience throughout their migration journey, the challenges faced with learning experiences, acculturation to U.S. high schools, and the role social emotional learning plays in addressing these factors.

### **Immigration Stressors**

#### **Pre- and Post-Migration Stressors**

Immigrants are susceptible to stressors that initially surface when they decide to uproot their lives, leave their homes, and embark on a trek to attain a semblance of a better and safer life in a foreign country. The factors that contribute to this drastic decision can stem from a variety of concerns compounded by assault, trauma, war, violence, etc. (Li, 2015), which subsequently triggers further distress when they finally reach their destination. Research indicates that immigrants experience an onset of pre-migration traumas that correlate to issues such as discrimination, stress associated with

their legal status, language barriers, and feelings of isolation (Li, 2015). In turn, Li (2015) contends that exposure to these pre-migration stressors may be linked to post-acculturative stressors, specifically amongst Asian and Latino immigrants. Li's study (2015) examines whether pre-migration trauma and post-migration acculturative stress contributes towards health risks amongst Asian and Latino immigrants.

Although ample research exists that exposes how trauma impacts health (Fortuna et al., 2008; Marshall et al., 2005; Steel et al., 2002), there are limited studies that examine the effect that secondary stressors have on immigrants' lives after they arrive in the United States (Li, 2015). In this study, Li (2015) analyzed data collected from the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) between 2013 and 2014 on a subsample of participants that consisted of 1639 Asian immigrants and 1629 Latino immigrants. Li (2015) further explored social isolation, feelings of guilt that stemmed from leaving family and loved ones behind, challenges with attaining employment and stresses with communication and discrimination as various forms of acculturative stress. In addition, stress associated with legal status was established when participants noted feelings of anxiety, fear and avoidance when confronted with experiences or unfair treatment based on their legal status. Li (2015) utilized the Posttraumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale (PDS) battery of the NLAAS to examine the exposure immigrants had to pre-migration trauma, such as illness, death, violence, war, etc. Based on the age that participants had experienced these traumas, Li established a scale to distinguish between those who were exposed prior to moving to the US (1) and those who were not (0). Further demographic factors controlled by the researcher included age, gender, marital status, educational level. The time that elapsed from initial immigration was also accounted for and categorized as follows: >5 years, 5-10 years and <10 years (Li, 2015). To test the hypothesis, Li (2015) assessed several logistic regression models to establish

that post-migration acculturative stressors were connected to specific pre-migration trauma exposure.

Li's (2015) findings suggest that the hypothesis supports the literature surrounding social psychological effects of trauma and correlates to studies affecting the refugee communities. Due to the underlying traumas, victims are unable to disassociate the previous trauma from their current experiences which in turn causes them to shift their outlook from a positive one to a negative one (Li, 2015). The results further establish that immigrants who struggle with a cognitive schema that has been disrupted will continue to experience feelings of guilt and will continuously question the disparity of justice in their world (Li, 2015) Based on these results, Li's findings suggest that an immigrant's health or status may not improve once they have removed themselves from the initial trauma in their country and establish themselves in a new one.

### **Unaccompanied Youth**

Unaccompanied children are individuals under the age of 18 who have not established a lawful immigration status in the United States and do not have someone who can claim legal guardianship or parental responsibilities for their welfare (ORR, 2023). When unaccompanied children are detained by immigration officials, the department of Homeland Security shifts custody to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which in turn is responsible for providing necessary care as the process for locating relatives or a sponsor begins (ORR, 2023). As of January 27, 2023, the number of unaccompanied children assigned to the Department of Health and Human Services stands at 7,565 ("FACT SHEET Unaccompanied Children (UC) Program," 2023). Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA of 2008) Congress established that these unaccompanied children must be placed in a safe environment that affords them an opportunity to receive health and educational services

(ORR, 2023). Once unaccompanied children are placed in ORR care, the objective is to reunite them with a relative or guardian. Those who have interest in becoming a sponsor must undergo criminal background checks, an assessment process, and possible home-study to ensure that the placement will be a safe one for the child (ORR, 2023).

### **Social Emotional Learning**

The concept of social emotional learning (SEL) in schools continues to evolve. Research suggests that embedding the five social emotional competencies of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making within school instructional practices and overall curriculum can help students navigate the stressors they experience daily and the impact these stressors have on their academic achievement (Garriguez & Billy, 2021). Students enter school bearing the weight of social, cultural, and emotional experiences that impact how they interact with peers and their overall learning. Research presented by Garriguez and Billy (2021) highlights the role of SEL amidst the COVID pandemic and more specifically addresses research that indicates that EBs are further impacted due to the strain of learning a new language, attaining new academic thresholds, being immersed in a new culture, and struggling to transcend both discrimination and racism. Garriguez and Billy's study further stresses that integrating the five social emotional competencies of SEL in the curriculum indicates a connection to student academic achievement. Given the numerous factors that affect student relationships in schools, as well as their instructional deficits, implementing SEL could provide all students with skills that offer a positive outlet for their social well-being.

### **Supporting EBs' Social Emotional-Well Being in Schools**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) over 10% of children enrolled in United States (US) schools are classified as English Learners (ELs).

As emergent bilingual (EB) numbers continue to rise, schools are tasked with meeting their instructional and language needs. Campus academic accountability is contingent on every student meeting the state assessment standards; thus, there is a heightened need to embed strategies and systems that provide both content and language support for EBs. However, amidst the urgency to modify curriculum and instruction, there is little focus on addressing and implementing social emotional support in classrooms (Heineke & Vera, 2022).

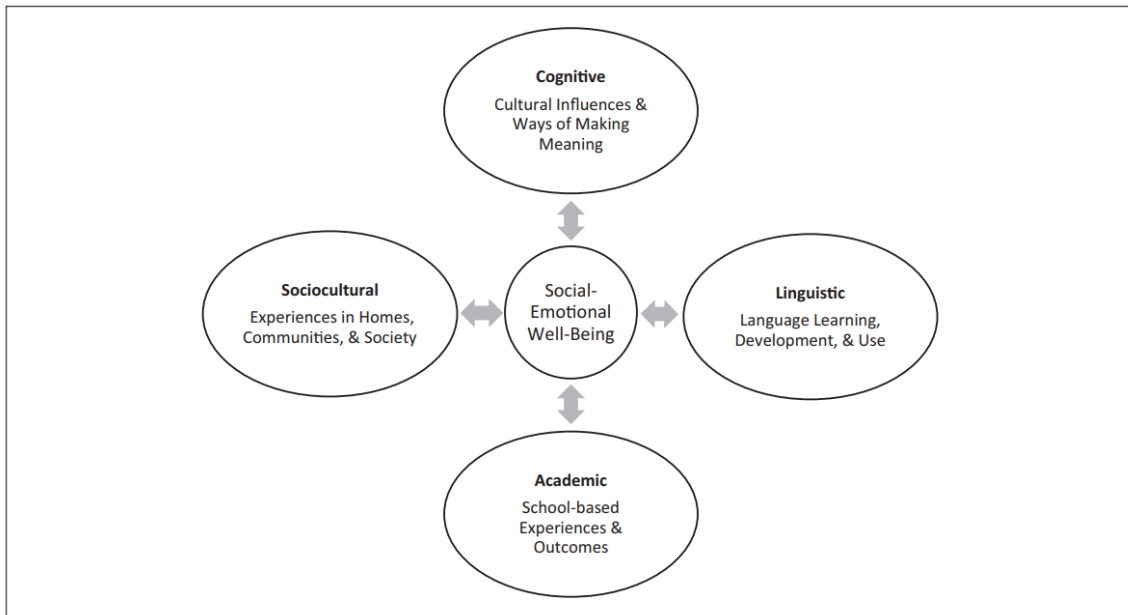
There has been an increase in the incorporation of SEL with academic instruction on school campuses (Heineke & Vera, 2022). However, there are concerns and questions about whether the traditional and commonly implemented SEL programs are structured to serve the needs of the EB population, considering their experiences are diverse and their emotional needs transcend across factors that their non-EB classmates do not contend with, such as the stress of acquiring a new language, acculturation, and trauma caused by their migration journeys (Heineke & Vera, 2022). Furthermore, although the underlying focus of SEL components stretch across various factors that contribute toward a person's self and social awareness, relationship building skills, and decision making, there is still a disconnect with accounting for cultural differences (Heineke & Vera, 2022).

In a comparative case study, Heineke, and Vera (2022) examine teacher preparedness in comprehending and applying various components of program models to aid in supporting EBs' social emotional well-being, as well as explore both teacher and student views. Heineke and Vera (2022) utilize the prism model for bilingual learners to explore the framework needed to support EBs social well-being. The framework asserts that social emotional well-being is an integral facet in student experiences (Heineke & Vera, 2022). Collier and Thomas (2007) further declare that students' life experiences

impact their learning in schools, that their experiences in schools in turn impact emotions that cause worry, and finally that facing concerns such as discrimination correlates to the overall well-being and learning for EBs.

**Figure 1:**

*Heineke and Vera (2022) Emergent bilingual learners' social-emotional well-being*



Heineke and Vera (2022) focused their study on five suburban schools in Illinois implementing a two-way immersion program that served students with various cultural backgrounds. The study specifically concentrated on grades third through eighth and yielded 20 teacher participants, with varying years of experience, across the five schools. Heineke and Vera (2022) conducted individual and focus group interviews to collect data and the data was analyzed through inductive and deductive coding. Overall findings established that teachers were not equipped with training in addressing EBs' social emotional needs. Teachers indicated that they needed guidance in understanding their students' cultural backgrounds, and students wanted teachers to learn more about their



families and experiences outside of the classroom. Heineke and Vera (2022) concluded that despite the increasing enrollment of EBs in schools and the persistent need to integrate social emotional learning into the academic curriculum, their results established that teachers do not receive sufficient training in understanding and addressing EBs social emotional needs.

### **Acculturation**

Immigration continues to be a resolution for many battling societal and political issues in their home country. However, the challenges encountered in their journey to reach the U.S. border do not always signify the end of a struggle. Amongst the number of adults that migrate are children who must become a part of a new culture and learn to adapt. There is little research on the effects of acculturation on youth, as opposed to the considerable amount of research on adults (Berry, 1997). Berry et al. (2006) define acculturation as “the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact”. Acculturation encompasses multiple facets of change and adaptation that not only affects economic, social, and cultural customs, but also has the capability of altering individuals’ own cultural identities (Berry et al., 2006). Berry et. al., (2006) examined the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant children ages 13 to 18 years, from 26 different cultural backgrounds. The three questions guiding the study focused on how immigrant children handle the process of acculturation, how they adapt, and whether there is a correlation between the two (Berry et al., 2006). A series of variables were identified and analyzed to reveal two forms of adaptation: psychological and sociocultural (Berry et al., 2006). Berry et al., (2006) further contended that individuals grapple with two distinct issues when going through acculturation: their connection to their own culture and to the new. Within these two contexts individuals assert how much effort they will place on embracing the new culture and how much of

their own heritage they will maintain (Berry et al., 2006). In contemplating the approach they will take to acculturate, Berry et al. (2006) contended that individuals consider: a) assimilation, or (b) little interest in maintaining their own culture; (c) separation, circumventing the new culture to maintain their own; (d) marginalization, a neutral stance-individuals do not seek out the new culture and do not make an effort to maintain their own; and (e) integration, individuals make an attempt to embrace the new culture while maintaining their own. When considering immigrant youth, Berry et al. (2006) stressed that there are two methods in which they adapt to acculturation: psychological and sociocultural adaptation. The former involves a person's well-being and mental health; while the latter focuses on an individual's social competence and their ability to manage situations in an intercultural setting (Berry et al., 2006).

Berry et al. (2006) administered both individual and group-questionnaires that assessed variables associated with acculturation and adaptation: acculturation attitudes, cultural identity, ethnic identity, language proficiency and language use, ethnic and national peer contact, family relationship values, perceived discrimination, psychological adaptation, and sociocultural adaptation. Results indicated a correlation with acculturation and how youth adapt. The youth defined by an integration profile demonstrated more positive psychological and sociocultural adaptation and those with a diffuse profile had a negative adaptation. Furthermore, those youth that categorized with a national profile demonstrated a moderately poor psychological adaptation and a minimal negative sociocultural adaptation (Berry et al., 2006). Overall, Berry et al., (2006) concluded that immigrant youth should strive to embrace their own heritage cultural identity, as well as embracing the new; therefore, there is a need to “[develop] policies and programs that will enhance the experience of acculturation” to ensure that immigrant youth experience positive adaptation outcomes.

## **Impact of Migration**

Amongst the vast numbers of immigrants are Latino children, whose parents made the decision to migrate to the United States (Ko & Perreira, 2010). Although there is a myriad of reasons why parents choose to migrate, the impact of these decisions is costly; their children must ultimately contend with the challenges of adapting to a new environment and culture. The stressors that accompany the migration process, such as “loss of social status, discrimination and economic hardships” (Ko & Perreira, 2010, p.2) weigh heavily on adults; however, the impact is just as difficult for children.

Ko and Perreira (2010) conducted a study that found that immigrant children exhibited more immigration-related stressors than their parents and in turn their psychosocial well-being is affected, causing depression, anxiety and difficulties adjusting to school. Numerous studies exist on the impact of migration on children’s health and education; however, there is limited research on the “migration and acculturation of Latino youth (Ko & Perreira, 2010). The study conducted by Ko and Perreira (2010) consisted of an in-depth interview to document the impact of migration on Latino youth, more specifically those living in a newly developed Latino community in the southeastern region of North Carolina, as compared to those who live in established Latino communities. They further explored how these Latino youth learned to adapt to living in the United States. Data were collected through the Latino Adolescent, Migration, Health, and Adaptation (LAMHA) project. Ko and Perreira (2010) affirm that migration is a bidirectional process in which immigrant youth select the “cultural beliefs and behaviors” that they feel will support their well-being and ultimately allow them to interact with their new environment. This process allows immigrant youth to navigate the stressors of acculturation and adaptation (Ko & Perreira, 2010).

## **Physical and Psychological Effects**

When contemplating and examining the impact that migration has on our Emergent Bilinguals, it is critical to analyze the physical and psychological effects their journeys have caused. Perreira and Ornelas (2011) contend that there is a myriad of factors that contribute towards a child's health, and those factors are further exacerbated if the child has endured the type of stress our EBs face during their migration and after they arrive in the United States. Perreira and Ornelas (2011) provide evidence of the stressors that affect the health of our EBs and provide insight on strategies that could alleviate the outcomes.

Acculturation is a compilation of social and psychological changes that occur when individuals or groups attempt to join and adapt to a new culture (Cabassa, 2003). Perreira and Ornelas (2011) discussed and analyzed the specific factors that can affect EBs' acculturation and ultimately, how those impact their overall normative development. Perreira and Ornelas' research includes Sluzki's (1979) framework that outlines the various stages of stress that individuals encounter during and after their migration and the outcomes those stressors have on their health. The stages begin with the initial decision that families make to leave their home country due to the sufferings surrounding their daily lives then move into the various levels of the migration process that includes the method of travel used. In addition, the framework identifies the challenges adults and children face after they arrive in the new country, which include their adaptation to new culture and expectations, as well as the impact of further stressors such as the financial, social, and educational influences. The research identifies the potential risk factors that compound a child's migration experiences and thus how they transcend to their overall health and educational experiences in the new country. Perreira and Ornelas (2011) emphasized the differences in migration journeys experienced by

documented and undocumented children. An undocumented youth will undergo different levels of physical and emotional trauma than a documented youth, more so if the child is an unaccompanied youth. Their study focused on Latino youth who had traveled alone and upon arriving in the United States indicated fear for their safety both throughout their migration and upon their arrival. It was determined that they had been injured, suffered emotional distress, and would ultimately require both physical and mental health services. Although it is established that migration impacts various factors of an individual's transition to a new country, there is still a gap in understanding how this journey impacts the health and life experiences of immigrants and the influence those experiences have on their schooling experiences. The results of Perreira and Ornelas' (2011) study indicate a need to establish programs that support the wellbeing and health of our immigrants, as well as provide them with the necessary guidance and strategies needed to transition to living in the United States.

### **Trauma and mental health**

Immigrant children are vulnerable to risk factors associated with their migration experiences (Cohodes et.al, 2021). They are subjected to stress factors and threats such as violence, poverty, and uncertainty prior to starting their journey and additional challenges present themselves throughout the migration process. Further traumatic exposure occurs after migration, specifically when children are separated from their parents, which subsequently contributes to a higher potential of developing social, emotional, and mental health disorders (Cohodes et al., 2021). Research indicates that students who have suffered separation from a parent combined with additional traumatic factors will experience negative emotional and behavioral development (Allen et al., 2015; Bean et al., 2015; Brabeck & Sibley, 2017). Cohodes et al., (2021) examined the relationship between early-life adversity, the stress associated with migration, and the impact on the

mental health of Central American and Mexican children detained in immigration facilities. Since 2014 there has been an influx of families and unaccompanied youth immigrating from Central America and Mexico.

Following the passing of the “Zero Tolerance” policy, which established the process of separating immigrant children from their parents or guardians, over 2,737 children were removed from their loved ones after crossing the United States border. This practice continued even after the policy was terminated that same year and led to prolonged detention of minors, inhumane treatment, and deplorable holding conditions (Cohodes et al., 2021). A study presented by Cohodes et al., (2021) sought to explain how specific traumas experienced prior to migration coupled with experiences in detention centers, contributed to mental health development amongst children from Central America and Mexico. Cohodes et. al., (2021) conducted semi-structured interviews, in Spanish, with 84 children and 65 parents residing in shelters in Brownsville and San Antonio. In addition, the UCLA Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Reaction Index (PTSD RI) was utilized to screen participant children for effects of traumatic exposure (Cohodes et al., 2021).

Findings indicated that children who experienced trauma in their country, prior to migration “are associated with higher rates of adverse mental health outcomes... [such as] impaired cognitive and emotional development, behavioral problems, attempted suicide...anxiety” (Cohodes et. al., 2021, p. 2) as well as an increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. Furthermore, Cohodes et. al. (2021) established that a child’s traumatic history, separation from parent, and other early life adversities, contribute to subsequent levels of stress after migration.

## **Learning Experiences**

Multiple factors affect and alter the learning experience for Emergent Bilinguals in U.S. schools. Depending on the EBs' prior living and educational conditions in their home country, they are subject to further academic challenges when they reach the U.S. (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017). Immigrant children are more likely to come from poverty, grow up in a household that is monolingual, and have a parent or parents who did not have formal schooling. (Hernández & Cervantes, 2011). These factors further influence their educational opportunities once they enroll in U.S. schools, because they tend to live in poorer neighborhoods and attend schools that do not receive the same resources as more affluent schools (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017). Additionally, children who are impacted by parental separation prior to and after migration are more apt to experience social isolation in schools and ultimately are prone to dropping out (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017).

Brabeck and Sibley (2017) examined challenges that immigrant children face throughout their educational experiences in the United States. They explored the environmental, political, structural, and psychological challenges that immigrant children face as well as how engaging the community, school and families can impact the trajectory of their educational outcomes (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017). The developmental changes that adolescents undergo are further compounded for immigrant children. As they grapple with their own social identity and belonging, they must traverse the feelings of isolation they experience due to the apparent cultural and linguistic differences (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017). Acculturation and the stress it induces further complicates their ability to forge peer relationships or simply to make social connections. Sirin et. al., (2013) contend that prolonged exposure to acculturative stress puts immigrant children at higher risk of developing depression, anxiety and somatization which ultimately affects how they perform in school. Brabeck and Sibley (2017) also explore the implications that

an immigrant student's legal status has on other critical stages of their adolescence, such as obtaining a driver's license and pursuing higher education. Although immigrant children face a barrage of pressures and challenges, Brabeck, and Sibley (2017) stress the role that social support has on alleviating the symptoms brought on by acculturative stress and depression. Forging strong family relationships coupled with engaging in school related activities can help immigrant students circumvent language and cultural barriers (Brabeck & Sibley, 2017).

### **Summary of Findings**

Despite the federal requirements mandating schools to support EBs with their language and literacy needs, so they receive equitable instruction, there is still an apparent achievement gap when compared to native English speakers. This achievement gap in a secondary setting translates to lower academic achievement and a decline in graduation rates, which in turn affects the campus accountability ratings (Slack, 2019). Thus, EBs require instruction that is structured with accommodations to fit their language and academic levels (Slack, 2019). To meet the demands of our Emergent Bilinguals, there is a need to move towards providing effective professional development aimed at refining teacher skills (Calderon, Slavin & Sanchez, 2011) in engaging and preparing EBs for academic success, as well as integrating SEL programs that address the social and emotional competencies necessary to cope with their personal traumas and experiences.

Research has reflected that EBs who enter U.S. schools carry a plethora of life encounters and stresses that overshadow their ability to properly transition to new surroundings and culture. Although research indicates that Emergent Bilinguals who have not reached language proficiency by the middle and high school years, risk not mastering the content needed to meet state and graduation standards (Artigliere, 2019), there are



critical factors that are not as readily addressed. An Emergent Bilingual's social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing places a stress on determining which factors influence the learning experiences of EBs, as well as impact that timeline for overall academic achievement, language proficiency and overall acculturation. The purpose of this study will be to elaborate on the social emotional learning impact on EB learning experiences and their social and cultural integration in a new country. The following chapter will further elaborate on those affective relationships.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study uses the Community Cultural Wealth Model theoretical framework (Yosso, 2005). Through a critical race theory lens, this model addresses “some of the under-utilized assets students of color bring with them” (Yosso, 2005, p.70) and asserts that Latino communities utilize specific cultural wealth as a survival tactic (Yosso, 2006) to overcome the “institutional neglect of the U.S. public school system that has historically failed them” (Luna & Martinez, 2013, p.3). Furthermore, critical race theory aims to challenge the notion that “Communities of Color are indicators of cultural poverty disadvantages” by shifting attention to “the array of cultural knowledge, skills, [and] abilities possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69).

Yosso (2005) establishes that through six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant, “Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth”. Aspirational capital contends that even when faced with adversities and potentially limited means of attaining goals or realizing dreams, individuals continue to hold on to those ambitions. Linguistic capital brings forth the reality of embracing the value of knowing multiple languages and “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences” as well as “[emphasizing] the connections between

racialized cultural history and language” (Yosso, 2005, pg. 78). It further acknowledges that students of color experience and attain both language and communication skills through their experiences with cultural traditions such as “storytelling tradition, ...listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, stories (cuentos) and proverbs (dichos)” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Familial capital describes the ties that are made and nurtured within a community through interactions with extended family which in turn stresses the need to “[maintain] a healthy connection to our community and its resources” (Yosso, 2005, 79). Social capital emphasizes the concept of building networks and identifying resources that students of color can utilize and in turn they can share “back to their social networks” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Navigational capital stresses that communities of color must contend with the challenges of maneuvering institutions that were not intended to serve them (Yosso, 2005) and thus, proclaims the need for them to “sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of...dropping out of school” (Alva, 1991, p.19). Finally, resistant capital describes the persistence and resiliency that students of color maintain as they challenge inequality and resist subordination (Yosso, 2005). Through this lens, children are educated to “engage in behaviors and maintain attitudes that challenge the status quo” (Yosso, 2005, p. 81). Through this framework, I retell the migration stories of immigrant youth and describe their experiences as marginalized students of color entering U.S. schools cradling the influence of their cultural values, knowledge, and skills as they prepare to navigate the inevitable challenges of acculturation.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined research relevant to Latino Emergent Bilingual experiences throughout the migration process, the role SEL can have on their learning experiences in U.S. high schools, as well as how they approach and traverse the cultural and social tensions that arise as they grapple with acculturation. The research presented serves as a foundation to solidify the purpose of this study and will concentrate on the migration journey of Latino newcomer youth, the social emotional stressors that impact Emergent Bilinguals' learning experiences and acculturation to U.S. high schools. The following chapter describes the framework for the study, that includes research design, methods, data collection and analysis, and overall review of the research problem.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore and document Latino newcomer students' migration experiences, their perception of the impact these experiences have on their learning, social emotional learning (SEL), and cultural transition to U.S. high schools. It presents the stories of three Latino newcomer students who attended high school within the first three years of entering the United States. Their stories provide insight into their journeys and transitional experiences in U.S. high schools. Utilizing snowball sampling, former Latino newcomer students were solicited to participate, and data was collected through individual open-ended interviews. Responses from the interview transcripts were analyzed utilizing a thematic coding process and presented in narrative form. This chapter includes an overview of the research problem, research purpose and questions, research design, participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations of the study.

### **Overview of the Research Problem**

The number of international immigrants has increased within the last few years. In 2020, approximately 34 million immigrants were refugees, who were fleeing their country due to safety and economic factors beyond their control ("Child migration - UNICEF data," 2022). Astonishingly, half of those forced to leave their countries are children, under 18, who must accompany either a parent, relative or stranger through the often-treacherous migration journey. Out of the 15 countries with the largest number of migrant children, the United States leads with 3.3 million ("Child migration - UNICEF data," 2022). Out of the millions of undocumented youths, Latinos comprise “approximately 78% of [the] population” (Coronado et. al, 2009). Given the number of

immigrant youth entering the United States, it is critical to allow them to share their experiences during and after migration to understand the impact it has and will have on their lives in the United States.

### **Positionality**

Migration is one of the most drastic and unpredictable experiences a person can endure. This life altering event becomes even more challenging for children and youth, who must quickly adjust to leaving their homes, relatives, and friends, and simultaneously adapt to a foreign environment and culture. As dean of instruction in a high school, I have been fortunate to work with newcomer students for the past 15 years in various roles providing onboarding support as they transition to learning in a large comprehensive high school. I have been privy to our newcomers' struggles with learning a new language, not only navigating the challenges of being a teenager, but being a teenager in a strange and demanding environment, and the overall stress of academic expectations in a U.S. high school. However, when I stop to reflect and ponder whether we are servicing our newcomers beyond the perfunctory, *welcome to high school, here is your schedule, let me know if you need anything*, my thoughts drift back to the first day they sat in my office, staring at me with doubtful eyes and nodding with uncertainty. Aside from ensuring newcomers have a class schedule on the first day they enroll, how do we know we are meeting all their needs? How do we ensure their voices are heard? When do we stop and listen to their stories to truly make a connection to how their experiences have shaped who they are and how they will transition to a new country and a new school?

### **Research Purpose, Questions, and Hypothesis**

The purpose of this study was to examine Latino newcomer perspectives on their migration experiences, and their perception of the impact migration has on their learning and acculturation to U.S. high schools. This study addressed following questions:

How can we understand the migration journey and cultural experiences of Latino newcomer high school students?

How do high school Latino newcomer students perceive their learning experiences and transition to U.S. schools?

How can we understand the challenges high school Latino newcomers face with acculturation and their perceived impact on learning experiences?

### **Research Design**

For this study, a qualitative narrative inquiry design was utilized to explore former Latino newcomer students' migration experiences, their perception of the impact their experiences have on their learning, and their cultural transition to U.S. schools. A narrative research inquiry design focuses on learning about people's experiences through individual accounts of stories from their own perspectives, memories, and social interactions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry provides a platform that allowed me to present participant portrayals of their lived experiences through a compilation of personal accounts. Furthermore, as Geertz (1995) asserts, through narrative inquiry, "what we can construct, if we keep notes and survive, are a hindsight account of the connectedness of things that seem to have happened: pieced-together patterning, after the fact" (p. 2). Through interviews, I assembled the voices of my participants to produce a collection of their "stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). I immersed myself in their recollections of memories and aimed to reach an "understanding and make meaning of [their] experience(s)" (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000, p. 80) as I too, “[became] part of the experience itself” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). As a member of the Latino community, a daughter of immigrants, and the wife of an immigrant, I am personally vested in learning and immersing myself in the stories and experiences of our immigrant youth.

Utilizing a snowball sampling technique, former Latino newcomer high school students were solicited to participate in open ended interviews. Snowball sampling provided an opportunity to establish a participant pool from a group of subjects that is difficult to access (Dusek et. al., 2015). The responses from the interview transcripts were analyzed using an inductive thematic coding process to identify and classify emerging themes.

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were three Latino adults who attended high school in the United States as newcomers, ideally, they attended high school within three years of entering the United States. Given the difficulty of reaching participants who are current newcomer students in U. S. high schools, the population was identified by making a connection on Facebook with a former high school newcomer student. That connection in turn, provided an opportunity to expand the sample through social connections with the initial subject through snowball sampling.

Reaching the desired participants for this study was challenging, given the subject and nature of the study. Researchers such as Leighton et al., (2021, p. 41) have found that social media can be “an effective and efficient way to recruit study participants.”

Utilizing a snowball convenience sampling technique, the initial participant was solicited through Facebook, and additional participants were identified from further social connections with the initial subject. Recent Latino newcomer high school graduates were

solicited to participate in this study. Participants were selected if they were Latino and attended U.S. high schools within three years of arriving in the United States.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher gained approval from the University of Houston-Clear Lake's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) before any data was collected. To collect interview data, the researcher gained approval from the participants. Utilizing snowball sampling through social media outlets, participants were solicited and invited to participate in interviews. The researcher provided interested participants with a letter informing them of the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous. After receiving signed participation consent forms, three participants were contacted to schedule interviews. Interviews were scheduled based on each participant's availability, and the interview locations were selected to accommodate the participants.

Qualitative data were collected through two individual open-ended interviews conducted in person. The initial face-to-face interview was approximately 30-45 minutes in length and served as an introduction to the purpose of the study, as well as to allow the participant time to ask questions about the process, establish a level of comfort and familiarity with answering questions out loud and being recorded, as well as building rapport with the researcher. The second interview was either face-to-face or over Zoom and was approximately 30-45 minutes in length and centered on questions that provided the researcher with information on the participant's background, not only to ensure participants met study criteria, but to allow participants an opportunity to share details in an open-ended interview. There were also follow-up 10-minute interviews to deepen understanding, reach saturation, and member check emergent themes throughout the study.



Interview data from the one-on-one interview were recorded with permission, transcribed by the researcher, scripted, color coded, and analyzed to identify themes amongst participant responses. Additionally, the researcher utilized a recorder and Zoom to record participant responses. The researcher conducted interviews with each participant individually based on their availability. Furthermore, the researcher translated and repeated questions as needed to ensure that participants were clear and comfortable with the interview process. All data were secured in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer and in the researcher's office within a locked file cabinet. At the culmination of the study, the data will be maintained by the researcher for five years, which is the time required by CPHS and district guidelines. The researcher will destroy the contents of the file once the deadline expires.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process in narrative inquiry is a compilation of various field texts that a researcher must filter through to “construct a chronicled or summarized account (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131) of an individual's stories. Analyzing field texts does not involve a “smooth transition of [gathering and sorting]” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). The analysis is a fluid process inviting the researcher to revisit and re-read texts as well as allowing us to “[bring] our own re-storied lives as inquirers, bringing new research puzzles, and re-searching the texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132) to produce a social narrative composed of multiple lived experiences and reflections of an individual's memories.

Utilizing grounded theory, I sought to “locate relationships between concepts of themes across interviews through a process of constant comparative analysis (Lal et al., 2015, p.11). Given the depth of data that were collected from interviews, as well as the challenge of ensuring that the participants' stories are represented as they were

experienced, the focus of my analysis was to maneuver through the “ open coding process by [reducing the data from larger clusters to...refined themes [and]...assess the veracity of these themes against...categories and preliminary analyses (Lal et al., 2015, p.11). In my study, I analyzed my participants’ stories to present an understanding of their migration journeys and experiences as young immigrants transitioning to U.S. high schools. There is a lack of literature representing immigrant accounts from the perspective of youth who accompany their families as they journey to a new country, enroll in U. S. schools, and contend with a cultural transition; therefore, my analysis will aim to explore those narratives by retelling their stories.

Guided by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I utilized a combination of analytical tools to sift through the collected texts and piece together the data to produce a complete narrative text worthy of representing the participants’ lived experiences. Interview data were transcribed from recordings on Zoom and the personal handheld recorder. After all transcriptions were printed, the initial process of coding began. Through a process of narrative and holistic coding, the researcher “categorized the text into broad topics as a preliminary step before more detailed analysis” (Saldana, 2021, p. 214). Through a “macro-level coding” approach, the researcher “[grasped basic themes or issues in the data by absorbing them as a whole [the coder as a ‘lumper’] rather than analyzing them line by line the coder as a ‘splitter’]” (Dey, 1993, p.104; Saldana, 2021, p. 214). Given that those themes “[bring] meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations” (Saldana, 2021, p. 258), the researcher engaged in “themeing” the data. The themeing process allows “comparable reflection on participant meanings and outcomes” (Saldana, 2021, p. 259). Therefore, by utilizing a categorical theming approach, the researcher was allowed an opportunity to “[create] themes related to general topics and ideas..., through descriptive details about the patterns observed”

(Saldana, 2021, p. 259). Furthermore, through this analysis the researcher presents a narrative that “at once looks backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situates the experiences within place” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 140) for each participants’ story.

### **Validity**

Given the researcher’s professional background, there was a possibility of inherent bias with the purpose of the study and the participants. Furthermore, the purpose of the study and the interview questions were initiated, structured, and influenced by the researcher’s experiences; therefore, specific protocols and processes were established to ensure that the qualitative component of this study was validated for accuracy and credibility.

The researcher conducted a peer review of the interview process and clarified research bias. In addition, member checking was conducted with participants as a validity check (Creswell, 2013). The participants were given both interim texts and final research texts to assess the veracity of their accounts as well as researcher analysis, for member checking. Additionally, to establish validity in the coding process, the researcher utilized peer review to problematize the codes resulting from the thematic coding process (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, theory triangulation was used to analyze findings between interviews, journals, and literature (Creswell, 2013).

### **Privacy and Ethical Considerations**

For the purpose of this study, approval was obtained from the University of Houston-Clear Lake’s Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) before any data were collected. The researcher gained approval from the participants to collect interview data. The participants were sent a letter detailing study information and informing them that participation would be voluntary. After receiving signed

participation consent forms, the participants were provided with interview times and locations. The data collected were securely locked in a cabinet and pin drive in the researcher's office. The researcher will maintain the data for 5 years as required by the CPHS. After the deadline has passed the researcher will destroy all data files associated with the study.

### **Research Design Limitations**

This study presented certain limitations. First, participants may be concerned that their responses are not confidential, because they are being recorded. Second, considering participants were solicited on social media, they may not feel comfortable disclosing their true feelings or perceptions. Thirdly, participant legal status may present a limitation, because they may be reluctant to fully participate or disclose personal information. Therefore, there is little control for how honestly participants chose to respond to questions; hence, the results are only reflective of how they decided to reply. Finally, another limitation was the difficulty in reaching current high school students; therefore, participants' recollection of events is based on those that occurred in the past over a span of multiple years. Hence, accurate accounts of events are limited to what participants can recall after years have passed. Ultimately, the potential bias that arises from participant answers can further limit the research; therefore, the participant selection process must account for this bias and the researcher must align research questions to the purpose of this study.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore and document Latino newcomer high school student migration experiences, their perception of the impact their experiences had on their learning, and cultural transition to U.S. high schools. The study investigated student insight and recollections of their experiences in a U.S. high school, as well as

how their migration experiences contributed to their acculturation and overall learning. In the following chapter, interview data were analyzed and discussed in further detail.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

“Conozco personas cuyas experiencias fueron tan traumáticas que no podrían hablar de ellas” [I know people whose experiences were so traumatic that they couldn't talk about them] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

#### **Overview**

This study presents the experiences of three former newcomer high school students as they retell their individual migration and acculturation stories. In this chapter, I will present their personal accounts, as they reflect on the anguish they endured as they contemplated leaving family, friends, and their home country. Although their individual narratives evolved differently during their migration journey and after they entered the United States, their emotional reflections centered on the same sentiment, “la esperanza de lo que nos esperaba en el otro lado” [the hope of what awaited on the other side] (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that each participant had created a chronology of their own experiences based on their emotional connection to those specific moments. Their “chronicles...[and] sequence of events in and around...particular [topics] or narrative threads of interests” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.112), provided the framework for analyzing their interviews. Utilizing an inductive and thematic approach, I sifted through the stories they shared and identified that all participants' memories started with a vivid recollection of their home country, a semblance of a former self, a connection to their birthplace and their culture. Their emotional descriptions were a testament to their loyalty to their country and stressed the fact that their decision to immigrate was not done hastily or easily. I further organized the themes that evolved from their oral histories, by continuing with their migration journeys and ending with

their experiences and challenges as they arrived in the United States and struggled with acculturation.

Their anecdotes allowed me to construct their emotive narratives by carefully weaving the pieces of their memories as they selected to share them. As I listened to their recorded voices, the sudden realization that I would not be able to include every detail, every lived moment in their narrative, left an unsettling void in my heart. They entrusted me with their memories, their fears, their hopes, and every word was crucial to their story. The following, although only fragments of their lives and echoes of their voices, is a humble attempt at capturing my participants' migration journeys and acculturation to the United States.

### **Overall Analysis**

There are multiple life experiences that can be categorized as challenging and impressionable. In turn, many cause permanent scars that are daily reminders of the emotional and mental stress endured throughout those moments. One such life altering event is immigration. The decision to leave one's home country, regardless of the factors that contributed to that decision is "complex, multidimensional, and stressful for families" in turn "the process of immigration and of adaptation in the United States" (Espinoza et al., 2020, p. 268) is life changing.

As the researcher, I was cognizant of how sensitive, personal, and transformational the topic of immigration is; however, the interview process was a humbling experience that reminded me that a textbook definition does not do justice to the lived human experiences, memories, and emotions. My participants granted me the honor of listening to their stories and witnessing their vulnerability as their words were often stifled by heavy sighs and watery eyes. They shared their memories as young adolescents in their home countries, each depicting similar but very different landscapes

that once held the only vision of themselves they knew. Every pause, every moment that prompted them to close their eyes, was an attempt to hold on to the emotions that those memories evoked and to understand the impact they each had on who they are today. I was immersed in each of my participants' timelines of "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space," (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50) that allowed more than a glimpse into their worlds, it allowed me as a researcher, to see myself "in the middle of a nested set of stories-[mine] and theirs" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.63).

### **Participant Narratives**

*Ricardo's memories of his youth in Los Tangos, Honduras, are blended images of beauty, longing, and disparity. As a young boy he was left in the care of his maternal grandmother as his parents sought an opportunity for a better life in a foreign country. Soon after, he would have to contend with further loss with the passing of his grandmother and the realization that his was now a fight for survival. He was torn with holding on to what Los Tangos represented in his heart and what it would become to a young man with no loved ones to help him navigate the darkness hidden behind the shadows, luring him into the gang life. What follows is Ricardo's journey for a new hope in a new land.*

#### **Ricardo's Home Country**

Ricardo is the youngest of the three participants. He was born and raised in a small rural area of Honduras, called *Los Tangos*. *Los Tangos*...He smiles as he shares that although he lived in a very humble *aldea* [village] that was lacking in so many resources and commodities, there was still so much beauty around him. Sadly though, he understood that the limited resources and opportunities prompted so many to immigrate to the United States. In 2003, when he was three years old, his father made the decision to immigrate to the United States in hopes of better economic opportunities, and a year later



his mother made the journey leaving him with his maternal grandmother. He shares that his parents made the difficult decision of leaving him behind, because he was so young, and they did not think he could withstand the perils that they would encounter throughout the migration to the United States. He further explains that his mother had to walk through Guatemala and Mexico, crossing through deserts before reaching the United States and reuniting with his father.

At a young age, he was left with no parents and in the care of his grandmother. She meant everything to him and when he lost her at ten years old, his life changed drastically. “Después de la muerte de mi abuela, mi vida cambió y entré en una etapa de soledad, de mucho dolor y sufrimiento” (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). [After my grandmother’s death, my life changed. I entered a stage of solitude full of pain and suffering.] He thinks back on his solitude as a young boy, living alone with no moral or physical support from a close relative that would provide the same love as a parent or grandparent. After his grandmother’s death, he was sent to live with an uncle, and he sighs as he recalls how lonely he felt growing up. As the years passed and he entered adolescence, there was a fear that he would succumb to a life of crime and gangs, as so many in the *aldeas* [villages] do. Children were heavily recruited, especially those with little or no family support and often had no choice but to join a gang. Considering that death threats were common, and opportunities were limited, joining a gang became a matter of survival. Aside from the dangers of violence and gangs, he was contending with the reality that there were very limited medical resources, food, or clothing, as well as minimal educational opportunities. It was during this critical time in his youth, that he decided he needed to find a way to immigrate to the United States for fear of losing himself to the darkness in *Los Tangos*.

### **Ricardo's migration journey**

“*Me armé de valor, y decidí hacer el viaje*” [I gathered the courage and decided to make the trip.] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). Upon learning that a group of older acquaintances, from the same *aldea* [village] were planning to make the journey to the United States, Ricardo stated that he summoned up the nerve and decided to join them. He waited until they had entered Guatemala before he contacted his mother to tell her of his plans. This was not a pleasant surprise, given his age and the fact that she knew what awaited him on this journey, his mother was not pleased. However, Ricardo shared, “tenemos un dicho, ya estamos en el gancho hay que hacerle pa’ delante.” [We have a saying, we are already on the hook, we have to move forward.] There was no turning back and his mother promised to help in any way she could as he continued his trip. The group traveled by foot, bus, train, and in some instances hitchhiked. A member of the group who had attempted the journey a number of times and had been deported, was guiding them because he was somewhat familiar with the path. As they reached the Guatemala and Mexico border, they were met by a couple of men, whom one of the group members knew, and they helped them cross that border by canoe. After crossing they continued their journey watching over each other carefully, so they were not robbed or ambushed. As they traveled, family and friends helped them by sending money when they could, and in times when they were in need, they would beg for money on the streets.

After crossing into Mexico, the group would need to board *La Bestia*, [The Beast] a freight train whose route begins in Chiapas, a state in Mexico, close to the Guatemala border. Ricardo explains that *La Bestia* runs through most of Mexico and when he and his group came upon it, there were hundreds of others waiting to jump on, too. He further shares that attempting to jump on *La Bestia* is a feat in itself. There are rare occasions

when *La Bestia* is at a complete stop, allowing migrants to jump onto the ladders as they move to the top of the cars, but most often than not, people would have to run parallel to the train as it was moving, in hopes of grabbing onto the ladders. Ricardo shared that, “gracias al señor, cuando nosotros nos subimos iba apenas a vuelta de rueda” [Thank the Lord, when we got on it was just one turn of the wheel] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023), so they were able to jump onto the ladders quickly to board, as the train’s wheels started to turn. However, he knew of others who were not as lucky. “Gracias a Dios yo no viví esto, pero sé de algunos que tuvieron que correr para alcanzar el tren, y luego se soltaron y el tren los partió en mitad. Esas son las historias de tantos [Thank God I didn't experience this, but I know of some who had to run to catch the train, and then they let go and the train cut them in half. Those are the stories of so many] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

Once aboard *La Bestia*, they would quickly settle down on top of the cars bracing themselves and praying for the next 4 days. Ricardo recalls the cold nights, the fear of falling asleep and falling off the train, the hunger, and although the train made stops and vendors were waiting for migrants to get off and purchase food, this was also a chance for danger to join them once they were back on the train. Men would board at night with weapons to rob or assault migrants.

Te apuntaba la pistola a tu cabeza diciendo, “o te brincas o te boto, ¿qué prefieres?, o te decían dame todo lo que tienes o te mato, y aún más, solo porque podían, te decían, ‘bésame los pies,’ ¿qué haría usted? [ He pointed the gun at your head saying, “either you jump, or I throw you off, what do you prefer? Or they told you, give me everything you have, or I’ll kill you. And even more, just because they could, they told you, ‘Kiss my feet, or I’ll kill you’, what would you do? (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

Nightmares like these made falling asleep dangerous. You had sleep without sleeping, always ready to react and prepared for anything. He pauses to reflect that many migrants who make this journey, don't retell these experiences, "Uno omite esas cosas. Solo dicen tomé La Bestia, y nada más" [You omit those things. They merely mention that they traveled on *La Bestia*, and leave it at that.] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). No one wants to remember the danger and the fear.

At the end of the trip on *La Bestia*, Ricardo and his group were met by a coyote, who would help them through the remainder of their journey. Ricardo's mother had very limited means, so he knew the sacrifices she made to gather the money needed to pay the coyote. At his young age, she did not want him to continue the journey through what he called *la zona caliente de Mexico* [the hot zone of Mexico] without someone who knew the dangers that lay ahead. The coyote took them to a house located somewhere in Mexico, that held about two hundred other immigrants waiting to cross into the United States. Pausing, he looks down and recounts one day when the coyote left them alone and four trucks of men arrived midday, carrying long weapons. They barged into the house and started yelling and forcing people out. He does not recall how many they took, but it seemed like the majority of them. He turned to ask me, "¿Qué le dice eso? Usted sabe cómo nos hizo sentir eso, la fragilidad e impotencia que sentimos, que vulnerables estábamos, pensando ¿cuándo vienen por mí?" [What does that tell you? Do you know how that made us feel, the fragility and helplessness we felt, how vulnerable we were, thinking when they are coming for me?] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). He continued, asking, how would we run? What would happen if we started running, what would they do? Or do we tell them no, we aren't going to go with you, and see what will happen. They didn't return again, but Ricardo won't forget the fear and anxiety he felt each night waiting until it was finally his turn to continue his journey.

They left the house late one night and after traveling an additional 16 hours, the coyote left them close to the U.S. border and Ricardo surrendered to immigration.

### **The United States 2014**

Ricardo's trip ended at the United States and Mexico border on April 3, 2014, almost a month and a half after he decided to make the journey. After arriving at immigration, he soon learned that *Las hieleras* [the refrigerators], the holding cells made from concrete walls within the customs and border protection facilities, would be his home for the next two weeks. Ricardo remembers the stone-cold bench that lined the inside of the cell and the thin, small *papeles de aluminio*, [aluminum warming blankets] that they were given to keep them warm. One per person. He spent the first five days in *las hieleras* with no bath, no food and with minimal clothing. Men and women were kept in separate areas, and so were those traveling together as families. While in *las hieleras*, Ricardo had to go before a judge to plead his case to stay in the United States. After two weeks, he was sent to *la casa hogar*. During his stay at *la casa hogar*, he attended class and was taught basic words in English, as well as an introduction into life in the United States. After 23 days he was taken to the airport where he boarded a plane to Houston, where he was reunited with his mother.

### **Education and Acculturation**

Imagínese cuando entré a ese edificio de dos pisos y tres mil doscientos estudiantes, que la mayoría, si no que todos hablaban inglés...me sentí como un mono en un circo...totalmente perdido” [Imagine when I walked into that two-story building with three thousand two hundred students, who most, if not all, spoke English...I felt like a monkey in a circus...totally lost] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

Ricardo laughs as he recalls his first experience walking into his high school in the United States. “Esa es una historia muy, muy hermosa, que me gusta contar” [That is a very, very beautiful story, which I like to tell] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). He first explains that in *Los Tangos*, his school was an L shaped building with ten classrooms and each classroom held about 20 to 30 students depending on the grade level and that was it. A new building had just been constructed prior to his departure, and it held grades seven through ninth. Both buildings held less than two hundred people, including students and teachers. Ricardo recalls his first day of school.

La escuela comenzaba a las ocho, y mi mamá me dejó en la escuela a las siete y media. Eran las nueve y media y yo todavía no llegaba a mi clase. Entré por la puerta principal y comencé a caminar por los pasillos y vi que todos se acercaban a los papeles de la pared. Busqué mi nombre y no lo encontré. Seguí caminando por los pasillos, perdido. Después me di cuenta que todos los papeles tenían mi nombre [School started at eight, and my mom dropped me off at school at seven-thirty. It was half past nine and I still hadn't gotten to my class. I walked in the front door and started walking through the hallways and saw everyone approaching the papers on the wall. I looked for my name and couldn't find it. I continued walking through the hallways, lost. Then I realized that all the papers had my name on them] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). He finally made it to class after an assistant principal helped him find his name on the wall roster. Throwing back his head, laughing, he remembers that he walked into the room and quickly realized he had nothing with him except for the phone his mother had given him.

La maestra me dijo tantas cosas cuando entré al salón, pero no entendí nada. Me senté y me preguntó si tenía un *pencil*, le dije que no y dijo ughhh, luego me dijo

papel? y le dije que no, y volvió a decir "ughhh pa' qué vienen a la escuela" y me puso un lápiz y un papel en el escritorio [The teacher told me so many things when I entered the classroom, but I didn't understand anything. I sat down and she asked me if I had a pencil, I said no and she said ughhh, then she said paper? and I told her no, and she said "ughhh again, and why do they come to school" and she put a pencil and paper on my desk] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

Getting to his classes was challenging that first day, because of the size of the school and the different colored hallways, but his experience at lunch was quite the adventure. "Ir a lonche, hay Dios mío, cuando sonó la campana para lonche dije para dónde voy yo. Las filas estaban tan largas y cuando al fin agarré lonche, ya era tiempo de regresar a clase y solo me pude tomar un cartón de leche" [Going to lunch, oh my God, when the bell rang for lunch, I asked myself, where am I going. The lines were so long and when I finally grabbed lunch, it was time to go back to class and I could only drink a carton of milk] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023). Finding his classes and eating lunch proved to be a culture shock that Ricardo was not anticipating. He continued to share that eventually he would learn to navigate the hallways and acquired a close group of friends, who like him, were newcomers adjusting to their new environment and their new normal. The majority of the teachers, like the students, were English speakers, with the exception of a few who were part of the English as Second Language program (ESL). Ricardo was surrounded by English speakers, and each person had their own tone, enunciation and some spoke so fast that even if he could understand a little English, he still wouldn't capture what they were saying.

At the time, he wasn't aware that he was in the ESL program. He only knew that the majority of his classes were filled with mostly Spanish speaking students who were

recent arrivals to the United States, with a few students who were from Vietnam. In retrospect, he recognizes that the ESL program proved to be a saving grace for him and his classmates. Students in the program followed a similar schedule, so they attended academic classes together and those teachers would help them with translation, as well as allow them to use Google Translate and bilingual dictionaries. However, outside of the comfort of those classes, they were quickly immersed in a sea of faces that they didn't know and who didn't care who they were, how much they were struggling or how or why they had come to the United States. Now he reflects that once he befriended other students who were also newcomers, they became his support system. They were all experiencing the same transitions, the same challenges, including one critical commonality: standing appointments with immigration.

No one asked him about his journey when he started school. With the exception of the typical questions, 'what country are you from, how much English do you know,' no one probed any deeper than what he felt was necessary. Although he says that he isn't embarrassed about his journey or what happened, and he would have shared had someone asked him, he knows of many who would not have been able to speak about their experiences. Many started their journey because of traumatic experiences, like rape and violence. Some of the friends he met were forced to immigrate because of these circumstances, and it was years before they felt safe speaking about them, but only to other immigrants. They would have never opened up to anyone at school. They all lived with a fear of what others would think about them or what would happen to them.

"Nosotros que vivimos tales cosas en nuestros países, estamos acostumbrados y por eso no nos da tanto temor, cruzar y hacer este viaje. No minimizo los riesgos y los peligros, pero la recompensa de llegar a este país vale la pena, ¿me entiende?" [We who experience such things in our countries are used to it and that is why we are not so afraid



to cross and make this trip. I don't mean to minimize the risks and dangers, but the reward of reaching this country is worth it, you understand?]" (R. Rodriguez, communication, June 23, 2023).

Arriving in the United States was a series of first-time experiences for Ricardo and although the journey was difficult, it was worth immigrating because of the opportunities that were waiting in the United States. "Si queríamos hacer un dinerito para mandar a nuestra Honduras, era necesario llegar al gabacho, como decíamos y hacer muchos verdes, y por eso valía la pena hacer el viaje, por las esperanzas." [If we wanted to make a little money to send to our Honduras, it was necessary to get to *the gabacho*, as we called it {United States}, and make a lot of green{money}, and that is why it was worth making the trip, for the hopes] (R. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 23, 2023).

*Ricardo is twenty-four years old. During his senior year in high school, he recalls the excitement he felt when he was selected to join a group of students who were going to visit a college campus. At the time, there was a faint hope that maybe one day he could also go to college. However, he soon learned that it wouldn't be an option. After graduating high school, he started working at a mechanic shop and eventually through years of experience, is now an automotive mechanic. He is married and has two daughters. His journey, like those that follow, began with a yearning for a life filled with new hope, and ultimately, each would evolve into their own narrative of survival.*

### **Belinda's Home Country**

*Belinda remembers a Mexico that promised a life of possibilities laden with the realities of the daily struggles that stemmed from a single parent household. Although she vividly recalls having a happy childhood, she understood, even at a young age, that they would have to leave those moments and her home behind, in hopes of attaining a life that*

*offered financial and emotional stability in a foreign land. However, her journey to the United States would test her strength and courage. Running through fields of cotton, she remembered the promise she made her mother; she wouldn't be afraid, she wouldn't cry. She didn't realize that one day she'd be yearning for the humble life she left behind, amidst the broken pieces of false hope, and years of hiding her true identity in the shadows.*

Belinda was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. She spent the first 12 years of her life there, in a single parent household. Her memories revolve around her mother and her brother. She recalls that her mother always worked multiple jobs, and when Belinda was about eight years old, her mother started doing strangers' laundry and ironing their clothes for extra money and she would have to help so they could get through the loads more quickly. She remembers that:

There were also times when my mother would open a *cenadoría*, [a restaurant of sorts) in our home. She would set up four tables and chairs in our living area a few evenings a week and people came to eat (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda takes a moment, closes her eyes, and shares that these were the moments when her mother grew tired and started thinking about leaving Mexico. She knew people always talked about the United States and, *el sueño americano* [the American dream], when they dreamt of finding a better way of life.

### **Belinda's Migration Journey**

Belinda shares that her mother, brother, and she attempted to cross illegally three times, before they finally reached the U.S. However, she states that:

My mother attempted to get a visa three times, and was denied, before she decided that we had to find other means of getting to the United States. Our first

attempt was unsuccessful, mainly because the person that was guiding us was drunk and he kept stalling us and saying that there were too many officers around and he made us go back. The second time we attempted we were actually caught and held at immigration while my mother had her fingerprints taken. After they were done, they released us back at the border. It was about a week after that when we made our third attempt (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda's mother sought her family's help finding a coyote to help them. They were sent to stay with one of her uncle's friends who had a house that was closer to the border, as they waited for the coyote. She recalls that this man was nicer than the other two, he explained when and how they would be making the journey, so everyone knew what to expect. Belinda shares:

We actually walked across fields of cotton, and I remember being surprised at how sharp the cotton plants were and how they scraped across my legs as we walked. Although it was rough walking through all the thorns, I was glad we didn't have to swim across the river, because I can't swim. There were times when we had to lay in the fields as we heard immigration officers around us, but we finally made it to a trailer home where we would stay for a week until we continued with our trip (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda reflects on how she felt at twelve years old, as her mother explained what she needed them to do during their journey. She pauses, swallowing, moving her glasses to wipe her tears as she tries to describe how she felt:

I was only twelve years old, but I remember thinking about what my mom needed me to do and you know you almost have to numb yourself, so you don't feel or think too much. My mother needed us to be brave and I thought I can't be weak.

You've got to suck it in and even if you're scared, you can't show the fear. I'm sorry, this is making me cry, now that I have kids and I think back, I just can't believe I did that, that I actually went through that at that age (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

### **The United States 2004**

Belinda's aunt and uncle picked them up after they arrived in Houston. She shares that one of the first culture shocks she experienced was during the drive to her aunt and uncle's house.

In Mexico, there are landscapes of concrete houses. If you wanted to see grass or trees, you'd have to go visit a park. As we drove to my uncle's house, I remember thinking this really is like the movies; everything looked cleaner and everywhere I looked houses had grass; they had yards. In Mexico only the rich had a yard with actual grass. This made me hopeful that one day I could also have a house with my own yard (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

After arriving in Houston, Belinda, her mother, and brother moved in with her aunt. Although she recognized that things were calmer now, there were additional challenges that arose after they settled in. Her eyes filled with tears as she continued to share:

My mother had to work three jobs and I was left alone with my aunt. She was mean to me and there wasn't anything I could do except shut up and do what I was told. I feel now we coddle our kids so much, but I'm glad that we get to do that. We didn't have a choice (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda talks about her children and how they react when she tells them her story. She shares that with an incredulous tone, they ask, "But why mom, why did you have to put up with that?"

My children don't know but they are actually growing up with what I feel is White privilege. They don't know how it feels having to be very careful not to do anything wrong, not even in school, because God forbid you were questioned by a teacher. Everything was a threat. You had to follow the law completely, because if a cop stopped you, that meant jail or worse. My kids don't understand, but I tell them if you grew up in the ghetto like we did, you would feel differently if you were stopped by a White cop (Belinda, interview, June 12, 2023).

### **Education and Acculturation**

Growing up in Guadalajara the school system was different than it is here. You either went to school during the morning session or the afternoon. My mom would walk us to school in the morning and we walked home alone. I thought school was harder in Mexico than when I arrived here. Mexico didn't have multiple choice tests, you had to learn everything. So, I thought, man' this is easy, it was just the language that was a challenge (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

However, Belinda soon realized that entering school in the United States would be an experience of culture shocks. Most of those challenges she faced centered around interactions with her peers. She didn't know anyone other than her two cousins, but they were in a different grade and were a part of a magnet program which was located on the opposite side of the school. So, she had to walk to classes on her own and because she didn't speak the language and was always nervous, she would try to keep to herself. However, this led to several confrontations because other students, specifically girls, thought she was:

...stuck up because I didn't talk to anybody. There was one instance when I overheard girls saying they were going to jump me, and I was so scared, but

thankfully my cousins helped me, and those girls never bothered me again (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Aside from not having any friends, there were other factors that made Belinda feel nervous and alienated. Her school was predominantly African American, and she recalls feeling very intimidated and scared because the only faces she knew were those that looked like her. All around her, students were talking and calling out to each other and:

I remember that was one of the scariest things for me, because I didn't know English and I couldn't communicate. I would walk with my head down and try to stay to myself. Everyone always sounded as if they were screaming at you, and I was never sure if they were screaming because they were happy or angry (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda decided that she would focus on doing well in school, because at that time, that was the only thing she could control. Although initially her classes were in Spanish, most of her work and tests were in English, after her first year, her aunt convinced her mother to place her in advanced classes, which meant she would not only be taught in English, but every assignment and test would also be in English.

I was a geek in school, so that helped me learn English. My cousins were in their own world, so I would sit in a corner and read. When I watched television I would put on captions, so that also helped me learn to read in English. There were teachers who worked with me, so that also helped me be successful. At home, there was no one to help me with homework or to support me, but my teachers did (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Living with her aunt didn't make Belinda's transition any easier. Her aunt treated her differently than her brother and her cousins. She wasn't allowed to go out or have any friends over. When her cousins would ask if she could go to the park with them, she

wouldn't let her go. She wasn't even allowed to work with friends on school projects. Belinda remembers that even when she went shopping for clothes, her aunt wouldn't let her mom buy her things she liked. She would take her to less expensive stores, and this often meant that the clothes would be too big for her and had to be altered. Her mother knew that her aunt was mean to her, but there was nothing she could do because she was working three jobs and was hardly home. When she did address the issues, all she would say was, "We're living in her house, you need to shut up and just follow her rules, and when we get a chance, we'll move out" (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023). Belinda did as she was told and continued to focus her energy on schoolwork in hopes that things would get better.

It was during my junior year, that my aunt, just out of the blue said you all have got to go. Suddenly, we had to quickly find an apartment for the three of us. My mom found a one bedroom that was located behind someone's house. We didn't have much, except one bed and a small table, like the ones you have in a living room. That's where we would eat and that's how we lived, so you know you gotta do what you gotta do (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

After their move, Belinda started thinking about her life in Guadalajara. She often asked her mom if they would have had a better life if they had stayed. Although she knew they would often move and her mother had to hold several jobs, things were different and there was still a hope of a better life. "In Mexico, citizens would go to college for free, and here, there was no chance of that. Although I graduated top five percent of my class, I couldn't apply for financial aid or scholarships because of my immigration status, so I worked hard to get good grades for nothing" (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

Belinda watched as her cousins and friends applied to college and planned their futures. Although she got pregnant during her junior year, she worked hard to finish school at the top of her class, but that's where her American dream would end. She didn't get to have the college experience, but instead was married at a young age and had to take on the responsibility of not only running her household, but eventually managing her mother's, as their relationship deteriorated. She still often thinks about what could have been and wonders if she would have lived a better life if they had never left Guadalajara.

*Belinda is 36 years old. When she was a senior in high school, she realized that the narrative that she had imagined when she crossed the border, as a young, scared girl; would not have a happy ending. She was thrust into the reality that she was a teenage, undocumented mother, who could not go to college. Belinda is married and has three teenage children. She shared that although it took many years, she will finally start taking online college courses. She laughs nervously, as she mentions that although she's older, and this might take her years to finish, she will do her best. After marrying her husband, she was able to become a legal resident and proudly states that now she is no longer afraid.*

### **Maria's Home Country**

*Maria's migration journey and story started with the same hope as the other participants. However, one difference is that Maria crossed the border in a car with her family, because she had obtained her citizenship through naturalization. However, in the summer of 1978, that didn't make much of a difference. She was still a newcomer, who didn't speak the language, didn't know the culture and who didn't belong.*

Maria was born in a small town in Mexico called Valle Hermoso and would spend the first thirteen years of her life there.



I recall having to walk everywhere because transportation wasn't readily available within town. We had to walk ten blocks to get to el centro, which was the central part of town, or what one would call, downtown and [that's where many of the main gathering areas were located]. La Plaza [the square], the main church, the library, la Presidencia [the presidency], the jail and el mercadito [the market] were all centrally located within el centro. A few blocks down were the two main grocery stores in town. The longest distance we had to travel from our house was to the high school or the stadium, which was across town (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

There were also tienditas [little shops] embedded in each vecindad [neighborhood] that would provide access to everyday staples like sodas and tortillas. She shared that her town was fairly quiet, and everyone knew everyone, especially those who lived within distance of the elementary school. Living so close meant their paths would cross often through social interactions and gatherings. These neighbors became friends that were kindly referred to as compadres and *comadres* and some would ultimately become like family as they were united through religious ceremonies like *bautizos* [baptisms], *comuniones* [communions], *graduaciones* [graduations] or *quinceañeras*. They would then earn the honor of the title of *madrinas* [godmothers] and *padrinos* [godfathers] to the kids in the vecindad.

The school system is different in Mexico. Children either attended the morning or afternoon session. Maria attended the morning session during her primary years, which meant school was done by noon and for *secundaria* [high school], she attended the afternoon session which started at one and ended at six or seven at night. *La secundaria* was a combination of middle grades and the grade equivalent to ninth grade; there is no official middle school in Mexico. For the first three years of her education, she walked a

block to her school and after that she attended a newly built school about seven blocks from home.

Every Monday every student would wear a white uniform to honor the flag and the entire school would gather on the playground to sing the national anthem. I still remember this with much awe and pride (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

Throughout elementary school, Maria recalls spending time with her three best friends. They would walk to and from school together and were inseparable. She remembers they would play so many games together with the other neighborhood kids. Games like, *al shangai*, *béisbol*, *la bolita*, *los encantados* and many more, like *Loteria*. *Loteria* was a game that everyone played, including the adults.

The adults in the neighborhood would gather to play and sometimes people would not have money to bet, but they would pay with groceries, like chiles, and it would all be totally acceptable (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

She pauses and then continues:

There were times when my sister used to cheat when she played *Loteria*, because we did not have any money at home, since my dad was sick and could not work. As she played, she would “look at the deck of cards” to make sure she would win. After winning, she would go buy tortillas to bring home (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

Maria, and others in her neighborhood were living in single parent homes, often in houses with multiple families, while their fathers were working *en el otro lado* [the other side—the United States]. For most of her childhood it was only her mother and her siblings, and this was normal for Maria and her friends, who were in the same situation.

I did not have a lot of interaction with my father, because he worked and lived in the United States. We were being cared for and raised by my mother and I almost never got to see him. I may have seen him a total of ten times in all the years I lived in Mexico. I remember seeing him once when I was in third grade and he gave me twenty dollars before he left, and that happened maybe two or three times. (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023)

### **Maria's Migration Journey**

I was thirteen when my father completed the process for us to go live with him in the United States. He came home one summer, he packed us in a car, and we drove off. We took what little clothes we had, but we left all our furniture; no one ever explained what was happening or if we were coming back home (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

Maria explains that her trip to Houston was fairly uneventful. Her father was a citizen, so he was able to get documentation that allowed them to travel together across the border. They were all packed into her father's car, they stopped a few times for gas and for something to eat. Her father had planned the trip well, so they did not encounter any challenges or difficulties throughout their drive. She shared that prior to this, she had only seen pictures of the United States, so everything she saw was new to her.

I remember the highways, the cleanliness of it all, the green grass, the trees; it all looked beautiful to me. When I saw the Houston skyline, I remember gasping, because it looked so amazing. The shock of entering the United States came when we arrived at the place where we would be living (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

Although Maria shares that her home in Mexico was tiny, humble and they did not have much, her mother always kept her home clean and would take pride in taking care of their

furnishings. Her new home in the United States was a one-bedroom apartment that was located over someone's house that her father was renting along with several of his cousins. "The kitchen was *asquerosa* [disgusting], there were small roaches everywhere; I was not used to living like that in Mexico" (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). She recalls walking into a room of mixed matched, old, smelly furniture with two beds and it was hard to breathe. "We converted the living room into a second bedroom and my brother converted the closet into the third room. Our new home proved a little too much for me and my siblings to handle; although we know our father had the best intentions bringing us to the USA, it was all unwelcoming and depressing" (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). The one good thing Maria remembers about the move was that "now that we lived with our dad, we always had food to eat, might not have been a lot, but we had food" (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

"The problems with the landlord started right away" (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). Maria explained that the landlord didn't want the family walking around the apartment, because he and his family lived right below, and they could hear the noise. The children were not allowed to play in the backyard, and they weren't allowed to play with the landlord's children. When Maria's older sister would come to visit, the landlord charged her father an extra five dollars, because he said that her visit meant she would be using the bathroom and hence, more water would be used.

It was all so depressing. In my home country, I was used to playing outside all day and now I was cooped up in the apartment all day because my dad was at work, and we weren't allowed to go outside or anywhere else. The only day we went somewhere were Saturdays when my dad would take us to Fiesta to buy

groceries. I remember he would always buy bananas. I got so sick of bananas (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

### **Education and Acculturation**

Maria shared that her memories of her educational experience in Mexico were mostly positive ones. She always did well in school and was usually at the top of her class. Throughout her elementary years, the walk to school consisted of a couple of blocks; however, once she moved to the *secundaria* [high school], she had to walk across town, “but the walks at night were memorable, a group of us would walk home together mostly for safety, but we would also enjoy the laughter and conversations” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). Maria explains that she never realized that her “life would really be turned upside down when [I] started school here in the United States” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

The first thing that Maria recalls upon entering the United States was that everything she saw was in English. Her only experience with English were the minimal words they were taught during the one year she spent in the *secundaria* in Mexico, where she learned to say things like pencil. She also recalls hearing her friend call out “*comir*, Erica” [come here, Erica] because that’s what she learned from her cousin who lived in the United States. Nothing had prepared her for what she would experience when she entered school in a new country.

The high school was located about a mile and a half from Maria’s home. She recalls being in awe at the school’s size and that every classroom had air conditioning. When she first walked into the high school, Maria felt “...smaller than I was, I did not understand anything and I felt scared, alone and ignorant about what was happening” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). She quickly realized that she didn’t know the routines, the schedules, the norms, the rules, the people; she didn’t even know

how to find the restrooms and there was no one around to help. Although the majority of the students were Hispanic, the teachers were mostly White and Black and there were only a couple of Hispanic teachers who spoke Spanish. Despite the fact that Maria was feeling completely alienated, there were a couple of positive discoveries that were oddly very comforting about her first experience in U.S. schools. “One welcomed change was that they gave us free food at lunch time, free food, and it was good! I remember the pizza and burgers fondly because I hadn’t experienced that before” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). However, this moment was short lived as the reality of what would become the norm sunk in.

I remember the first day, I was going down the stairs and I saw the neighbor who lived across the street from me. He was going up the stairs, so I smiled, and I was about to say, hello when he gave me the most hateful look and said something that sounded like “*grapet*” to me, which at the time, I thought was odd, because it was the brand name of a soda in Mexico. I remembered the word because his tone was so hateful. I didn’t know what it meant at the time, but later I realized that he had called me *wetback* and it made me feel so sad and lonely. No one had ever treated me that way. That was how I started my first day (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

Maria closed her eyes as she continued to reflect on the uncomfortable memories of her new school. She never felt safe, she never “felt warmth from the teachers, especially the White and Black teachers. They were all cold, and their stares and tone were always uncaring” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023). Her experiences with students weren’t any different than the ones with adults. She recalls the tension between Black and Hispanic students, and even more surprisingly between Hispanic students and newcomers. To Maria, it seemed like there were always fights between the different

minority groups and she made an effort to avoid them and walk straight home. The only students that she grew close to were other newcomers like herself. Maria shares that her years in high school were the years when bilingual education was being introduced and it felt like neither teachers nor students were very welcoming of the program or of the newcomers.

Maria doesn't recall anyone at school taking time to talk to her about how she felt. No one called her to an office to discuss her transition, her journey, her fears. No one except other immigrants like herself, would ever know how she felt to leave her country and home behind.

I think it would have saved me a lot of trauma, if I had had an explanation as to how the system worked, the expectations, and the norm in school and in the United States. Everything was new and my parents couldn't help me, except to pray. There was no support system to help me be successful. I needed social, academic, mental counseling and someone to let me know that I mattered and that I was worthy of being here, in this wonderful U.S.A. (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

*Maria is fifty-nine years old. She is married and has three adult children. After high school, she started working and started college. She recalls having to take two bus routes every day to and from school because they had no other means of transportation. Her nights ended late, sometimes she wouldn't walk in until after midnight, but she earned her bachelor's degree and shortly after her teaching certificate.*

CHAPTER V:  
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

The premise of this research and narrative inquiry study was to present the stories of former newcomer students throughout their migration journeys, initial introduction to high school in the United States and their acculturation experiences. The following chapter examines their perspectives and how their experiences support the following questions: (1) How can we understand the migration journey and cultural experiences of Latino newcomer high school students? (2) How do high school Latino newcomer students perceive their learning experiences and transition to U.S. schools? (3) How can we understand the challenges high school Latino newcomers face with acculturation and their perceived impact on learning experiences?

**Summary**

There is limited research that focuses on the experiences of newly arrived high school immigrants from their perspectives. Immigrants of all ages contend with multiple stressors and difficulties when they enroll in U. S. schools; however, “these challenges are generally greatest and of most lasting consequence for youth who arrive during their secondary school years” (Sugarman, 2017, p. 1). My participants’ voices and memories created a colorful montage of their lives as young children in their home country and their words transcended to the inevitable interruption of the only way of life they knew.

There are professional and personal experiences that contributed to my decision to pursue this specific focus for my dissertation. As a child of immigrants, I experienced firsthand the tensions that my parents faced as non-English speakers, immersed in a country that was not welcoming or accommodating. Years later, when I began my educational career and was given the opportunity to work with newcomers, I decided that



I would be their voice, just like I had been for my parents. Although I have come across hundreds of students with diverse backgrounds and needs; I could not forget the stories of my newcomers; their eagerness to learn, to belong, and just to be seen. The last 24 years in education have taught me that it is impossible to teach children without learning and respecting their story.

In this chapter, I unravel my participants' memories as story constellations and present them through a chronology of themes that emerged as I analyzed them side by side. Although each of their stories developed freely as they spoke, as the researcher, I was thrust into a "three-dimensional inquiry narrative space...that allowed me to travel inward, outward, backward [and] forward" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 49) as I carefully crafted their narratives. Their stories emerged organically, as they began a nostalgic introduction of memories of their home country. Ricardo, although he was left to grow up without his parents, still recalled how he was captivated by the beauty in *Los Tangos*. He stressed that, in spite of the violence and poverty that surrounded his small village, when he closed his eyes, he could still see the beautiful landscapes. Ricardo understood and felt the connection that he would always have to his Honduras, the land, the people, the culture, but he also realized that he may never be able to return. Belinda's words also vividly depicted Guadalajara as a city that she still longed for, even though she recalls having to move numerous times when her mother couldn't afford housing; it was still her birthplace. Maria described Valle Hermoso, as a town where everyone knew their neighbor, children played games and daily life, although simple, was comforting.

### **Loss**

Through these images emerged the first theme in their narratives: loss. Their memories of their home country along with their recollection of the beauty it held, was an homage to their identity prior to immigrating and to what they left behind. As each spoke

of their country, it was evident that their tone changed, it often became a whisper followed by deep sighs, as they grasped on to the person they were before they crossed. “Mi país de origen es pobre, pero bello, pero nos obliga lastimosamente emigrar a los Estados Unidos” [My country of origin is beautiful, but poor, so it unfortunately forces us to emigrate to the United States] (R. Rodriguez, communication, June 23, 2023). “The most challenging part for me [is that] I was unaware of what was going on. I had to leave behind everything I knew, everyone that was important to me, my friends, my home, my security blanket, for the unknown” (M. Hernandez, personal communication, July 21, 2023).

### **The Journey**

Following that initial theme, the participant’s stories unfolded to the final two themes that also served as a semblance for the chronology of their narratives: their journey and survival. Each participant’s journey, although unique, depicted a story of loss, resilience, and hope. The decision to immigrate centered around a longing for better opportunities and stability. The journey itself weighed differently on each participant; however, they each bear the scars of what they endured throughout their trip and of what it represented; a loss of what once was and a fear of what would be.

### **Survival**

Upon entering the United States, every participant was captivated by the overall aesthetic, tall buildings, large billboards, green grass, and possibilities. However, that initial welcome was short lived, as they were met with the reality of what living in the United States truly represented. Although each participant had family with them, they were not prepared for the bouts of solitude they experienced in their new living conditions, in their new environment and new school. Aside from not knowing the language, they struggled with learning the culture and feeling unwelcome. Theirs was

not only an immigration journey, but one that would test their identities as they navigated acculturation, and psychological and sociological stressors.

### **Relation to Theoretical Framework**

This study utilized Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model as a theoretical framework to establish that the "Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach to education involves a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge the multiple strengths of Communities of Color in order to serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Furthermore, "looking through a CRT lens means critiquing deficit theorizing and data that may be limited by its omission of the voice of People of Color" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Critical Race Theory "draws explicitly on the lived experiences of People of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles and narratives" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73).

Through a narrative inquiry approach, this study presents the voices of newcomer students as socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Their narratives depict an "array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69), through "various forms of capital nurtured through cultural wealth; such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial and resistant capital" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Participant narratives demonstrate that our immigrant students continue to have high educational aspirations despite their legal status and the educational inequities they experience when they enroll in U.S. schools. Their willingness to share their journey and experiences demonstrates that our newcomers' stories are worth retelling, not only to share their culture, memories, and traditions, but as a form of healing, growth, and survival. Their accounts stress the importance of establishing support systems to navigate

social networks and to cope with a lack of connection to a nurturing family and community. Above all, participant narratives indicate the desire and need for newcomers to feel seen and heard, so they have a sense of belonging. Through a CRT lens, “they become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed and learning to make the arguments to defend themselves” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75).

### **Implications for Practice**

The premise of this study, as well as its findings, stress the need for further research on newcomer perspectives, especially those who arrive in the country as high school aged students. My participants’ narratives contribute to the need for literature that explores a newcomer’s experiences during their migration, as well as what they encounter after they arrive in the United States and subsequently, when they are immersed in a new culture. It is prudent to establish measures that provide high school newcomers with an opportunity to share their stories, an opportunity to provide psychological and emotional support, if they request it, and a system that advocates for them as they learn to navigate acculturation. “An inclusive school environment can help to ensure that no student is marginalized and that all students can connect and identify with the school and its curriculum” (Dei et al., 2000 as cited in Nakhaie et al., 2022, p. 65-66).

The study emphasizes the importance of raising awareness of and acknowledging, listening to, and understanding the narratives of our newcomers. “Understanding such perceptions of their experiences is important because the education achievement of newcomer youth is an indicator of integration into a host society” (Nakhaie et al., 2022, p. 65). Schools have the responsibility of implementing measures that support newcomers as they learn the framework of U.S. high schools as well as the challenges of

acculturation. Schools should offer newcomers an opportunity to share their migration experiences and stories. Given that schools implement specific onboarding measures for students entering high school for the first time, these systems should also consider the needs of newcomer students. Onboarding should include an initial session with a school counselor to establish a relationship of support and identify immediate needs. Further support can include monthly counselor sessions throughout a newcomer's first year in high school, to ensure they are transitioning well. In turn, schools should establish systems that provide psychological and emotional support if newcomers or their parents request it.

School districts must acknowledge that newcomers experience different migration journeys with challenges that impact them psychologically, socially, and emotionally, and in turn affects them academically. Therefore, there is a need for districts to implement culturally responsive training for all individuals working closely with newcomers, as well as ensure that teachers are equipped to welcome, teach, and understand newcomers' academic and cultural needs in the classroom.

Throughout the study, two participants shared that they were uncertain if they would have shared their stories if they had been asked, but they would have appreciated that someone cared to ask. As Ricardo stated, not everyone is ready to disclose what they endured throughout their migration journey, but knowing someone cared enough to ask, may have helped provide a sense of comfort. However, every participant expressed that their acculturation experiences could have been less traumatic, if someone had taken time to explain the U.S. school system, as well as the cultural expectations. Therefore, an inclusive school environment should help newcomers with the development of a sense of belonging to school and to overcome the loneliness from migration's loss of social networks (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014, as cited in Nakhaie et al., 2022, p. 66).

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore Latino newcomer student perspectives on their migration journey, their experiences in high school and acculturation. The findings of this study indicate the importance of acknowledging and understanding the narratives of our newcomer high school students. We must recognize that our newcomers are often forced to remain silent; their cries, their fears, and their yearning are merely echoes in their own minds and hearts. There is a need to move our newcomers out of the shadows that have been created within our schools, so they feel like they are welcome, and not hidden. There is a need for “students, whose voices have been marginalized in school and society” (P. Enciso, 2011, p. 22) to feel free to share their stories, if they wish, without fear.

It is equally necessary to respect the factors which contribute towards their migration, the implications and challenges of the journey itself, as well as establishing systems to support their immediate immersion into an unfamiliar culture and environment. With little research on newcomer perspectives, it is imperative to include this critical topic in the literature to explore their experiences and identify the stressors that impact how they will interact, learn, and survive in a new country.

Furthermore, there is even less literature that focuses on newcomer perspectives when they are still in high school; hence, the need to explore methods that will ensure there is a system in place that offers support to help with navigating the unknown, even something as simple as having a person, who speaks their language, walk them to class on their first day. Considering “there are one million unauthorized children under the age of 18 living in the U.S. ... [who live with] the risk of their own deportation and subsequent separation from families” (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017, p. 140), I recommend further studies on exploring how establishing social emotional support systems can

provide an avenue for newcomers to safely disclose their experiences, and aid in their transitions and acculturation. Although one of my participants voiced that she would not have shared her experiences if someone had asked, for fear of getting deported, the others said it may have helped them and others. Therefore, further research on implementing support systems for newcomers may provide solace for those who are ready to start healing.

The schools and “school districts represent an important context that shapes how newcomer students, and their families are incorporated” (Dabach et al, 2021, p. 1). Therefore, it is important to establish the need for these entities to acknowledge and accept their role in the transition that our newcomers face, as well as barriers that will impact their acculturation when enrolling in U.S. schools. To further add to the literature that explores newcomer perspectives, it is recommended that research be conducted to examine the systems that schools and districts have in place to support students who are newly arrived in the United States. “Given that districts are often one of the students’ and families’ first points of contact with U.S. society, how they are received by district and school staff” (Dabach et al, 2021, p. 1) is critical and will impact how students and parents request support and resources.

According to Brabeck and Sibley (2017), “Latino immigrant children are more likely to experience several risk factors when compared to nonimmigrant children...these...put them in jeopardy of poor academic performance” (p.139). Considering these factors, it is prudent for schools and districts to ensure that teachers are prepared to welcome, teach, and understand newcomers’ needs in the classroom; both academically and culturally. Therefore, I recommend further research should be conducted to explore teacher’s perspectives of their effectiveness in “validating [newcomer] students’ lived experiences and building a trusting and caring relationship

with them” (Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016, p. 48). This research would also entail concentrating on the culturally responsive training that schools and districts offer to teachers who will be serving newcomer students. This training should be considered just as necessary as the traditional pedagogical academic professional development that is provided to teachers. By interviewing teachers, researchers can identify any gaps that exist in providing teachers with more information about newcomers’ “cultural, language, and lived experiences in order for students to be successful and sustain academic success” (Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016, p. 48).

Further consideration should also be given to conducting research on newcomer parents and/or guardians’ perspectives. Given the limited research from the newcomer parent/guardian perspective, it would be beneficial to interview parents/guardians to determine what support they need to help their children with their transition to the United States and to U.S. schools. A study focused on parent/guardian perspectives would also provide insight on “political, cultural, psychological, and health challenges associated with migration that often go unaddressed” (Dabach et al, 2021, p. 2). Newcomers may be reluctant to share their own experiences; however, building relationships with parents, welcoming them on campus by meeting with them to provide them with the resources and supports available, may help with learning more about what our newcomers have faced in their home country and throughout their migration. However, this research would entail exploring an approach that considers the sensitive nature of newcomer parents’ legal status. Parents must feel safe so they can trust that schools and districts understand their stories, their experiences, and their needs.

The one recommendation that supersedes all others, is the responsibility of awareness. It is important that schools, districts, educators, all stakeholders, recognize and acknowledge that newcomers carry the weight of “acculturative stress: guilt of



leaving family/friends behind, social isolation, communication difficulty, employment difficulty, legal status stress, race-and language-based discrimination” (Li, 2015, p. 47). Theirs is not merely a story of relocation, but rather one of traumatic exposure and “stress proliferation, ...which [ in turn, triggers] a chain of subsequent stressors in the post-migration context” (Li, 2015, p. 48).

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to present and examine Latino newcomer perspectives on their migration experiences and their perceptions of the impact migration had on their learning and acculturation to U.S. high schools. A qualitative narrative inquiry design was utilized for this study. This method allowed participants to share their experiences, memories and perspectives on their immigration journeys and subsequent immersion in U.S. high schools. Although each participant’s story presented a distinct narrative, they shared a similar perspective of the opportunities that their migration represented and an unsettling view of the reality that welcomed them. Each of their individual interviews was a series of emotional glimpses that started with the lives they left behind intertwined with shadows of the experiences that they were yet to encounter. All were left yearning for their home country, as they struggled with learning a new language, a new culture, and a semblance of the person they once were.

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## APPENDIX A:

### INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (ENGLISH)

You are being asked to participate in the research project described below. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or you may decide to stop your participation at any time. Should you refuse to participate in the study, or should you withdraw your consent and stop participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be otherwise entitled. You are being asked to read the information below carefully and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether to participate.

Title: SABES QUIÉN SOY Y DE DÓNDE VENGO: LATINO NEWCOMER PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR MIGRATION JOURNEY AND PERCEIVED IMPACT ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACCULTURATION TO U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS.

**Student Investigator(s):** Claudia Del Villar

**Faculty Sponsor:** Judith Márquez, Ph.D.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine Latino newcomer student perspectives on their migration experiences and their perceptions of the impact migration has on their learning and acculturation to U.S. high schools.

## PROCEDURES

The research procedures are as follows: To collect interview data, the researcher will gain approval from the participants. Utilizing snowball sampling through social media outlets, participants will be solicited and invited to participate in interviews. Snowball sampling is a process that is used to identify participants for the study. This process involves making a connection to the initial participant through social media, in this instance through Facebook, and then that participant will in turn make connections with additional participants through Facebook. This will allow researcher to invite these additional participants to the study.

## EXPECTED DURATION

The total anticipated time commitment will approximately be one-to-one hour and a half to participate in a minimum of two face-to-face or virtual open-ended interviews on Zoom.

## RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this project.

## BENEFITS TO THE SUBJECT

There is no direct benefit received from your participation in this study, but your participation will help the investigator better understand Latino newcomers' migration journeys and experiences, their cultural transitions, and their perception of the impact on their learning in U.S. high schools.

## CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. The data collected from the study will be used for educational and publication purposes, however, you will not be identified by name. The researcher will use pseudonyms and only the researcher will have access to list of participant names and identifiers. For federal audit purposes, the participant's documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the investigator, Claudia Del Villar, for a minimum of three years after completion of the study. After that time, the participant's documentation may be destroyed.

## FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to be offered for participation in the study.

## INVESTIGATOR'S RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPANT

The investigator has the right to withdraw you from this study at any time.

## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

The investigator has offered to answer all your questions. If you have additional questions during the course of this study about the research or any related problem, you may contact the Student Researcher, Claudia Del Villar, [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. The Faculty Sponsor, Judith Marquez, Ph.D., may be contacted at phone number [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED].

## SIGNATURES:

Your signature below acknowledges your voluntary participation in this research project. Such participation does not release the investigator(s), institution(s), sponsor(s) or granting agency(ies) from their professional and ethical responsibility to you. By signing the form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, and explanation of risks or benefits have been explained to you. You have been allowed to ask questions and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You have been told who to contact if you have additional questions. You have read this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate as a subject in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Principal Investigator or Student Researcher/Faculty Sponsor. You will be given a copy of the consent form you have signed.

Subject's  
printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of  
Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Using language that is understandable and appropriate, I have discussed this project and the items listed above with the subject.

Printed name and title \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Obtaining  
Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS  
HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT  
MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL*

*RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)*

## APPENDIX B:

### CONSENTIMIENTO A PARTICIPAR EN UN ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Se le está pidiendo que participe en un estudio de investigación. Su participación en este estudio es voluntario y usted tiene el derecho de no participar o puede retirar su participación en el estudio a cualquier tiempo. Si decide en no participar en este estudio o retira su consentimiento de participar en el estudio, su decisión no será penalizada ni perderá beneficios a los cuales se le han prometido. Antes de que decida si va a participar o no se le pide que lea la información que sigue, y haga preguntas de cualquier cosa que no entienda antes de firmar esta forma de consentimiento.

**Título del estudio:** *SABES QUIÉN SOY Y DE DONDE VENGO: LATINO NEWCOMER PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR MIGRATION JOURNEY AND PERCEIVED IMPACT ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ACCULTURATION TO U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS*

**Investigador(es) Principal(es):** Claudia Del Villar,

**Patrocinador de la Facultad:** Judith Márquez, Ph.D.

PROPÓSITO DE ESTE ESTUDIO El propósito de este estudio es examinar las perspectivas de los estudiantes latinos recién llegados sobre sus experiencias migratorias y sus percepciones del impacto que tiene la migración en su aprendizaje y aculturación en las escuelas secundarias de los Estados Unidos.

PROCEDIMIENTOS Los procedimientos de investigación son los siguientes: Para recopilar datos de la entrevista, el investigador obtendrá la aprobación de los participantes. Utilizando el muestreo de bola de nieve a través de los medios de comunicación social, se solicitará e invitará a los participantes a participar en entrevistas.

El muestreo de bola de nieve es un proceso que se utiliza para identificar a los participantes para el estudio. Este proceso implica establecer una conexión con el participante inicial a través de las redes sociales, en este caso a través de Facebook, y luego ese participante a su vez establecerá conexiones con participantes adicionales a través de Facebook. Esto permitirá al investigador invitar a estos participantes adicionales al estudio.

### DURACIÓN ESPERADA

El compromiso de tiempo total anticipado será de aproximadamente una hora y media para participar en un mínimo de dos entrevistas abiertas presenciales o virtuales en Zoom.

### RIESGOS DE PARTICIPACIÓN

No hay riesgos anticipados asociados con la participación en este estudio.

### BENEFICIOS AL PARTICIPANTE

No hay ningún beneficio directo de su participación en este estudio, pero su participación ayudará a los investigadores a comprender mejor los viajes y las experiencias migratorias de los latinos recién llegados, sus transiciones culturales y su percepción del impacto en su aprendizaje en las escuelas secundarias de EE. UU.

### CONFIDENCIALIDAD DE SU INFORMACIÓN

Se hará todo lo posible para mantener la confidencialidad de su información de su estudio. Los datos recopilados del estudio se utilizarán con fines educativos y de publicación, sin embargo, no se lo identificará por su nombre. El investigador utilizará seudónimos y solo ella tendrá acceso a la lista de nombres e identificadores de los participantes. Para fines de auditoría federal, la documentación del participante para este proyecto de investigación será mantenida y resguardada por el Investigador Principal,

Claudia Del Villar, por un mínimo de tres años después de la finalización del estudio. Después de ese tiempo, la documentación del participante puede ser destruida.

### COMPENSACIÓN

No hay compensación monetaria por participar en este estudio.

### EL DERECHO DEL INVESTIGADOR A RETIRAR EL PARTICIPANTE

El investigador tiene derecho a retirarlo de este estudio en cualquier momento.

### CONTACTO PARA PREGUNTAS O PROBLEMAS

El investigador se ha ofrecido para responder a todas sus preguntas. Si tiene preguntas adicionales durante el curso de este estudio sobre la investigación o cualquier problema relacionado, puede comunicarse con el Estudiante, Claudia Del Villar, al número de teléfono [REDACTED] o por correo electrónico a la dirección de correo electrónico [REDACTED]. La patrocinadora de la facultad, Judith Márquez, Ph.D., puede ser contactado por teléfono al [REDACTED] o por correo electrónico [REDACTED].

### Firmas:

Su firma a continuación reconoce su participación voluntaria en esta investigación. Dicha participación no exime a los investigadores, las instituciones, los patrocinadores o las agencias de concesión de su responsabilidad profesional y ética. Al firmar este formulario, no está renunciando ninguno de sus derechos legales.



El propósito de este estudio, los procedimientos a seguir y la explicación de los riesgos o beneficios le han sido explicados. Se le ha permitido hacer preguntas y sus preguntas han sido respondidas a su satisfacción. Se le ha dicho con quién comunicarse si tiene preguntas adicionales. Usted ha leído este formulario de consentimiento y acepta voluntariamente participar como sujeto en este estudio. Usted puede retirar su consentimiento en cualquier momento al comunicarse con la Investigadora Estudiantil / la Patrocinadora de la Facultad. Se le entregará una copia del formulario de consentimiento que ha firmado.

Nombre del Participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del Participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Usando un lenguaje que es comprensible y apropiado, he discutido este Proyecto y los elementos mencionados anteriormente con el sujeto.

Nombre y título: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

*EL COMITÉ DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS SUJETOS HUMANOS HA REVISADO Y APROBADO ESTE PROYECTO. CUALQUIER PREGUNTA RELATIVA A SUS DERECHOS COMO SUJETO DE ESTA INVESTIGACIÓN PUEDE SER DIRIGIDA AL COMITÉ DE LA UHCL PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS SUJETOS HUMANOS (281-283-3015). TODOS LOS PROYECTOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN QUE REALIZAN LOS INVESTIGADORES DE LA UHCL ESTÁN GOBERNADOS POR LOS REQUISITOS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD Y EL GOBIERNO FEDERAL. (FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)*

APPENDIX C:  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your home country?
2. How long did you live in your home country?
3. How would you describe your schooling and social experiences in your home country?
4. How would you describe the challenges and/or difficulties you experienced in your home country prior to making the decision to immigrate to the United States?
5. From your perspective, what are the reasons you and/or your family immigrated to the United States?
6. How would you describe any difficulties or challenges you encountered in your journey to the United States?
7. Tell me about when you first arrived in the United States?
8. How would you describe how you felt when you first arrived in the United States?
9. How would you describe your first impressions and feelings on your first day of high school in the United States?
10. How would you describe the location of the high school you attended when you first arrived in the United States? (Do I need to include the questions below or just use them as probing questions if participant is not specific enough in their response?)
  - a. How many students were enrolled?
  - b. How many students were in your classes?
  - c. Can you describe the school environment?
  - d. What ethnicity were most of your teachers?
  - e. What ethnicity were most of the students?
11. When you first enrolled in your high school, did anyone talk to you about your migration journey or experiences?
12. When you first enrolled in your high school, did anyone ask if you needed to speak to a counselor about your migration journey or experiences?
13. With whom did you speak about your migration journey and/or experiences?

14. Reflecting on your migration journey, the experiences, and the challenges you and your family faced, how would you have felt if a counselor had spoken to you when you first enrolled in high school?

APPENDIX D:  
PREGUNTAS DE ENTREVISTA

1. Háblame de tu país de origen.
2. ¿Cuánto tiempo vivió en su país de origen?
3. ¿Cómo describiría su educación y experiencias sociales en su país de origen?
4. ¿Cómo describiría los desafíos y/o dificultades que experimentó en su país de origen antes de tomar la decisión de emigrar a los Estados Unidos?
5. Desde su perspectiva, ¿cuáles son las razones por las que usted y/o su familia emigraron a los Estados Unidos?
6. ¿Cómo describiría las dificultades o desafíos que encontró en su viaje a los Estados Unidos?
7. ¿Cuéntame cuándo llegaste por primera vez a los Estados Unidos?
8. ¿Cómo describiría cómo se sintió cuando llegó por primera vez a los Estados Unidos?
9. ¿Cómo describirías tus primeras impresiones y sentimientos en tu primer día de secundaria en los Estados Unidos?
10. ¿Cómo describiría la ubicación de la escuela secundaria a la que asistió cuando llegó por primera vez a los Estados Unidos?
  - a. ¿Cuántos estudiantes estaban matriculados?
  - b. ¿Cuántos estudiantes había en sus clases?
  - c. ¿Puedes describir el ambiente escolar?
  - d. ¿De qué etnia eran la mayoría de sus maestros?
  - e. ¿De qué etnia eran la mayoría de los estudiantes?
11. Cuando se matriculó por primera vez en la escuela secundaria, ¿alguien le habló sobre su viaje o experiencias migratorias?
12. Cuando te inscribiste por primera vez en la escuela secundaria, ¿alguien te preguntó si necesitabas hablar con un consejero sobre tu viaje o experiencias migratorias?
13. ¿Con quién habló sobre su viaje migratorio y/o experiencias?

14. Al reflexionar sobre su viaje de migración, las experiencias y los desafíos que usted y su familia enfrentaron, ¿cómo se habría sentido si un consejero le hubiera hablado cuando se inscribió por primera vez en la escuela secundaria?