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**A RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEW STUDY OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND THEIR
SUCCUESS IN INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ENGLISH / LITERACY**

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by

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ABSTRACT

I interviewed six former students who were in enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program in an urban high school in south central Pennsylvania. The purpose of the study was to understand their resiliency, motivation, and determination for academic success. This study also contributes to existing literature on English language arts education of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States by exploring factors to which these high achieving students attribute success. As scholars have pointed out, these marginalized students and many other Latino students are not expected to succeed much less earn admissions to any college / university. However, this study shows how student success is dependent on support from parents, family, friends, and teachers. Furthermore, my work addresses the issues of teacher practice, English as a Second Language curriculum, and student preparation in academic work and beyond.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

When I first started teaching in an urban school some twelve years ago, I was amazed at the many different cultures and ethnicities represented. I often made the comparison of walking down the hallways of our school to walking through Terminal A at the Philadelphia International Airport in that many languages and cultures can populate both places. During my first year, I remember vividly the demographics of my classroom. I taught regular English 10 and English 11; for a more realistic snapshot, these were the most reluctant learners in high school. The stereotypes of urban education portrayed in the sitcom “Boston Public” were not, in fact, stereotypes to me. Rather, the television show accurately portrayed some of the real situations I encountered daily.

During that first year, nearly 80% of my students scored basic or below basic on their 4sight or Terra Nova exams (these exams were given four times annually to measure students’ academic ability in their current grade level) and out of the 80% some 25% ELLs. My students who struggled most to acclimate into the American system of education and assimilate into the academic language of school were my ELLs. Thus, I was faced with two dilemmas: how to reach the 80% of my students who performed well below their benchmarks and how to reach and to provide meaningful instruction to my ELLs. As time progressed, I attended some teacher-led professional development sessions on the topic of how to adapt my individual curriculum to suit the needs of my ELLs. Fast forward some ten years later, I was still concerned with ELLs; however, my concern was not reaching those more reluctant ELLs; instead, my interest focused on how our district determined who qualified for gifted enrichment services, how this identification effected the ELL population and what motivated these learners to be successful

readers and writers. Springing from this topic, I became interested in studying what motivated these students to succeed in high school and who was responsible for their interest in reading and writing.

As a 12th grade Honors International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) English teacher, I was fortunate to observe ELLs achieving at a higher level. By the time the majority of the students entered an Honors English course, their English proficiency was very high and their level of motivation and work ethic were extremely intense. For the most part, it was my ELLs who were willing to go the extra mile and rewrite a paper or encourage me to have a review session prior to an exam. It was this population that seemed to be the one that had the drive and the discipline to trudge through adversity and competently conquer success even in my toughest assignments. Thus, my passion and my burning question is what are the factors that make these students successful readers and writers and what positive influences have made a difference in their lives? I proved that teachers, friends and family members helped encourage these students; however, through my research, I pin pointed specific situations that allowed these students to be successful. From this retrospective study, I have identified factors that allowed these students to be successful, most notably parental support in their literacy, teachers/friends involvement in their literacy, and their personal motivation to read and write in English.

Purpose of Study / Need for Study

The purpose of this study has several over-arching objectives; however, the questions that resonate to the top are how does an ELL become a successful high school student, and more importantly, what influences helped create an environment that fostered the development of reading and writing skills? Also, another theme is how their experiences as immigrants contributed to their success as high school and college students. Certainly, many people have

their speculations on why certain ELLs were successful; however, I researched and made a final conclusion as to why these students were successful. I also asserted that the students' resiliency to overcome adversity is a point that must be considered, and it is an area of the study that provides the reader with methods of how these students overcame their particular situations. The resiliency factor, which will be discussed later in chapter 4, is an area of the study that truly defines the students and their supporting factors. For example, the students interviewed expressed that much of their success was due to their support systems that were in place (i.e. family, friends, etc.).

Another perspective that has piqued my interest is the gifted identification process and the measures that should be taken to ensure fair, proper and valid identification of potentially gifted students. The identification process must be restructured in order to capture those ELLs that do not fit the traditional testing formula. I have taught a number of students who have had to overcome obstacles to achieve success. Many are first-generation students in the United States and many students are first-generation high school graduates. So, what were their motivations and how were these students motivated to become successful and what can be learned from their victories in public education? The answers to these questions are helpful to teachers, counselors, and administrators, for they provide insights into how schools can more appropriately offer all Latino similar support.

Existing research makes clear that ELLs face challenges in school literacy learning. ELLs tend to be underrepresented among students identified as gifted (Callahan, 2005). They often find themselves in classroom environments that may not take into account their first-language literacy backgrounds (August and Hakuta, 1997) or offer helpful scaffold learning experiences in English. It is not surprising, then, that ELLs are often characterized as disengaged

from school whether this characterization is appropriate or not, and they can face social barriers that limit their participation in academic activities (Hubbard, 1992; Cho and Reich, 2008; Kim, 2008; Hinkel, 2006; Huang, 2005; Huang and Klinger, 2006; and Huang and Rinaldo, 2009). Nonetheless, many ELLs do in fact perform well in high-level English language arts classrooms (Compton-Lilly, 2011). This study contributes to existing literature on English language arts education of ELLs in the United States by exploring factors to which these high- achieving students attribute their success.

Chapter 2 of this study is focused on the literature that relates to ELLs and their place in gifted education; ELLs' experience with literacy in school; barriers / obstacles for ELLs' success, and finally their successes in school (from their ESL classrooms to their IB classrooms). Next, chapter 3 establishes the methods in which the data was collected, transcribed, and then coded. The 6 participants were interviewed and the data was then categorized into themes that emerged. I maintained a detailed journal of the process as to make sure all of the interviews were documented accurately. Each participant's narrative is reflective of his / her experience with literacy in his / her native country and in the United States. Chapter 4 is dedicated to the findings and the results from the interviews; in this chapter the participants' success was dependent on the following: resiliency, motivation / discipline, and curriculum (all of which will be discussed in more depth in the chapter). Finally, chapter 5 focuses on how this study will contribute to the field of ELLs and how this study could potentially impact urban schools with a high population of ELLs - more specifically an urban school with an IB program.

Listed below are the research questions that were considered for the study.

Research Questions

Specific research questions include:

1. What were the factors that allowed ELLs / immigrant students to be successful readers and writers?
2. What barriers / obstacles did ELLs/ immigrant students identify in order to become successful students and how, if at all, did they overcome these barriers to become successful in high school and college?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

ELLs and Giftedness

Throughout this chapter, I provide various viewpoints of relevant existing literature. My study involved various aspects of non-identified gifted ELLs and elements that allowed them to become successful high school and college writers / students. Major areas include (1) gifted programs and the English Language Learner; (2) Literacy experiences of immigrant students in school; (3) Barriers to success, and (4) School success of immigrant students “against the odds.”

(1) Gifted programs and the English Language Learners

The first major theme that surfaced was how successfully motivated and disciplined underprivileged / marginalized groups can perform successfully in school yet not be identified as being gifted. Throughout this section, several people commented on reasons why these students are not identified, and the barriers that kept them from achieving this identification. These barriers, such as district financial strains, hindered the identification process thus lessening the importance of the gifted programs (Bernal, 2002). It has also been reported that teachers often have low expectations of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Frasier & Passow, 1994). Many teachers believe that since ELLs misbehave and act inappropriately, they are not worthy of being in the honors program. Also, a study conducted found that teachers did not refer any students of limited English proficiency for gifted identification (Peterson & Margolin, 1997). Furthermore, non-identified gifted minority students who demonstrated different learning styles and behaviors were often times overlooked when compared to those typically found in the dominate culture (Ford, 1998). Previous research, therefore, indicates that during the

identification process teachers took into account non-academic standards such as learning styles and also behavior.

Teachers who participated in the identification of potentially gifted students seemed to be biased and failed to properly identify these students. Wagner and Hatch (1975) asserted that teachers' classroom expectations had detrimental effects on the development of ELLs. With the emergence of standardized testing as a means of measuring student success, schools suddenly had a new tool to use in the process of identifying gifted students. However, this test-based method left many school districts charged with the task of grappling with data and figuring out how to make sense of the results. Regarding gifted education, for example, 90% of public schools rely on standardized tests scores to identify and place gifted students in gifted/talented (GT) programs (Sarouphim, 2002). Also, a study conducted by the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) found that some ethnic groups are significantly less likely than their white counterparts to be involved in the gifted programs (Resnick & Goodman, 1997). The study concluded that 17.6% of the Asian students, 6.7 % of Hispanic students, and 2.1% Native Americans were identified as being gifted. Since standardized testing is one of the most influential instruments in the identification process, this certainly raised a concern as to why the number of identified minority students remains low. Under representation of ELLs in gifted programs was documented by scholars such as Aguirre and Price. These scholars claimed that the number of identified gifted ELLs does not correspond to the number of ELLs enrolling in the public schools (Aguirre, 2003; Price, 2007). One of the ways to correct this problem is to concentrate on a broader conception of giftedness that included a nontraditional approach that should consider culture during the identification process (Johnson, 1999).

Various research initiatives revealed the relevance and the validity of IQ tests and the reasons that state agencies relied so heavily on these scores. Research in this area proposed that the test indicates the irrelevance and invalidity of this process. Siegel identified three indicators that clearly state that the IQ test was not a true indicator of giftedness. First, she stated that the IQ test clearly does not examine “problem solving skills, logical reasoning, and / or adaptation to the environment” (Siegel 1989: 47, 1992). Secondly, she implied that “IQ achievement is independent constructs,” and thirdly, she explained that even though the IQ scores in reading are not proficient, she contended that this does not make the student a poor reader, nor does it make the student unable to comprehend what he/she reads (Seigel, 1989: 48). Also, IQ achievement tests are poorly correlated, and they are not accurate indicators of students’ abilities. Finally, an IQ test does not predict reading achievement levels in normally developing readers. This research was certainly applicable to ELLs and the impact of how the initial IQ test was not a final determiner as to how the student would perform once he/she had been exposed to English (Naglieri, 2001).

Lastly, I think it is crucial to examine the cognitive abilities of the non-identified gifted students without using the IQ test as a definite indicator. According to August and Hakuta (1997), young children who come from a literate household, who have been read to, and whose parents are highly educated and / or use literacy regularly, are most likely to become successful readers . The aforementioned authors continue to stress the views of psycholinguistics in that participation in literacy-related practices provides opportunities for children to acquire specific knowledge about letters, language, and symbolic systems that are prerequisites to full literacy (1997). Another point stressed the sophistication of preschool children and their knowledge of phoneme. These students are likely to be successful at the early stages of reading. Also with the

knowledge of phoneme comes the attempt at invented spelling, which in turn results in more abstract knowledge of the phoneme structure. Regrettably, research indicated that educational systems focused their attention on the weakness rather than on the cognitive strengths of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Barkan & Bernal, 1991).

The emphasis of current literature raised the issues of using the IQ test for determining a child's giftedness. Since there was also limited research in the area of measuring a child's cognitive abilities based on his/her learning environment, I contend that quality teacher instruction fosters and develops this specific kind of disposition for learning.

Several studies have involved students who were successful despite being labeled underprivileged. According to Callahan (2005), her current research focused on the inability to make gifted determinations based on a single assessment / exam. Through her research, she attempted to find a single, silver-bullet solution of a new test or a single new policy that would allow for a fairer identification tool. While Callahan made the assertion that the identification of gifted students leans more towards a policy issue, she continued to say that the bias of identifying gifted students stems from the inherent beliefs about the low capabilities of poor and minority children (Callahan, 2005). Certainly this assertion is exacerbated in an urban setting where poverty and the number of minorities are more represented. Some researchers believed that minority students cannot excel on performance tests; however, on the contrary, the U.S Department of Education documented those outstanding talents and abilities are present in students from all cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds (Callahan, 2005).

(2) ELLs Experience with Literacy in School

Many researchers believed that students' knowledge of their native language is a key component in developing important linguistic and cognitive tools for academic English (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 1979, 1986; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Certainly, if ELLs are going to be successful in any academic environment, they must successfully interact with texts and develop a keen sense of the writing process. In order for students to learn more complex language skills, they must first be introduced conceptually to easier tasks, then to more complex tasks (Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). The process of learning a first language may be similar to that of learning a second language in a sense that language learning requires a coordination of linguistic, cognitive, and social factors. Kim (2008: 434) also contended that there was a distinct difference between learning English as a second language and learning it as a native language. Even though some researchers believe this to be true, there are others who argue that oral language is a prerequisite in order for quality literacy instruction to take place (Mills, Cowen, & Guess, 1977; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wong-Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). From the perspective of this study, the importance of learning the first language was a key element to the participants' success in school but more specifically their proficiency in literacy. Also, the schoolwork assigned to students should be grounded and relevant to their experiences and make connections to their prior knowledge (Smagorinsky, P., Hansen, M.R., & Fink, L., 2013).

The development of literacy skills by ELLs suggested that the students associate language and literacy development with their instructional context without first acquiring proficiency in oral language. Weber & Longhi-Chirlin (2001) studied two 6 year old Spanish-speaking children where the teacher used basal texts for reading and provided writing experiences through dictation. The study was to investigate whether ELLs could be exposed to

both methods while achieving success in reading and writing. This is extremely crucial in the areas of transferring oral language to written language in that the teacher's dictation allowed the students to be successful as opposed to another method of assessment. At the conclusion of the study, they found that both children developed accurate decoding skills and their oral reading was also proficient. Lastly, the literacy development was sufficient so that they would be on the current grade level reading scale. Language development was used in classroom settings to foster language learning. Students began to integrate reading and writing into their educational and social contexts; it was the social context of literacy that allowed them to make connections to life experiences and in turn allowed them to interpret their literacy experiences (Combs, 1996). From these learning experiences, students regulated their learning behavior and initiated the social dialogue that is necessary for students to move from other-regulated to self-regulated reading and writing (Combs, 1996: 26).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) addressed the ELLs' cultural and linguistic knowledge of their language, and this should be used for teachers to address the level of students' potential development (Vygostky, 1978: 86). Vygotsky emphasized how this idea aided ELLs and their language development. He continued to emphasize the importance of society and culture and their roles in promoting children's cognitive growth (1978). He also asserted the importance of scaffolding and how this process encouraged the students' potential development. Scaffolding is an important part of effective instruction and also necessary for student engagement. Vygotsky also explained that the ZPD and the area of dynamic assessment in conjunction with socio-cultural theory are key components in the area of scaffolding (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2000). They contend that the areas of dynamic assessments provided a more operational view of the students' most current development, and they asserted that dynamic

assessment united traditional assessment and helped to strengthen instruction. Lantolf (2004) explained the perspective of dynamic assessment as positive results for everyone involved. Wells (1999) identified three factors that explain the significance of educational scaffolding: 1) the discourse in which the knowledge is co-constructed; 2) the importance of the kind of activity that is embedded; 3) students' past experiences that allow them the means of knowing (Wells: 127). Lastly, Mercer and Fisher (1993) identified the main role for scaffolding in effective teaching and how it was related to ZPD; they contended that the transfer of responsibility was placed on the student. In turn, they also believed that collaboration between teacher and student helped in constructing knowledge. In the area of ESL instruction, scaffolding literacy is no different; however, in some instances it may be more difficult. Scaffolding in reading is paramount in that it is regarded as an integral part of reading instruction (Duffy, 2002).

According to Brown and Broemmel (2011; 82), in order for ELLs to be successful, teachers must embody the premise of "deep scaffolding." Essentially, teachers should regard ELLs as a "glass half-full, not half-empty." Brown and Broemmel (2011) contended that if ELLs are component speakers in their native language, then they will be successful in learning English. While some researchers disagree with this statement, the aforementioned researchers assert that in order to foster academic success, teachers must supply ample scaffolded assignments. Another factor that also followed this idea of deep scaffolding is teachers being able to maximize the ELL's personal experiences. Lave & Wenger (1991) discussed that ZPD stressed the collaboration of teacher and student as a bilateral process that emphasized the specific role of each. From my own teaching, this has proven to pay huge dividends, especially when teaching works in translation. My ELLs were extremely engaged and they were able to provide personal context for the book which we were reading (i.e. my Russian students and One Day in the Life of

Ivan Denisovich). The scaffolding process is a high –stakes experience in that the scalffolder creates the scaffold (task) and then presents the task to the student (Daniels, 2002: 59).

Also, another method that promotes the idea of scaffolding is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). According to Echevarria and Vogt (2000: 45), this is the best method for actively engaging ELLs. Scaffolding offers support that allows students “to comprehend, learn, and complete academic tasks” (Echevarrisa & Vogt, 2000: 46). SIOP serves not only as a scaffolding mechanism but also as an instructional tool / framework for organizing a contextually relevant classroom. I have observed teachers using this model of instruction, and the most revealing point of interest is the way in which ELLs responded. Student engagement was evident; however, teacher practice and planning was also a key factor contributing to the success of ELLs. Vygotsky’s theory and the SIOP model are methods to engage ELLs and help them comprehend and learn complex tasks. Throughout Vygotsky’s work, he discussed two ideas that help to define how scaffolding and instruction coexist. He contended that actual and potential development exists within the context of teaching and learning. Actual development is defined as the ability to perform a task without any assistance, and the potential development is the level of development that can potentially occur with more experienced guidance and explanation.

From 1991 to 2001, the ELL enrollment in public schools in the United States has increased 95% while the general population has only increased 12% (Padolsky, 2002). Therefore, being able to provide adequate and meaningful instruction to ELLs is extremely crucial to the development of United States’ well being and its economic stability. Scaffolding is just one opportunity to provide for quality education for ELLs and should be used to move students forward. Along with scaffolding, the SIOP model gives structure to the classroom

environment and allows for student engagement and growth. With these two instructional practices in place, teachers and students observe an increase in student engagement and success.

(3) Barriers / Obstacles for ELLs Success

While scholars acknowledge gains in Latinos enrolled in higher education, they argue that these students continue to face difficulties acquiring basic educational skills through their secondary schooling (Singer, 2007). As Latinos continue to struggle in public education, especially in urban schools, some of their struggles continue once they reach the collegiate level. This obviously is considered a barrier that some Latinos cannot overcome. According to the federal census bureau, (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005) slightly more than 50% of Latinos finish school and some 10% go on to graduate from college. Therefore, in order for the percentages to rise, public education / urban education must exert a stronger and more consistent effort on behalf of Latino students. The stakeholders must own their share of how to adequately prepare this population for collegiate studies.

Compton-Lilly (2011) “asserted that discourses guide children’s emerging beliefs about the world and relate to the identities and roles that they assume.” Therefore, if ELLs do not have the family support system in place, then their chances of being a successful high school student are in most cases non-existent (Compton-Lilly, 2011: 76). She goes on to say that children who have parent(s) that are supportive tend to excel in academics; however, there are exceptions such as in the case of Alicia and her mother. In the case study, Alicia, a student who defined herself as literate, was being raised by her mother, Ms. Rodriguez. Ms. Rodriguez, 34, was a single mother raising six children in a poverty stricken environment. The chances that Alicia would become a reluctant learner and potentially a high school dropout were probable. However, Ms. Rodriguez instilled in Alicia that the only way to “better herself” was by getting an education. Alicia persevered; she did not let the poverty barrier keep her down; she decided that she wanted to

become a success. I am certain that many of my former students had experiences similar to Alicia's; they were able to turn a negative into a positive.

With more than 14 million language minority students, schools in the United States are more ethnically and linguistically diverse than ever (August, 2006). According to Waggoner (2000), by 2050, Latinos will represent nearly 30% of the total U.S. school population. Many of these minority and ELL students now attend public schools (McIntyre, Chen, Munoz, & Beldon, 2010). ELLs have challenges in all academic language skills at North American schools. They find it difficult to participate in classroom conversations and also find it challenging to become involved in the reading and writing process (Hubbard, 1992; Cho & Reich, 2008; Kim, 2008; Hinkel, 2006; Huang, 2005; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Huang & Rinaldo, 2009).

One of the major barriers for ELLs remains their seeming inability to embrace the need for an education or, in the more short term, a high school diploma. Many are often perceived as not caring about school or education in general. From my experience in an urban school where the Latino population is roughly 55%, I agree with the "turned off from education" phrase. I have observed on countless occasions that this group of the school's population is not engaged in academics or extracurricular activities. Some students lack the support system at home to encourage them to "do their best."

As a group, Latinos are the least educated minority group in the country (Gandara, 1995). They have the highest high school dropout rate of all minority groups (Llagas & Synder, 2003). Another staggering statistic is number of Latinos that fail to earn a bachelor's degree. According to Yosso (2006), out of 100 Latinos, only seven will complete the requirements for a bachelor's degree. Thus, what are the key issue(s) that does not allow these students to be successful?

A second major obstacle for ELLs was student engagement and their ability to be involved in an active student-centered classroom. A student-centered classroom is an environment that thrives on student-led activities and allows students social freedom to learn on several different levels. I have always encouraged this type of learning because I find that this is where I can best observe student growth, especially in the areas of critical and analytical thinking as well as writing. From my experience as a classroom teacher, if students are not engaged, then they are not going to be successful, not to mention the ELLs who are having difficulty understanding the information being delivered. As mentioned above, adding context to instruction vastly increases student engagement of the lesson / information.

According to Echevarria and Vogt (2000), in order for ELLs to get over the anxiety of learning concepts, it is helpful for them to relate the content of instruction to their personal experiences. Also, in order to fill in the gaps of what they do not know about American culture, the teacher might use illustrations, videos, or photographs to convey the message. However, these are still barriers / obstacles that ELLs must overcome in order to be successful. It is also crucial not to assume that ELLs have no “prior knowledge” regarding particular subjects. Instead, teachers should use this as a teachable moment and allow students to make a connection to the topic being discussed.

Finally, a major barrier is the absence of literacy in the home. Home literacy practices among young children are crucial to the success of young readers. Adults in the home must recognize the importance of having reading materials readily available and also, the adults should advocate for consistent literacy practices. They also stated that the time element is important. They find that the time young children spend with or around language and literacy tend to increase their chances of becoming literate. Another study conducted by Leseman & de

Jong (1998) tracked children from ages four to seven to examine their relationships between home literacy practices and educational outcomes. It was determined that indeed literacy practices at home strengthened the students' educational outcomes. Thus, parents / guardians reading to children are crucial – reading is crucial. However, this is not the practice in most ELL households. It is difficult to get reading materials other than the newspaper, and finally, some of the parents / guardians are not educated themselves and are reluctant to read to their children. Going back to Ms. Rodriguez, she shared her love for reading to her child by insisting that reading is the way to the world. Ms. Rodriguez also stated (interview, February 1, 2001) “I was a bookworm..... Yeah, if it is a good book, I can read that bad boy in one day. I don't like to put it down.” Many of my parents have been like Ms. Rodriguez; they have instilled in their children the importance of reading.

(4) ELLs' Successes in School

According to Arbeiter, Maute-Bianchi, and Ramist & Arbeiter (1984), there have been increases in immigrants' motivation to overcome early obstacles in their school learning. In the study "The Boat People" by Caplan, Whitmore, & Choy (1989), the parents of the immigrant students spoke no English and were able to maintain only low income jobs; however, the immigrant children were able to be successful in school due the work ethic instilled in them by their parents. I mention the study above for two reasons: to show that familial influence is a key factor to success and also to show that instilling a strong work ethic in young children is important to their educational outcome. Duran & Weffer (1992) contend that relevant family behavior has a direct outcome on the way these students behave in an educational setting. Even though in my current teaching situation, ELLs sometimes cannot communicate with their parents in English, the parents have an expectation that their children will continue to take advantage of their educational opportunities. The aforementioned authors also discussed that the success of these students "is largely a result of their academic effort and school-related behavior, and it is important to identify the process by which successful high school students overcome their early learning deficits" (Duran and Weffer, 1992: 164). Along those same lines, it is crucial to recognize that their motivation, academic coursework, and school related behaviors certainly figure into the formula for success (Alexander & Cook, 1982).

A second key study outlines the Latino perspective of academic success and achievement. Hanson & Ginsburg (1988) identified certain factors that influenced achievement within the Latino group. The values that they discovered were "parental expectation of a child going on to college, student's own expectation and valuing the importance of hard work" (Hanson & Ginsburg: 345). In her research, Suarez-Orozco (1991) explained that Central

American immigrant students' academic achievement was due to the positive aspect of their home life. According to Coleman & Hoffer (1987), the opportunity for academic advancement resulted from immigrant students' clear and positive goals that are often first learned at home. Certainly this goal setting was similar to the Asian Americans; however, what was interesting was the staggering statistic of high school drop-outs. The drop-outs were not Asian Americans, but in fact, were Latinos. Matute-Bianchi (1986) also determined that certain Mexican immigrants stressed that being goal oriented and motivated to succeed resulted in stronger achievement levels and graduation rates. The participants expressed their motivation to excel and asserted that they were, in fact, atypical Latinos. Suarez-Orozco contended that parents' expectations are extremely high. I also found the same in my study as students expressed a sincere gratitude to parents for motivating them and also instilling in them the values it took to be successful.

Most families who immigrate to the United States are in search of a better life for their family, particularly their children; thus, they know that in order for their children to be successful they must make education a priority (Caplan et al., 1989). Research also indicated that close-knit, supportive immigrant communities often encourage student success, especially in urban areas (Kaufman, 2004). Moreover, most recent sociological research contends that the success of certain immigrant groups comes from the positive cultural and social influences of the ethnic group in which they reside (Gans, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Bankston & Zhou, 1998). Zhou & Portes (1993: 82) made an interesting point in that immigrant families tend to take three paths when they enter the United States. The first path enables them to interact with the white middle-class while the second path is where they tend to gravitate to the poverty stricken sector. The third path relates to "rapid economic advancement with deliberate

preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Zhou & Portes, 1993: 83). It seems that most recent educational research within the United States has shown that solidarity and support from within various ethnic communities is certainly helping immigrant students succeed and furthermore gives immigrant children more of a support system at home. Swidler (1986: 273) used the paradigm of culture as "a 'tool kit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different problems." Swidler's view was consistent with the family support system offered by immigrant families and how they value education; these immigrant families' "tool kits" are filled with motivation to excel and succeed because families offer support in any way possible.

Moll (1992) discussed the implication of how immigrant students found multidimensional uses from their family experiences. He asserted that students' curriculum must make a connection to the students' culture and learning experiences. Moll also emphasized his "funds of knowledge" idea where he contended that, "People are competent; they have knowledge, and their life experience gives them knowledge" (Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005: 1). Moll's funds of knowledge added clarity and understanding to my study. Cathy Amanti conducted a study of Mexican and U.S. students of Mexican origin where she explained the importance of acknowledging and including aspects of the students' culture into the course of study. She contended that curriculum must go beyond the typical foods and artifacts conversation; instead, the conversations should consist of how these experiences go beyond the obvious (Gonzales & Amanti, 1992).

Literature Review Conclusion

Throughout this chapter several areas were addressed and these areas will be expanded further in the chapters to follow: ELLs and giftedness, ELLs' experience with literacy in school, barriers/obstacles for Spanish-speaking ELLs' success, and finally, ELLs' successes in school. The findings in chapter 4 assert that each student's experience reflected all of the above categories.

Chapter 3

Methods

Throughout my research process, both I and my students had very defined roles, as exemplified by the practice of identifying grounded experiences (situations or experiences that caused students to pinpoint the value of their learning outcomes) (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). These grounded experiences had one constant variable that allowed the students to redefine an experience that had meaning or impact on their educational process. The students who were interviewed recounted several learning experiences and, in turn, they established that these experiences helped motivate them toward success.

In preparation for my research, I developed a series of interview questions that allowed me to elicit candid and open responses from the students regarding their reading and writing habits and experiences. I used a socio-cultural and resiliency model; therefore, this allowed me to focus on the experiences that helped make them strong academic students and, in particular, excellent students in the IB program (Prior, 2006; Werner & Smith, 1982).

Bracketing is defined as the need for the researcher to set aside his/her own presumptions in order to register the student's most accurate point of view (Ashworth, 1999). While all of the students were motivated, it became clear, as this study progressed, that I had to focus on other factors that coexisted with motivation. The basis for the research was to use motivation as a vehicle to discover other factors that allowed these students to be successful. The aim and purpose of bracketing was to allow me to observe other factors that contributed to their success.

This was extremely challenging for me as I had to remove preconceived notions from my thought process. Since I had been the students' IB English teacher, I had to use the interview

questions as the basis for the study – not my previous experience with the students. The idea of bracketing suggests that I am supposed to put aside my preconceived ideas instead of judging to what extent student responses reflect an understanding of the phenomenon (Marton, 1994). The bracketing that occurred allowed me to focus fully on the responses of the students.

Another perspective of this study and a point that I will elaborate on later was how phenomenography focused on the impact of the human experience rather than on human behavior or mental states (Prarling, 1994). Through this notion, I was able to hone in on the students' experiences and establish how they had become successful in high school. In this study it is important to note that phenomenography helped discover the differences between individual experiences of the same situations. The theory of phenomenography allowed me to overlook their behavior and strictly focus on the students' experience which in turn led to their case narratives. Consequently, there have been studies that have linked phenomenography and phenomenology. The latter is my perspective as the researcher, which I examine by reflecting on my own experience of the world. Thus, this makes phenomenography a more student-centered research experience. The student-centered perspective is the key point of my study because I want to make sure that their experiences were expressed in a manner that showcased their resiliency and motivation to excel. The idea of second-order reality emphasizes the students' experiences and brings to light those grounded experiences that surfaced as being important in the students' educational journey (Hasselgren & Beach, 1996). Andretta (2006) believed that phenomenography focused on how students relate to what they are taught and how they make use of the knowledge they already possess. Learning, from this perspective, encapsulated the experience of the learner-world relationship which reflected their interpretation of significant aspects of the learning process.

Therefore, my choice of phenomenography was meant to focus my attention on the experience-as-described, rather than on either the psychological process generating the experience or the objective facts themselves (Marton, 1981; Uljens, 1992). Life story researchers McAdams and Wortham (2001) argue that people's identities are conceived and expressed as stories that involve reconstructions. Life stories are continuously constructed and reconstructed within the social and cultural worlds. The identities referenced in the aforementioned research parallels those of the ELLs I have taught. I saw within the life stories of my selected ELL students how their identities evolved as their social and cultural worlds changed.

Participants

All of the students identified in my study are Latino immigrants that were labeled ELLs when they entered public schools in the United States. These students were also not identified as gifted students even though they all selected to be a part of the IB/Honors Small Learning Community (SLC). I interviewed six former high school IB students in a south central Pennsylvania urban school district. These students are my former high school students that excelled in reading and writing and went to on attend a four-year college or university. Since these students were also not identified as gifted students, they were not allowed to take advantage of the gifted enrichment offered by the school district. The students / families interviewed are from the following countries: Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Peru. Of the students in the study, there were four females and two males. Five out of six students were from households that were extremely disadvantaged; also, five out of the six students had both parents that were extremely active in their child's education and learning. All of the students discussed how their parents' personal sacrifices opened the doors to opportunity. These students were atypical as compared to other Latinos in their school. As mentioned later in the interviews, all of the students discussed that they were not like other Latino students; they were at times embarrassed by the behavior and actions of their Latino counterparts.

All of the students discussed how their parent(s) sacrificed their lives so they could attain success. Another important aspect of my study was the students' relationship with their teachers and fellow classmates. Each student mentioned specific teachers and the impact they had on their education and ultimately their success. They also mentioned how their friends served as a support group for them – helping them to achieve success.

Data Collection

For this study, I collected data in several different forms. Throughout the process, I kept a journal to reflect upon my experiences. My data consisted of recordings from each participant. After the recordings were complete, I began to transcribe the accounts which led to dividing the interviews into various categories and then later transferring them into specific themes. These themes will be discussed further in later chapters of this study.

Before the study, I met with each student to explain the process and the rationale behind why I was conducting this study. I explained that the comments shared would be confidential and that no one's true identity would be revealed. After the students agreed to allow me to use them in the research project, I proceeded with the necessary paperwork allowing them to participate. All of the data was stored in a secure setting and the computer I used was highly secure and accessible only by a protected password.

Interviews

The interviews with the students took approximately one hour and were conducted in their home or over the phone. The interviews were audio recorded, and students were reminded that their identity would be protected. They were reminded that I would provide them a pseudonym that would be used throughout the study. During the interview, I took notes and made sure that the interview did not exceed the allotted time limit. As a reminder, if any of the participants needed to take a break during the interview, they could do so. The recorder was paused until the participant returned from his/her break. The student interview protocol consisted of questions divided into different thematic/topical sections. The first section asked students to identify their first experience with American schools and the impact of being in an ESL classroom. Other questions focused how the school curriculum met their needs as an ELL. The

next section addressed the barriers or obstacles that they faced in order to be successful in school. In this section of the interview, I allowed time for students to comment on the barriers that were created at home. The third section included a discussion of their literacy successes and their successes as part of the school population; this section addressed the “how” and “why” of motivation, self-discipline, and work ethic. Also, in this section of the interview, I asked students to point out a teacher(s) that had impacted their literacy development. The purpose of this section was to allow the each student to speak freely about people who had a meaningful impact on their quest to become successful. The interview guide is included in Appendix G.

Reflective Journal

Throughout the interview process, I kept a detailed journal, where I reflected upon the elements and dynamics of conducting my research. During the journaling process, I made sure to capture those moments that perhaps would allow for further reflection and discussion. Immediately, after each interview, I made time to journal and reflect on the process and content of the interview. Researchers Morrow and Smith (2000) contended that rigor is most effectively added to a qualitative inquiry through reflective journaling. As they asserted, I, as the investigator, recorded assumptions, reactions, and biases about the research process. Through journaling I was be able to have a clearer idea of how to analyze the data.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, I listened to the interviews and transcribed them into a working document. Next, the reflective journal guided my analysis of the interviews more closely. I used the journals specifically to guide to my transcriptions. For example, I would reflect on an interview and write, “It seems that Gelica really had a lot to say about the ESL instruction.” I would then go back to the transcription to make sure I had captured this idea. Other times my reflection led me to reexamine the question that I asked and then I would go back and listen to the recording to make sure the student captured the intent and the importance of the questions. The method of content analysis was used for coding the data. This means that the data was sorted and organized based upon its meaning, therefore allowing me to identify certain themes and patterns as they emerged.

Analytic Procedure

Step One: Transcription

After collecting the data, I listened to the audio recording and began to transcribe the recordings as close to verbatim as possible. On several occasions, I would have to review my notes and listen to the recordings multiple times. This process was extremely labor intensive in that my goal was to capture each student’s voice and share his/her narrative to the fullest.

Step Two: Coding on timeframe

After the transcription was complete, the transcribed text was placed into categories for coding. Carefully listening for similarities and differences that surfaced, I grouped the students’ narratives into three distinct categories: past, present, and future. From there, I was able to visualize various themes that emerged from their narratives.

Step Three: Coding on the following: Uses of literacy, school success, barriers, and support of family

The heading in step three was themes that surfaced from the interviews. I gathered the information from each category and began to make determinations on what themes surfaced from the student interviews. The information I had gathered gave another insight as to how these students excelled and how they gained the motivation and ambition to keep moving forward. After this was complete, I began to categorize the themes and cross analyze the responses.

This process derived from the step one.

Step Four: Categorizing of Themes

I observed these themes and was able to transfer them into a connected form of prose. On many occasions the information students shared regarding family was not consistent; however, the information shed some light on the importance of other members of the students' lives (i.e. friends and teachers)

Step Five: Comparing Case Narratives

I coded twice through the dataset, and I transferred these themes into a connected prose form. The purpose of this was to fully express the meaning of each student's grounded experiences which were keys to identifying their success in IB English and also in school. By doing so, I was able to adequately represent their experiences and further explain how they were relevant to their success. I accomplished this by categorizing their experiences and finding the commonalities among these experiences. For example, on several occasions students mentioned the impact of a teacher's instruction; therefore, this subject was placed into the category of "teacher influence." I structured the narratives in

a manner that was consistent to the interview questions. After the interviews were complete, I then began to organize the responses that would show similarities and differences, which allowed me to see a clear representation of their experiences.

Step Six: Open Coding

Open coding “must include the perspectives and the voices of the people” who are studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 274). Open coding also involves “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 278). I took the above information into consideration and made sure that each voice was heard and that each voice was truly replicated in the data. This is where I had to make sure I was not placing my judgment on the students’ responses. Certainly some of the students had similar situations; however, it was my job to show that those specific experiences were also authentic. It was also imperative that I capture each student’s voice so that readers could observe their struggles and also see their success. The codes consisted of motivation, discipline, resiliency, and passion.

Step Seven: Analysis across the Open Codes

The information I gathered from the open codes and the information in my reflective journal provided a forum for cross case analysis. The analysis consisted of themes that were consistent and how each student’s experiences helped derive each theme. Through my journal, I was able to capture the experiences accurately and effectively.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussions

Throughout this chapter, I will discuss my findings from the interviews with my six former students. I will explore what they experienced as first-generation students in the US educational system, how they felt during their time in ELL classes, and ultimately what inspired their success in IB English during their junior and senior years of high school. I will also address the motivation and discipline behind their success.

After the interviews were completed, I coded and began to analyze the data. During the coding and analysis process, various themes began to emerge, connecting the stories of the different students. Most prominently, it seemed that the success of the students was dependent on several factors that allowed them to eventually make strides in their language development and their success as readers and writers.

This chapter is organized by major themes. They are as follows:

- I. Students faced obstacles but drew on resiliency to overcome.
 - A. Major obstacles
 1. Time management
 2. Parents do not speak English
 - a. Embarrassment
 - b. Parents are unable to help with homework.
 3. Disengaged peers in ESL classes
 - a. Students who misbehaved.
 - b. Student that were not focused.
 4. Felt stigmatized by poverty compared to the other students in class

B. Students were resilient in the face of these obstacles.

II. Powerful Motivations

A. Students cited family was highly motivating.

1. Family was directly motivating by requiring students to earn high grades.
2. Family was indirectly motivating by stressing that they moved for their child's success.

B. Students cited friends as highly motivating

1. Students were in extracurricular activities together.
2. Students formed study groups.

III. Specific curricular experiences influenced students to be successful in school.

A. Students cited specific ESL class features as important to their success.

1. Teacher influence
2. Curriculum delivery
3. Classroom dynamics

B. Students cited specific AP / IB class features as elements to their success.

1. Complexity of texts that were studied.
2. Writing assignments that prepared them for college
3. Teacher preparation / practice

C. Students cited literacy and writing at home as important to their success.

1. Influence of older siblings
2. Magazines and other periodicals in the home
3. Parents learning English with their children
4. Watching and learning from television

Students Faced Obstacles but Drew on them with Resiliency

As the interviews closed and all of the questions were answered, students reflected on their answers and how, in many instances, these answers brought back some painful memories of their past struggles. All of the students, with the exception of Alex, were from a lower economic class; they were a part of the “working poor” and wanted to make sure that they were not blaming their families for their economic conditions. All of the students were certainly faced with obstacles along their journey; however, they felt they excelled in IB English because of the lessons learned from past experiences. These students realized that coming from a disadvantaged background was something they had to accept; however, they also realized that they had to turn those negative experiences into positive experiences and build upon their experiences.

Table 1 summarizes specific instances where students discussed their obstacles/ barriers.

They are categorized by time management, their parents’ inability to speak English; disruption of their peers in their ESL classes, and feeling stigmatized by poverty as compared to others in the class.

- TM- time management
- PSE- parents’ inability to speak English
- ESL – disengagement of their peers in ESL classes
- POV- feeling stigmatized by poverty / not being as academically prepared as compared to others.

Student	Number of Instances	Quotes
Gelica	6	<p>“Time management was a real issue for me... I had to make sure I made time to read outside of class..” (TM)</p> <p>“I knew extracurriculars activities would be obstacles for but I had to stay involved...” (TM)</p> <p>“.. I had to keep striving for the best because I knew I was not going to be one of those kids that misbehaved in my ESL classroom.” (ESL)</p> <p>“... as I continued in the IB program I had to learn how to manage my time better” (TM)</p> <p>“My parents were blue-collar workers and very proud Puerto Ricans...they were Spanish speakers not English... (PSE)</p> <p>“The other students in my IB classes didn’t seem to have this issue...well, with the exception of the Spanish kids in my class; it was just embarrassing.” (PSE)</p>
Tasha	3	<p>“My biggest obstacle was making time for all of the work especially all of the reading. 9th and 10th grade Honors English were doable...but IB English was rough.” (TM)</p> <p>“Neither of my parents could speak English.....” (PSE)</p> <p>“My challenges were time management; how was I going to earn good grades and keep up with all of this work? I would utilize my lunch period to work in the library and definitely would use any available class time to do homework.” (TM)</p>
Carmen	5	<p>“My parents were laborers in the Dominican Republic (DR); they only knew how to work and make money so we could survive-learning English was not at the top of their list.” (PSE)</p> <p>“...these [ESL] classes turned me off from school; I wondered if I would make it...” (ESL)</p> <p>“The kids in my ESL [in the Bronx] would do anything to not</p>

		<p>conform to the teachers. They would misbehave all the time; I hated it.” (ESL)</p> <p>“I was, in some ways, embarrassed by my family because we were poor...” (POV)</p> <p>“My challenges in the IB program were how to manage to get all of this work completed...I made lists of things to do..” (TM)</p>
Miguel	2	<p>“Ummm... was it an obstacle? (his parents could not speak English) I guess it was because I had to complete all of my homework at school, so we could get help from my teachers.” (PSE)</p> <p>“The walls [at school] were caving in and we had to go outside beyond the school to use the bathroom....this was third world living..? (POV)</p>
Angela	3	<p>“ A major challenge for me was how to balance schoolwork / homework with extracurricular activities.” (TM)</p> <p>“When we arrived in Lancaster [from Cuba], I was already academically behind.” (POV)</p> <p>“ I knew I had to learn English.. how would I catch up? How would I catch up even in Math..” (TM)</p>
Alex	1	<p>“I just could not fully understand why we moved. Yes, I know it was the drug thing, but I just could not fully wrap my head around it...and I had to learn English (TM)</p>

Time Management:

Gelica's obstacles to success in high school, especially in IB English, became a key component to her success and made an impact on her beyond the high school classroom. Gelica was able to build on her experiences in middle school which, in turn, carried over into her high school experience.

Well, I had to learn time management; that was really an obstacle for me; I had to make sure that I made time to read outside of class, and I also had to make sure I took detailed notes so I could share them with my teacher the next day. IB English was super hard; we read lots of stuff that other high schools seniors in our area were not reading, but again, I knew I had to make time to do this. Books like *Absalom, Absalom!* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* were extremely challenging for me.....

Time management concerned Gelica because this was area that would possibly prevent her from doing well in her academics. She wanted to remain heavily involved in activities at school because this was a motivator for success.

Tasha shared, "I knew my extracurricular activities would also be obstacles for me...but I knew I had to stay involved. I knew that my friends were also in these clubs / band, so I would have someone help me with homework and have someone to help me study. It was tough, and I regretted it at times, but I knew ... my friends would help me get through these tough classes... especially English."

Tasha explained that her family originally moved to the Philadelphia area but soon realized Philadelphia was too large, and they needed to move, so Lancaster would be their next

stop. Some of the obstacles that surfaced while Tasha was in school were obstacles that faced five out of the six students interviewed. She explained.

Well... I breezed through the ESL classes here and felt very confident that I would be able to excel in middle and high school. Middle school was a bit more challenging, but I made it. Now, high school was a different story. My biggest obstacle was making time for all of the work especially all of the reading. 9th and 10th grade Honors English was doable...but IB English was rough. The intense reading and writing was very demanding; I thought sometimes, 'Is all of this work worth it? Was the IB diploma really that important to me and my future?' Throughout my high school experience, I began to realize, 'Of course it is.' Once I finished high school, I knew the answer to those questions.

Miguel's parents knew they had to make the move to the United States. According to Miguel, "Despite all of the resistance we [kids] put up; we did not want to leave." When asked to comment on the lack of English spoken by his parents, and if this was an obstacle, once he reached the United States, he replied,

Ummmmm.....was it an obstacle? I guess it was because we had to complete all of our homework at school, so we could get help from our teachers. In Peru, our parents could help because all of the work was in Spanish, so yes; I had to really work harder while in school to get my work completed. Once I reached high school, my biggest fears and obstacles were how was I going to conquer IB English? How was I going to read all of those hard books and write all of those papers? I knew I wanted to try to earn the IB diploma, so I knew I had to endure IB English.

Alex was an anomaly in my study. His obstacles were very different than the other five students; he certainly faced obstacles; however, his obstacles were not as life changing as the other five students. After carefully thinking about his answer long and hard, he responded.

I guess the main obstacle to overcome was ... I just never could fully understand why we moved. Yes, I know it was because of the drug thing, but I just could not fully wrap my head around the situation, but if there was one thing I did know, it was I had to learn English and I had to be successful. But once I reached high school, especially the IB program, I became more afraid of the workload. I was afraid of IB English. I knew this class would be very difficult for me simply because of the intense reading and writing.

Disruptive Peers in ESL Classes:

Gelica commented on several instances where she felt as if she was not going to be able to be successful; she was extremely wary that she was going to disappoint her family.

I knew that once I entered 8th grade I would not have the one-on-one attention that received in my ESL classes; this was extremely scary for me because I knew I had to be more independent and more self-sufficient. I was not ready for this independence; I was not ready to take on this challenge...but again I thought back to the reason of why my family had come to the United States...I thought of their sacrifices, so I mustered the courage to move ahead.

After processing this comment by Gelica, her resiliency started way before she entered the IB program. Her motivation and drive are rooted in her experiences from eighth grade when she realized the true reason that her family had come to the United States, the chance for a better education. She knew that she had the skills; she gained the confidence to move forward. Gelica

explained that the other students in her ESL classes were extremely disrespectful and misbehaved quite a bit. She knew she did not want to be labeled as “one of those kids.” She said,

Yes, I was embarrassed and angry all at the same time; these kids were taking away from my learning time with the teacher...but what I didn't know was that this was preparing me to work more independently and to be more of a ‘thinker’ on my own. So, looking back I guess I am thankful for those kids because they pushed [me]over the edge, in a good way, to learn how to be work and think on my own. I learned that I wanted to be successful and I did not want to disappoint my family.

These were not the first challenges that Gelica faced; she, in fact, had already faced the reality that learning English was not going to be easy and had already come to terms with the idea that success in the IB program was dependent on her ability to be a proficient reader and writer. I assert that experiences in her earlier ESL classes allowed Gelica to reach into her “back pack” and get the motivation to excel. She was successful in her Honors English 9 and 10 classes, but tackling the IB curriculum in her 11th and 12th grade years would bring other obstacles, especially since she was planning to earn the IB diploma. I concluded that the obstacles she faced were consistent with the other students interviewed as they all faced similar situations that could have allowed them to give up. Finally, I claim that with the help of teachers, parents, and friends these setbacks were faced with resilience and with a determination to excel.

Carmen, like Gelica, had issues with students in her ESL classes and as she asserted, “this turned me off from school; I wondered how would I make it?” Since Carmen’s family was hard

workers, I assert that Carmen developed this same work ethic because her family modeled preserving and accepting the challenges of the unknown.

The kids in my ESL class would do any and everything not to conform to the teachers. They would misbehave all the time; I hated it with a passion because I could never think in there [classroom]; I never felt as if I was learning. Most times I would just sit in the corner and cry....hoping that we would move back to my run-down school in DR. But when we moved to Lancaster, my ESL class and work was no longer an obstacle. This new experience was wonderful... and not all the kids were focused and wanted to learn.

Carmen also commented, “When I was in New York, I was like the other kids in the class...meaning we were all from poor backgrounds and most all of us were Spanish. When we moved to Lancaster, that wasn’t the case. I was, in some ways, embarrassed by my family and how poor we were. But, in the end, I know I just had to deal with it – was it an obstacle for us /me? Yes....”

Parents’ Inability to Speak English:

Tasha, much like Gelica, had the same issues with communication in her home. Neither of Tasha’s parents spoke English, and she had a very difficult time completing some of her assignments for school; therefore, this became frustrating for her and in the end created an obstacle for her. Like Gelica, she relied heavily on the support of her friends and teachers. These two groups were very influential. Her parents, like the parents of most the students interviewed, were illiterate, which added to their struggle once they reached the United States. Thus, I believe that, like Gelica, the lack of parents’ knowledge of English served as a motivator for Tasha.

My parents were blue-collar workers and very proud to be Puerto Ricans.

However, that was just it – they were Spanish speakers not English. When I was in Puerto Rico, this was not an issue because no one really spoke English in our town, but when [we] moved to the United States, this was my family’s biggest hurdle. The other students in my IB classes didn’t seem to have this issue...well, with the exception of some of the other Spanish kids in my class; I guess it was just embarrassing. After we were here for awhile, my father started to learn English, but it wasn’t the same as my friends’ parents in that his English was very broken and, at times, extremely difficult to understand.

Carmen was also raised by parents who did not speak English and she, much like Tasha, found this to be embarrassing and, at times, unbearable. I contend that the embarrassing moments that Gelica and Tasha experienced with their parents, like Carmen, served as obstacles but were also motivators for their success. All six of the students interviewed explained that this “embarrassment” did not exist once the students learned English. I observed that once the students learned English, they were confident to help their parents learn English, and also learning the language also served as a sense of accomplishment for the students.

Carmen explained that her “parents were laborers in the Dominican Republic (DR); they only knew how to work and make money so we could survive; learning English was not at the top of their list.” Carmen’s family also moved to a big city first but soon realized that this was not the appropriate setting from them or for their children, so they too moved to Lancaster.

Miguel was from an impoverished family who migrated from a small village in Peru; his parents, like Gelica’s Tasha’s, and Carmen’s did not speak English and like all of the other students, their families were moving to the United States for a better life for their children. Lack

of resources and poor fiscal conditions of Miguel's Peruvian school were comparable to the obstacles faced by four of the six students. These poor conditions motivated Miguel's parents to move to the United States. He explained, "Our school was falling apart...literally. The walls were caving in and we had to go outside beyond the school to use the bathroom. Looking back, this was third world living." His family knew that the only way for their kids to have a chance for success was to move to the United States. Moving to the United States meant that they would have a better life. This was going to be very difficult, as his parents spoke no English. Miguel explained his resiliency regarding the poor conditions of his school.

Despite all of the physical issues going on at my school in Peru, I put all that behind me and focused on learning. Of course, we had little to no resources, but we seemed to manage and seemed to learn. Actually, I love to learn. I was the kid that was always reading; always trying to figure out the hardest math problem. At that age, I was trying to figure out just why we had to move. Why did we have to leave all of my friends and extended family? I was a bit resentful. I just didn't understand.

Gelica relied on her friends because she could not ask for help from her parents; she relied on her friends because she knew they would be there to support her. Her parents did not speak English, and at times, this was very frustrating for her. I contend that since her parents could not speak English this served as a motivator for Gelica to excel. Her parents were poverty stricken, and they believed that it was not necessary for them to learn English. The only objective for Gelica's parents was to move to the United States, so she could have an opportunity for success. Gelica stressed that she was not "putting her parents down;" she was stating that this was, at times, frustrating.

Feeling Stigmatized by Poverty / not being Academically Prepared

Angela was in a similar situation as Miguel and Carmen. In her native Cuba, there were little to no resources; therefore, this became a motivator for her. Like Miguel, her school was in poor structural condition, and her parents did not speak English. Angela was the only student that was raised solely by her mother. This was a motivator that would force Angela to realize that she did not want to travel the same journey as her mother. Her father deserted the family when she was very small, so the burden of providing for the family was placed on her mother's shoulders. Angela discussed this in detail; however, she wanted to make sure that she was not criticizing or blaming her mother. She responded with, "My mother is the hardest working woman I know; when I was growing up in Cuba, she was constantly doing something. I was young then, so I did not know why she was always working. As I got older, I realized she had to work for us to survive. We had a tough life in Cuba." Angela, like Miguel, also attended poorly maintained schools and had very limited resources. Angela explains,

It was really, really difficult growing up in Cuba. My school was dirty and was falling to pieces. Our books were old and many of the pages were missing; it was bad. So when my mother decided to move to the United States, I was so excited. I knew we would be leaving behind our family and friends, but I also knew this would be worth it. My mother always wanted me to be better than her; she wanted me to go to college and to be able to support myself; however, when we arrived in Lancaster, I was already way behind academically not to mention I could not speak English. I thought, 'How would I make it here? How would my mother manage to keep us alive financially?'

Angela is the only student that mentioned being academically “behind” once she reached the United States. I asked her to elaborate further. Angela’s lack of academic preparation was due to the overwhelming scarcity of resources. She was hesitant, but she responded with, “I knew I had to learn English first, but how would I learn everything? How would catch up with math? These were just some of the issues I struggled with. At first, I didn’t think I would make it here just because I wasn’t prepared like the rest of the kids.”

Finally, and rightfully so, is Alex. His situation was much different than the others. His parents were more affluent; however, his parents could not speak English either. His parents were moving from Mexico City because of the increased amount of drug trafficking taking place around them. Once Alex found out about the move, he, like Miguel, was heartbroken.

I knew I would be giving up everything. I just hated to do that. I tried to convince my parents to move to another section of the city; moving was just not an option for me. In the end, my parents thought the only way for us to escape the drug wars was to move to the United States. I also want to stress that they knew that the educational system in the United States was also better than Mexico, so that was also a deciding factor as well.

Unlike the other the students, his school and resources in Mexico City were among the best available; these were not obstacles for Alex. He explained, “It seemed like we had new books and workbooks each year. My teachers were also extremely creative when it came time to extend our learning beyond the classroom. So, I wondered how moving to the United States would better my educational experiences.”

All of the students interviewed discussed obstacles and challenges in their native countries and also the struggles they faced once they reached the United States. These obstacles

for all six students motivated them to excel; motivated them to move beyond the ranks of the their Latino counterparts. All of the students discussed the necessity of learning English and shared their positive and negative ESL classroom experiences (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). They also explained how they were terrified of the IB program, specifically English. They did not know what to expect, and they knew that the reading and the writing would be their biggest challenge even though they had taken Honors 9 and 10 English. Gelica and Tasha made a point to discuss the impact of time management as a major obstacle. They discussed that participating in extracurricular activities was a concern and at times an obstacle, but the other students didn't seem to be concerned with this issue. It seemed that Tasha and Gelica used this extracurricular time as a form of therapy to deal with their situation(s). They found that these obstacles eventually became advantages for them due to the friendships they made and study groups they formed.

With the exception of Alex, poverty was a key factor for the students. They knew that in order for their lives to improve, they would have to leave their current homes and explore better lives in the United States. Another common barrier is that their parents did not speak English. While in their home countries, their parents could help them with their homework. Once in the United States, the students had to rely on after school help from their teachers and friends.

Table 2 summarizes the elements of motivation—specific factors that allowed students to reach their potential. Students expressed that family motivated them directly and indirectly and also commented that specific support systems, like their friends and social groups helped to keep them grounded. Throughout this section, students asserted that they would not have become successful without the help and guidance of these people. In the end, family and friends had a defined and distinct role in the maturation and growth, both academically and socially, of these six young people.

Powerful Motivations

- Family Motivating= FM
- Family Indirectly Motivating= FIM
- Students’ Friends Motivating= SFM

Student	Number of Instances	Quotes
Gelica	5	<p>“They [parents] made it loud and clear that one of the main reasons for us leaving Puerto Rico was so I could get a better education” (FIM)</p> <p>“My dad’s sister completed her Ph.D.in sociology about two years ago so she was very instrumental in helping my choose colleges...” (FM)</p> <p>“ I wanted to be successful and not disappoint my family.” (FIM)</p> <p>“I knew I had to stay involved [with extracurriculars]. I knew that my friends were also in these clubs / band, so I would have someone to help me with my homework...” (SFM)</p>
Tasha	5	<p>“I attributed my love for reading and writing to my father...” (FIM)</p> <p>“There was never a doubt about going to college; that is the main reason we moved from Puerto Rico....[they] believed the only way to survive is to become educated.” (FIM)</p> <p>“My school friends were a crucial part to my high school success; they kept me grounded...” (SFM)</p> <p>“I definitely did not want to earn a poor grade(s) because that meant I looked dumb in front of my friends- this was unacceptable.” (SFM)</p> <p>“I had extremely supportive parents...” (FM)</p>
Carmen	5	<p>“College was always in the picture; there was no doubt in my mind and I was always encouraged by my parents.” (FIM)</p>

		<p>“I was not going to let my parents down... I was always motivated by the fact of not disappointing my family because I knew they changed their lives for me and my siblings.” (FIM)</p> <p>“...being a clear communicator either written or oral is the key to success.” (FM)</p> <p>“I had a core group of friends that shared everything together; we formed our own homework club and really leaned on [one] another.” (SM)</p> <p>“So I learned so much from them and learned how to accept the positives and the negatives associated with high school.” (SM)</p>
Angela	4	<p>“Going to college was not an option for me; in essence, this is why we came to Lancaster. My mother knew [that] by staying in Cuba, I would not be exposed to a good education.” (FIM)</p> <p>“I am very thankful for my mother’s determination and drive.” (FIM)</p> <p>“My friends in Lancaster were not like my friends in Cuba; Everyone I interacted with here [Lancaster] had the same goal in mind and that was to earn good grades, graduate from high school, and do well in college.” (SM)</p> <p>“My mother was my rock...” (FIM)</p>
Alex	2	<p>“My one and only motivating factor was to make my parents proud. I knew that they had given up what they knew for me and my siblings. I also knew that once I graduated from college and landed a good job I could finally give back to them.” (FIM)</p> <p>“At first I tended to lean towards the Spanish speakers, but after I was more comfortable with English, I felt comfortable asking anyone for help. So all-in-all, I needed a good friend(s) / study group, and I found it in the IB program.” (SM)</p>
Miguel	3	<p>“My parents were extremely supportive. The real reason we moved from Peru was because they wanted us to earn a better education....they gave it all up for us.” (FIM)</p> <p>“She [sister Rachel] inspired me daily; she was the one that always reminded me of why our family moved from Peru.” (FM)</p> <p>“In those [IB classes], my classmates and I were able to create projects and expressed our ideas.” (SM)</p>

Family Motivations:

All of the students' parents served as motivators in some capacity. In every instance, the parent(s) were directly responsible for coming to the United States and each student felt, in some sense, obligated to be successful. In turn, each student who had younger siblings was committed to be a role model for them. They wanted to let them know that learning a new language and being successful in a new country were goals that could be reached.

Angela's chief motivation was certainly her single mother. A woman who had struggled her entire life, Angela's mother, by moving to America, was about to embark on a journey to overcome yet another obstacle: learning a new language and culture. Angela commented that her mother was her rock.

My mother was/is my hero; she single handedly is responsible for our move to the United States. She was the person who made sure we made the right connections once we moved to Lancaster. I guess I knew all of this then, but it wasn't until I reached high school and started to discuss college did I realize just how amazing she is. Whenever I thought of maybe not doing an assignment or brushing off a study session for a biology exam, the image of my mother popped in my head. I realized how much she has struggled for me – so I did the assignment and studied for the exams.

Growing up, Carmen and Angela's experiences were very similar, with the exception that Carmen's mother married a very nice gentleman when Carmen was older. Her stepfather accepted Carmen and her siblings as if they were his children. However, there was a point in Carmen's life when she and her mother were alone. Similar to Angela, she praised and thanked

her mother for making the move to the United States and eventually to Lancaster. As Carmen explained, the sacrifices made by her mother inspired her to work hard in return,

I never wanted to disappoint her; I knew if I did something wrong it would be hurting her, and I never wanted to do that. While in DR, we struggled to eat and struggled to have a cover over our heads. But she did not stop trying to provide for us; she would work long hours. I was too young to realize it, but she was working really hard for so little money. This was my motivation to be successful. I wanted to make her proud. When my stepfather entered our family, he stepped in and really helped us, but it was my mother that had been with us from the very beginning. Whenever I would get down in the dumps and really just didn't care, I always came to the phrase 'I just cannot be a failure!'

Miguel was certainly very thankful for parents as well, but as he got older, he began to think about how much he was motivated by his older sister, Rachel. Miguel explained that they would practice speaking English with one another, and she would help him with his homework. In Miguel's eyes, Rachel had proven that learning English and being successful in school were goals that could be accomplished.

I have always wanted to be like Rachel; she was smart, creative, and most importantly, she had a great sense of humor. Of course I did not want to disappoint my parents, but it was Rachel that I really did not want to disappoint. So I guess she was my motivating factor to be successful. Even now, I look to her as someone who motivates me to be better and to be stronger than everyone else. Rachel graduated from college a couple of years ago and now she is studying to become a minister at Princeton Theological Seminary. Actually it was Rachel

that helped me get through the IB program, and it was Rachel that helped me make the tough decision of where I should attend college.

Motivation was a key factor for Miguel, but he too wanted to lead by example, much like Rachel did for him. Miguel has younger siblings that he hopes will be motivated by his accomplishments. He also hopes that they will realize that hard work does pay dividends.

Indirect Family Motivations:

While Gelica's parents were extremely influential in her life, so were the members of her extended family, particularly her Aunt Maria. Aunt Maria was a role model for Gelica; she was the person that always spoke with conviction and sincerity; she was the person that was always grounded and stable. Throughout Gelica's time in school, she always remembered the constant, steady voice of her Aunt Maria telling her that, "going to college and getting a good job are two things you must keep in mind." Gelica did just that.

My Aunt Maria always had a good job; when I was a child, I remember [her always] being dressed up and everyone talking about [how] successful she was. Later, I learned she had earned a Ph.D. from the University of Puerto Rico and was the first person in my family to even go to college. This was a huge motivator for me; I essentially wanted to be like her. I wanted to be able to share my knowledge with others. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology in Puerto Rico. From a small child, she was the constant motivator for me. I knew I could not disappoint her. I also knew I could not disappoint my parents because they were the ones that made the ultimate sacrifice in moving to the United States.

Like Miguel, Gelica wanted to set an example for her younger siblings. She wanted to make sure that they realized how much of a gamble it was for her parents to uproot them from their native Puerto Rico and essentially start over in Lancaster.

As mentioned earlier, Alex's situation was a bit different; his family was upper middle class with both of his parents having very good jobs. Despite his parents' financial security, they knew they were going to have to give that up in order for their children to be successful. Alex said, "I often times feel guilty and sometimes selfish because my parents left everything behind." Alex discussed how moving from Mexico City to America influenced his ambition, saying,

I just wanted to be the best I could be. I always knew I wanted to go to college and study medicine. Once my parents decided to move, that sort of changed a bit. When we moved to Lancaster, I had to dig deep in my soul and had to gain the courage to keep that success spark burning. I also knew that I wanted to be a role model for my young sister. She had a really difficult time with the whole moving thing so I wanted to make sure she knew she could do it.

Alex also mentioned that both of his parents led by example. They were the parents that supported all of their children; consequently, this is why they decided to move from drug-stricken Mexico City to the United States. When asked to discuss other factors that helped motivate him, he said, "Others around me also motivated me. I have always been extremely competitive, so I used this to my advantage. Once I entered high school, my competitive edge increased....so in a sense I was motivated by my high achieving classmates."

Parents and siblings had a definitive role in motivating these six students. They were constantly reminding these students that even though they had lots of barriers facing them, they could still be successful. In Miguel's academic career, his sister Rachel served as a role model;

she showed him that earning good grades, conquering IB classes, and going college were possible. Angela's sole motivator was a very strong, determined mother; Angela wanted to make her proud. Gelica's motivator was her Aunt Maria, who had a Ph.D. in sociology. Gelica did not want to disappoint herself or her family. Carmen and Tasha were motivated by their parents; they wanted to show them that moving to Lancaster was not a mistake. All of these students never let obstacles come between them and their goals; they were constantly seeking ways to be successful.

Friends' Motivations:

Miguel also mentioned that his friends were important to his success; he discussed that most of friends were "science and math geeks," so they shared something in common. Miguel, Gelica, and Tasha explained how their marching band friends were the ones that kept them grounded and encouraged them to stay focused. Their motivation was defined by forming a "critical friends" group that essentially was a homework group that met to discuss various assignments and papers. While Gelica and Tasha were not considered "science and math geeks," they knew it was important to surround themselves with other students just as motivated as themselves.

Carmen also discussed the importance of her "study buddies," explaining that they served as a major motivator and support system; they were motivational because they were all invested in one another, and all of her friends were also a part of the IB program. "We all wanted to make sure that each of us was successful in school, and also we were all focused on earning the IB diploma and getting into a really good college—hopefully with lots of scholarship." She then proceeded to say that her friends were the most critical of her and her work. "They were very honest and at the same time sincere. If my *Absalom, Absalom!* paper was terrible, they would tell

me, and I would also return the favor. This was just how we treated each other, and we all responded to the positives and negatives.”

Angela also commented on how her “American” friends served as a cornerstone to her success. “Since we were all in the same classes, we knew each other’s good habits and the bad ones. I joined the soccer team and marching band when I arrived in Lancaster and those kids were instrumental in my success too. We all had each other’s back; it was not a competition thing at all.”

Table 3 summarizes the specific experiences that influenced students and discusses the impact teacher preparation and instruction had on their success. All of these categories addressed key components in school success and added another layer of support for these students' success. Students discussed at length the importance of teacher preparation and how this was a major factor in their academic promise. While family support was mentioned earlier, it seems that teacher influence coupled with a rigorous curriculum strengthened these students in the areas of reading which resulted in high marks on the AP and IB examinations.

Specific Curricular Experiences that Influenced Students

- TI= Teacher Influence / Teacher Preparation
- IB= Complexity of text / Written Assignments
- HC= Hidden Curriculum
- EC= ESL Classroom Experiences

Students	Number of Instances	Quotes
Gelica	10	<p>“Mrs. Jones would not just hand out worksheets; she used creative ways for us to remember the material.” (EC /TI)</p> <p>“She [Mrs. Jones] would make up jingles and raps about certain grammar rules. This really stuck with me. She was constantly practicing certain grammar rules.” (EC /TI)</p> <p>“My teachers were positive role models, and they gave me hope for the future.” (TI)</p> <p>“The books we read in IB English were really, really difficult. One saving grace is that we read <u>One Hundred Years of Solitude</u> in Spanish class, so we one class period to talk about the book.” (IB)</p> <p>“I knew I was not going to be one of those kids that misbehaved in my ESL classroom.” (EC)</p> <p>“My parents were always bringing books home for me and my sister... they had the local newspaper delivered; they would also journal each day.” (HC)</p> <p>“I loved watching television in English; I learned so much and was able to place an image with the words.” (HC)</p> <p>“...I would watch cartoons because I could understand the words better..” (HC)</p> <p>“Everyone raved about Mr. Brown’s IB [English] class,</p>

		<p>but they also said it was very demanding and it scared me... by reading <u>One Hundred Years of Solitude</u> first was a huge advantage because I really believe this is what set me up for success in IB English.” (TI)</p> <p>“IB English was super hard; we read lots of stuff that other high school seniors in our area were not reading.” (IB)</p>
Tasha	6	<p>“In my school in Puerto Rico, I loved my teachers. They were so caring and compassionate...when I arrived to my elementary school in Lancaster, I received the same treatment.”(TI)</p> <p>“My ESL classroom was awesome; there were English words on everything: the doors, the windows, the desk; you name it, and my teacher had it labeled.” (EC/TI)</p> <p>“My parents always had books and magazines in the house, and they were all in English. Also another key component that helped me to learn English was watching television.” (HC)</p> <p>“My IB Spanish teacher was also very instrumental in my reading and writing in English; she strengthened my grammar skills, which in turn translated into success in IB English.” (TI)</p> <p>“I loved the books we read in IB English especially the works of William Faulkner, <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> and <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i>” (TI)</p> <p>“Yes, the books we read were difficult and yes, our assignments were extremely challenging...I listened in class and took really good notes; I had to be on point while in class or I would not get the work done.” (IB)</p>
Carmen	9	<p>“At least when I arrived in New York I did have my workbook [ESL], and I was able to take my books home to study.” (EC)</p> <p>“My ESL teacher in Lancaster was awesome; she made me feel welcome right away, and she was also bilingual.” (EC/TI)</p> <p>“My ESL teacher had her entire classroom labeled with English words...” (TI)</p> <p>“Mrs. Watson’s [ESL] classroom was very small and there were other Spanish speaking students in the class too.” (EC)</p> <p>“Once I reached middle school, my favorite class was Language Arts. All of my teachers were fantastic. There were several ELL students in the class and the teacher would make accommodations for us [allowing students to use word banks on tests]” (TI)</p>

		<p>“My best teachers in middle school were my Language Arts teachers; they made me love my English and Spanish classes [in high school].” (TI)</p> <p>“ I knew IB English would be the most difficult of all my IB classes; our reading was very challenging not to mention so were our writing assignments..” (IB)</p> <p>“My IB English teachers offered lots of support after school.” (TI)</p> <p>“I wanted to watch [television] all of the local stuff because I thought I would be able to make a connection to the people places I had seen.” (HC)</p>
Angela	10	<p>“In Lancaster [ESL classroom] we could take our workbooks home; I also had other materials I could take home and read as well...” (EC)</p> <p>“My ESL teacher was wonderful; she had parts of the classroom labeled with Spanish words translated to English.” (TI)</p> <p>“She required us to learn 10 new words each day; we had to make note cards with the words and definitions. This was a huge help.” (TI)</p> <p>“While in 9th grade I was in Mr. Yoder’s ESL class for three of the eight class periods. This meant that I was in regular classes with different students. I loved it; I thrived!” (EC/TI)</p> <p>“When I was in Cuba, I hated school, but when I moved to Lancaster, my love for learning, especially reading and writing increased.” (TI)</p> <p>“I did well in IB English because my teachers practiced critical reading and writing with me and my classmates...I knew they were setting us up for college.” (TI/IB)</p> <p>“My ESL experience in Lancaster changed my outlook not just on school or education but on life.” (EC)</p> <p>“My ESL teachers would make me practice saying certain words.” (TI)</p> <p>“I was afraid to take IB classes especially IB English...but I knew Mr. Brown prepared his students for the IB exams and college.” (IB/TI)</p> <p>“ I knew that reading <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> was going to be a breeze in Spanish but what about IB English? Mr. Brown and Mrs. Lopez taught the books together... I was able to understand the material and text in Spanish, and we were also able to take that to IB English class.” (IB)</p>

Alex	8	<p>“My first ESL class was great; my teachers were great; I was shocked! My teacher would work with each one individually...I had never had this type of attention- not even in Mexico City.” (EC/TI)</p> <p>“We were given reading and writing workbooks that we would write in and take home; I also made flashcards, so I could learn more words.” (EC)</p> <p>“One of my first memories of writing was when my teacher asked me to complete a ‘word splash’ activity where we used specific vocabulary words to create a specific story... I thought this was fun.” (TI)</p> <p>“My ESL teacher created ‘word walls’ throughout the classroom...” (TI)</p> <p>“They [IB English teachers] were extremely supportive and they knew exactly how to make me a better writer. We read two text by William Faulkner; those books killed me... I had to spend so much time re-reading.” (IB)</p> <p>“There were all types of printed material in my house from books, both fiction and non-fiction to magazines- lots of emphasis was placed on reading.” (HC)</p> <p>“I knew IB English was going to be rough, but I also knew that we were going to read <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> in our Spanish class, so I could at least handle that book.” (IB)</p> <p>“Mr. Brown gave us numerous strategies to attack the text; he would make us write everyday; the assignments were not always long writing prompts...I think this was so beneficial for me.” (TI)</p>
Miguel	7	<p>“First of all, I loved my teacher! She made me feel so welcomed even though she could not speak Spanish. She had the entire classroom labeled with words in Spanish, Russian, French (Creole) and the words translated into English.” (EC/TI)</p> <p>In Mrs. Smith’s class, we read every day and we did some sort of writing each day; I really enjoyed this so I think that was the beginning of my love for reading and writing.” (TI)</p> <p>“My experiences in IB English were very interesting. The books we read- even the Shakespeare stuff. We were able to create projects that expressed our ideas.” (IB)</p> <p>“What contributed to my success was my IB English teachers; they put everything into preparing for the high stakes IB exams.” (TI)</p>

		<p>“ I watched lots of television so I would share [with my ESL class] something I had learned.” (HC)</p> <p>“My older sister knew a lot of English so she would bring home stuff [printed materials] so I could read..” (HC)</p> <p>“Even though I was scared of Mr. Brown and IB English, he was always there to work with me before, during, and after school. He made sure we had a handle on text prior to the writing our final paper...” (TI)</p>
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Teacher Influence and Teacher Preparation:

Throughout my research, it was evident that teachers and friends had a profound effect on the students. All six students cited evidence that teachers at all levels were extremely caring and invested in their educational success. Also, their friends were very influential in providing a support system. Alex and Miguel seemed to be the most excited to discuss the role of their teachers, especially their IB English teachers. Alex commented:

First, my ESL experience in Lancaster was unbelievable. My teacher was all over the place in our room; she was constantly working with students one-on-one, which meant, when she wasn't working with me, I had to learn to work independently. This was very difficult for me; however, she kept encouraging me to work through my issues and she would be there to help... and she was. She was one of my biggest fans and cheerleaders. Also, when I got to high school and more specifically the IB program, my IB English teachers were awesome. I was scared of the courses, but looking back, my senior English teacher was the one who really helped me develop into a good writer.

Alex continued to discuss the importance of his teachers' work and how greatly they were invested in his future. He also discussed the motivation and support provided by friends. He was motivated by his friends because he knew they all had the same goals in mind: earn the IB diploma and get accepted into college. Alex said, "My friends were the backbone of my high school experience; since we were all in this together, we all knew the requirements we had to meet. We formed study groups and, in my junior and senior years, we were each other's editors and math study buddies; this was a major key to my success in the IB program."

Miguel, much like Alex, discussed how his teachers in Peru and in Lancaster shared many of the same characteristics. He reflected that, “In my poor run-down school in Peru, my teacher always overlooked that kind of stuff. The walls and floor were falling down and our resources were next to nothing; however, my teacher still concentrated on giving us her best.” Miguel anticipated that his teachers in the United States would be just as motivated as his teachers in Peru.

Fortunately for Miguel, when his family moved to Lancaster, he found his ESL, high school, and IB teachers to be just as motivated; they merely did not share the same infrastructure. He stated that he “loved and adored his ESL teacher in Lancaster.” It was this teacher who convinced Miguel that learning a new language could be fun and that it could allow him to be successful both in middle school and high school. Miguel explained that his ESL teacher was a key motivator to his success:

My teacher would have a morning meeting with our class; she would always begin with the ‘word of the day’ and she would have a visual example of the word. After this activity, we would share something we learned yesterday. Our example could be from our class or from something we encountered at home. I watched lots of T.V. so I would share something I saw on T.V. After we all shared, she made us write a short paragraph about something we learned from one of my classmates. This caused me to be a better listener and allowed to have some choice in what I wanted to write about. Whether she knew it or not, this helped ease my mind with writing. This was a very relaxed experience, and this motivated [me] to learn more.

Much like Alex and Miguel, Gelica had excellent teachers who served as motivating forces in her life. It was these teachers who helped make it possible for her to excel in a subject she once feared: English. She drew motivation and support from close relationships with these teachers as well as with her friends, who at many points would serve as study companions. Gelica discussed some key points that allowed her to become successful:

My ESL teachers and my high [school] teachers set the bar really high and their expectations, at times I thought, were not doable. While in ESL, my teacher made it a point to connect with each student in some way. For me, we connected in that we both loved Puerto Rico and we had been to some of the same places.

Whenever we were learning something new, she always challenged me to take the next step. For example, when we were learning English grammar, she wanted me to help teach the other students in class. This was motivation to excel and not to disappoint her. I was her ‘grammar assistant.’

While Gelica said that her ESL experience was key to her later success, it was her time in high school and IB English that proved to be one of the most pivotal and stressful experiences of her life. Her IB English teachers forced her to read very challenging texts and, more importantly, she was assessed on the reading. Some of the strategies used by her teachers helped motivate Gelica. These strategies included: posting grades weekly, individual and group presentations, and reading parts of each student’s essay to the class. She did not necessarily like these strategies at the time; however, she said she now understands how they inspired her to work harder.

When Mr. Brown would post grades, we all were terrified to look because we did not want to have a ‘bad’ grade. So, that was my personal motivator because I did not want my ‘critical friends’ to see that I scored a low grade. Also, “he would read parts of our essays in class. He

would not reveal the student's name but we all knew whose paper it was. I would be so nervous when this happened....so I knew that my paper had to be on point.” These were huge motivators for me and for others like me.

Unlike the other students, Carmen and Angela did not have the most positive school experiences. When Carmen was in the Dominican Republic, school was not always her main priority and when she arrived in the New York, this seemed to intensify. However, Carmen was able to overcome this motivational obstacle. Once she realized the real reason her family moved (a chance a better education), she became more focused and began to utilize the supports that were available to her.

I remember when I was in the DR and even when I first moved to New York I wanted to give up and just forget about this whole education thing and learning English stuff. But when we moved to Lancaster and I met Mrs. Watson, my life changed. She was extremely caring and very much interested in our success. Most of the kids in my class were struggling with English, so I did not feel alone. After I was in her class for about three weeks, she made us do this activity called, ‘think-pair-share.’ I hated this because I had to communicate all in English. She would give us a topic and we had to think about it on our own, pair up with a classmate, and then share our conversations with the class – all in English. After the first couple of times, I was extremely nervous; however, I knew that I did not want to disappoint Mrs. Watson because she believed in me – something that I did not always have in my life.

Carmen said that she was motivated to excel in her ESL class because Mrs.

Watson established an environment that fostered learning and acceptance – not

fear. She explained that she did not want to disappoint her because she knew that Mrs. Watson “truly wanted the best for me and she constantly praised me and the remainder of our class for hard work. Every Friday afternoon we would have a special time devoted to ‘what we learned during the week.’”

Much like Miguel’s situation, the school resources in Tasha’s native country were very limited and at times nonexistent. She, like the other students, was highly motivated by her teachers and friends. Tasha attributed her love for reading and writing to her ESL teacher, Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones was the first teacher to introduce her to word decoding strategies.

Mrs. Jones was great. She realized that I was really scared, and she realized that my English was really, really bad. When I got settled in to our classroom, Mrs. Jones would make each student read something we had written yesterday (we had to write in our journal each morning). I was not happy. I told her I was not going to do [it] because I did not think my English was good enough. She made [me] anyway. As it turns, my journal was usually the best in class, so that made Mrs. Jones proud. From then on, I could not disappoint her. I used this as motivation to become successful in her class.

Complexity of Text and Written Assignments:

Once Tasha reached high school and the IB program, she faced some of these same challenges. Her ESL experience was fantastic; however, she knew that high school would present her with different hurdles to cross. While in high school, as mentioned before, she had established a key group of friends. Her friends like many of her teachers, expected success from her and she was not going to allow herself to disappoint them. She gave a similar explanation as Gelica regarding her IB English class, but she added.

The books we read in IB English were really, really difficult. One saving grace is that we read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish class, so we had another class period to talk about the book. Mr. Brown was the type of teacher that motivated you by fear; I just did not want to disappoint him because I knew he had already invested in me. The reading of students' essays was so stressful, but I knew that prior to turning my final draft, my paper better be the best it can be. Also the posting of the grades was stressful because I did not want to feel inadequate to my friends.

Carmen also mentioned the importance of her IB English teachers and her experience with higher level reading and writing:

I knew IB English would be the most difficult of all of my IB classes. I was pretty good in math and science, but higher-level English was a different story. And our IB English program was really good, and we had really good and hard teachers. Our reading lists were very challenging not to mention our writing assignments. Ms. McCormick and Mr. Brown like, Mrs. Watson, offered lots of support before and after school. Mr. Brown would post our grades and that was so stressful for me. This was the ultimate motivation for me because I did not want to disappoint my study buddies.

After Angela commented on her teachers' influence in the ESL classroom, she then discussed how her IB English teachers sustained what she had learned from Mrs. Smith, Mr. Yoder, and friends:

I was so afraid to take IB classes especially IB English. I kind of thought I was prepared, but I was still incredibly unsure; plus, Mr. Brown's reputation in school

was that he was extremely difficult, but his students scored really high on the IB exams and they were well prepared for college. I just kept reminding myself of this. While in IB English, I learned to take very detailed notes and to always listen and pay attention to Mr. Brown's lecture – especially when we read Faulkner. I guess my motivation for success was that I wanted to earn the IB diploma and also get college credit for English. Also he would post our grades and this was lots of pressure because of my friends...social pressure I guess.

Angela's story parallels that of the other students; however, she was "turned off by education" while in Cuba. Her teacher was not able to control the students in her class and this, in turn, caused her not to focus on her class work. She said, "The kids in my class were extremely disrespectful, and they never allowed the teacher to fully do her job. So, I started to turn into one of those kids. I was not disrespectful but I did not do my work either."

However, once Angela arrived in Lancaster, she wanted to give education and learning a new start.

I knew that the reason we moved to United States, but more specifically Lancaster, was for me to learn English and to ultimately earn a college degree. I knew I had to be more focused, and I hoped that I would not be in classes with the kids like the kids in Cuba, and luckily, I wasn't. In Cuba we had no resources, but we had lots of stuff in Lancaster. Mrs. Smith and Mr. Yoder were the teachers that truly made a difference for me; they saw potential in me and they knew just how to motivate me to excel. Both teachers would allow me to be creative to show my knowledge of the content we were studying. This proved to be a huge factor for

me because I could finally express my knowledge in a different way. They were awesome and I knew I just could not disappoint them.

Influential ESL Experiences

All of the six students were enrolled in ESL classes once they entered the United States. Also, all six students entered school at the middle school level with the exception of two students, Tasha and Miguel. During the interviews, all of the students expressed various accounts of their time in an ESL classroom. All of their experiences were extremely meaningful and they attributed much of their success as IB students –and particularly as IB English students –to their early successes in the ESL classroom.

Gelica discussed that her first ESL experience was not very positive. “All of the students around me were more concerned with misbehaving and not concentrated on learning. I knew I had to get out of this situation because I knew the main reason we moved to Lancaster was for me to learn English and go to college.” While Gelica was not the student misbehaving, she knew that she had to do her best to move from the Beginning ESL to the Developing ESL (these are two separate classes), and she did this at the beginning of marking period 2 of her first year.

Gelica commented that this ESL classroom was totally different; everyone was engaged and there were very few discipline problems.

This is where I learned to read and write. Our activities were filled with learning new words and being able to use those words in sentences and eventually in paragraphs. Also, Mrs. Jones, my second ESL teacher, required us to learn grammar. This was one of the most important aspects of ESL for me. This helped me so much once I reached the honor classes in high school. She also had a great system of learning vocabulary words. She would cut out pictures from magazines

and make us choose the correct vocabulary word that matched the picture. Later, I realized this gave me a visual of the word and allowed me to make that connection.

Tasha, like Gelica, said that her earliest experiences in the ESL classroom contributed to her later successes in honors middle school classes and the IB program. She explained that her fifth grade ESL teacher was so instrumental in “turning her on to English and giving her the confidence to read and write in English.”

My ESL classroom had words everywhere. Everything in the classroom was labeled in English, Spanish, Russian, and French (Creole). But that was for marking period one only. After marking period one, the labels were only in English. This allowed us to learn the word and to make a visual connection. Also in her ESL class, her teacher stressed the importance of using those words and other vocabulary words in sentences and eventually in paragraphs. She was definitely preparing me for the honors classes in middle school and the IB program in high school.

Tasha also discussed the impact of watching television at home and how this helped strengthen her knowledge of vocabulary she learned at school. She explained that when she saw an unfamiliar picture on television, she would write the word in Spanish and then translate the word into English. This became a new word for her.

Carmen, like Gelica, did not enjoy her first ESL experience. She stated that, “I would cry every morning before going to school.” Carmen asserted that her class was filled with students who were constantly causing problems with their behavior; students who concentrated more on making people laugh than on their studies.

My teacher really tried to control the class, but it was nearly impossible, so I just waited until I was able to reach middle [school] and I hoped that it would be better. My first real and positive ESL experience was in Lancaster. In Lancaster, Mrs. Watson's class was very small and the kids were very respectful. Mrs. Watson made learning vocabulary very easy; that is one thing that I can remember about her class. She would give a picture of the word and we had to identify the word, but we also had to use the word in a sentence, and the sentence had to make reference to something at school or at home.

Carmen also commented that her ESL classes were the cornerstone for her success in her honors middle school classes and also her IB English class. She also discussed her anxiety of entering honors classes. "I was always so anxious about going into the honors program; however, I knew I was prepared. I knew that teachers like Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Book did their best to help me be successful."

Angela's ESL teacher, like Tasha's and Gelica's, had many objects labeled in the classroom in Spanish and English.

Mrs. Mitchell was the ESL teacher that truly made a difference in my vocabulary building and my writing skills. She would work with each one [of] her students and she would do her best to go over our classroom and homework in detail. I will always remember our 'hero project.' We had to design a power point [that] explain hero and had to complete a small essay explaining why we chose this person. We also had to present this to the class. I was so nervous, but I did it, and it was lots of fun because I got to see classmates' work. She forced me to work

out of my comfort zone, and this is what I needed, so I could be successful in my Language Arts classes and eventually in my IB classes.

Angela mentioned that Mrs. Mitchell did not speak Spanish, so Angela was forced to learn the English and forced to communicate with her classmates in English. She went on to say, “Mrs. Mitchell made us learn the hard way, but I am thankful for her because she made me a better reader and writer. Middle school honors was doable; she totally prepared me.”

Alex and Miguel’s ESL experiences almost mirror each other: their experiences, from the ESL classroom to receiving the IB diploma, were extremely positive. Their ESL classrooms were filled with resources to help them learn in English and to help them achieve their short and long term goals.

Alex asserted that, “the majority of classmates were not Spanish; in fact; they were Russian, French, Chinese, and Haitian students. Yes, the goal was to learn English, but I learned lots of cultural things from my classmates. It was a very diverse group.” Like Mrs. Mitchell, Alex’s teacher, Mr. Brown, would work individually with students making sure that they had a handle on the assignment and also preparing them for their homework. Alex explained how Mr. Brown’s classroom worked.

Every inch of Mr. Brown’s classroom was filled with words, but in particular, he had a ‘word wall’ that changed weekly. The words on the word wall were our vocabulary for the week. For example, we would discuss the words and at the end of the week, we had to choose five of those words to create a story about school (school could also be an extracurricular activity) or home. We would also read graphic novels; this was so fun because we are able to attach pictures with words.

I really think that Mr. Brown was definitely a factor that helped me become successful in the IB program especially IB English.

Alex explained that his knowledge of reading and writing started in Mr. Brown's classroom. He went on to say that he knows that this foundation in ESL was truly the stability he needed to be successful.

Miguel, like Alex, loved school and everything associated with it. Miguel had big shoes to fill as his sister was already advanced in English, and she was certainly on the road to college, and he knew that he wanted that too. Miguel truly loves learning, and he knew that he was not going to let the language barrier come between him and success. He commented on his ESL experiences and the reasons why this was a huge hill for him to climb.

Mrs. Smith's way of teaching was remarkable. Of course, we used workbooks and other resources, but she would do creative things to help us learn words. Every week, we would play a game similar to Pictionary, but with a little twist. We would have to draw the word but we would also have to make a connection to something we had learned during our class. For example, if the word was 'pencil' then we had to connect the word to something we have written during that particular week. (We would guess the word, then [when] the round was over; we would make the connection to a past activity). We would also play 'context clues' bingo. She would pull words out of the reading passages and we would have to guess how they connected to the passage and overall theme. This was hard, but we learned. Looking back, these activities made a huge difference in my ability to be a good reader and writer.

Miguel also explained that Mrs. Smith was always able to get him to “write on certain prompts.” “Of course, we had to write but I was not always good at starting my essay. She helped me brainstorm; she showed me that pre-thinking and pre-writing were crucial in the success of a [writer], and she was right. I still brainstorm before I write.”

All of the students’ ESL experiences were very different, yet they were able to produce the same results. The skills they learned were certainly sustained throughout middle and high school years. They expressed that their ESL curriculum and their ESL teachers were the cornerstone to their learning in middle school and, most importantly, they attributed their success in the IB program (and especially English) to what they learned early on in their ESL classroom.

The Hidden Curriculum: Literacy and Writing at Home Explained Students' Success

Several of the students interviewed mentioned the influence of literacy in their home. Literacy is defined in this context as a magazine, newspaper, or another piece of printed media (printed in English or Spanish) that was found within the home. Writing or journaling was also another aspect that was discussed in the interviews. There were some students that wrote in their journals at home and this made a difference in their passion for writing and in their success in school. Also, students discussed the impact of learning English by watching television.

Miguel discussed that he did have reading materials in house, but they were in Spanish. He explained that his parents received a copy of their local newspaper, and they enjoyed reading about the happenings around their town and village. He also explained that reading the local paper was the extent of their reading; they did not really enjoy anything other than the newspaper.

They would share the news with us, and they encouraged us to read as well. So, when I started to learn how to read, I started with the small chunks of the paper. When we moved to the United States, we listened to the Spanish television station and we would get the local biweekly Spanish newspaper. There were no magazines. My older sister knew a lot of English so she would bring home stuff in English so when I started to learn English; I would practice reading with her. After I had learned English and could read fairly well, I would bring books and magazines home; I think this motivated my parents to learn English as they enrolled in ESL classes the second year we were in Lancaster.

In Miguel's home, there was no type of writing or journaling that took place. He commented that "the only writing that was done in my [home] was homework assignments and

when I reached high school, it was all of the lab reports and essays I had to write...but no journaling—not even my older sister.”

Alex’s parents were more interested in reading and writing. They had the local newspaper delivered to their home, and they also received several magazines – all in Spanish; however, his older brother had a magazine delivered to their home that was written in English.

Reading was extremely important in my house. There were all types of printed material in my house from books, both fiction and nonfiction, to magazines. My parents wanted to be informed. I thought at first that they wanted to just read about the crime, but later found out that they enjoyed reading. Also, they encouraged all of the kids to read and to write, but more emphasis was placed on reading.

While Alex’s parents were the most educated and the most outspoken when encouraging their children to read and write, they had a set back once they reached Lancaster. Both parents could not speak or understand English very well, so they had to learn more English in order to understand the newspapers and the other printed materials. “Yeah... they struggled when we first [got] here because they were used to reading everything in Spanish, but they used this as motivation to learn English. By the time I had finished high school; they knew lots of English and could communicate pretty well in English”

When referring to writing in the home, Alex stated, “Well, I was not that kid that enjoyed journaling, so the writing that was done pertained to school work. After I graduated from high school, I realized how important writing is to surviving.”

Miguel and Alex’s parents shared a commonality: they were readers and they encouraged their children to do the same. Both sets of parents were aware that their children’s success

depended on being proficient readers and writers. Also, both Alex and Miguel scored five out of seven on their IB English examination and this allowed them to opt out of their freshmen English Composition courses in college.

For Angela, it was important to read while at home. She discussed that her mother encouraged her to read. Her mother, who could not speak English, would read the Spanish newspaper while Angela would read books that she would bring home from school. Angela's mother was her role model, and she wanted to do everything she could to please her, so when her mother encouraged to read, Angela obeyed because she knew this would be important later.

I loved to read and that was a key factor in learning English. While in Cuba, I would read often, so when we moved to Lancaster, I knew had to adopt that same mentality; plus, I knew that [it] would help me learn more English vocabulary. In regards to journaling or other writing at home, I did not do any of that. The only reading I did was the homework I had to complete. But my mother was a writer; she would write letters to family and friends often.

Gelica, unlike Alex, Miguel, and Angela, did lots of journaling at home. She expressed that her parents, especially her father, encouraged her to read and write; they stressed that this was the only way she would be successful in school and beyond. Gelica kept a detailed journal about the happenings at school and home. "I love to write, but when I moved to the United States, my journaling was not as consistent. I think that was because I was trying really hard to learn English, so I was not focusing that much on my journal."

Gelica's parents purchased the local newspaper, and they did their best to keep "children's books" in the house both in English and Spanish.

My parents were always bringing books home for me and my sister to read. Even though they did not know very much English, they encouraged us to read and write in both languages. As far as printed materials, they had the local newspaper delivered, which was in English and they also [got] the local Spanish newspaper. My parents were strong advocates for reading and writing. They also would journal; this was also very important to them.

Gelica also mentioned the importance of learning English from watching television. She commented that she would watch and listen for words she did not know and she would try to write those down so she could discuss them with her teacher and class the following day.

I loved watching television in English; I learned so much and was able to place an image with the words. I did not watch that much news, but I would watch cartoons because I could understand the words better; the news was too technical and I just could not get into those shows / channels. My ESL teacher thought this was good idea, and she encouraged other students to do this as well.

Tasha, like Gelica and Carmen, learned several English words and phrases by watching television. She said that there were newspapers, magazines, and books in her home, but she remembers her “television learning” the most.

I remember very well turning on the T.V. and trying my hardest to hear words that I had learned in school. At first, it was very difficult because everyone talked so fast, but I soon learned how to just look for certain words or phrases. The news channels were the most difficult because of all the technical terms so at first, I would pay closer attention to the commercials because I could usually make connections to the pictures.

While both parents were supportive, Tasha's father was especially adamant that his daughter read and write at home. She contends that when she first started to read in Spanish, her parents made a very conscious effort to encourage her to read. She explained that her parents' thought reading and writing were instrumental in achieving success.

My parents required me to keep some type of journal. I had to write in my journal weekly; when we came to Lancaster this became harder for me to do because I was trying to learn English and get used to school, but I did it. I did not want to disappoint my parents. Once I reached high school, especially IB, my journaling declined a little but I tried to maintain this practice. They did not pressure me as much when I was in high school because they knew that my IB courses were filled with lots of homework and writing.

Tasha also mentioned that reading and writing at such a young age was the cornerstone of her success in the IB program and in college. She went on to say that the pressure from her parents was "annoying" and at times "overbearing," but she knew that they were trying to prepare her for high school and beyond.

Carmen too was a "television learner." She explained that she would watch television and try her best to make connections to words she knew and attempt to write down the words that she wanted to know. "I would try to watch all of the local stuff because I thought I would be able to make a connection to people or places I had seen. This was very hard because the news channels were hard to understand."

Carmen's parents were not readers or writers. She commented that she was the only person in the home that did either.

When we lived in D.R., my parents did not take the time to read anything – not even the newspaper. They were not concerned with that kind of stuff, not [to] mention they were not writers either. But they thought that reading and writing were important; it is just that they were not interested.

There were no books in the home with the exception of the books that Carmen would bring home from school. She also commented that, “the only writing I did at home was the writing that was required for homework. I just did not journal or take the time to do so, but I realized that once I reached high school and IB that writing would be [a] crucial part of my success. So, looking back, I should have written more as a kid.”

All of these former students had a different perspective on reading and writing and who influenced them. Also, all of the students were able to make specific connections to things, ideas, and people that influenced them to read and to write. Lastly, of all of the responses, and perhaps the most revealing was the emphasis that many put on “television learning” and the instrumental role T.V. played in allowing them to grow in their understanding of the language. While some of the students discussed the importance of interacting with classroom teachers, it seems that they also were able to learn from other external factors.

IB Curriculum and Students' Success

The goals for all of the former students were: to learn to read, speak; and write English effectively; to be successful; and to earn the IB diploma as the key to university admission. Also, all of the students realized how important their prior learning experiences such as ESL had been in their preparation for, not just IB English, but for the IB program in general. However, all of the students were apprehensive of the IB curriculum, especially English. Tasha echoed the sentiments of all of the students when she said, "IB English scared me to death; I was so intimidated by Mr. Brown's class. Everyone that had taken his class talked about how difficult the readings were and how demanding he was with his papers." Tasha continued, "After I finished with IB English, I knew that I was ready for, not just college, but for the world."

Students in IB English (both junior and senior years) read a variety of texts. They were: *The Tragedy of Prince Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Things They Carried*, *The Sorrow of War*, John Keats Poetry, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Story of Zhara*. In Year 2 they read: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denosovich*, *The Stranger*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*. The following is a brief synopsis of how students are assessed: an oral commentary on a Keat's poem, a passage from *Hamlet*, or a passage from *King Lear*, an oral presentation on *The Things They Carried* or on *The Sorrow of War*, two individual writing assessments (one their junior year and one their senior year) which are graded externally, and finally, two exams in the spring of their senior year. One of the exams addresses specifically *The Handmaid's Tale*, *The Story of Zhara*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, or *Beloved*. In order for the student to earn collegiate credit, each assessment must earn a total score of five out of seven potential points.

All of the students in the sample were IB diploma candidates. The six students had a variety of commentary on their IB experiences, but most of them were positive and also indicated their motivation to excel in such a difficult course of study. Also, all of the students discussed how their past ESL experiences helped strengthen their skills in order for them to do well in IB English. As mentioned earlier, many of their former teachers had a specific role in their preparation for reading and writing.

As Tasha mentioned earlier, IB English was a tough course and a course that all of the students “dreaded to take.” Tasha went on to explain what she meant by “dreaded.” “Many of the students that I talked to said, ‘Mr. Brown is very fair and extremely helpful but the books and the papers are just really hard to get through.’ But I knew I was going to get through this course because I knew I did not really have a choice.”

Alex and Miguel had the same thoughts; however, they were looking forward to reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* because they were going to be reading the text in their IB Spanish classes as well. Alex commented that, “I knew that IB English Year 2 was going to be rough, but I also knew that we were going to be reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in our Spanish class, so I knew I could at least handle that book.” Alex had also heard that Mr. Brown’s class was very difficult but “manageable.” He went on to say that, “Mr. Brown gave us numerous strategies to attack the text. He would make us write everyday; the assignments were not always long writing prompts but we did some writing each day. I think this was so beneficial for me.”

Miguel had a similar response; however, he was more worried about the writing component in IB English Year 2. “Yeah, I knew we were going to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish, but how was I going to read and write about *One Hundred*

Years of Solitude in English? I was scared. Plus, the anxiety of having to read the other books.... I was not looking forward to that.” He also commented that, “Even though I was afraid of him and the course, Mr. Brown was always there to work with me before, during or after school. He also made sure we had a handle on the text prior to writing our final paper on a specific text.” Miguel also wanted to share how his reading of the Faulkner texts, especially *Absalom, Absalom!*, strengthened his critical thinking skills.

With Faulkner, I never knew where to begin; I never really knew how to ‘read’ his books. But when I finished reading *The Sound and the Fury (TSTF)*, I knew I had really accomplished a huge feat. Then we had to read *Absalom, Absalom! (AA)*; this made the *TSTF* sound like a kindergarten text. It was so difficult, but with Mr. Brown’s help and his expertise on Faulkner, we made it. I was so confident with Faulkner that [I] chose to write on *AA* on paper two of the IB exam. I am glad that I did because I scored a six on the IB English exams.

Angela had a bit of anxiousness with the reading list, but she explained that Mr. Brown’s method and style of teaching made the text easier to understand.

I knew that reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was going to be a breeze in Spanish but what about English? Mr. Brown and Mrs. Lopez taught the books together. This was such a great idea because we were able to ‘understand’ the material and text in Spanish and we were able to take that to English class. This was much better than having to relying on the Internet for plot summaries and information about the text. Also, Mr. Brown required us to complete small writing assignments as we read the book. This was

so helpful because we started to write our IA (individual assessment that is graded externally) we already had several prompts we could choose from.

Gelica, like some of the other students, was super excited to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish and also in English. “I was so excited. I knew that I could handle this book even in English.” Gelica went to say that, “Yes, I liked *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, but I also really learned to like the Faulkner books. They were extremely difficult, but Mr. Brown said that if we understood *TSTF* and *AA* we would do well on the IB exam, and I did. I earned a five on the exam and a five for the course.” Gelica continued to comment on the idea of reading the same text in both her Spanish and English classes.

Of course I was afraid of IB English but reading a Spanish novel sure did help ease some of my anxiety. I had already had Mrs. Lopez for higher level Spanish, so I knew what to expect from her class, but it was IB English that really scared me. Everyone raved about Mr. Brown’s class, but they also said it was very demanding and scared me. But reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* first was a huge advantage because I really believe this is what set me up for success in IB English.

Carmen had a similar experience as the other students with the one exception; she struggled with *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. She commented that, “I was super excited that the book was going to be about a Latino family, and I was eager to read the books simultaneously. After I started reading the text, it was very difficult to follow, and I had a hard time understanding the plot.” She went to say that she appreciated *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, but it was not her favorite. “Mr. Brown and Mrs. Lopez explained the text and really prepared us to write our IB paper, but it just wasn’t my thing... I just

didn't like the plotline.” Carmen also said that even though this was not one of her favorite books, she knew that texts like this were going to help strengthen her reading and writing and most importantly were going to help prepare for college writing.

Carmen discussed other texts that she liked in IB English. “I really liked *The Handmaid's Tale*. It was the first real novel that discussed the trials of a determined character. I chose to write on this book for the IB exam in conjunction with AA, and I am sure this is why I earned a five on the exam and a five in IB English.”

Angela, like the other students, had major issues with the Faulkner books: *TSTF* and AA “We read *TSTF* first... right before Christmas. What a hard book to read! The language and the plot were very difficult to understand. So, Mr. Brown would go back to certain passages and help us make connections to the assignment we were completing.”

For example, before we even starting reading *TSTF*, we did a really neat activity that allowed us to do some predicting and allowed us to make some assumptions prior to reading ‘Benjy’s’ section (the first section of *TSTF*). After we did this, we kept the list of our assumptions and tried to apply those to the reading. Also we watched part of *Gone With the Wind*, and we had to respond to a series of questions about certain parts of the film and how we thought these parts represented southern culture.

All of the students interviewed did have some anxiety about IB English, but in the back of their minds, they knew they were prepared to handle the rigorous reading and writing assignments. They also knew that Mr. Brown had a very special talent in preparing them for the IB exams specifically, English. Also, the students contributed parts of their success in IB English to their ESL teachers in elementary and middle schools. Tasha and Gelica specifically mentioned certain teachers that made a huge

difference in their ability to read and write in English. Angela recalled certain activities that resonated with her even when she was reading the most difficult Faulkner text.

Carmen, Alex, and Miguel also shared examples of how well their ESL experiences prepared them for IB.

IB English was the capstone for all of these students. They mentioned Mr. Brown's class earlier and how challenging and difficult it was; however, all of the students also expressed a genuine "thank you" for all of the support he provided throughout their time in his class. As stated earlier, all of the students were on the IB diploma track, and all of the students chose IB English as one of their higher level exams. This meant that they had to score at least five out of seven to get collegiate credit, and they all reached that milestone. Since this is a higher level course, meaning that the course assessments span over their junior and senior years, Ms. McCormick was their junior IB English teacher and was responsible for preparing them for two of the six assessments.

Conclusion

All six students shared similar comments about their time in IB English, and they were also extremely reflective, particularly when discussing how IB English prepared them for college. However, some of them mentioned how difficult and challenging the course was but how rewarding it was to earn a high score and be exempt from freshman level composition courses.

Tasha and Gelica shared very similar stories about IB English and why they were successful. Their stories focused around engagement while in class and their ability to interact with the text they were reading.

Tasha stated that, “Yes, the books we read were very difficult and yes, our assignments were extremely challenging. However, I knew that if I listened in class and took really good notes I would be able to complete the homework with no problem. But the key was that I had to be really on point while in class, or I would not get the work done.” Tasha continued to say that she was extremely lucky to have her “study buddies” in her IB English because these students provided the extra support she needed to complete the challenging assignments. She also echoed that her junior IB English teacher, Ms. McCormick, was also an incredible resource in that she would also stay after school to work with her and give her pointers on how to approach a particular assignment.

Also, Tasha remarked on the support she received from others around her like her guidance counselor and other IB teachers.

Tasha commented, “Everyone struggled with the IB courses, so our teachers would make changes to some of our assignment due dates because of other assignments that were due in other classes. This was extremely helpful for me and for the rest of the IB students Teachers would make certain IAs were due at other times so we would not be so stressed.”

Gelica also mentioned that the support of her friends and classmates was the reason she was successful in IB English. “It seemed like everyone just stuck together; we knew what had to get done and we did it. We would read over each others’ papers and help each other with paper topics and definitely help each other with the Faulkner books” (*TSTF* and *AA!*). She went on to say that she initially dreaded coming to IB English class each day, but when she realized how helpful and entertaining Mr. Brown was, she knew this class would be just fine, especially with other peers supporting her.

In Mr. Brown's class, he would use various things to get his students involved. For example, before reading *TSTF*, we watched excerpts from *Gone With the Wind* and we had to analyze certain scenes in the film. I kind of thought this was a little dumb. However, when we started reading *The Sound and the Fury*, it made sense. He was allowing us to make predictions about certain aspects of southern life; he was also giving us a visual of some of the scenes from Faulkner's book. In the end, it did make sense.

Like Angela, Gelica went on to say that her experience in IB English definitely prepared her for college, especially in the courses that were writing intensive. Both Tasha and Gelica felt privileged to have Ms. McCormick and Mr. Brown for IB English simply because they felt extremely prepared for post secondary education.

Carmen commented that she thought IB English was the most difficult of all of her IB classes in both her junior and senior years. She remarked, "Mr. Brown's class was brutal. We had to read some very difficult books; I thought those books and papers would be the death of me, but they weren't; I survived and I learned a whole lot." Carmen's commentary on IB English was that she wanted to be challenged, and she wanted to be a better reader and writer, but with all of the other courses, especially her science classes, she knew she would have to work really hard; she did.

After graduating from high school and completing her first two years of college, Carmen had new perspective on her experience in IB English. Since I earned a five in IB English, I did not have to take ENG 101 or ENG 102. That was pretty nice because others in my dorm were stressing over writing countless papers and having to do, what they said was, bogus research on irrelevant topics. I was lucky in that I did not have to do because I worked hard in Ms. McCormick's class and Mr. Brown's class. Yes, it was a rough junior and senior year, but it paid

off. I also feel that I am a much better thinker and writer. It just comes so easy to me now, so IB English definitely has its advantages.

Angela, Alex, and Miguel also echoed the same sentiments as the previous students. They all expressed that IB English was very difficult; it was worth staying awake late at night trying to finish numerous assignments, and all of the students received six college credits for earning a five or higher on the exams. They expressed that IB English was certainly challenging; however, it was worth it. Angela commented that, “ Yes, Mr. Brown’s class was difficult, but looking back, I am so glad that I took his class and so glad that he made us write all of those papers.”

Alex asserted that, “I was not very interested in reading and writing until I took Mr. Brown’s English class. I was sold when we read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* because we were also reading the book in my IB Spanish class too. When I graduated and finished my first year of college, I realized how valuable all of the reading and writing was for me.”

Miguel echoed those comments, “When I arrived at college, I knew all of the classes were going to be very difficult, but I was certain I was prepared. Writing was not my strength, but I truly felt prepared because of IB and because of the papers we had to write, especially the papers on *TSTF and AA!*

All six students shared how IB English and their IB English teachers enriched not only their high school experience but also prepared them for reading and writing at the college level. While they all had both similar and different experiences, it seems that each student was able to leave IB with not only a tangible reward (in that they all earned a five or higher in IB English) but also with confidence and determination. Their individual and collective experiences are a testimony to their perseverance and motivation to excel and to prove to themselves and others that they could conquer what was once thought to be impossible.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this chapter, I will briefly summarize conclusions, discuss a few major points of interest, explore implications for research, and explore implications for practice. Listed below is a summary of the study: a discussion of how this study has implications in the fields of ESL instruction, educational learning theories application, teacher education, and urban education. The remainder of this chapter includes the implication for further research and how this study could impact teacher practice.

Summary:

From this study, I was able to assert that there are specific factors that help first generation Latino students reach success in the public schools, particularly in IB English and ultimately the IB program. Throughout the study, I realized that motivation, discipline, ambition, and resiliency were characteristics that each student possessed. All students discussed the barriers they had to overcome, and consequently, explained how they overcame those obstacles. All of the students commented that they were very fortunate to have a support system that allowed them to be successful; they mentioned family, friends, and teachers as the main sources of support. Each student asserted that he or she did not want to disappoint parents because they knew parents had made huge sacrifices to move to the United States. Also, from this revelation emerged the importance of consistency in curriculum and expectations. It seemed that if the parent(s) or teachers provided a structured environment for learning, then the student performed. Students explained that they were intimidated by the IB program at first; however, they remained focused and they sought out help to become successful.

All of the students were extremely grateful for the experiences their parents provided for them; they constantly restated that part of their success was due to the people that surround them both in and outside of the classroom.

Discussion:

This retrospective study was guided by two distinct theoretical frameworks: phenomenography and its importance in understanding how others experience, conceptualize, understand, perceive, and apprehend the world (Marton, 1994) and the psychological idea of how children overcome adversity and mature into successful adults (Werner & Smith, 1982, Masten, 2001, Coleman, 1990). Throughout this study, the objectives were to use both frameworks as lens' to uncover how six first-generation Latino students became proficient English speakers, successful IB English students, and top-performing college students. The driving force of this study was to reveal the specific sources of motivation that enhanced their innate ability to achieve success both in and out of school.

Compton – Lilly (2011) discussed the notion that if family / parental support are absent in the home then the chances of the student being successful is very limited. Also Llagas & Synder (2003) discussed Ms. Rodriguez's story and how she was an active participant in her daughter's educational journey particularly when it came to introducing her to reading and sustaining the passion for learning. In this study, both of these types of parents were represented. Home literacy was sometimes more limited than I once thought given the parents' commitment to education and their involvement on behalf of their children. This, however, seemed to complicate the usual connection made between home literacy and student success. Therefore, I feel that it is important for the school community to reach out to these parents and share with them resources that would enhance the exposure to literacy in the home.

Tensions between some parents' efforts to support academic success, by restricting friends, proved to be an issue for fostering students' positive peer relationships. In this study, students commented on the support of their "critical friends." These peers groups helped each

other grow into academically prepared students and allowed them the freedom to share situations that ultimately enriched their high school experience. For example, students shared the bond they established by being involved in extracurricular activities. Even though some of the parents did not approve of their child staying after school, the students contributed these experiences to their success in high school and beyond. Thus, I think it is crucial that students find their niche in their high school environment. The students in this study explained how their “critical friends” gave them stability and resiliency to keep moving forward and to keep their future in sight.

The results from this study proved that Latino students, given the necessary support from family, friends, and teachers, first-generation Latino (a) children who immigrate to the United States do have the motivation, discipline, and resiliency to become successful students. Each student expressed ideas and situations that were unique to his/her educational setting. The findings from this study should be shared with other urban districts that have a similar ESL population and also districts that have IB Diploma programs. After reading this study, school districts’ curriculum and instruction administrators will see the value of a skills based curriculum in their middle and high school ESL courses. Along with the curriculum and instruction component, this study proved that teacher preparedness and teacher practice directly impacts student achievement with positive results. Another element that goes hand-in-hand with this idea is the necessity for teachers to forge relationships with students in a manner that extends the students’ experiences. Also, as motivation for success, the findings from this study should be shared with reluctant Latino learners in urban schools. South central Pennsylvania has a thriving and growing Latino population, so community organizations should be aware of the successes taking place in the classroom, especially in schools that have a high Latino population.

All six of the students interviewed said explicitly that they were not like their Latino counterparts, and the students discussed those differences and suggested that many of the other students did not have the support and motivation from family, friends, and teachers. Lastly, I think school districts that have had such success with their Latino students should celebrate. The community should hear about these student achievements and realize that the greater school community has an impact on the success of these students. Thus, the question becomes how can school administrators use this study to prepare teachers more effectively to reach ESL students who have not yet realized their potential as did those in this study?

Implications of Phenomenography and Socio-cultural Learning Theory

In the 1960s and 1970s phenomenography emerged as an educational research method in Sweden and then became popular in United States. This particular idea takes into account the students' experiences and the investigations that surround how the students grasp disciplinary concepts (Ashworth and Lucas, 2000). Also, many researchers believe that the designated phenomena effects how students experience, conceptualize, understand, perceive, and apprehend concepts differently. The findings in this study illustrate how students learn from various phenomena and how they are able to use their experiences as a springboard to other key events in their lives. Experiences such as poverty and lack of school resources allowed these students to learn from these situations, and this fostered their motivation and discipline.

Socio-cultural learning theory is an understanding of writing as a practice that has been influenced by Vygotsky (1978), Bahktin (1986), and Volosinov (1978). More recently researchers such as (Heath, 1983 and Dyson, 1984) have discussed this theory in conjunction with understanding writing as a process. Vygotsky (1978) asserted that learning is a social process which allows children to be immersed in a culture that, through various signs and people, allows them to acquire new knowledge and observe the change in culture. "From the very first days of a child's development, his activities acquire a meaning of their own in a system of social behavior, and being directed towards a definite purpose, are refracted through a prism of the child's environment" (Vygotsky, 1978: 30). Socio-cultural learning theory is important to this study because the six students that were interviewed and studied embody the elements of this theory. The six students gained knowledge and they were able to learn and work independently. With the help of friends, family, and teachers, these six students were able to grow and mature and also able to gain success beyond the walls of the ESL and IB English classroom.

It is my hope that this study will help guide curriculum decisions in ESL and also in the Language Arts curriculum. My study revealed that the students' engagement in learning was directly related to the material taught in their classes and the methods used to teach. For those more reluctant Latino students, school districts should seek out a reading and writing curriculum that actively engages all ESL students. Each student interviewed stated that their fellow students were not engaged because of the obstacles / barriers they faced.

Next, I think that the evaluation for ELL gifted students should be reformed. As mentioned in chapter 2, there is not an accurate method of identifying these students. While none of the six students were formally identified as gifted, they outperformed their counterparts in almost all aspects of the IB program. It is the aim of this research to provide evidence as to why other urban districts should seek out programs like the IB to reach all students but especially minority students. The IB program offers a global education that helps teach the cultures and customs of other people. The offerings of such a program of study allows for the educational community to expand and explore beyond the walls of the classroom and the streets of their city.

Finally, while I believe that pre-service teachers are being taught how to prepare and academically motivate ELLs for success, schools of education, in general, should become more familiar with ESL instruction and how effective instruction fosters success. The veteran ESL teachers featured in this study showcased their ability to work with this population, and they are examples of how ELLs can be successful. In urban education there are far too many minority students who fall by the wayside because they never truly engage the school experience – culturally or academically. It is my hope that all students will have experiences similar to the six students that I interviewed.

Implications for Practice:

Since I have been in the classroom for the past fourteen years, I have learned how to address some of the issues associated with reluctant Latino students. Prior to teaching in the IB program, I taught all regular English classes in which a large number of the students, according to my research, were not supposed to be successful. During this phase of my career, I learned to plan effectively and became more conscious of how to make my classroom student centered. I vividly remember differentiating my instruction for individual students and hoping that what I was doing would capture their interest and engage their minds; it was trial and error most of the time, but I knew I had to reach those students. In part, this is what the students remembered most about their experiences in their ESL classroom. I was the teacher who made every effort to reach his students and make sure the activities were engaging and meaningful; I was the teacher who used a guided note taking method; I was the teacher who allowed students to create a map and plan for how Odysseus was going to get back home. Today, I am the teacher who meets his students where they are so I can get them where they need to be. Effective classroom instruction is a practice that has lasting effects on students, particularly students who are early ELLs.

When I began teaching more advanced courses, my focus on teacher effectiveness did not change. I worked with a different caliber of student; however, I knew that I had to plan lessons that stretched their ability to think and understand. This started with text / novel selections. Knowing that most of my students were Latino, I knew that co-planning with our IB Spanish teacher would be a key. My students were pleased when we read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in IB English and Spanish. When reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in IB English and IB Spanish, my Latino students especially benefitted from the combined study. While they easily

discussed the fundamentals of literary criticism, they also tackled more difficult concepts such as why the major works should be translated across languages and cultures. Because I made the text available to all students, all students were absolutely engaged, and they learned, both individually and collectively, from this cross curricular / cross cultural exchange. We read other texts that also allowed students to extend their learning. I chose texts that related to students' experiences and texts that addressed social issues that affected their world. As mentioned in their narratives, they were challenged by certain texts; however, they like the challenge. Essentially, I forced students to become active learners in my classroom. They were asked to take ownership of their education. In essence, they knew I had a vested interest in their success, and like their parents and friends, they did not want to disappoint me.

My charge for novice English teachers is to choose texts that relate to their students' lives – texts that a myriad of students can relate to on individual and collective level. Schools are becoming more diverse; therefore, the language arts curriculum should follow suit. Certainly, there will be times when choosing relevant and relatable texts will be challenging; however, I contend that teachers must be able to evaluate their students and then choose specific texts that can maximize their engagement and learning. In my own experiences, I quickly learned the interests of my students and planned lessons that maximized that interest and actively engaged them in the highest possible order of thinking. Learning cannot always be fun, but it can always be effective and applicable on some personal level. From my perspective, engagement was always my first sign of success. Through the years, I have discovered that if students are interested, they will engage; if they engage, they will perform, and when they perform, they will be successful.

In this study, I discussed the success of first – generation Latino students and how these marginalized students found appropriate support systems to sustain their motivation and ambition to excel beyond their peers who lacked these same systems. It is my hope that this study will enhance the fields of teacher education, urban education, and teacher effectiveness. The students who were interviewed gave a global perspective on what it takes for first-generation language learners to become successful students in their college experience and professional lives; these students exemplified the above – average high school student. This study can become a guide for school administrators who recognize the challenges in the scope and sequence for planning an effective language arts curriculum that maximizes the potential for ESL students.

Further Research:

From the beginning of my study, I discovered there were several studies conducted in the fields of ESL instruction, Latino success in schools, teacher education / practice, and urban education. However, in all of studies, there were several elements missing, and my former students embodied those missing elements. The missing elements were: IB programs and the successes in urban schools, Latinos and gifted education, and teacher effectiveness in the ESL and English classrooms. In fourteen years of teaching in an urban school, these students routinely have been in my classes, yet, they are poorly represented on the global spectrum of success. Through my research, I concluded that while some Latinos have been successful, that success depends, in large part, on a combination of personal and outside motivation and discipline for them to achieve their goals.

From this study, I believe evidence proves that if adequate support systems are in place for marginalized students, more specifically Latinos, they can be successful. The students that I interviewed gave detailed accounts as to who provided support for them –parents, friends, and teachers. Their narratives were explicit; they wanted to express fully how and why they were successful. In part, they were eager to acknowledge the importance of their teachers and how crucial they were to their success. Also, students gave a detailed perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their classroom instruction, especially in their ESL classrooms.

From these testimonials, future researchers can explore the correlation between effective teacher practice in elementary and middle school ESL classrooms and success in IB English classrooms. It is my belief that if more school administrators examined more closely the scope and sequence of a K-12 language arts curriculum, all students, including those first – generation Latino students, would have the opportunity to reach their potential to take higher level English

classes; moreover, they would be prepared to meet this challenge. The students in my study were fortunate to have ESL teachers that supplemented / differentiated for the lack of scope and sequence in the curriculum. Regarding the IB curriculum, students had a more defined course of study that was linked to other disciplines within the IB program of study.

However, the question becomes how can students who do not have these support systems in place be successful? How can school districts implement a curriculum that takes best practices from the classroom and magnifies those practices for the rest of the faculty? Teacher professional development and training is the first step in reaching this goal. School administrators should carve out time in the school day for teachers to collaborate and to share best practice ideas. Next, is the responsibility of the family. How can school districts educate Latino families on how to actively participate in their child's academic life? One suggestion would be to establish a Parent Academy in each school with high Latino enrollments. The Parent Academy would address issues mentioned in this study, as well as others, based on parent need. Also having parents of successful Latino students share strategies and experiences with more reluctant Latino families would be a strong motivator for those who have had ineffective ELL experiences.

Appendix A Gelica:

Gelica and her family moved to the United States from the outskirts of San Juan, Puerto Rico when she was in the 8th grade. Both of her parents worked outside of the home, and they were able to provide a middle class living environment for Gelica and her sister, allowing them to spend time together as a family. Gelica commented that, “My parents made sure our family found time to discuss the happenings of our day.”

Her father was a merchant in town and her mother was a cashier in one of the local markets. Both of her parents were native Puerto Ricans and they loved it there; however, they knew that Gelica and her sister would excel academically if they relocated in the United States, so the process began. Gelica had an aunt who lived in Brooklyn, which provided their avenue out of Puerto Rico. They moved at the end of her 7th grade year.

After arriving in New York, her family soon realized that Brooklyn was too large for them since they were coming from a very small, rural town in Puerto Rico. Thus, they began to reach out to other family members. Gelica had an uncle who lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and offered his extended family lodging until they could become established in Lancaster. So, they packed up their belongings and headed south to Lancaster. When they arrived, Gelica’s parents made a point to enroll their children in school right away because this was in fact the main reason for their departure from Puerto Rico. Gelcia and her sister started their American educational journey at an urban middle school in Lancaster city. Below, I recapitulate Gelica’s account of three aspects of her experience: ESL classroom / interaction with literacy, family and their influence surround literacy, and motivation to success in IB English. Case descriptions for the other participants will follow the same format.

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

Gelica explained that she “loved school” as a youngster; she remarked, “I loved to read and write” but most importantly she “loved to color and loved to play and listen to music.” When I asked her about her first impressions of school, she shared that she loved the “reading circle” time and loved to sing. She shared an interesting experience that occurred in one of her reading circles. Gelica reported, “I remember vividly the first time we have to read aloud; I was so terrified I was actually shaking, but I knew I should give it a try. So, I did. My teacher was so supportive. When I stumbled over words or phrases she was there to help. I was really hoping that I would have this same experience in the United States.” Her elementary school in Puerto Rico consisted of very small classes with very few resources. Gelica commented that the books that her teachers read from were torn and tattered and sometimes falling apart. However, she said her teachers persevered and continued with their instruction.

After coming to the United States and eventually settling in Lancaster, she was placed in an ESL classroom. She reported that she did not care for this type of learning environment. She explained that the students in her class were not interested in learning English; instead, they were more concerned with misbehaving and causing havoc for the ESL teacher. Since Gelica knew this was not the place for her, she reported that she became very motivated to learn all of the English she could. She said that she would practice learning new vocabulary words every night because she knew that learning new words would help her to speak English more clearly. The most important aspect of her time in the ESL classroom was the chance to improve the quality of her writing; she said that in Puerto Rico writing was not encouraged, but it became a must in American schools.

I asked her to describe a specific memory from her ESL experience and she could only keep referring back to the patience of her teacher, and how she was always expecting more and

more from her. One example that she shared was how her teacher taught English grammar. I asked her to explain further; “My teacher, Mrs. Jones, would not just hand out worksheets; she used creative ways for us to remember and learn the material. She would make up jingles and raps about certain grammar rules. This really stuck with me. She was constantly practicing grammar with us. She would devote one [day?] a week to grammar.” Gelica also shared that her ESL teacher made a point to tell her often how proud she was of her and how motivated she was. Gelica explained that these encouragements were motivators for her the remainder of her middle and high school years. After the two 9 week marking periods, Gelica stated that she had learned enough English to be placed in a regular 8th grade Language Arts class. She reported that she was very happy with her new class and her new teachers.

Gelica’s time in 8th grade proved to be very crucial; she was in a much larger class and in a class where the teacher was not able to work with her one-on-one. When I asked how this affected her she said, “I knew this was just another obstacle I would have to overcome; I knew I would have to reach down in ‘mental backpack’ and keep striving for the best because I knew I was not going to be one of those kids that misbehaved in my ESL classroom.” I also asked Gelica to recall a memory or situation that occurred in her 8th grade Language Arts class. She did not hesitate at all. She said that her teacher instilled in her the importance of have a “working vocabulary.” Gelica continued to explain that her teacher required her students to use new vocabulary words in their writing. With 8th grade now over, it was time to select courses for next year and which track she would like to take: IB /Honors, Arts and Humanities, Health Sciences, Vocational / Technical, or Media Studies. Without hesitation, she, with the help of her parents and her guidance counselor, selected IB / Honors. Gelica stated that her English had definitely improved, but she was still extremely nervous entering the IB program.

During her time in high school, Gelica stated that she would excel beyond her expectations. While in high school, she was enrolled in all of the higher level honors courses, and her senior year, she committed to earn the IB diploma which is a course of study beyond the scope of the traditional high school diploma. When asked about her high school experience, she first discussed some of the obstacles that prohibited her academic success. Gelica thought for a few minutes and reported.

One of the main obstacles for me was how to balance all of the work that was thrown at me. I had to balance seven classes along with band and other clubs I was involved in, so this was very difficult. After school, I had to concentrate on homework some 4-5 hours a day; this was really difficult. However, as I continued in the IB program, I learned how to manage my time better. Regarding my reading and writing, I think by just sheer practice and having to learn how to communicate effectively allowed this to not be an obstacle. Again, like my ESL teacher and my 8th grade Language Arts teacher, they instilled in me the keys to success; they planted that seed that learning is what you make it.

Lastly, Gelica commented on her high school IB experience specifically. Gelica was a very good high school student; thus, Gelica reported on why she was so successful. She discussed the following:

Well, I listened; I took lots of notes, and most importantly, I read the books! I had wonderful junior and senior English teachers that took time to prepare me to not just pass the IB exam in the spring of my senior year but to also prepare me for college reading and writing. My teachers were such positive role models and gave

me such hope for the future. After I graduated from high school, I was even more thankful for their time they had invested in me.

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

While sharing her experience from school, Gelica was extremely vocal in giving praise to her teachers that she said helped her become successful. Along with the teachers, she reported that her parents were a huge influence in her life. Both of her parents had very limited English proficiency, but they were determined to help Gelica and her little sister to learn English. In fact, they were enrolled in ESL classes too. They were learning English together. Gelica explained that both of her parents read to her and her sister in English. She said both of her parents had very limited English skills.

Gelica stated that watching television was a huge factor in learning English. She said that at first the English words were difficult to understand, but she and her sister began to pay closer attention, and eventually, she was able to recognize some of the words and phrases. Gelica explained that her parents had the local paper delivered but no magazines or other periodicals. She reported that her parents thought it was important to have a “children’s library.” Her parents would often come home after a shopping trip with books for her and her sister. She reported that her dad would take time to read to her and later he would ask Gelica to practice and read the book(s) to him. Gelica also said that all of the printed material in the home was in English. Reflecting back, she said this was a great idea because it forced everyone in the house to “practice” their English. While reading was obviously important to her family, she was asked about the importance of writing. She said while in Puerto Rico both of parents would journal weekly, so writing was very important to them. Gelica commented that when they arrived in Lancaster her teachers made her write daily so she continued this at home. She said that she

enjoyed “journaling,” referencing the fact she knew this task was helping her improve her reading and writing skills. Her parents modeled this activity for her and when she got older, she continued the tradition her parents had started.

Lastly, Gelica commented on the importance or the expectation of going to college. There was no hesitation; Gelica referenced the notion by explaining.

The only question remained was where I was going to college not if I was going. They made it loud and clear that one of the main reasons for us leaving Puerto Rico was so I could get a better education. My dad was the vocal parent; he also stressed that the only way to become truly successful was to become educated. Regarding other family members that graduated from college, my dad’s youngest sister completed her Ph.D. in sociology about two years ago so she was very instrumental in helping choose colleges and also being that Latina role model. So, in the end, college was never a question for me; I knew I had to go and I knew that the expectation was for me to be just as successful as I was in middle and high schools.

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Gelica commented on her specific motivation in school. Gelica stated that an integral part of her success was the group of friends that she selected. Gelica reported that there is a lot of social pressure. If students are on the IB / Honors team, then they are expected do well in their classes, and thus, in order to “fit in” socially, she needed to be successful. However, she was already motivated and was dedicated to earning success. Gelica also stated that she had to sustain that motivation and had to be able to excel at a different level. She did, however, have a GREAT group of friends of various ethnicities. She discovered that she and her friends were able

to lean on one another when the workload seemed unbearable. She remembered that they would often take turns studying at each other's houses, and they never made plans to do anything until their homework / projects were completed. Regarding being in honors classes, there were not that many Latino (a) students in her classes, but that had been the case since 8th grade; consequently, Gelica had to "surround [herself] with other kids that had the same goals that [she] had."

Finally, Gelica discussed how she measured up against her fellow Latinos (as) in her school. Since her high school was predominately Latino (a), Gelica discussed her role as a Latina student in high school. There were no hesitations. Gelica reported.

I am unlike the majority. Many of fellow Latino (a) students are not in honors classes and they are not concerned with earning an education. They feel that starting a family at such a young age is more important and that getting a job after high school is the best option; it is almost like it's the 'I need to work now' mentality. It's disheartening in that they do not see the value of an education. These were the kids that misbehaved in my ESL class in middle school; these were the kids that did not take their schoolwork seriously. I am sad for them.

Gelica then reported that her parents and her social group instilled in her the importance of reading and writing; consequently, this turned into a love for learning. She said that she is thankful that she took their advice and worked hard. One final comment from Gelica was she wished more of my Latino (a) friends were able to have her family and friends; they would have seen the same path she did.

As the interview concluded, Gelica was glad that I included her in my study; she said the questions really made her think of her past and about the people that were instrumental in her

growth as a student and as a human being. Gelica has just completed her first year of college at Millersville University and earned a 3.8 GPA. She also concluded with, “If I could go back and change anything about my education, I have to say that there is nothing at all I would change; life happened and it was great!”

Appendix B Tasha:

Tasha and her family moved from a small mountain town in the hills of Puerto Rico. Both of her parents were blue collar workers; her dad worked various construction jobs while her mother worked in a local restaurant. Both of her parents were native to Puerto Rico but had visited family in the Philadelphia area for many years. While they loved Puerto Rico, they knew that the only way Tasha would be successful would be for them to move to the United States. Her parents always talked of moving to the United States because they knew that the schools, especially the university system in Puerto Rico, would not be the best place for Tasha to study. Therefore, they made plans to uproot their family for the United States. At first Tasha was not responsive to this move; however, after talking it over with other people in her community, she thought the best idea was to leave her native Puerto Rico and start over in United States.

They first settled in Philadelphia but soon realized that this was not the place either as neither parent could find a job. Thus, a church in Lancaster sponsored them so they could move to Lancaster city. With the sponsorship, the church would ensure that the family would receive some English instruction, which was provided at the local city high school. Both parents could not speak English and Tasha had been exposed to English for only a short time in Puerto Rico. Tasha had just completed grade 4, so she would definitely need to be placed in an ESL classroom upon arriving in Lancaster.

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

Once Tasha and her parents arrived in Lancaster, she reported that she was thrilled she would be taking some English classes because she would finally be able to “interact with other kids that did not speak only Spanish.” Tasha commented that she was very excited to be in a new school, and she was ready for a new beginning. Lancaster city was much different than her

Puerto Rican mountain town. Lancaster has a bustling, thriving downtown, which also excited Tasha. When asked about her first experiences in American schools, she said:

It was much different than what I had known previously. In Puerto Rico my teacher had very limited supplies and all of the students had to share our books; we never got to take our books home that made me sad because I wanted to learn as much as I could. In my school in Puerto Rico, I loved my teachers. They were so caring and so compassionate; they wanted the best for us, and when I arrived to my elementary school in Lancaster, I received that same treatment. Again, my teachers wanted the best for me.

Tasha continued talking about how much her teachers in Lancaster were responsible for her success in middle and high school.

Since Tasha's city district is roughly 56% Latino (a), there were several ESL classes offered to students like Tasha. Tasha reported that her experience in the ESL classroom was extremely meaningful and beneficial. Tasha explained,

My ESL classroom was awesome; there were English words on everything: the door, the windows, the desk; you name it, and my teacher had it labeled. There were only Spanish speaking students in my classroom so it was easy for me to slip back into speaking Spanish; however, I know that would be counterproductive.

The purpose of the class was to LEARN ENGLISH! I only was in the ESL classroom setting for a year (5th grade) and when I went to middle school in grade 6, I was placed into a regular 6th grade Language Arts class; now that is a different story (will get into this later in the interview).

After rehashing her 5th grade ESL experience, the next series of questions focused on Tasha's initial impressions of reading and writing and those who were influential in teaching her to read and write in English. Tasha attributed her love of reading and writing to her father, specifically. After completing a series of English classes at the local city high school, her father was able to read and communicate in English quite effectively. Tasha referenced that her father would read to her every night; she commented:

He would struggle to pronounce a word, and he would ask if he was pronouncing the word correctly. We would chuckle, and he would continue reading. After I got a better handle of on the English language, I yearned to read everything I got my hands on. My parents always had books and magazines in the house and they were all in English. Another key component that helped my learn English was watching television. I was able to pick out the words that I had learned in school.

Tasha also referenced the teachers that had an impact on her American educational experience. Tasha was eager to do this because she had commented earlier that her 6th grade Language Arts teacher made a huge impression on her; Tasha commented that, "... she (her teacher) just got it." She mentioned earlier that her ESL teacher was fantastic in that she fostered the love for learning vocabulary and the importance of communication. Tasha then reflected on her 6th grade teacher in the areas of motivation and expectations. The conversations turned into what specifically did Tasha learn from Mrs. Jones in 6th grade and how did she prepare her for the honors track for grades 7 and 8?" Tasha's answer was quite interesting.

Well, I was deathly afraid of Mrs. Jones. Her reputation was that she was a 'no nonsense' kind of teacher. I was okay with that; however, I was afraid if I messed up on English she would yell at me and think I was stupid or dumb. So I walked a

chalk line in her class. After the first couple of weeks, I figured her out. If I did all of my work to the best of my ability and if I went to her for help, she was fine. She knew my English was a work in progress but she still expected me to perform, and I did! Getting papers back with a smiley face or a ‘good job’ was the best because I knew I had done a good job. She pushed me to take honors class the next two years; she always encouraged me and said that ‘working hard is just part of earning an education.’ I used this motto; I remembered this each time I struggled with anything. Mrs. Jones was just what I needed after being placed out of ESL.

Tasha reported that she completed middle school with success; she excelled in her honors classes and was ready to reach high school; the “big house” as students called it. Keeping in line with her past, she enrolled in all IB / honors classes. Again, she was apprehensive, but she knew she could do it; she kept Mrs. Jones’s motto in the back of her mind.

Tasha explained that her classes at the high school were geared towards earning the IB diploma which meant her workload in middle school would be very light compared to her work at the “big house.” Tasha discussed the academic challenges she experienced in high school, and she also described her experience in IB English during both her junior and senior years. Tasha thought for a few seconds and explained that:

My challenges were time management; how was I going to earn good grades and keep up with all of this work? Well, I started taking advantage of any down time I had during the day. I would utilize my lunch period to work in the library and definitely would use any available class time to do homework. But, as I learned in the IB program, I learned how to prioritize my homework, which has been a

huge life lesson for my college experience. In regards to IB English, my junior and senior English teachers followed closely behind my 6th grade teacher, Mrs. Jones. I learned how to read critically and specifically, I learned how to respond to extremely difficult writing prompts. My IB Spanish teacher was also instrumental in my reading and writing in English. She strengthened my grammar skills, which in turn translated into my success in IB English. I loved the books we read, especially the works of William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* My high school English experience was absolutely one of the best learning experiences of my life because I felt confident in my abilities; I knew I had the skills to be successful.

Tasha concluded this section of the interview raving about her high school experience. Tasha said she believes that her success in college is a direct reflection on how well she was prepared by high school and, in particular, the IB program.

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

As mentioned before, Tasha and her parents were exposed to English when they first arrived in Lancaster. Tasha explained that her father is a “quick learner” so he was able to grasp the language. Her mother, on the other hand, had a more difficult time with learning English. Thus, her father was able to communicate with Tasha and help with some of her homework. Tasha then commented on her exposure to literacy in the home. Tasha explained that reading material was in the home, including printed media (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.). Tasha responded to the “exposure to literacy question first.” Tasha hesitated and then said,

My father, specifically, required me to read at home; I had to make sure I had a book to read at all times. When I was in Puerto Rico, I was expected to do that same. He thought that reading is the center of learning so that meant I had to abide by that rule. When we moved to Lancaster and when I had learned enough English to begin reading, all of the books and magazines were in English. So, reading was very important in my house growing up.

Tasha then transitioned to the importance of writing in her house. She said, “Reading and writing went hand-in-hand. My father asked that I journal each week; he also thought that reading and writing was very important for my success in the present and the future. Therefore, I kept a journal; I did not like writing that much then (as a middle school student); however, once I reached high school, the love for writing increased, especially [during] my junior and senior years.”

Finally, Tasha reflected back on her earliest memories of going to college. Tasha responded,

There was never a doubt about going to college; that is really the main the reason we moved from Puerto Rico to the US. My parents always instilled in me that the only way to survive, not necessarily financially, is becoming educated. They believed that living a meaningful life meant going to college and doing something with your life. So, from the time I was a child, I knew that obtaining a college degree was a non-negotiable idea. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school and would be the first college graduate on either side of my family. This is also a huge motivator for me; everyone wants to see me excel and represent our family.

Tasha was passionate about this series of questions in that she felt that “my parents have been huge supporter of me.” She also knows that her success would not be possible without the support from her parents and teachers.

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Like Gelica, Tasha always had her eye on what was important to her; she always knew that being successful was just part of the way to a successful life. I asked her to address the following topics regarding motivation: what were some factors that motivated you to become a good reader and writer? Were you motivated by your classmates? And lastly, how are you like or unlike other Latino (a) students in your school?

Tasha stated, “What motivated me in my early life was the ‘I want to know’ element. I was always inquisitive.”

I always wanted to know the answers to certain questions. So that transferred into my schoolwork. When I was in my ESL class in 5th grade, I knew that if I kept reading and writing I would be able to teach my father and he would be able to better his English skills. Once I reached high school, I knew that my reading and writing was on par with my classmates; that was such a good feeling for me because I had worked so hard on my English.

Next, I asked Tasha about “being motivated by [her] classmates.” Tasha said,

Being in honors classes requires you to lean on your classmates; I was able to form friendships with people that shared my same motivation; that shared the element of being successful in school. Therefore, my school friends were also a crucial part to my success in school. They kept me grounded and served as role models. Another interesting aspect of being in honors classes is the whole ‘social

image' thing. I definitely did not want to earn a poor grade because that meant I looked dumb in front of my friends; this was unacceptable in our circle of friends.

Finally, Tasha was asked to compare herself with others in her ethnic group. As stated earlier, her school was approximately 56% Latino (a) and not all of this population was enrolled in honors classes. Tasha responded, saying

Many of my Latino (a) counterparts were more concerned with acting out in class and not taking your education seriously. I remember in my gym class in 9th grade I was on the only Latina girl that participated regularly. If students were dressed for gym they got an A for the day; so the only thing you had to do was simply change into gym clothing. They would not do that; instead, they sat on the bleachers and earned an F. Quite often I was asked why I was 'acting white,' and responded with, 'I am just trying to do what is best for me.' Always many of the Latinas at my school were teenage mothers so studying for a biology exam was not at the top of their list. When I mentioned situations like this to my father, he would always say that those kids did not have the proper focus at home. I have to agree. Many of the Latino (a) s at my high school was not ones that wanted to be successful.

Tasha was asked if she had any closing statements or if she wanted to elaborate on something she mentioned earlier. She reiterated that had if she not had "supportive parents," she might have turned out like many of the Latinas in her school; therefore, she referenced how important her parents and friends were to her.

Tasha is currently in her second year at Millersville University, and she plans to major in biology. She has consistently earned spots on the honor roll and has a cumulative GPA of 3.9. Once she graduates, she plans to pursue graduate school in the field of bio-medical research.

Appendix C Carmen:

Carmen's story is a bit different than Gelica and Tasha's stories. Carmen never knew her biological father; she and her four siblings were raised by a single mother who worked sometimes two or three jobs to make ends meet. Carmen spent the first nine years of her life in a small village in the Dominican Republic where everything was scarce. Shortly after Carmen's youngest sister was born, her mother met and married a man. Carmen's new stepfather – "Papi" – turned out to be the father she never had. However, much of Carmen's life was spent in a single family home. Carmen commented that she "cherished Papi" and referenced that she knew he loved her and her other siblings as his own children. When Carmen was in the Dominican Republic, she learned how to survive in her small, remote village. Carmen had to care for her younger brothers and sisters while her mother worked.

It wasn't until Carmen's stepfather realized that his "children" were never going to excel if they did not move to the United States that things began to change. So, their journey began; they lived in a predominately Spanish neighborhood in the Bronx. There, her school was mostly composed of Spanish speakers as well. However, she had to learn English, and she knew this. In fifth grade, she was enrolled in her first ESL class; she reported that she did not like the class at all; frequently, she cried and did not want to go to school. Her class, much like Gelica's ESL class, was composed largely of students who had behavioral issues, so not much instruction took place. But that did not stop Carmen. She took the initiative to learn English on her own by reading and watching television.

While she thought the Bronx was going to be her home, her stepfather thought that New York City was too big for his family; he wanted to settle in a much smaller urban environment. He contacted a relative in Lancaster and asked for advice. Soon after his conversation with his

relative, they made plans to move to Lancaster at the end of Carmen's school year. Once in Lancaster, she was placed in ESL classroom and her learning experience, as Carmen referenced, was changed because of her teacher and the bond that formed between them. Next, Carmen referenced her experiences with literacy and how she was able to be successful in school.

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

As mentioned before, Carmen did not have a very pleasant experience in the Bronx. She was asked to reflect on her first years of school in the Dominican Republic and compare that to her experience in the Bronx. Carmen responded,

I think the school system in my country was extremely backwards as compared to the United States. In my school, we were all placed in one room; well, I mean kindergarten through grade six was in one room with one teacher. So, this meant that the teacher was pulled in all different directions. I did not get any individual attention there. I had to basically take what I given and do the best I could. Compared to my experience in the Bronx the schools in my country did not have any resources such as books, paper, pencils, crayons, etc. At least in New York I did have my own workbooks and I was able to take my books home to read and study. However, the one thing that makes my experience in the Bronx so bad was the way the kids behaved; they would throw things at the teacher and never get disciplined for their actions. But this was still better than the Dominican Republic.

As Carmen explained, her experience in New York was not very good; however, as she mentioned, it was better than the option of remaining in her home country. She referenced the fact that in her home country there were no resources and at least in the United States, but kids had more hands-on materials.

Carmen was very excited to talk about her ESL and other school experiences in Lancaster city. She was asked to reflect on her first ESL classroom in Lancaster – was it good, bad? Carmen said,

When I first arrived in Lancaster, I thought, ‘oh no, not another American school?’ I had all of the memories of my school in the Bronx stuck in my mind. However, my mind was changed; my first ESL teacher in Lancaster was awesome. She made me feel welcome right away and she was also bilingual. I remember distinctly that she had her entire classroom labeled with English words and phrases. For example, she had ‘Mrs. Watson, may I use the bathroom?’ This was so helpful for me because during my time in the Bronx I was able to communicate very little. Our relationship began to grow. So my ESL experience in Lancaster was completely different than in the Bronx. Mrs. Watson’s class was very small and there were other Spanish speakers in the class too. I was only in Mrs. Watson’s class for one year; I was sad to leave her but I knew I had to because I was going into the middle school.

After finishing 5th grade on such a strong note, it was time to enter yet another learning environment in middle school. According to Carmen, middle school was much different from her small, structured elementary classroom. Carmen, again, referenced her anxiety about going to another school and having to encounter other teachers; she commented that she was especially nervous because Mrs. Watson had exited Carmen from the ESL program and she would now be in all regular education classes. Carmen reported that she was “scared and really afraid of everything.”

After Carmen shared this information, she reflected back on her middle school experience. She addressed the following: who helped you in middle school (i.e. was there a Mrs. Watson?); how prepared she felt to tackle the challenges of middle school class work all in English. Carmen responded quickly by saying,

I was determined to be successful ... Yes, middle school was so intimidating. All of my classes were in English and this was stressful for me. However, I did have access to an ESL teacher if I needed it. My favorite class, surprisingly, was Language Arts / Reading. All of my teachers, from grades 6-8, were fantastic. There were several ELL students in the classroom and each teacher made accommodations for us. For example, there were word banks for us to use when taking a vocabulary test and we could choose to do a project as opposed to an extended writing assignment. This increased my love for reading and writing because it was manageable for me. This type of assessment was only in 6th grade and looking back that was the push I needed because I entered the honors program in 7th grade. Regarding being prepared, I go back to Mrs. Watson's class in 5th grade; she instilled so many good study habits in me that I was able to take them forward to middle school and forever. So, my best teachers in middle school were my Language Arts teachers and that also transcended to high school because I loved my English classes and my Spanish classes.

Transitioning to high school, Carmen explained that she experienced much less anxiety than when she entered middle school. She said that she had "consistency on her side now," as she had been with some of the same students since 5th grade. However, she mentioned that she was going to be challenged even more because she had chosen the IB / Honors team, meaning

that her workload would definitely increase. Carmen was reluctant to choose this team, but she knew, in the back of her mind, that this was why her family had decided to make the move to the United States – to get a quality education and eventually go on to college.

My series of questions addressed the following topics: what were your academic challenges in the IB program?; how would you describe your experiences in IB English in both you junior and senior years?; and what would you contribute to your success in IB English?

My challenges in the IB program were how to manage to get all of this work completed? I wanted to play sports but I knew that academics came first, so what is the solution? So, I started to prioritize my ‘to do list.’ I made lists after lists; I worked during my lunch period and took advantage of all my down time during the school day – that was very difficult for me. So, I guess my real challenge was how utilize my time wisely. Fortunately, this is a skill I am still using today.

Regarding IB English, those two classes were so difficult, not because of the language but because of the expectations of the teachers. I felt the most confidence about my English skills; however, I was still struggling with making time for the reading requirements. But, in the end, like my middle school teachers, my IB English teachers forced me to analyze and delve into literature. They forced me to push myself because they knew I was headed to college and they wanted to prepare all of us for what lay ahead. My success in IB English was due to the support of so many people at school. My teachers were willing to stay after school to help me edit a paper or they could meet me at school prior to school starting. I could not have excelled in IB English or in school had it not been for my supportive and caring teachers.

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

As Carmen explained, her parents did not speak English at home and they barely spoke English outside of the home. They only communicated with people in English at their places of employment. Thus, Carmen mentioned that she only spoke “English at school” and “only spoke Spanish at home.” When she first started learning English, she would not have anyone to talk with at home so she had to utilize books and had to watch television. Carmen addressed literacy at home and how this environment hindered her learning experiences, saying,

The only reading that occurred at home was when I bought home books from school to read. My parents were not readers even when we lived in the Dominican Republic. So, I was the only person that read. In regards to writing, I did not do any at home unless it was for my homework. I was not a ‘journaling person.’ It was not that I hated to write; it’s just I never took an interest in doing so. The only printed media in our house was in Spanish with the exception of the Lancaster newspaper and the only reason we got that was so my stepfather could keep his pulse on the jobs that were available. When I first started learning English, it was really tough for me to practice my speaking skills. I could talk to my little sister but I wanted to talk to kids my own age. When I was at school, I learned to talk to my friends A LOT, so I would be able to practice my English.

The next set of questions for Carmen addressed going to college and the expectations of her parents. As mentioned earlier, her parents moved to the United States for a better life particularly, for their children; they knew that the only way for them to be successful was to move. Carmen discussed the topic of attending college and the support system that was in place for her. Carmen explained,

I was the first person in my family to graduate from high school, so that meant that I would be the first person in my family to graduate from college. College was always in the picture; there was never a doubt in my mind and I was always encouraged by parents. Regarding advice from other family members after we left the Dominican Republic, we lost contact with both sides of our families. My stepfather thought it would be best for us to start over in the United States; so no, I did not get any other advice from family. But what I did get was wonderful advice from teachers and my guidance counselor. I was always encouraged and always made to feel that I was the only person in world to go to college; it was the epitome of individualized attention.

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Carmen frequently referenced her motivation to excel; she explained that it was established in her ESL classroom in the Bronx when she was only nine years old. Carmen discussed how she could have easily “given up on learning and on English while in the Bronx.” She knew she was not like the other students in her class; she knew that she was going to be successful, because as she mentioned, “I was not going to let my parents down.” Therefore, Carmen explained that, for her, being a “really good reader and writer” was the key to going to college. Carmen reported that she was not going to “end up” like the other students in her first ESL class; in fact, Carmen said that she believed she was going to prove to those people and to herself that she had “what it took to be successful.” Carmen explained,

I was always motivated by the fact of not disappointing my family because I knew they changed their lives for me and my siblings. From an early age, I knew that being educated and earning a good wage was always important. When I was a kid,

we were extremely poor. We never had any food left after meals and we were instructed to take only one serving – nothing more. As I got older, I knew that one of the ways to combat this cycle was to earn a college education and make a decent wage. I also realized the key to all of this was being able to be a good reader and writer; essentially, being a clear communicator either written or oral is the key to success. I also learned that being disciplined and having a good work ethic were definite keys to success so I tried my best to follow those road maps. Was I motivated by classmates...? Yes, I was, in a big way actually. I had a core group of friends that shared everything together. We formed our own homework club and really leaned on [one] another. It seemed that we were all involved in the same activities so that made it easy to form study sessions. So, I learned so much from them and learned how to accept the positives and negatives associated with high school.

Regarding Latino (a) successes in school, Carmen had some interesting points to make, including detailing what disappoints her most when it comes to Latinos (as) in an education.

I was definitely not like my other Latino (a) classmates. Even back in middle school, they did not take school seriously; they had much rather join a gang or participate in premature sexual activity. Many of my classmates were disenchanted with learning and with doing the right thing. I was often taken back by just how they would ‘blow off’ homework and how they were content with just earning a D to pass. I would often share with my parents how this concerned me, and my stepfather would reassure me that these students did not have the support systems in place like me. When I reached high school, the Latino (a) students

were even more disenfranchised with learning. Thus, I gravitated to students that were like me. I knew that I could never 'act' like those students. Needless to say, I was one of the atypical Latinas in my school, and quite frankly, I was fine with that.

As the interview was concluding, I asked Carmen if she wanted to share anything regarding her literacy experience in the United States. She said that she hopes more Latinos (as) take advantage of the opportunities they are given and that they start to realize that life is more than gang life and being a teenage parent. Carmen is currently a junior at a major research institution in Pennsylvania where she has earned a 3.89 GPA and plans to major in Agricultural Engineering with a minor in Spanish.

Appendix D Angela:

Angela and her family (her mother) were some of the poorest people in a small, rural town in Cuba. Angela's father deserted her family when she was just an infant, leaving her mother with the job of supporting the family. At times, she worked two or sometimes three jobs. Angela described her hometown as very small; the school she attended was likewise tiny. There was very little work for her mother; she was an extremely good seamstress, but there was only so much of that kind of work. When Angela was older, she tried her best to help her mother earn money; she helped neighbors garden, and worked as a babysitter for another family. Angela knew her mother could not continue down this path.

This life in Cuba continued until Angela was in 7th grade. Her mother had made contact with a church in Lancaster that was willing to move and support Angela and her mother in the US. Angela knew this was going to be a lengthy process; however, she knew she wanted out of this impoverished environment and the only way out was to move to a place where she and her mother would have a chance at a better life. Angela's mother, on the other hand, wanted to move so Angela would be able to take advantage of the educational system in the US. Her mother knew that the educational system in Cuba was not going to prepare Angela for college or for a good paying job, so she decided to take advantage of the church's offer.

The move was going to be extremely difficult because all of their family was in Cuba. One of the most daunting obstacles was that they were going to have to learn English. Angela and her mother had never had any training in the English language; however, that did not stop them from moving to Lancaster. Angela reflected on her educational experiences in Cuba, describing how horrible they were: "the classrooms were overcrowded and my school did not have resources (no books, pencils, paper, etc.); my classmates were not concerned with learning

so that made the classroom setting unbearable for me.” Angela was unable to have one-on-one attention with the teacher because the teacher was constantly distracted with the task of calming down the remainder of the class. Angela, again, reiterated how “unbearable this was for her and how horrible for me.” She felt as if education was not for her, so she wanted to focus on getting a job and helping her mother with the responsibilities at home. Her mother, however, did not agree with this decision. She was constantly encouraging Angela to learn more so she could escape this life; so she and, one day, her family could have a better life her. Thus off to Lancaster they went with no way to communicate with anyone in English. Still, Angela was determined to make the opportunity work.

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

When they arrived in Lancaster, the church was able to provide them a one-bedroom apartment in the city. They also made some connections with the Latino community in hopes that Angela’s mother would be able to find employment as a seamstress. As for Angela, she was now in 8th grade; she was enrolled at one of the city middle schools. As Angela explained, “I already had a negative view of education in my mind; I was very apprehensive about the educational system in Lancaster.” She was first introduced to her ESL teacher who spoke no Spanish. How would Angela survive in this class? How would she be able to communicate with the teacher and others? These two questions were quickly answered. Much like Tasha and Gelica’s ESL experience, Angela’s teacher had everything in the room labeled in both Spanish and English. Her teacher also had several common phrases listed on a bulletin board so each student could ask her certain questions. Angela immediately thought how “wonderful.” Angela soon found out that learning English was not going to be “that bad.”

Angel reflected on her educational experiences both in Cuba and in her ESL class in Lancaster. Angela first addressed her time in Cuba.

School in Cuba was extremely different than in Lancaster. My teachers could not handle the kids in the classes; kids were uncontrollable to a point that the teacher would lock them out of the class. Our resources were non-existent. We had to share all of the books, which meant we were not allowed to take any of them home, so we were forced to do all of our work there in that crazy environment. Essentially, I was turned off with school; I was constantly frustrated with the system. However, I did not let my poor attitude affect my willingness to learn. Once I arrived in Lancaster, I was shocked at how much the schools were different. In Lancaster, I had workbooks I could take home; I had other reading materials that I could take home and read; it was wonderful. Also, my ESL teacher was truly wonderful. There were only eight students in my class and we all were all Spanish speakers. But, Mrs. Smith limited our communication in Spanish. She labeled the entire classroom with Spanish words translated to English. This was a huge help for me because I am visual learner and if I saw the words, I was more likely to remember them. She would also require us to learn ten new words a day, so we had to make note cards with the word and the definition all in English. This was a huge help. I soon realized that I would not be with Mrs. Smith next year as I going over to the high school. Once I got to the high school, my ESL teacher was just as wonderful as Mrs. Smith. Mr. Yoder really pushed me; he knew I had the potential to go to college. While in 9th grade, I was with Mr. Yoder three of the eight periods each day. This meant that I was in

regular classes with different students. I loved it; I thrived! As my 9th grade year passed, I then asked to join the IB / Honors team next year. I thought.... Really? Can I do this type of work? Well, I did, and it was the best decision of my life.

Angela was also eager to discuss how influential her ESL experience and how Mrs. Smith's energy and motivation helped her excel. She referenced how important her 7th grade year was to her language learning experience.

Yes, I was proficient in English. I worked really hard from 8th grade to the beginning of my 10th grade year. I would stay after school and study / talk with Mrs. Smith and Mr. Yoder. When I was Cuba, I hated school, but when I moved to Lancaster, my love for learning, especially reading and writing, really increased. What were some of my challenges? Well, definitely writing. I was a good reader and knew lots of vocabulary; however, my writing was not as good as the remainder of my classmates. I expressed this to my English teachers and they were more than helpful. My 10th and 11th grade English, Mrs. Green, gave me extended time to finish my essays; she also would help me with each part of the paper. For example, she could help write a solid introduction then she would have me write the body paragraph then we could conference. This was 10th grade. By the time I reached 11th grade, my writing had really improved because of the time I spent with Mrs. Green and also the time I spent writing at home. Another major challenge for me was how to balance schoolwork / homework with extracurricular activities. I played soccer in Cuba and wanted to continue playing in Lancaster, but I just did not know how to do this. It took time but I devised a time management plan that allowed me to fit soccer into my schedule.

Angela went on to reflect how she achieved success in IB level courses, and why she reached for that success,

I think doing well in my IB classes in general was due to hard work I had put into my studies. Specifically, [in] IB I did well because my teachers practiced critically reading and writing with me and my classmates. Junior and senior teachers always made us think critically about the books we read, and their tests and exams were just that; we had to answer questions from a critical / analytical perspective. Also, I knew they were setting me up for college work, and I was right. My English teachers knew that we could complain about the work, but they also knew the hard work would pay off. I was extremely fortunate to have had those teachers in my life at that time.

Angela then referenced her experiences in Lancaster, reporting how they turned her mindset completely around. As she mentioned, early on she believed education was not for her due to the issues and complications that surrounded the school setting in Cuba; however, when she arrived in Lancaster, Angela explained, her “love for learning thrived. [She] wanted to continue to learn English and continue to keep learning.”

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

Angela’s only support system, beyond the walls of her school, was her mother. After they arrived in Lancaster, her mother was able to get a job as a seamstress and was very happy. However, she still could not speak English very well, so Angela decided she would teach her. Angela commented on reading and writing that occurred at home, and she also referenced the idea of attending college and how this would or would not be a possibility.

Yes, there was reading done at home. I would read books that I got from school and my mother would read the Spanish newspaper that was delivered to our apartment. As a matter of fact, I read almost every day. When I first started to read in English, I always wanted to learn new words and always wanted to know their definition, so yes, we read at home. In regards to writing, I would complete my homework and would work on papers for school but I did not do any type of journaling. My mother was much more of a reader than writer; she would write letters and send them back to Cuba but as far as journaling, she did not do that either. Going to college was never ‘not an option for me.’ In essence, this is why we came to Lancaster. My mother knew [that] by staying Cuba, I would not be exposed to a good education or a good job. She was also telling me that she did [not?] want me to end up like her. She was determined that I was going to go to college. I was the first person in my family to graduate from high school and I will be the first person in my family to graduate from college. When I graduated from high school, my mother was happy but she kept saying there is one more graduation; she meant my college commencement.

Angela reflected clearly that she is “I am thankful for my mother’s determination and drive.” She believes that her mother is the strongest woman in the world because of the adversity she has encountered. Angela concluded, “My mother would do anything physically possible for my success.”

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Angela’s first encounter with education was not very positive. “I was an outcast from the beginning simply because I could not communicate with my classmates; I hated it; I did not want

to continue.” However, once she moved, her motivation to excel emerged: “my love for learning changed.”

Angela then referenced how her total ESL experience culminated in taking AP and IB classes; she made it very clear that her “experiences were certainly up and down – most up.” Asked to think for a moment or two on these experiences, she responded, saying, “Wow, I could spend another half hour on these!” She went on,

My ESL experience in Lancaster changed my outlook not just on school or education but on life. Both Mrs. Smith and Mr. Yoder [were] so wonderful and most important, they were caring; they knew I had the potential to go to college but they knew I had to master the English language first. I think back on how they encouraged me to read and to write and how they would make me practice saying certain words. They changed me. In terms of motivation, I have to say my mother. She made the huge sacrifice to come to United States for me. She gave up all of her friends and family so that I could have a better life. In turn, I hope I can give back to her. Other things that motivated me were my friends, teachers, and coaches. I had a fantastic group of core friends that helped with my writing, especially. They would always offer to edit my papers and they were always willing to stay after school to help me. My friends in Lancaster were not like my friends in Cuba. Everyone I interacted with here had the same goal in mind and that was to earn good grades, graduate from high school, and do well in college. My Cuban friends did not have that mindset. Looking back, I am sorry for those kids. My work ethic, like my love for learning, changed when I arrived in

Lancaster. I started to own my work; I started to become engaged at school; consequently, I was able to excel. But again, I attribute this to my mother as well. She also reflected on her high school peers, particularly those also of Latino descent, Was I like or unlike other Latinos (as)? Definitely not! My Spanish speaking peers were much more concerned with other things and education was not on their list. I think there were two groups of Latinos (as): the ones that wanted to choose crime and gang life as an option [and] those who wanted to become teenage parents. Being successful in high school did not fit into either category. I was the odd ball in the crowd; I was always treated differently by these two groups of people. I did not know what to think of it until my mother said they were jealous; they wanted my success but did not want to work for it. As I think back to high school, so many of those kids could have done so well had they focused on their schoolwork. I hope someday my ethnic group comes to realize that success is not measured gang life or measured on how many kids a teenage mother can birth.

Much like the other young ladies, Angela's quest has taken a different journey. She repeatedly described her mother as her "rock" and as the foundation on which her motivation and work ethic were rooted. Angela is currently in her third year of college at a south central Pennsylvania university where she has earned a spot on the Dean's List each semester. She is actively involved in the Latino group and plans to study abroad in Cuba this year. Her plans are to finish her degree in biology and to attend medical school. She also expressed an interest in giving back to those students like her; she knows that had it not been for the support from her teachers in her city school district, she would not be at this place in her life. As the interview concluded, she praised her Lancaster educational experience.

Appendix E Alex:

Alex, his three brothers, and his parents all came to Lancaster from Mexico City, Mexico. Both of Alex's parents were middle class Mexicans. His father was a manager at one of the local restaurants and his mother was a law secretary or paralegal. Both of his parents earned a fairly decent wage, but they were not satisfied with life in Mexico. They were particularly worried about the influence of drugs on their community, and they knew they did not want their boys to be exposed to or to take part in this activity. Alex's father had relatives that lived in the greater Philadelphia area so he knew a little about the United States. After Alex had finished the 8th grade, his parents made a decision to move to Pennsylvania. They were reluctant to move near Philadelphia because they did not want to move that close to such a big city; in fact, this is what they did not like about Mexico City. Alex's father had a distant relative that lived in Lancaster and, after discussing it with his wife, they collectively decided that Lancaster would be the best place for their family and, most importantly, the best place for their kids to receive an education. It was settled; they planned to move after Alex's 8th grade year.

Prior to coming to Lancaster, Alex did not speak English. His only educational experience was in Spanish. Alex explained, "I was worried about coming to the United States; I was anxious because in Mexico City I was at the top of my class." He explained that he earned perfect scores on all of his work. However, this would not be the same in Lancaster simply because he did not know the language. After they made the big move, Alex was enrolled in the city high school in Lancaster. He was also placed in all ESL classes from beginning English to beginning Social Studies. Alex explained that he "mustered up the strength and determination to learn English and to also earn a dual IB diploma in both English and Spanish." Alex responded to a series of questions much like those answered by Gelica, Tasha, Carmen, and Angela. They

were broken into three categories, each addressing different aspects of the ESL, literacy, and IB English experiences.

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

Alex explained that when he and his family first arrived in Lancaster, he knew he was at an automatic disadvantage because of the language barrier. As he explained, “Everywhere I went in Lancaster I had to communicate in English; I thought that since there were many Latinos in Lancaster that I would not have such a difficult time finding people to talk to, but I did.” Alex explained that this was a very “difficult adjustment to make.” He had always been the top performer in his school, yet now he knew he would not maintain that position. After enrolling in school, Alex was tested and placed in the Developing ESL class.

At first, I had Alex reflect on his impressions of school in Mexico City:

My experiences in Mexico City were great. I had wonderful teachers and learned so much. Well, I learned everything but English (with a smile). My teachers were extremely caring and would do anything for their students. So when I overheard my parents discussing the idea of moving, I was heartbroken. I loved my school; I loved my friends. I thought, ‘how could they do this to me (and my brothers)?’ By the time my 7th grade year was over, I realized that staying in Mexico City was not an option. I remember very well some of the things we did in school. We would go out in the forest and observe animal behaviors; we would perform plays in our classroom with costumes, props, and everything – just like on stage. I remember thinking ‘I am really going to miss this...’. But I knew, deep down in my heart, why we were moving. It was because of the drugs and the gangs.

He then explained his feelings about his first experiences in an ESL classroom in Lancaster. He also provided thoughts on his earliest impressions of reading in English:

Then our move to Lancaster; of course, I was afraid; and of course, I was nervous but that soon left me. I realized I had to make the best of this situation because my [parents] thought it was best we move I should respect that. My first ESL class was great; my teachers were great; I was shocked! I [was] placed in a class with other ESL students not all Spanish. There were Russian students, Chinese students, and Haitian students; it was a very diverse group. We were all at or around the same developing level. My teacher would work with each of us individually while other students worked on their assignments. I had never had this type of attention before, not even in Mexico City. We were given 'reading and writing' workbooks that we would write in and take home. This was our study guide; we were told to read and practice English words and definitions at home; I did this every night. I also made flash cards so I could learn even more words. By the end of the first semester, I had already skipped two levels in the workbook series and was able to move ahead to more difficult work. My teachers were amazed that I could do this so fast, but I told them I studied and read at home for some 5-6 hours. I wanted to know these words, and I wanted to make sure that I was only in ESL for one year?

After discussing his experience in the ESL classroom, Alex then referenced his experience with writing. He responded,

Writing was kind of a different story. I practiced my writing but I was not as sure of myself as I was with reading. One of my first memories of writing was when

my teacher, Mr. Brown, asked us to do a ‘word splash.’ A word splash is a writing activity using a specific set of vocabulary words to create a story; in other words, practicing using the words in context. For example, the prompt may be ‘Rewrite the end *Of Mice and Men* and use at least 8 of this week’s vocabulary in your story.’ I thought this was fun; I was able to be creative yet still using the vocabulary words we had just learned. All in all, I learned so much from my one year in ESL; I have to say my teachers were the most important aspect of that experience. They made sure I / we learned English and they were there to help us in any way.

After Alex’s 8th grade year and his second year in an ESL class, he was placed on the IB / Honors team; he was ready for the challenge of taking honors classes. Alex explained, “I was a little nervous about reading and writing, but I knew that if he had any issues my ESL support teacher, Mr. Brown, would be there to help me.” ESL was a huge safety net for him, and he commented on why this was important, saying, “I knew that my ESL teachers would be there to support, but most importantly they knew me and [my] work, my motivation. They knew I wanted to succeed; they knew that I wanted to go to college and become a doctor. This really meant a lot to me.”

Alex’s experiences in honor classes and in the IB program, specifically English, were “extremely intense and extremely challenging.” Alex addressed how the district met his needs as an ELL. He also discussed how and why he was successful in IB English and what, if any, academic challenges he experienced in the IB program.

My first ESL class was amazing; my teacher used different methods for me to learn the English words. He had words displayed on several ‘word walls’

throughout the classroom. Each word wall had its own theme. For example, one of the walls would be about the particular holiday that was occurring during that particular month. This meant that I would learn the words mostly associated with that holiday. Later in the school year, we also read graphic novels. This was very difficult at first; however, I made it work because I knew I wanted to read and write in English. Mr. Brown also made time to work with me individually. Since I spent so much time working [and] studying at home, I was a little more advanced than the other kids in the class, so he would get them started on an assignment and come work with me. After a year with Mr. Brown, I felt extremely confident in my ability to function in a regular English classroom. But I thought, 'I am fully prepared for the IB program?'

After Alex commented on his ESL classroom / teacher experience, I asked him to discuss the impact of the IB program, specifically the English class, and what the challenges were that he faced. He said,

I faced many challenges and had many disappoints, but my goal was to learn from them. Overall, my experience with the IB program was nothing but positive.

When I arrived to college, I was very prepared to tackle college level work and I knew that part of that was the preparation in IB. IB was especially rough because of the books I had to read and the expectation of the writing. During my junior year, it would take me much longer to read the texts and even longer to write about them. However, I worked hard; I knew that if I put forth the extra effort I would become a faster, better reader and the same with writing. My junior and senior English teachers were awesome. They were extremely supportive and they

knew exactly how to make me a better reader and writer. During my senior year, we read two texts by William Faulkner; those books killed me! I had to spend so much time re-reading and had to work with my teacher after school because I had so many questions, but in the end, I did it. So, what were my challenges? Well, I would have to say finding the extra [time] to devote to the extra reading and writing. All of my IB courses were extremely demanding so I knew I had to spend time on those as well. So, if I had to choose one challenge it would be how to manage my time.

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

Alex's familial influences in the areas of reading and writing were "pretty important." Alex explained that "both of my parents knew some English and my older brother took some classes in Mexico City; however, I spoke very little English." As part of the interview, Alex described the printed media that was in his home both in Mexico City and in Lancaster and discussed how much, if any, reading occurred in the home.

Alex mentioned that "I am very passionate about my experiences in Lancaster, and I am also very appreciative to his parents, teachers, and friends." Alex also discussed his experiences with media and literacy,

In Mexico City, my parents had several magazines delivered to our house and we also got the local newspaper, but my brother also received a magazine from the United States in English. My parents were readers and they wanted to stay informed about the events around them and us. So, reading was very much a part of my life in Mexico City and also in Lancaster. There were also books, all in Spanish, which were in our house. Again, both of my parents were readers so

there was always a new book lying around. When we arrived in Lancaster, my parents still received publications in Spanish; however, they also were more eager to start learning English so they subscribed to the local paper in the city. Also, when I started to read English better, I always had books at home; again, I was trying to learn as much as I could.

He also spoke about his parents' expectations regarding going to college, and lastly, what family member was the most influential regarding his decision to go to college.

Hummmmm... what were my parents' expectations about going to college? Let me just say, it was not *if* I was going to college but *where* and *how* many scholarships I would receive. Essentially, this is why we moved to the United States and to Lancaster. My parents wanted me and my younger siblings to have the best education possible. They were always encouraging me to stay after school and always encouraging that this step in my life is just a part of the puzzle. They were so right. They were very influential. Regarding other people or family that encouraged me, it was mainly immediate family, especially my older brother, David. I would be the second person in my family to graduate from high school (my older graduated two years earlier) and I would also be the second person to graduate from college. But some of my biggest supporters were my teachers in Lancaster. They spent tireless hours working me and helping with my English skills. Time after time I would just show up at their door and they graciously [allowed] me in and [helped] in any way. Yes, while I lived in Mexico City, my teachers were great; however, the teachers in Lancaster seemed to be more concerned with my success as a student and as a person. I will always have so

much respect for these teachers; they were so instrumental in my success in high school and beyond.

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Motivation was never really an issue for Alex. He knew what he needed to do and he did it; he knew that success had to be earned and that was his motto. Alex explained, “ I was a very motivated young man in Mexico City; I was a great student with lots of potential, but was able to communicate solely in Spanish.” When he moved to the United States, his motivation continued but he also encountered struggles, which is something to which Alex was not accustomed. When he arrived in the United States, he knew that sustaining his academic success would be very difficult; however, he could not disappoint his family; he knew that education and academic opportunity were the main reasons they uprooted and moved to the United States.

Next in the interview, I inquired into the source of his motivation. Alex referenced his experiences in elementary school, specifically his ESL classroom. He described his experiences and explored what the possible factors were that motivated him to become a good reader and writer. I asked whether his classmates motivated him and what it was like being in honors classes. Lastly, I asked him to explain / define his work ethic, and consider whether he was like or unlike the other Latinos in his school.

I loved elementary school in Mexico. I had great teachers that taught us many, many things, but most importantly, they instilled a love for learning, especially reading. My teachers also blocked out a specific time during our school day so she could read to us. When I was in fourth and fifth grades, my teacher would let us read in our reading circles; that was so much fun because we took turns reading and I loved to hear my classmates. When I came to Lancaster, my ESL classroom

was much the same. My teachers had that same passion for learning and they instilled in me that I could learn English and that I could excel in the IB program. Some of my fondest memories are learning English by playing word games. Most all of the other kids in my class were in the beginning stages of ESL so we share that common bond; I liked that. My ESL teachers also were there once I was moved to the regular education classroom. I knew that if I needed their support they would be there.

Alex next explored the factors that motivated him to succeed, saying,

My one and only motivating factor was to make my parents proud. I knew that [they] had given up a majority of their lives in order for their kids to be successful. I also knew that once I graduated from college and landed a good job I could finally give back to them. In reference to reading and writing, I was always motivated to learn more; I was always that kid that could never get enough information. I was that way in Mexico and consequently, the same way in Lancaster. Learning to read and write in English was extremely difficult, but again I knew that I was going to have to work really hard and study long hours. Looking back, those days were long and tough, but I always had in the back of my mind that I could not let my family down.

Alex mentioned that he was a “motivated young man.” Regarding motivation, Alex was asked what factors motivated him to be successful in the IB program, especially in IB English.

Alex responded with,

Once I reached the full IB program, I had to lean on my classmates. I needed their support because the course work in IB was so difficult and challenging. I was still

learning English so being thrown into such hard subjects made me reach out to other(s) around me. The majority of the students in my IB classes were white, but there was also a good number of Latino(s). At first I tended to lean towards the Spanish speakers, but after I was more comfortable with English, I felt comfortable asking anyone for help. So all-in-all, I needed a good friend / study group, and I found it in the IB program. I loved the classes too. The information that I learned was invaluable once I reached the college level; I knew how to study and I had read texts that other of fellow freshmen had not. So, I felt extremely prepared.

Finally, Alex responded to last question, comparing himself to other Latinos(as) at the school,

I was definitely not like the majority of other Latino(s) in my school. The majority of the Spanish kids in my school were not concerned with getting an education or for that matter going to college. My school was over half Latino(s) but the amounts of those kids in IB classes were significantly different. Many of the Spanish kids those lived on block or in neighborhood were 'street kids.' They were gang members; they sold drugs; they were teenage parents. Ironically, that was what my parents were hoping Lancaster would not be. However, I did not fall into the traps of those people or of those activities. Again, I knew I would disappoint my family if I did any of those things. So, no, I was not like the majority, and I am thankful for focusing on my academics.

Alex graduated in May of 2012 from small liberal arts college in south central Pennsylvania with a degree in chemistry, and he planned to enter medical school in Philadelphia in the fall of 2012.

Appendix F Miguel:

Miguel and his family moved to Lancaster from Peru when he was in second grade. He was the second oldest of a family of five. His older sister, Rachel, was in fourth grade. No one in his family spoke English; no one in his family had the desire to speak English until they knew that they had to move to the United States. Like it was for many students in south-central Pennsylvania school districts, moving to the United States provided Juan and his family with many opportunities for a better life. They could escape poverty and experience a better economic and educational climate.

Miguel's town, or should I say village, was in one of the poorest parts of Peru. His parents were merchants; they had very menial jobs that paid a very low wage. Miguel's parents knew that the only way their children were going to be successful was to sacrifice, leaving family and friends for a life of unknowns yet hopefully of promises. When Miguel was asked about his experiences in school in Peru, his facial expression completely changed. He explained that, "I would just like to take those memories out of my mind." It was as if he did not want to activate that part of his school memory. However, he was able to share a few things with me. At first, I asked Miguel to describe his school and his overall classroom environment. Miguel explained,

My school was very old and run down; we did not have running water or a bathroom. There were only three teachers in my small four-room school. Our school had books that were basically thrown away and we dug them out of the trash so we could use them. We only had textbooks; there was no such thing as going down to the library and just 'checking out a book.' It was truly awful. I was scared about moving away, but I knew that I would be better off in the end.

At the end of this second grade year, a local church sponsored Miguel and his family so that they could move to Lancaster. They arrived the summer before he started third grade in the city school district. I explained to Miguel that I was going to ask him a series of questions pertaining to his experiences in Peru and also his experiences in Lancaster. While he was reluctant to talk about his experiences in Peru, he replied, “I will be more than happy to discuss my Lancaster experiences.”

ESL Classroom Interaction with Literacy

Miguel discussed his first experiences in school ranging from his time in Peru and also his experiences in an ESL classroom in Lancaster. He also commented on who was instrumental in helping him to read and write and his initial impressions of reading and writing in English. Juan also described a particular memory of learning to read and write in English, and lastly, he referenced his time in honors classes and the IB program – especially IB English.

Miguel commented on his experiences in Peru (which is similar to what is stated above with the exception of the experiences with his classmates).

As I stated earlier, I am from a very small, poor farming community. No one in my town was interested in going to college; no one really cared about getting an education. They were only focused on getting the minimal amount of education so they could begin to farm like their parents. I knew I did not want that; I was tired of that kind of life and so were my parents. The only positive about living in Peru was the amount of friends I made. Since my school was so small, it is almost like we did not have choice but to get along, and we did. I learned so much from them, so, on that account I was not looking forward to leaving.

Miguel commented on his experiences in Lancaster ranging from his experiences in ESL to his culminating experience in earning the IB diploma. Miguel first described his ESL experience in a third grade classroom,

First of all, I loved my teacher! She made me [feel] so welcomed even though she could not speak Spanish. She had the entire classroom labeled with words in Spanish and the words translated into English. For example, the label on the desk had 'desk' translated into all of those languages. I spent my entire day with her. By Christmas, I was able to read and write in English (not a lot) but I was able to show that my work was paying off. In Ms. Smith's ESL classroom, we read every day and we did some sort of writing each day; I really enjoyed this so I think that was the beginning of my love for reading and writing. I was excited out of ESL at the end of my fourth grade year and everyone was shocked at my progress.

Miguel was asked what motivated him to learn to read and write. He replied that his passion was fueled by Ms. Smith; according to him, "She was the guiding force in my success in elementary school." Miguel finished elementary school and was placed in honors classes in middle school. He thrived in middle school and could not wait to enter high school and the IB program. He earned all high marks and was inducted to the Junior National Honors Society. Miguel's older sister completed the IB program, earning the diploma, and he could not wait for the challenge.

Certainly any AP or IB course is extremely challenging; as Miguel stated, "I knew I had the skills to be successful and if I needed help, I knew I had teachers in my corner that I could lean on." Miguel then commented on his specific challenges and how he was going to be

successful in the IB program. By the time he reached high school, his English skills were no longer his first concern, as he explained,

Boy, the first real challenge was ‘how I am going to make time to get all of this homework done?’ When I was in 9th grade, my classes were much different than middle school; I had work to do for each class every night. It was all about time management and making use of each second of the day. The anxiety of learning English and making sure I was on point with classmates had long passed. I was very confident with that; it was just time management that I first struggled with.

He then reflected on his experiences as an IB student:

My experiences in IB English were a very interesting one. The books we read were awesome, even the Shakespeare stuff. My IB English teachers rocked. As I think back to those classes, this is really where I learned how to write and write effectively. In those classes, my classmates and I [were] able to create projects that expressed our ideas. Yes, we had to write papers, but this was an activity that stretched other parts of our brain and learning. Prior to taking the IB exams in May of my senior year, I just knew I would do well. I was right! I earned a total of 6 out of 7 possible points, which meant I did not have to take English in college. What contributed to my success was my IB English teachers; they put everything into preparing me to take high stakes exams. Even now in my first year of college, I think back to some of the things we did in English class and I use them.

Miguel’s experiences in Peru and in Lancaster differ greatly. According to Miguel, “the difference was that we have resources in Lancaster to be successful; this was not the case in

Peru.” While in Lancaster, he “flourished.” He was able to grasp the English language. He soaked up all of the knowledge given to him and, with sheer determination, was able to be successful in school. His high school success culminated when he earned the IB diploma (24 college credits).

Family and Their Influence Surrounding Literacy

Reading and writing, even in Spanish, was not a priority for Miguel’s parents. As Miguel explained, “They were content with their market, blue collar, jobs; however, they really wanted their children to become good readers and writers so they encouraged them indirectly.” When he was first asked about literacy in his home (in Peru), he said, “Even though my parents did not read, they still made sure there were books, magazines, and newspapers in the house.” Miguel said he remembers as a kid seeing all of the magazines lying around. When he learned to read in Spanish, he would try to read the periodicals. His older sister was the very same, reading all of the materials too. Miguel recalls, “When I had just begun school in Lancaster; I would bring books home that were written in English. My parents would look through the books and try to recognize words they knew. It was not too long after that my parents would enroll in ESL classes at the local city high school.” Miguel also commented that, unlike in Peru, it was as if they wanted to be able to read with their children.

Miguel recalled that he had a strong support system at home, with parents that encouraged his academic endeavors. They expected him to attend college. Miguel explained, My parents were extremely supportive. The real reason we moved from Peru was because they wanted us (their children) to earn a better education than we would have had in Peru. They gave it all up for us; that is pretty amazing because they left behind all they knew: family, friends, and church....everything! So they were

/ are extremely supportive. There were always the expectations that all my brothers and sisters would graduate from college. My parents made sure that they would do their part for that to happen. Even though they could not effectively communicate in English, they attended all of the activities at school; they made sure that they were involved with what was happening. Looking back, [it] was pretty amazing that they were that interested in what their kids were doing.

Miguel continued, discussing his pursuit of a college education:

No one else in our family even graduated from high school much less college. My sister Rachel would be first, then me (2016). There was no one in our family to give us ‘college advice’ specifically, but once we reached Lancaster, there were people that offered college advice especially when it came time to applying for financial aid. Essentially, I was on my own; I knew college was a must and I made every opportunity to make my experiences count.

When asked about his experiences with literacy at home, Miguel recalled that it was interesting.

His parents, he explained, did not read but they provided reading material for their children.

Obviously, his parents were extremely supportive and Juan and the rest of his siblings knew this.

Motivation for Success in English Language Arts

Since Miguel was from a very disadvantaged rural school in Peru, he and his family knew that the only way for him to achieve success (which meant going to college) was to move to the United States. Even though Miguel was in the trenches of a very poor school, he recalled, “My motivation for success was tremendous. I was heads and shoulders above his Latino (a) counterparts, so his motivation was very intrinsic for me.” However, he knew when he arrived in United States he would have to overcome many more obstacles to keep his motivation alive.

Miguel recalled that, growing up, he was far more successful in both math and science than he was in reading and writing. While in Peru, he was one of the only students in his school to excel in these two subjects. But he knew he would have to be successful in reading and writing if he wanted to excel in United States and at the college level. When Juan was asked about why reading and writing were not his strengths, he explained,

From a little kid I was always fascinated with numbers and mechanics; those seems to more interesting than reading a book or writing in a journal, but I knew when we moved to the Unites States I would have to take an interest in reading and writing because I knew that I would not be able to go to college – and that scared me!

Miguel also commented on his motivation to be success; he was anxious to respond,

Oh yes! My older sister Rachel graduated in the top 2% of her graduating class and was accepted to a very prestigious private liberal arts college in south central Pennsylvania. She was able to attend the college on a full academic scholarship plus they gave her a new laptop. She inspired me daily; she was the one that always pushed me harder and harder; she was the one that always reminded me of why our family moved to Peru. Rachel graduated from college last year and now she has been accepted to seminary or graduate school.

When Miguel arrived in Lancaster, he was placed into the ESL program; however, he knew that this was only temporary; he knew the only way to truly achieve success was to learn English quickly so he could interact with his native English speaking peers. With such high hopes at yet such a young age, Miguel was exited from the ESL program at the end of third grade. He was then placed in all regular classrooms; he was also tested for the gifted program and, not

surprisingly, he was admitted and was able to take advantage of the gifted trips. When I asked Miguel to comment on his ESL experience, particularly teachers, he could not say enough good comments about them. He recalled, “My ESL teachers knew my potential and they pushed me; they made me learn lots of new vocabulary each week. They also knew that I like math and science better than reading, so she made sure that most of my reading assignments had to do with math or science. I learned so much from her.” Miguel continued to explain that his ESL experience was definitely a positive experience.

Lastly, Miguel was asked how he compared with his Latino counterparts. He thought for a few minutes and he said, “Well, many of my fellow Latino students did not have the support systems in place like me. I had supportive parents and siblings that would do anything to provide my success. Many of the Latinos in my school were much more concerned with doing the ‘wrong things’ like not taking school seriously and participating in gangs. I knew this would not be acceptable at my house and I did not want to risk my academic success.” Miguel continued to say that he was also very fortunate to have a very supportive friend group that kept him grounded and focused; he said that everyone seemed to have the same goals no matter their ethnic background. Again, Miguel was very appreciative for all that had a hand in his success.

Miguel is currently studying mathematics at the college level and having a fantastic experience. He continues to attribute his success to his teachers and family. Miguel knows that he could have been a statistic, but he also knows that he wants to be successful and most importantly, he wants to make sure his parents do not regret leaving their native Peru. Miguel plans to graduate in 2016, at which time he hopes to return to Lancaster to give back to those in his community who are less fortunate.

Appendix G: Student Interview Protocol

Date _____

Pseudonyms _____

Introduction

- Who am I?
- Why I am doing this study and its importance?
- Explain consent form from Penn State.
- Provide proper instructions of the interview (i.e. audio recording, taking notes, and the use of a pseudonym)
- Perform audio testing.
- Ask if he/she has questions prior to the interview.

Questions about being in an ESL classroom and Interaction with Literacy

1. Think back to your first years of school.
 - A. Where was it? (What country? Was it an urban, suburban, or rural setting?)
 - B. What were your first encounters / impressions of school?
2. Were you initially placed into an ESL classroom? If so, what were your feelings about it?
3. Who helped you learn to read?
 - A. Can you remember specifically what he/she did?
 - B. What was your initial impression of reading and writing?
4. What teacher(s) were most influential in helping you read / write?
 - A. Describe a memory of something they did.
5. Fast forward to middle and high school; what was your experience with ESL? Were you “placed out” of the ESL program? How long did it take for you to reach proficiency in English?
6. How, if at all, did the school district meet your needs as an ELL or not? Explain.
7. Were the curriculum and courses of study easily accessible for you and how did this equate to your success in school?

Family questions regarding literacy in the home

1. How were your parents helpful or hurtful to your education?
2. What reading, if any, occurred at home?

- A. What were some of the texts that were available to you while at home?
 - B. In what language was the material printed?
3. What writing, if any, occurred at home?
 4. Describe the economic conditions at home.
 5. Where did you grow up as a child? Was the neighborhood predominately Hispanic? Did you interact with other ethnic groups in your neighborhood / street?
 6. How did you speak to your parents / family? In your native language or in English?
 7. What were the different types of printed media in the home? (i.e. newspapers, magazines, books)
 8. Describe the place where you did the majority of your studying/ homework.
 9. When do you first remember having “college conversations” with your parents and was it an expectation to go to college?
 10. Did anyone else in your family attend college?

Motivation for Success

1. What are some factors that motivated you to become a good reader and writer?
2. How influential were your parents in your educational journey? What were some of things they said or did to encourage you to be successful?
3. Were there specific texts you liked to read and write about? Give examples.
4. Were you motivated by your classmates? What was it like being in honors classes?
5. How would you describe your work ethic?
6. How are you like and unlike other Hispanic students at school?
7. How did your experiences in elementary school, more specifically in ESL, help or hinder your success in high school?

Concluding Questions and Statements

1. Besides the topics we have talked about are there any other items you would to discuss?

2. Are there any of the previous topics you would like to go back and revisit?

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will:

- Thank them for their time and participation with this study
- As if they would like to read a copy of the study

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