

English Language Learners in a Comprehensive High School

Cathy Coulter and Mary Lee Smith
Arizona State University

Abstract

The comprehensive high school has changed little over the past few decades, in spite of the rising numbers of immigrant children populating U.S. public schools. Critics claim that high school traditions and structures consign English language learners to marginal positions and inferior academic opportunities. In our intensive analysis of 8 English language learners in a comprehensive high school, we found the criticisms to hold true and came to an understanding of the mechanisms by which these consequences came about.

Go almost anywhere from Miami to Anchorage and you will recognize the fundamental character of high schools there. Time travel from 1950 to 2000 and you would still feel familiar with those schools. In spite of the invariant forms of school, however, the students who enter the door have changed and grown more diverse. Conservative projections placed the number of documented school-age English language learners (ELLs) at 3.5 million in 2000 and 6 million by 2020 (Faltis, 2006). Can this diversity of humanity be squeezed into the same boxes and routines?

This study aims to understand the kinds of students who fit uncomfortably, if at all. In one school in particular, we wanted to understand from the students' perspectives their experiences as ethnically and linguistically "other" and how they defined and confronted the structure of the school, their transactions with it, and some of the consequences of their actions.

Theoretical Framework

Jacqueline Ancess (2003) summarized the literature on the comprehensive high school and contrasted its characteristics with those she found in her

study of schools that departed from the norm. Her contrasting characteristics served as a theoretical framework for the present study. Ancess states that the comprehensive high school offers “an impersonal and uncaring environment, emotionally distant social relations, weak group cohesion and communication, high levels of anomie, silencing, disengagement (particularly among low achieving and racially, culturally, and linguistically different students)” (p. 1).

The schools Ancess (2003) studied, in contrast, maintain the following atmosphere: First, each school offers a “common ethos and vision” (p. 9). That is, faculty and students work together in articulating and maintaining a common vision of what the school should accomplish and how the school should accomplish the vision within given internal and external forces. Second, there is a spirit of “care and caregiving,” (p. 10) in which students and faculty alike honor the need for mutual consideration. According to Ancess,

The schools demonstrate the understanding that they need to be . . . responsive to the human need for voice, visibility, belonging, celebration, consolation, and meaning. They reject conventional high school organizational behaviors and norms that produce anonymity, anomie, isolation, invisibility, silence, insecurity, coercive conformity, meaningless rote activity, and intellectual deadening as painful and hurtful to human development, performance, spirit, and society. (p. 10)

Third, there exists a “willingness and capacity for struggle” (p. 11). That is, each school works internally to achieve a sense of community and commitment to one another, embracing the struggle involved in this endeavor. Finally, there is a “mutual accountability” (p. 11) in which faculty and students develop a sense of responsibility and support for the school and for one another. These characteristics work in tandem to create high school environments that are caring and productive, and in which “teaching and learning for meaning-making” takes place (p. 88).

For this study, we paid special attention to the last of Ancess’s (2003) list and drew from sociolinguistic research. Lave (1991, 1993), Lave and Wenger (1993), and Gee (1992) indicate that learning is largely social, and that community is paramount to academic learning. Learning requires active participation around content and within communities of practice (Faltis, 2006). Further, learning occurs when students have a voice in the curriculum (Faltis & Hudelson, 1998). Because of the social nature of learning, access and inclusion are paramount to an equitable education.

By combining the above perspectives, we fashioned a framework that helped us understand the lives of ELLs in a comprehensive, traditional high school.

Method

To understand the experiences of English learners in a comprehensive high school in the most engaged and comprehensive way, we chose to concentrate attention on a single case in which the lead researcher had been a full participant. She taught in the program known as ESL in Northwest High School (a pseudonym), an otherwise White and upper-middle class high school in an Alaska suburb. The location of the case in Alaska highlights certain ethnic and historical differences not present in the high schools in Arizona that we have observed. In most other respects, such as the socio-economic stratification, and the place of immigrant and second language students in school structures, these disparate schools share many features in common. Single case studies offer important trade offs between validity and traditional generalizability, as Stake (2000) and Becker (1992) point out. In the end, the reader must judge the contribution of the study.

Participants

Northwest High School is a large (approximately 2,300 students) comprehensive high school located in a mostly White, upper-middle class neighborhood. Our participants included the following 8 students (pseudonyms) who attended Northwest at various times within a 5-year period: Vicki, who was born in the United States of first-generation immigrants from Mexico and Ecuador; Anna, who immigrated to the United States from Russia her freshman year; Leilani, who was born in the United States of first generation-immigrants from the Philippines; Charlotte, who immigrated to the United States from the Philippines when she was in the seventh grade; Jolar, who immigrated to the United States from the Philippines as a freshman; David, whose mother is first-generation Filipino and whose father is White and born in the United States; Darek, whose mother is Cu'pik and whose father is African American; and Jenn, whose mother is first-generation Filipino. Due to space limitations we have not included excerpts from all participants from the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for analysis fell into two categories. The students were closely observed and notes taken in situ by the lead researcher, who also drew on her own experiences and journals, as well as her insider knowledge of the workings of the school and district. Students were interviewed, and she collected their journals and other papers over a 5-year period.

The second category of data collection occurred 5 years after the first. All the students studied in the first round were contacted and invited to participate. Eight agreed and were subsequently interviewed. Relevant documents such

as student artifacts, school paperwork specific to each student's story, and newspaper clippings were collected. Interviews with school personnel such as other teachers, ESL tutors, security guards, and a football coach also were conducted. All interviews were taped and transcribed.

Narrative research perspectives guided the interview process. Storied accounts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) were written from each student's interview data for each participant. These were factual, chronological accounts of students' experiences in which we sought to filter through all the "impressions and raw phenomena" (Barone, 2000; Ecker, 1966) within the data as a whole. We wrote storied accounts for each participant. Then we began looking at the salient themes within each story and within the data as a whole. At this point, "tentative relationships between qualities present(ed) themselves as structured fragments" (Barone, 2000) but failed to present themselves as a central theme. In order to find these central themes, we took to the work of story boarding and journaling. Finally, we began writing narratives for each student, going back and forth between the database and the emerging themes. Thus, recursive movements were made between the emerging narratives and the database to test that the narratives were plausible, understandable, and useful. Various renditions of each student's story were written. At this point, a qualitative control (Ecker, 1966) emerged, in which thematic elements from the database converged as a unifying quality. Barone (2000) writes, the qualitative control "facilitates selection among observed qualitative phenomena, while simultaneously serving as a kind of patterning principle for revealing relationships between these phenomena" (p. 196). The qualitative control that emerged in this study we labeled "exclusion." This core concept organized both ideas and evidence.

The primary purpose in using narrative analysis was to capture the experiences of the students through their eyes, in their voices, and from their perspectives. The narrative constructions produced express the data as analyzed. The purpose of narrative analysis differs from the purpose of traditional research methodologies. Rather than reducing data to explicit findings, we produce constructions that allow the reader to transact with data such that he or she becomes an interpreter of the educational phenomena we have researched, interpreted, and portrayed. We decided that the narratives would be written in first person, from the perspective of each participant. We felt first person could best capture the experiences our participants expressed in the interviews. Constructing narratives of our participants' experiences in first person required close work with each; and, therefore, collaboration with research participants was an important part of this study. Once written, the narratives were brought to each of the participants, who accepted them as they were written, made comments and clarifications, or offered substantive additions that enriched our understandings.

To pull the narrative together, the lead author placed each separate story side by side such that each separate incident was told in incremental sequence and these were ordered, along with the teacher's own recollections and the themes uncovered during the analysis, to tell the story of the high school experience as a whole.

The assemblage of this narrative might be described as constructing a novel. Another way of describing it is a novelized nonfiction narrative. That is, the identities of the persons and places were altered and scenes were constructed based on factual data, with the aim of being true to both the participants' perspectives and recollections, and also the themes uncovered. The crafting that produced the text is represented in Coulter (2003).

In addition to the narrative analysis and for the purposes of this paper, we conducted an analysis that followed Erickson's (1986) modified analytic induction. For this phase of analysis the entire corpus of data was read and reread to generate assertions. Each assertion was subjected to a process of warranting, that is, weighing the evidence both confirming and disconfirming the assertion. Assertions that survived as stated or revised are listed in the next section along with excerpts that demonstrate the plausibility of each. It is important to note that the presented excerpts do not represent the only confirming evidence for that assertion. Instead, the excerpts presented should be read as representative of all the confirming instances.

Findings and Discussion

Assertion 1: ELLs were not given equal access to mainstream school functions and extracurricular activities.

Exclusion emerged as a core theme in students' accounts. Although students tried to take part, they were denied access in many different ways. In the first vignette below, Darek, a talented basketball player, tells about what happened when he tried out for the team:

I was mad. Mad because I didn't make the team, and mad because I had put myself out there by trying. I felt like I had given them the power to reject me, and I couldn't believe that I had allowed myself to believe that things weren't the way they were.

When I turned to go I saw Mr. Jackson standing against the wall, looking at me. He shook his head. I walked over to him.

"I'm sorry, man," he said. I didn't answer. I was mad at him, too. He knew how things were at Northwest, and he talked me into trying out.

"I really thought you would make it, Darek. You should have made it," he said. He touched my shoulder and I jerked away. I just didn't want to talk to him right then, and I didn't want his sympathy.

“Darek, did you see? Jason Mahoney?” he said.

“Yeah,” I answered. I still didn’t feel like talking, but I suddenly realized something. Jason Mahoney couldn’t dribble, catch, or shoot to save his life. Everyone knew he wouldn’t make the team. But he had made varsity.

“His mother is Betty Mahoney. You know, of the booster club? His mother runs the booster club!” Mr. Jackson said. “Look, Darek, I’ll talk to Coach Tanner. You should have made the team.”

“Don’t bother,” I told him. I walked away. I mean, I know he cared, but I just couldn’t stand to talk anymore. Jason fuckin’ Mahoney. It was all about who you were around there, and who you weren’t. I could have been Michael fuckin’ Jordan, and I wouldn’t have made the team.

In his interviews, Darek expressed how anxious he felt about trying out for the basketball team. It was an intangible but debilitating anxiety, and it was only because of the encouragement of Mr. Jackson that he tried out in the first place. Darek saw his anxiety play out when he was snubbed from the team, in spite of clear talent. Leilani speaks of the same sort of anxiety as Darek. However, unlike Darek, Leilani succumbs to the anxiety, and does not take the risks to become involved in mainstream school activities. As a result, she blames herself for not having more courage and wonders what would have happened if she would have made more of an effort to take part. When asked what they were anxious about, both Darek and Leilani said they were afraid of being rejected in a public and humiliating manner. Four other participants expressed the same anxiety. All attributed the anxiety of being rejected to their identity as minority students.

Perhaps the source of anxiety is made clear in Anna’s story below:

I guess if it’s a holiday in India, the Untouchables have their own celebrations. But it’s not like they have to act like they live in a different country. They’re the lowest class citizens, but they are still Indian.

Nina and I decided that we would still be Northwest High students. I mean, we lived in the boundary, just like everyone else, and we were enrolled, just like everyone else. So we went to some games, we went to some dances, and we took part in some events. We were always by ourselves, but we still took part.

Our decision was clear and conscious. Be ourselves, don’t try to fit in, but enjoy ourselves anyway. Take part in our own way.

So our senior year we had our lockers in H hall with the other seniors. They didn’t like us there, but we weren’t going to let them intimidate us into moving. Every year Northwest had Spirit Week, where there was a hall decorating contest. It was a part of the class competition.

Every class would pick a theme, and the whole hallway would be decorated according to that theme. That year, our class picked “New York, the Big Apple” as our theme. So all week the cool people stayed after school to decorate, and the following Monday would be the judging.

Nina and I liked the theme, and we decided that we would decorate our lockers to go along with it. We thought and thought about what we could do. We thought about famous New York tourist attractions and landmarks. The World Trade Center, Broadway, everything you can imagine. Finally, we decided on the world famous Statue of Liberty. It seemed fitting. Here we were immigrants, and we could pay tribute to the lady herself, and what she symbolized. We spent hours researching, and more hours making an exact-scale replica to fit on our two lockers. When we finished, she was beautiful.

Monday morning we got to school early to put our Statue of Liberty on our lockers. We taped her up carefully so that we could both still open our lockers, and so that she would fit in with the other decorations that were already up. When we were finished we stood back and examined our handiwork. It looked great.

We were happy. Happy to be a part of the senior class during Spirit Week—at least in terms of theme—happy about the results of our work. We sat in front of our lockers that morning and waited for the first period bell to ring. The hall looked great, and everyone seemed happy. No one teased us that morning. No one talked to us, but no one gave us a hard time, either. Just before the bell rang, we decided to go to the bathroom before class started. So we went to the restroom, talking happily about how well it had turned out, how nice all the decorations looked, how we were sure the senior class would win.

When we came out again, we walked out of the bathroom, looked up at our lockers to see the effect from afar, and stopped cold.

You know those moments, like they have in TV, where the camera angle shows the main character from afar, then suddenly zooms in on her shocked face. Then it shows what she’s looking at from afar, then it zooms in on it? Then the music starts, abrupt music that shows fear or amazement? It was like that. Nina and I both standing there with our mouths wide in surprise, and the whole senior class suddenly freezes, like a silent audience, just a split second, and then goes back to whatever it is they were doing.

We looked over at our lockers, and we looked at nothing. Nothing. Nothing was left. Not even a piece of tape. Where one moment our beautiful Statue of Liberty had hung, when we turned our back for an

instant, the next moment she was simply gone. Nina and I covered our surprise quickly, and she touched my arm and pointed to the trashcan across from our lockers. There she was smashed and stuffed into the garbage can. I could make out a glimpse of the gold glitter that had been her eternal flame.

We felt like we were on display, and everyone was waiting for our reaction. They wanted anger. They wanted slumped shoulders. They wanted to see our rejection. They wanted something. And we knew enough not to give it to them. We simply walked quietly, shoulders up and heads held high out of the hall and toward our class. I could feel them watching us, waiting for one of us to trip so they could laugh. Waiting for us to create some sort of spectacle for them to mock. We didn't give it to them.

We had given them enough already.

You always hear stories about bullies, and how they can ruin a kid's life. What happens when the whole school is the bully? What happens when the whole damn school is out to get you? And they don't do it loudly. They don't beat the shit out of you every day, literally. They beat the shit out of you silently, and everyone's in on it. No one puts a stop to it. Kids will be kids, right? It's all a part of growing up. It's tough, but it'll make us stronger.

People who say that don't know what it feels like to be rejected by an entire school. They don't know what it feels like to be mocked and ridiculed by groups of kids every single day. They don't know what it feels like to live in that poison, that complete and total rejection. That feeling that they just want you to disappear, and that's what they're going to try to do: make you disappear. And they'll keep trying until you're simply gone.

Nina and I walked out of the hall that day with our heads held high, but really we were smashed and stuffed in the garbage can with our Statue of Liberty, broken hearts and broken spirits crunched under the gold of her eternal flame.

Unlike Leilani, Anna attempts to be involved in various school activities. But like Darek, she, too, is excluded. Clearly, Leilani's anxiety about taking risks to become involved in school activities is not unwarranted. All of our students expressed a sense of anxiety about taking risks to become involved and experiencing rejection or humiliation as a result. Anna and Darek, who did take risks and try to become involved in various school activities, actually were rejected and/or humiliated as a result. Some blamed themselves, some blamed the school, but all said that they were nervous about attempting to participate in activities that were supposed to be open to everyone.

Assertion 2: ELLs were not given equal resources for classrooms, materials, field trips, and other learning needs.

Small, substandard, out-of-the-way classrooms and outdated materials sent a clear signal to ELLs at Northwest, which is evidenced by the ESL teacher's story below:

By the time I got back to Sandy's office, she was with someone else. I popped my head in the door and let her know I was finished. She directed me back to the couch, where once again, I waited. I imagined that other new teacher, Patti, and how she must now be arranging her desks, entering the names of her students in her grade book, getting her books from the book room, decorating her room, sitting at her teacher's desk. I just wanted to get to my room. I had been at Northwest for nearly two hours, and so far all I had done is wait.

Sandy finished with the person inside her office, and once again invited me in.

"What did Mr. Tang say?" Sandy asked. She was beginning to look tired.

"He said I needed to find more students. Nineteen isn't enough," I answered.

"How are you supposed to find them?" she asked.

"He didn't say. But he did say that you would have a room for me, and books," I couldn't spend time beating around the bush anymore.

"There are no more rooms, Christina. Northwest has a capacity for 1800 students. We have over 2300. All the rooms are taken, and all the classes are full. And books? Where are we supposed to get books? The bilingual department is supposed to supply those," Sandy answered.

"Okay, let me get this straight. I have no room, no books, and no students?" I must have started looking pretty desperate, because Sandy looked at me with pity.

"Look, Mr. Brown held classes in the drafting room while Mr. Corter taught wood shop. I can work something like that out for you. I'll put you in whatever room is available each period. I can talk to some teachers about using their rooms during their preps. I'll get you a cart, and the stock clerk can fill it up with supplies. I don't know about books. I'll check with the history and English department heads about that. Maybe they have some leftovers. Meantime, why don't you start going through the cumulative files to find students?"

What else could I do? I had no room to decorate, no desk to sit at, no students to enter into a grade book. Sandy had efficiently dealt with me and was ready to move on. Out of courtesy (or to get rid of me) she walked me over to the stock clerk and requested a grade book and lesson plan book for me. She then introduced me to the registrar, and set me to work searching the cumulative files for possible students.

Nothing was going the way I imagined it should go. When I thought I'd have time to prepare my classes and decorate my room, I spent what little time we had outside of in-service meetings trying to find students.

I kept telling myself it would get better. It had to.

The ESL teacher had been offered a full-time position at Northwest because the Bilingual Education Office knew there were enough students to warrant a full-time position. In fact, by the end of the year, additional ESL personnel were hired. However, nothing had been done to identify students or allocate resources for the growing program. Language survey questionnaires, though administered, were not included in scheduling sessions with counselors, and testing was done after students were already placed in ESL classes. The school administration expected the district Bilingual Education Office to provide books and materials but district policy mandated that each school provide them. This first-year teacher had to take on administrative duties in addition to having to teach in substandard conditions, with no classroom, no materials, and no books.

The irony in all of this was that the district Bilingual Education Office generated \$6 million in state funds, \$2 million of which went to general district funding. While the district Bilingual Education Office generated monies for the General Education fund, they were not allocated enough funding for basic materials such as books. In fact, when the ESL teacher is finally given U.S. history books, she is given an overflow of fifth-grade level books that had been over-ordered. Students in the ninth grade who had siblings in the fifth grade recognized this right away.

The discrepancy in resource allocation was not lost on the students, as evidenced by Vicki's story below:

So this is me my first day of school. I'm carrying my schedule, looking for room G-13, thinking, where the hell is this place? I'm walking down H, walking up and down Upper G, not finding it, and then I notice the stairs on the far corner. I can't help it. I start to laugh. I mean could they have put ESL any further away from the office? So then I go down the stairs and I still can't find it. So I finally ask a security guard, and he's like, "G-13? That's the mechanic shop!" And he points to another set of stairs, and a door, about midway down and on the left. I laughed again. You know they put ESL in the dreariest, darkest place they could

find, hiding them like a pair of dirty socks. They say, “That’s your classroom. Walk past the transmission, then turn left at the axle. DON’T TOUCH ANYTHING!” They put them where the White kids go to trade school, you know? And I’m thinking, great, can their place at Northwest be made any clearer?

But something started down there in that little dark closet they put us in. Something really amazing. When I walked past all those pieces, that collection of gutted and unwanted car parts, left at the axle, and up a little case of stairs to a cramped corner with tables and a chalk board, I found something unexpected. You don’t expect a flower to grow in the shadows, do you?

But that first day, I didn’t know what I would find there. One thing I did know was that ESL was getting the shaft, clear and simple. It was as clear as you’re the dog gettin’ your nose rubbed in shit and your backside swatted with the Daily News.

Students often complained that the ESL program lacked resources. They were well-aware of inequitable distributions within the school.

Assertion 3: ELLs were not given quality instruction in which to interact with each other, native English-speaking peers, and the content.

ELLs experienced a poor quality of instruction at Northwest High School. ELLs were either integrated with mainstream students, but then virtually ignored or even ridiculed, as evidenced by Leilani’s, Charlotte’s, and Chansy’s stories (due to space limitations, it is not possible to include all of their stories) or segregated into ESL classes and tracked into a vocational, non-academic schedule as evidenced by David’s story below:

It wasn’t just the ESL classes that were too easy for me. It was all my classes. Every year this is what I’d do: I’d do nothing in any of my classes for the first quarter. Then, after report cards came out, I’d do all this make up work and bring my grades up to passing or even better. If that doesn’t tell you something, what will? I could skip all the work for the first quarter, and still bring my grades up by the end of the semester.

The other thing I would do is get the teachers off-track. I was really good at that. I would change the subject or get them talking about some current event or something, and then they couldn’t finish what their plans were for that class period.

Like my personal finance class with Mr. Peters.

So Lester and I get to class one day, and I don’t have the assignment done. Mr. Peters would assign us to read a chapter and do the end of the chapter questions. We would grade the questions out loud in

class, and then turn them in. So I pull out an old assignment and pretend to correct it. But I know I'll have to turn it in at the end, so I start to ask Mr. Peters questions to get him off course.

Mr. Peters says, "Number three, describe the theory of supply and demand in terms of retailing in the U.S. marketplace." I raise my hand. "David?"

"Mr. Peters, you know, this supply and demand stuff seems awfully simple. I mean, how does marketing play into it?"

He totally falls for it. "Well, David, that's a good question. You know advertising is an element in economics that can have an effect on supply and demand. Or, it can increase demand, thus affecting the equation. If you look at advertisements directed at young people..."

I interrupt him, "Teenagers are one of the most important focus groups for advertising, don't you think?" You see the whole idea is to keep him off and keep him from realizing it until it's too late to finish correcting the assignment. So I keep asking questions.

"Yes, David, that's true," says Mr. Peters. He stands and heads toward the board. I mean, he's really warming up to this discussion. He turns to write on the board.

"Teenagers spend an average of 50 million dollars a year on clothes, technology, and other goods," he says. He writes "50 million" on the board. As he turns his back, I look at Lester. Lester looks at me and rolls his eyes. The other kids are looking at me amazed, too. The ones who finished the assignments are mad, but the ones who didn't are happy. The boy sitting in front of me, Tony, turns and gives me a high five. They all know what's going on. I've done it before. By the time Mr. Peters looks around again, we're all looking up at him, interested.

"Mr. Peters, if teenagers spend so much, and the media are so tuned in to them, doesn't that change the equation?" I ask. I mean, it's an art, really. You have to be smart enough to know what to ask, and you have to act dumb enough for them to still feel like they're actually teaching you something.

"No, David, it doesn't. It has an effect on the equation, but it doesn't change it. You see . . ." he turns back to the board, and Lester gives me a thumbs up.

So the discussion continues. Half the time, the teachers are so dumb they don't even know what they're talking about. Half the time I felt like I could be the one up there teaching the class. So while Mr. Peters thinks he has a class full of interested students, what he really has is a class of students interested in delaying class long enough for them

to finish their assignments. The longer I can keep him off track, the longer I'll have to finish my work.

When the bell rings, Mr. Peters turns from the board and says, "Great discussion, guys," as though it wasn't just me prompting him to keep talking. "We'll correct the chapter 7 questions tomorrow. Also, please read chapter 8 and complete the questions. We'll correct both chapters tomorrow." He just says that so he won't feel guilty for letting me get him off-track. But he knows we won't get to both.

As we stand up and gather our things Alicia says to me, "Great, David. You took all our class time and now we have more homework."

"Don't worry about it," I say. But she's so anal she'll stay up all night finishing the work.

We walk out into the hall, and Lester says, "Dude, you really think you can distract him another day?"

"I can keep this up for a whole week!" I say. I knew I could, too.

Tony comes up behind me. "Bet?"

"How much you want to lose?" I ask.

"Five bucks says you can't do it another day," he answers.

"Five bucks says I can do it another week!" We shake hands.

Next day I ask Mr. Peters to explain how marketing affects international economies. We don't get a new assignment. The next day I ask about the European Community and how that will effect the global market. By the third day Mr. Peters is feeling guilty for letting the distractions continue, and he says, "No unrelated questions, David!" But still I ask. I say, "It's related!" and then I twist it so it's related enough for him to answer, but not enough that he can get back on track. Day after day Mr. Peters falls for it, and day after day we get out of more work. Mr. Peters thinks we're a class of eager learners. He thinks this is a "teachable moment" like Mrs. Coulier used to say when I'd do this to her. But really, it was just a bet. After a week and a half I figured I had made my point, so I gave poor Mr. Peters a break. Besides, by then I had finished the assignment.

No one could believe that I had kept us on the same assignment for a week and a half. Tony paid up his five dollars, but he didn't mind. I kept him from having homework for over a week, and to him it was worth it.

While David took the low quality of instruction in stride, it had tragic ramifications for him and others in their futures. While 6 of the 8 participants went on to 4-year degrees, only one finished. Five dropped out sometime after

freshman year in college. The five who dropped out expressed that the university-level classes were unlike anything they had ever experienced before and that they lacked the academic training to be successful at the university level. Several students expressed that other university-level students seemed to have a knowledge-base in content areas that they did not have. Tracking has far-reaching effects.

Assertion 4: ELLs were tracked into remedial classes which had low expectations for achievement and which undermined their academic success.

Jolar's story, below, is one example of the far-reaching effects of tracking in high school:

I had to take a test at State University to see if I could take regular English classes. I didn't pass the test, so I had to enroll in zero level courses, ESL composition classes. The courses were good, but they didn't count toward graduation, and I was afraid I was wasting time and money. I also took other basic courses, like psychology, and speech. Mrs. Collins was right. It was much harder than Northwest. I was still working, and I studied all the time. I read the chapters two and three times each, and still I didn't get it. It was like those other students knew more than me. They could speak English better, so they could understand things better, but it was like they had learned this stuff before. Some of them had had these classes in high school. But not me. In high school, I took mostly ESL classes, and then basic classes like Consumer Math and Earth Science. I felt really lost. All of the information was new to me.

I started going back to Northwest to get help from Mrs. Collins. She told me just to come through the back door and don't check in at the office. They wouldn't even know I wasn't enrolled at Northwest anymore, she said. She liked for me to tell the other students about my experiences in college. She said I was a good role model for them. But the help she gave me sometimes wasn't enough. So she invited me to come to her house to get some help there. I went to her house three different times and she helped me on my work. My first semester I failed psychology, but I passed my other classes. I tried to test out of the zero level courses, but I didn't pass the test. I didn't understand why I didn't do better. I worked so hard. But the classes were very hard for me.

The next semester I took psychology again, and this time I passed it. But every semester was very difficult. I started getting warning letters from the grant office that if I didn't pull up my GPA, I would lose the money. But I was studying every spare minute. I was getting help from Mrs. Collins, and nothing seemed like enough. But I was determined to achieve my goals, so I worked even harder. By the end of the year,

I had a C plus average. I had a meeting with someone from the Pell Grant. I told him how hard I was working and everything. I gave him Mrs. Collin's number, and told him he could talk to my instructors. I never skipped classes, and I did all my work. So he let me keep the grant.

My sophomore year in college I worked even harder, but the classes got harder, too. By the end of the first semester, I got a letter that said that I didn't keep my grades up enough, so I lost my grant. I decided to start paying tuition out of my savings. I was earning \$8.00 an hour at the airport, and tuition was \$1,500.00. That's a lot of hours to work. I used up my savings paying for tuition. I passed second semester, but I still only had a C plus average. The whole time I never tested out of the ESL classes. I didn't like paying for classes that wouldn't even count for my degree.

First semester my junior year I signed up for microbiology. I had heard about that class. Everyone said it was very hard. People who spoke English as a mother tongue had a hard time with that class. I worked so hard. But I could tell I wasn't going to make it. I finished that semester, but I didn't pass microbiology. I would have to take it again. Worse, I still didn't pass the test to get me out of the ESL classes. My savings was gone, and I was having a hard time making ends meet. My dream was very important to me, but I decided to take a break from college and concentrate on getting my savings built up again.

When you get to a certain age, it's hard to go back to college. I have a family now, with a wife and two children. I have to work. I got a good job at a hotel, and they're paying for me to get my culinary license. I'm working really hard studying for the exams and working. But the job is pretty good, and I'll earn a little more with the license.

My uncle told me if I worked really hard I could achieve my dreams. This is America, he said. The land of opportunity. I worked very hard all through high school and for two and a half years in college. But it still wasn't enough.

I guess the American Dream was just too hard for me.

Perhaps if Jolar had received more academic instruction in high school, a university education would have been a more tangible goal. Jolar's story is about a lack of access, not a lack of effort. The American Dream is not accessible to all.

Assertion 5: ELLs were segregated from their native English-speaking peers.

One of the tensions in programs created for ELLs is that such programs, such as Newcomer Centers, often end up segregating ELLs from their native English-speaking peers. When the ESL program at Northwest went full-time,

ELLs who got to know each other in ESL classes started gathering along minority lines in specific hallways. Lower D hall was known as “Little Asia,” Lower G was known as “Little Spain” (a misnomer, as the Spanish-speaking population at Northwest was mostly Latino and Chicano), and so on. At Northwest there was a large majority of White students (84%). The more ELLs congregated, the more they were set apart. Within the first year of the ESL program going full time, there was a standoff between a group of Neonazis and a group of minority students, including ELLs. Leading up to the standoff were rumors of an impending attack against minority students. As a result of these threats, minority students began congregating together with ELLs in an area off the library referred to as “G square.” When G square became a gathering place for minority students, it became known as “Gansta Hall.” While there is no proof of causation, the growth of the ESL program corresponded time-wise with these social and spatial changes. None of our participants knew how, when, or by whom these hallways were given these names.

Vicki’s story highlights some of the social stratification she found at Northwest:

You see, at Northwest, there was an “Either/Or” policy. Either you’re White, and you’re accepted, or you’re not, and you’re not. In the beginning, I wanted to be “either.” I mean, I have dark hair, but so do a lot of White people. And none of my White friends knew that I could speak Spanish. I figured as long as I looked like them and acted like them, I could be one of them. I took on a “don’t ask/don’t tell” policy. They didn’t ask, and I didn’t tell. I went by the name “Vicki”, which sounded more White than “Victoria.” I acted just like them. White. I guess I thought I had them fooled. Now I know I was only fooling myself.

It’s not like I was ashamed of my background or anything. I was bilingual, and understood two cultures. I figured that gave me a one up on everybody. But I understood even then that if you let them know your background, you would never fit in. My Dad is from Mexico, and my mom from El Salvador. If they knew, I mean really knew that I was Latina they would not have let me hang out with them. So I bought the latest clothes from Nordstrom, just like the other girls. I watched and I understood, and I played the game the way it should be played. The difference was that I worked and paid for my own clothes from the sweat off my brow. Their parents bought their clothes, and you can bet there was no sweat involved in that.

I knew who was in and who wasn’t, and I made sure I was part of the in-group, even if I had classes with ESL kids. I mean I was never at the topmost reaches of the cool group, but there were a couple of the cool

kids that took me in, and that was enough. But I wasn't out, either. No one recoiled in my presence or anything. But that required certain sacrifices, certain illusions. If I worked for my clothes, no one could know it. If I took ESL classes, it was because I could get away with it. Not because I was a part of the "or" group. And I took great pains to make sure that they knew I wasn't.

It wasn't easy. I liked the ESL kids, and I didn't want to be mean to them. It was just that I wanted to hang out with my White friends, the ones that were cool, the ones that belonged. I was only 15 years old. What did I know? The power was with the in crowd, and I wanted to be there. And I was there. I went to all the parties, all the dances, all the games. I hung with the right people, wore the right clothes. And I lived a double life. Whenever someone would find out that I was in ESL, I would make a big joke about it, like how I had scammed the counselor, worked the system. About how I was able to enroll in easy classes and they were none the wiser. It worked. They gave me props instead of pushing me out.

And if someone knew and mentioned that I spoke Spanish at home, they would also say, "But she's not like them," and then it was always a joke, like I'd say, "Yeah, my mom works at 7-11," and everyone would laugh. I'd throw them a piece of their own stereotypes, and they loved it. And I would think to myself, "Shit, why do I always have to be different? Why does it always have to be an issue? Why can't I just mix? What can't I just be? Why does it have to be either/or?"

So for the first couple of years, I ran myself ragged living the double life. When ESL class was over, I would run to meet my friends in C Hall. When it was time for class, I would wait until the last minute before leaving, and get through the door just in time. I had ESL for language arts and social studies, but the rest of my classes were regular, so I did have some class time with my either friends. I wouldn't have been able to pull it off without that.

It's not like all of my non-ESL friends were White. It's just that they acted White. Like Beata. She was Persian or something, but no one ever knew it. And Treda Wendell. And Jasmine Yong. Jasmine was Asian, and Treda was mixed, from Trinidad and Bengal. They were all good students. Very good. The teachers loved them. They were playing the part, and except for each other, they didn't intermix with anyone who wasn't White. Like they wouldn't speak to ESL kids. I understood where they were coming from. They wanted to fit in. They knew it was either/or, and, like me, they chose either.

My other White friends were trailer trash. I guess that was it. I could mix with the fake White, and mix with the White trash, but the really rich, really White kids were still out of my league. But Beata, Jasmine, Treda and me, we all knew that we had that unknown, hidden secret about us, and I guess we protected each other by never letting on. And so to me, they weren't just acting White, they were White. And I guess I was the same to them, except for the ESL classes. I was walking a fine line. Maybe it would have been easier if I had kept to the "either" side of things.

Vicki was not the only student who expressed the feeling that in order to fit in you had to "act White." Leilani also felt that in order to belong at Northwest, she would have to give up her identity as a Filipino:

I think the ESL kids were like chunks of chocolate in a glass of milk. Northwest wanted a nice, creamy, smooth glass of milk, but we kept getting in the way. Stir as they might, we just wouldn't mix. We wouldn't dissolve, and we clouded up their milk. They didn't like that. But I couldn't dissolve to fit in. To dissolve would be to destroy myself, and I just couldn't do that.

There were plenty of times that I was harassed. But that wasn't what got to me. What got to me was feeling left out. It was like a poisonous gas that had no substance and no form, but it was killing me nonetheless. It was in the posters that popped up on the wall about upcoming school events. Events that I had no idea about: who planned them, what they meant, what they were for, and who was really invited to go. That's what they were like: public invitations to parties that I wasn't invited to. And they were put there to mock me, to make me feel bad for not being invited. I mean, really, if there hadn't been laws against it, I think they would have put, "Whites only" on every one. But they didn't need to write it. It was already there, in invisible ink. I'd walk by these things every day, "Sadie Hawkins Dance, Friday October 14, 7-11 pm" or "Don't Miss the Homecoming Ball" or "Vote Alex Mehan for Freshman Class President". Every one of these could have easily said, "You're not welcome Leilani!" for all they meant to me. Homecoming, Winter Ball, school dances, football games, pep rallies came and went, and I knew that I would not be welcome. I sat and watched these events go by like a train full of passengers I didn't know. I wanted to belong, I wanted to fit in, I wanted to be a passenger on that train, but it never stopped to let me board.

In my ESL classes I felt good. I participated in them a lot. But in my regular classes I felt dumb. I would always come in and sit in the back of the class. I just didn't feel like I was a part of things. The teacher

would mostly ignore me, but sometimes they asked me questions. Most of the time I knew the answers, but I just couldn't express them without sounding dumb. So I tried not to look at the teachers so they wouldn't ask me. Sometimes I felt like they asked me things they knew I wouldn't know so they would make me look dumb. Like in science Mr. Fetter asked me about photosynthesis. I know about photosynthesis. I've been learning about it since elementary school. But he asks me like, "Who can explain the process of photosynthesis?" and he waits, just so everyone can squirm. A couple of White kids sitting in the front have their hands up. Martha Trasky is dying to answer this one, with her hand waving back and forth like she's saying goodbye to her navy man or something. But he pauses, and then he says, "Someone who hasn't answered for a while," and I know I'm in for it. I look down at the floor hoping that if he doesn't catch my eye he won't ask me. "Leilani Ramos?"

Everyone turns to look at me. Someone says, "Like she knows." I sink a little in my chair, and I open my mouth to speak. The sound that comes out doesn't sound like any kind of sound I would make. It's hushed and shy and shaky.

"Photosynthesis?" I say.

"Speak up, Leilani, we can't hear you," he says, impatiently.

"Isn't that where the plants drink . . ." some of the kids laugh. I hesitate.

"Go on . . ." he says. And I'm thinking is he enjoying this torture or what?

"Isn't that where the plants drink the water and then it goes through them and out into the air or something?" Why I answer like a question, I don't know. Why I can't speak up and tell them what I know, I don't know. That's just how it comes out. I feel dumb, and that's how they treat me.

"Drunk plants barf into the air, and that's photosynthesis," some smart aleck guy says, and everyone laughs at my expense. I feel awful, but at least I know that Mr. Fetter won't be asking me again any time soon.

In ESL it was so different. I mean, we put Thomas Jefferson on trial for crimes against humanity, and I was one of the lawyers! And sure, I didn't know all of the language I needed to, but it didn't matter. None of us did. But still we argued about it. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence we said. The words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal". All men are created equal, and yet he had slaves? We talked about how owning

slaves was just a sign of the times, and how he couldn't have had such a big house and land and stuff without slaves, and how owning slaves was considered okay at the time, just like in the Philippines where rich families have servants. And we talked about how good he was to his slaves. But then what about that he didn't set them free, even after he died? What about the rumors of having children with slaves and all of that? And who has the right to own anyone else? I don't know, we argued all about that stuff, and I never once felt tongue-tied. I never once felt dumb. Actually, I felt smart in my ESL classes.

Once I asked Mrs. Coulier a question. I said, "But Mrs. Coulier, why do more minorities end up dropping out and getting pregnant and selling drugs?" We debated the whole class period about that question, and then Mrs. Coulier let us do a whole unit on racism, even though we were supposed to stick to district curriculum. That's why I felt smart in ESL. I could speak my mind, I could speak without fear, and what I said mattered.

The only thing that mattered about me in my regular classes was that I was a nuisance, like that chunk of chocolate in their glass full of pure, white milk. I used up a chair they could have used for someone else. Someone White.

Leilani felt that she could not belong to the school unless she gave up who she was . . . literally dissolved. Thus, she lived her high school life segregated with other ELLs and minority groups, outside of the mainstream majority, and feeling all the while that she did not really belong.

Assertion 6: ELLs were expected to assimilate to the dominant culture, leaving behind their linguistic and cultural identity.

Like Leilani, Anna, too, found that the only way she could fit into the mainstream high school life would be to let go of her Russian identity. However, unlike Leilani, Anna was anxious to assume a new American identity:

When I left Russia, I knew I was leaving my old life behind. My mother was marrying an American man, and we were leaving Russia for good. I also knew that there were a lot of Russians in Anchorage, and I figured that I would find some friends to speak Russian with. But I also thought I'd meet some new American friends, learn English, and learn more about the American way of life. I loved American music, especially Michael Jackson, and I hoped I'd find a friend who loved him, too.

When I first came to Northwest, I was pretty shy. I couldn't speak much English, and I was overwhelmed. So I stuck mostly to ESL kids, and Russians. Not that that was bad. We had a lot of fun, and I liked the kids from ESL. They were from all over, and I learned a lot about

other cultures. But I also wanted to be a part of the whole school, and as I started learning more of the language, I tried to get more involved.

The classes at Northwest were very easy. They first put me in Algebra I. It was so easy! I was doing that stuff in elementary school in Russia! So they moved me to Algebra II. That was too easy, too, but since I was a freshman they wouldn't move me up. That was okay, though, because I was still learning English, and having those easy classes early on helped me learn the language quicker.

I went my first year or two at Northwest feeling pretty good. I hung out with people I liked, and I didn't try to venture out into Northwest life because I didn't feel ready yet with my language. But toward the middle of sophomore year, as I started understanding more of the language, I started understanding more of Northwest life. It was like I was coming out of my cocoon, and when I was just trying to open my wings and be a butterfly, I found that Northwest High School was full of spider webs.

I don't know if my awareness was sudden, or gradual. I remember early on getting some pretty funny looks when my friends and I would speak Russian in the hall. But we were sharing stories from home, and we always laughed a lot, and mostly we just ignored it. But soon I started understanding some of what the other kids were saying.

"What are the KJB talking about?" one would say.

"They're arranging more mail order brides," another would answer.

"Maybe they're Russian Mafia, making a drug deal!"

"Whatever it is, they should SPEAK ENGLISH!" This they would say loudly, looking directly at us.

My stomach turned the first time I got it. Suddenly, Northwest was no longer waiting for me to feel comfortable with English. Suddenly, Northwest was a place I was not welcome. I'm not dumb, you know. If I wasn't welcome, it wouldn't matter how good my English was. I would never be a part of Northwest High School.

Don't get me wrong. I wasn't dying to fit in or something. Northwest wasn't some holy place or anything. But I was trying to make the best of my new home. What kid doesn't want to fit in? What kid doesn't want to be a part of her own school?

That first time, I didn't let it get to me too much. I figured maybe it was just that group of people. But I was more aware of the looks people gave us. I started speaking Russian in a lower voice, and sometimes didn't talk much until we got into the ESL room.

But the ball was rolling, and I would never be able to go back to that cocoon, that hope, that expectation. From then on what I felt that first time would be repeated over and over again until I caught on. But it took awhile until that happened.

That's the thing about butterflies, I guess. They'll try to spread their wings even when they know they can't fly.

Anna was well-prepared academically to enter the American school system. She was able to enroll directly into upper division and Advanced Placement classes. However, because of her Russian accent and status as an ELL, Anna was not accepted by mainstream groups. Thus, Anna was in a Catch-22: She had to assimilate in order to belong, but even then she was not welcomed. Vicki and Leilani also felt they had to give up their ethnic identities in order to belong. All three girls chose to embrace their sociocultural identity and face rejection from the mainstream. All three girls paid a price for that decision: Vicki was eventually expelled from school for having the same number of truancies as one of her White friends (who was given work detail but allowed to remain in school); Leilani regretted not having taken more risks to be involved in her school; Anna took risks and was rejected outright (on a daily basis). These kinds of social transactions are very costly for ELLs. High school is a high-stakes social world as it is an adolescent sense of identity that is at risk.

Assertion 7: There was little cultural relevance for many ELLs in either the instruction or the institution of high school.

Adolescent immigrant children face a very difficult situation as they establish their growing sociocultural identities. They are often faced with a choice: become American and violate some of their native cultural norms, or stay within their home cultures and be rejected in school. Everyone wants to belong, to have a sense of community. ELLs who assume a more American identity are often treated like outsiders by the very students they choose to identify with because they look or sound different than their native English-speaking peers. At Northwest, ELLs who chose to identify with an alternative group—other ELLs—were often pegged as “gangstas” no matter what their true interests were. Such was the case of Chansy, as his best friend Charlotte describes:

Security sure knew Chansy. They were always following him and were all suspicious about him and stuff. We all wore baggy clothes at the time, and everyone thought that since we were Asian and wore baggy clothes, we were in a gang. To us it was just the clothes we liked. Some people thought that if we wore our clothes tight no one would suspect us of being in a gang. Like we did the gangsta thing just to make them believe we were in gangs. But I think they already thought all that stuff

about us. So we just played into it because why shouldn't we? If that's who they think we are, then there's nothing we can do that's going to change that. I'm not going to say that it didn't make me mad. I wasn't in a gang.

So we'd all hang out in G square, right by the library. Everyone called it "Gangsta Hall." I liked hanging out there with all my friends. We had a good time, and we felt good together. There was always a security guard standing there by the soda machine, watching what we did. So we'd all get together there with our baggy clothes, and we'd stand in a circle, and they're probably thinking there's something going down, like that can't be good. But what we're standing around talking about is *The Lion King* or something like that.

Chansy loved Disney movies, and he was always begging Mrs. Coulier to let us watch one in ESL class. And he'd walk around saying "Hakuna Matata" or "My friends call me Al, but you can call me Aladdin." He had an answer for everything with his lines from Disney movies. His all time favorite movie was "The Little Rascals" and he would watch it at home whenever he could. He made me sit and watch it with him, too. He knew every line. He laughed through the whole thing. Every time he watched it, he laughed like he was seeing it for the first time.

Security was always following Chansy around. Chansy would see them behind him and go, "Man, that's racist!" But Chansy would say that about almost everything, "Man, that's racist!" Like he could make a big joke about it. When Mrs. Coulier would announce a test, he'd be all, "Man, that's racist!"

There was that trouble with Eddie, but Chansy stayed away from that. Chansy was a good friend. He was loyal. And sometimes it'd get him into trouble. Like when Eddie brought a gun to school, no one ratted him out. Eddie just got too dumb about it, and started talking about it, and then a teacher heard him and told security. It was like he wanted them to find out. But he got it off campus before they caught him with it, and then he said it was all a joke. But Chansy wasn't a part of that at all. And then Eddie got kicked out of school for truancies. As soon as Eddie got his fourth, he was out on his ass like that. I've heard of other people having a bunch of truancies, but they never get kicked out. But they wanted Eddie out fast. So then Eddie got kicked out of his house, and Chansy let him stay with him. But Eddie was getting into some bad stuff. Every once in a while someone would come looking for Eddie at Chansy's house, and Chansy's family had to start sleeping on the floor because they had some drive bys. So Eddie had to move out, but Chansy gave him money. Chansy was loyal to Eddie to the end. He did whatever he could for Eddie. But Chansy backed

away from Eddie when the shit got too much for him. It was just his loyalty that made him help Eddie. So when Eddie shot that guy and ended up in jail, everyone thought Chansy was involved, too. But he wasn't. He was just Eddie's friend. He wasn't his accomplice or anything.

Chansy maybe partied a little, but not much. Thing is, we couldn't afford alcohol and drugs the way the White kids did. So here is security following us while we talk about *The Lion King*, and it was the White kids that had those huge parties with drugs and stuff. We spent most of our time hanging out at the mall or going to the movies. We liked to go to Northern Lights Center after school. We'd go ice skating there, or bowling. Chansy was so funny on skates. He just loved to have fun, like a little kid.

I think if Chansy had a motto, *Hakuna Matata* was it. No worries, for the rest of your days. That was the way he lived, and that was the way he taught us to live.

It wasn't so easy for us after Chansy was gone.

Chansy, who loved Disney movies and was known to quote them at any given time, was profiled as a gang member because of the way he dressed. While students rejected the identities given them by others, they often assumed an "in your face" attitude. Jolar, David, Darek, Charlotte, and Leilani all describe embracing the toughness of the gang identity as protection from bullying at school, while all rejected the idea of gang membership all together. Cultural relevance to adolescent immigrants in America is a fluid, all-encompassing notion. In order to create a culturally relevant environment, all students must be included, have a sense of belonging, and a voice in the community. Without cultural relevance, without something to identify within the instruction or the institution of high school, the participants in this study expressed the need to group together and identify with one another. However, the mainstream groups interpreted this as gang-like behavior.

Conclusions and Implications

Juxtaposing the themes that run through our research with the characteristics of successful high school "communities of commitment" [p. 9] that Ancess (2003) describes, it is clear that high schools are not meeting the needs of our immigrant children. Research on secondary programs for ELLs concurs. Lucas, Henze, and Donato (1990) documented in a now well-known study the attributes of six exemplary high schools that contributed to the success of ELLs in high schools. From this study, eight features of programs that promote the success of ELLs were identified: (a) respect for students'

languages and cultures, (b) teachers' high expectations of students, (c) language minorities as a leadership priority, (d) staff development, (e) language-minority specific courses, (f) counseling, (g) parent involvement, and (h) committed staff. Most high schools have not committed to embracing all of these attributes. In 1992, Minicucci and Olsen studied 23 high schools in California, and found that most of them severely underserved ELLs. For example,

1. Teachers with little or no background in teaching academic content to ELLs were assigned to classes with large numbers of ELLs;
2. ELLs were offered sparse coverage of academic courses;
3. ELLs with conversational proficiency in English were linguistically and socially isolated from English speakers;
4. Programs for ELLs were not considered part of the school community;
5. There was little or no site leadership regarding the needs of ELLs; and
6. There were no additional support mechanisms for ELLs and their parents (as adapted in Faltis & Coulter, in press).

Furthermore, Minicucci and Olsen discovered that fewer than one-fourth of the high schools studied offered a full sequence of core content classes to ELLs.

In 1994, Olsen studied 32 randomly selected secondary schools and found: (a) Changing demographics require changes in schools; (b) Research has documented inequalities rooted in institutional structures; and (c) New challenges require new thinking about schools and support for educators engaged in the change process. Studies by Olsen (1996, 1997) uncovered issues of tracking, inadequate instruction, and denied access to core content classes. Patterns emerge from such studies and are echoed in the stories of our participants.

More, when we bring into play what we know about the social nature of learning, we find that the social exclusion many ELLs face denies them access to a fair and equitable education. The call to restructure high schools to smaller communities, schools-within-schools and the like, with the attributes Ancess (2003) describes (common ethos and vision, care and caregiving, willingness and capacity for struggle, mutual accountability, teaching and learning for meaning-making) is well-warranted.

At Northwest, the experiences of ELLs fit into Ancess's (2003) description quoted previously: ". . . high school organizational behaviors and norms . . . produce anonymity, anomie, isolation, invisibility, silence, insecurity, coercive conformity, meaningless rote activity, and intellectual deadening [which is] painful and hurtful to human development, performance, spirit, and society" (p. 10). This study instantiates the categories and makes real what students in one Alaskan suburb face. Furthermore, this study gives names and faces to the painful experiences of alienation, rejection, and failure that many ELLs

face. From Jolar and David's intellectual deadening through meaningless rote activity to Leilani's and Darek's insecurity, to the coercive conformity that Vicki experienced, we see not only the real-time effects on adolescents, but get a glimmer of the implications of these experiences on their future lives.

The structures Ancess (2003) describes are not inevitable or natural. They have been constructed, institutionalized and often go uncriticized because they do not threaten the powerful. However, as more students fail to fit the system, the system must adapt. The call to restructure high schools resonates more imperatively as they grow in diversity. Exemplary high schools such as those studied by Ancess (2003) and Lucas et al. (1990) give us much to learn from, as do the stories of individual ELLs, such as those featured in this study. The eight recommendations from Lucas et al. are well-heeded, but they are not enough. Though structural changes such as creating smaller schools-within-schools and including more course offerings for ELLs and more staff development are absolutely vital, our stories reflect how the mechanisms for marginalization become internalized at the individual level. It was strikingly evident that our participants experienced varying levels of exclusion, discrimination, segregation, and marginalization on a daily basis, particularly at the hands of *students* from the dominant mainstream. It is here that Ancess's call to create communities of commitment resonates the most. Administrative imperatives to improve schools for ELLs will go a long way, but attitudinal changes will take time and work. School personnel, students, and their communities alike will need to participate in a process of articulation that will require dialogue and ultimately the desire to create a new, truly comprehensive high school, inclusive to all. For an adolescent exploring her sociocultural identity, there is much at stake. For students facing life after high school, the future is at stake.

References

- Ancess, J. (2003). *Beating the odds: High schools as communities of commitment*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Barone, T. (2000). *Aesthetics, politics, and educational inquiry: Essays and examples*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Becker, H. (1992). Cases, causes, conjunctures, stories, and imagery. In C. Ragin & H. Becker (Eds.), *What is a case?* (pp. 205–216). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. H. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2–14.
- Coulter, C. (2003). *Snow white, revolutions, the American dream and other fairy tales: Growing up immigrant in an American high school*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University, Tempe.

- Ecker, D. (1966). The artistic process as qualitative problem-solving. In E. Eisner & D. Ecker (Eds.), *Readings in art education* (pp. 57–68). Waltham, MA: Blaisdell.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (pp. 119–161). Chicago: Macmillan.
- Faltis, C. (2006). *Joinfostering: Teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Faltis, C. & Coulter, C. (in press). *Teaching English learners in the secondary school*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Faltis, C., & Hudelson, S. (1998). *Bilingual education in elementary and secondary school communities: Toward understanding and caring*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gee, J. P. (1992). *The social mind: Language, ideology and social practice*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.
- Lave, J. (1993). Situated learning in communities of practice. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (pp. 63–82). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Lucas, T., Henze, R., & Donato, R. (1990). Promoting the success of Latino language minority students: An exploratory study of six high schools. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60(3), 315–340.
- Minicucci, C., & Olsen, L. (1992). *Programs for secondary limited English proficient students: A California study*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Olsen, L. (1994). *California tomorrow research and policy report*. San Francisco: California Tomorrow.
- Olsen, L. (1996). *The unfinished journey: Restructuring schools in a diverse society*. San Francisco: California Tomorrow.
- Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant students in our public schools*. New York: The New Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5–24). London: The Falmer Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2000) Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 435–454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Press.