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Fo(u)r Friends: The Social, Emotional, and Academic Effects of an Extracurricular
Program for Secondary Newcomer Students

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Hamline University

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DEDICATION

To all my students: past, present, and future. Thank you for being my forever teachers.
May you always know your value in the classroom and in our world.

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I am eternally grateful to:

Selin Colak: Your friendship and kind spirit have given me so much joy and motivation. Thank you for being my grad school day one.

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My family: Thank you for always encouraging me to achieve my dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	6
Finding Purpose.....	6
Personal Background.....	7
Professional Rationale	9
Chapter Summary.....	11
CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review.....	13
Introduction.....	13
Newcomers in the United States.....	14
Identity and Positionality	21
Language Learning and Acquisition.....	28
Extracurricular Programs.....	32
Chapter Summary.....	40
CHAPTER THREE: Project Description.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Program Description.....	43
Project Framework.....	46
Setting and Audience.....	49
Timeline.....	51
Assessment.....	52
Chapter Summary.....	52
CHAPTER FOUR: Conclusion.....	54
Introduction.....	54

Major Learnings.....	55
Revisiting the Literature.....	57
Implications and Limitations.....	59
Future Work.....	61
Chapter Summary.....	62
REFERENCES.....	63

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Finding Purpose

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, I spent the summer of 2021 back in the classroom student-teaching in an English learner (EL) newcomer program. The students, who were from middle and high schools all around the district, were brought together for a three-week summer camp to learn English and content, earning high school credits and building community with their peers. The time flew by quickly, and it was during the second week of camp that I was inspired with my capstone project. In the middle school classroom, the students' English assignment was to create an All About Me presentation using six prompts from the teacher: your name, your family, your friends, your favorite food, your favorite place to visit, and your hobbies. On each slide, students were expected to write a complete sentence and include at least one photo. On the first day, the students mostly worked on the slides that had more obvious sentence frames (i.e. my favorite food is ...) and Google-able photos. They skipped the apparently difficult slides to save for later. On the second day, we resumed work on our presentations, and I noticed a group of the five girls huddled, smiling, and giggling together. This was exciting, given that the students spoke four different first languages (Spanish, Somali, Oromo, and Twi) and had not been able to communicate much via spoken language. I slowly made my way to the group and asked what was so fun that they were working on. Immediately, they all flipped their iPads in my direction to show me what they had done: they each wrote "4 friends" on the top of their slide and posted selfies of each other. Under my mask, I was smiling with them!

In this moment, I realized how profound an impact special programs could have on newcomer students' school and life experiences. I decided to focus my work on creating an extracurricular program model for secondary newcomer students by researching more about their specific assets and needs, the benefits of extracurriculars, and existing newcomer programs that serve students in and out of the classroom. This project will seek to answer the research question: *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?* In this chapter, I will present my personal background related to teaching newcomer students and provide a rationale for the project, an extracurricular program model designed to help secondary newcomer students transition to their new lives.

Personal Background

I began my teaching career at an urban high school in California, 2,000 miles from home. The student population was vastly different from my rural Minnesota hometown, and my students spoke many languages and varieties of English I had never heard before. As the only licensed chemistry teacher, I was assigned to teach the newcomer students in sheltered section chemistry classes. Without much formal training in teaching ELs, I felt inadequate in my role. However, I quickly discovered my love for working with ELs: sharing language, culture, and common learning experiences. This joy inspired my daily work, and I began to do my own research to become a better teacher for my newcomer students and ELs.

Science is typically the first course that ELs and special education (SPED) students take in the mainstream setting, which presents unique challenges and opportunities in the classroom. Though I was formally trained in science pedagogy, I

continuously searched for new ways to make the content and my practice more relevant, hands-on, and accessible for all students. In my first year teaching, I participated in extensive training in the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) crafted to make science curricula more engaging. Instead of focusing on knowing, the new standards focused on doing. They also focused on phenomena, finding a topic that all students could connect with to make the content more relatable. In addition to science professional development, I attended the Bay Area CADA Leadership conference about building positive classroom and school culture. I also started learning Spanish through adult community education so I could connect with my students on a more personal level. Together, these helped me transform my classroom into an inclusive space for all learners.

During this time, I was also adjusting to my life in a new city and state. After arriving at my rented bedroom on a Saturday evening and settling in over the weekend, I started work on a Monday morning. Trying to get acquainted with the city's roads, I decided to drive home without GPS. This decision resulted in a scary accident that totaled my car, and the reality of my situation immediately sunk in: I had no car, no family within hours, and no friends in the school or community. It was a far cry from my childhood in small-town Minnesota, where everyone looked like me and I knew them by name. It was also different from college where everyone, like me, was navigating a new city, culture, and work-life balance together. This was my new adult home, surrounded by strangers, a new teaching job, and a bustling city culture I had never experienced before. I quickly learned that I needed to make friends with locals who knew about the bus routes, the closest grocery stores, and local car dealerships. Fortunately for me, this was fairly

easy, as I am extroverted, speak English, and had a built-in community of teachers to connect with. Despite the car setback, my transition was smooth, and in a short time, I felt comfortable calling my new place home.

After three years in California, I decided to return to my home state and enroll in a MA-TESOL (Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program. I continued teaching chemistry during the day and studied language acquisition theories and EL pedagogy at night. While much of the training taught me how to develop a curriculum and advocate for students, little prepared me to help students transition to the community as a whole. Thus, as a traveler and adventurer myself, I am inspired to develop a program that helps newcomer students transition to a new home, supporting their social, emotional, and academic well-being. In developing such a program, I recognize that my experiences and perspective are different from my students' lived experiences and perspectives. I am a white, cis-gendered female from a middle-class background. I am an educated adult with many opportunities in front of me. My native language is a language of power whether I am in the United States or abroad. As a person of privilege, I need to use my voice to elevate and enhance the experiences of others, but because my position and perspective are different, I must work with their goals in mind rather than my own.

Professional Rationale

As a secondary science and EL teacher, I believe my job goes much beyond teaching content standards. My job is to prepare students for life after high school by creating an experience that challenges and affirms them in all parts of their identity. More importantly, my job is to help students become kind, compassionate adults who will make

a positive difference in the world. To achieve these goals, students must be supported socially, emotionally, and academically. Yet historically, many students are not receiving the support they need to reach their full potential.

The population of ELs in public schools is growing nationwide. As a marginalized group of students, it is the job of school leaders to advocate for their needs and resources to support their growth. This mission is a critical component of social justice (Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011). Since the influential *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) lawsuit, which stated *same* was not *equal* in regards to educating ELs, there has been a history of federal policy about the education of ELs in the United States (Hakuta, 2011). These regulations define ELs’ rights and access to an equal educational opportunity, particularly regarding language instruction. In providing specialized services and English language support, schools are foundational to helping students transition to their new lives (López et al., 2020). Academic language, taught during the school day, is often seen as a stepping stone for ELs to engage with their peers and interact with their community. However, an EL in a new country requires, and perhaps desires, much more than just academic language support; they need social and emotional support to contribute to positive identity formation and ultimately a resilient and successful transition to their new lives (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Schools and communities together can support ELs’ social, emotional, and academic growth. Learning is not confined to the walls of a classroom. In fact, the basic concept of learning goes much beyond the classroom and has changed very little throughout time. According to Freire (1970), “Knowledge emerges ... through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with

the world, and with each other” (p. 72). As such, students need to interact with the world and each other in a variety of ways, not just in the classroom where they are learning content and academic language standards.

This extracurricular program model developed for secondary newcomer students intentionally centers community-building and community engagement. By creating a space where students are supported socially and emotionally, students will find academic growth, too. The program will take place during the school year when students are already on campus. Students will have a chance to learn language as it relates to a particular task or topic, and then go into the community to practice that language. Topics and field trips will be determined by the participants at the beginning of the program based on their interests and needs. Students will form friendships with other students as they share experiences together. In the end, this inclusive extracurricular program will enhance students’ transition to the United States, preparing them to be successful long after they leave high school.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed my personal connection to the project, my experience working with ELs, and the need for additional extracurricular newcomer support. There are currently too few opportunities for newcomer ELs to intentionally and positively engage with their new communities and peers outside of the classroom. The aim of my capstone project is to develop a research-based extracurricular program model for secondary newcomer students that any school can adopt and implement. While the program will support students socially, emotionally, and academically, it will also

demonstrate a commitment towards social justice. The rest of this project will be spent working towards this goal.

In Chapter Two, I will introduce the current, relevant research that supports and describes who newcomers are, the theoretical perspectives regarding the identity and language development of newcomers, and the benefits of extracurricular programs in holistically supporting newcomer students. In Chapter Three, I will describe the project, explaining how the literature review shapes the program model. Finally, I will provide a reflection of the capstone project and process in Chapter Four, highlighting my hopes about its implementation in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Since the beginning of time, the United States has been home to migration. It is a story of both a brutal and beautiful past, and it gives hope and dreams to the future. In more recent times, immigration rates have increased and are continuing to rise, representing a larger share of the youth population (Amthor, 2017; Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Berliner, 2019; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These young immigrants and their families are moving to all parts of the country, from small towns to big cities, and their reasons for immigrating to the United States include familial, economic, political, and security reasons (Berliner, 2019; Hos, 2020; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Upon their arrival, they learn the local cultures and share their own; they enrich the country with their diverse experiences, stories, traditions, knowledge, and ways of thinking (Amthor, 2017; Berliner, 2019). They are the future of the United States. In designing learning experiences for newcomer students, educators must consider newcomers' prior knowledge, life experiences and future goals. This project will seek to answer the question: *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?* First, I will provide a working definition of newcomers, describe the different ways in which newcomers come to the United States, and present some of the unique assets and needs of newcomer students as they relate to their daily lives. Second, I will describe theoretical perspectives regarding identity and positionality, highlighting the dynamic, multi-faceted identities and identity development as a pursuit of liberation. Third, I will describe language learning and

acquisition theories including current educational models, translanguaging, and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Finally, I will define and describe the social, emotional, and academic benefits of extracurricular activities for secondary newcomer students.

Newcomers in the United States

According to the United States Department of Education (2017), newcomers are “foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States” (p. 1). Newcomer students are defined as students who have recently arrived and enrolled in the United States K-12 school system who have not yet acclimated to their new, local culture (Abel, 2020; Berliner, 2019; Rivera, 2009). Their status might be immigrant, refugee, or asylum-seeker (Abel, 2020; Lopez et al., 2020). Newcomer students arrive in the United States with a variety of English language and native language skills, ranging from illiterate to literate in one or more languages. They also arrive with a variety of educational experiences that may include structured, rigorous education to virtually no formal education. Regardless of skills, abilities, prior experiences, or immigration status, all newcomer youth have the right to a free, public education (Berliner, 2019).

As ELs, newcomer students are also a protected class who are required by law to receive specialized services. Hakuta (2011) and the United States Department of Education (2017) cite a number of key pieces of legislation that define these services. According to *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), schools must ensure all ELs can access the curriculum by providing differentiated English language support. *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) clarified that all ELs, whether documented or undocumented, have access to a free, public education. Finally, *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) provided a tool to assess districts and educational agencies’ compliance with civil rights laws. Each of these cases describes

ELs' academic legal rights. More recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandated that all states must have clear, consistent entrance and exit criteria for English Language Development (ELD) programs. In accordance with this regulation, newcomer students' English language skills are assessed in a school-determined appropriate manner (Hakuta, 2011). The more than 30 states part of the WIDA Consortium use the WIDA Screener as the entrance assessment and the ACCESS for ELLs (English language learners) as the exit assessment, both of which provide feedback about English language skills (WIDA, n.d.). The results of these and other similar assessments determine placement in ELD programs at students' local schools. However, they do not necessarily provide any information about the strengths and overall well-being of the student, including primary language skills, social-emotional competencies, and personal interests and strengths.

Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

Newcomers in the United States come for many different reasons, each unique to their own stories. While some move to the United States by free will, others may be forced to leave their countries due to poverty, violence, war, natural disasters, or a variety of reasons. These groups of newcomers are classified into three main categories:

- *Immigrant*: a person who voluntarily leaves their country for hopes of a different life (Berliner, 2019; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001)
- *Refugee*: a person who is forced to leave their country due to conflict or fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, social affiliations, or political stance (Berliner, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], n.d.)

- *Asylum seeker*: a person who is forced to leave their country due to conflict or fear of persecution but whose request has not yet been processed (Berliner, 2019; UNHCR, n.d.)

An additional sub-category is a group of students classified as SLIFE, students with limited or interrupted formal education. In contrast to some of their peers, these students are lacking literacy skills, content-knowledge, and knowledge of how to do school (DeCapua, 2016). During inconsistent times in their countries and lives, many have also experienced trauma. While SLIFE students may come to the United States as immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers, they have distinct educational needs that must be addressed. For the purpose of this capstone, the term *immigration* will be used to describe the process of moving to the United States for all groups, regardless of their entrance route.

While each person has a unique immigration story, those who immigrate to the United States have some shared experiences. Each person goes through an adjustment period, and two common terms used to describe the process of adjustment include *acculturation* and *assimilation*. *Assimilation* is the process in which one learns the new culture while giving up the old, whereas *acculturation* is a personal or group change as a result of being in contact with different cultures (McBrien, 2005). These expectations are problematic, because they suggest that those immigrating to the United States are the only ones who must adapt and change. Yet the possibilities for expected change, especially regarding communication, are nearly endless. For example, there may be cultural differences in language, proximity between people, volume and tone of voice, eye contact, and timing. These social expectations are typically learned in childhood, but they may need to be learned or adjusted later depending on context (Suárez-Orozco &

Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In communication, both parties can learn to adjust, yet this is unfortunately often left solely to those who have immigrated. Dominant society often assumes that once the newcomers acculturate or assimilate, they have been successful. However, there is not one way to measure success. Some people might define success as establishing a permanent life in the United States, whereas others might define success as reaching the goals that brought them here in the first place and then making a better life for themselves back in their home country (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). No culture or nation is permanent, and as communities change, so must the people living in those communities. Alternative terms used to describe the process of adjustment include *cultural pluralism*, *transculturalism*, and *additive assimilation*, in which one retains their native culture and adds customs of the new culture (McBrien, 2005). All people can choose to adjust in these ways, and these new terms and ideas recognize that it is a skill to move “within, between, and beyond”¹ (Barlow et al., 2021) languages and cultures in everyday life.

Newcomer Students’ Assets and Needs

In developing an extracurricular newcomer program, the diverse life experiences and unique needs of newcomer students must be the driving factors. The program must meet the students where they are at and help them to be successful according to their own hopes and dreams. Newcomers bring with them vast *funds of knowledge*, which refer to the accumulation of historical and cultural knowledge that are present in their homes and communities (Moll et al., 2005). Teacher leaders must act as researchers and learners to

¹ “Within, Between, and Beyond” was the title of an exhibition at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in 2021 by Leslie Barlow. Her work explored the stories and experiences of 16 Minnesotans who identify as mixed race, multiracial, and/or transnational/transracial adoptee.

discover these funds of knowledge and build upon them. Funds of knowledge cover many topics of life, including ranching and farming, mining, construction, repair, business, contemporary medicine, budgets, cooking, childcare, religious studies, and more (Moll et al., 2005). Utilizing funds of knowledge in education means making sure they are represented in day-to-day topics and activities and recognized as assets to future learning. Moll et al. (2005) studied how individuals and their families use these funds of knowledge in constructing their social lives, particularly their connections with other individuals and families. Two emerging themes provide insight into how these funds of knowledge can be incorporated into educational experiences. First, most relationships are multi-stranded, meaning the people with whom they learn from are also people with whom they may socialize. This means that neither the teacher nor the learner are isolated in a single role. Secondly, the relationships are reciprocal, meaning both parties are participating and gaining from the relationship; there is mutual trust (Moll et al., 2005). In light of these observations and patterns, it is evident that an extracurricular newcomer program should build upon these skills and structures to best support newcomer students.

In addition to a multitude of assets, newcomer students' diverse life experiences might present unique challenges when it comes to their education in the United States. Newcomer students often have new family dynamics and roles that can impact their participation in school and school-based activities. Many newcomer students and their families live in poverty- and crime-filled, segregated, urban neighborhoods (Berliner, 2019; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The familial structures vary widely from single-parent to extended family units. Overall, the poverty rate for newcomers and children of parents who immigrated to the United States is double the poverty rate of

U.S.-born children (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). These socioeconomic disparities are critical factors for consideration in regards to students' participation in their education and extracurricular activities.

For many, especially those displaced by tragedy, education is the way to a better life. When asked "How do you get ahead in the United States?", a Chinese parent eloquently responded,

"The only way to do it is to do well in school... Knowledge is the most lasting thing. If you have an education you can have a more fulfilling life and nothing can defeat you. Material things are short-lived no matter how much you own. Only knowledge can last forever" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 125).

Many newcomer students also feel a strong commitment to their education because they have seen their parents' sacrifices for educational opportunities (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). A positive mindset towards school is generally shared within newcomer families. However, school might lose its top priority when the day-to-day tasks present a more immediate, pressing need. Instead of focusing on school, students may need to take care of family business. If their parents are working long hours, this might mean managing household duties or taking care of siblings and other relatives. If money is tight, this may mean supporting the family financially by working one or more jobs (Hos, 2020; Sinclair, 2007). Before making any judgments about newcomer students' participation in school and/or extracurricular activities, it is important to understand the whole situation.

When students immigrate to a new country, necessary cultural learnings also emerge in the classroom and in society. In addition to taking care of their own personal and familial needs, students must learn new school and societal norms. For example,

newcomer students might need to adjust to the learning or teaching styles (i.e. rote learning vs. inquiry), test types (i.e. multiple-choice vs. essay), school day schedule (i.e. number and length of classes), and the concept of credit (Rivera, 2009). Even something as simple as hand-raising might cause a disconnect. Whereas teachers often view hand-raising as a sign of engagement and intelligence, students may view hand-raising as compliance and perhaps an opportunity to ask questions (Strickland, 2012, as cited in Abel, 2020). Socio-cultural norms, such as politeness in communication, are ever-present in the classroom and community, too. When cultural mistakes are made between newcomers and members of the dominant culture, newcomers can feel confused and embarrassed (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The lack of social and cultural capital puts them at a disadvantage (Hos, 2020), and it requires a lot of new information and adjustment to successfully navigate the systems of school and daily life.

Secondary newcomer students have an especially difficult set of circumstances. Adolescents experience greater challenges in adapting to the new home life, school life, social life, and cultural life than elementary students (Amthor & Roxas, 2016). By middle school, students typically identify with peers from the same ethnic circle. When newcomer students arrive in the country, they must start over in making new friends, which can be a daunting task due to language barriers, cultural barriers, and personal conflicts. Confronted with familial, social, and academic challenges, adolescents may experience a wide range of emotions, struggle with clashing values and belief systems, and have undesirable behaviors related to school and home (Rivera, 2009). Secondary SLIFE students may have even greater difficulties with this transition because of their limited English and academic skills altogether, which makes them an especially

vulnerable group at risk of dropping out (Rivera, 2009). In addition to this struggle at school, newcomers may experience tension at home. Children are generally exposed to the new language and culture much more quickly than parents, especially if their families live in segregated spaces or their parents work with other families who have immigrated. This can lead to family tensions (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008) or newcomers' embarrassment about their native language or their parents' cultural ways of life (Gaytán et al., 2007). Creating an unwavering, loving support system and a safe space for students that allows them to practice their own cultural ways and build upon their funds of knowledge while making mistakes with new cultural norms is a critical component of newcomer education.

Summary of Newcomers in the United States

Newcomers in the United States are a diverse group of individuals with endless stories and dreams for the future. They come to the United States as immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, but they live in the United States as valuable members of our communities. Newcomer students are also valuable members of our schools. While they often have many things to learn, including language, culture, and how to “do school”, they have great funds of knowledge across a wide spectrum of topics to share. Many newcomer students and their families believe that education is the path to success in life. Learning from and with newcomer students is an honor, and addressing their unique needs should be the driving factor of all newcomer programs decisions.

Identity and Positionality

Moving through cultures is an important part of adjusting to life in a new country. While sustaining a native culture, newcomers must also navigate the new mainstream

culture and other local cultures. The introduction and meshing of these cultures and corresponding languages shape new communities, cultures, and languages, all of which have lasting impacts on individuals' and communities' identities. Though there is no absolute agreement about the definition of identity, this section will explore the concept of identity as an ever-changing construct, made of many layers depending upon time and space, both an individualistic and group phenomenon, a cognitive circumstance and a cultural process (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). It will also describe adolescent identity development and provide evidence that supporting newcomer students' positive identity development is an act of social justice. Understanding the complex notion of identity, including how identities are shaped for individuals and members of connected society, is a key step in supporting newcomer students' transition to a new country.

Defining Identity

Identity is a complex notion of many parts, including who we are, who others believe we are, and who we hope to be in the future. It is fluid, dynamic, and shaped by the environment around us (Muhammad, 2020). Due to immigration, newcomer students have a changing environment and array of needs regarding family separation, language adaptation, social capital, educational gaps, potential undocumented status, and social positioning. As a result, there exists an intersectionality between one's identity in social, power, and institutional relations (Amthor, 2017). Newcomer students may have a strong sense of identity in some areas and a less established sense in others. Certain aspects of one's identity may even be non-existent after being stripped from them in their new life (Muhammad, 2020). With these various, overlapping identities, newcomer students are often torn between identities of “‘here and now’ with the ‘there and then’”

(Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 87). A particular challenge is that newcomer students' sense of identity is partly dependent on the reflections mirrored back by those around them from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) state that these reflections coming from family, friends, teachers, and the greater mainstream society can be positive and negative, accurate and inaccurate. They note that the push and pull of perceptions between people of different cultures and spaces cause students to craft one of the following identities: *ethnic flight* (identifying with the mainstream culture and dissociating to some level with their own ethnic group), *adversarial identities* (rejecting the mainstream culture that has rejected them), and *transcultural identities* (fusing their own ethnic traditions with the new mainstream culture). Transcultural identities are most aligned with a multicultural, ever-changing world, as it seeks to find a balance between global expectations and personal desires.

Multiple Identities. Newcomer students, who are often students of color and language learners, have multiple identities and layers of identity development. Abel (2020) provides examples of identity struggles as they relate to language. Two English-speaking girls from South Africa became immediately aware that their English accent was different from their peers; in an effort to help others understand, they felt that they needed to try to talk in the local accent. Another student from Brazil felt that she could be made fun of because of her accent. She added that having a different accent means you might not totally fit in, but it also “keeps a memory of your country of origin” (Abel, 2020, p. 132). In these examples, the girls experienced a similar push and pull between cultures but chose to respond differently, either speaking with the local accent or speaking in different accents in different environments. In addition to accents, other

language factors that affect identity include raciolinguistic stereotypes and prejudices related to BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) versus CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) (Cummins, 1980, as cited in Flores, 2020), oral versus written language, and multilingualism (Flores, 2021). According to Chen (2010), language is a form of capital that may influence one's identity, social status, and future prospects. Individuals might struggle to find their place within the world of language, but language is also just one component of a person's whole identity.

Identity in Context. Newcomer identities have been carefully studied and analyzed in a variety of educational contexts. In his study of an EL Ambassadors Program in a midwestern high school, Przymus (2016) found that schools promote opportunities for academic language and content development, as well as identity formation. In particular, identity formation in a setting with a mix of peers who speak a variety of languages influences identity affiliation and belonging. Chen (2010) and Amthor (2017) both analyzed the identities of individual students in multiple school contexts and found that the student's constructed identity, power relation, and identity negotiation change by space. Similarly, Oikonomidou and Karam (2020) confirmed that students identify differently in different environments, just as teachers view behaviors in different environments differently. Because identities are dynamic, flexible, and ongoing, changing over time and in different spaces (Amthor, 2017; Chen, 2010; Przymus, 2016), educators must recognize and honor newcomers' multi-dimensional, dynamic identities in and out of the classroom.

Identity Development

An individual's identity is constantly changing and developing, and it is important to help students see that all their identities, past, present, and future, make them who they are. For adolescents, who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood, identity development can be conflicting and tumultuous (González & Moll, 2002). Some youth may end up feeling lost or turning to gangs for a sense of identity and cohesion (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), whereas others may flourish finding their place in a new world. Muhammad (2020) argues that youth need intentional opportunities for identity development: to explore multiple aspects of themselves while learning about the identities of others who are different from them. In order to enjoy a peaceful life in community, they need to know themselves and the truths of others. Learning these similarities and differences teaches youth to respect, love, and live peacefully. She goes on to add that students need positive opportunities to see who they are and who they are not before they are adults (Muhammand, 2020). During a summer literacy institute for Black girls, a 16-year-old explained,

I have so many issues with it [identity] and I feel like no one really understands or at least not anyone I have encountered so it makes me self-conscious and I don't like to talk about it and sometimes I cry about it because not knowing who you are is the worst feeling in the world. (Muhammad, 2020, p. 68)

This particular student was a high achiever in the classroom, yet she still struggled to find her voice and sense of self in the world. This urgent call for identity development speaks for all students, especially for students of color who are often portrayed negatively in media and literature. The job of educators is to help develop students' identities,

particularly the identities of who they want to become (Muhammad, 2020), both as individuals and as members of their collective communities. Students' adaptability and flexibility in terms of identity and positionality are powerful assets in a pathway towards success.

Social Justice

Navigating and understanding one's identities is a critical component of self-advocacy and empowerment. As funds of knowledge are the accumulation of historical and cultural knowledge present in one's home and community, *funds of identity* are the funds of knowledge "essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding" (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 37). In short, funds of knowledge become funds of identity when people internalize them as part of their sense of self. Just as learning occurs when it connects to funds of knowledge, individual growth can occur when it connects to funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Identity development within the context of a new environment is critical for newcomer students' ultimate success. Within a formal educational system that represents imperialism and colonization (Gauvain et al., 2011, as cited in DeCapua, 2016), language and identity-awareness are tools of power (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In order to access this power, students must have exposure to people and customs of the dominant culture. If students only see the segregated neighborhoods they often live in, their dreams and opportunities for the future are limited; instead, exposing students to mainstream culture, as well as local micro-cultures, provides an opportunity to learn different varieties of English, build broader networks, and create new goals about their futures

(Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). These new experiences may then become a part of their funds of identity.

Including newcomer students into the wider culture of school and community is critical to their development and success. The implementation of programs that integrate newcomers into communities cannot be considered an extra thing but an essential thing (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Jovés et al. (2015) emphasized bringing students' funds of identity into the curriculum, a pedagogical practice that fights deficit-thinking and traditional power-relations between students and families. In a case study of two schools, Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) found that school leaders who view ELs with an asset-based orientation and place ELs' needs in the center of decision-making were more inclusive to ELs and their families, eliminating segregated instruction and services. Overall, utilizing students' funds of identity as a means for providing further identity and content development paves the way for ELs personal, social, and academic success.

Summary of Identity and Positionality

Identity is a complex, context-dependent construct that describes who we are in a given time and space. Newcomer students' identities are influenced by multiple cultures, languages, and perceptions of the world from themselves and others, which results in multiple, layered identities that present differently in different environments. Newcomer adolescents are especially susceptible to identity struggles as they transition from one culture to another and from childhood to adulthood. Incorporating their funds of identity into the educational space allows them to see multiple aspects of themselves and their peers, which promotes positive identity development. Supporting the development of the

whole child is a step towards creating a more equitable educational experience for all students.

Language Learning and Acquisition

The process of learning a new language is multi-faceted, nuanced, and ongoing, just as language itself is fluid and ever-changing. Age, native language, setting and exposure, and purpose are all factors that affect language learning. A particularly important intersection exists between manipulated learning conditions (setting and exposure) and learner intentions (purpose). One can be highly motivated and acquire a new language without formal instruction, or one can have a rigorous instructional program and not learn without a strong intent to do so. One may also fall somewhere in-between this intersection (Loewen, 2020). The traditional K-12 public schools' standards-based model of instruction is part of a highly-systematic, formal educational system that emphasizes literacy and 'academic' ways of thinking (DeCapua, 2016). More specifically, English Language (EL) program models generally fall into one of three main categories: English-only instruction, dual language (or bilingual) programs, and transitional bilingual education (in which one's native language is used as a foundation for learning English), each relying on a specific curriculum for instruction (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Sugarman, 2018). The goals of EL programs are typically to teach the 'academic' English language, which is often presented as a language that students must learn in addition to and separate from their native language. With this frame of reference, students are viewed as being behind in both their native language and English (Flores, 2021), and thus must follow a traditional curriculum to help remedy the problem.

The 2020 edition of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework challenges the idea that ‘academic’ English is the only language for school, which must be learned after students have basic language for communication. Instead, the framework includes five standard statements that “represent the language of schooling and provide the broadest conceptual framing of content and language integration” (WIDA, 2020, p. 24). The abbreviated versions of the standards are as follows:

ELD Standard 1: Language for Social and Instructional Purposes (ELD-SI)

ELD Standard 2: Language for Language Arts (ELD-LA)

ELD Standard 3: Language for Mathematics (ELD-MA)

ELD Standard 4: Language for Science (ELD-SC)

ELD Standard 5: Language for Social Studies (ELD-SS)

There is no hierarchy to the order in which the standards are learned; rather, students learn all language simultaneously, embedding social language with content language at all grade levels, subjects, and language proficiency levels (WIDA, 2020).

The aforementioned model leads to the idea that language learning is not limited and linear but interdisciplinary and dynamic. It does not require the rigorous, structured manipulation as is often seen in schools in the United States, nor does it require the English language to be independent of other language forms and skills. Each of these tenets can be observed in natural, non-academic settings. Where individuals are motivated to communicate, there are ample opportunities for learning language. Consequently, to provide a truly equitable and multicultural education for newcomers that helps them acquire language and become more competent communicators, learning should not be confined to strict rules of a single language system, nor should it be

confined to a classroom. Instead, it should be based in the everyday contexts of daily life in the diverse places and manners in which natural language acquisition takes place. Utilizing a variety of these contexts and resources can promote language learning and acquisition in a more authentic, asset-based way.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is one such way in which speakers authentically use language in everyday life. Translanguaging is the use of one full linguistic repertoire to make meaning. It contrasts with a more traditional model of multilingualism, which is based on the concept of having multiple independent languages (Faulstich Orellana & García, 2014; García & Kleifgen, 2019; Poza, 2019). It also differs from code-switching, which implies switching between distinct languages. Translanguaging questions the idea that monolingualism even exists (García & Kleifgen, 2019). Students use translanguaging naturally because they have not yet learned the social construction of independent languages. They use all their gifts and funds of knowledge to contribute to their multilingual communities; they are experts at their translingual toolkits (Faulstich Orellana & García, 2014). Poza (2019) spoke with a young student at a bilingual school about her language(s), and she expressed that “los dos son mi idioma” (p. 92), that her language is an overlapping and interconnected part of her hybrid identity. Translanguaging should be thought of as an action, a liberating use of language, rather than languages (García & Wei, 2014, as cited in Poza, 2019). Allowing students to utilize translanguaging is asset-based and inclusive, acknowledging all their skill sets and ways of thinking.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Thinking about the word language as a verb, *linguaging*, highlights the process of communication and the dynamic nature of languages. Though English is considered a language in its own right, it is rooted in and continuously influenced by countless other languages around the world. It is used for transnational communication in the United States and abroad, and the number of speakers of English as an additional language is greater than native speakers who use solely or primarily English. These speakers of English maintain a variety of cultural practices, religions, and languages, yet they share the invisible community of English as a Lingua Franca (Canagarajah, 2007). According to Firth (1996), ELF is a ‘contact language’ between speakers of different native tongues and cultures. House (2003) adds that its purpose is for communication rather than personal identification. It is a hybrid language, varying by language features, grammars, and discourse patterns. It does not follow norms of a specific language and is constantly written by the users. Therefore, comprehensibility strictly depends on the users (Canagarajah, 2007). Speakers of ELF are proficient in the multilingual and negotiation skills necessary to communicate between people of different cultures. For this reason, misunderstandings are relatively uncommon. In fact, most cases of miscommunication occurred in the presence of individuals who speak English as a first or only language (Canagarajah, 2007; House, 2003; Seidlhofer, 2004). As with any language or form of communication, these skills can be practiced and learned. ELF acquisition and competence is essentially multilingual acquisition and competence; both are situational, adaptive, and innovative (Canagarajah, 2007). Allowing students to use words, features, and grammars of their own language systems while communicating via English is

asset-based and inclusive. Teaching them to contextually communicate utilizing all of their skills prepares them to be successful in any environment, another act of liberation.

Summary of Language Learning and Acquisition

Similar to identity development, language learning and acquisition is a complex, ongoing process that one continues to navigate their entire life. Language can be practiced and acquired naturally or systematically. Schools traditionally use highly-manipulated instructional strategies to teach ‘academic’ English. However, the new WIDA standards have begun to acknowledge that language is a social practice dependent upon the identities and contextual frameworks of all individuals involved. As such, social language is independent of and simultaneously embedded in academic language, and it can and should be practiced in all tasks and situations, structured and natural. Translanguaging and ELF provide two theories about how language can be learned and used in strength-based, authentic ways. Specifically, translanguaging emphasizes the act of language and encourages the use of one’s entire linguistic repertoire for making-meaning. ELF settings rely on the use of contextual and multilingual communication skills to negotiate meaning. Learning and acquiring a language while utilizing translanguaging and ELF strategies contributes to overall greater language and communication development.

Extracurricular Programs

While an extracurricular program is not mandated by law, its potential for supporting both personal and academic growth of newcomer students makes it an important component of students’ high school experiences. Hughes (2014) argues that secondary extracurricular programs are an untapped resource:

Extracurricular programs - activities, clubs, and teams that stand apart from a school's core curriculum - allow students to explore topics that are outside the purview of classroom instruction and, ideally, to relate them to what they are learning elsewhere. In high school (grades 9 through 12 in the U.S.), many extracurricular offerings help prepare students with skills and competencies they will need to transition to college and adult life. (p. 3)

As an optional extension to the required curriculum, extracurriculars have greater flexibility in terms of structure and goals; this often results in outcomes that might be not achieved in a traditional classroom setting. Per the five-year Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study (LISA), a positive correlation was evident between school achievement and extracurricular engagement. However, only 37% of immigrant youth participate in extracurricular activities (Gaytán et al., 2007). Due to the potential dangers of their surroundings and their family commitments such as taking care of younger siblings, many parents of newcomer students expect their children should be home immediately after school (Rivera, 2009). Simultaneously, many parents of newcomer students also value extracurricular programs for their students when the program provides support with things the parents cannot (ex. language support, homework help) (Gaytán et al., 2007). These considerations must be proactively addressed when developing extracurricular programs for newcomer students. The concerns may be reassured while the benefits of extracurricular programs are presented.

Students can experience social, emotional, and academic benefits of extracurriculars, particularly when structured with clear goals in mind. First and foremost, extracurricular program leaders must use asset-based approaches to meet

students where they are at, bridging personal, social, emotional, and academic aspects of their identities (WIDA, 2020). Gonzalez and Moll (2002) emphasize using a funds of knowledge approach with students by “identifying and validating local cultural and social capital” (p. 639), engaging with students’ families and communities, providing professional development for program leaders, and teaching students to be researchers of knowledge themselves. Przymus (2016) facilitated and evaluated an EL ambassador program and found multiple themes: extracurricular activities provide opportunities for socialization and identity formation; learning while participating in activities that match students’ interests helps their language development; and students make friendships with other ELs and former ELs who they may not get to know in their leveled ELD classes. The previously mentioned benefits contribute to greater overall success in the school system as a whole. There appear to be relatively few extracurricular programs specifically for secondary newcomer students, but there is an increasing number of EL immersion programs, academies, and pathways. While these are structured a bit differently, some of the benefits may translate to the extracurricular setting. López et al. (2020) and Bajaj and Suresh (2018) found that successful EL enrichment academies and programs embrace students with asset-based mindsets, respond to socio-emotional needs (and consequently academic needs) as they arise, and create a culturally-relevant and engaging curriculum that allows students to participate with and in their communities. Rivera (2009) found that parents whose students were enrolled in such a program were overall pleased with their students’ placement in the program, felt well-received upon their arrival, and believed it offered ways for students to become involved in school. Overall, there is strong evidence that newcomer programs can indeed lessen some of the

obstacles newcomer students face in their transition to the United States, which provides justification for offering such programs. While some of these benefits depend on the structure and activities of the program, others are simply results of having a program in place at all. The benefits will be analyzed more deeply in the following sections.

Experiential Learning

Extracurricular programs provide a unique space for experiential learning. Experiential learning is broadly defined as a student-centered learning process in which students are actively-engaged, motivated participants; experiential learning approaches are guided by principles of hands-on learning, problem-solving processes, real-world problems, student-student and student-content interactions, direct experience, and cross-curricular learning (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2009). These contribute to communicative competence, which encompasses four aspects of using a language effectively and appropriately: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Some of these are easier to teach in the classroom than others, which makes experiential learning an important part of an educational experience. Muhammad (2020) adds that “students need rich and meaningful learning experiences...that engage mind and heart and help shape positive school histories” (p. 98). Experiential learning is one such way to make sure students have that engaging, memorable learning experience once, or many times. It is about connecting individuals and the content in a meaningful way.

Place-based education and service learning are aspects of experiential learning worth attention. Place-based education is anytime and anywhere that utilizes place to personalize learning and increase engagement in the curriculum and community (Vander

Ark et al., 2020). It has been used for generations, long before the industrialization of education; people learned in and from the community for joy and survival. The Teton Science Schools developed six design principles for place-based education including: community as classroom, learner-centered, inquiry-based, local to global, design thinking, and interdisciplinary (Vander Ark et al., 2020). Place-based learning supports experiential learning within and outside the walls of a classroom. Service learning is another aspect of experiential learning that combines place and community engagement. It can be tailored to focus on specific learning needs and/or aspects of communicative competence, and it benefits the students providing the service and those being served (Tocaimaza-Hatch & Walls, 2017). It should also build on students' interests and experiences and be accompanied by reflection (Dewey, 1938, as cited in Tocaimaza-Hatch & Walls, 2017). Studies have found service learning benefits to include learners' appreciation of learning in authentic, real-world atmosphere, engagement as active learners, confidence in language development, and personal development for overcoming challenges in communication (Bippus & Eslami, 2013; Tocaimaza-Hatch & Walls, 2017). Place-based education and service learning are just two examples of experiential learning, but the list goes on and on. While experiential learning is not a new phenomenon, there appear to be few K-12 extracurricular programs that use experiential learning specifically to support newcomer students socially, emotionally, and consequently, academically, in their transition to the United States.

Socio-Emotional Benefits

Newcomer students face many challenges in their transition to their new life in a new country. These challenges may be present at home, at school, and anywhere

in-between. The process of immigration itself means that students are removed from communities of familiarity, lose their social role in a known context, and must regain their sense of confidence and autonomy in a new country (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In a study of 100 newcomer students in a New York City middle school Academy, Rivera (2009) found that 81% had negative feelings, including discomfort, anxiety, anger, nervousness, fear, or sadness, when they were informed of their move and upon their arrival, with 54% indicating a real worry about making new friends. More significantly, 96% were unhappy about leaving their friends and family behind. Students who continued to experience these difficulties were “less likely to participate in school activities and therefore may be withdrawn and socially inactive” (Rivera, 2009, p. 74).

Adolescence is an especially critical and vulnerable time for social, emotional, and academic development (Abel, 2020; Eccles & Roeser, 2011), because students are asked to navigate environments where their previous cultural knowledge may not provide any comfort to fall back on (Amthor & Roxas, 2016). López et al. (2020) “highlighted the need for enrichment programs geared towards secondary-level newcomer students, not only for language development, but also for their acclimation to the school system in the United States” (p. 97). Sinclair (2007) added that education can provide a sense of normalcy and provide hope for the future, especially for teens. In Przymus (2016), one student advised about participating in school groups: ““That they *tienen que perder la vergüenza* (they have to lose their shame), try harder, keep going and never give up.”” (p. 277). Despite the challenges, an extracurricular can provide a special place where

students feel comfortable in school, translating to positive identity development and overall confidence.

Just as children tend to have greater educational success and opportunities when they are supported in cohesive neighborhood communities (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001), they also do better in cohesive school communities. These communities should be diverse in culture, linguistic background, English language proficiency, and life experiences. When students see that cohesiveness can be rooted in differences, they may find inclusion where they once felt excluded. An extracurricular program provides freedom from state standards and bell schedules in a traditional sense, and thus the primary focus can be on community. A stronger community allows space for positive identity development. A strong self-identity means more confident individuals who can build strong relationships with others. Strong relationships are critical contributors to newcomer students' experiences in school and ultimately their success (Suárez-Orozco, 2005, as cited in Hersi & Watkinson, 2012).

Academic Benefits

School is designed to prepare students for entrance into society, whether that be college, career, or contributing to the common good in another form. Research suggests that how immigrants fare in our schools, both academically and socially, is an indicator of how they are adjusting and how they will contribute to society as adults (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Based on data from teacher observations, school records, and student report cards, Rivera (2009) found that students struggling with traumas of immigration are less likely to perform well in school. She argued that the barriers preventing achievement in the classroom need to be eliminated first, and then students can achieve in the classroom and

society. Przymus (2016) concluded that students who participate in extracurricular activities matching their interests form friendships with students they may not otherwise get to know in class and gain natural exposure to the new language, which increases their language skills. Together, these outcomes result in greater academic achievement and skill development for their futures. In their studies of Oakland International High School (OIHS), Bajaj and Suresh (2018) found that students participating in Soccer Without Border (SWB), an extracurricular soccer program, had a 35% higher graduation rate than the rest of the district. This is due to the strong student-adult relationships, cross-cultural friendships, communication skills, and the comfort of a safe place. Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008) summarizes that students with strong English language skills, healthy friendships, positive relationships with teachers, and commitment to learning earned better grades and received higher test scores. These studies show that social/emotional adjustment and academic success are not independent of each other; instead, they are positively correlated, and focusing on increasing student socio-emotional well-being will lead to academic success.

Summary of Extracurricular Programs

Extracurricular programs are an underutilized resource for holistically supporting ELs in and out of the classroom. Extracurriculars have freedom and flexibility to meet students' needs beyond the academic curriculum. Students can engage in place-based learning, service learning, and other forms of experiential learning through field trips, community events, backyard explorations, and more. Through extracurricular engagement, students can experience socio-emotional and academic benefits including positive identity development, diverse friendships, cohesive school communities,

stronger communication skills, and increased graduation rates. Supporting the immediate well-being of ELs in their transition to the United States promotes lifelong achievement.

Chapter Summary

This literature review provided the research framework to answer the question: *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?* First, it introduced newcomers in the United States and provided an overview of their pathways and shared experiences of immigration. Then multiple theoretical perspectives regarding ELs' identity and positionality were presented, highlighting the complexity of identity development, especially for adolescents. Offering positive opportunities for identity and skill development was shown to be an act of social justice, empowering students with the tools needed to successfully navigate their school and personal lives and providing a pathway to liberation for traditionally-marginalized students. Theories regarding English language learning alongside overall language development were described and compared, emphasizing the asset-based frameworks of translanguaging and ELF. Extracurricular programs were presented as an opportunity to provide socio-emotional and academic support outside the constraints of a traditional classroom setting. A critical examination of the literature revealed that there are few extracurricular programs tailored to newcomer students for this purpose. Because education must be about accepting and teaching the whole child, especially given its immediate and future widespread impact on the child, this project, an extracurricular program model specifically designed to support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically, was created to fill this gap. The next chapter will introduce the extracurricular newcomer program model, describe the

components of the program handbook, justify the program decisions with relevant theories and frameworks, and provide logistical details about its creation and implementation. This project is just the beginning of a liberating education for all students in our schools and our hearts.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Schools are the heartbeat of the community—they provide education, activities, community resources, safety, and love for young people and their families. They open doors to new people, lifestyles, ideas, and opportunities. Students are expected to think creatively and work hard to form connections, build relationships, and develop plans to achieve their dreams.

Worldwide, schooling has emerged in the last half-century as the surest path to well-being and status mobility... Solving the big problems of the day... will require the active engagement of well-educated, cognitively flexible, and culturally sophisticated individuals able to work in groups. Schools, then, will need to nurture young minds to be able to synthesize knowledge derived from various academic disciplines, wrestle with social and ethical dilemmas, and work across cultural boundaries with individuals of different races, religions, and cultures. (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008, p. 2)

Schooling prepares students for life after high school by challenging and affirming them as learners, friends, inquirers, community members, and most importantly, unique individuals who are kind and compassionate to the people and places around them. Yet achieving the idealistic outcomes of schooling is not a simple task and requires a holistic approach to education, which is the primary reason for this project. This project seeks to fill a gap between newcomers' formal educational experiences in the classroom and their informal learning in the community by creating an extracurricular program model

focused on honoring their special assets and fulfilling their particular needs. The creation of this project was guided by the question: *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?*

In this chapter, I will provide a description of the extracurricular newcomer program model, including an overview of the specific components of the program handbook. Theories and frameworks that support its design will be offered as rationale for the program development. A description of the setting and audience for this project will follow, defining its secondary focus, flexibility, and projected use in many different schools and cities. Finally, a timeline of the research, planning, and implementation of the program, including its eventual assessment, will be shared. The chapter will conclude with a summary of these key components and an introduction to Chapter Four.

Program Description

Many newcomer students come to the United States with dreams: dreams to succeed in school, learn a new language, and make friends in their new communities. For many, schools are the place to do this, as they are often the first place newcomers will regularly interact with others of different experiences, stories, beliefs, languages, and lifestyles (Abel, 2020). Through extracurricular programs, schools can be places of not only community involvement, but community engagement. Sukuma proverb reminds us of the value of our communities and provides inspiration for this work: *One knee does not bring up a child.* (Cohan et al., 2020). Thus, the aim of this project is to create an extracurricular program model that, when implemented, offers a special place for newcomer students to find a school community while immersing themselves in the greater community. They will explore a monthly topic through school-based and

community-based activities. Through this extracurricular program, they will engage in multicultural and multilingual learning in and out of the classroom. They will form connections with their teachers and peers, learn language and communication skills, develop their own newfound sense of identity, and explore their new cities. Through these activities and communities, students will be supported socially, emotionally, and academically in their transition to life in the United States. An investment in their well-being as adolescents is a commitment to their futures.

This Fo(u)r Friends Handbook is a guide for educators who want to make this extracurricular program a reality at their schools. It provides detailed information for program implementation across the course of a school-year. It also provides flexibility to be tailored to each school's individualized context. Each section of the handbook will be described below.

Overview of the Fo(u)r Friends Handbook

Immediately following the cover page, the Fo(u)r Friends Handbook starts with a *Letter to the Program Leader*. Putting in the work to create the best educational experience for our newcomer students is no small task, and the leaders should know that they are not alone. The section provides information about how the handbook can be used. A personal note is shared to provide encouragement, hope, and appreciation for the collective work. The next page, the *Table of Contents*, lays out the organization of the remainder of the handbook.

Because many program leaders may not have the capacity to read all the relevant research regarding extracurricular programs for newcomer students, the next section, titled *Key Terms*, will identify some of the important words and concepts in the field to

provide a basic but necessary understanding of the key components of the program. The key terms included are: newcomer students, English learner (EL), funds of knowledge, identity, funds of identity, WIDA standards, translanguaging, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and experiential learning. The *Scope and Sequence* then provides a suggested year-at-a-glance look at how the program might manifest itself in a school.

Materials needed to implement the program are provided in user-friendly formats. As an introduction to the program, all students will engage in a community-building and communication lesson by affinity groups. The *Session #1 for Newcomer ELs* will prepare students with some basic phrases to help them communicate in English. The *Session #1 for English-Speaking Students* will prepare students with basic communication strategies for interacting with speakers of other languages, including strategies for both listening and speaking. These sessions will be hosted independently so students can be equipped with the specific skills they will need for the remainder of the program. During these sessions, students will complete a Pre-Program Survey to provide input about their topics of interest, express their current feelings towards school, and informally show their English language skills. This is a critical component of the program, because it highlights student voice as a driving factor. Their suggestions should be used throughout the entire program to ensure their needs and goals are being met. Students are formally surveyed again at the end of the program with a Post-Program Survey. In order to make the surveys more accessible to students of all language backgrounds, English proficiency levels, and learning styles, they can be modified to an online format, translated to students' native languages, or taken with an adult who can provide scaffolds to understand and respond to

the questions. Comparison of pre- and post-survey data will provide evidence of strengths and areas of growth for ongoing improvement of the program.

Community building will be a crucial aspect throughout all program sessions, so many *Community-Building Activities* with instructions and materials are detailed in the handbook. These activities are followed by a section titled *Strategies for Constructive Conversations*, which is a toolbox of strategies to get students talking about the chosen topics of the program. Given that the program utilizes experiential learning both in and out of the classroom, there is a *Community Partnership Request* [letter] for program leaders to use. It is intended to be sent out to potential community partners to establish connections and ultimately start the communication regarding a place-based learning experience.

The last major component of the handbook is the *Appendix*, which includes printable materials for the sessions and activities referenced throughout the handbook. Specifically, appendices A-I include the *Pre-Program Survey*, *Post-Program Survey*, *English Pocket Cheat Sheet*, *Printable Taboo*, *Goodbye Sample Poster*, and materials for the community-building activities. Each of these materials can be used as-is or modified before use. Reference information for these materials and the remainder of the handbook is contained in a final *References* page.

Project Framework

The structure of the program model is supported by current and relevant research and theories. First and foremost, Theoharis and O'Toole (2011) describe the need for inclusive services for ELs, which requires teacher leadership and agency. Successful teacher leaders share common beliefs:

1. inclusive education is the best for all students,
2. leaders have a sense of agency - they can make a difference,
3. student diversity benefits schools and individuals, and
4. reform is comprehensive (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

With these shared beliefs and a vision of social justice, an extracurricular program has the opportunity to be successful.

The program is designed with newcomer students' specific assets and needs in mind. Affirming newcomer students' funds of knowledge is an important way to show them of their value in the program, school, and community (Moll et al., 2005). Program topics and activities should represent a wide range of topics, giving students opportunities to be the experts and the learners. Culturally responsive teaching is necessary to build an inclusive and safe learning space that supports students' diverse backgrounds and strengths (Hersi & Watkinson, 2012). This includes having student representation in the lessons (Muhammad, 2020), honoring students' funds of knowledge, validating students skills and strengths, and encouraging positive relationships between diverse individuals. Culturally responsive teaching is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory; it respects students backgrounds and experiences, celebrates their individual and collective accomplishments, and liberates them from the constraints of traditional schooling (Gay, 2010).

A culturally responsive learning space promotes positive social interactions. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) explain that positive interactions at school and in community are necessary to help students develop their identities. In an extracurricular program that utilizes experiential learning, students have opportunities to develop their

own, dynamic identities in different situations as they relate to prior experiences and new learning experiences. Transcultural identities, which fuse native and new mainstream cultures, serve students well long-term. In order to develop these transcultural identities, students need to interact with a diverse mix of students, including other newcomer students and U.S.-born students. The cross-cultural interaction provides opportunities for appreciation of students' own culture and learning of other cultures. Through their actions and words, educators can support and encourage this development. Muhammad (2020) suggested that a driving question of the program could be, "How does this lesson/unit plan help my students learn something about themselves or others?" (p. 78). In the process of leading students through this process, teachers will likely get to know themselves better, too.

Embedded in all interactions, students also learn language. Language acquisition goes beyond the classroom (Canagarajah, 2007). In a natural environment, students acquire language informally, without manipulated instruction. At times, a learner can be so engaged with compelling input that they are not even noticing it is in a different language (Krashen, 1985, as cited in Salva & Matis, 2017). Salva and Matis (2017) argue that this emphasis on language acquisition instead of language learning is beneficial, because the focus is more on context instead of rigid vocabulary or grammar lessons. Through this natural acquisition, students use their entire linguistic repertoires to make meaning, an act of language known as translanguaging (Faulstich Orellana & García, 2014; García & Kleifgen, 2019; Poza, 2019). Allowing students to use all of their language through translanguaging is an asset-based approach that honors their diverse vocabularies of the world. Allowing students to learn language and communicate through

translanguaging, conversation, and negotiation also embodies an ELF context, which is used throughout the world as a language of communication (Canagarajah, 2007). Instead of focusing on the words, ELF focuses on communication strategies. This type of learning prepares students to be successful in any social situation, and the act of translanguaging and the ELF context provide an image of what cross-cultural and multilingual learning can look like in the program.

Ultimately, an extracurricular program provides space for learning beyond the constraints of academic standards and school schedules. Salva and Matis (2017) provide ideas for “encouraging curiosity, creativity, and global thinking” (p. 43) such as engaging in virtual mystery calls with community members, partnering with local businesses or professionals, visiting local establishments, contributing to community and local news outlets, playing games, and more. The outcomes of such a program are endless. Students can form friendships, create connections with adults in their communities, explore their own identities, and learn language and communication strategies to help them socially and academically. They can learn real-world skills, providing them greater opportunities in the future. According to Wagner (2008), many students today are unprepared for the 21st century workforce. However, this extracurricular program can encourage critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration across networks and leading by influence, effective oral and written communication, and curiosity and imagination, all of which are shown to be critical survival skills for the future.

Setting and Audience

This program is designed to serve as a transformative model for secondary schools all around the country serving newcomer students, ELs, and English-speaking

students. It can be adapted for an urban city or a rural, small town. The exact sessions will vary at each site, depending on the students' chosen topics of interest. Program enrollment can vary by size, age, linguistic skills, and cultural experiences in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to the student participants, a teacher leader at each site will be involved in leading this extracurricular program, and school administration and community members will be involved at different levels for program coordination.

The program was specifically created with newcomer students in mind. The definition of newcomer student presented in the literature review is relatively broad, and newcomers' caregivers' perspective on the definition of a newcomer is broad, too. Based on qualitative interviews, caregivers believe that the timeline of adjustment includes a variety of factors such as family needs, support structure, language skills, and opportunities presented to them (Abel, 2020). Though many newcomer schools often place stricter timelines on the definition of a newcomer, limiting their time in the U.S. to one or two years (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2020, as cited in Abel, 2020), this extracurricular still uses a loose definition of newcomer students, acknowledging the variety of experiences and timelines of newcomer students. In fact, the extracurricular program serves a wider variety of students, including English-speaking students who are interested in engaging in multicultural learning to become more globally competent citizens. According to Hughes (2014), a more-connected world demands every global citizen be ready to respectfully and mindfully engage with others who have different ideas and ways of life. Thus, the benefits extend beyond the newcomer students to all those involved.

Timeline

The development of this extracurricular program model for secondary newcomer students took place over the course of a year, drawing from years of experience observing and teaching in the U.S. public education system. Though I was inspired to work with newcomer students even before starting this project, this idea was fully developed during the summer of 2021. The research and project design was completed during the 2021-2022 school year.

The extracurricular newcomer program follows a school year long timeline. In the first month of the program (September in Minnesota public schools), students participate in language-level affinity group sessions (groups are Newcomer ELs and more proficient English-Speaking Students). In these sessions, students partake in a team-building activity and introduce themselves to a smaller group. They also provide input about their learning interests and activities for the year by taking the Pre-Program Survey. This survey is used to determine the topics of each month of the program. It is also used as a pre-assessment of students' English language skills and feelings of belongingness in the school and community. Lastly, students engage in a short lesson regarding cross-cultural communication that is tailored to their skill sets. The second session of the first month joins everyone together for a whole-group community-building day.

After the first-month launch, each subsequent month has a different topic, determined based on the students' input. In a bi-weekly program model, students explore the topic and then engage with the topic in the community for the second session. In a weekly program model, students participate in program sessions following this general order: introduction of the topic, in-class exploration, constructive conversation, and

community engagement. In either model, a key component of the program is community engagement, often a field trip to a local establishment related to each month's particular topic.

Assessment

The final step in the development of this program was developing an assessment to be used as a catalyst for making improvements each and every year. This program was designed for the students and is guided by the students, and therefore, their assessment of the program is the single-greatest measure of success. Comparison and analysis of the Pre- and Post-Program Surveys is the most useful assessment, because it reveals the students' opinions and growth throughout the program. In particular, if positive socio-emotional and academic growth is evident based on this survey, then the program served its purpose. While these Pre- and Post-Program Surveys are the best indicator of students socio-emotional well-being, this data can be supplemented with an analysis of students' grades at the start of the program (and/or prior, if data existed), during, and after to observe academic growth.

Another measure of assessment for program leaders is the ability to secure funding for community engagement activities. As the school system and community recognize the importance and benefits of the extracurricular program, the funding for more resources should increase. Building a program that is sustainable at every level is a long-term goal.

Chapter Summary

In the development of this project, the following research question was asked:
How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially,

emotionally, and academically? In this chapter I offered a detailed description of the project, including theories and frameworks that informed the setting, audience, timeline, and assessment of the extracurricular newcomer program. I provided evidence for why this project specifically supports secondary newcomer students, as well as the benefit of being inclusive to all students. In Chapter Four, I will reflect on the project by restating the research question, describing my personal and professional learnings, hypothesizing about potential limitations, and emphasizing the key points of the project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

Working with newcomer students and ELs has been a highlight of my teaching career. While I have taught them about science and English, they have taught me about life: kindness, resilience, and passion. They inspired me to enroll in Hamline's MA-TESOL program in pursuit of improving my practice to better support them in and out of the classroom. They have unknowingly motivated me throughout the entirety of the program, and they are the reason for my work. Thus, my capstone project has been guided by the research question: *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?* My connection to the work and answers to this question are presented in this paper. In Chapter One, I provided the context and rationale for the creation of the project. In Chapter Two, I identified newcomer students and brought to light some of their unique assets and needs, analyzed the complexity of newcomer students' identity development, described language learning and acquisition theories, and studied newcomer student programs in the United States, including the social, emotional, and academic benefits of extracurricular activities in general. In Chapter Three, I provided an overview of the Fo(u)r Friends newcomer program, describing the project handbook, the research framework underlying the project, the intended setting and audience of the program, timeline of the project creation and eventual implementation, and its assessment. In this final chapter, I will discuss my major learnings from the research and creation of this capstone project, the Fo(u)r Friends handbook. I will revisit the literature that helped shape the project and consider the

limitations and implications of the project as it currently stands. Finally I will state possible future work, including how this project can be shared with others, how it will benefit the profession, and how the work can be extended and improved to serve diverse students now and in the future.

Major Learnings

Throughout the capstone process as a researcher and writer, I had opportunities to learn about the social, emotional, and academic development of ELs. More importantly, I had opportunities to reflect upon these learnings as they relate to my own life. First and foremost, I have gained a deeper understanding of the multidimensionality and interconnectedness of human identities and experiences. As individuals, we are constantly changing and growing as we move through time and space. Our ability to live peacefully in community depends upon how well we know ourselves and how we respect the similarities and differences in others. Engaging in positive identity work can improve overall well-being, which results in a positive feedback cycle. This cycle can continue indefinitely, just as our learning continues indefinitely. Even though the focus of this work was on youth identity development, it became obvious to me that identity work is important for everyone at every stage of life. This greater understanding of our flexible identities and human connectedness reminds me that there is always personal work to be done.

I quickly learned that this work to be done starts with me. While I initially imagined this extracurricular program to include only secondary newcomers and ELs, the research provided evidence that newcomer students and ELs have the best chance to learn English and develop a positive identity when they interact with local, English-speaking

students. Consequently, this program was re-envisioned to welcome all students, each with many things to learn and gain from participation. Namely, ELs will gain the social and emotional benefits of being a part of a community and learn and practice language skills while exploring their new environment; together these benefits lead to greater academic success. English-speaking students will gain opportunities to interact with diverse students, learning cross-cultural communication skills and cultural knowledge of people in their community. Though the program was designed with newcomer students in mind, I realized that it serves all those involved, leaders included. This work has confirmed the truth in Latina influencer Ana Flores' quote, "When one grows, we all grow."

My final learning is a reminder of the challenge and importance of this ongoing work. More specifically, I discovered how difficult it is to create a program that is detailed enough to reach specific objectives but also flexible enough to be tailored to and guided by each group of students. This is a challenge I face as a classroom teacher, too. Because I am always learning from my students, I cannot possibly create a program that includes and represents them all. In the planning and creation of this project, I did my best to leave room for unheard voices. However, this means that there are gaps to be filled. Implementing the program will still require a lot of work on the part of the leaders and students beyond what has been provided in the handbook. To be successful, Fo(u)r Friends will rely on the whole community. Though I have completed the project for the purposes of this capstone, the work is still just beginning.

Revisiting the Literature

I started this capstone process with a vision of an extracurricular program for secondary newcomer students, and the research component of this project provided strong guidance for its details and eventual development. To begin, I focused on who this program would be serving. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) explain that increasing immigration rates in the United States means there is a rising immigrant youth population in our schools. This initial fact provided validation that my work is important now and will continue to be in the future. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco go on to explain that these immigrant youth in our schools are a diverse group of students who have varying lived experiences, incredible strengths, and distinct needs, all of which deserve acknowledgement and attention. Adjusting to life in their new environments is more than meets the eye, as differences can include elements of surface culture such as food and holidays and deep culture such as rituals and approaches to problem-solving. These adjustment processes look different for everyone because of their unique experiences but also because of their own goals and vision of success in the future. The stories and descriptions of newcomer students provided by Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco (2001) beautifully reminded me that one size does not fit all, especially when it comes to education.

When considering how to best serve newcomer students, the topic of identity became very prevalent. Adjusting to a new environment can be painfully challenging, exciting, overwhelming, and rewarding, all at the same time. Every aspect of life, especially through times of adjustment, influences our identity, which is complex and composed of many parts. Muhammad (2020) was an influential resource that highlights

the importance of identity work for all students, especially secondary students. She clarified that the work should help students see not only who they are currently but who they can become. It should also help them learn about others who may be different in many ways, and this greater understanding of themselves and others leads to living more peacefully. Muhammad's research insists that identity work is important for all aspects of students' lives, both immediately and long-term. This confirmed for me that to holistically support students' identity development, an extracurricular program should include diverse people, topics, and activities.

Learning in the program is done through interaction and communication, so another key component of the literature was studying language learning and acquisition. While I originally thought that the English-speaking students would be considered more as 'experts' and the newcomer students as 'novices' when it came to language, it is apparent to me that this is not the case. Both English-speaking students and newcomer students have many language skills to share, in addition to cultural knowledge and skills. Faulstich Orellana and García (2014), García and Kleifgen (2019), and Poza (2019) all present research related to translanguaging, the use of one full linguistic repertoire to make meaning. Canagarajah (2007) was another key resource providing research related to the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), a hybrid language where speakers of different languages communicate via English and comprehensibility depends upon context. In the K-12 school system, English is typically taught in a structured way where there is a standard version of English. However, this research regarding language use is asset-based and makes a convincing argument that all students have strong language skills. In this program, newcomer students will learn skills to communicate in their new

environments, but English-speaking students will learn how to communicate with people of different cultures, too.

Finally, the importance of extracurricular programs was really highlighted by Przymus (2016), who noted the importance of programs that connect students over shared interests, as opposed to skills, resources, or experiences. Through facilitation and evaluation of an EL ambassador program, he found that extracurricular activities provide opportunities for socialization and identity formation, language development, and diverse friendships. This study was confirmation for me that my program needs to include students of all language levels and a wide range of topics so everyone has someone to connect and grow with. More specifically, exploration of cultures and community should be a common interest, though the activities should span many topics and genres, utilizing experiences, knowledge sets, and connections of students to come to fruition. Overall, this project was influenced by the work of many others before me. Through the literature review and development of the project, I have realized that there is no simple solution to integrating newcomer students into society. Everyone must grow and adapt; it takes a village.

Implications and Limitations

Although I have not yet implemented this program in its entirety, I would like to make this happen soon. In the current state of the world, I believe identity development and social-emotional skills are perhaps just as important as academic development. However, educational policy does not necessarily align these priorities. According to Maslow (1943), there exists a hierarchy of needs, meaning that one need must be satisfied before the next. He argues that basic physiological needs must be met before safety needs

can be fulfilled. Safety needs must be met before individuals can feel love and belonging, which is achieved through connection and community. This program model seeks to focus on the love and belonging that is not as intentionally addressed in our education system. Extra support to address physiological and safety needs can be added, as needed. With a strong foundation of these hierarchical needs, students can then proceed to the final two stages where they develop esteem and self-actualize, achieving to their fullest potential in all aspects of school and life.

Because I have not yet implemented this program, I have not yet seen some of the greatest obstacles come to light. However, there are a few limitations in the creation of this project. First, I developed the program based on my own experiences with newcomer students. However, they did not provide explicit input into its creation. While I tried to make room for their input throughout the program sessions, the overall structure was developed independently. Thus, their schedules and personal obligations may be obstacles to participation. Factors such as childcare or extending field trip opportunities to students' families might help address these barriers.

Additionally, the program runs best with community support. Because I have not yet implemented the program or established the connections needed for successful implementation, I am unaware of the challenges this might present. Possibly the greatest project limitation is funding. Schools are already underfunded, especially for extracurriculars. This program will require a passionate leader who is willing to devote time and energy to the program. It will also require the community to step up in providing opportunities for our students. In many urban districts, secondary students have

public transportation passes. This can help address funding concerns regarding transportation, though it limits the possible excursion destinations.

Future Work

As noted above, an inability to implement this program in my school means that I have not yet seen all the directions in which this work could continue. However, I think one goal of any educational program is to help students become leaders. For example, after participating in the program for a year, students could serve as ambassadors, similar to the model used by Pryzmus (2016). In order to help students become program leaders, additional work could also focus on creating a more detailed curriculum for a variety of potential topics with specific language and communication goals. The program currently leaves that up to the leaders.

Finally, future work could expand upon the connections built within this program to help place students in mentorship programs in the community for life beyond high school. This extension acknowledges the fact that even if students have strong communication skills and have learned how to advocate for themselves, they can still use community support once they leave school. In fact, this support might even be more critical at this time when they are no longer receiving required support from the school. Community organizations can expand this support beyond the student to their families, allowing families to visit these places, too. Creating a more connected community at all levels benefits everyone in the community.

Upon a successful implementation of the Fo(u)r Friends program, the data regarding social, emotional, and academic benefits should be thoroughly analyzed. This would identify additional areas of the program that could use further development. Until

then, this project will be shared with my immediate, professional community when it is published in the Hamline University Digital Commons. Then, after some trial and error, implementation, and modification, this project can be shared to the broader education community through presentations and professional development. Overall, Fo(u)r Friends benefits the entire education profession, because it fills a gap that schools are often missing by providing a resource for implementation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I reflected upon my own learnings through the brainstorming, research, and creation of this project. I sought to answer the question, *How can an extracurricular program support secondary newcomer students socially, emotionally, and academically?* but I arguably took away more questions than I answered. The understanding of the interconnectedness of our identities is a critical understanding to implementing this program. I hope we, as a society, can acknowledge and support all diverse identities within the context of our educational system and world. Another key understanding is that programs and activities that positively affect newcomer students and ELs also benefit English-speaking students. Clearly defining goals for all students and creating a structured program that addresses them, as well as provides flexibility for program leaders who know their students best, is an important and rewarding challenge. Though the program has not yet been implemented, it is possible to consider limitations and attempt to address those proactively. Utilizing relevant and ever-developing literature and human experiences is necessary to continue and improve the work now and in the future. This conclusion is still just the beginning.

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