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The Role of School Boards in Addressing Opportunity and Equity for English Learners in the U.S. Mountain West

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THE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN ADDRESSING OPPORTUNITY AND EQUITY FOR
ENGLISH LEARNERS IN THE U.S. MOUNTAIN WEST

By

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Abstract

Locally-elected school boards in the United States may be the public's closest democratic link to public education. Yet, little is known about how school boards balance their representational obligations with their responsibilities to address educational inequities. *The purpose of this study* is to examine how school boards address policies and practices for one of education's most vulnerable populations, English learners (EL). *Applying the conceptual framework* of social construction theory for policy design, which assumes that policy is heavily influenced by the social construction of target groups, this multiple-case study includes data from 30 interviews, four years of school board meeting minutes, and other archival documents from three sites located in the understudied region of the U.S. Mountain West— Clark County School District, Salt Lake City School District, and Tucson Unified School District. *Results found* that although EL policies/practices are largely shaped by the social constructions of ELs which are mostly deficit-based, school boards often react to triggering mechanisms in addressing the needs of their growing EL populations in the context of federal and state policies, competing interests, and limited resources. *These findings suggest* that while school boards are a significant democratic link, they are often unwilling, and in some cases unable, to adequately address inequities faced by ELs until school boards are triggered.

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Thank you. I hope that this research and my future scholarship make each of you proud. Most of all, I hope that my work will add to scholarship that moves us toward a more socially-just world.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my late father, Michael Lynn Sampson. Since I was a little girl, you called me Dr. Sampson and believed in my ability to achieve anything in life. I miss you dearly and I know that, out of everyone, you would be the proudest of this accomplishment. Your spirit lives on in my work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The role and influence of local school boards on student outcomes and achievement remain a source of debate among education and public policy researchers (Alsbury, 2008; Delagardelle, 2008; Howell, 2005; Land, 2002; Wong, 2007). Although the overall number of school boards in the United States has decreased dramatically from approximately 119,000 since 1937 (U.S. Department of Education, 1993); they are still responsible for the policy governance and operation of roughly 13,000 public school districts serving more than 50 million students nationwide (National School Boards Association, 2013). In addition, the increasingly complex political, economic, demographic, and social contexts in which local school boards must operate (Howell, 2005; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; Tyack, 1993), coupled with a growing federal role in education policy and reform (Cross, 2004; Viteritti, 2005), have called into question the need and efficacy for locally elected school boards (Alsbury, 2008; Hess, 2010; Maeroff, 2010; Wong & Shen, 2008). Whether the push for increased standards and accountability (Lewis & Fusarelli, 2010; Usdan, 2010) or expanded educational opportunity and equity for all children (Horsford, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Petrovich & Wells, 2005; Yosso, 2005), school boards in the 21st century face unique challenges and opportunities.

Background

Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, state and federal governments lacked the capacity and power to intervene in education, making local school boards an essential element in the development and operation of schools (Tyack, 1993; Danzberger, 1994). Given their role and influence over school and district governance and

operations, some researchers have sought to assess the impact of school boards on student achievement. One such study, The Lighthouse Inquiry conducted in three phases between 1998 and 2010, found that school boards in high-achieving school districts were distinctly different than those in low-achieving districts based on their perceptions of student potential and the level of confidence in the school district staff. Overall, school boards were shown to make a difference in the educational outcomes of students and because of this, were considered “critical players in the school change process” (Delagardelle, 2008, p. 221).

In addition to their academic impact, research has confirmed that voters hold school boards accountable for student achievement. Although the average voter turnout is only 10% to 15% during school board elections, a study of South Carolina school board elections in 2000 indicated that “when test scores dropped in South Carolina schools, incumbents were less likely to run, they were more likely to face competition, and they won (if they won) by smaller margins” (Berry & Howell, 2005, p. 167). Similar results in Washington found that school board turnover from 1993 to 2001 was positively associated with declining student test scores (Alsbury, 2008). Yet, for the past twenty years, school boards have been considered a major barrier by school reformers who advocate for increased school choice and competition as a way to improve educational outcomes (Chub & Moe, 1990; Usdan, 2010; Whitson, 1998).

In 2008, *The Atlantic* published an article supporting these ideas entitled “First, Kill All the School Boards” which noted, “In an ideal world, we would scrap them [school boards]—especially in big cities where most poor children live” (Miller, para. 28). Miller (2008) blamed school boards and local control of schools for the dismal academic performance relative to other countries, suggesting that school boards are inept to deal with school district affairs. Several major cities, including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit have already

abolished locally elected school boards in favor of mayoral control (Gold, Henig, & Simon, 2011; Wong & Shen, 2008). Opponents of school board elimination view this move as a threat to democracy in public education (Ravitch, 2010; Resnick & Byrant, 2010). Several scholars assert that school choice and competition seek to privatize education with the hope of running schools like businesses (Giroux, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Ravitch, 2010). This corporate model of education, according to Diane Ravitch (2010) “treats local school boards as a nuisance and an obstacle rather than as the public’s representatives in shaping education policy” (p. 27).

Regardless of the criticism of school boards by many leaders in business, politics, and education (Usdan, 2010; Tucker, 2010; Viteritti, 2009), studies have shown a connection between the role and influence of school boards on student achievement, as well as their ability to be representatives of democratic practice through voter accountability (Alsbury, 2008; Berry & Howell, 2005; Delagardelle, 2008; Land, 2002). Furthermore, as Michael Resnick and Anne Byrant (2010) asserted, “If school boards didn’t exist, someone would invent them to create a link between the community and its schools...” (p. 11). Given this, school boards, or something similar to them, will likely maintain some type of role in the governance and policy leadership of schools.

Statement of the Problem

According to research on school district leadership, which include school boards, a major factor for improving education is their ability to be equity-focused (Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2008). Yet, educational inequities are prevalent throughout the United States, illustrated most clearly through the existence of economic, racial, and linguistic achievement gaps.

This problem has been widely publicized since the release of the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report by the U.S. Department of Education. Although authors of this report called for “equity

and high-quality schooling,” more than 30 years and several accountability-based reforms later, this gap still exists (DOE, 2013). Acknowledging the atrocities of discrimination that have led to disadvantages among students of color, low-income students, and linguistic minorities, authors of a 2013 U.S. Department of Education report, *For Each and Every Child: A Strategy For Education Equity & Excellence*, stated that:

The current American system exacerbates the problem [of discrimination] by giving these children less of everything that makes a difference in education. As a result, we take the extraordinary diversity—including the linguistic backgrounds and familial relationships—that should be our strategic advantage in the international economy and squander it. (p. 14).

Such inequities have resulted in achievement gaps among many areas of education, including academic subject proficiency and high school graduation rates. For instance, the average freshman public high school graduation rate in 2009-10 was lower among Black (66%) and Hispanic (71%) students when compared to White (83%) and Asian (93%) students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). A similar gap was also evident on 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores. Among 4th grade public school students, only 26% of those considered low-income¹ scored at or above proficiency in math compared to 60% of their non-low-income peers. In reading, 45% of Whites scored at or above proficiency, whereas only 17% of Blacks and 19% of Hispanics scored at this level. These racial and economic NAEP test score gaps reflected similar trends for 8th grade math and reading.

¹ Low-income is determined by those student who qualify for free & reduced lunch.

For English learner (EL)² students, the achievement gap appears is even more severe. Among 4th graders, the percentage of EL students who scored at or above proficient in reading (7%) and math (14%) were much lower than their non-EL counterparts (37% and 45%, respectively). According to *The Condition of Education 2013*, the EL and non-EL achievement gap on the reading and math NAEP tests for 4th and 8th graders has remained consistent on each annual assessments since 2002. Furthermore, EL students are more likely to be low-income and a majority of them are of Latino/a heritage (DOE, 2013; Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). When considering these intersecting identities, the achievement gap grows exponentially. For example, among 8th grade students classified as Hispanic, low-income, and EL, only 3% scored at or above proficiency in math, whereas 52% of White, non-low-income, and non-EL 8th graders scored at this level, a gap of almost 50 percentage points.

Although school districts have experienced increasing state and federal interventions, many are still provided autonomy at important policy making levels. This was demonstrated with respect to EL policies and practices in a 2012 U.S Department of Education report revealing that 42 states allowed local districts to develop their own criteria for identifying ELs and 32 states gave school districts authority to create EL exit requirements. Notably, however, EL students are a growing and misunderstood population (DOE, 2013; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010).

As leaders of school districts, school boards can be among the most important players in addressing the policies and practices that impact educational inequities in the form of racial, economic, and linguistic achievement gaps. However, critics often blame school boards for either reproducing inequities or ignoring them (Hochschild, 2005; Maeroff, 2010). As shown in the case of school desegregation and special education in school districts throughout the country,

² Other common terms referring to EL students includes Limited English Proficient (LEP), English Language Learners (ELL), and English as a Second Language (ESL) (USDOE, 2011; Bardack, S., 2010)

school boards were often forced by legal and federal mandates to enact policies designed to achieve educational equity (Cross, 2004; Hochschild, 2005; Maeroff, 2010). In her chapter, “What School Boards Can and Cannot Accomplish” Jennifer Hochschild (2005) suggested that school boards are faced with a simple choice between promoting the status quo or promoting equity. Deborah Stone’s (2002) *Policy Paradox* presents a more complicated view. She argues that policy making is the result of conflict over how individuals and communities define the broader goals of policy making—equity, efficiency, liberty, and security.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how local school boards address policies and practices designed to expand educational opportunity and equity for underserved or marginalized students. In this multiple-case study, I focus my attention on English Learners (EL) in three metropolitan school districts in the Mountain West region of the United States. Applying the conceptual framework of social construction theory (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007; Schneider & Sidney, 2009), this research pays special attention to the conflict of ideas over equity. In particular, the social construction framework would assume that the perceptions (i.e., social constructions) of EL students heavily influence the way policy makers address EL policies/practices.

In my analysis, however, I discovered that this framework was not sufficient in explaining why and how school boards address EL policies/practices. Instead, I found that two important components were missing—contextual effects and triggering mechanisms. Contextual effects are the surrounding factors that influence school boards’ actions, opinions, and priorities such as demographics as well as economic and political climates. The other component, triggering mechanisms, defined as “a critical event (or set of events) that converts a routine

problem into a widely shared, negative public experience” (Gerston, 2015, p. 23), often correspond with school board reactions (further explained in Chapter 4). In this multiple-case study, contextual effects and triggering mechanisms helped to answer “why” school boards address EL policies/practices, whereas, the social construction theory helped to understand nature of “how” these policies/practices were designed.

Research Question

Framed by social construction theory, the study aims to answer the following question:
What drives school boards to address policies and practices for English learners?

In addition, I developed a series of sub-questions that were informed by the theoretical framework and existing literature that deal (explained further in Chapter 3). The sub-questions include:

1. How are EL policies and practices presented?
2. What was the school board’s role in the development and maintenance of EL policies and practices?
3. How do perceptions of EL students influence the way school boards inform policies and practices?
4. In what ways are school boards influenced by external actors in developing EL policies and practices?
5. Given the perceptions of EL students and external forces, what types of programs do school boards support (i.e., asset-based (bilingual or dual language) or deficit-based (English immersion) programs)?

Research Methods

This multiple-case study (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009) explores how school boards in three large metropolitan school districts in the Mountain West region of the United States—Clark County School District located in Nevada, Salt Lake City School District located in Utah, and Tucson Unified School District located in Arizona—addressed equity for EL students, despite having less power, less funding, and in some cases, less influence.

School boards are situated in complex environments that include local, state, and federal contexts and require in-depth analysis to understand how and why these governing bodies develop policies and practices. Case study methods are designed to “*explain* the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (Yin, 2009, p. 19). When guided by theory, case studies can be generalized analytically (Yin, 2009), and in this research, the analysis of school boards based on the social construction theory tests whether school boards use perceptions of EL students to guide their policies and practices that impact this group. The other conceptual pieces, contextual effects and triggering mechanisms, were also used and allowed for a more robust analysis.

The Mountain West region and these school districts were chosen as sites of study because of the region’s growing importance in political, economic, and social research (Brookings Mountain West, 2012; Horsford, Sampson, & Forletta, 2013; Teixeira, 2012), as well as the increasingly diverse student population in large metropolitan school districts throughout the country (Lipman, 2006). These selected school districts are located in the nation’s top 100 metropolitan areas (Brookings Institution, 2013). Using school boards as the unit of analysis, I collected and analyzed multiple sources of data including official school district documents, archived school board meeting materials, news articles, and a total of 30 in-depth interviews with

school board members, school district officials, and community stakeholders. I then organized the data in an electronic database (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009) and corroborated these to most accurately address the research question (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Bogdan & Biklin, 2003; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009).

For the data analysis, I used the social construction theory to guide the development of a pattern matching logic. More specifically, I identified how ELs were perceived within each case study using the four target populations defined by the social construction theory—advantaged, dependents, contenders, and deviants. I also identified the contextual effects and triggering mechanisms in each case site. Then I evaluated how these conceptual factors related, influenced, and/or informed EL policies/practices. Finally, I conducted a literal replication of each site, comparing emerging outcomes with predicted ones, which allowed for a cross case analysis (Yin, 2009).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is focused on school boards with respect to EL policies and practices. Understanding school boards in their current context requires an in-depth investigation, but the dissertation is limited by time and resources. I chose to focus on EL students because of the diversity that exists within this group as well as their growing population in schools across the nation, providing both a unique perspective, but also one that contributes greatly to the broader knowledge on educational equity and opportunities for all children. Additionally, this research was only conducted in three school districts in one region limiting the ability to make broad statistical generalizations. Instead, my results led to solid analytical generalizations because I conducted more than one case study and employed a replication logic, (Yin, 2009).

Significance of the Study

Research on the role of school boards and their impact on student achievement remain limited (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Howell, 2005). Furthermore, examinations of the role local school boards play in expanding educational opportunity and equity for underserved and marginalized students are even harder to find. In the book *Besieged*, William Howell (2005) found that “In comparison with the well-developed literatures on many other aspects of public education and local politics, empirical research on school boards remains in its infancy” (p. 14). Ten years later, this dissertation study helps fill this void by building on the limited knowledge and theoretical understanding of the effectiveness, impact, and politics within school boards. In their research on school districts, Rorrer, Skrla, and Scheurich (2008) explained that past studies use indicators such as testing and policies to study equity, but have not focused on the “implications of leadership, organizational, and policy initiatives for educational equity and social justice” (p. 344). They stated:

This void is evident frequently in the neutral stance (i.e., language, analytical frameworks, description of findings) taken toward district efforts. As a result, this research does not attend to the complexity of inequity and fails to address whether current efforts actually result in greater disparities in access, outcomes, and/or power. (p. 344).

Through the use of case study methods framed by social construction theory and focused on English Learner policies and practices, this study asks the difficult, yet direct questions necessary to unravel the complexities behind how school board roles and perceptions inform and expand educational opportunity and equity for underserved and marginalized students.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 2, provides an overview of the literature on two main topics—school boards and English learners—including a discussion of the politics of education as it relates to the equity and demographic realities of today’s public school population. Located at the end of the literature review is a description of the social construction theory for policy design and a justification for its use in framing this study. Chapter 3 covers the research methods used for this study, including the rationale for the research design. Chapter 4 includes the study’s results and analysis. This chapter is presented in four sections, containing each of the three case studies and a cross case analysis. Each case study includes a section on 1) contextual effects, 2) social constructions of ELs, 3) triggering mechanisms, 4) school board actions and policy making, and 5) summary. The cross case analysis provides an overview of the cases’ similarities and differences among contextual effects, school board factors, EL social

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

School boards have long played a critical role in the governance and leadership of schools and school districts. And while school boards are designed to represent their local communities and make decisions that reflect local community values as they pertain to education, school boards operate within complex political and bureaucratic systems and are responsible for negotiating diverse constituencies representing a wide range of desires and unique needs. Increasingly in many parts of the country, particularly the U.S. Mountain West, as the EL student population grows at record levels, there is a need to better understand their participation and representation as a growing constituency that has been on the receiving end of school board policies. This literature review explores two broader areas of scholarship related to the research question in this dissertation study.

The first area is the role of school boards in public education. This section provides an overview on the history of school boards, their current structure and responsibilities within larger political systems, and their role in equity-related issues in education. A short subsection on recent demographic changes in the public schools is included to provide a current context in which school boards operate. The second area is on emerging bilingual students in the United States. Although the term “emergent bilingual” (Garcia, 2009) is interchangeable with other official terms such as limited English proficient or English learner, it is intentionally integrated in this study and in existing literature to pose an oppositional and asset-based perspective on a community of children that, at times, has been viewed as a problem rather than an advantage.

This section draws upon literature that provide a description of current emerging bilingual students, their historical experiences in education, and the local, state, and federal

environments along with the ideological debates that have influenced educational policies pertaining to this community. Finally, these sections highlight existing scholarship on equity, particularly given its focus on school boards as policymakers and leaders who impact the equitable and inequitable educational outcomes and opportunities experienced by emerging bilingual students.

The Role of School Boards in Public Education

Historical Role and Context of School Boards

1647 to 1960s. The origins of local school boards in the United States go as far back as 1647 when the Massachusetts Bay Colony legally instituted formal schools in their communities that were governed by local participants in town hall meetings (NSBA, n.d.). It took almost 200 years before school governance evolved into a more formal body, but in 1826, Massachusetts required every town to elect a school committee (now known as school boards) (Danzberger, 1994; NSBA, n.d.). Massachusetts legislator and popular education reformer Horace Mann advocated for the common school, one that was available to every child and controlled at the local and state level without influence from politics or religion (Danzberger, 1994). Influenced by Mann's philosophy, Massachusetts developed the first state board of education in 1837, naming Mann the secretary (Mason-King, 2000). States throughout the nation soon followed Massachusetts' lead in creating formal school boards at both the local and state level.

Throughout much of the nineteenth-century, schools remained in the hands of local boards. These boards had an average of 21.5 members and included mostly untrained laypeople (Howell, 2005). Although states had legal jurisdiction of education, their resources were limited. Similarly, staffs at the federal level were small and lacked authority (Tyack, 1993; Danzberger, 1994). Ultimately, local control of schools reflected an America value that embraced a so-called

democratic process built to meet the needs of each and every unique community deemed valuable enough to educate (Kirst, 2008; Danzberger, 1994).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, schools boards became involved in political patronage and corruption due to the growing local political machines, particularly at the local level, unclear accountability processes, and a lack of capacity at the state and federal level to intervene at the local level (Danzberger, 1994; Howell, 2005; Kirst, 2008; Knott & Miller, 1987; Tyack, 1993). By 1900, Progressive reformers who included populists and civil service reformers who had grown tired of political corruption, demanded a change in government bureaucracy (Knott & Miller, 1987). Eventually, this led them to embrace Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific methods focused on management with the goals of efficiency and accountability, altering school governance to meet these goals and rid schools of corruption (Howell, 2005; Knott & Miller, 1987; Wong & Shen, 2003). High levels of state, and later, federal bureaucratic structures aimed at accountability and standardization soon replaced community-run schools. In addition to confronting existing corruption, Reformers developed curriculum and obtained employment that reflected white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant values so that communities of immigrants and the poor could be assimilated within the education system (Kirst, 2008).

Long term effects of the Reformer movement resulted in a much more centralized system that included fewer boards with fewer members as well as larger school districts that had been consolidated, and overseen by experts (Howell, 2005; Kirst, 2008; Tyack, 1993). School boards size shrank dramatically, going from an average of 21.5 members in 1893 to around 7 in 1913 (Berry, 2005; Howell, 2005). As shown in the Table 1, in 1937, there were 119,001 school districts serving an average of 218 students (DOE National Center for Education Statistics

[NCES], 1993; 2011). By 1957, there were less than 50,000 school districts and in 1987, this number dropped to around 15,600 school districts serving an average of approximately 2,600 students (NCES, 1993; 2011). The average size of schools increased from 87 students in 1936 to 440 per school in the 1970s (Berry, 2005; Howell, 2005).

Table 1.

The Change in School District Composition and Student Population

	Total Public School Districts	Student Enrollment	
		Average Per School District	Total in Public Schools
1937	119,001	218	25,975,108
1957	47,594	704	33,528,591
1987	15,577	2,568	40,007,022
2007	13,838	3,562	49,292,507

Source: Berry, 2005; Howell, 2005; NCES, 1993; NCES, 2011

1960s to NCLB. The impact of events during The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in increased bureaucracy in education, particularly at the federal level. Court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* and *Lau v. Nichols (1974)* required that school systems provide an equal education for all children. For the most part, federal and state-level courts gave local school boards autonomy to make required changes even though several school districts complied only after lengthy legal, political, and social battles (Briffault, 2005). As school districts evolved to meet legal standards, they became even more bureaucratic, requiring superintendents and administration to take on larger decision-making roles. Many districts also changed electoral structure of school boards from at-large elections to single-member districts (or ward) elections to increase minority representation (Danzberger, 1994; Meier, Juenke, & Polinard, 2005).

The 1980s marked a new context that school boards were operating in, one filled with standards and accountability as opposed to productivity and opportunity (Danzberger, 1994; Horsford, 2014). In 1920, about 80% of the revenue for education came from local sources, with

the remaining coming from state and federal sources. By 1970, local revenue designated to education dropped to approximately 40%, while states increased funding to almost 50%.

As states increased their role in public education, they required school districts to comply with specific expectations, known as standards-based reform (Berry, 2005). In 1983, The U.S. Department of Education published “A Nation at Risk,” a report that caused anxiety throughout the nation about the state of education. This report claimed that U.S. school system was failing as demonstrated by dropping test scores, and authors connected this to a potential threat to our nation’s prosperity. Among its evidence, the report found that although more students had access to education, the typical student was not as educated as those of generations prior and a racial and economic achievement gap existed. Given this, authors advocated for the nation to adopt two goals: “equity and high-quality schooling” (p. 8). This educational scrutiny, couple with higher-level of state funding, led to standards-based increased accountability of local schools from both state and federal level government (Horsford, 2013; Lewis & Fusarelli, 2010; McDonnell, 2012). What was once a locally-controlled system, was now being threatened and as Thomas Alsbury (2008) stated, “For better or worse, there is less attention now to the need for democracy (either on school boards or in schools) due to our obsession with the threats on globalization, international competition, accountability, and high-stakes testing” (p. xvi).

As a response, states throughout the nation implemented legal reforms, setting standards for local school boards to institute in their districts (Danzberger, 1994; Lewis & Fusarelli, 2010). In fact, in 1989, governors were invited to attend a national summit on the nation’s education hosted by President George H.W. Bush, further encouraging increased state and federal intervention in local schools (Gold, Henig, & Simon, 2011). Evidence of such state intervention

exists in the fact that twenty states have assumed control of as many as 55 school districts since 1988 (Wong, Langevin, & Shen, 2004).

During the administration of George W. Bush, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 provided even more opportunities for both federal and state involvement in local school districts, shifting power and control from school boards to other entities. Under NCLB, states were expected to develop accountability systems based on testing and then intervene when schools did not meet these standards (Lewis & Fusarelli, 2010; McDonnell, 2012). More recently, President Obama's administration allowed states to opt out of NCLB, instead promoting its Race to the Top initiative that provides funding to select applicants based on their performance. In its inception, only states were allowed to apply but more recently, schools and school districts have been invited as well (Klein, 2012). Interestingly, among school district applicants, school boards must create an evaluation system to measure their own performance, the first federal requirement of its kind (Klein, 2012).

The Contemporary Role and Context of School Boards

A profile of school board members. Despite significant demographic shifts within school districts over the last twenty years, local school board structures have changed little. Currently, there are approximately 90,000 school board members serving on close to 13,600 school districts (NSBA, 2013). Although some school boards include appointed members, the majority of them are elected (Land, 2002; Wong, 2007). Women make up 44% of school board membership, a large increase from 12% in 1930 (NSBA, n.d.; Kirst, 2008; Deckman, 2007). The racial demographics of school board members are approximately 81% White, 12% African

American, 3% Latino/a, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% other according to a recent self-report survey administered to school board members nationwide (Hess & Meeks, 2010)³.

Almost three-fourths of school board members have a college degree and close to 18% have been associated with a teacher union (NSBA, n.d.). Political ideology among school board members was mainly conservative as of a 1989 survey, but a more recent survey in 2010 suggests that many members consider themselves moderate (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Kirst, 2008). Economically, board members tend to be better-off than the average citizen (Kirst, 2008)

Although some scholars believe that people who run for school board positions do so to climb the political ladder, and in fact, some high-level politicians such as President Jimmy Carter and six current Congresswomen were former school boards members (Tucker, 2010; Deckman, 2007), others have found that the most members have little desire to delve deeper into politics (Deckman, 2007). Based on a study of Midwest school board members, motivations to join were personal and/or altruistic and many hoped to change something in the school district, either specifically or in general (Mountford, 2008). Additionally, when compared to female school board candidates, male candidates tend to want to influence policy as well as integrate their moral/religious perspectives into educational systems (Deckman, 2007). A nationwide study showed that women on school boards often work on curriculum related policies while men are more concerned with budgetary and management issues (Kirst, 2008).

Over 40% of individual school board members from large districts dedicate more than 40 hours every month on school board related activities, whereas the majority of those from smaller districts spend less than 15 hours per month (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Although about 62% of

³ These percentages shifted depending on the size of the school districts (larger schools districts include more African American and Latino school board members).

school board members received no compensation, close to 14% earned \$5,000 per year, and 2% received over \$15,000 year. (Hess & Meeks, 2010). According to research, higher salaries have a positive relationship to the amount of time board members spend on board-related policy issues and board-focused training and development, which tend to increase their levels of expertise and professionalism (Grissom & Harrington, 2012). Other district factors affecting school boards' level of professionalism include their size, complexity, and type—larger school districts with both elementary and secondary schools that are urban are relatively more professional (Grissom & Harrington, 2012).

Responsibilities. One of the unique qualities of elected school boards in comparison to other elected bodies is their sole focus on one issue— education. In many cases, this responsibility is vast and these officials are expected to provide leadership on a variety of matters. As governing bodies, one of school boards' main responsibilities is to develop policies for their district. Some school boards create policy in conjunction with school administration, namely the superintendent, but ultimately school boards determine whether or not a policy is instituted (Grissom & Harrington, 2012; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). Such policies include those related to funding and budget distribution, facilities, and personnel. Another task that school boards take on is to develop academic goals for the school district that ultimately drive policy and funding decisions (Mizell, 2010). Finally, school boards determine the school district's managerial leadership by hiring and firing superintendents, which is arguably one of the most vital positions within a school district (Usdan, 2010). These responsibilities tend to “set the political tone” (Usdan, 2010, p. 9) for districts. Acknowledging the heightened existence of school reforms, Usdan (2010) notes that school boards are frequently “the only entities that

provide continuous institutional leadership through times of constant change and administrative churn” (p. 9).

Although school boards are central to most educational systems, their leadership capacity along with public perceptions and expectations of them vary. Some critics claim that it is common for school boards, as a group, to not understand their responsibilities and the level of influence they should have on school districts (Hess, 2010). Individual school board members also lack a consistent knowledge of their roles, resulting in tension among individuals (Danzberger, 1994). Some opponents of school boards note that they fail to institute their own professional development, including educating themselves on policymaking, learning about pertinent issues, and evaluating their job performance (Danzberger, 1994). When it comes to decision-making, one study found that members make decisions that are more frequently based on experience, data, and testimony as opposed to using evidence-based research or law/policy (Asen, et. al, 2013). School boards that have access to administrative staff tend to have more information about policy issues which increases their level of professionalism (Grissom & Harrington, 2012), while those that lack such staff have been critiqued for relying too much on public opinion to make decisions concerning policy (Asen, et. al, 2013).

Tucker (2010) also believes that school boards, through local districts, should have no role in teacher employment, but that the state should take on this responsibility in order to rid school boards of patronage related corruption. On one hand, school boards are often expected to be the liaison between state and federal officials, providing a local entity that reflects unique community values, including those of the teachers they hire (Resnick & Brynant, 2010). However, the reality is that schools boards have been on the losing side when it comes to power

and authority, as other levels and forms of government have intervened in matters of education (Mizell, 2010).

Mayoral control. One of the more controversial topics regarding elected, locally-controlled school boards is their possible elimination. Although only 12% of the nation's 75 largest school districts include mayoral appointed school board members in which either the entire school board is appointed or only some of the members are (Wong, 2007), several mayoral takeovers were widely publicized (Wong & Shen, 2003). The first city to experience mayoral control was Boston in 1992 followed by Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit, all within the 1990s (Gold, Henig, & Simon, 2011). In 2002, Mayor Bloomberg took over the nation's largest school system located in New York City, replacing 32 local school boards with one 13-member board that included eight mayor appointed board members and five borough president appointed members (Ravitch, 2010). In 2008, Mayor Villaraigosa made a failed attempt to take over the Los Angeles Unified School District, which ended with him gaining authority over 10 poor performing schools (Cabico & Harrison, 2009).

Scholars have highlighted various reasons why elected school boards were and still are threatened by mayoral control. Many of these cities needed social and economic improvements and mayors felt that creating a better educational system was one way to meet the city's needs (Wong & Shen, 2003). Others pushed for a different governing structure that would allow for rapid reform. Authors in *Calling the Shots in Public Education*, note "Contemporary reformers began to focus on mayoral control during the 1990s as a way to by-pass the iron triangle of school boards, school bureaucracies, and teachers unions that they argued were buttressing a dysfunctional status quo" (Gold, Henig, & Simmon, 2011, p. 34). Many current educational

reformers advocate for competition and choice, believing that this will force schools to either improve or shut down.

The evidence of mayoral control has been mixed. Rather than spending additional money, mayor-led districts tend to budget more on instruction and less on administration, allocating extra to schools and a smaller amount to per-pupil expenditures (Wong & Shen, 2005). These districts tend to employ administration from private industries as opposed to education while supporting non-traditional programs such as Teach for America (Wong & Shen, 2008). Research has shown that test scores in mayor-led districts increased slightly, but achievement gaps remained consistent, and in some cases, these gaps have widened (Henig, 2009; Wong & Shen, 2008). Although mayoral control has been arguably effective in areas of spending and student achievement, scholars warn that a successful mayoral takeover requires that all stakeholders support such change (Wong & Shen, 2008). Additionally, mayoral takeovers are often dependent on the existing mayor as a perceived reformer, relying on certain personalities and relationships that are not always sustained through electoral changes (Henig, 2009). Critics like Diane Ravitch, who tend to associate mayoral control with privatization of education, contend that this approach is not appropriate for public institutions as indicated in the following excerpt:

The business model assumes that democratic governance is a hindrance to effective education. It assumes that competition among schools and teachers produces better results than collaboration. It treats local school boards as a nuisance and an obstacle rather than as the public's representatives in shaping education policy. It assumes that schools can be closed and opened as if they were chain stores rather than vital community institutions. (Ravitch, 2010, p. 27).

School boards impact on student achievement. Student achievement has been the main reason why mayors and states have taken over school district control (Viteritti, 2005). Thomas Albury's (2003, 2008) research on school boards suggested that voters often hold school board members accountable for student performance in their school districts. Yet, the school board's role in student learning has been heavily debated. Marc Tucker (2010), president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, stated that "school boards should get out of the business of running schools and focus on student learning" (p. 29), suggesting that districts privatize schools and create financial incentives to increase student performance. Some scholars blamed school boards for poor student performance, indicating that their goals are not aligned with achievement (Cabico & Harrison, 2009). Yet, school boards are often limited in decisions related to curriculum and are relatively more accountable for ensuring schools have the resources necessary to run (Maeroff, 2010).

Although student performance may not have been a priority of school boards in the past, research shows that they are increasingly concerned with student achievement, especially in the midst of rising accountability standards (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Interestingly, there is conflicting research regarding how school boards view student performance. One self-reporting survey indicated that they tend to characterize student learning beyond test scores (Hess & Meeks, 2010). However, an in-depth case study of one school board revealed a contrary result, illustrating that this board developed teaching and learning goals specifically with test scores in mind (Trujillo, 2013).

School reformers intent on not working with school boards, along with other critics, perceive them as an historical and irrelevant barrier to necessary changes in education (Usdan, 2010; Howell, 2005). Unlike many reformers, school boards lean toward more moderate

approaches of increasing student performance, such as professional development and leadership as opposed to merit pay and school choice (Hess & Meeks, 2010).

One of the first studies linking school boards to student achievement was The Lighthouse Inquiry conducted in 1999 through 2000. Results indicated a clear relationship between the perceptions and beliefs among school boards and the performance of students in their corresponding districts. When comparing high- and low-achieving school districts, researchers found school boards of higher-achieving school districts perceived potential of students differently and had more confidence in their staff when compared to lower-achieving districts (Delagardelle, 2008). Authors of this study reiterated the need for school boards as “critical players in the school change process” and stated that “Without effective school board leadership, systemic change becomes impossible, and improvement in student achievement remains episodic, with only pockets of excellence sprinkled throughout public schools and school districts. (Delagardelle, 2008, p. 221).

School Boards and Local Democracy

School boards are designed to reflect their community’s values within a larger set of systems, linking these values to other institutions including those at the federal and state levels (Howell, 2005; Resnick & Bryant, 2010; Usdan, 2010). To better understand community values, school boards are expected to engage their respective communities, listen to their concerns, and make thoughtful decisions with these concerns in mind (Ravitch, 2010). In doing so, they are supposed to take into account all voices, including marginalized ones, in ways that influence citizens to support their schools financially, politically, and socially (Hess, 2010; Hochschild, 2005; Resnick & Bryant, 2010).

One study of South Carolina school board elections showed that sometimes voters hold school boards responsible for student achievement at the polls (Berry & Howell, 2005). However, the average voter turnout for school boards is only 10% to 15% in most places, suggesting a lack of public involvement and electoral accountability (Howell, 2005; Land, 2002; Plucki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006). Furthermore, these elections are heavily swayed by teacher unions and other interest groups which may result in school boards being too political (Howell, 2005; Moe, 2005; Plucki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006; Hess, 2008). Other scholars point to the fact that many voters do not have children in school as a rationale for voter apathy (Resnick & Bryant, 2010; Viteritti, 2005).

Beyond voting, a large portion of the public does not know any of their school board representatives— 48% of parents and 62% of adults according to one report (Hess, 2010). Although school board meetings are a venue for the public to raise concerns, research shows that they tend to be controlled by special interest groups (Hess, 2010). Another study indicates that school board meeting attendance is lower in diverse communities and attendees tend to be relatively more wealthy, educated, and religious (Campbell, 2005). As a consequence of low public accountability and participation, school boards have been accused of not fairly representing their local communities, and some cases, maintaining the status quo (Howell, 2005; Land, 2002; Plucki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006).

Either way, elected school boards are thought to be more transparent and less apt to corruption since they often make their decisions in public (Hess, 2010; Resnick & Bryant, 2010). In her defense of school boards, Diane Ravitch (2010) states that “Local school boards insist on deliberation; they give parents and teachers a place to speak out and perhaps oppose whatever bold actions are on the table” (p. 24). On the other hand, increased accountability standards

seem to threaten democratic practices such as deliberation. Rather, these standards sometimes cause school boards to make decisions aimed at specific outcomes based on test scores.

According to a case study on an urban school board, Tina Trujillo (2013b) found that these school board members, along with the superintendent, “restricted deliberative decision making and failed to provide opportunities for local participation in matters of instruction and personnel” (p. 352) in order to implement policies that will meet accountability standards.

Another aspect that impacts the democratic role of school boards is their governance style. Over the past 30 years, several school boards have adopted a policy governance model developed by John Carver. Essentially, this model encourages school boards to invest their energies on broad goals and policies while relying on administration, particularly the superintendent, to reach these goals in whatever manner they feel is effective through clear expectations (Carver & Carver, 2013; Gehring, 2005). This model also is designed to facilitate agreement among school board members in the development of policies and expectations (Carver & Carver, 2013; Gehring, 2005).

The marketed benefits of this model include efficiency and increased accountability of school boards (Carver & Carver, 2013). However, the model has been critiqued for several reasons, but among these is the criticism that boards end up giving more authority to the superintendent than warranted. In 2007, John Gehring highlighted Clark County School District’s (CCSD) adoption of the policy governance model four years prior, indicating its success in increasing trust between the board and the superintendent. The hope of policy governance implementation among board members was to address conflict, distraction, and micromanagement (Gehring, 2005). Three years following Gehring’s article, another article exposed disappointment with the policy governance model among community and school board

members, noting that board members are left out of important decision-making such as highly funded contracts (Gray, 2010).

Although policy governance might provide opportunity for increased consensus among school board members due to its macro-focus, conflict has been associated with particular policy developments. Kirby and Crain (1974) found that conflict among school board members in the form of disagreements and debating were positively related to school desegregation. In other words, the more conflict among school board members, the more likely their districts were to desegregate schools. These authors believed that this relationship had to do with the fact that school boards reflected the politics of their geographical locations which impacted school board member recruitment. This relationship illustrates a connection to the democratic nature of school boards as a reflective voice of the people, to specific policy development which was, in this case, believed to be an equity-related policy.

School Boards and Educational Equity

As highlighted above, school district leaders have the ability to eliminate or reproduce inequities through action and inaction (Rorrer, 2001; Rorrer, 2006). In their narrative synthesis of limited existing scholarship on school districts' role in reform, Rorrer, Skrla, & Scheurich (2008) highlighted four major responsibilities that district leaders, as major institutional actors, should adopt to improve education. Among these functions is the importance of "maintaining an equity focus" (p. 313); the other three center on leadership, organization, and policy. Being equity-focused according to Rorrer et al. (2008), means that school district leaders, including school boards, must continuously aim to develop policies, structures, and processes with equity as a major objective.

Achieving equity within educational systems, specifically those in urban environments where institutions are highly complex and populations more diverse, can be a challenge. In a recent report entitled “Redefining and Improving School District Governance” one of the major inquiries left unanswered centered on how to provide effective school governance that meets the needs of marginalized populations (Plecki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006).

Representation and equity. Increasing the professional representation of these populations within education has been thought to be one way of accomplishing the goal of equity (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Pitts, 2007). Several studies rely on quantitative methods to measure the effects of representation. One study found that African American and Latino/a school board members elected in a ward system (compared to an at-large system) more effectively pushed a minority agenda. The other result indicated that school districts with high numbers of Latino/a and African American school board members also had more Latino/a and African American administrators and teachers in their districts, a factor that is often linked to the increased educational outcomes of Latino/a and African American students (Meier, Juenke, Wrinkle, & Polinard, 2005). Another study revealed that representation of African Americans on school boards was positively correlated with the number of African American residents, which in turn, significantly improved the likelihood of residents’ increased satisfaction with their local schools. These same relationships, however, were found to be insignificant among Latino/a representation (Marschall, 2005).

Although research has demonstrated some positive results from increased minority representation on school boards, school board members in urban school districts are often wealthier, whiter, and more formally educated than those they represent (Hess & Meeks, 2010; Plucki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006). Furthermore, within larger communities that contain

multiple school districts, democratic representation might emphasize inequalities. Jennifer L. Hochschild (2005) explained that members of more affluent, higher-performing districts are less concerned with the status of lower performing districts, therefore, their representatives on school boards “have seldom, to put it mildly, taken strong measures to redistribute resources or children across district lines” (p. 330).

This also may ring true among electoral structures in which school boards represent wards as opposed to at-large systems, causing resistance among representatives of wealthier neighborhoods (wards) to distribute resources equitably even within same school districts. Edwin Darden and Elizabeth Cavendish’s (2011) study on nonmonetary resources such as teacher assignment and parent involvement revealed that even the common day-to-day operations overseen by school boards tend to reinforce inequities between high-poverty and low-poverty schools. Additionally, a case study of two North Carolina school boards and their approach to desegregation policies revealed a recent phenomenon of “enclaves” of schools within districts that were racially and economic segregated (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013). Factors that impacted these school boards’ pursuit of integration included the level of stability among the school board as well as their policy design—in this case, the more school choice families were provided with, the more able school boards were to support integration-related policies.

Examples of inequity. Historically, school boards have done little to promote equity-oriented policies that impact marginalized children, specifically those with economic and racial disadvantages as well as those with disabilities and/or who are English learners. Often, other levels of government (courts, mayors, states, and federal) have forced such policies onto school districts (Hochschild, 2005). In his recent book, *School Boards in America: A Flawed Exercise*

in *Democracy*, Gene Maeroff (2010) explained that although school boards might reflect democracy, they have also reinforced inequalities:

The fact that some of those same boards acted until more than halfway through the twentieth century to bar African Americans and disabled students from many of the public schools raises questions retrospectively about democracy, questions that most school boards conveniently left unaddressed. (p. 6).

School board responses to school desegregation and other discrimination-related petitions and lawsuits illustrate their resistance toward equal access to quality education for all children.

One of the first school desegregation class action lawsuits was filed in 1945, *Mendez v. Westminster*, on behalf of 5,000 students of mainly Mexican-descent. This lawsuit followed the failed negotiations with four school boards located in Orange County, California that insisted on placing Mexican students in separate schools using language and ethnicity as a basis for their decision (Strum, 2010). In addition to language and ethnicity, school boards throughout the nation used race to exclude children from quality schooling. Even after the Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Brown V. Board of Education* in 1954, their ruling in response to an appeal in 1955 (known as *Brown II*) gave many school boards leverage to avoid compliance for as long as they could. The Prince Edward County School Board went as far as closing all public schools in 1959 to circumvent school desegregation and only opened them when forced to do so in 1964 by the Supreme Court (Waugh, 2012; see also *Griffen v. County School Board of Prince Edward County (1964)*).

Although Prince Edward County appointed (and still does) its school board, Dwana Waugh (2012) highlighted that one of the major points of contention in this historical case was over who had control of public schools. On one hand, segregationists (mainly White) demanded

that public education be controlled locally rather than in accordance with federal law since it, in their opinion, had been influenced by minority advocate groups such as the NAACP. On the other hand, the African American community struggled to gain and maintain control of schools at the local level. As a result of an economic boycott organized by the African American community in Prince Edward County in 1969, three White school boards members resigned and two Black men were appointed. Soon following this, a new superintendent who had gained the supported of the African American community, was hired by the school board. This situation illustrates the power of representative democracy and social movements related to school governance.

In California, school board members for the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) had been appointed by the mayor for 50 years (1922-1972) and according to Fine (1986), they were not politically prepared to effectively address school desegregation and were eventually placed into a lose-lose situation until their elimination. The SFUSD School Board, along with an advisory committee, created a plan that would result in racially desegregated schools, but after opposition from anti-busing proponents and the mayor, they were unable to implement this plan without being legally mandated (Fine, 1986). In fact, the mayor threatened to abolish the appointed board for an elected one if it instituted a school desegregation plan. Because the school board did not implement the plan, the NAACP filed a lawsuit in 1970 against SFUSD (*Johnson v. SFUSD, N.D. California*), which pressured the school board to act and influenced the mayor eliminate the appointed school board for an elected one (Fine, 1986). The politics revealed in this case study led Fine (1986) to suggest that appointed school boards were not politically positioned to navigate highly controversial issues such as school desegregation.

Unlike many other districts, the Seattle School Board agreed to mandate a school desegregation plan without legal force although legal threat was lurking (Dumas, 2011; Siqueland, 1981). After 14 years of failed attempts to desegregate schools using voluntary methods, in 1977 school board members voted 6 to 1 on the Seattle Plan, a plan that attempted to share the burden of school desegregation among the different racial groups residing in the Seattle School District (Dumas, 2011; Siqueland, 1981). Ultimately, the Seattle School Board's choice to pursue desegregation was heavily influenced by its desire to maintain local control over a plan as opposed to being forced to hand control over to the courts (Dumas, 2011).

Beyond race, school boards have discriminated against children based on sexuality as well. In 2004, a California school board members refused to comply with a state policy designed to protect transgender and transsexual students even when state and federal funding was at stake (DeHard and Ganley, 2008). One member even went so far as calling transgender/sexual people "trash" and another expressed their religious concerns in relationship to such policy compliance. Following four months of public outcry which was sparked by a letter written by one of the board's minority members and published in a local newspaper, the school board finally voted to include this policy (DeHard and Ganley, 2008).

Unlike many of the school desegregation cases of the past that excluded students from educational opportunities simply because of race or refused to protect students due to sexuality in the case regarding transgender and transsexual students highlighted by DeHard and Ganley (2008), economic constraints of school districts have become a excuse for inequity when it comes to students with special needs which is exponential for students with multiple "needs" (i.e., English learners students with disabilities).

School districts throughout the country failed to educate millions of children with disabilities. According to Mark Weber (2009), although special education programs did operate in some districts prior to 1975, “the law excluded from school children deemed either unable to learn or merely considered disturbing to others” (p. 728). In fact, in 1974, Congress estimated that 1.75 million students with disabilities had been without any education and some 3 million children were being provided an inadequate education (Weber, 2009; Yell, Katsiyannis, & Hazelkorn, 2007). It was not until the federal government intervened through the creation of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (originally the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) in 1975, which used funding as an enforcement tool for states to provide adequate education for children with disabilities (Weber, 2009). This Act was followed by several key Supreme Court hearings (e.g., *Board of Education of The Hendrick Hudson Central School District V. Rowley* (1982); *Cedar Rapids Community School District v. Garret F.*, 526 U.S. 66 (1999) ; and *Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District*, 550 U.S. 516 (2007)) to determine whether schools, under the authority of school districts, had provided appropriate educational services to various children with disabilities (Special Education Advisor, 2010; Weber, 2009). In the majority of these court cases, school districts had not complied with law (Maeroff, 2010; Weber, 2009). One of the biggest factors of non-compliance involved the relatively high cost of providing adequate education for students with disabilities (Maeroff, 2010).

Although public perceptions of school board members’ ability to address English learners were found to be two times more favorable than school boards’ self-perceptions in this area, according to a 1998 survey (Wong & Shen, 2003), more recent cases suggest otherwise. For instance, in 2013, in order to save approximately \$20,000, the Clark County School District

School Board in Nevada recommended eliminating written translation services for families of English Language Learner students who are enrolled in Individualized Education Programs. This upset many Latino/a leaders who proposed legal action against the school district (Pommells, 2013; Takahashi, 2013). Additionally, the Cleveland School Metropolitan District settled a case in 2011 that was filed by families in 2008 with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights because they failed to provide translation services for parents of special education students and students charged with disciplinary violations (O'Donnell, 2011). Such cases suggest that resources directed at linguistic minorities, such as translation services, are not a priority for some local school boards.

In addition to policies directed specifically at marginalized students, increasing federal and state accountability standards play a significant role on the development of general school boards policies and their impact on equity. In a case study of an urban school board, Trujillo (2013a) found that school boards often create policies and institute practices that exhibit standardization and align with federal and state high-stakes accountability policies as opposed to ones that take into account the diverse needs of various communities. She further indicated that "Such goals also suggested that the district leaders minimally regarded the powerful role of social and historical contexts of oppression in shaping teachers' and students' performance" (Trujillo, 2013a, p. 346). In a subsequent analysis of her case study, Trujillo (2013b) also determined that school boards were influenced by "bottom-up" pressures from teachers and principals that hindered equitable and redistributive policies and practices. She suggested that equity-minded district leaders were required to ensure the implementation of equitable policies and presented recommendations for leadership preparation programs to address these concerns. Such recommendations are not easily applicable to elected school board members, most of whom

do not participate in leadership preparation programs. Given this, school board members might lack the opportunity to become equity-minded in their pursuit of policies and practices.

Examples of inequity in school districts throughout the country demonstrate the fact that schools are often not designed to educate every student. Historically, the overt exclusion of children because of race and disability was commonplace. Changing ideology and federal intervention has made overt discrimination and exclusion increasingly frowned upon. However, both equity and inequity still surface, sometimes inadvertently, through various policies and practices intended to meet or not meet the unique needs of students.

Public Schools and Demographic Change

The opportunities for achieving equity through educational systems are increasing as the demographic backgrounds of public school students become increasingly diverse. *The Condition of Education 2013*, a report authored by the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), showcased several interesting characteristics related to public school enrollment at the preK-12 level. First, after dropping in the 1970s and early 1980s, overall participation in school has increased from 41.2 million in 1990 to 49.5 million in 2010, with a projected increase of 53.1 million students by 2021. While the enrollment of White students dropped from 61% in 2000 to 52% in 2010, Hispanic enrollment grew from 16% to 23%. Projected enrollment in 2021 among these two populations are 48% White and 27% Hispanic. Regionally, the West experienced the biggest decrease in White enrollment and the South experienced the largest increase in Hispanic enrollment.

The total average students receiving a high school diploma or its equivalent made some sharp increases from 38% in 1940 to 75% in 1970, and more recently to 90% in 2012. Although these averages vary among racial groups, all groups have experienced increasing attainment at

this level. From 1990 to 2012, Black and Hispanic students have made the largest gains, going from 82% to 89% and 58% to 75%, respectively, whereas White and Asian students increased slightly from 90% to 95% and from 92% to 96%, respectively.

School-aged children whose families live in poverty had declined from 17% in 1990 to 15% in 2000, only to increase to 21% in 2011. Most recently, the percentages of impoverished children were higher in states located in the Southeast and Southwest regions. Also, Black, Native American, and Hispanic children were among those populations that had more than 30% of their children living in poverty (39%, 36%, and 30%, respectively), whereas White and Asian groups both had 13% of their respective children living in poverty. Similarly, concentrated poverty in schools has increased over time from 12% in 1990-2000 to 20% in 2010-11 among those children who attend high-poverty schools⁴.

English learners (EL) students in the preK-12 public school population have also increased from 9% in 2002-03 to 10% in 2010-11. Among states, eight had populations of more than 10% EL students in 2010-11 which included Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Texas. *The Condition of Education 2013* also highlighted the achievement gap among EL students and non-EL students using the average reading scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). There was a gap of 36 points on the NAEP reading test among 4th graders and 44 points among 8th graders between EL and non-EL students in 2011. For 4th graders, this gap had not changed significantly since 2002, but among 8th graders it has decreased slightly from 47 to 44 points.

Overall, the population of public school students have changed dramatically. School districts are educating a more heterogeneous population. The number of students who are

⁴ High-poverty schools have more than 75% of their students eligible for free or reduced lunch (NCES, 2013).

retained through high school have increased, students of color compared with White students in public schools are at an all-time high, and those living in poverty and even attending schools with others living in poverty are significantly higher than two decades ago. Furthermore, students whose primary language is not English are among a growing population. Given these changes, school boards, as policymakers and leaders, are an essential factor in creating of equitable opportunities for marginalized students.

Emergent Bilinguals in the United States

The emerging bilingual population of students, otherwise known more officially as English learners (EL), are not new to the United States. Although 31 states have declared English as their official language, there is not a nationally-declared language (U.S. English, 2013). In fact, many languages other than English have been spoken for centuries in what is now the United States. Among those who were educated in the early years of schooling, some were even instructed in non-English languages. As English became synonymous with “American,” schools encompassed an assimilationist role, instituting English through instruction and learning. Soon, rights provided to EL students further enforced English by protecting ELs’ rights to an education while mastering only English (Rodriguez, 2005).

Although the EL population has always been part of the education system, their connection to historically oppressed groups have put them at a disadvantage. Furthermore, language policies and practices have often sought to silence languages other than English, marginalizing EL students even more. However, this community, who is largely children of new immigrants, have aspirations of success even though systematic barriers often make their path difficult (Portes, 2010). The following sections provide a contemporary profile of EL students along with a history of federal, state, and local policies, laws, and practices pertaining to ELs.

Demographic and Enrollment Trends

Among the 20% of students who speak a language other than English at home, those classified as English learners (EL), made up approximately 10% (around 4.7 million) of the total population enrolled in public school during the 2010-11 academic year (NCES, 2012.). More than 50% of these students are U.S. born (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Additionally, EL students attend about half of the schools in the United States (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009) and their overall enrollment in public schools has increased by 56% from 1995 to 2005, outpacing general student enrollment which experienced only a 2.6% growth (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). This growth trend is expected to continue, and by 2030, ELs are projected to reflect 40% of all elementary and secondary students (Li, 2007).

The geographic location of ELs are mixed. On one hand, ELs tends to be densely populated in specific locations. In 2009-10, there were eight states that had 10% or more EL students enrolled in public schools: California (28.9%), Nevada (16%), New Mexico (15.5%), Texas (15.5%), Colorado (11.4%), Alaska (11.1%), Oregon (11.0%), and Hawaii (10.0%) (NCES, 2012). At the school level, 10% of all elementary schools and 10% of all metropolitan public schools in the United States educate 70% of EL students (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010).

On the other hand, data suggest that families of EL students are migrating and/or relocating to places without a significant population of EL students. While places such as Arizona, New York, and the District of Columbia experienced declines in their EL student enrollment from 2000-01 to 2010-11 (-42%, -10%, and -39% respectively) (USDOE, 2013; NCES, 2012), several states have had significant growth in their EL population in recent years (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). Table 2 illustrates the top ten states with the most change in their EL enrollment from 2000-01 to 2010-11.

Table 2.
EL Student Enrollment, 2000-2010

Location	ELL Enrollment		
	2000–01	2010-11	% Change 2000-2010
South Carolina	5,121	36,379	610%
Kentucky	4,030	16,351	306%
Nevada	23,488	83,352	255%
Delaware	2,081	6,858	230%
Arkansas	11,847	31,537	166%
Kansas	14,878	39,323	164%
Mississippi	2,176	5,620	158%
Alabama	7,226	17,559	143%
Virginia	36,802	88,033	139%
North Carolina	44,087	103,249	134%
U.S.	3,707,689	4,371,553	18%

Source: (Horsford & Sampson, 2013).

About three-quarters of EL students speak Spanish (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010) and the remaining top four languages spoken by ELs include: Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Hmong (ED Data Express, 2011). Most immigrants, particularly those of Latino/a heritage, are more likely to experience economic poverty and poor academic achievement relative to their peers (DOE, 2013; Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010). Additionally, many EL students are enrolled in schools that lack necessary resources and are segregated by language, race, and income (DOE, 2013; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010).

National EL Policies and Practices

A nation of bilinguals. Throughout the late 18th century until much of the 19th century, most policies and practices throughout the United States embraced linguistic diversity. Prior to their genocide, people indigenous to this country spoke approximately 300 languages (de Jong, 2013) and much of what is now known as the Southwest region and parts of the Mountain West region of the U.S. (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and parts of Nevada, Colorado, and Utah) belonged to Mexico until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was enacted in 1848. This region remained occupied by many of its Spanish-speaking residents following the Treaty (Flores & Murillo, 2001; PBS, 2013). From around the time of The American Revolution until World War I, officials viewed multilingualism as an asset that “provided access to knowledge and learning” (de Jong, 2013, p. 102; see also Flores & Murillo, 2001).

Public schools throughout the country were either bilingual or monolingual in a language other than English. In fact, German language schools were located in the following states: New York, Boston, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, and Oregon. Other languages used for instruction in schools included: Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Polish, Italian, French, Czech, and Spanish (de Jong, 2013; Gándara, Losen, August, Uriarte, Gomez, & Hopkins, 2010; Flores & Murillo, 2001). Bilingual public schools existed for various reasons including families’ aspiration to preserve their language and culture, the lack of English-speaking instructors, and existing competition with parochial education (de Jong, 2013).

In the Southwest region during the 19th century, the majority of school board members and other elected officials were of Mexican descent, and schools offered culturally pertinent curriculum in Spanish. However, this changed as a result of a movement to Americanize non-

White people. According to Flores & Murillo, 2001, “The first step necessary for the Americanization process to succeed was the Americanization of the schools, by removing local control from the Mexican community and replacing it with Anglo control” (p. 192). This was followed by instituting English-only curriculum. Similarly, Native American children were sent to boarding schools, stripping them of their language and culture, and replacing this with English and “Americanized” values (Flores & Murillo, 2001).

Shifting policies. The combination of World War I, the Great Depression, and an increasing influx of immigrants in the early 20th century paved the way for English-only sentiments among federal and state officials. In addition to President Roosevelt’s statement regarding the need to have one language in 1914, immigration quotas were established through the Immigration Act of 1924, 34 states attempted passing English-only laws by 1923, schools started to administer intelligence tests, and non-English languages began to be prohibited in schools, resulting in many disadvantages for non-English speaking children (Flores & Murillo, 2001; de Jong, 2013). Throughout this time, states and localities, especially in the Southwest region, segregated students of Latino/a descent using language as a proxy for racism (Flores & Murillo, 2001; Strum, 2010).

After a few decades of English-only policies and practices, feelings about language changed again in the wake of World War II and the rising competition with Russia (de Jong, 2013). Having benefited from bilingualism on the battlefield, such as that from Navajo Code Talkers who used their language to create secret messages (Navajo Code Talkers Foundation, 2013), the government recognized a need for a more multilingual nation (de Jong, 2013). Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawing discrimination based on language, was soon followed by Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, otherwise known as

the Bilingual Education Act in 1968, which recognized specific needs of language minorities and provided financial assistance to school districts for the creation of “new and imaginative elementary and secondary programs designed to meet these special education needs” (sec. 702).

Supreme Court decisions and federal funding. However, it was the Supreme Court decision in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), which found that 1,800 Chinese students in San Francisco had been discriminated against because they were not provided the necessary resources to acquire the same education as their fluent English-speaking peers, that legally distinguished the need for equity in education as opposed to simply attaining equality (de Jong, 2013; Li, 2007; Marschall, Rigby, Jenkins, 2011). Based on the Court’s finding, The U.S. Department of Education developed the *Lau Remedies*—policies used to classify, instruct, and reclassify ELs, along with standards for EL teacher preparation—that schools receiving Title VII funding were required to adopt (Colorín Colorado, 2011; Gándara, et. al, 2010). Furthermore, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 specified that “the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs” was against federal law (Education Law Center, 2013, para. 3).

In the meantime, funding from the Bilingual Education Act increased in total (less per pupil) from \$7.5 million for 27,000 students in 1969 to \$68 million for close to 400,000 students during the 1974-75 academic year (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988; Gándara, et. al, 2010). The BEA reauthorization in 1974 allowed funds to be used for resources and support for bilingual programs as well as capacity-building to sustain such efforts (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

In 1981, *Castañeda v. Pickard* was decided in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and determined that EL children in Texas were not receiving an adequate education, and as a result, the court developed three criteria required by future EL programs which included having a solid

theoretical foundation, adequate support, and a clear way to assess the program for effectiveness (Wright, 2010). That same year, 23 states made English the official language (Gándara, et. al. 2010).

ELL related funding and regulation policies, however, were inconsistent. Changes in the BEA were often dependent on the political landscape, specifically the presidential administration (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009). By the 1984 and 1988 reauthorizations, a significant portion of these funds went to all-English/English immersion programs, and in 1994, the Bilingual Education Act was replaced with the Improving America's Schools Act and there was no limit on the funding distributed to all-English programs within this newly named Act (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Li, 2007).

Federal policies post-NCLB embraces English-only. Although the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 resulted in increased accountability for EL student performance, it has also been critiqued for being shortsighted, focusing intently on the transition of EL students to English proficiency as quickly as possible (Gándara, et. al. 2010; Garcia, 2011; Flores & Murillo, 2001; and Wright, 2012). In the following excerpt, Eugene Garcia (2011) highlights the transition that occurred from bilingual to English-only in the era of accountability:

At a time when globalization means that workers and goods flow across borders, NCLB focuses only on attaining “English proficiency.” In fact, “bilingual” has been eliminated completely from the law and all government offices affiliated with it. The Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) has replaced the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Affairs. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education has

become the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs. (pp., 48-49).

Most recently, states that qualify, receive Title III federal funding as part of the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act (DOE, 2008). This funding is dependent on the number of students that qualify for EL services. In 2010-11, approximately \$734 million in Title III funds were allocated to close to 4.1 million qualifying ELs, an average of \$179 per EL student (DOE, n.d).

State and Local Responses to Emergent Bilinguals

State Funding. At the state-level, policies and funding related to EL students vary widely (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009; Horsford & Sampson, 2013; Lopez & McEneaney, 2012). For instance, Horsford & Sampson (2013) discovered that the average per pupil funding in the top-ten fastest EL-growing states ranged all the way from \$0 to \$741 per EL student in 2010. Furthermore, state funding levels are often developed using ambiguous standards that are not necessarily connected to methods that increase educational outcomes for students, especially linguistic minorities and other marginalized students (DOE, 2013).

State and local implementation of policies. NCLB played a large role in driving EL policies at the state and local levels. In order to receive Title III funding, NCLB required states and districts to develop and meet three annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) which included increases in the number of ELs learning and attaining English proficiency as well as ELs making adequate yearly progress in terms of academic content and graduation (Tanenbaum & Anderson, 2010). Additionally, states were expected to create a plan for districts that failed to meet AMAOs for more than 2 years in a row (Tanenbaum & Anderson, 2010).

Required AMAOs were implemented nationally, yet each state was given the authority to determine how they identified ELs and how English proficiency was measured (DOE, 2012). In 2009-10, 42 states gave local school districts the authority to develop criteria for identifying ELs and 32 states allowed these local agencies to determine exit criteria for ELs, whereas, the remaining states created statewide criteria. “Thus, a student who is considered an ELL based on one district’s criteria may not be eligible for services, or may be exited from services in another district, even within the same state” (DOE, 2012, p. xiv). Furthermore, as of 2009-10, 19 states reported having policies specifying language of instruction and programs parameters such as time allocation for English learning, while other states reported having no related policies in place (DOE, 2012).

Although states and the majority of local school districts were given autonomy in the development of EL criteria under NCLB, the push for Common Core Standards among states has changed that conversation. With many states opting out of NCLB, most recent recommendations for those adopting the Common Core Standards include the development of consistent criteria for EL identification and exit (Maxwell, 2013). Thus far, 43 states, including those in the Mountain West region, agreed to the Common Core Standards (http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2015/06/a_common_core_math_problem_how_many_states_have_adopted_the_standards.html).

Interestingly, one of the common-core standards’ recommendations is contrary to what research has suggested. Specifically, the recommendation for determining English proficiency for ELs include “criteria that rely on students' linguistic abilities and not require a minimum level of performance on an academic-content test, which is what several states do now” (Maxwell, 2013, para. 7). However, scholars recommended that ELs maintain their status until they reach

fluency in both language and academic-content which would require relative performance measures (Gándara & Rumberger, 2006; Gándara & Rumberger, 2007). Based on their research, Gándara & Rumberger (2006) indicated that “a strong program for linguistic minority students will incorporate additional time for them to acquire both English and the academic content at their grade level” (p. 69). These conflicting recommendations demonstrate how standards at the national and state levels might result in local school districts implementing policies that are insufficient in meeting the needs of EL students.

Other EL policies instituted at the state-level include teacher standards and bilingual programs versus English-only ones. In their comparative research on EL policies in Texas and California, Gándara & Rumberger (2009) credited Texas’ adoption of bilingual education with one possible reason why their EL population, on average, scored higher on NAEP and state tests than California ELs. Another clear distinction between California and Texas was their teacher certification standards for EL teachers—Texas standards were relatively lower than California standards, a finding that was difficult to explain given the higher EL performance in Texas (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009). Similarly, researchers found that Latino/a students who are classified as EL (as well as those who are not) are outperforming their counterparts on NAEP tests in states that have bilingual programs and more Title III funding (Lopez & McEneaney, 2012; Li, 2007).

Again, policies across states are highly variable (Horsford & Sampson, 2013). While some 29 states offer newcomer programs to EL students which provide holistic-type support and services (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009), other states have voted on and implemented propositions that include intentional restrictive language policies (Gándara, et. al. 2010). In California, Proposition 227 banned bilingual education in schools since 1998 (Flores & Murillo,

2001). In 2000, Arizonans passed Proposition 203, requiring schools serving EL students to use a Structured English Immersion Model designed to give students 4-hour blocks of English-specific development (Garcia, 2011). Similarly, Massachusetts approved the Massachusetts English Language Education in Public Schools Initiative in 2002, replacing bilingual programs with English-only curriculum (Gándara, et. al. 2010). Even English-only laws (unrelated to schools) approved at the state-level tend to limit bilingual education on the local-level illustrating that the state's political climate has a significant impact how EL education is developed and implemented locally (Marschall, Rigby, Jenkins, 2011).

Local bureaucracies and representation. On the other hand, scholars have observed that sometimes policy implementation is not reaching localities for a variety of reasons, including bureaucratic resistance. For example, several school districts in Arizona have not complied with the Structured English Immersion program, one reason being that EL students are not able to complete their high school degrees on-time in such a program (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). Scholars have found that bureaucratic incorporation happens frequently with new communities of people regardless of state policies (Jones-Correa, 2008; Marrow, 2009). Helen Marrow's research (2009) showed that the needs of newly arrived immigrants in rural parts of America were met at the bureaucrat level. The excerpt below explains how their needs were addressed:

Bureaucrats working in public elementary school systems in eastern North Carolina espoused a surprisingly favorable view of Hispanic youth (including undocumented ones), envisioning them as automatic and deserving "clients" even when politicians and bureaucrats in other institutions did not. Both counties' school systems had hired bilingual ESL-program coordinators and assistants (primarily in their newcomer-heavy

schools), despite the substantial cost, and established policies to encourage Hispanic parents to become more active in their children's educations. (Marrow, 2009, pp. 761-762).

In addition to bureaucratic influence, representation of people of color (particularly Latino/a and Asian American) and women on school boards as well as Latino/a superintendents were determined to be either more supportive of bilingual education or resistant to English-only educational policies (Bali 2003; Jones-Correa, 2008; Leal & Hess, 2000).

Federal and state government involvement, coupled with shifting racial ideologies have always had a significant impact on shifting EL-related policies in multiple directions. At times, this shift has required local school districts to recognize and make accommodations for ELs, but not necessarily in a way that would preserve their native language. In other cases, however, local school control was favorable to EL students because it was relatively more flexibility to meet the unique needs of each community.

Responses to new and existing populations are varied. For instance, in Miami, the school district welcomed the influx of Cuban immigrants in the 1960s, offering the first official bilingual program in the United States with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation (Flores & Murillo, 2001). However, Puerto Rican families in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s, struggled with state and local officials to gain control of their schools in order to change existing policies and develop bilingual programs for their children (De Jesus & Perez, 2009).

Ideology: Asset v. Deficit

As shown above, shifting and varying EL policies at both federal and state levels have largely been the result of existing political climates, regardless of research-based evidence. There

is a clear ideological stance on EL policies, one that favors bilingual education and another that leans toward English-only education. Some researchers have framed this debate aligning with asset-based curriculum (bilingual education) versus a deficit-based curriculum (English-only) (Flores & Murillo, 2001; Black, 2006; Gándara & Orfield, 2010). However, most of the research suggests that policies in support of bilingual education provide the most opportunities for EL students to succeed (Gándara & Orfield, 2010; Li, 2007; Koyama, 2004; Lopez, McEneaney, 2012). In her review of EL policies, Li (2007) concluded that:

Time has demonstrated that bilingual education programs are the most effective. Some may argue that today's Congress has taken current research into account and determined that a policy of English immersion works best. Yet the most recent comprehensive studies contradict this assertion. (p. 570).

The development and implementation of bilingual programs has several requirements. Bilingual programs, especially ones designed to provide dual-language support (teaching both English fluent and English learners an additional language) typically cost more than English-only programs, and therefore, need sufficient funding. Teacher preparation, teacher standards, and professional development are also key policy and practice areas shown to be connected to EL achievement (Good, Masewicz, Vogel, 2010; Heilig, Lopez, & Torre, 2014; Gándara & Orfield, 2010; Harper, de John, 2009; Roy-Campbell, 2012; Lopez & McEneaney, 2012). Given the historical and current variation in policies across states, a better understanding of how local policy makers develop and maintain environments designed to address EL learning is essential to the success of this marginalized group.

Summary of the Literature

The literature presented above demonstrates the connection between school boards and emergent bilinguals. Although schools boards have arguably lost power over time as educational institutions shifted from small, locally-run institutions to increasingly bureaucratic systems, they remain major players in a political environment that expects results and accountability. Research shows that while they are sometimes underprepared, school boards affect student achievement and represent democracy. Equity is essential to both of these. As Rorrer et. al. (2008) indicated, equitable policies, structures, and processes are necessary for improving education; the democratic nature of school boards allows local participation in education, one our nation's oldest and most significant public institutions. Such participation assumes that all citizen voices, even those who are marginalized, are taken into account when shaping systems of teaching and learning.

It is evident from the literature that school boards have influenced equity through policies and practices, which is particularly clear from research on school desegregation and special educational policies. It is interesting to note that school boards were often pushed either by federal laws, financial incentives, or advocacy groups to construct policies that addressed marginalized children (Cross, 2004). However, studies specifically focusing on school boards' role in equity are limited, especially those of a contemporary nature, post-NCLB.

The education of emergent bilinguals is considered to be on the forefront our of nation's equity agenda (DOE, 2013), and yet, it is also "one of the most misunderstood issues in preK-12 education today" (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010, p. 1). This population of students is often dealing with intersecting racial, economic, and linguistic barriers in education, and although the federal government has provided them with minimal rights and funding, state and local officials must

determine the specific ways they will address this population. History suggests that if they fail to do so, their authority to make decisions based on this population will be considerably diminished.

The significant demographic shift in public schools and the relocation of emergent bilinguals and their families in the last decade to different states, provides a unique opportunity for this dissertation study to examine how, and if, school boards have worked to include this population in their local educational systems through the institution of policies and practices. Furthermore, this study will provide a contemporary analysis of how school boards, as local non-partisan, community representatives, envision and address equity in education.

Theoretical Framework: A Case for Social Construction Theory

Much of the literature on school boards claim that these governing bodies have not been a significant part of improving equity in education. Whether this is because they either cannot or will not push the agenda is debatable. What is clear, however, is that they have a role in informing policy and practice within their school districts.

Jennifer Hochschild (2005) argues that the school board's role in equity is largely based on choice. More specifically, she explained, that these entities are faced with the choice to either make decisions centered on the desires of elite individuals and groups *or* centered on the needs of their constituents, which include marginalized populations. She concluded her argument by suggesting that the "latter choice is electorally and substantively difficult, and it may fail. But the existence of this option implies that a school board can do more than most currently do to fight against resource and teaching inequities within its own district" (pp. 335-336).

Is Hochschild's assertion that school boards make a clear cut choice between two options, one that promotes the status quo and one that promotes equity too simplistic? Perhaps, it mimics

the myth of rationality in policy making, which fails to account for the complexity of people and systems that influence policy (Stone, 2002). In particular, it arguably assumes a problem (educational inequality), a goal (equity), and a solution (redistribution of resources), and then blames school boards for not meeting the goal.

An alternative perspective was presented by Deborah Stone (2002) in the *Policy Paradox*. Stone (2002) claimed policy making stems from the tension over ideas. She explained that

“Ideas are a medium of exchange and a mode of influence even more powerful than money and votes and guns. Shared meanings motivate people to action and meld individuals striving into collective action. Ideas are at the center of all political conflict. Policy making, in turn, is a constant struggle over the criteria for classification, the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideals that guide the way people behave” (p. 11).

Stone (2002) wrote that the larger goals of policy making are equity, efficiency, liberty, and security, and the struggle lies in the ideas we have around these goals.

The literature on both school boards and EL-related policies and practices illustrate a great deal of tension over ideas related to these goals. For instance, some label school boards inefficient, while others view them as democratic. As for ELs, shifting and inconsistent policies, such as those that support English immersion and others that advocate for bilingualism, demonstrate conflicts over the broader goals of equity, efficiency, liberty, and security. To aid in understanding how school boards address policymaking for ELs, I use the social construction and policy design framework.

The social construction and policy design framework shares many of the same notions presented in *The Policy Paradox* but provides propositions that can be utilized to understand the policymaking process. Developed in the late 1980s by Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider, the social construction and policy design framework uses a series of six propositions presented in Table 3. In sum, these propositions assume “public policymakers typically socially construct target populations in positive and negative terms and distribute benefits and burdens so as to reflect and perpetuate these constructions” (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007, p. 93). This theory accounts for the ways that power and privilege influence the level of engagement among target populations, hence, those who benefit from policies will be more engaged and those who do not, are less engaged, enhancing the cyclical nature of policy design which tends to reinforce benefits and burdens for specific populations.

Table 3.

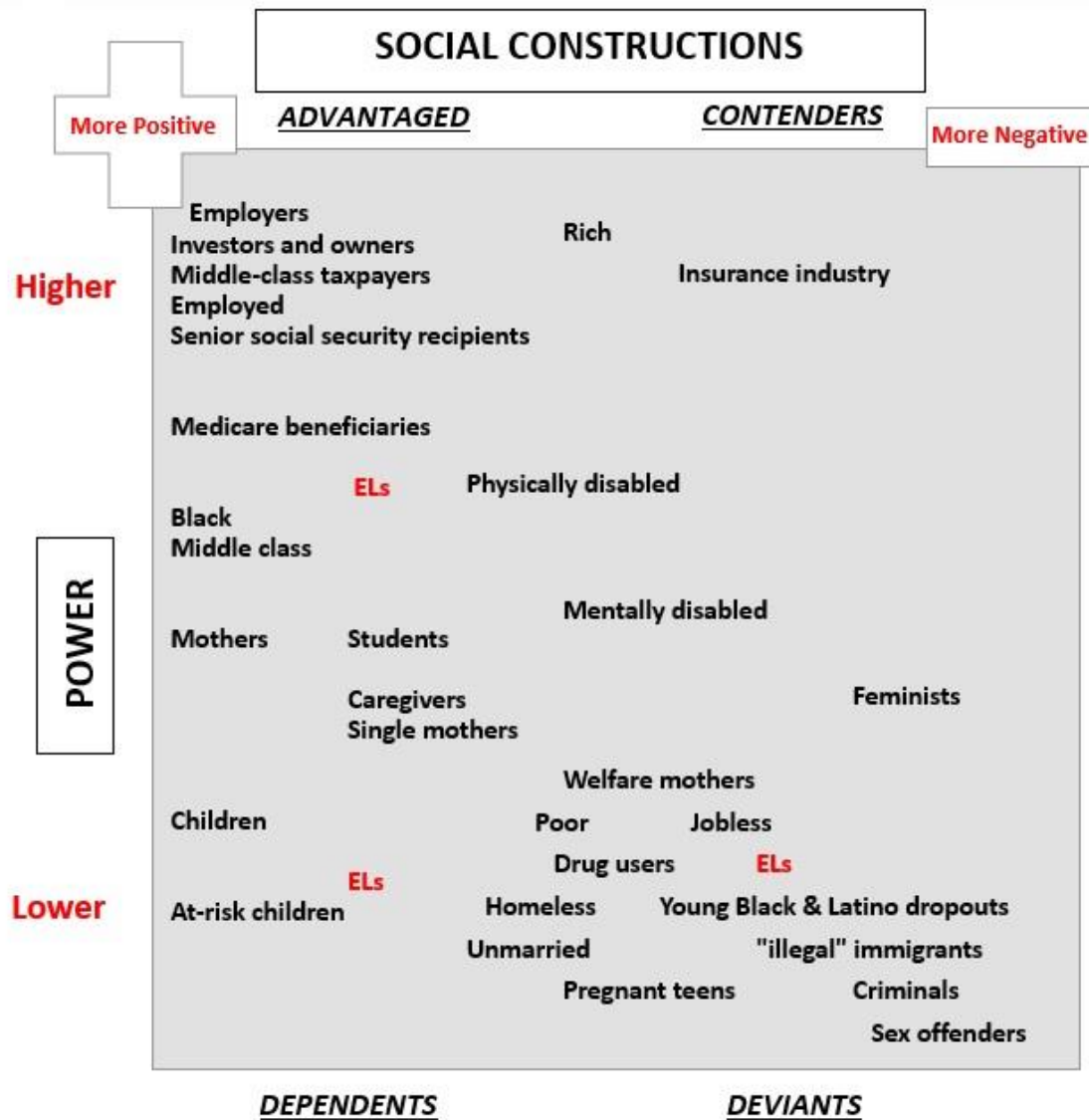
Social Construction Theory Propositions

Proposition #	Proposition Description
Proposition 1	“Policy designs structure opportunities and send varying messages to differently constructed targeted groups about how government behaves and how they are likely to be treated by government. Both the opportunity structures and the messages impact the political orientations and participation patterns of target populations” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 98).
Proposition 2	“The allocation of benefits and burdens to target groups in public policy depends upon their extent of political power and their positive or negative social construction on the deserving or undeserving axis” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 101).
Proposition 3	“Policy design elements, including tools, rules, rationales, and delivery structures, differ according to the social construction and power of target groups” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 104).
Proposition 4	“Policymakers, especially elected politicians, respond to, perpetuate and help create social constructions of target groups in anticipation of public approval or approbation” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 106).
Proposition 5	“Social constructions of target groups can change, and public policy design is an important, though certainly not singular, force for change. The seeds for altering social constructions can often be found in the unanticipated or unintended consequences of previous policy designs” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 108).
Proposition 6	“In degenerative policymaking contexts, differences in policy and designs are related to different patterns of policy change” (Ingram, et al, 2007, p. 112).

(Source: Ingram, et al, 2007)

As shown in Figure 1 within this framework there are four groups: Advantaged (viewed positively with more power/resources), Contenders (viewed negatively with more power/resources), Dependents (viewed positively with less power/resources), and Deviants (viewed negatively with less power/resources).

Figure 1.
Targeted Groups Based on Social Constructions and Levels of Power



Adapted from Schneider & Sidney (2009)

Consistent with the broader idea of social construction, Ingram, et al. (2007) pointed out that these groups and their associations with power and policies are fluid. For instance, “At times, various groups have contested social constructions, with different actors perceiving their attributes differently” (Ingram, et al., 2007, p. 103). Similarly, as demonstrated in the literature,

ELs have been viewed by different groups at different times as both assets and deficits. Within this framework, ELs may be positioned as dependents, advantaged, or perhaps even deviants depending on the political, economic, and social climate.

Additionally, scholars of this framework argue that although some policies are deemed obligatory and can result in burdens experienced by advantaged groups, eventually advantaged groups will use their power to push back on such policies (Ingram, et al., 2007). For example, many school desegregation cases required school boards to develop policies in accordance with the law. As documented, some of these cases, especially those that mandated busing, illustrated serious opposition from White communities (advantaged groups), forcing Black communities (dependent groups) to carry the burden of busing (Horsford, Sampson, & Forletta, 2013). One might anticipate a similar reactions to EL students as a dependent group. In fact, recently on a local public radio segment on ELs and funding, a caller posed the question “How can I justify requesting millions of dollars for foreign kids when we can’t even help our own kids here in our own state?” (Doughman, 2013, para. 7). The idea of policymakers redistributing resources from one group of children to another brings to surface questions around who deserves what and why.

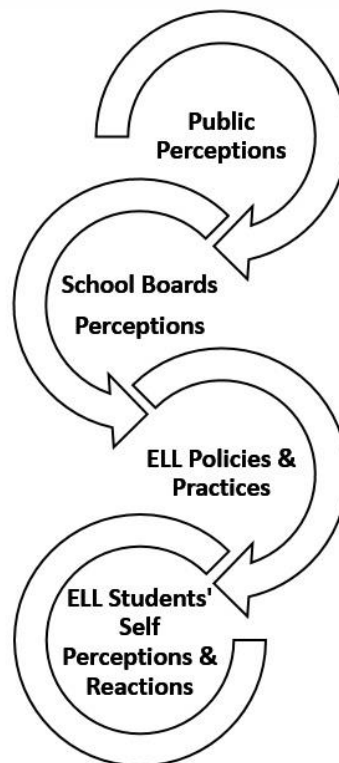
Furthermore, it is clear from the literature that EL policies and practices throughout the country are inconsistent. For instance, research shows that the most effective programs for ELs are bilingual and dual-language ones (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010), yet many school districts institute English immersion programs. The lack of research-based policies demonstrate that policy designs are likely connected to perception. Ingram et al. (2007) indicated that the social construction framework can be used to determine “the circumstances in which science and expert opinion are not likely to be influential, that is, where social construction of target groups is deeply embedded and dominates discourse in an issue area such as immigrant, welfare, and

crime” (p. 113). This framework fits this study well given the discourse, varying perceptions, and shifting policies on ELs, most of which are not informed by research-based evidence.

Although each proposition builds on one another, to better understand how and why school boards develop EL policies and practices, this dissertation research focuses largely on *Proposition 4* which claims that “Policymakers, especially elected politicians, respond to, perpetuate and help create social constructions of target groups in anticipation of public approval or approbation” (Ingram, et al. 2007, p. 106). In other words, as seen in Figure 2, this study tests the notion that public perceptions of ELs influence how school board reinforce these notions through the development of EL policies and practices which are internalized by ELs.

Figure 2.

School Board EL Policy Design and Social Construction Theory



Anne Schneider and Mara Sidney (2009) suggested that unlike most policy frameworks, the social construction theory forces an examination on how public policy influences American

democracy, specifically inequality. They explained that “Our recipe for the next generation of policy studies is that policy design and social constructions can make important contributions to empirical theory, interpretive theory, and perhaps most importantly, to democratic theory” (p. 116). With this in mind, the social construction framework provides a solid theoretical foundation to understand how school boards might inform policies and practices for the growing population of emerging bilingual children in the United States.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study is to examine how local school boards address policies and practices designed to expand educational opportunity and equity for English learners in the Mountain West. In this Chapter, I discuss the research methods and study design used for this dissertation research. First, I provide brief overview of case study research methods followed by a description of the multiple case study research design adopted for this research, including its connection to this study's research question and the theoretical propositions that helped frame the research design. Next, I discuss the school boards chosen as units of analysis for this study. After this, I discuss the sources of data (e.g., interviews, school board meeting minutes, archival documents, etc.) as well as the data collection process. Finally, I describe how the data was analyzed for this research followed by short conclusion.

Case Study Research

According to Yin (2009), one of the benefits of case study methods is its ability to “*explain* the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (p. 19). When using a multiple-case design, Yin (2009) described the need to “follow a replication, not a sampling logic” (p. 60). More specifically, Yin (2009) argued that “Survey research relies on *statistical* generalization, whereas case studies (as with experiments) rely on *analytic* generalization. In analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (p. 43).

In the sections that follow, I describe my research design and rationale given the study's focus on school boards and EL policies/practices. Case study methods were chosen because the research question guiding this study strives to understand how school boards influence

educational equity in the contemporary context of English learners policies and practices (Yin, 2009).

Research Design

Given the complex contexts in which school boards operate (e.g., local district, state, and federal), a deep investigation within and across cases is powerful approach to understanding the role and perceptions of school boards as it relates to equitable education policy and practice. This multi-case study includes three cases: Clark County School District (CCSD) in Southern Nevada, Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD) in [specific area] Utah, and Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) in [specific area] Arizona.).

In case studies, it is also important to develop boundaries in order to complete the research project in an efficient manner. According to Baxter & Jack, 2008), “Binding the case will ensure that your study remains reasonable in scope” (p. 546). This case study is bound to cases within (1) a specified region (Mountain West); (2) population of the surrounding area (large metropolitan); (3) similarly structured school districts (K-12 school districts with a minimum of 5% EL population and an elected school board); and (4) time (2010-2013). In choosing cases, I selected cases based on the ability to replicate both the design as well as the results. Therefore, I chose cases that were located in a similar geographical region and relatively comparable in size and population when considering these factors for school districts nationally.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study is the following:

What drives school boards to address policies and practices for English learners?

In addition, I developed a series of sub-questions that deal with the specifics of “how” and “why” school boards address EL policies/practices. The “how” and “why” questions also support the rationale for selecting case study methods for this study. These sub-questions were informed by both the literature and theoretical framework since Yin (2009) advocated for the use of case study questions that are associated with expected evidence (existing literature and theory) to help guide the data collection process. The sub-questions include:

6. How are EL policies and practices presented?
7. What was the school board’s role in the development and maintenance of EL policies and practices?
8. How do perceptions of EL students influence the way school boards inform policies and practices?
9. In what ways are school boards influenced by external actors in developing EL policies and practices?
10. Given the perceptions of EL students and external forces, what types of programs do school boards support (i.e., asset-based (bilingual or dual language) or deficit-based (English immersion) programs)?

Proposition and Existing Literature

Again, this study’s sub-questions are guided by the literature and the theoretical framework. To deal with “why” school boards address EL policies, this research focuses largely on *Proposition 4* of the social construction theory, which claims that “Policymakers, especially elected politicians, respond to, perpetuate and help create social constructions of target groups in anticipation of public approval or approbation” (Ingram, et al. 2007, p. 106). This proposition heavily informed by sub-questions 3, 4, and 5.

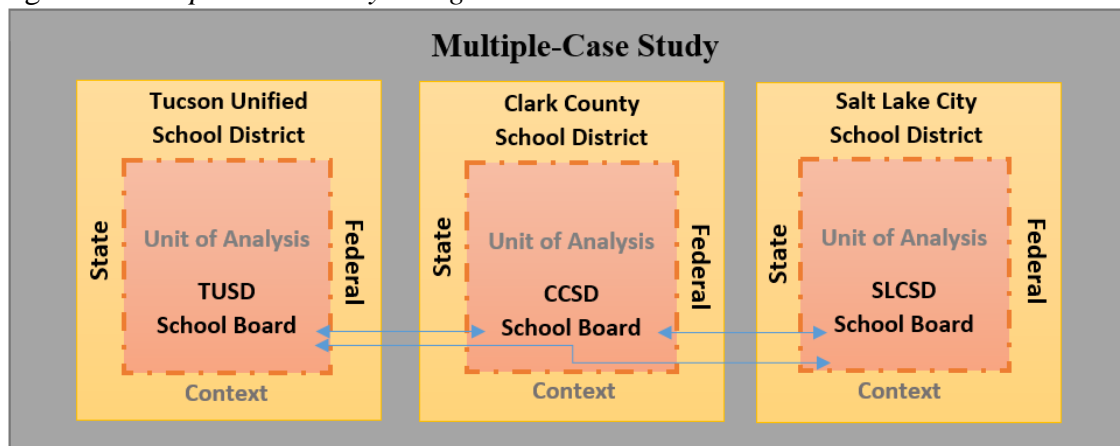
To address “how” school boards approach EL policies, literature pertaining to school board responsibilities would suggest that school boards might inform policies and practices through the development of the following: (1) academic goals; (2) budget allocations; (3) teacher preparation and standards; (4) professional development requirements; (5) hiring and recruitment strategies for teachers and administration (including superintendent); (6) lobbying local, state, and federal legislatures for resources; (7) criteria for identification and exit of ELLs; (8) services and resources allocated to ELLs; (9) programs development for EL families; and (10) priorities in strategic and annual planning. These factors heavily informed sub-questions 1 and 2.

Units of Analysis (Local School Boards in the Mountain West)

The units of analysis for the study are local school boards in the U.S. Mountain West. In recent years, the Mountain West region (i.e., Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) have been of interest to scholars, especially demographers, economists, and political scientists given the region’s drastic changes demographically, economically, and politically. While schooling in regions like the Northeast, South, Southeast, and Midwest have been studied extensively, the Mountain West is often ignored in scholarly work (Brookings Mountain West, 2012; Horsford, 2016; Teixeira, 2012). Given the lack of research conducted in this geographical location and its distinct demographic characteristics, this study focused on school districts located in three states within this region—Arizona, Nevada, and Utah.

Figure 3 graphically depicts this multiple-case study design, showing three units of analysis within their respective local, state, and federal contexts. Adapted from Yin (2009), the dotted lines surrounding the cases show that “the boundaries between the case and the context are not likely to be sharp” (p. 46).

Figure 3. *Multiple-Case Study Design*



Adapted from Yin (2009)

The chosen states are among the 16 highest EL enrollment states in the nation (DOE, 2012). Furthermore, the areas surrounding the selected sites are all in one of the top 100 metropolitan locations in the U.S. with populations between approximately one and two million residents (The Brookings Institution, 2013). According to Pauline Lipman (2006):

Metro regions are becoming more economically, racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse as immigrants and low-income people of color are pushed out of central cities by gentrification and new immigrant workers are moving directly to edge cities and towns on the periphery of urban areas. (p. 110).

As seen in Table 4, each of these metropolitan areas have experienced growth in their population during the 2000s ranging from approximately 16% to 40%. Furthermore, their foreign-born populations have grown from a range of 25% to 71%.

Table 4.

Metropolitan Population Figures, 2010

Metro Area	Population	Rank Among Top 100 Metro Areas	% Change 2000- 2010	% Foreign- Born 2010	% Change in Foreign-Born 2000-2010
Las Vegas	1,954,260	30	+40%	22%	+71%
Salt Lake City	1,128,988	49	+16%	11%	+31%
Tucson	982,154	52	+16%	13%	+ 25%

Source: The Brookings Institution, 2013

The three school districts, CCSD, SLCSO, and TUSD are all K-12 school districts that serve relatively large populations of EL students. As shown in Table 5, EL students make up at least 5% of total student population in all of these districts. When combined, the number of EL students in these districts total close to 75,000 students.

Table 5.

School District Enrollment and Board Composition

	<u>Student Enrollment 2010-11</u>				<u>School Board Composition</u>	
	Total	ELL	% ELL	% Low- Income	Total Members	Office Term Length
CCSD	314,059	67,877	21.6%	53.6%	7	4 years
SLCSO	24,647	5,488	22.3%	65.4%	7 (+1 student)	4 years
TUSD	53,275	3,417	6.4%	56.2%	5	4 years

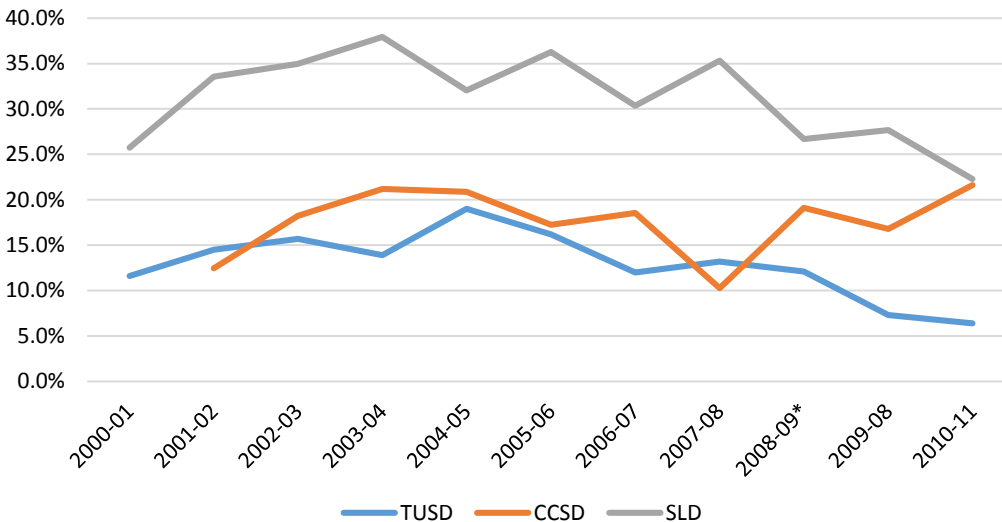
Sources: NCES, 2012; Clark County School District, 2013; Salt Lake City School District, 2013a; Tucson Unified School District, 2013.

Note: The percentage of low-income students is based free & reduced lunch calculations.

The graph in Figure 4 illustrates the change in EL population over at least 10 years in each of these school districts. CCSD and SLCSO have experienced periods of growth and slight decline in EL enrollment, whereas, TUSD has had a fairly significant decline in the district's percentage of EL students. The majority of the students in each of these district are low-income

students. They also have a comparable school board structures which include 5-7 elected members, each with four year terms.

Figure 4.
Total Percent of EL Enrollment by District, 1998-2010



Data Sources and Collection

Yin (2009) emphasized “that case study data collection is not merely a matter of recoding data in a mechanical fashion, as it is in some other types of research. You must be able to *interpret* the information as it is being collected... (p. 73). As such, I used a broad list of data sources, but narrowly aligned my data collection with this study’s sub-questions.

The data collect are listed in Table 6. This includes purposeful sampling of ten focused interviews in each school district (a minimum of four with school board members, two with a high-ranking school district official; two with local EL community advocates); school board meeting minutes and audio/video records; documents related to policies, procedures, mission, strategic/annual planning; newspaper articles; official reports; state policies directives and standards for local districts.

Table 6.
Data Sources List

Focused Interviews (10 total)	Archival Records	Documents
4-5 school board members	School board meeting material	Newspaper articles
2-3 school district officials	School district budget	Administrative and policy documents
2-3 community stakeholders	School district demographic academic records	School district websites
	School district reports and planning documents	State websites-information related to education

Interviews

I made one visit to each case study site to conduct all 30 interviews, 10 interviews at each site. During these visits, I requested any additional data, namely school board meeting material that was not available online and noted any relevant observations. As much as possible, I replicated the data collection methods for each site.

Interviewing is an essential source of data in case study designs (Yin, 2009). The internal sampling for this case study was based on the desire to find what Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (2003) termed as “key informants” (p. 61). These authors explained that decisions about who to interview should consider both diversity and quality. Bogdan and Biklin (2003) noted that “some subjects are more willing to talk, have a greater experience in the setting, or are especially insightful about what goes on” (p. 61). Given these considerations, I conducted interviews with school board members, school district officials, and community members. See Table 7 for a list of the interview participants.

Table 7.
Interview Participants

School District Site	School Board Members	Participant Position		Participant Demographics		
		School District Officials	Community Stakeholders	Latino/a	African American	Female
CCSD	5	2	3	3	2	6
SLCSD	5	3	2	5	0	3
TUSD	5	3	2	4	1	4
Total	15	8	7	12	3	13

I interviewed 15 current and/or former school board members. These participants were selected based on both maximum variation and snowball sampling strategies (Creswell, 2007). To achieve maximum variation in perspective, the following criteria were employed: (a) at least one member from each elected term since 2010 (2006-2010, and 2010-2014); (b) at least two ethnic minorities, preferably Latino/a; (c) at least two females; and (d) length of experience as school board members was considered, favoring those with relatively more years on the board.

I interviewed a total of eight school district officials, at least two from each site. School district officials were important sources of data in this study because they often work closely with school boards in the development and implementation of policies and programs. Since school boards often hire superintendents who report to them, I prioritized an interview with at least one superintendent at each site. Due to the political nature of the superintendency, sometimes the tenure in these positions are relatively short. Given that, I selected the second school district official based on their (a) the length of time spent working in the school district and (b) work with EL issues. I also made it a priority to include at least one ethnic minority and woman within these two interviews to achieve a maximized variation. Finally, since school district officials are directly and indirectly supervised by school boards, I used these interviews

in a contextual manner and refrained from using direct quotes from these interviewees in order to protect them from any potential risk.

I interviewed seven community stakeholders which included two to three at each site. For these interviews, I targeted a combination of EL community advocates and representatives of the local chambers or similar businesses/non-profits that have an education component (i.e., education committee). To align this work with social construction theory, Schneider and Sidney (2009) recommended interviews with advocates since these informants might have unique insight about the perceptions of target populations. Additionally, community representatives were able to shed light on the broader local and state educational agenda and perspectives of the target population. I selected these individuals based on (1) information gathered from public documents (i.e., individuals who speak often during public comment about EL issues at school board meetings), (2) suggestions from school board members and school district officials, and (3) a review of local community organizations and positions relevant to education.

I contacted all potential interviewees by email. Appendix A includes a sample of the written request. In cases that there was no response within a week, I sent a follow up email. If the member does not reply to either email, I followed up by phone if a contact number was made public or shared through other interviewees. The interview protocol is located in Appendix B. I recorded all interviews on a digital device and saved them electronically. Interviews were transcribed and transcriptions were also saved electronically.

Documents and Archival Data

I gathered official documents on both school district and state websites as well as those received from the school district offices. I visually scanned these documents for specific materials related to the sub-questions. As I scanned documents, I collected and electronically

saved any relevant materials to analyze later. I used the same process described above to collect and save relevant school board meeting materials, including agendas, minutes, video and audio. Specifically, I scanned 519 school board meeting minutes (270 in CCSD, 162 in TUSD, and 87 in SLCSD) within the 2010 to 2013 timeframe. Finally, I conducted a general Internet search, saving relevant news articles, reports, and commentary.

Data Analysis

As recommended by case study scholars (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009), I developed an electronic database to both increase reliability and organize the available data. Using suggestions from Yin (2009), the database included case study notes, documents, audio/video, data, and interviews saved and filed electronically. I also saved memos and a narrative outline that addressed the case study sub-questions. The narrative is an “attempt to integrate the available evidence and to converge upon the facts of the matter or their tentative interpretation. The process is actually an analytic one and is the start of the case study analysis” (Yin, 2009, p. 121).

In analyzing the documents and interviews, I adopted interpretative methods. In order to assess the impact of policy design within a social construction framework, Schneider and Sidney (2009) suggested interpretive research methods such as discourse and textual analysis. This methodological approach allows researchers to more effectively assess and understand the perceptions of target populations, which in this case was EL students.

To help code the interview data, I used MAXQDA 11, a data analysis software. The data analysis was both deductive and inductive. More specifically, I used a pre-established a set of codes based on the theoretical framework and the existing literature but also added codes as

other patterns emerged within the data. There were a total of 19 larger codes, many of which had sub-codes.

The pre-establishment of codes using target populations based on the social construction theory was a significant part of the data analysis. I coded interview data that highlighted the perceptions of ELs based on who the perception was from (i.e., school district staff, community members, and school board members) and whether the perception was of ELs were considered dependents, deviants, advantaged, or contenders based on the study's theoretical framework.

It is important to note that some of the interview statements were coded based on second-person perceptions. For instance, one of the interview questions asked how the community perceives ELs. These answers often described other people's perceptions and were coded from those perceptions. More specifically, if a school board member explained that the community perceives ELs positively and with considerable power and resources, I coded this as contender-based from a community perspective. On one hand, including second-person perceptions could have negatively impacted the validity of these accounts because I did not rely on data directly from the person from whom this perception is based. On the other hand, second-person perceptions may be more valid, especially if perceptions of ELs are negative. In particular, interviewees may have been more willing to share other people's perceptions as opposed to their own in order to avoid being politically-incorrect or offensive.

Within the interview data, I initially coded a total of 323 segments of perceptions in MAXQDA. During my analysis, I sometimes identified perceptions that met the criteria for more than one target population and/or was from more than one perception. For example, one school board member explained that the superintendent made efforts to not publicize an increase in EL funding because he was concerned about public backlash. I coded this segment as "ELs as

dependents” from both a community perspective and a school district official perspective. After reviewing, reorganizing, and editing codes, I ended up with a total of 405 perception-based codes. I used these coded perceptions to determine how ELs were socially constructed within each case site according to this study’s framework.

A key aspect of case study research is the analysis of multiple sources of evidence that allow data to be triangulated (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). In other words, evidence from each source was used to identify facts (Yin, 2009). I reviewed approximately 519 school board meeting minutes (270 in CCSD, 162 in TUSD, and 87 in SLCD) within the 2010 to 2013 timeframe. In reviewing these documents, I visually skimmed each agenda and set of meeting minutes electronically. I then used ctrl-Find for the following terms: English, Language, Spanish, Bilingual, Hispanic, Latin, Mexican, Diversity, Culture, and ELL. For any relevant part of the minutes, I reviewed the content more closely by searching for related audio, video, and documents. I developed a reference page for each district that organized the meetings by year and I documented each meeting by date and the type of meeting. Along with these details, I provided any information from the meeting that related to ELs or EL education and noted whether audio or documents were saved for analysis. Finally, I also collected and analyzed other data such as newspaper articles, reports, presentations, and budgets for each site.

To help achieve data triangulation in this case study, I collected data discovered from documents and archives and then corroborated with interviews. In order to maintain a narrow focus on the purpose of the study, Bogdan and Biklin (2003) noted that “some analysis must take place during data collection” (p. 150). As such, I added and/or adjusted interview questions slightly based on prior interviews so that I could augment data and collect relevant evidence for this study.

I analyzed the collected data using a pattern matching logic (Yin, 2009). Pattern matching, according to Yin (2009) “compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (or with several alternative predictions)” (p. 136). In this case, predicted patterns of “how” school boards inform EL policies and practices are based on the variables specified during data collection that address the predetermined sub-questions (e.g., academic goals, budget allocations, etc). Similarly, the predicted patterns of “why” school boards inform EL policies and practices are based on variables identified in the data collection using the sub-questions that were guided by the social construction theory. The outcomes (dependent variables) emerged through the triangulation of data, which I matched to predicted patterns that provided evidence for or against the predicted explanations. When evidence developed against the predictions, I considered any rival explanations (Yin, 2009). I used literal replication (Yin, 2009) of pattern matching in the analysis of each additional case to strengthen the validity of the results. Finally, during the coding and analysis process, I utilized two additional guides to help make sense of the data: Johnny Saldaña (2009)’ *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* and Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman’s (1994) *Qualitative data analysis*.

In addition to pattern matching analysis, I developed a contextual narrative of each case. According to Creswell (2007), case study “analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its setting” (p. 163). Following such description and pattern matching logic for each site, I conducted a cross-case analysis to determine themes including similarities and differences among the case sites (Creswell, 2007). During the final step of the data analysis, I developed cross-case generalizations and conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

Although scholarly research on school board is limited, their leadership can be significant. However, understanding how and why these governing bodies develop specific

policies and practices require an in-depth analysis of their work within complex environments. Case study methods provide this opportunity. By augmenting multiple sources of data from three school districts, this case study contributes to the overall understanding of school boards and their role in providing expanding educational opportunity and equity for all children.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I present this study's analysis of the findings, focusing on the research question: What drives school boards to address EL policies/practices? To answer the research question, this chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section is a brief contextual description of the U.S. Mountain West region. The next three larger sections are case studies of each of the school districts—Clark County School District (CCSD), Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), and Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD)—and how they address EL policies/practices. In each of the case studies, I include subsections that highlight the 1) contextual effects, 2) social constructions of ELs, 3) triggering mechanisms, and ultimately 4) the school board actions and policymaking, followed by 5) a summary. In the final section, a cross-case analysis, I present the similarities and differences of the first four factors mentioned above.

It is important to note that this study evolved through the use of two additional conceptual frameworks to guide the analysis. The underlying conceptual framework, the social construction theory, relies on the assumption that policies are influenced by the perceptions of four target populations—advantaged, dependents, contenders, and deviants—all with varying levels of power, resources, and perceptions associated with them. Although this framework provided a foundation for addressing the nature of how EL policies/practices are designed, I found that it did not sufficiently explain *why* school boards address EL policies/practices. Instead, I found that I needed to employ two other important analytical components, contextual effects and triggering mechanisms.

Contextual effects are the surrounding factors that influence school boards' actions, opinions, and priorities. These factors include economic and demographic conditions as well as state laws and political climates. Additional significant factors included the structure, composition, and operations of the school boards.

The other component, triggering mechanisms, is a term stemming from the literature on policy development. It is defined as "a critical event (or set of events) that converts a routine problem into a widely shared, negative public experience" (Gerston, 2015, p. 23). Such events help to create what John Kingdon (1995) referred to as a "policy window," which is an opportunity for the successful development of policy.

As a local entity, school boards are accountable to several policy subsystems and represent varying constituencies. Therefore, I found that it was essential to capture the contexts school boards operate in, which provide a range of opportunities and limitations that influenced their decision-making. Equally important was being able to identify and analyze the events that prompted school boards to address EL policies/practices. The social construction theory remained a critical component in my analysis, focusing on the development of EL policies/practices.

As Nikolaos Zahariadis (2007) noted, "policy analysts have become sensitive to the limitations of using single lenses and the value added when exploring policy questions from multiple perspectives" (p. 86). Within the complexity of the school board environment, using more than one policy theory to answer this study's research questions proved beneficial. In this multiple-case study, contextual effects and triggering mechanisms helped to answer "why" school boards address EL policies/practices, whereas, the social construction theory helped to understand nature of "how" these policies/practices were designed.

U.S. Mountain West: A Shifting Landscape

The U.S. Mountain West region includes Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, and Wyoming. For this purpose of this research, it is important to emphasize an historical context of transnational borders that has made a lasting impact on several states in the Mountain West. Specifically, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado were part of Mexico until the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This treaty ended the Mexican-American War and included the cessation of these lands to the United States (The Library of Congress, 2015). However, within the terms of the treaty, United States promised citizenship and protection “in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property” (Lillian Goldman Law Library, Article IX, para. 1) to the approximately 120,000 Mexicans living in this region. Although language was never mentioned in the treaty document, some scholars argue that these rights extend to language including the right to a bilingual education (Cameron, 2000).

Fast-forward more than a century later following events such as the “gold rush” and the building of the railroad, and the U.S. Mountain West region became one known by its desire to be rugged and independent from the government. Yet, within the past two decades, much of the region has changed drastically. An area that was once characterized heavily as politically conservative and libertarian, largely White and working-class, and, relatively older in age, is now leaning toward being more liberal, racially diverse, educated, and young (Teixeira, 2012). This is especially true in urban cities throughout the Mountain West, where population growth is prevalent (Teixeira, 2012). Among these growing areas are Las Vegas, Nevada; Tucson, Arizona; and Salt Lake City, Utah. These cities experienced a change in population by 40%, 16%, and 16% (respectively) from 2000-2010 (The Brookings Institutions, 2013).

Clark County School District Case

Contextual Effects

State demographic and economic conditions. As one of the fastest growing states in the U.S. for a few decades, Nevada's population soared 66% from 1990-2000 and 35% from 2000-2010 (Frey & Texeira, 2012). Nevada has three main regions—Las Vegas, Reno, and the rest of the state, which is considered rural. Of the 2.7 million Nevadans, about 1.9 million (or 72%) reside in the Las Vegas metropolitan area.

Despite Nevada's continued growth, the Great Recession had a deep impact on the state in terms of both its population and economy. Population growth slowed to about 5% from 2010-2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) and Nevada ranked among the highest relative to other U.S. states in home foreclosures and unemployment (Robison, 2010; Robison, 2014). As expected, the recession also negatively impacted tourism, Nevada's top industry (Kennelly, 2013).

With close to 50% of the state's school funding deriving from local sales taxes and another 20% from property taxes (American Institutes for Research, 2012). Nevada's economic downturn translated into large budget cuts to education. For instance, in 2011-12 the state's total per pupil expenditures decreased over 10% from the previous year (Nevada Report Card, 2015). In 2011-12, Nevada ranked among the lowest three states (along with Arizona and Utah) in per pupil expenditures at \$8,247 (National Education Association, 2015).

Along the dramatic growth came the obligation of educating a more heterogeneous population. The Nevada Plan, adopted in 1967, determined K-12 education funding for the state. Yet, it failed to account for the increasingly diverse student enrollment and corresponding needs that coupled the growth. Specifically, the plan did not provide additional funding for capital outlay (i.e., buildings) or for student demographics including income and language abilities.

Nevada English Learner funding and laws. Nevada was one of only eight states in the U.S. that had not funded EL education. However, in June 2013, the Nevada Legislature approved \$50 million for two years toward a pilot program for English learners to be implemented within three months starting the 2013-14 academic year in the Clark and Washoe County School Districts (Milliard, 2013b). Although this was an increase in funding for ELs, it was significantly less than a 2006 costing out study that recommended approximately \$132 million annually (not accounting for inflation) to provide an adequate education to ELs (Sampson, 2014).

Nevertheless, the 2015 Nevada Legislature increased this amount to \$100 million for all Nevada school districts and expanded funding (\$25 million annually) to also provide services to high-poverty schools (Nevada Department of Education, 2016).

Beyond funding, the 2013 Nevada Legislature revised and implemented additional statutes pertaining to EL education. These laws included the development of a council charged with making recommendations regarding teacher training and licensure for EL instructors and the requirement of annual reports containing EL demographic and academic measures at the district-level. Nevada statutes also require Nevada school boards to develop policy:

designed to provide pupils enrolled in each public school located in the school district who are limited English proficient with instruction that enables those pupils to attain proficiency in the English language and improve their overall academic achievement and proficiency. (NRS 388.407).

These policies must address EL identification and assessment, close EL and non-EL achievement gaps, and strive to increase EL parent engagement.

Local demographic and economic conditions. With almost three-quarters of Nevada's

population, the Las Vegas metro experienced much of the state's prosperity and hardship over the years. Unlike many other urban and metropolitan areas that have several school districts, the Las Vegas metro is home to one—The Clark County School District (CCSD). CCSD, along with Nevada's 16 other school districts, correspond geographically with county boundaries. As the fifth largest school district in the United States and the largest in the U.S. Mountain West (American School & University, 2016). CCSD enrolls more than 300,000 students. To meet the growing population demands, CCSD built schools at an alarming rate. For instance, 112 schools opened between 1998 and 2008 to accommodate the growth of approximately 119,000 new students (Milliard, 2014).

Amid the increase in student enrollment, CCSD's schools also changed demographically. The first phase of these changes were in the 1960s with an influx of African Americans from the Southern region of the United States. Following this migration, CCSD elementary schools were *de facto* segregated by race until the Court required the district to implement a mandatory desegregation plan in 1972. This plan remained intact until 1992 during which time it was reverted to a voluntary desegregation plan (Horford, Sampson, & Forletta, 2013).

The second phase of changes related to the population increase was the shift in demographics within CCSD. In particular, CCSD became a "majority-minority" school district in 2001, which meant that there were a larger portion students of color enrolled than there were White students (Horsford, Sampson, & Forletta, 2013). By 2009, the once historically African American community that included six racially segregated elementary schools had transformed into nine elementary schools segregated by race, income and language with a student enrollment that was almost 50% Latino/a and 33% ELs (Terriquez, Flashman, Schuler-Brown, & Orfield, 2009).

During the same time, Nevada's recession hit CCSD particularly hard. From the 2009-10 to the 2012-13 academic year, CCSD's total revenue fell over 5% and total expenditures dropped 14.5% (CCSD, 2013; CCSD, 2014a). Simultaneously, the district grew slightly in student enrollment by 0.5% (CCSD, 2013; CCSD, 2014a). Although the populations of White, Black, and Asian students declined, the district gained around 10,000 (or 7.6%) Latino/a students, almost 44% of the student population. There was also an increase of more than 30,000 (or 23.1%) students who qualified for free-and-reduced lunch which totaled nearly 53% (Nevada Department of Education, 2014). However, one of the most alarming areas of growth in CCSD was among those served by EL programs, which rose from about 90,000 to approximately 184,000 students, an increase of more than 100% (CCSD, 2010; CCSD, 2013; CCSD, 2014a).

Policy governance and superintendents. In 2000, the CCSD Board of Trustees adopted a policy governance model (CCSD, 2012). This model requires boards to focus on setting policy and holding the superintendent accountable while refraining from micromanaging district activities (Carver & Carver, 2016). On the record, the district adopted this model to be more proactive with the goal of increasing student achievement and to "run like a business" (Scow, 2007, p. 7). In interviews, however, it was clear that the implementation of policy governance was largely the result of a potential lawsuit over a school board member's unlawful involvement related to CCSD's human resources area. As of 2007, the model had been adopted by several school districts and in 2004, the Broad Foundation gave CCSD \$200,000 to further develop it with the aim of improving its use and encouraging other urban school districts to adopt this model (The Broad Education Foundation, 2004; Scow, 2007).

Several critiques have been offered regarding policy governance as it pertains to CCSD, both from board members and media outlets. Among these critiques are 1) the inability to

improve student achievement since its adoption, and 2) the lack of authority that school board members have to make positive change. Concerning policy governance, one board member explained its impact on issues of diversity in the statement below:

So the administrators loved it [policy governance] because you didn't have board members involved in anything. I mean they went back to not hiring outside administrators. They went back to not having diversity months. They went back to doing vanilla type stuff and the board was okay with all of that because they didn't want to get involved with any of that.

Within this model, the superintendent is extremely important because the district relies heavily on this individual to implement the goals, strategies, and policies developed by the board. Given this, superintendent turnover is likely to impact district operations significantly. In CCSD, there were three different superintendents within the four-year time frame covered in this study.

March 25, 2010, then-Superintendent Walt Rulffes offered his resignation to retire with the caveat that he would remain in the position until CCSD found a replacement. Rulffes, an inside hire and former Chief Financial Officer for eight years, had been the CCSD superintendent for four years (The Las Vegas Sun, 2016). On December 15, 2011 Dwight Jones officially became the CCSD Superintendent (Garvey, 2010). Prior to this position, Jones was Colorado's Commissioner of Education and had held various positions in education as a teacher and administrator, including a Superintendent position. As CCSD's 13th Superintendent, he was also the district's second African American Superintendent. Considered to be an educational reformer, Jones remained in the position for slightly over two years. He resigned March 2013 reportedly to take care of his ill mother (Takahashi, 2013). In May 2013, the CCSD board

appointed the then-interim Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky as the district's newest Superintendent. Skorkowsky had been the deputy superintendent for about seven months but had been working in the district almost 25 years (Milliard, 2013a).

The CCSD Board of Trustees. As one of 17 school districts in Nevada, the CCSD Board of Trustees

was established in 1956. The board is given authority to ensure students have the necessary educational resources within state and federal limits as described below:

reasonable and necessary powers, not conflicting with the Constitution and the laws of the State of Nevada, as may be requisite to attain the ends for which the public schools, excluding charter schools and university schools for profoundly gifted pupils, are established and to promote the welfare of school children, including the establishment and operation of schools and classes deemed necessary and desirable. (NRS 386.350).

This seven-member board represent smaller districts (also known as “at-ward”) that range from approximately 38,000 to 50,000 students. Members are elected, in a staggered fashion, to four year terms up to 16 years and paid \$750 per month (NRS 386.320).

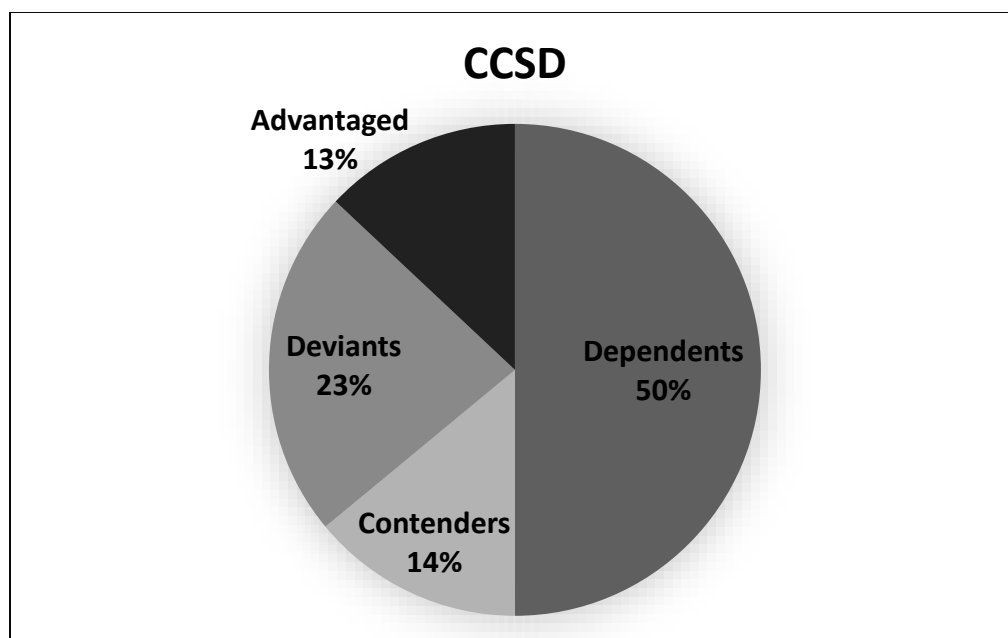
From 2010 until the end of 2013, there were 12 school board members. Of these members, eight were women and four were men. Racially, the majority of this board was Caucasian (8) and the rest were Latino/a (3) and African American (1). Of the three Latino/a members, two were appointed to fill vacancies. Half of these members were involved in the Parent Teacher Association or as parent volunteers prior to their positions, three were former teachers, and two were college administrators. Two of board members did not have a college degree and the educational background of two others were unknown. The longest-standing member had been on the board for 15 years. Although the CCSD school board is required by the

state to meet monthly, there were a total of 270 documented meetings including work sessions and retreats.

CCSD Social Constructions of ELs

Within the CCSD case study, interview participants mentioned the social constructions of ELs 146 times. The majority of these perceptions viewed ELs as Dependents (50%), followed by ELs as Deviants (23%), Contenders (14%), and Advantaged (13%). (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5.
Pie Chart of CCSD Social Constructions of ELs



ELs as dependents. The perception of ELs as dependents was mentioned a total of 73 times as described from the three perspectives—32 community, 21 school board, and 20 school district staff⁵.

Framed as dependents, ELs were viewed as potential benefits to the district and the community. In other words, participants felt that ELs could provide the district/community with

⁵ As explained in Chapter 3 some of the interview data were coded based on second-person perceptions. For instance, community perceptions of ELs might have been discussed by either school board members, school district officials, or community members themselves.

some advantage, but this was often juxtaposed with participants blaming ELs for district problems or foreseeing them as potentially damaging the district/community. They were also often discussed as both a commodity and in terms of their ability to influence district performance. Others viewed them in an empathic manner.

As a commodity, several stakeholders argued that allocating resources to EL education was an investment that would lead to better economic and social conditions for the larger community. Although district-wide conversations about increasing the return on investment were prevalent, the commodification of ELs was particularly emphasized. One board member reflected these sentiments as she stated “They’re here. If we educate them they will earn more money and pay more taxes and spend more money.” She further explained “Let’s make them productive citizens and contributing members of our society.” On the other hand, by not investing in ELs, stakeholders expressed a fear of this group becoming a burden, discussed further in the section on deviant constructions.

Those who viewed them as an influential group used this as a rationale for investing in EL education with the hope of improving the school district. Comments reflecting this theme, such as the one below, frequently implied the school district’s poor academic performance is largely the result of ELs’ poor performance:

I think if we don’t address that issue [ELL issue], we will never be successful as a district. So the entire board understands that. They’re not the only group, but they have the largest group and so if can elevate our English language learners, we will elevate the district (board member).

This statement also highlights the significance of ELs being perceived as a critical mass that can shape the aggregate performance of the school district, hence increasing school board members' concerns for the academic success of this particular community.

Still, others expressed an altruistic motive in advocating for EL education. One community member explained that some "elite opinion makers and decision makers" are embracing the "idea that we have to improve EL performance just for the sake of helping EL children." Most of the advocacy with this motivation, however, came from people of color, particularly those within the Latino/a population.

Dependents have relatively less power and resources than other target groups. In this case, ELs were often viewed as under-resourced both in and out of the school district. Their lack of power required stakeholders to use the arguments described above to justify the need to increase, and even maintain, resources for this group. Language such as "attacking ELL" and not ignoring the "ELL problem" was repeatedly used when describing the need to address EL education.

For some participants, the lack of power among ELs, which were interchangeable with the Latina/o population, was illustrated through the unwillingness of the community to elect a Latino/a school board member. One Latino board member had been elected, but several participants indicated that was because this person did not have a seemingly Latino/a surname. In the two election cycles within this study's timeframe, two Latinos unsuccessfully ran for a seat on the board and two others had been appointed when board members resigned. Yet, all of the interview participants credited the appointed Latino board member with being a positive advocate for EL students and expressed disappointment when this person was not elected. The statement below reflects the overall feelings expressed:

He lost his race and he worked very hard. What does that say about our electorate? That was a very sad day on election night when he lost and it's very sad for our entire board because he was a shining star and I don't know what he's going to do but we should have a Latino, at least one on our board if not two. But the electorate doesn't do that and in his district they don't do that (board member).

ELs were also labeled as challenging. In addition to the financial expense of EL education, these challenges included the lack of cultural competency, district infrastructure, and EL expertise to support EL education. One participant explained that among district staff “there’s still a large amount of uncomfortableness with individuals who don’t look like them.” He later explained “that does drive fear in a district that doesn’t have experience or leadership in those areas.” And yet, accountability measures, such as NCLB, were blamed for placing negative pressure on teachers working with ELs. Of these teachers, one interviewee stated that before NCLB, “they were getting really excited when [instruction] worked and all of a sudden there was just this compartmentalized stress put upon it” and “it ignored a bunch of realities. Like it tried to make it simpler than it is.”

Some comments fluctuated between the dependent and deviant categories of social constructions. Such comments implied that ELs were immigrants and not considered the government’s responsibility. Similarly, some statements suggested that ELs received more than they deserve. One community stakeholder shared that an influential community member posed these questions/statements: “Why do we still have so many ELL kids? How come these immigrant people haven’t moved away? When construction collapsed, I thought they would have been gone.” Another community stakeholder said that with a recent surge of state resources

allotted to EL education, this group “should count [their] blessings” because they also received resources allotted to low-income children causing them to have “double dipped.”

ELs as deviants. The perception of ELs as deviants was mentioned a total of 34 times as described from the three perspectives—27 community, 5 school board, and 2 school district staff.

The perceptions of ELs as deviants were often related to immigration. As such, being EL was frequently interchangeable with being an immigrant and undocumented. One school board member explained that “there's an element of the community that thinks we should not be educating illegal immigrants and I hear that all the time.” Similarly, another school board member made the reference that some, but not all ELs were “illegal.” This board member also indicated that hostility toward ELs is “mostly about the Latino, Mexico and taking our resources.” Finally, a community member recalled a school board member questioning whether “those kids [ELLs] really want to learn English” and if “they really want to become Americans.”

Participants also noted that while African Americans used to be viewed as scapegoats by the majority population, ELs have now taken on that role and are blamed for lost jobs and decreasing wages. Finally, some participants expressed that the negative consequences of not improving EL education could result in ELs becoming criminals later in life, suggesting a perception of them as potential deviants.

ELs as contenders. The perception of ELs as contenders was mentioned a total of 20 times as described from the three perspectives—18 community, 1 school board, and 1 school district staff.

Often, the EL and Latino/a population were described interchangeably. Given the growth among the Latino/a community in this district and state, there was a perception that this group

had increasingly more political power and influence. As a result, some non-Latino/a community members, particularly those within the African American community, viewed ELs as a threat.

Of the African American community, one participant explained that with the focus on ELL, “the problem with that is now we take the chance of being left again at the back of the line.” Although this interviewee supported bilingual education, she felt like ELs should not be the only group given the opportunity to become bilingual. The statement below reflect these sentiments:

You got immigrant kids that have now gone through EL and...qualified for that job because they're bilingual. Our kids on the other hand are not. Shoot they can't even speak English well or fill out the application for that matter. So how is that fair? These are taxpayer dollars we're talking about.

In addition to highlighting the potential advantage for ELs on the job market, one community member implied that ELs are not taxpayers, and therefore, do not deserve to be bilingual. The implication that ELs are not taxpayers also suggests that they are undocumented immigrants.

ELs as advantaged. The perception of ELs as advantaged was mentioned a total of 19 times as described from the three perspectives—3 community, 11 school board, and 5 school district staff.

ELs being perceived as advantaged was the least mentioned, yet least often attributed to the community. Some school board members expressed their respect of EL families' right to maintain their culture and first language. Also, some participants expressed that ELs bring diversity to the school district. Finally, one school district official discussed the academic potential of ELs to outperform non-ELs if provided sufficient resources. This participant said

that among much of the Latino/a community, ELs were considered a “gold mine” because offered potential return on investment, which again reinforces the commodification of ELs.

Triggering Mechanisms

The Latino/a community. Within the time frame of this case study, Latino/a community members were instrumental in working with, and placing pressure on the school district to develop policies and practices affecting EL education. Although a handful of Latino/a individuals were involved in these efforts, one person emerged as a leader who will be referred to as Norma (pseudonym) within this dissertation. In addition to being a Latina parent and CCSD resident, Norma was also a professor at the local university’s law school. A well-respected professional, Norma often worked within the system to advocate for change. Between 2010 and 2013, she spoke at a minimum of seven school board meetings and every person interviewed for this study described her involvement as critical in changing the state of EL education in both CCSD and Nevada.

Furthermore, Norma made significant efforts to organize the larger community around EL issues. She led the development of a community organization called The Latino Leadership Council and used this as a vehicle to legitimize and represent the Latino/a position on several issues including EL education. Norma requested support for EL issues from several other Latino/a-based organizations as well as some outside of the Latino/a spectrum. Additionally, she invited representatives from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada to talk to community members about EL education in CCSD. Several media outlets presented these meetings as the first step in a potential lawsuit against the state for inadequate funding for EL education (Doughman, 2013; Unknown Author, 2013).

There were four areas that stood out among the various EL-related issues that the Latino/a community pushed for in CCSD. The first area stemmed from two district-wide committees that Latino/a community members participated in. One was a superintendent committee formed in 2010 to examine the district's persistently underachieving elementary schools. EL-related recommendations from this committee included: each high-EL populated schools have at least one bilingual staff member; that the district implement more dual language and bilingual programs, especially for native Spanish speakers; that the district do an in-depth analysis of what was needed to support ELs; and that the district lobby the state for EL funding. The other committee, developed as a result of Norma's pressure toward district officials, was an EL review committee. The committee's first recommendation was to conduct a study of EL education in CCSD. After the study occurred, the EL review committee dissipated for about a year and was later reinstated with the help of Latino/a community pressure. After being re-established, the committee developed key components related to EL education as district-level accountability measures.

The second area of focus was to increase Latino/a representation within the district. In spring 2011, Latino/a advocates engaged the school board regarding redistricting of election boundaries. They successfully urged the board to create zoning areas that would be highly Latino/a to increase the chances of electing a Latino/a with a Latino/a surname to the school board. This group, on behalf of Latino/a leaders in the community, also pledged their support of Pedro Martinez, a candidate for CCSD deputy superintendent position. Beyond his professional experiences, these leaders described the importance of cultural affinity and having a Latino/a in a high-level executive position within the district. Finally, when a school board member resigned toward the end of 2013, the Latino community rallied to ensure that the CCSD school board

appointed a Latino/a replacement. In fact, 11 individuals, mostly Latino/as, representing various Latino-based community organizations, testified to the school board that they supported Stavan Corbett, a Latino who was born and raised in Las Vegas and a former EL student.

The creation and maintenance of a new district-wide EL position was the third area the Latino/a community focused its efforts on. This position, an Assistant Superintendent of the EL program, was established during spring 2013 and filled by Lucy Keaton, an internal hire and a CCSD principal who had excelled in increasing EL achievement at the school-level. When Keaton resigned, the district demoted this to a director-level position and planned to conduct an internal search to fill it. The Latino community pushed back on this decision, writing a letter to the school board demanding that the district complete an outside search to attract more EL expertise and reinstate the position at the superintendent level so that the person has relatively more authority. In a follow-up meeting to this letter, Norma used the names of influential community members such as Elaine Wynn (Nevada Board of Education President and former wife of casino mogul Steve Wynn) to support these demands, explaining that these people would not be satisfied with how the district was handling the position.

Finally, the Latino/a community focused heavily on lobbying the state to increase funding, standards, and accountability measures with regards to EL education. These efforts resulted in the passing of Senate Bill 504 during the 2013 Nevada Legislature. This bill had two components. First, it required the development of a committee to make recommendations regarding teaching standards for ELs that would be implemented at the district-level. The second component was the allocation of \$50 million for two years toward the creation of Zoom Schools. Schools chosen to be a Zoom School were required to be highly populated by both ELs and low-income students. The bill also required school districts to use the money toward

“extended services” including “pre-kindergarten, full-day kindergarten, a reading skills center, and summer or intersession academies” (Clark County School District, 2014, p. 20).

The African American community. Several African American community organizations and elected officials consistently weigh in on educational issues in CCSD, especially since the school desegregation lawsuit in the late 1960s. Among these are the local chapter of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Clark County Black Caucus. Yet, their involvement shifted focus when some of the Black community started to view ELs as contenders in terms of social constructions. More specifically, concerned about losing resources that might be shifted to EL students, Black community members pursued certain goals to preserve and increase resources for Black students in CCSD.

When it came to funding, Black community members wanted to ensure that the Latino/a community and others understood that EL students were receiving as much, if not more, than Black students. One community member explained that the Latino/a community believed Black children had been provided sufficient funding through the additional support for Prime Six schools (historically African American schools). She recalled her response to Latino/a community members:

‘I want you to please go back and make sure your community understands a few things about Prime Six. One, Prime Six has not been black for many, many years. Prime Six is very Hispanic; been for at least ten years. So when we talk about all the resources that Prime Six has gotten you guys should count your blessings because not only did you get those resources from Prime Six you also got your ELL resources. So you double dipped. So let's keep it real.’ And then when we talk about black students and black students

getting resources we don't even...the district doesn't even know where those schools are but they will.

This community member also began requesting data from the district on Black students. These requests were a direct result of Latino/a community's advocacy efforts. In particular, this participant shared that when she witnessed the Latino/a community's effective use of data during testimony to the Nevada State Legislature regarding increased funding for EL students, she "ran out into the hallway with my calculator...and started crunching numbers." These numbers became a foundation of the Black community's platform. She explained:

We were able to now put our hands on and feel 32,371 black students that are on free and reduced lunch and make it now about individual students. Rather than this vague, vague ghost that nobody sees and ever since we did that it's changed the dynamics, it's changed the perception and all of a sudden these kids became a priority.

The Black community then connected demographic data to performance data and realized that Black students performed relatively low in terms of English proficiency. They used this as an opportunity to collaborate with the Latino/a community to expand the desired outcome of improving EL education to providing support to increase literacy for all children, with an emphasis on low-income students.

In addition to collaborating with the Latino/a community, Black community members also reminded school board members of their political obligations. Acknowledging the emergence of Latino/a political power, they explained to school board members the Black community vote is still large enough to shift elections. Below one participant summed up these conversations with school board members:

One of the things I try to share with them is 'yes this [Latino community] is a growing population but don't underestimate the power of the Black vote. Shelley Berkley is no longer congresswoman because she lost the Black vote, 30 percent of the base.'

She also went on to explain that the Black community had the highest number of voters within any ethnicity in the most recent elections. Overall, Black community members used various methods—committee involvement, community organizing, utilizing data, and political engagement—to help increase support for Black students and shift the focus to literacy.

CCSD School Board Actions and Policymaking

Reactions to Triggering Mechanisms.

Committees and recommendations. The school board responded to these triggering mechanisms in two ways—symbolically and substantively. In terms of the committees and recommendations, the board's support to develop these committees were often simply symbolic, and committee recommendations tended to be ignored. Although the superintendent committee recommendations were made in the midst of a superintendent turnover, the board referred the responsibility of implementing these to the newly hired superintendent, and many were never implemented. In fact, the Latino/a community expressed their disappointment in a formal letter to the superintendent and school board, indicating that the district had done a poor job of advocating for EL students when it came to funding at the state-level.

As part of the ELL Review Committee, however, the school board approved \$95,000 for WestEd, a consulting group, to assess EL education in CCSD. In early spring 2012, WestEd examined 10 high-EL populated schools. Based on the WestEd report prepared by Aída Walqui in June 2012, six main findings emerged:

- 1) “low expectations and perceptions of students as deficient are pervasive throughout schools visited” (p. 10)
- 2) “observed classes indicated little evidence that teachers designed instruction to challenge and support English Language Learners” (p. 12),
- 3) “in observed classes teachers focused on discrete disciplinary or linguistic elements” (p. 14),
- 4) “there is little sense of urgency, a general slow pace characterizes classes”(p. 17),
- 5) “when available, technology is used at its lowest potential, thus limiting ELs’ opportunities to participate in a quality learning” (p. 20),
- 6) “bilingual programs: A wasted opportunity” (p. 22).

Overall, WestEd deemed EL education in CCSD as poor and determined that ELs were missing out on essential opportunities necessary for academic success. Furthermore, the report highlighted that teachers and principals often address EL education and EL students using a deficit framework. Following the report, WestEd proposed a contract for around \$1million dollars that would include the implementation of professional development aiming to improve EL education, which the CCSD Board of Trustees never placed on the agenda for approval.

In 2014, Norma coordinated a follow-up meeting with the WestEd lead researcher, CCSD administrators, and school board members. The WestEd representative shared her disappointment that the district had not responded to the report. Instead, she stated that the issue had been given “lip service.” Replying to this, one trustee (among the two present) explained that they were becoming more responsive to EL issues because of increasing community pressure.

Latino/a representation. Among the school board’s substantial responses to community pressure were the decisions they made to increase Latino/a representation. First, they voted in

favor of redistricting that would increase the likelihood of having a Latino/a school board member elected. The school board also approved the hiring of Pedro Martinez as CCSd deputy superintendent. Finally, upon a school board member's resignation, they voted unanimously to appoint Stavan Corbett, an active Latino community member, as a replacement. During this appointment, some of the board even publically recognized the lack of diversity on the board relative to the community.

Although redistricting did not result in an elected Latino school board member, having Latino/a representation did make a significant difference for EL education. First, Pedro Martinez was the district official who created the ELL review committee and presented the WestEd study to the board for approval. When Martinez resigned in the summer 2012, almost a year after he began, ELL review committee work came to a halt. Yet, soon after his appointment, Corbett pushed the Superintendent to reinstate the CCSd ELL review committee under the superintendent.

Everyone interviewed agreed that Corbett was a leader when it came to EL education. Some explained that his leadership was a result of being Latino and others credited his leadership to his personal experiences. When it came to tension between the African American community and ELL, two interviewees reflected on Corbett's ability to successfully alleviate issues between the two communities and educate the board. Of this, one board member stated "The board had to understand the issue and I had to be educated. Stavan was very helpful with that." Slightly less than a year following Corbett's appointment, he lost the school board election.

Executive EL leadership and lobbying. Another substantial response from the school board occurred when the Latino/a community insisted that the district maintain an executive level position for EL programs rather than demoting it to a director-level position. After

addressing the issue both formally and informally, the board agreed to reverse their plans and moved forward with hiring an outside person at the superintendent level. This person ended up being a Latino administrator who formerly oversaw EL services in the Tucson Unified School District for many years.

The CCSD school board did little to help pass SB 504 aside from sending the CCSD lobbyist to support it and approving the set criteria to identify the 14 Zoom Schools, all at the elementary-level. In fact, one board member echoed the significance of Norma's involvement getting SB 504 passed as she explained, "I'm absolutely sure we wouldn't have Zoom Schools if Dr. [Norma] hadn't done what she's done and put the time in that she's done."

Expanding EL services to literacy. The school board did, however, have a substantial reaction to the African American community related to EL education. In particular, school board members shared that community efforts significantly influenced their views and district policies/practices in ways that shifted the focus from English language acquisition to literacy. For instance, one board member explained:

If we change it from English language learners to an issue of literacy for everybody then you begin to also bring in the African-American population in the low income population because that's where literacy is an issue and not just ELL but African-American and low income and really the driving factor for literacy is low income. So if you change the conversation from Latino to let's address literacy across the board for this population for low income families now you bring in more diversity than just Latino.

Another board member coined this shift as a game-changer in the following statement:

When I was campaigning in 2010 which was when the community was really more in a role of pulling in a lot of different directions and causing the district to have to navigate

competing interests so there's really been a coming together around literacy that I think will change the game. I think it will transform the way things happen for kids here.

In terms of policies, literacy became a key focus in the CCSD strategic plan developed in 2013 and published in 2014. Mentioned 16 times throughout the 16-page document, literacy was one of the components among the “Strategies in Action” as shown below:

Identify and implement research-based practices on English Language Acquisition (ELA) strategies that increase the proficiency of *ELL students and students with language difficulties* to ensure literacy for all by third grade. (Emphasis added) (CCSD, 2014 b, p. 10).

Not only does this strategy pertain to EL students, but the school board and the district also made it clear that practices and policies designed for EL students would expand to any student assumed to have language barriers impeding their literacy ability in English.

Again, school board reactions to Latino/a and African American community advocacy efforts were both symbolic and substantial. While committees and reports largely illustrated symbolic efforts to support EL education, efforts to increase Latino/a representation among school district officials and school board members as well as the emphasis on literacy reflected fairly substantial changes to EL education. Also, even though symbolic efforts often resulted in a lack of school board response in terms of recommendations, these did provide the community with valuable information that they used to advocate for more resources at both the state and local levels.

Contextual and Constructive Policies/Practices

EL budget. Although triggering mechanisms played a significant role in EL education within CCSD, existing contextual effects and social constructions of ELs, who were heavily

viewed as dependents, likely impacted the extent to which triggering mechanisms were able to influence EL policies and practices. For instance, according to documents provided by one participant, CCSD's budget for EL education was cut 56% within a five-year period from \$21.2 million in 2009-10 to \$9.4 million in 2013-14. Of course, the economic downturn likely influenced these cuts; however, overall cuts to the budget were significantly less when compared to local EL funding cuts. More specifically, total enrollment in the district rose 0.5% and total expenditures dropped about 14.5% from 2009-10 to 2012-13. Yet, EL enrollment grew 103% during this same time period while the CCSD budget allocation to the EL department decreased 52%.

Although some of the decrease relative to growth might be attributed to economies of scale in operational terms, the considerable difference signifies a prioritization level for EL education when it comes to funding. On the other hand, in 2013 for the first time ever, CCSD received state funding for ELs amounting to \$39.4 million for two academic years. This state funding may have allowed the district to decrease its locally allocated funding without having a huge impact on EL education.

EL facilitators. Similarly, in 2011, CCSD removed all of its EL facilitators, who provided direct support to EL students within schools. Facing a significant budget shortfall, CCSD surveyed district employees on what they believe should be done to work within the budget. During a presentation at a school meeting, administrators highlighted that the majority of respondents suggested that CCSD cut EL facilitators and literacy specialists. They also indicated that they planned to cut these positions by 25% but ended up cutting all of them. Although hesitant, the school board approved the budget that included these decreases.

One of the school board members shared that the superintendent agreed to redeploy funds that came specifically from these cuts to fund something more effective for ELs. However, this never happened. Instead, this board member explained that when two board members consistently asked for an update about the redeployment plan, the superintendent's reaction was negative in that he "snapped a little." According to the interview and school board meeting audio, the reaction was somewhat territorial. This board member explained that the "superintendent sort of expressed a 'Hey you've crossed the line into my territory'; there was kind of a tension there and we stopped following up out on the dais, um, and started talking more intensively with him." She also believed that the superintendent's creation of the Assistant Superintendent for the ELL Program position was in part to "get us off his back." Yet, the contextual effect of the policy governance structure enforces territorial practices, encouraging conflict when board members cross operational boundaries.

English immersion focus. Another major policy/practice is CCSD's heavy focus on English immersion programs for EL education. Although the superintendent committee related to Prime Six schools and the WestEd report made recommendations to the district to increase dual language programs, these programs have decreased from seven in 2013 to three in 2016. Even the seven that were implemented lacked district support in terms of resources, requiring principal to find funding to support these programs.

Although fewer dual language programs might be the result of overall budget cuts, the lack of support for such programs that embrace bilingualism might also be connected to EL social constructions that view them heavily as dependents. Hence, policy makers are less apt to invest in programs such as bilingual ones that are more likely to advantage them economically and socially. The English immersion focus was evident in much of the literature and

conversations about EL education. For example, one board member explained of EL students, “Until you learn the [English] language you're really not going to be learning.” This statement also reflects a narrow view that some board members have, equating English with the only avenue to learning.

Summary

The Clark County School District experienced significant changes over this study’s time period as well as the years leading up to it. Changes resulted in a rapidly growing and very different student population, numerous economic constraints and opportunities, and leadership turnover at various levels. As social constructions, participants viewed ELs as a commodity that needed to be invested in (lack of resources) in order for them to be better future citizens (potentially positive) and avoid becoming a societal problem as well as a continued academic problem that makes the district look bad (presently and potentially negative). These dependent and deviant social constructions were juxtaposed with contender-based social constructions that viewed ELs as taking resources (relatively powerful) that they did not deserve (relatively negative). Regardless of social constructions, however, the school board paid little attention to ELs until triggering mechanisms of both the Latino/a and African American community activists caused this entity to react.

CCSD school board reactions were heavily symbolic, including the support of committees and research, both which made recommendations that were largely ignored, illustrating this group’s lack of power. Reactions that included substantial efforts by The Board also existed. Aligned with ELs’ social construction reflecting negative perceptions and less power were substantial reactions such as cuts to both the EL budget and EL facilitators along with the demotion of the EL executive level position. On the other hand, ELs’ contender and

advantaged-based social constructions were supported by substantial actions like the hiring and appointing Latino/a officials, halting the demotion of the executive level EL position, and the expanded focus on literacy as a way to include African American constituencies. Most of these actions, symbolic and substantial, did little to institute a high-quality education for ELs within this study's timeframe. As West Ed reported, CCSD was wasting opportunities by not supporting bilingual and bicultural programs.

Ultimately the CCSD school board, with the exception of the Latino/a members (one in particular), did not initiate much concern for EL education. Instead, the school board relied on Latino/a and African American community members to threaten, pressure, and guide their decision-making. This was even evident in their choice to appoint Stavan Corbett to the school board who, in the short year he served, became the main person who "educated" them on EL issues. Many of the school board's efforts, with respect to EL education, were arguably pursued to avoid legal (lawsuits) and political (losing elections) repercussions. Interestingly, however, Corbett, the board member praised most often for his work to improve EL education, was also the person who suffered politically by not being elected. Perhaps this reflects the larger community's desire to dismiss EL issues, in which case the school board's lack of concern aligns with the larger community.

Tucson Unified School District Case

Contextual Effects

State and local demographic and economic conditions. Arizona followed Nevada as the second-fastest growing state in the U.S. With an almost 25% increase in population from 2000-2010, Arizona's largest regions are Phoenix, Tucson, North, West, and Southeast (respectively). Together, Phoenix and Tucson make up nearly 80% of the state with Tucson encompassing about 20% of that (or 15% of the total state population). (Frey & Texeira, 2012).

Tucson is one of the few areas in Arizona, as well as the largest, whose residents voted more heavily Democratic in the 2008 Presidential election. Although that share of eligible minority voters only increased about 6% in the whole state, TUSD has changed fairly dramatically in terms of demographics (Frey & Texeira, 2012). In the 1997-98 academic year, 45% of the student population was White and in 2013-14, this population decreased to slightly over 22%. Latino/a students now make up a majority of TUSD (62% in 2013-14).

Arizona was among the top eight states negatively impacted by the Great Recession at the end of the 2000 decade. The state experienced the second-highest home foreclosure rate and an unemployment rate of nearly 10%, the largest it had been in more than 25 years (College Degrees.com, 2016). Although many areas of the state have experienced an economic upturn following the recession, Tucson ranked 149 out of 150 cities in terms of recovering (Walton, 2015). In fact, Tucson recovered only about 32% of employment since the recession compared to the state's 79% (Spicer, 2015).

Although Arizona has long been one of states that ranked among the lowest in per pupil funding to education, this amount further declined following the Great Recession. For instance, in 1992, Arizona was ranked 34th in per pupil revenue and dropped to 48th in 2013 (Irish, 2015).

In 2011-12, Arizona had the country's lowest average per pupil expenditures at \$6,683 (National Education Association, 2015). Among funding, local sources account for about 50% of the total revenue for K-12 education, followed by the state and federal governments at nearly 36% and 14% respectively. Although most states had an upward trajectory in terms of funding education when compared to local sources, Arizona's share decreased about 6%. When adjusted for inflation, the state cut more than 17% of its education budget since 2008 (Children's Action Alliance, 2015).

In 2013, TUSD closed 10 schools due partially to decreases in the budget, which loomed at around \$17 million (Huicochea, 2012a; TUSD, 2016). In terms of capital funding, TUSD experienced more than \$78 million in cuts since 2009-10 (TUSD, 2015).

Arizona Proposition 203. In 2000, 63% of Arizona voters passed Proposition 203 entitled "English Language Education for Children in Public Schools." The proposition included the requirement to use an English-only approach through a Structured English Immersion Program for ELs with some caveats. Within the proposition were exceptions that allowed parents the ability to request a waiver if their child is over 10 years old, speaks English, or has "special needs best suited for a different educational approach" (Proposition 203, 2000, para. 1). The campaign to support this proposition was largely financed by Rob Unz, an entrepreneur from California who also sponsored similar measures in California, Massachusetts, and Colorado (Combs, 2012).

In the first few years of Proposition 203, Arizona's Department of Education left much of interpretation of this law up to school districts, resulting in a wide array of practices reflecting its implementation, including the continuation of bilingual programs (Wright, 2005). Yet, in 2003 the newly elected State Superintendent Tom Horne, who was supported by Robert Unz.

developed stringent standards of implementation with the intent of discontinuing bilingual education in Arizona. Horne was fairly successful in eliminating most bilingual and dual language programs, particularly those that served ELs (Wright, 2005).

Flores v. Arizona (1992) and Structured English Immersion Program. In 1992, EL families filed a class action lawsuit against the state of Arizona, claiming that it had provided inadequate resources to educate ELs. After more than 20 years of litigation, this case led to several major changes for ELs. Among those were 1) the state agreed to provide school districts \$432 per ELL, and 2) a statewide requirement aligned with Proposition 203, which instituted a Structured English Immersion Program in 2008-09 and included a minimum of four hours per day of English Language Development (being “pulled out” of mainstream classes) (Sampson & Horsford, 2015).

Arizona House Bill 2281. In 1998, the Tucson Unified School District implemented the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program for high school students intended to increase student achievement particularly among Latino/a students (Romero & Arce 2009). Although this program was deemed successful in raising student achievement among its participants, it was targeted by State Superintendent Tom Horne after Dolores Huerta, a civil rights Chicana activist, stated that “Republics hate Latinos” in a MAS-invited speech. Horne used his position and power to develop and pass H.B. 2281, a bill aimed to ban curriculum that teaches students “to resent or hate other races or classes of people” (Arizona House Bill 2281, 2010, p. 1). Initially, the TUSD School Board allowed MAS to continue because they believed that the MAS was not in violation of H.B. 2281. However, the Arizona Department of Education threatened to withhold close to \$15 million of state funding from TUSD if they did not dismantle MAS

(Reinhart, 2011). In January 2012, TUSD School Board voted to discontinue the MAS program amidst hundreds of student protesters and national media attention (Huicochea, 2012b).

Arizona Senate Bill 1070. In 2010, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law S.B. 1070 entitled “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” and otherwise largely known as the “anti-immigration” law. This law would allowed state officials to enforce the federal immigration law through various measures such as requiring individuals in Arizona to carry documentation of their citizenship status and making it unlawful to harbor undocumented people (Morse, 2011). Arizona received national attention over S.B. 1070 and many civil rights groups, particularly Latino/a ones, believed that its implementation would legalize discrimination through racial profiling (Khan, 2015). Although about two years later, the Supreme Court determined that parts of this law were unconstitutional, the result was a climate of increased hostility geared toward immigrants (Khan, 2015) and it also correlated with one of the largest state declines of undocumented immigrants, calculated at about 40% (Passel & Cohn, 2014).

TUSD school desegregation lawsuit. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a lawsuit against TUSD in May 1974 on behalf of African American students claiming the district had unlawfully segregated them. About five months later, Latino/a students, represented by Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), filed suit with the same claims of discrimination in terms of segregation. Soon after, the plaintiffs combined the two cases and they became known as the Fisher and Mendoza case. The plaintiffs settled with TUSD in exchange for the district’s agreement to eliminate discrimination in 21 schools.

For more than 20 years, TUSD remained under Court supervision to maintain compliance with the court order, and in 2009, the district was given Post-Unitary Status to end the Court

supervision. However, in 2012, TUSD returned to Court supervision as a result of a Plaintiff's appeal. The Court appointed a Special Master to guide a year-long development of a plan that would return TUSD back to a Post-Unitary Status within three academic years. Planning occurred during the 2012-13 academic year followed by the plan implementation until 2015-16. The broad goals of this plan are highlighted below from a district presentation that included quote from the Special Master:

The fundamental goals of this Plan are to eliminate the vestiges of segregation, provide every student with the opportunity to attend a racially and ethnically integrated school, increase the number of TUSD schools that are integrated, and enhance the learning opportunities and outcomes of all students, especially African American and Latino students who are the plaintiffs in this case. -Dr. Hawley, Special Master, July 2012 (Brown, 2012, slide 15).

The state of Arizona allocates close to \$64 million annually to ensure that TUSD can provide the services and accommodations necessary to implement the plan and move toward compliance under the Court Order (Huicochea, 2015). The Post-Unitary Plan includes several components that impact EL education. In fact, many of district policies and practices that encompass EL education were developed as part of the plan, including the expansion of dual language programs and the inclusion of these program as an Advance Learning Experience (similar to honors credit) (TUSD Unitary Status Plan, 2014). Also, interviewees indicated that the funding that is allocated to desegregation efforts are used to help these programs operate.

TUSD superintendent turnover. Three superintendents were hired in this study's four year period framework. TUSD's former Superintendent Elizabeth Celandia-Fagen resigned from her position in June 2008, almost two years after she was hired with a 3-2 vote by TUSD School

Board (Hatfield, 2008). Although she expressed the intent to remain in Tucson for at ten years, she explained that what ultimately lured her away were the continuous budget cuts to education and the opportunity to be the Superintendent of the Douglas County School District in Colorado (Kiser, 2010).

November 23, 2010, the TUSD School Board voted, unanimously, to approve the contract for the then-Superintendent John Pedicone. Pedicone was a retired superintendent from the neighboring Flowing Wells School District in 2004 and a faculty member at University of Arizona (Herreras, 2010). He led TUSD through budget cuts, school closures, and the dismantling of Mexican American Studies. In March 2012, he announced that he was resigning mostly due to the newly elected school board that he felt should hire a new and fully-supported superintendent (Echavarri, 2013).

Starting the position on July 2013, Dr. H.T. Sánchez was voted in 4-1 as TUSD's 33rd superintendent (TUSD, 2013; Huicochea, 2013). Superintendent Sánchez is bilingual in English and Spanish with more than 15 years of educational experience. Critiques of his hire included relatively little experience as a superintendent and a lack of stability in his past positions (Huicochea, 2013). Despite ongoing critiques, Sánchez remains in this position and has maintained support from the majority, but not all, of the board.

TUSD Governing Board. There are 230 school districts in Arizona (Arizona Department of Education, 2016). As the second largest school district in Arizona, TUSD was established by Pima County in 1867 and the first TUSD Governing Board was enacted in 1884 (Cooper, 1967; Niche, 2016). The school board is “responsible for broad, futuristic thinking, minute analysis and decisive action in all areas that affect students and staff in their schools” (Arizona School Boards Association, 2015). This five-member board is elected at-large with each member

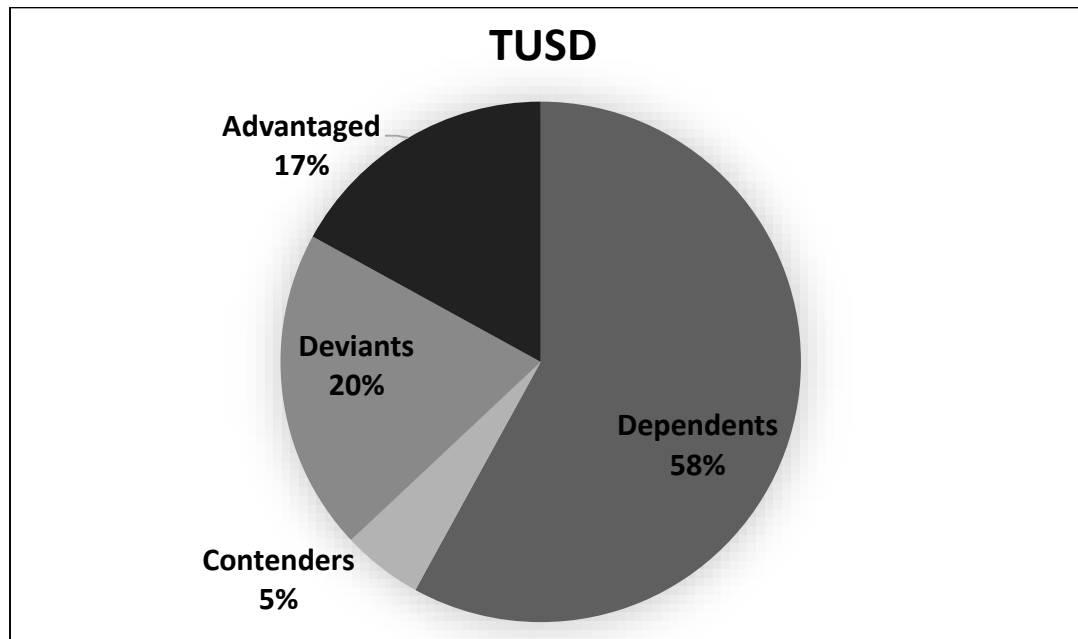
representing the whole district. Members are elected, in a staggered fashion, to four year terms and are unpaid (Arizona School Boards Association, 2015).

From 2010 until the end of 2013, there were nine school board members. Of these members, three were women and six were men. Racially, the majority of this board was Caucasian (5) and the rest were Latino/a (3) and Asian American (1). Almost all of these members were public sector employees (7), one was an attorney, and one was a college student. Two members were professors/instructors at the local university, one was a K-12 educator in a neighboring school district, and one was a former teacher's aide. Finally, one member was involved in the Parent Teacher Association. Eight of the board members have a college degree. The longest-standing member had been on the board for 13 years. Although the TUSD school board is required by the state to meet monthly, there were a total of 162 documented meetings including retreats from 2010-13.

TUSD Social Constructions of ELs

Within the TUSD case study, interview participants mentioned the social constructions of ELs 127 times. The majority of these perceptions viewed ELs as Dependents (58%), followed by ELs as Deviants (20%), Advantaged (17%), and Contenders (5%) (See Figure 6.).

Figure 6.
Pie Chart of TUSD Social Constructions of ELs



EL as dependents. The perception of ELs as dependents was mentioned a total of 74 times as described from the three perspectives—35 community, 12 school board, and 27 school district staff.

Within the dependent category, a desire to help ELs existed from various perspectives. One perspective was more empathetic and largely aligned with immigrant ELs. Comments reflecting this often portrayed a deficit perspective that assumed ELs had little education. For instance, participants described some refugee communities having “no language” and “no education” before transitioning to the United States. One board member conveyed the district’s obligation to educate ELs while also implying that some of these students were undocumented and that educating ELs would equate to larger societal benefits in the long-term. He stated:

If I have a kid that's in one of our schools, legal or not legal, and they're wanting to learn, we need to teach them. It's not only going to benefit us at a later date, it's going to benefit them wherever they're at.

Another perspective related to supporting ELs was justice-oriented. Some board members and other interviewees shared their hope of reversing inequities ELs experienced. In the context of discussing ELs' status and the relationship to civil rights, one board member explained:

I didn't enter this board because I wanted to take anything away from White kids. I just wanted to make sure that all kids had equal access, and you know, you talk about equality versus equity and you're talking about a very different conversation because you can't provide the same thing to all students and expect them to perform exactly the same.

Nationally, TUSD was considered a leader in EL practices a few decades ago (Brousseau, 1993), and it was clear that the desire to provide more support to ELs currently exists. However, interviews illustrated that this group is often not prioritized at the district level, especially considering the issues that were looming in the district such as those with Mexican American Studies and school closures. Instead, EL support, or lack thereof, was often attributed to leadership at the school and the state levels. At the school level, interviewees described EL support in terms of cultural sensitivity and relevance. At the state level, interviewees overwhelmingly discussed policies and practices that harmed ELs.

In particular, almost every study participant explained that the implementation of the state-level Structured English Immersion (SEI) program negatively impacted ELs. Words used to describe the program included “not humane,” “not good for students,” “horrible,” and “modern-day segregation.” One school board member stated the following:

For anyone who is an educator I think is really saddened by the state—the requirements that we have to isolate these children, it's discriminatory. I have not spoken to one educator that is in favor of isolating these students in the room.

Additionally, during a school board meeting in 2011, board members asked and received confirmation from TUSD administrators that the program was not an evidence-based program, but rather a top-down practice without research to support it. Yet, TUSD implemented the program even though most board members were convinced by district-provided data and educator input that it had adverse consequences for ELs.

In comparison, interviewees shared that TUSD's neighboring Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson refused to implement the SEI program for about five years. When Sunnyside agreed, it was only after being out of state compliance and given one last chance by the state before they would lose funding. Comparing the two school boards, participants described Sunnyside Unified School District board members as more progressive. However, they also indicated that TUSD did not have the power to fight back against this state policy largely due to TUSD being in the midst of many contentious issues, which included state pressure to make changes. As a community member reflected, "TUSD is in the perfect storm right now because they have Mexican-American Studies, you have the unitary status plan and then you have these kind of conflicting views within the district about the ELL big law." The reference to TUSD in a "storm" was a theme throughout the interviews.

While the implementation of what board members and TUSD officials considered to be a poorly designed program for ELs might have been the result of the contextual effects in TUSD, such as state scrutiny, it may also illustrate the lack of power and resources ELs have to demand state resistance and policy/practice improvements in TUSD. Again, some interviewees explained that EL issues were not prioritized and one board member recalled that EL related items had not been on the agenda for a couple of years, explaining that "If it's not on the agenda, the board doesn't discuss it."

Along with the possible “assumption” that EL issues are “untouchable” because of the state, which was indicated by a community member, other EL perceptions were also likely to be an influencing factors that led to the negligence toward this group. Another community member described ELs as “both an invisible population and they're very visible.” She went on to say that “It's one of the interesting paradoxes. Visible in the sense that they are in every school.” However, she explains that “On the other hand I would say the general public doesn't know very much about that population and there is a perception that all those kids are undocumented.” Similarly, from a board perspective, one participant acknowledged the difficulty of relating to the economic and social challenges that ELs and their families often deal with. The inability to relate to ELs might pose challenges in developing effective EL policies as well as prioritizing this group’s needs appropriately.

The EL challenges this board member described were in terms of immigration status. While many interviewees communicated the assumption that ELs were immigrants and undocumented, they also used EL interchangeably when discussing the Latino/a population and the Spanish language. Yet, participants also explained the stigma attached to Latino/as and Spanish that sometimes created challenges in developing various policies/practices impacting ELs. For instance, one district administrator explained that while Arizona supported dual language immersion programs, it was often non-Spanish languages, such as Mandarin and French, which officials viewed as more beneficial. In order to implement Spanish dual language programs with more ease, one board said administrators purposively framed these programs in vague terms such as “world languages.” Such framing allowed for the possibility of several languages even though the reality was that the most cost-effective and achievable program would be a Spanish-based one.

Part of the support for dual language programs, according to interviewees, came from the desire to attract White students in alignment with the district's desegregation plan. For ELs, on the other hand, opposition to dual language programs existed because some felt English immersion should be prioritized. Part of this opposition stemmed from non-ELs who are anti-immigrant, whereas, some EL parents resisted dual language programs because they were concerned that their children were not learning English in school.

Aligned with the concern for English immersion, one school board member adamantly critiqued, both during an interview and a board meeting, the time it took most Spanish-speaking ELs to become fluent in English. More specifically, he indicated that Spanish was a relatively easy language to learn and yet:

you got kids who are in an English language environment with TV, radio, all these...even if they're not speaking at home there is a lot of English language in the environment and they're taking five years, four or five years to get out of ELL. There's something wrong with that picture.

Participants also discussed burdens that ELs and bilingual children experience in TUSD as a concern. These burdens included low expectations, being perceived as not smart, and being bullied. Finally, regardless of a child's English speaking ability, participants shared that speaking a non-English language(s) prompts the burden of significant testing because school officials must determine if these students need EL services. Hence, testing requires students to spend less time engaged in classroom learning.

ELs as deviants. The perception of ELs as deviants was mentioned a total of 25 times as described from the three perspectives—20 community, 0 school board, and 5 school district staff.

As mentioned above, ELs were often viewed within the same realm as Latinos and immigrants. As such, perceptions of ELs as manifested mostly from the larger community, were aligned with a negative lens that many interviewees explained were anti-immigrant and racist against ELs. For instance, a community member described those who “think that every student ought to come into school already knowing English and why the hell are we talking about ELL anyway? Because they're all a bunch of fucking migrants.” Similarly, another community member explained that “because we're so close to the border and in some ways we are a really racist state, there's no other way to say that. You know I've lived here 20 years and it pains me to have to say.”

As a school board member described, even though immigrant children in TUSD represent many different countries, the “real ugly anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican sentiment” fosters comments related to ELs such as “‘These kids don't speak English’ and ‘We're in America. If they don't want to speak English then let 'em go back to Mexico.’” Similarly, another board member explained that “ELLs, much like immigration, are seen as a brown issue opposed to an issue of students and equity.” According to some interviewees, these perceptions, along with laws such as SB 1070, sparked fear of sending their children to school among some immigrant families because of the risk of being deported. One board member also conveyed the challenges of preserving children’s culture in schools because she said, “We don't, as a state, acknowledge or value the contributions the immigrants with language/culture.”

Anti-immigrant sentiments also existed in relationship to the Arab community. In 2013, TUSD received money from the Qatar Foundation to implement Arabic dual language programs. In the following statement a school board member explained:

it was a huge controversy because apparently some of the people...the Qatar Foundation also gives people who are perceived Islamists and supporting Jihadists and all this and so we supported this. And then it got into the right wing media and people we're saying "Ah, they're letting the Qatar Foundation come in and do their education."

He went on to say that among the school board members, "I was the only one willing to defend it. Everyone else just like wanted to like pretend the issue didn't exist." His rationale to support building an Arabic dual language program was that the U.S. State Department deemed it a critical language for security purposes and it is difficult to learn.

Beyond the issues with immigration, interviewees expressed that some policies/practices contributed to discrimination toward ELs. For example, one school board member pointed out that ELs were being "pushed out" of school due to the SEI program that pulls them out of their academic classes for four hours a day. A different board member considered these practices of "isolating your children for four hour blocks in a classroom; no content, just language with a teacher who doesn't necessarily speak Spanish and is unable to communicate with a child in their native language" to be "criminal." Although a handful of schools try to mitigate this by creating an inclusive environment, she said that some school board members might push back on these efforts if they know about the extra resources used to alleviate discriminatory practices.

ELs as advantaged. The perception of ELs as advantaged was mentioned a total of 22 times as described from the three perspectives—1 community, 19 school board, and 2 school district staff.

There were three main themes that emerged among perspectives of ELs as advantaged. The most popular theme was the support of bilingual/multilingual skills. Several interviewees pointed out that the school board showed their support by voting for dual language programs to

be recognized as an Advanced Learning Experience on their diploma similar to an honors diploma. As one school board member described, this move was partially designed to give “an elevated status to our ELL students.” A different board member pointed out that the majority of the school board was “ideologically highly invested in dual language” for reasons that he believed were “philosophically” and in some cases, “politically” based.

Although less prevalent, two other related themes that emerged were the perceptions that 1) viewed ELs as an asset, and 2) valued the cultural connection embedded in a ELs’ first language. From a school district and school board perspective, a few interviewees discussed the desire for more people, particularly in the community, to understand ELs as an asset because of the diversity they contribute to both schools and the community. Also, one participant emphasized that ELs were just as smart as their non-EL peers. Because they did not need to know fluent English to understand math or science, he believed that schools should encourage ELs to become strong leaders in STEM.

For some participants, ELs were seen as an opportunity to use language in building a stronger culture within their communities. As a Latina, one participant discussed this in terms of her own children and her hope that they would have a good foundation in both Spanish and English. Another participant shared a story of a group of Navajo teachers in Arizona who were deeply committed to language revitalization among their community’s children who were often classified as ELs.

ELs as contenders. The perception of ELs as contenders was mentioned a total of 6 times as described from the three perspectives—5 community, 1 school board, and 0 school district staff.

The contender perspective of ELs was rare. However, interviewees described that parts of the community, particularly the east side, which is demographically more affluent and White, felt somewhat “threatened” by an increasing population of Latinos that would result in their power and influence declining. One interviewee also briefly mentioned the possibility of slight tension between Latinos and African Americans, specifically related to TUSD’s desegregation case. Yet, they explained that the relatively small African American population (about 4%) compared to the Latino/a population (about 60%) made this issue nearly obsolete.

TUSD Triggering Mechanisms

Elections. Following the 2012 TUSD school board vote that eliminated the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program as enforced by Arizona’s HB 2281, 12 candidates vied for three at-large seats in the 2012 TUSD school board elections (Herreras, 2012). Although the school is non-partisan, prior to the 2012 elections, interviewees explained that two board members were relatively liberal, two were relatively conservative, and one was often considered the swing vote. When HB 2281 was passed in 2010, the school board dismissed it as irrelevant within TUSD. However, the state placed continuous pressure on TUSD to dismantle MAS and threatened to withhold state-level funding if the district failed to comply.

On October 27, 2011, Judy Burns, one of the liberal members of the school board who had served since 2000, died suddenly of a heart attack. Among the 54 applicants, Alexandre Sugiyama was appointed by the Pima County School Superintendent to serve Burns’s remaining term (Herreras, 2011). Sugiyama was a lecturer at University of Arizona in the Department of Economics, the same department as Mark Stegeman, one of the conservative-leaning members of the board. The same day of his appointment, the board voted 3-2 to place Stegeman as president, an upset to several of the MAS supporters (Smith, 2011). The following week, with hundreds of

community members present, the TUSD school board voted 4-1 to eliminate MAS (Smith, 2012).

The MAS program became one of the primary issues that drove the 2012 school board elections in TUSD. Stegeman was the only incumbent to win, carrying the second largest percentage of votes behind Kristel Foster, who gained the most support, and followed by Cam Juarez (Echavarri, 2012). Foster had been an educator for more than twenty years and was employed in the neighboring Sunnyside School District as a specialist in the language acquisition department. Foster is also bilingual in Spanish and English. Furthermore, several interviewees pointed out her strong affinity with Mexican culture as explained by one participant who said “she just really feels like she's adopted this culture.” Juarez, an urban planner and community organizer with close ties to activist Dolores Huerta, was a former volunteer for Congressman Raul Grijalva.

Congressman Grijalva served on the TUSD school board from 1974 until 1986, and his daughter Adelita Grijalva had been a school board member since 2002. Given Juarez’s experience and knowledge as well as the fact that his child was about to begin kindergarten in TUSD, Congressman Grijalva recognized that Juarez had the ability to effectively address TUSD’s inequities. As such, he convinced Juarez to run for school board, providing the following reflection about this:

In retrospect I think he just wanted me to get on the board to support his daughter who at this point had been in the minority for close to six years and basically wasn't able to achieve too much because she had been in the minority with a fairly conservative board majority.

Congressman Grijalva's strategy worked. Following the 2012 elections, several interviewees noted the clear "shift" that happened on the school board.

Among these reflections, a board member explained that "the vote to bring in Mr. Juarez and Ms. Foster as candidates that were known to be 1) More progressive and 2) Really supportive of Mexican-American studies, that was the shift." Of the five person board, there were now three like-minded, relatively liberal individuals who made up the majority in terms of voting power. While some viewed this as a victory, others saw this as a defeat. For instance, a school board member indicated "I have three board members who...it's really, the way I see it is if you're not Hispanic, you're not anything and I disagree with that. I disagree with that wholeheartedly." Nevertheless, this shift triggered several changes that influenced EL-related policies and practices.

TUSD School Board Actions and Policymaking

Reactions to triggering mechanisms.

Leadership changes. As a board member recalled, "Shifts immediately happened. The first vote was to make Ms. Grijalva board president, which again that shift had enormous impact on how we were going to move forward." This vote to change the board's president occurred during the first meeting that included the newly elected board members. During the same meeting, on January 8, 2013, board members made another significant vote that reversed an objection from the formerly elected school board to include Culturally Relevant Curriculum (CRC) courses, a revised version of MAS, in the school desegregation Unitary Status Plan. Both of these actions were supported by a 3-2 vote with Grijalva, Juarez, and Foster all voting in favor of it.

Hiring a new superintendent was the third area of change. Interviewees explained that Superintendent Pedicone resigned largely because he wanted the newly elected board to identify someone aligned with their vision. Pedicone's resignation was made in April 2013 and Superintendent Sanchez was hired in June 2013 in a 4-1 vote with Stegeman voting no. Although one board member stated that "we have two board members now that are making our current superintendent's life pretty miserable because they don't have confidence in him," a different board member highlighted the significance of hiring Sanchez in the following statement:

You have a Latino superintendent that speaks Spanish. That attends meetings and speaks Spanish without translators. It's through policy, through these decisions made by the board majority. We are communicating effectively to our communities, 'You're not lost on us. We're going to make the changes necessary to help your child graduate and achieve.'

Dual language program support. February 12, 2013, during the fourth meeting of the newly elected board, Foster requested a study/action item on a future agenda concerning the possibility of making dual language programs part of the Advanced Learning Experience (ALE) program. Similar to the honors programs, this proposal would provide additional recognition for students who participate in the dual language program. In response to Foster's request, TUSD staff presented a report on April 9, 2013, that highlighted the status and vision for the district's dual language programs. Staff also explained how the program could be considered an Advanced Learning Experience as part of the district's school desegregation Unitary Status Plan presented to the Court.

During this presentation, staff indicated that TUSD offered dual language programs in 12 sites, of which three were schoolwide. Total enrollment in these programs included 2,408 with students on a waiting list. This was a substantial increase from only 132 students in 2006. Most of the students in the program were Latino/a (87%) and non-EL (81%). Although relatively fewer ELs were able, and did, participate in dual language programs, staff pointed out that ELs who do participate are reclassified to non-EL status at a higher rate than those in English immersion programs (46.4% versus 34.5% in 2012). Furthermore, students in dual language programs in grades 3, 4, and 5, on average, attained higher scores on state exams than the district average. Finally, staff presented information on the 2012-13 dual language expenditures, which showed that of approximately \$1.5 million spent, all of it, with the exception of \$3,000, was funded by either Title III federal funding or desegregation funds. In other words, EL services and programs had relatively little financial support from local funding streams.

For the most part, following this presentation, school board members made inquiries and comments that illustrated support for continued growth and recognition of dual language programs. Grijalva asked for confirmation about there being zero costs associated with making dual language programs an ALE. She proceeded by sharing that she believed dual language teachers work more than non-dual language teachers. Fosters responded by explaining that as a bilingual teacher, she did not mind the extra work. Even so, Grijalva emphasized the desire to increase incentives to recruit and retain bilingual-endorsed teachers. Specifically, she indicated the following:

I would like to ask staff to...I guess Dr. Pedicone to figure how to strengthen this program. What can we have to do internally to ensure that we can attract more endorsed teachers, ask more teachers to become endorsed, and how we figure it out? Because

there's...ideally I would love for us to give some sort of stipend, compensation, write a grant to get those funds so it would be easier. Because I do understand that it is fairly difficult to attract teachers willing to teach in a dual language program and while I know that Ms. Foster, maybe she's being modest, but I know that the teachers that teach it love it, but it's extra work.

A principal explained that obtaining funding to hire enough dual language teachers to expand these programs was a "fight."

Other comments reflected confusion on behalf of the board about why a large portion of EL students were unable to participate in dual language programs. Also, one board member, Hicks, expressed his concern that there were no dual language programs on the eastside of the district, which is considered a relatively more affluent and White. When a staff member explained that eastside students had the option of transferring to dual language programs in other areas of town, Hicks indicated concern with these students being required to travel outside of their community in order to participate.

As a response to another request from Foster, TUSD administration presented a study/action item at the May 28, 2013, school board meeting on building dual language programs in relation to ALE. During the presentation, Stegeman asked staff about any non-compliance issues related to ELs. Staff explained that TUSD was in corrective action from 2008 until 2011. Regarding dual language teachers, Juarez pointed out that dual language teachers do more work and Foster stated that TUSD does not have a sufficient amount of dual language teachers.

Following the presentation, Foster brought forth the motion below as shown in the school board meeting minutes:

I move that all Dual Language classes/programs in the Tucson Unified School District be accorded Advanced Learning Experience status, equal in every way to the status of all other classes and programs recognized as Advanced Learning Experiences. I set this motion forward as educational policy to be carried forward immediately. This policy action should also be reflected in the Desegregation/Unitary Status Plan. The Governing Board recognizes:

The high level of academic achievement required of Dual Language students developing speaking, reading and writing proficiency in two languages as they simultaneously learn math, science and social studies content in two languages; mastery of two or more languages is an important achievement, as indicated by empirical evidence that associates bilingualism with increased metacognitive skills and cognitive flexibility; and that biliteracy, bilingualism, and multicultural proficiency represent a set of skills that are especially attractive to future employers and college admissions officers in the global community of the 21st Century. (2013, p. 4).

The motion passed 4-1 with Stegeman voting against it. Although the majority of the board illustrated their support, some communicated concerns. One concern was about the legal ramifications of formally making a dual language program an ALE within the Desegregation Unitary Status Plan. Legal counsel indicated that doing this might present recruitment and retention requirements of student participation from populations of specific races and/or language ability. Board member Hicks presented another concern about having non-Spanish languages as part of this effort. Specifically, he noted “I want to make sure that we’re not going to segregate French, we’re not going to segregate Chinese or any other language and only focus,

only forward go Spanish.” TUSD staff explained that while they planned to grow to include other languages, Spanish was currently the only available option. Hicks responded by saying “Well I’d like to see expansion in *other* languages. I mean we have quite a bit; and I’ve met quite a bit of individuals who are a little distraught that we don’t do anything with that” [emphasis added].

In addition to amplifying the status of bilingualism through the policy change described above, interviewees also discussed the board’s support of changing dual language programs from a 50/50 model to an immersion model. As opposed to having 50% of instruction in English and 50% in Spanish, 10 schools piloted a model that front-loaded Spanish so that students began dual language programs with 90% of instruction in Spanish with increasing English instruction over time until grade four when it would be 50/50 (Huicochea, 2014). Although according to interviews, research proved this to be a more effective model, they also pointed out that it was controversial because of the perception that it prioritized Spanish over English.

Strategic plan. One participant in this study also credited the newly elected board with ensuring TUSD developed its first strategic plan. Although the former Superintendent Pedicone believed a strategic plan was not necessary outside of a focus on academic achievement, the board intended to hire a new superintendent that planned to develop one. With the full approval of the board, a five-year strategic plan went into effect in July 2014. Even though the implementation of the plan occurred outside of this study’s timeframe, it is important to note that the plan included very little in terms of EL-related goals. Among these goals were the expansion of world languages and a plan to analyze staff diversity skills including state-level bilingual endorsements.

EL Policies/Practices Stemming from Context Effects and Social Constructions

“Snitches”. During a December 13, 2011, school board meeting, the Language Acquisition Department informed the board that ELs were being reclassified to non-EL status at an alarming rate following a change in the required state exam to the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA). While the state boasted of positive results which corresponded to decreases in state-level EL costs, TUSD department staff speculated that the standards of the AZELLA were lower than the previous exam, and therefore, many reclassified ELs were not adequately proficient in English.

School board member, Adelita Grijalva, illustrated the most interest and concern in this presentation. Grijalva explained that she was unaware that TUSD had implemented the four-hour model and thought the district was working with a hybrid model. Among Grijalva’s concerns were that different grade levels of ELs were being combined during the four hour blocks and that there was no research suggesting that the four hour model was effective. Stegeman also showed concern. He indicated that he was “struggling” with the idea that it takes about three years for 80% of ELs to be reclassified which he believed did not “sound that good.”

Nonetheless, TUSD kept a close track of the data by assessing exited ELs. At a school board meeting on October 23, 2012, department staff stated that they found that 2,450 ELs were exited as determined by the AZELLA, but lacked English proficiency as measured by Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). The department shared the data with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) which eventually led to a directive from OCR to the Arizona Department of Education. The directive mandated additional services for the identified ELs who were misclassified; however, state or federal funding were not provided for these services.

Board responses varied. Again, Grijavla posed several questions that reflected concern about the logistics for these ELs. The newly appointed board member, Sugiyama, asked about translation services to communicate the changes to parents. A top administrator praised the department for identifying and reporting the issue, referring to TUSD as a leader in the state for EL services. Following this comment, Stegeman asked, “am I understanding you, that we were the snitches on this?” He later expressed his belief that the four-hour model was a not a “reasonable pedagogical approach” but rather it was “strange.”

Summary

Throughout this study’s timeframe, the Tucson Unified School district faced significant changes and pressures from all angles—demographic, economic, legal, and political. More specifically, TUSD had a student enrollment that shifted to more than 60% Latino/a, faced economic conditions that were rather bleak, was constrained significantly by state laws, and was the center of national attention when it came to ethnic studies. Additionally, TUSD was operating within a federal desegregation lawsuit and substantial leadership changes.

As social constructions, participants often viewed ELs in conflicting ways. On one hand, ELs were viewed empathically as immigrants and as a group who deserve equity (positively), but were often not prioritized (low power). On the other hand, these students were seen in a xenophobic manner (negatively). Another less prevalent perspective embraced ELs’ potential bilingualism and biculturalism in an asset-oriented manner (positive). The school board, however, rarely pursued policies/practices impacting ELs until the triggering mechanism of school board elections sparked action.

As dependents, ELs' social constructions that emphasized empathy and equity failed to translate into policies/practices that adequately served the majority of ELs. In particular, the school boards' adoption of the SEI program, which requires ELs have four hours a day of English immersion instruction and was considered harmful to them, illustrated ELs' dependency status. Perhaps had ELs been viewed more positively and/or with more power, TUSD might have resisted the state-enforced SEI program similar to their neighboring Sunnyside School District. Yet, given Sunnyside's school board description as more "progressive," the political orientation of the board might have overcome the dependent-based social constructions of ELs. Still, TUSD was uniquely targeted and under close scrutiny by state officials, a contextual effect that added to the school board's unwillingness to refuse policies/practices they believed were negatively impacting ELs.

Additional school board reactions included changes to leadership and the expansion and alterations to dual language programs. These aligned with social constructions that perceive ELs in both equity and asset-oriented manners. However, this group's dependent status remained prevalent in the fact that dual language programs only served a small portion of the district's ELs, which was influenced by the contextual effect of Arizona's Proposition 203. More so, most of the funding supporting dual language programs came from the TUSD desegregation lawsuit. Interviewees expressed concern that when TUSD moves into Post Unitary Status and this desegregation funding stream is gone, dual language programs will no longer be sufficiently funded. Interestingly, state and federal laws have allowed TUSD opportunities to expand dual language programs while also constraining their ability to include more ELs.

TUSD's school board experienced significant contention, particularly following the elections. Although TUSD board members are non-partisan and elected at-large, they often

functioned opposite of what these factors might suggest. More specifically, board members were either liberal or conservative and represented either the Eastside or the Westside of TUSD, communities segregated by race and income. As a result, two of the three board members largely supported state-enforced policies and expressed critiques of ELs and EL-related resources, particularly those connected to Latino/s and Spanish. These board members are also White males, whereas the other three are Latino/s and/or female. Yet, without the chance of a majority vote, the conservative-leaning White male board members, who tended to represent the Eastside, had little power at the school board level. On the other, these board members' politics were often supported by state level contextual effects.

Even though the elections triggered changes in EL-related policies/practices, most of them were fairly minor. TUSD school board's push to expand and alter dual language programs as well as the board's support of the district's efforts to circumvent the state policies was important. In the meantime, however, thousands of ELs were left without an adequate education because of destructive state policies that the TUSD school board allowed to be implemented.

Salt Lake City School District Case

Contextual Effects

Demographic and economic conditions. With a 24% increase in population, the state of Utah ranked third in growth nationally from 2000-2010 (Frey & Texeira, 2012). Three main areas make up Utah—Salt Lake City (40.7%), Ogden and East (30.5%), and Provo and South (28.8%). Of eligible voters, Salt Lake City had the most minorities when compared to the other areas with about 16% in 2010, an increase of more than 4% since 2000 (Frey & Texeira, 2012). The Salt Lake City metro area, reflecting 38% of the state’s eligible voters, was the only area to experience a Democratic political shift of a 19 percent increase from 1988 to 2008 toward the Democratic margin (Frey & Texeira, 2012).

Within the Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD), demographic changes in student enrollment led the district to become a “minority-majority” district in the 2004-05 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 1997-98, White student enrollment was over 62% decreasing to slightly more than 40% in 2013-14. Latino/a students make up SLCSD’s largest racial demographic at close to 42% in 2013-14 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a).

Economically, Utah did not experience the severity of the Great Recession’s negative economic consequences relative to other states in the U.S. In 2008, Utah’s unemployment rate did rise, but only slightly while median housing prices grew (Zumbrun, 2008). Reports speculate that because of its economic diversity and the strong investment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Utah remained largely protected (Green, 2012). Although Utah fared well under the Great Recession, it has traditionally funded its schools among the lowest in the nation. In 2011-12, the state was second lowest compared to other states in terms of per pupil expenditures at \$6,849 (National Education Association, 2015). Also, SLCSD dealt with

approximately \$26 million in budget reductions from 2009 until 2013 (Wood, 2013). These cuts totaled more than 13% in per pupil revenue for SLCSD (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Among revenue sources, the state covers about 45%, whereas the local and federal sources are at about 42% and 10% respectively, according to 2013-14 SLCSD budget (Salt Lake City School District, 2013b).

The influence of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Utah has the largest number of members belonging to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (also known as LDS or Mormons) in the country. In fact, more than half of the population (55%) is LDS, accounting for more than 1.4 million people (Olaveson, 2015). Of Utah's 29 counties, Salt Lake City is among the lowest five in percentage of LDS members at about 51% (Canham, 2014).

Members of the LDS church are encouraged to complete a mission, lasting about two years, that involves teaching and converting individuals to the LDS faith (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016). Between 55,000 and 85,000 LDS members are serving missions each year (Whitney & Barnes, 2007; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016a). There are slightly over 400 mission sites around the world, with 60% of these being outside of the United States (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016b; Walch, T, 2014).

Several interviewees shared that the LDS culture, both in its desire to convert individuals and the push for its members to participate in missions that are often in non-English speaking countries, creates a welcoming culture toward immigrants and the inclination to learn more than one language. This has translated into an increasing demand for more dual language programs in schools. For instance, an article in the Salt Lake Tribune highlighted the dual language programs

being added to Utah schools. Of these, Portuguese was added to the list because Brazil is among the most popular missionary sites (Rogers, 2012).

Utah dual language immersion. Two schools implemented one of the state's first dual language immersion programs in 2004 in Farmington, Utah. Impressed by these Spanish/English immersion programs, Gregg Roberts, a Granite School District official, decided to adopt similar programs in two of the district's schools. Later, Roberts took a position at the Utah State Office of Education and helped launch a committee focused on world languages (Leite & Cook, 2015).

In 2007, the former Governor Jon Huntsman and Senator Howard Stephenson, the Chair of the Utah State Senate Education Committee, met with Roberts regarding the expansion of dual language programs. Stephenson was impressed by students' ability to speak English during a trip to China, motivating him to initiate the development of state funding toward teaching "critical languages" (Porzucki, 2015). Similarly, as someone fluent in Mandarin and an ambassador to China, Huntsman had personal experiences that influenced his support (Porzucki, 2015). Many of the interviewees also noted that the former Governor Huntsman adopted two children, one from China and another from India, both of whom he often referenced as an inspiration for his continued support of dual immersion programs.

Following this meeting, the Senator and Governor helped to pass Senate Bill 41, entitled International Initiatives, in 2008. Originally, the intent was to include only Chinese dual immersion programs, but Roberts convinced them to expand the programs to Spanish and French. Later, the state added Portuguese and German programs (Rogers, 2012). As a result of this bill, Utah provided \$750,000 toward the development and maintenance of 50/50 dual language immersion programs (Leite & Cook, 2015). As of 2014, more than 25,000 students in Utah are participating these programs within 118 schools (Leite & Cook, 2015). However, as

discussed further in the section below on social constructions of ELs as dependents, these dual languages programs target White, middle-class students with the purpose of teaching them another language.

Copypat bill of AZ's SB 1070. In the 2011 the Utah State Legislature passed House Bill 497 entitled "Utah Illegal Immigration Enforcement Act." This bill would give law enforcement officers the authority to require proof of citizenship during lawful stops opening the possibility of racial profiling. Co-sponsored by 38 of the 75 Representatives in the House in addition to one chief sponsor (Utah House Bill 497, 2011), the bill passed by approximately 80% of the vote in both the State Senate and the House (Vote Smart, 2016). Soon after it was passed, a federal judge halted the law following a lawsuit filed against the state by two civil rights groups (Montero, 2011). In 2013, Utah's Attorney General and the civil rights groups settled the lawsuit when the state agreed to amend HB 497 and remove the requirements regarding proof of citizenship (Felder, 2014). Although this law does not directly impact individuals in terms of race or immigrants, it does speak to the climate around immigration in Utah.

School Community Councils. The School Community Councils (SCC) were legislatively approved by the state of Utah in 2000. Each public school is mandated to have a council represented by a minimum of five individuals from a combination of elected parents and school staff constituencies. The state provides SCCs with \$20,000 to \$50,000 in annual funding from a school LAND Trust program toward implementation of school-level services outlined in a SCC-developed plan that is approved by the local school board (Utah Education Facts, 2016). Several interviewees discussed the significance of SCCs in supporting family involvement at the school-level. Additionally, most of the board members shared that SCCs were their first point of entry in school politics that eventually led them to run for the school board.

Salt Lake City School Board of Education. There are 41 school districts in Utah (utaheducationfacts.com). The SLCSB was established on July 19, 1980, and is responsible for governing the school district within state and federal limits in the following way:

Notwithstanding a local school board's status as a body corporate, an elected member of a local school board serves and represents the residents of the local school board member's district, and that service and representation may not be restricted or impaired by the local school board member's membership on, or obligations to, the local school board. (Utah Code 53A-3-401, 2015, p. 6).

This seven-member board represent smaller precincts (also known as “at-ward”). Precincts are determined by the number of voters rather than the number of students. Members are elected, in a staggered fashion, to four year terms and paid \$3000 per year. Additionally, since 1972, Utah has urged local school boards to appoint student members to the board (SoundOut, 2015).

Within SLCSB, students from rotating high schools may apply and are selected by a group of students, parents, and school staff members (Salt Lake City School District, 2015a). Students are non-voting members on the board (Salt Lake City School District, 2015b).

From 2010 until the end of 2013, there were 12 elected school board members and four student members. Of the non-student members, eight were females and four were males.

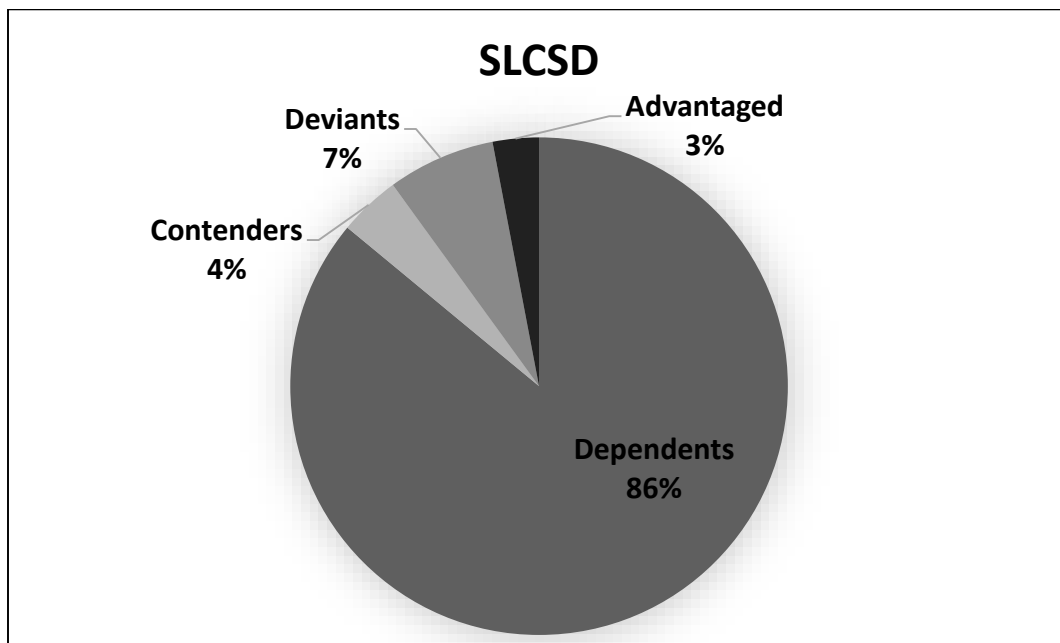
Racially, the majority of this board was Caucasian (10) and the rest were Latino (1) and Pacific Islander (1). One non-student member was appointed. The two non-White elected members represented the same precinct on the Westside of Salt Lake City. Many of these members were involved in the Parent Teacher Association, School Community Council or as parent volunteers prior to their positions and at least one was a former teacher. Most of the members have a college

degree. Two of the longest-standing members had been on the board for close to 12 years. The SLCSD school board typically met twice every month, one meeting on public business and one on a public study session (Salt Lake City School District, 2015c). There were 87 documented meetings including retreats from 2010 to 2013.

SLCSD Social Constructions of ELs

Within the SLCSD case study, interview participants mentioned the social constructions of ELs 154 times. The majority of these perceptions viewed ELs as Dependents (86%), followed by ELs as Deviants (7%), Advantaged (3%), and Contenders (4%) (see Figure 7.)

Figure 7.
Pie Chart of SLCSD Social Constructions of ELs



EL as dependents. The perception of ELs as dependents was mentioned a total of 132 times as described from the three perspectives—48 community, 42 school board, and 42 school district staff.

ELs in SLCSO were overwhelmingly described as dependents. Three main themes emerged from these descriptions—a lack of resources/support, empathetic feelings, and an emphasis on English proficiency and assimilation.

The first theme of insufficient resources reflected two areas. One area of discussion underscored an historical perspective prior to approximately 2002, when triggering mechanisms (discussed later) helped to shift this. Interviewees explained that although the EL population was growing, the school district had done very little to ensure that these students were being adequately educated. More specifically, the school district did not have an official process for educating ELs and teachers assigned to these students were not qualified to teach them. Instead, ELs were often separated in a combined class away from non-ELs and there were no academic standards, creating high levels of inconsistencies and no monitoring.

The other area of discussion highlighted a contemporary perspective acknowledging the increase in EL resources and support over the years, but claimed that these were not enough. On one hand, the state culture was described as one that embraces efficiency and as one board member suggested, “People take a lot of pride in Utah about being creative and careful with how the money is spent so that there's no waste.” Adding to this, a school board said that Utah is “a typical western conservative state that views with suspicion things from the federal government like money, money for education.” Yet, on the other hand, a different board member stated there was “not a clear funding stream” for ELs. She elaborated by saying “It would be nice if the state would acknowledge that and would fund kids who are learning English at the level that they need to be funded.” A participant explained that one of the reasons “public education is underfunded” is because “the more children you have, the less state tax you pay into the education system.” He believed this was exacerbated by the Mormon families who tend to have more children.

Beyond funding, identifying a sufficient number of teachers qualified to instruct ELs along with effective EL instructional strategies were considered another challenge in terms of resources/support. Although new teachers in SLCSO are required to have an EL endorsement, teachers hired prior to this requirement are not. Interviewees pointed out that these veteran teachers along with content-level teachers often do not seek the endorsement because they do not see value in it. This resistance poses hiring and recruitment challenges for principals in highly populated EL schools. Furthermore, some interviewees shared that teachers found it particularly difficult to work with ELs using terms like “burden” and “barrier” to describe this. A school board member said that “If you have really good teachers, you can overcome English language learner barrier but it is very hard in an English language learning environment.” He went on to explain that even though SLCSO instituted the endorsement to help alleviate these challenges, “it’s still very hard to retain good teachers.”

Participants also highlighted that academic achievement disparities experienced among ELs and students of color often coincided with insufficient resources and support. Interviewees believed that these disparities persisted for a variety of reasons including low expectations among teachers, a lack of effective educational and relational skills, and discrimination. For instance, one school board member recalled doing an equity-related observation of a White teacher who, after unintentionally ignoring a Latino student who had his hand raised several times and became disengaged, disciplined him for not paying attention. Several interviewees explained that it was difficult for the district to determine how to effectively meet the needs of these students in ways that close the academic achievement gaps. Knowing that some teachers and administrators claim to be colorblind, one school board member explained that working with

teachers to recognize diversity was one way to address disparities. She followed this by stating that:

Most of our teachers are just as frustrated as I am to see that achievement gap and they want to be able to reach those kids, but they don't always have the tools. Sometimes they just don't. They've been teaching a long time and it's hard for them to make those adjustments.

The statement above, highlighting the desire of educators to improve EL education, also reflected the second theme—empathy toward ELs. Several interviewees noted that, especially with the increase in ELs within SLCSD, stakeholders (e.g., school board members, school district staff, and community members) have shown concern and commitment toward addressing EL needs. For some, addressing these needs means achieving equity. Even though some felt that the school board mistakenly aligns inequities solely with poverty as opposed to race or language, two school board members expressed that it was the responsibility of the school board and the school district to ensure ELs are being educated. According to a school board member, “you can't ignore their [EL] needs.” He went on to say that “there are obvious challenges there but it's our job, it's our professional responsibility to get around those challenges.” Others, however, have a compassion stemming from the LDS church and missionary experiences. Of this, a community member shared her critique:

I think the LDS church actually is a really good support in terms again of the culture and the belief and attitude. We have lots of young men who go on missions to foreign countries and learn other languages and so they're more open to it in a diminutive way, in a white privileged kind of way. In an ‘I'm superior to you’ kind of way but regardless I think it's a little more humane than it could be.

The final theme emphasizing English proficiency and assimilation had several strands. One was the ways some interviewees distinguished ELs from other populations. Most participants described the geographic distinction—ELs residing in the Westside of Salt Lake City versus White, relatively more affluent students living in the Eastside. Some also used language that distinguished ELs from non-ELs in a marginal way such as “normal” or “regular” students versus ELs. Yet, interviewees simultaneously made comments that suggested a desire to have ELs assimilate, including describing Salt Lake City as a “melting pot” and explaining that Mormons in Salt Lake City want to convert ELs.

In terms of language, Utah has many dual language programs; however, participants shared that these programs are largely designed for White, middle-class students with the narrow focus of them learning a second language. For many years, SLCSd hesitated to adopt these programs because they failed to incorporate English language development. Moreover, they did not include components that would ensure bilingualism and biculturalism. While SLCSd had a handful of developmental bilingual programs, most of the district’s EL programs were considered English immersion. With the desire to expand bilingual programs, SLCSd slowly began changing them to dual language programs, since this was a prerequisite for state funding and programmatic support.

Yet, SLCSd officials were relatively more focused on English proficiency. From a school board perspective, one participant pointedly explained that it was the board’s obligation to “Get those kids speaking English.” Another school board member’s statement below echoed this but reflected a broader, more comprehensive aim that included the school board’s desire to respect ELs’ cultural foundation:

The goal is to get students academically proficient in the English language, which is the language that they'll have to do future work in in this country by and large, without dishonoring their language, their home language and the culture that surrounds that language. So that's the overarching philosophy is to try to get kids proficient as quickly as possible in English so that they will have access to the curriculum that is in English so that they'll be able to graduate from high school and then go on to the secondary education and work.

ELs as deviants. The perception of ELs as deviants was mentioned a total of 11 times as described from the three perspectives—3 community, 5 school board, and 3 school district staff.

Although interviewees seldom described ELs as deviants, these constructions were presented in ways that were closely related. Often, ELs were viewed interchangeably with Latino/a and immigrant students. As such, this construction unfolded through descriptions and stories of ELs, Latino/as, and immigrants being discriminated against, criminalized, segregated, and broader feelings of xenophobia. As mentioned in the dependent section, interviewees noted that discrimination from school district staff likely contributed to academic inequities and disparities. Issues of “White flight” due to critical masses of “brown kids” and anti-immigrant sentiments were also brought up. Concerned about the high dropout rate among Latino/a students, one board member suggested that these students should be “monitored” more closely because they “are running around all day and acting stupid in the neighborhood.”

ELs as contenders. The perception of ELs as contenders was mentioned a total of 6 times as described from the three perspectives—5 community, 0 school board, and 1 school district staff.

Social constructions of ELs as contenders reflected concerns about fairness among White people within the community. Among these concerns was that the EL population would grow, creating increasing pressure to attend to their needs. As a result, some of the community felt resentment about this as shared by a school board member in the following statement:

If you go out to the white suburbs where there are a lot of conservatives that are angry about taxes going up for these things, Title I monies and things like that, that are unfair for some schools to have and their school doesn't have that extra resources, there's a little bit of angst still but the attitudes are improving.

ELs as advantaged. The perception of ELs as advantaged was mentioned a total of 5 times as described from the three perspectives— 0 community, 1 school board, and 3 school district staff.

As advantaged, ELs were discussed in terms of their contribution to diversity within the community. A school board member explained that families appreciate the “richness of different cultures” within Salt Lake City’s public schools. Also, interviewees recognized the potential advantage ELs, as bilinguals, provided for employers in the community. Finally, ELs’ ability to outperform non-ELs academically was highlighted. With regard to this, another school board member explained “the great thing that we see is that kids who do develop that English proficiency along with their home language proficiency they do better overall than kids who are monolingual once they've gotten to that place...”

Triggering Mechanisms

Office of Civil Rights. In 2001, Michael Clára, a Salt Lake City resident who was later elected as a school board member, filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) regarding the inadequacies in EL education in the SLCSd. The

complaint stemmed from Clára's observations at his nephew's Junior High School when he realized that a group of Latino/a students were being segregated in one classroom while all the other students were switching classes. According to Clára, the principal explained that these students were in that particular class because they were Mexicans who did not speak English or pay taxes. Clára followed up by researching SLCSO's EL policies and services, attributing to the high EL dropout rate to a lack of services. After unsuccessful discussions with the superintendent, Clára filed the OCR complaint. Of this process, he shared the following:

Somebody told me about OCR and being a cop for ten years I know how to write a probable cause affidavit. So I did that and OCR from Denver, they physically showed up in two weeks...then told the district. 'Here are these allegations. Here is what you've got to start doing or we kick this over to the Justice Department and we'll take over the school district.' You lose \$50 million a year and so the district had to change everything.

As a result of the complaint, OCR completed five site visits and monitored SLCSO for eight years (Zehr, 2009). According to several of the interviewees and other documents, which admitted/revealed that ELs were insufficiently served within SLCSO, being under OCR compliance monitoring triggered extreme changes in the district for ELs

No Child Left Behind. Around the same time that the complaint was filed, the federal government's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was enacted. Many participants mentioned NCLB's as another triggering mechanism because of its requirement to disaggregate academic performance data by subgroups. According to one school board member, "It's kind of interesting, No Child Left Behind, which was a crappy law overall, you had you know wave the magic wand." He further explained that "It was helpful in that it told school districts 'Look. You got to stop just using aggregate data. We want you to parse your data and display it based on

things like race, socioeconomic status.’ As such, this data helped SLCSD board members and staff understand the academic disparities between ELs and non-ELs as well as other intersecting populations.

SLCSD School Board Actions and Policymaking

Reactions to triggering mechanisms.

Teacher endorsement requirement. Pressured by OCR to develop a plan that would meet ELs’ educational needs, SLCSD implemented a mandate for newly hired teachers to become officially endorsed to teach ELs in less than three years of their hire date. To support this effort, the district partnered with a local university to develop a program and committed funds toward subsidizing tuition costs for teachers. In addition to teacher training, SLCSD provided EL placement preparation for elementary principals (Zehr, 2009). However, existing teachers were not required to be endorsed for EL. A school board discussed this further in her statement below:

Older teachers, and we do have an older teaching core in Salt Lake District, were exempted from that requirement. Some of them have done it anyway, but many of them have still not taken the classes and then done the practicum for that to pass those courses to get that endorsement, and that's a challenge we're still working through.

The school board could require every teacher to be endorsed, but negotiations did not include that when the mandate was developed. However, as of a 2009, the number of EL endorsed teachers in SLCSD grew tremendously since 2001 at more than 560% from 97 to 644. In a newspaper article, SLCSD’s superintendent explained “it has been frustrating at times, however, to work with OCR officials because they are ‘mostly lawyers’ focused on compliance and not on students’ academic results” (p. 12). He pointed out that some non-endorsed, more experienced

teachers were effective EL instructors, and yet, were not allowed to teach ELs because of the OCR mandate.

English language development. Soon after the EL teaching endorsement was instituted, OCR reviewed the program. During interviews with teachers, OCR found that the endorsed teachers were still not qualified to properly instruct ELs. OCR and SLCSO discovered that the endorsement program was focused on teaching instructors about ELs rather than providing them with the skills to help ELs in their English language development (ELD). More specifically, OCR assessed district-level data on ELs and found that a significant portion of this population were not progressing in their language acquisition and became what is referred to as “lifers.” As a result, OCR mandated that SLCSO create a 45-minute block during the school day for ELs focused on language development. Furthermore, OCR expected SLCSO teachers to provide differentiated instruction aimed at the various levels of EL language acquisition. Although many teachers were resistant to the 45-minute block implementation, district officials including the school board, supported the changes.

E.L. Achieve. Following the 45-minute block mandate, SLCSO learned that teachers did not have quality curriculum to support instruction during this time. Elaborating on this in the following statement, a school board member described the implementation of a new program:

We realized that those ELD time periods that were carved out for kids which they were in the classroom with a teacher who was ESL endorsed, were not being perhaps used in the best way because there weren't materials. You know, what is ELD? What is English language development? Is it the same as reading? What kind of strategies do you use and what kinds of materials will really get kids to that academic proficiency with the English

language? So we adopted two years ago a new program after much consideration called E.L. Achieve.

As a significant financial investment, the adoption of E.L. Achieve required school board approval. At this time of the study, district data reflected improvement in terms of English proficiency. However, ELs' English proficiency is assessed annually at the end of the academic year and this assessment allows them to access different levels of instruction. This was a concern among interviewees because it meant that ELs might not be progressing as fast as they could if they were assessed more often throughout the school year.

Student achievement plan. According to the Salt Lake City Board of Education Handbook (2015), "Every five years the board approves a Student Achievement Plan to guide the work of the district in improving and supporting student learning" (p. 1). The plan highlights "eight essentials of a learning community" (p. 4). Among the essentials is "Equity and Advocacy" which is defined below:

District-wide practices, programs, policies, and procedures to provide all students with rigorous curriculum, safe learning environments, differentiated educational opportunities, and the resources necessary to achieve comparably high outcomes. Equity requires that educators develop skills, knowledge, and beliefs necessary to meet the needs of every student, with an emphasis on students of color, English learners, students in poverty, and students with disabilities. (p. 5).

The aim of this "essential" is ensure that educators are equipped to improve academic disparities for marginalized students. ELs are a target population in this "essential."

Within the 2010-2015 Student Achievement Plan, there are two to three annual goals related to "Equity and Advocacy" that include concrete steps, responsible persons, and

accountability measures. Each year, the responsible parties present a report to SLCSB board indicating the progress toward these goals. For instance, in year 2012-13 goal #6 was to increase achievement and close gaps through implementing World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards which target ELs. On January 22, 2013, six staff members from the Educational Equity Department presented the board with an update of their progress toward the 2012-13 goals. Regarding the implementation of the WIDA standards, staff explained what had been accomplished thus far and then shared the difficulties of identifying ample time to provide professional development related WIDA implementation because of other competing topics that also had to be covered during this time.

Overall, this plan outlined clear steps toward providing and improving EL education. Other areas of the plan addressed EL education through cultivating cultural relevancy and sensitivity as well as increasing family engagement. One of the unique factors of the plan is that each document, including the largest 27-page document, was also available in Spanish.

Equity leadership team. As of 2015, an Equity Leadership Team had been operating at a district-level for about six years. Data from interviews and documents suggest that this team has been very active and strategic in addressing equity issues at the district and school levels. The team adopted strategies such as equity audits, assessed data in terms of performance and placement in special programs among marginalized students, and developed/implemented training for staff. Two interviewees shared about the board's support to invite Edwin Lou Javius, an Ed Equity educational specialist, to complete audits of schools and classrooms. The team also utilized books such as *Courageous conversations about race* and *Using equity audits to create equitable and excellent schools* as well as adopted a leadership development model from the University of Virginia.

Community and family outreach. Many parents in SLCSD get involved in their children's schools through School Community Councils (SCC). Although interviewees pointed out that SCCs in Title I schools have less parental involvement than SCCs in non-Title I schools, this was one avenue that the district and state encourages family engagement. As such, a school board member shared that "I think we as a school district and as a school board truly have strived to be more accessible to parents." In addition to developing events like culture nights to attract non-White families, he also recalled his experience within the SCC relative to language:

I remember probably about 10/15 years ago I was a SCC chair at Bennion, maybe it was 20 years ago, SCC chair at Bennion Elementary with a lot of Hispanics. Because of the 190 kids that pulled out it ended up being like 75% minority. So I did a school community council meeting in Spanish and I'd do another one in English. We had over 30 parents who came and just that extra little effort of doing a school community council meeting in Spanish, without a translator.

Furthermore, SLCSD has made efforts to reach non-English speaking students, parents, and community members by delivering the district website, many official documents, and phone texts/emails in multiple languages. For instance, users of the SLCSD website can easily access it in over 70 languages. Among the interviewees, the desire to increase involvement among families of color was evident.

Beyond SCCs, there were several community-based organizations that the district had partnered with to facilitate parental and community engagement of students from various backgrounds. Among organizations discussed by interviewees and in school board meeting minutes were the Latino Parent Association, Latinos in Action (non-profit college preparation program) and the Adalente Program (a college awareness program that partners with the

University of Utah). Board reports and meetings revealed that these organizations were highly active in providing outreach to students and families as well as in providing professional development for teachers and staff in the district.

Summary

In terms of demographics, SLCSO is located in a slowly shifting state but rapidly changing metropolitan area. Furthermore, the district is operating in a cultural environment that values both frugality and inclusion. Within this context, ELs were heavily socially constructed as dependents. More specifically, this group was described as having insufficient resources and support (a lack of power), viewed empathetically (relatively positive), and were expected to assimilate (arguably burdensome policies and practices). ELs' status as dependents was further established by the fact that this group was essentially ignored until triggering mechanisms caused the SLCSO Board of Education to react by developing/supporting policies and practices that would address ELs. The nature of these policies and practices were influenced by contextual effects, social constructions, and triggering mechanisms.

The social constructions that emphasized assimilation, particularly focused on English language development, support policies such as the 45-minute block and the investment in E.L. Achieve both aimed at English immersion. Moreover, English immersion related policies/practices reflect dependent-based social constructions since these tend to be less resource intensive and are proven to be less beneficial for ELs than bilingual programs. Yet, the empathic view toward ELs resulted in justice-oriented efforts such as the work of the Equity Leadership Team and the "Equity and Advocacy" focus within the Strategic Plan.

Although most of the EL -related policies/practices in SLCSO aligned with social constructions, some also seemed to compete with pressures stemming from contextual effects

and triggering mechanisms. For instance, perhaps as a way combat insufficient state resources for ELs and capitalize on cultural influences that value family and community, SLCSD built capacity to address EL needs through community partnerships and family engagements efforts. Additionally, SLCSD faced conflicting pressures from the state and federal governments that centered on policies regarding dual language versus English immersion. More specifically, the state supported dual language programs focused narrowly on non-English language development aimed at fluent English speakers, whereas OCR required SLCSD to produce results that illustrated ELs' progression solely in their English language development.

Overall, none of these policymaking or bureaucratic entities at local, state, or federal levels fully supported research-based policies/practices that embrace ELs' potential to become fluently bilingual and bicultural, reflecting their status as dependents. Furthermore, it was largely the activism of one Latino/a community member, who was later elected to the school board, which translated into concrete policies and practices for ELs. This individual used his knowledge of institutional and systematic change to successfully navigate politics and bureaucracies in ways that brought about change for this dependent target population of ELs. Although the school board acknowledged the lack of authority and resources that confine its ability to fully meet EL needs, upon being triggered by activism and NCLB mandates, members of the SLCSD school board expressed and illustrated an obligation to achieve equity for ELs.

Cross Case Analysis

Contextual Effects

Similarities. All three school districts are considered urban school districts with “minority-majority” student populations. Demographically, more than half of these districts’ students qualify for free-or-reduced lunch and all have high Latino/a student enrollment ranging from 42% to 62%. Economically, while each of these districts experienced the effects of the Great Recession, they are also located in states with relatively less funding for education. In fact, in the 2011-12 academic year, Arizona (50th), Utah (49th), and Nevada (48th) were ranked among the nation’s three lowest in per pupil expenditures. However, these three states provided some funding toward ELs within the timeframe of this study. Finally, state-level policies influenced all three districts’ EL-related efforts to varying extents.

Differences. Although all three school districts are relatively larger in terms of student enrollment, CCSD was more than 80% bigger than SLCSO and TUSD. Also, CCSD had a relatively larger population of African American students at nearly 12% in 2013-14 compared to TUSD and SLCSO at 5% and 4%, respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b). Furthermore, TUSD and SLCSO were surrounded by neighboring school districts, whereas, CCSD is the only district within this metropolitan area. In terms of leadership, TUSD and CCSD experienced a fairly high superintendent turnover—hiring three different superintendents within the four-year timeframe of this study as opposed to SLCSO’s superintendent, who was hired in 2003 and remained throughout this study’s timeframe.

State laws impacting ELs existed in the three districts but were very different. Arizona’s laws were relatively prescriptive in terms of EL-specific education. Arizona also passed other laws targeting immigrants and TUSD’s curriculum, shifting the context significantly within

TUSD. Nevada officials also passed a set of laws directed at EL education that came with funding and were also fairly prescriptive, but only impacted only small portion of CCSD’s EL population. Utah’s only law that influenced EL education at the state level was regarding dual language programs, which similar to Nevada, only impacted a small portion of SLCSO’s EL population.

Other contrasting contextual effects were largely cultural and operational. In SLCSO, the LDS Church and the emphasis on community building/family engagement were significant contextual factors. The policy governance model influenced school board operations considerably in CCSD. In addition to state laws, the school desegregation lawsuit had a large impact on TUSD.

School Board Factors

Among the three school districts, similarities and differences existed in school board composition and other factors as shown in Table 8. Demographically, Caucasian school board members made up more than 50% on all the school boards, although the TUSD school board included almost half Latino/as. The TUSD school board also had more male members, whereas, SLCSO and CCSD had more females on the school boards. Two of the school boards received small financial compensations and CCSD had significantly more meetings throughout this study’s timeframe.

Table 8.
School Board Characteristics, 2010-2013

	% Caucasian Members	%Female Members	Financial Compensation	# of Meetings
CCSD	66%	66%	\$750/month	270
TUSD	55%	33%	\$0	87
SLCSO	83%	66%	\$3,000/year	162

Social Constructions of ELs

As shown in table 9 below, participants mentioned ELs as dependents more than 50% of the time in all three districts. However, in SLCSD, ELs were seen overwhelming as dependents (86%). In TUSD and CCSD, ELs were relatively more often constructed as deviants (20% and 23% respectively). TUSD perceived ELs as advantaged (17%) at the highest rate compared to the other two districts. CCSD's contender-based constructions (14%) of ELs was the most, as a percentage, relative to the other districts.

Table 9.

Percentages of Interviewee Descriptions of ELs as Socially Constructed Target Populations

	% Dependents	% Deviants	% Contenders	% Advantaged
CCSD	50	23	14	13
TUSD	58	20	17	5
SLCSD	86	7	4	3

Similarities. There were four similar themes of EL-related social constructions among the three school districts. The first theme was the empathy-based perceptions of ELs as dependents. In CCSD, while only occasional, these views tended to be of an altruistic nature in wanting to help ELs. Similarly, perceptions in SLCSD were sometimes expressed altruistically, but others communicated a sense of obligation. TUSD's perceptions of empathy were often related to immigrant experiences.

The perceptions that ELs were Latino/as and immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, and that they spoke Spanish, was another theme that emerged among these school districts. Throughout the interviews, many participants used language that identified ELs interchangeably with Latino/as and immigrants. Some participants also briefly mentioned diversity within the EL populations, acknowledging the existence of non-Latino/a and refugee populations, but these mentions were typically made as a side note.

The researcher even asked interviewees several follow up questions regarding non-Latino/a ELs, as such the involvement of Asian American, Native American, and/or refugee populations in EL services or community engagement related EL issues. For instance, of the Asian American community, one school board member explained, “I think they understand. They're not actively doing anything, but when we have the conversation they go ‘yeah you're right.’ You know they get it.” She went on to say “They actually are supportive of the Latin Chamber. So the Asian Chamber shows up at the Latin Chamber.” This participant pointed out that CCSD students speak over 149 languages. However, it is fairly clear from the comments above and other participant comments that EL issues are very much focused on Latino/as, or as one participant, said “ELLs much like immigration are seen as a brown issue.”

The third theme that emerged was the perceptions of insufficient resources for ELs. In SLCS and CCSD, the lack of resources in terms of funding and expertise was a significant issue. The school desegregation lawsuit directed substantial funding toward EL services in TUSD, therefore, limited resources were mostly due to a lack of qualified teachers for dual language programs.

Finally, all three school districts included at least minimal perceptions related to ELs as potential assets. At least one participant in all three districts recognized that ELs could possibly outperform non-ELs academically if they were provided particular tools to become academically bilingual. However, most participants did not share this perspective in the interviews.

Differences. Interestingly, the differences in ELs as social constructions among the three school districts emerged from the similarities in many ways. Though interviewees in all three school districts viewed ELs as a population that must be attended to, CCSD’s focus on ELs was investment-driven. More specifically, participants used a language that signified the

commodification of ELs as a way to rationalize allocating resources to this group. As such, ELs were often seen as potential burdens or benefits depending on the level of investment. The view of ELs as contenders was another unique factor specific to CCSD. This contender view emerged mainly from African American community members who were concerned about resources and attention shifting away from African American students to ELs. These perceptions were perpetuated among school board members.

In SLCSO, participants' focus on ELs was distinguished by expressions of moral imperative toward serving ELs and improving EL education. This obligation ranged from a compassionate response to an equity-focused one. Also, participants illustrated a desire to identify and diminish any discrimination that ELs experienced within the district. Finally, sentiments existed reflecting an open-mindedness toward differences that aligned with ELs as a unique element among SLCSO interviewees.

Although a focus on equity was also heavily present within TUSD perceptions, it was among a smaller portion of participants. Social constructions of ELs were noticeably more divisive and territorial. Furthermore, participants emphasized the anti-immigrant and racist climate within the TUSD area that may have impacted EL policies/practices. However, TUSD interviewees suggested relatively more expertise and confidence in educating ELs, whereas participants in other cases lacked knowledge and tools for improving EL education.

Triggering Mechanisms

The triggering mechanisms within the three school districts, with the exception of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in SLCSO, were all community-driven at the local level. Additionally, these community-driven efforts were heavily Latino/a-based. Differing slightly in

CCSD, efforts were also made by the African American community, and in TUSD, one White individual who was labeled “progressive” was part of the triggering mechanism.

Though all of these triggering mechanism were similarly rooted as being community-driven, they transpired differently. Community organizing by way of community-based organizations was the center of CCSD’s triggering mechanism. In TUSD, individuals used political avenues to trigger change through school board elections. In SLCSD, one local resident used the federal accountability procedures (OCR complaints) that caused The Board to react. In all three districts, these community-driven efforts resulted in a Latino/a school board member being elected and/or appointed, all who were credited as leaders in improving EL education.

EL Policies/Practices

As for EL policies and practices, these three districts had fairly different approaches most likely caused by the varying contextual effects such as distinct state and federal pressures. However, developing a strategic plan that addressed EL issues was one similar practice among the three school boards. Yet, these plans were considerably different. TUSD’s five-year strategic plan was developed toward the end of this study’s timeframe. Relatively less focused on ELs, this plan included goals related to world languages and staff diversity. CCSD’s strategic plan developed in late 2013, but as an ongoing plan without a time span associated with it. Although the plan included a goal to eliminate academic disparities for ELs, there was a substantial focus on increasing literacy with an aim of expanding services beyond ELs. Finally, SLCSD’s five-year strategic plan appeared to be the most concrete in terms of goals, actions, accountability measures, and persons responsible for improving EL education.

Again, there was a wide variation of EL-related policies/practices among the three school districts. CCSD’s policies/practices consisted of committee work, research, position

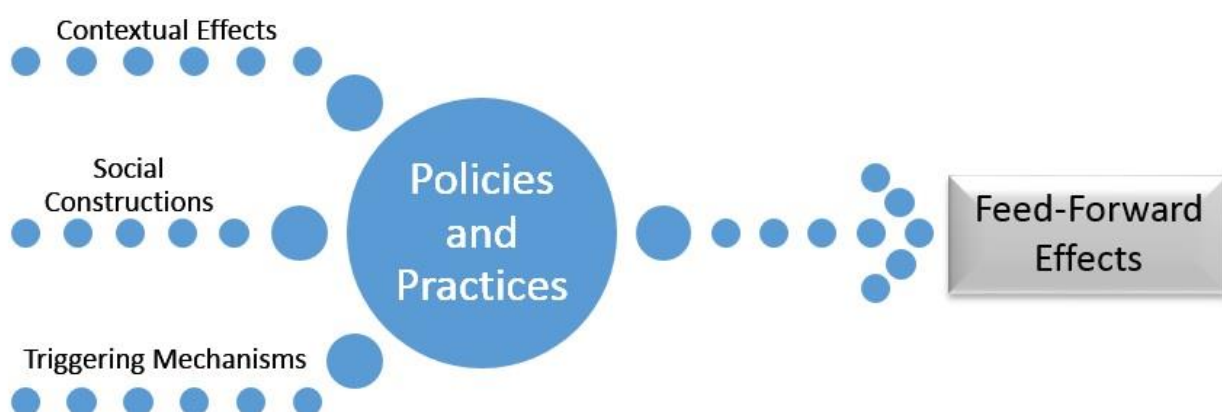
development, and an expansion of literacy services. EL efforts in TUSD were largely focused on circumventing state laws and dual language program development. In SLCSD, policies/practices were relative more tangible, including district-wide requirements for teachers, curriculum, and classroom time. SLCSD was also significantly involved in activities that promoted equity and community/family outreach.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The aim of this research was to understand what drives school boards to address policies/practices for ELs, one of the most vulnerable and growing student populations in the U.S. As shown in Figure 8, the results of this multiple case study show that school board level EL policies/practices are often influenced by a) contextual effects, b) social constructions, and c) triggering mechanisms. While the *contextual effects* of school districts and *social constructions* of ELs influenced the types of policies/practices developed, these were not usually initiated without the presence of *triggering mechanisms*.

Figure 8.

Analytical Generalization: Processes that Affects School Board Policies/Practices



Contextual Effects

Findings from this study underscore the significance of contextual effects on the ability of school boards to address EL policies/practices. Indeed, as the existing literature indicates, these contexts include the complex and changing political, economic, and social environments. Interestingly, much of the literature on educational politics seem to focus on federal-level influences. Yet, in these cases, state-level politics, particularly in TUSD, were equally or more influential. Furthermore, states' economic situations seemed to have direct impacts on EL policies/practices at the local level. Finally, demographic shifts in student populations toward

increasing numbers of students of color and ELs were frequently discussed as signals of future changes within school districts.

Within the contexts of these cases, school boards' level of authority and influence were fairly limited. Not only do school boards operate with tight budgets, which are largely state-allocated, these entities are also required to meet state and federal standards. Another constraint that school boards experience is the bureaucracy within the local school district, an aspect that appears to be rarely discussed in the literature. Although school boards often oversee school districts, this research suggests that board members struggle to execute power. In fact, local school district staff seemed to work hard at ensuring that school board members remained neutral, maintained distance from the day-to-day policies/practices within the district, and focused narrowly on "macro-level" issues. Anything other than this appeared to cause a great deal of tension and animosity between staff and board members. Given these constraints, it is not surprising that school boards initiated only a handful of EL-related policies/practices in these cases.

Although school boards were often constrained, this study supports research indicating Latino/a school board members positively influence policies/practices that favor Latino/a students (Meier, Juenke, Wrinkle, & Polinard, 2005). In these cases, Latino/a board members also impacted the agenda for EL students in a seemingly positive manner. Specifically, these board members voiced concerns, requested information, garnered community support, and lobbied other policy subsystems on equity-related issues regarding ELs. While these members were usually effective in gaining support for EL issues, the extent of their effectiveness was limited because of their rare existence on school boards, with the exception of TUSD. Moreover,

even with the inclusion of TUSD, none of these school boards were racially reflective of the student enrollment in the districts they represented.

Representation and Democracy

This calls to question issues of representation and democracy. More specifically, this research suggests that the racial/ethnic background of school board members might influence the level of democratic representation they provide for EL populations. Yet, Latino/a school board candidates were unelectable in some cases and did not pursue these positions in other cases. Interviewee speculations over why indicated that voters' racially discriminated against Latino/a candidates. Other study participants shared the difficulty of 1) convincing Latino/a individuals to run for school board seats, and 2) maintaining a school board member seat as a Latino/a. Both of these difficulties stemmed from the fact that school boards tend to require an enormous time commitment with little to no compensation. That said, most of the school board members' economic and social situations afforded them necessary flexibility and autonomy to commit to these positions. These members were also mostly White, middle to upper-class, formally educated, and many did not work full-time and/or traditional 8:00 am-5:00 pm jobs. Unlike their White counterparts, this research suggests that Latino/as were less likely to have the capacity to run and maintain an elected school board position. Therefore, the reliance on Latino/a school board members to represent and advocate for EL populations may be futile.

Social Constructions and Education

The issues of representation and democracy are further problematized when considering the larger target population of school board policies/practices. Although school boards represent taxpayers who fund education, these entities are serving children. As such, school boards are one of the few elected bodies that serve a sole constituency that, for the most part, lack the ability

to vote. Moreover, children tend to always be categorized as dependents within the social construction framework because they have very little power/resources but are normally viewed in a positive manner. Hence, the gap between those who school boards serve—children—and those who hold school boards accountable—voters—suggest that school boards, intentionally or unintentionally, deliver burdensome policies to children. One board member pointed out the significant effort required to remain focused on children in the midst of school board politics:

I'll say this. The majority of our work Carrie is dealing with adult problems. Very much energy that we put into, and even the superintendent, is all about putting out fires between adults to where at some point it's like 'Come on adults. Get it together so we can focus on these babies that shouldn't have to wait for us to get along or decide what works while we're losing them. They're going to jail. They're being impoverished. They're continuing what we don't want to continue to be a productive society and everybody will benefit.'

This study also provides a unique examination of educational and local-level policy, two areas that have rarely applied the social construction framework. Among the social construction studies Jonathan Pierce, et. al. (2014) reviewed, only 6% and 12% examined local and state level policies, respectively. Also, only 7% focused on education.

Hence, this study could arguably build on the social construction theory in three ways. First, the social construction theory might benefit from a revised framework that considers policymakers such as school board members whose policies impact children as dependents. This revised version could account for the various characteristics that distinguish target populations of children (e.g., ELs, low-income, gifted and talented, etc.) within a dependency

category to more effectively evaluate the unique policy burdens and benefits that children receive that are influenced by these characteristics.

Secondly, a revised framework might also allow scholars to analyze how children, as recipients of policy/practices without the power to vote, enact democracy that represents their needs and desires within educational politics at the district-level. Research on youth-oriented activism and organizing in education is increasing, and both educational and policies scholars alike might find value in a more nuanced model of social construction theory.

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Triggering Mechanisms in Local Politics

Finally, the use of triggering mechanisms as a concept combined with the social construction theory might be particular useful in understanding policy development at the local-level. At the federal-level, scholars of the social construction theory speculate that specific rationalizations would heavily influence education-related efforts. More specifically, these scholars believe that garnering national-level support for education is difficult because policymakers use rationalizations heavily focused on “justice-oriented” reasoning that promotes equality rather than economic-based reasoning that promote “instrumental goals” such as competitive advantages (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, p. 340). They claim that “the values of American society simply seem to favor instrumental goals over justice-oriented goals” (p. 340).

In this research, school boards promoted both. The CCSD school board used economic language to rationalize the board's investment in ELs, whereas, in SLCSD and TUSD, the school boards used equity-based rationalizations. From a policy/practice lens, SLCSD and TUSD appear to be doing more for ELs; however, these districts also had more federal and state requirements to adhere to. In CCSD, perhaps the use of an economic justification for ELs helped trigger the African Americans' involvement because it signaled the possibility of a shift in resources from African American children to EL children.

Regardless of the rationales used by school boards, whether economic or justice-oriented, this research shows that policy/practices resulted largely from triggering mechanisms. In other words, the justifications did not really matter. Instead, local communities demanded that school boards pay attention to ELs through the use of community organizing, navigating policy subsystems, and elections.

Interestingly, the most concrete policies/practices that seemed to serve ELs best were in the SLCSD. Two factors might have influenced this. First, the triggering mechanism resulted in federal pressure that cause the school board to react. In this way, SLCSD was similar to many other local school districts that historically failed to serve marginalized students until required by federal pressure such as those related to school desegregation and special education. Also, SLCSD's perceptions of ELs were almost all dependent-based (86%) which meant that fewer negative views of this population existed compared with their counterparts in CCSD and TUSD. Consequently, school board reactions were relatively more equity-based and substantial. SLCSD participants expressed a true commitment on behalf of the school board to improving EL education and followed this commitment with action.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is focused on school boards with respect to EL policies and practices. Understanding school boards in their current context requires an in-depth investigation, but the dissertation is limited by time and resources. I chose to focus on EL students because of the diversity that exists within this group as well as their growing population in schools across the nation, providing both a unique perspective but also one that could contribute to the broader knowledge on educational equity and opportunities for all children. Additionally, this research was only conducted in three school districts in one region limiting the ability to make broad statistical generalizations. However, conducting more than one case study allowed for replication logic and increased the ability to develop analytical generalizations based on the results (Yin, 2009).

Future Research

The social construction theory acknowledges feed forward effects of policy design (see Figure 8.). This accounts for the consequences of burdens and benefits that target populations receive from policies, including the internalization of these. Given the struggles school boards experienced in identifying and developing effective policy and practices for ELs in this study, it could be valuable to understand the feed forward effects of these as either burdens or benefits on EL education as well as ELs as a target population.

This research illustrates the variation to which state-level contextual effects influence EL policies/practices. Using a similar research model, an examination of school boards within the same state environments, but that govern school districts varying in size, composition, and structure could add to our understanding of school board politics significantly. Similarly, analyzing how school boards address other equity-related policies/practices that target different

populations might provide more insight regarding the willingness and ability of school boards to promote equity. Finally, research that digs deeper into how local communities influence school districts via school boards could enhance our knowledge about the reach of local politics within education.

Appendices

Appendix A. Sample Email

Dear (school board member's name),

My name is Carrie Sampson and I am a doctoral student at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I'm reaching out to you because as a school board member you play an important role in the education process.

My dissertation research is on school boards and how they develop and address policies. More broadly, I'm interested in exploring the role of school boards in education at a time when local school districts are operating under increasing state and federal standards connected to high-stakes accountability policies. My hope is to build on the limited existing research on school boards with respect to selected student populations.

I would like to conduct a personal interview with you lasting from 45 minutes to one hour. The intent of the interview is to gather information regarding your perspective and experience related to your school board in (city and state).

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in an interview by responding to this email. If so, could you please indicate the dates of your availability during (month and year) in your response?

Your participation in this research will be greatly appreciated and I believe that it will add significant value to the understanding of school boards. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carrie Sampson
Ph.D. Candidate, Public Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
carrie.sampson@unlv.edu
(315) 480-8661

Dear (school district executive's name),

My name is Carrie Sampson and I am a doctoral student at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I'm reaching out to you because as a school district official you play an important role in the education process.

My dissertation research is on school boards and how they develop and address policies. More broadly, I'm interested in exploring the role of school boards in education at a time when local school districts are operating under increasing state and federal standards connected to high-stakes accountability policies. My hope is to build on the limited existing research on school boards with respect to selected student populations.

I would like to conduct a personal interview with you lasting from 45 minutes to one hour. The intent of the interview is to gather information regarding your perspective and experience related to the (school district name) school board. Information from this interview will be used for background purposes only and will be off the record.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in an interview by responding to this email. If so, could you please indicate the dates of your availability during (month and year) in your response?

Your participation in this research will be greatly appreciated and I believe that it will add significant value to the understanding of school boards. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carrie Sampson
Ph.D. Candidate, Public Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
carrie.sampson@unlv.edu
(315) 480-8661

Dear (community stakeholder's name),

My name is Carrie Sampson and I am a doctoral student at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I'm reaching out to you because you have been identified as a key stakeholder in education within the (school district).

My dissertation research is on school boards and how they develop and address policies for English language learner students at the local school district level. My hope is to build on the limited existing research on school boards with respect to underrepresented students. More broadly, I'm interested in exploring the role of school boards in education at a time when local school districts are operating under increasing state and federal standards connected to high-stakes accountability policies.

I would like to conduct a personal interview with you lasting from 45 minutes to one hour. The intent of the interview is to gather information regarding your perspective and experience related to the (school district name) school board.

Please let me know if you are willing to participate in an interview by responding to this email. If so, could you please indicate the dates of your availability during (month and year) in your response?

Your participation in this research will be greatly appreciated and I believe that it will add significant value to the understanding of school boards. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carrie Sampson
Ph.D. Candidate, Public Affairs
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carrie.sampson@unlv.edu
(315) 480-8661

Appendix B. Interview Protocol

Questions for school district officials

1. What do you see are the major responsibilities of the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board?
2. What is the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board's philosophy and vision related to educating English Language Learners in this school district?
 - a. What's the role of the board in carrying out this philosophy and vision?
 - b. How has that impacted how way the school district addresses ELLs?
 - c. How has the philosophy and vision changed in the last 10 years (given school district and school board changes as well as NCLB), and why?
 - d. What are examples of the school board making decisions that reflect their philosophy and vision?
 - i. What were the challenges in making these decisions?
 - ii. Was the board unanimous?
3. What have been the points of agreement and/or disagreement between the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school boards members in addressing English Language Learners?
4. What are the factors that influence how the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board make decisions with regard to English Language Learners?
5. Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to curriculum? Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to ELLs? (Specialize or pay attention to).
6. What are the challenges that the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board face in addressing English Language Learners?
7. ADD questions clarifying evidence found in documents collected (i.e., how and why the school board develop specific policies, practices, or decisions).
8. Will you please tell me a little about yourself, including your background and why you decided to work as a (superintendent or deputy superintendent)?

Questions for school board members

1. What do you see are the major responsibilities of the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board?
2. What is the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board's philosophy and vision related to educating English Language Learners in this school district?
 - a. What's the role of the board in carrying out this philosophy and vision?
 - b. How has that impacted how way the school district addresses ELLs?
 - c. How has the philosophy and vision changed in the last 10 years (given school district and school board changes as well as NCLB), and why?

- d. What are examples of the school board making decisions that reflect their philosophy and vision?
 - i. What were the challenges in making these decisions?
 - ii. Was the board unanimous?
3. What have been the points of agreement and/or disagreement between the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school boards members in addressing English Language Learners?
4. What are the factors that influence how the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board make decisions with regard to English Language Learners?
5. Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to curriculum? Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to ELLs? (Specialize or pay attention to).
6. What are the challenges that the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board faces in addressing English Language Learners?
7. What is the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board's vision for English Language Learners?
 - a. How does the school board plan to implement this vision?
8. ADD questions clarifying evidence found in documents collected (i.e., how and why the school board develop specific policies, practices, or decisions).
9. Will you please tell me a little about yourself, including your background and why you decided to run for the school board in (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD)?

Questions for ELL community advocate

1. **How has the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board addressed ELs in the district?**
2. **What role does the community have in shaping the agenda for ELL students in the district?**
 - a. **What is the school board's reaction to the community?**
3. What is the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board's philosophy and vision related to educating English Language Learners in this school district?
 - a. What's the role of the board in carrying out this philosophy and vision?
 - b. How has that impacted how way the school district addresses ELLs?
 - c. How has the philosophy and vision changed in the last 10 years (given school district and school board changes as well as NCLB), and why?
 - d. What are examples of the school board making decisions that reflect their philosophy and vision?
 - i. What were the challenges in making these decisions?
 - ii. Was the board unanimous?
4. What have been the points of agreement and/or disagreement between the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school boards members in addressing English Language Learners?
5. What are the factors that influence how the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board make decisions with regard to English Language Learners?
6. Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to curriculum? Who are the leaders on the SB when it comes to ELLs? (Specialize or pay attention to).
7. What are the challenges that the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board faces in addressing English Language Learners?
8. What is the (TUSD, CCSD, or SLCSD) school board's vision for English Language Learners?
 - a. How does the school board plan to implement this vision?

9. ADD questions clarifying evidence found in documents collected (i.e., how and why the school board develop specific policies, practices, or decisions).
10. Will you please tell me a little about yourself, including your background and your involvement in ELL education?

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Curriculum Vitae

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4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 454030, Las Vegas, NV 89154-4030
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scarrie81@gmail.com

EDUCATION

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| May 2016 | Ph.D., School of Environmental and Public Affairs
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Dissertation: Expanding Educational Opportunity and Equity for English Learners: The Role and Perceptions of School Boards in the Mountain West
Co-Advisors: Dr. Sonya Douglass Horsford and Dr. Lee Bernick |
| 2013 | Graduate Certificate, Department of Women's Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Capstone: "A Different Kind of Education": Exploring the League of Women Voters' Struggle for Equal Education |
| 2007 | M.S., Department of Cultural Foundations of Education
Syracuse University
Thesis: Perspectives of Smartness Among Students of Color: Exploring the Social Construction of Smartness
Advisor: Dr. Sari Biklen |
| 2004 | B.S. <i>with distinction</i> , Department of Economics
University of Nevada, Reno |

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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| 2015-present | Online Education Instructional Designer
Online Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas |
| 2014-2015 | Research Assistant, Lincy Institute funded project: Cost Function Analysis of State of Nevada Elementary and Secondary School Finance System
Principal investigator: Anna Lukemeyer, Ph.D., J.D.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas |
| 2011-2014 | Graduate Assistant under Senior Resident Scholar of Education
The Lincy Institute at University of Nevada, Las Vegas |

2009- 2012 Research Assistant, Spencer Grant funded project: History of School Desegregation in Southern Nevada
Principal investigator: Dr. Sonya Douglass Horsford
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Sampson, C. (Accepted with minor revisions). The League of Women Voters and education reform: Intersectional identities and community organizing. *The Urban Review*.

Horsford, S.D. & **Sampson, C.** (2014). Promise Neighborhoods: The promise and politics of community capacity building as urban school reform. *Urban Education*, 49 (1).

Horsford, S.D. **Sampson, C.**, & Forletta, F.M. (2013). School resegregation in the Mississippi of the West: Community counternarratives on the return to neighborhood schools in Las Vegas, 1968-1994. *Teachers College Record*, 115 (11).

Book Chapters

Sampson, C. (Accepted for publication). The joy and misery of caretaking: Nursing family while striving to finish. In McKee, K. & Delgado, D. A. (Eds), *Don't Air the Dirty Laundry: Reflections of Women of Color on Graduate School*.

Sampson, C. & Horsford, S. D. (2015). Beyond legal remedies: Toward funding equity and improved educational opportunities for English language learners. In Bon, S., Brady, K., Miksch, K., & Sun, J. C. (Eds.), *Law & Educational Inequality: Removing Barriers to Educational Opportunities*. North Carolina, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Policy and Technical Reports

Horsford, S.D. & **Sampson, C.** (2013, May). The Las Vegas Promise Neighborhood: A comprehensive approach to improving educational opportunities and outcomes. The Lincy Institute at UNLV. University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Horsford, S.D., Mokhtar, C. & **Sampson, C.** (2013, March). Nevada's English language learner population: A review of enrollment, outcomes, and opportunities. The Lincy Institute at UNLV, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Other Publications

Horsford, S. D., & **Sampson, C.** (2013). Spotlight: The sixth grade centers. *Documenting the African American experience. A project of the UNLV university libraries*. Found at <http://digital.library.unlv.edu/aae/sixth-grade-centers>

Horsford, S. D., & **Sampson, C.** (2013, Summer). Expanding equity and opportunity for English Language Learners: A look at funding in high growth ELL states. *Voices in Urban Education*. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Sampson, C. (2012). Book Review of Chibnik, Michael (2011). *Anthropology, Economics, and Choice*. Austin: University of Texas Press. *International Social Science Review*, 2012, Vol, 87, Issue 3.

Sampson, C. (2010). Book Review: Gordillo, Luz María (2010). *Mexican Women and the Other Side of Immigration: Engendering transnational ties*. Austin: University of Texas Press. *International Social Science Review*, 2011, Vol. 86, Issue 3.

Publications submitted for review or in progress

Horsford, S. D., & **Sampson, C.** (in progress). The education leader as Politician: Navigating the superintendency in an era of high-stakes accountability and reform.

Sampson, C. & Kellog, L. (in progress). Constructing multicultural education through policy: A response to Mexican-American studies in Arizona

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Conference Presentations

Sampson, C. (April 2016). *School Boards' Approach to Policymaking for English Learners in the U.S. Mountain West*. Paper presented at the 2016 American Educational Research Association National Conference, Chicago, IL.

Horsford, S.D. & **Sampson, C.** (November 2014). *White Women, Black Students, and School Desegregation: Transcultural Encounters and Advocacy Leadership in the West*. Paper presented at the 2015 University Council for Educational Administration Convention

Horsford, S.D. & **Sampson, C.** (April 2015). *Here comes the neighborhood: The promise and politics of community-based education reform*. Paper presented at the 2015 American Educational Research Association National Conference, Chicago, IL.

Sampson, C. (November 2014). *A school boards' evolving role in civil rights: From school desegregation to educational opportunities for linguistic minorities*. Paper presented at the 2014 University Council for Educational Administration Convention

Horsford, S.D. & **Sampson, C.** (November 2014). *Here comes the neighborhood: The promise and politics of community-based education reform*. Paper presented at the 2014 University Council for Educational Administration Convention

- Sampson, C. (July 2014). *Reclaiming and embracing identities: An examination of school boards and emerging bilingual policies and practices*. Paper presented at the 2014 MALCS Summer Institute, El Rito, NM.
- Sampson, C. (April 2014). *Expanding educational opportunity and equity for English language learners: The role and perceptions of school boards in the mountain west*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association National Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Horsford, S.D., Mokhtar, C. & **Sampson, C.** (April 2014). *The opportunity to lead: Expanding opportunity and equity for English language learners in high-ELL-growth states and districts*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association National Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Sampson, C. (April 2014). *A different kind of education: Exploring the League of Women Voters struggle for equal education in Las Vegas*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association National Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Sampson, C. (March 2013). *A different kind of education: Exploring the League of Women Voters struggle for equal education in Las Vegas*. Paper presented at the UNLV Graduate College and Graduate Student and Professional Association Research Forum. Las Vegas, NV.
- Sampson, C. (April 2012). *The impact of school board decisions: An assessment of an elected school board's approach to equity-oriented reform*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association National Conference, Vancouver, BC.
- Sampson, C. (March 2012). *Who's the author and authority: The value of doing research from your own standpoint*. Paper accepted for competition at the National Black Graduate Student Association Conference. Philadelphia, PA.
- Sampson, C. (October 2011). *Stop re-writing our story! Moving into a space of resistance*. Paper presented at the National Women's Studies Association Conference. Atlanta, GA.
- Sampson, C. McNair, S., & Hernandez, C. (October 2010). *The Black/Brown divide: Building coalitions toward racial justice*. Presented at Living Without Borders Conference. Las Vegas, NV.
- Sampson, C. (March 2008). *Smart=White? Redefining smartness as a social construction*. Paper presented at Association of College Personnel Administrators National Conference. Atlanta, GA.
- Sampson, C. & Duah-Agyeman, J. (November 2005). *Establishing & Maintaining MUFP on Your Campus*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Regional Conference. Philadelphia, PA.

Invited Presentations and Panels

- “Investing in Our Children’s Future: Adequacy Studies and K-12 Education in Nevada” *Co Presenter*. Lincy Institute Community Forum, Las Vegas. 2015.
- “Expanding Educational Opportunity and Equity For English Language Learners: The Role and Perceptions of School Boards in the Mountain West” *Presenter*. Promising Scholarship in Education: Dissertation Fellows and Their Research at the American Educational Research Association National Conference, Chicago. 2015.
- “Black Lives Matter” Black and Brown Solidarity Teach-In. *Presenter*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2015
- “Campus Sexual Assault Film Screening and Student Panel Discussion” Take Back the Night, *Panelist*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2014.
- “Expanding Educational Equity and Opportunity: School desegregation, English language learners, and school boards in the Mountain West” *Featured Presenter*. Graduate Scholars & Scientists: A Celebration of Graduate Student Research. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2014.
- “Poverty & Educational Outcomes in Southern Nevada” *Co-Presenter*. I Have a Dream, Southern Nevada Foundation. Las Vegas, NV. 2014.
- “Nevada’s English language learners: Implications for Adult ELLs” *Speaker*. Nevada Leadership Excellence Academy and the Adult Basic Education Department Quarterly Meeting. Las Vegas, NV. 2013.
- “Expanding Educational Equity and Opportunity for English Language Learners” *Guest Lecturer*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2013.
- “African Americans in Las Vegas” *Guest Lecturer*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2013.
- “UNLV TV Elections Night: Education Issues” *Panelist*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2012.
- “Cultural Perceptions” *Guest Lecturer* in the following courses: Introduction to Leadership, Leadership Experience, First-Year Experience. Greek Leadership Day. The Center Academic Enrichment and Outreach. University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2012, 2010, 2009.
- “Why Diversity?” *Speaker*. National Education for Women’s Leadership Summer Program. University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2010.
- “U/W Curve: Transition and Change” *Guest Lecturer*. Leadership Experience. University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2009.

“Iceberg Theory” *Guest Lecturer*. Leadership Experience. University of Nevada, Las Vegas 2009.

“Diversity in the Asian Community” *Keynote Speaker*. Raising Our Asian Rights Conference. University of Nevada, Las Vegas. 2008.

“Diversity in Curriculum Rally” *Speaker*. University of Nevada, Reno. 2002.

“Freedom of Speech” *Panelist*. University Dialogue. University of Nevada, Reno. 2001.

“Diversity in Curriculum” *Panelist*. University Conference. University of Nevada, Reno. 2002 & 2001.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Fellowships/Scholarships

National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship Program, Semi-finalist (2016 17, application withdrawn)

UNLV Foundation Board of Trustees Dissertation Fellowship, Recipient, \$60,000 (2014-2016).

AERA Minority Dissertation Fellowship Travel Awardee, \$1,000 (2014-15).

Ford Foundation Fellowship Dissertation, Alternate and Honorable Mention (2014).

Hispanic Scholarship Fund/United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation Scholarship (2014-2015).

Hispanic Scholarship Fund, Anheuser Busch Companies-Vicente Fernandez Tour Award (2012 2013).

Patricia J. Sastaunik Scholarship, Recipient (2013, 2012, and 2011).

Patricia J. Sastaunik Scholarship, Recipient (2011).

Awards & Recognition

UNLV Rebel Grad Slam Semi-Finalist (2015).

UNLV Graduate College and Graduate Student and Professional Association Research Forum Social Science Poster Social Science and Law Session: A, Honorable Mention, (2015).

UNLV College of Liberal Arts Honors Convocation, Certificate of Recognition, Recipient (2013).

UNLV Graduate College and Graduate Student and Professional Association Research Forum
Social Science Platform, 2nd Place Winner (2013).

UNLV Alliance of Professionals of African Heritage (APAH) Thomas Wilson Community
Service Award, Recipient (2012).

The David L. Clark National Graduate Student Research Seminar in Educational Administration
& Policy, Scholar (2012).

UNLV *Native American* Convocation Ceremony Community Supporter Award Recipient (2010).

Student Leadership Program Knowledge Community Spotlight Series Winner (2009).

Program of the Year, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2009).

Community Development Value Award, Syracuse University (2005).

Grants

AERA Division G Travel Grant, Recipient (2014).

UNLV Graduate & Professional Student Association Conference Grants, Recipient,
approximately \$1,800, (2015, 2013, 2012, 2011).

UNLV Graduate & Professional Student Association Research Grant, Recipient, \$1,200 (2014).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Leadership as Social Change, The College of Education (co-developed)

Women's Studies: Race, Class, and Gender, The College of Liberal Arts

Policy for Public Administrators, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Research Methods for Public Administrators, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs (co-
developed online master course)

Introduction to Public Administration, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

First Year Seminar, Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Sierra Nevada College, Teacher Education

Understanding Community Leadership, Advanced Teaching & Leadership Master's Program

Syracuse University, College of Arts & Sciences, Latino-Latin American Studies Program

Living in a Diverse Society (teaching assistant)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research Summer

Program in Quantitative Methods for Social Research, University of Michigan, Courses: Regression II, Math II, Methodological Issues in Quantitative Research on Race and Ethnicity (Summer 2011).

Service

University and Profession

2013-Present	Reviewer, Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice
2013-Present	Member, UNLV Family Advocacy Committee
2013-Present	Member, UNLV Women's Council
2011-Present	Member, UNLV Black Graduate Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2015	Summer College Representative, UNLV Graduate & Professional Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2014-2015	Vice President, UNLV Black Graduate Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2014-2015	Member, UNLV Graduate College Curriculum Committee
2013-2015	Member, UNLV Minority-Serving Institution Taskforce
2014-2015	Department Representative, UNLV Graduate & Professional Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2014	Review, 2014 University Council for Educational Administration Convention
2013-2014	Member, Annual Students of African Heritage Awards Ceremony Graduation Celebration planning committee
2011-2012	President, UNLV Black Graduate Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2010-Present	Member, UNLV Black Graduate Student Association, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2011-2012	Member, UNLV GPSA Bylaws Committee, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2009-2010	Member, Leadership and Civic Engagement Minor Curriculum Review Committee University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2008-2010	Member, Vice-Presidential Diversity and Inclusion Committee, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2008-2010	Member, Student Affairs Diversity Training Committee, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007-2010	Member, Appreciate Inquiry Core Group Committee, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007-2009	Member, Student of Color Leadership Symposium Committee, University of Nevada Las Vegas
2007-2009	Member, AIDS Awareness Committee, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2007	Proposal Reviewer, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Conference
2006-2007	Member, Residential Director Search Committee, Ithaca College
2006-2007	Member, Professional Development Committee, Ithaca College
2006-2007	Member, Student Affairs Diversity Committee, Ithaca College
2006-2007	Member, Student Affairs Action for AIDS Committee, Ithaca College

2006-2007	Member, Umoja Students of Color Retreat Committee, Syracuse University
2003	Member, Counselor Coordinator Search Committee, University of Nevada Reno
2000-2001	Member, Core Curriculum Committee, University of Nevada Reno
2001-2002	Co-Chair, Presidential Ad-Hoc Diversification of Core Curriculum Committee Co-Chair, University of Nevada Reno

Community Involvement

2015-present	Board Member, Leaders in Training (college and career preparation program)
2014-present	Community Liaison & Grant Writer, Leaders in Training (college and career preparation program)
2013-present	Member, Latino Leadership Council (education committee member)
2011-2013	Volunteer and Speaker, Clark County School District PAYBAC Program
2012-2014	Member, Las Vegas Youth Safety Forum Committee
2012-2014	Member, Coalesce Clark County
2012-2014	Member, The African American Experience in Las Vegas Multimedia Library Project Advisory Committee
2011	Co-Chair, Shut Down the Strip for Education Demonstration
2010-2013	Board Member, Trendz Inc. Youth Organization
2010-2011	General Member and former Education Committee Member, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
2008-2010	Volunteer Mentor, Female Teen Group, Whitney Community Center, Las Vegas, NV

Other Relevant Training and Experience

Focus Group Facilitator

Facilitate focus groups for a research project entitled: “Social Capital and Health Inequities: Are the Poor Truly Poor in Every Way?”

Interviewer

Sanford Center for Aging, University of Nevada, Reno
Conducted phone interviews with Nevada residents on aging and dying.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Educational Research Association (Division A and L), Graduate Student Member
Association of Public & Policy and Management, *Graduate Student Member*
University Council for Educational Administration, Graduate Student Member
Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social, Graduate Student Member
National Women’s Studies Association, Graduate Student Member