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## A Model for Student Success: How Immigrant/First-Generation Teachers Use Cultural Identity and Experience in Pedagogical Practices with Immigrant/First-Generation Youth

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A MODEL FOR STUDENT SUCCESS: HOW IMMIGRANT/FIRST-GENERATION  
TEACHERS USE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE IN PEDAGOGICAL  
PRACTICES WITH IMMIGRANT/FIRST-GENERATION YOUTH

by

Lucie N. Bonneville

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for a Degree with Honors  
(International Affairs)

The Honors College

University of Maine

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify how immigrant/first-generation teacher populations in the United States apply their cultures and identities to the education of the immigrant/first-generation students that they teach. This study also aims to analyze the specific charter school management system, Ednovate, and how its innovative mission and model have led to its high rates of student success. Culture and identity are two significant factors in a student's educational experience, as the school system is a critical site for developing identity in children. In this study, eight members of faculty and staff from the Ednovate charter school system in Orange and Los Angeles counties were interviewed and asked to describe which parts of their immigrant experiences in the United States shaped their own educations and how these experiences and their own cultures in turn influence their respective teaching habits. With the growing number of immigrants in the United States, immigrant teachers make up a significant percentage of the teacher population and are some of the most profound influencers of a student's sense of identity and community belonging. Culture and education are closely related, as cultural transmission occurs in classrooms and schools, and schools can be important sites of cultural structures. The results of this study demonstrate that through the use of storytelling, celebrating culture in education, and cutting-edge educational models, schools can become centers of diversity, cultural appreciation, and student success.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes the ways in which immigrant and first-generation<sup>1</sup> teachers and educators apply their own immigrant experiences in the United States and their cultural identities when teaching immigrant/first-generation youth. According to Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) data, over eight percent of kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers in the United States are immigrants (Startz, 2017). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are an estimated 3.6 million full-time elementary and secondary school teachers in classrooms across the United States (“US Department of Education”, 2018). In other words, just under 300,000 of the teachers in classrooms in the United States are immigrants. Figure 1 shows that larger, more populated states such as Texas and California have higher percentages of immigrant teachers and could therefore face potential teacher supply shortages if no immigrant teachers were employed in their schools (Startz, 2017).

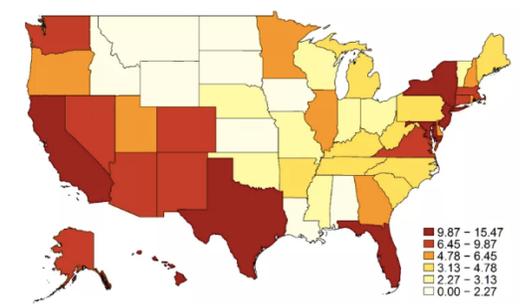


Figure 1: Percent of K-12 teachers who are Immigrants in the United States  
Source: Dick Startz/IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota

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<sup>1</sup> The term “first-generation” refers to any individual born in the United States of immigrant parentage. See Merriam-Webster

Furthermore, the largest nation contributing to the significant population of immigrant teachers in the United States is Mexico; nearly eighteen percent of the immigrant teacher population in the United States comes from Mexico (Startz, 2017). This demographic makeup of teachers in U.S. classrooms potentially plays a significant role in the relationships developed between students and teachers. The impact that immigrant teachers have on students likely reaches far beyond their physical presence in classrooms across the United States. This study aims to learn more about the possible influence that immigrant and first-generation teachers have on immigrant and first-generation students' construction of self-identity, sense of belonging in a school community and the measurable educational success of these students. There is a significant need for further research and development on this topic in order to understand and implement future policies that protect and encourage immigrants and first-generations to continue pursuing careers in elementary, secondary, and higher education. Given the growing number of newcomer students in the United States each year, the impact of those who share parallel or similar experiences may be crucial to building identity and ensuring student success. The next section will discuss the number of newcomers that reside in the United States and how certain challenges they face can impact access to education.

### Newcomers

According to the United States Department of Education, the term “newcomer” refers to “any foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States” (“US Department of Education”, 2016, p.1). Based on data from the Migration Policy Institute (2019), there are nearly 45 million immigrants in the United States to

date, making up nearly fifteen percent of the U.S. population. Figure 2 shows that there has been a significant increase in the number of children with at least one immigrant parent in the United States since the year 1990 (“Migration Policy Institute”, 2019).

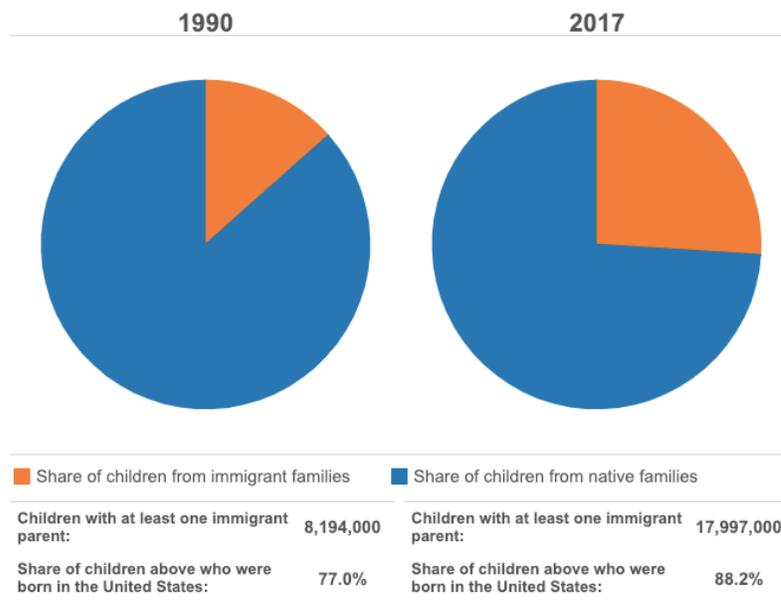
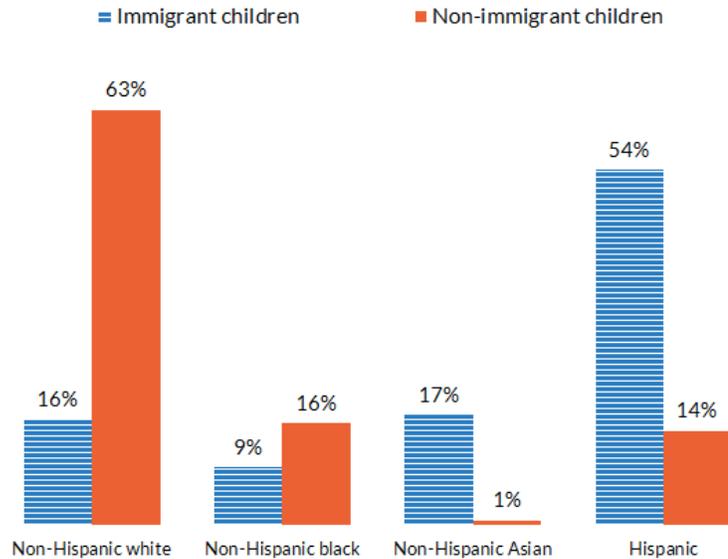


Figure 2: Number and Share of the Total U.S. Child Population, by Age Group and State  
Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI)

With nearly 18,000,000 children having one or more immigrant parents in 2017, the ethnic makeup of this population is an important factor when considering access to resources and education (“Migration Policy Institute”, 2019). Figure 3 shows that approximately 54% of immigrant children under the age of 18 in the United States come from Hispanic origin, which is higher than all other percentages of ethnic backgrounds combined (“Immigrant Children”, 2018).



*\* Immigrant children are those with at least one parent born outside of the United States. Non-immigrant children are children with both parents born in the United States or its territories.*

Figure 3: Percent of Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Children Under Age 18, by Race/Hispanic Origin, 2017  
Source: Child Trends

According to recent research, language proficiency in newcomers to the United States is among one of the most important factors when dealing with access to education, resources in schools, and communication with educators (Parker, S., Rubalcava, L., & Teruel, G., 2005). According to a 2014 U.S. Department of Education study (2016), nearly 50% of immigrants ages five and older were not proficient in the English language, while approximately 44% of those immigrants spoke Spanish as their first language. These language barriers affect the ability for both parents and students to communicate with educators within their school communities and to access important resources and tools. The next section will discuss a method of teaching known as subtractive schooling, and how these practices particularly impact marginalized students.

## Subtractive Schooling

As the number of non-English speaking newcomers to the United States has grown in recent history, new policies and educational practices have been implemented across the nation. In June 1998, the state of California passed Proposition 227, a bill that attempted to eradicate bilingual education (“Proposition 227”, 1998). The state’s proposition suggested two major requirements for California public schools: 1) “requires California public schools to teach Limited English Proficient (LEP) students in special classes that are taught nearly all in English. This would eliminate ‘bilingual’ classes in most cases.” and 2) “shortens the time most LEP students would stay in special classes.... this would eliminate most programs that provide special classes to LEP students over several years” (“Proposition 227”, 1998, para. 8). With Proposition 227 in place, Spanish-speaking newcomer students were no longer given access to a bilingual education and were instead forced into solely English classes (“Proposition 227”, 1998). Proponents of Proposition 227 argued that “bilingual education hinders language minority children’s ability to learn English and ultimately to succeed in society....” (Valenzuela, 2010, p. xv), defending the claim that immersing LEP students into fully English-speaking classrooms is the best way to learn the language. Supporters and implementers of this proposition therefore took away any further resources or opportunities for success for newcomer students; this educational practice is known as subtractive schooling. Subtractive schooling is a practice that subtracts cultural and educational resources from students based on ethnicity, immigrant status and income, and often does not acknowledge the issues within the education system but rather blames Latino cultural values for student failure, arguing that

education is not valued in Latino families (López, 2004). These cultural assumptions are known as “commonsense ideologies”; a way for “dominant groups to justify their policies and institutional practices” rather than reforming their own biased systems (López, 2004, p. 221). Besides making assumptions about students’ cultural traits and values, subtractive schooling is divisive in that it alienates students of different ethnic backgrounds and causes a rift between students and staff. As Angela Valenzuela (2010) states in her book *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* originally published in 1999, subtractive schooling “fractures students’ cultural and ethnic identities, creating social, linguistic, and cultural divisions among the students and between the students and the staff” (Valenzuela, 2010, p. 5). Subtractive schooling is a widespread practice that likely affects which students will succeed and which students will fail based on social status and ethnic background; its racist and classist methods of labeling student success have caused many Latino/Latina students to oppose the education system entirely (Valenzuela, 2010). As Valenzuela (2010) puts it, “they oppose a schooling process that disrespects them; they oppose not education, but *schooling*” (Valenzuela, 2010, p. 5). While educators that implement subtractive schooling make assumptions that Latino/Latina students do not succeed due to familial or cultural values, it is quite probable that the lack of resources, cultural assumptions, and a lack of caring on the teachers’ part causes a lack of educational success among Latino/Latina students in the United States (Valenzuela, 2010). The next section will explore the importance of developing identity and belonging in students, especially those of Chicano/a backgrounds.

### Developing Identity and Belonging in Chicano/a Students

Integral to student's educational experience is their ability to develop self-identity and a sense of belonging within their school community (Pizarro, 2005). This development of their individual identities is deeply influenced by the relationships that students build with their teachers, the interactions that they have with their peers, and their awareness of social divides. For Chicano/a students, identity and belonging are essential factors in their school experiences (Pizarro, 2005). Race and identity in youth determines many significant aspects of a student's education; perhaps most challenging is the dynamic that occurs when Chicano/a students are aware of the racial differences between themselves and their peers or figures of authority (Pizarro, 2005). A lack of cultural connection to their peers and teachers sets them apart from others, having "a significant impact on the connection that they make to their schooling" (Pizarro, 2005, p. 61). For many Chicano/a students, their identity in school is centered solely around their ethnicity and/or social class. As Marcos Pizarro (2005) states in his book *Chicanas and Chicanos in School*, "in most cases, students had to reorganize their sense of self, because who they are racially had become a critical part of who they are in the school" (Pizarro, 2005, p. 62). These racial confrontations in school create a gap among students and between students and their educators (Pizarro, 2005). Setting Chicano/a students apart from others and creating a divide between Chicano/a students and their teachers leads to the students believing that their identity relies primarily on their race and social status, therefore hindering their ability to achieve a sense of belonging in their school community (Pizarro, 2005). As Pizarro (2005) suggests in his book, "for many Chicana/o students, not only is identity a pivotal issue in their school experience, but it is also bound to their motivations in

school” (Pizarro, 2005, p. 62). The racial conflicts that Chicano/a students deal with on a day-to-day basis at school can be a reminder of the limited educational resources and opportunities available to them due to a biased assumption that Chicano/a students are not cut out to succeed in school. Because of this lack of support and racial confrontations from teachers and administrators, Chicano/a students often develop a “dramatic disinterest in school and subsequent failure” which becomes integrated into the students’ self-identities (Pizarro, 2005, p. 62). For all students, identity and belonging are two key factors when determining opportunity and success. For Chicano/a students, racial conflicts and preconceived assumptions from figures of authority create a lack of connection to schooling and an overall distance from the school community itself, leading to a higher rate of student failure among Chicano/a students. The next section will consider how these issues are combatted through educational practices geared towards cultural awareness and multicultural perspectives.

### Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

To move away from the schooling practices that associate student success with race and income, anthropologists and educators have developed pedagogies that focus on incorporating both students’ and teachers’ cultures into classroom curriculum and everyday teaching habits (Cunningham, 2001). In this particular context, the term *pedagogy* can be defined as “the choice of methods, materials, and content employed to create effective environments where learners can successfully encounter knowledge” (Cunningham, 2001, p. 85). One pedagogical theory that has been developed and implemented in schools is known as *culturally responsive pedagogy* or *culturally relevant pedagogy* (CRP). This is teaching that can be specifically geared towards

students of color or minority students wherein teachers and administrators aim to integrate the cultural contexts of their students into the practices that they employ daily (Ladson-Billings, 467). As stated in Eileen Cunningham's (2001) chapter titled *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, teachers who engage this theory are those who "wish to connect with and incorporate students' cultures, values, languages, and traditions into their strategies for teaching" (Cunningham, 2001, p. 85). Employing CRP in teaching praxes allows students and teachers to draw parallels between their classroom and personal experiences; it engages and acknowledges that heritage, background, values, and cultural contexts are relevant to a student's learning process, connection with educators, and ultimate schooling success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRP is equally the responsibility of the teacher as it is the learner and their families; understanding the challenges and experiences that one another faces and attempting to work together to adopt a multicultural perspective creates an equitable and reciprocal relationship that aims to eliminate a "cultural mismatch" between the students and the school (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 467). According to Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) article *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*, cultural compatibility in classrooms is a significant factor when measuring the rate of student success. While Ladson-Billings' (1995) work focuses primarily on the issues that African-American students face in the U.S. education system, her concepts can be applied to the broader context of minority students in general. She cites that teachers that use "interaction patterns that approximated the students' home cultural patterns" are more likely to improve the students' overall academic performances through incorporating culture and experience into their classroom curriculum and language (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 466). The notion that utilizing students' cultural

experiences and contexts improves academic performance stems from the issue of the impact of a lack of understanding and visibility from authority figures (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When students of color and minority status are taught by educators and administrators that do not share similar cultural experiences or values, cultural compatibility is unattainable; level of personal connection and interest in schooling decreases and students submit to the notion that students of color and minority are less likely to succeed academically (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When teachers and administrators employ CRP in their everyday teaching practices, they not only improve overall performance, but they also allow students' heritage to be celebrated in an educational environment while encouraging students to "challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). The next section will explain what charter schools are, how they have faced controversy in recent years, and the standards that charter schools often meet.

### Charter Schools

Recently in the United States, charter schools have been the subject of many discussions and controversies (Finn, C., Manno, B., & Vanourek, G., 2000). According to a *Columbia Law Review* article titled "The Constitutionality of Racial Balancing in Charter Schools", charter schools are "independent schools of choice that are publicly funded, freed from regulations governing traditional public schools, and contractually accountable for performance...." (Gajendragadkar, 2006, p.144). Opponents often claim that charter schools steal funds from the school district that they serve, do not have an adequate accountability system in place, and that they select only the "the most fortunate kids" to attend their schools while leaving the less privileged students behind (Finn et al.,

2000, p.157). Some opponents also claim that charter schools “balkanize” the U.S. education system by segregating and selecting students to attend their schools based on race and income (Finn et al., 2000, p.160). However, data shows that these claims have little truth to them. Figure 4 from the National Center for Education Statistics (2019) shows that in fact, charter schools tend to have a higher rate of ethnic diversity than traditional public schools in the United States.

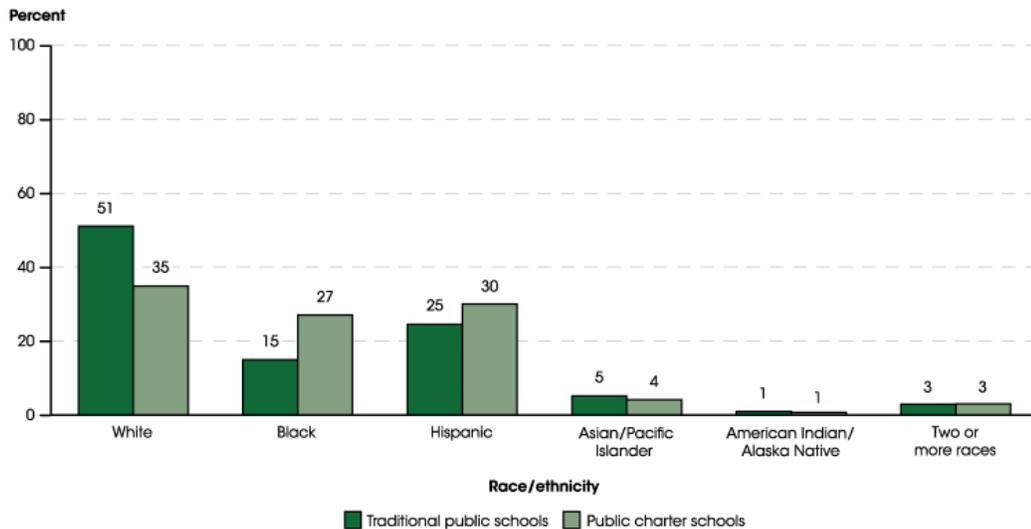


Figure 4: Percentage distribution of public-school students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade, by student race/ethnicity and traditional public or public charter school status: School year 2013–14  
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

In many cases, charter schools target underprivileged, at-risk, or low-income students to attend their schools; often these schools have been founded by community members, teachers, and parents seeking to aid populations of disadvantaged students in their communities (Gajendragadkar, 2006). The autonomy that charter schools have frees them from any bureaucratic regulations or pressures that traditional public schools must adhere to, giving teachers and administrators complete sovereignty to create and manipulate their individual curricula (Gajendragadkar, 2006). Because of the contractual accountability for performance that charter schools must follow, charters may be terminated if they fail

to achieve the level of performance promised in their contract (Gajendragadkar, 2006). This accountability drives charter schools to achieve high rates of student academic success while simultaneously promoting their individual visions or missions. Unlike most public schools in the United States, charter schools can have “internal coherence of program and community” while also outputting impressive academic results (Finn et al., 2000, p.163). Public schools however must follow the guidelines that school districts and boards create and have little to no freedom when creating curricula for their students. The autonomy of vision and curricula that charter schools allow gives teachers the freedom to incorporate things such as culture, experiences and backgrounds of students into their lesson plans and teaching praxes--all important considerations in the development of identity and the outcome of student success.

### Summary

The United States’ education system relies heavily on an influx of immigrant and first-generation teachers. The high volume of foreign-born teachers makes up hundreds of thousands of the teachers present in U.S. classrooms from kindergarten to twelfth grade (Startz, 2017). In parallel, the number of newcomer students in the United States has skyrocketed in recent years. Nearly 18,000,000 children living in the United States have one or more parents of immigrant status (“Migration Policy Institute, 2019); of this population, over half come from Hispanic backgrounds (“Immigrant Children”, 2018). Newcomer students arriving in the United States are faced with the challenges of navigating the U.S. education system with very few resources and often facing a language barrier (Parker et al., 2005). As studies have shown, certain schooling practices

implemented in the United States have been particularly difficult for newcomer and first-generation students (López, 2004). In California, laws such as Proposition 227 have been used to limit and eliminate bilingual schooling altogether, forcing mostly Spanish-speaking students to enter entirely English-speaking classrooms at a young age (“Proposition 227”, 1998). Limiting the necessary resources for students and their families in the school community is a schooling method known as subtractive schooling (López, 2004). Being denied appropriate resources and tools by educators because of linguistic or cultural background has had an incredible impact on the ways in which Chicano/Chicana students develop their sense of identity (Pizarro, 2005). According to Pizarro’s (2005) research, the school environment is one of the crucial sites of developing self-identity and belonging in a community. With their identity being defined solely by race and economic status, newcomer and first-generation students lack representation and connection to their teachers and administrators (Pizarro, 2005). This disconnect or mismatch often leads to a lack of student drive and motivation, ultimately leading to student failure in many cases (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In order to combat this systemic racism and classism in schooling practices, educators have employed the method of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in schools across the country (Cunningham, 2001). This schooling practice focuses on integrating the cultural traditions and practices of students into their classroom environments (Cunningham, 2001). Teachers and administrators then coordinate their curricula with the cultural agendas of the students that they serve, hoping to inspire educational success, motivation and celebrating heritage simultaneously (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In recent years, charter schools have surpassed district schools in cultural diversity and offer a unique autonomy to their staff in order to

create curricula that matches the students' overall needs ("Status and Trends", 2019).

This autonomy allows teachers to incorporate things such as culture and background into the lessons that they develop, which is crucial in helping develop identity and belonging in marginalized students. The following study aims to show the ways in which immigrant and first-generation educators can incorporate their personal stories and cultural identities in order to inspire immigrant and first-generation students in their classrooms, and how this ultimately leads to student success.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

This case study took place at three schools that are part of Ednovate, a charter school management company located in Southern California. The ethnic makeup of the student population is approximately 86% Latino, 10% Black, and 4% other. Nearly 85% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch. The participants in the study included 8 members of the staff and administration at Ednovate in Southern California recruited from three of the five schools in the charter management system (Legacy College Prep in Santa Ana, Esperanza College Prep in Los Angeles and USC Hybrid High in Los Angeles). The proposed number of participants was determined by the availability of the faculty during the summer months of the year. Three of the participants were male and five of the participants were female. The participant pool consisted of one Caucasian, five Mexican/Central Americans, one Middle Eastern, and one Filipino. All participants but one were either immigrants to the United States or first-generation Americans. All participants were citizens of the United States and had received college education in the United States. The participants were all between the ages of 20 and 40 years old. Three of the eight participants were members of the administrative faculty while the remaining five were teachers.

Participants were identified and recruited by an email containing a written proposal of the study being conducted, which was forwarded by the administration to the rest of the faculty and staff, seeking participation in a study focusing on immigrant teachers and their use of culture and identity. Participants interested in taking part in the study then contacted the principal researcher directly by email. Participation was voluntary; no compensation or benefits were given to participants who volunteered to be interviewed and participants were aware that they may choose to skip any questions during the interview process that they did not wish to answer.

### Measures

Before the research was conducted, appropriate Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) training was completed through the University of Maine system. An IRB application for research was filed, processed, and approved before research began (see Appendix A). Participants were then emailed and asked to choose a time and location of their preference for a one-on-one interview to be conducted. Upon arrival at the chosen interview location, participants were asked to read a consent form provided to them that disclosed information about the study, procedure, and anonymity of their responses to interview questions (see Appendix B). Before beginning the interview process, participants were asked to verbally agree to conditions in the consent form provided. Upon consent, the interviewer read the following brief statement:

Thank you for choosing to participate in this research project. The purpose of this study is to research the ways in which the educational system in the United States is influenced by the growing number of immigrant teachers in schools and to study the ways in which immigrant staff and faculty in schools use their culture/identity in their education. Your responses to questions will be kept

confidential, and your name will not be attached to any of the data. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may choose not to respond at any time. I will now be conducting a forty to sixty-minute audio-recorded interview that will be used for my research purposes. Do you have any questions before the interview begins?

To ensure the privacy of participants and the confidentiality of the data, no names were recorded or attached to any of the interview documents, and a random number label was assigned to each participant so as to not associate their names with any of the data. Responses to interview questions were kept private and were only accessible to the interviewer and advising faculty on this study.

#### Procedure

An email was sent to the vice principal of Legacy College Prep asking for their cooperation in this study and requesting that they email their colleagues within the Ednovate network for recruiting. After initially meeting with the vice principal and conducting a short interview with them, the principal investigator of this study was connected with seven other members of the Ednovate system. Meeting times and locations were chosen voluntarily by the participants. Once times and locations were chosen with each participant, interviews were conducted ranging between 30 and 60 minutes long. Responses were manually and audio-recorded by the interviewer and were then transcribed individually by hand. Results are based on the answers to a set list of interview questions for each participant (see Appendix C) and data provided by Ednovate Inc.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FINDINGS

Applying the data extracted from interviews and website information, this chapter will begin by outlining the academic model utilized by the case study charter schools and the ways in which recruitment practices take place. The chapter will then discuss specific pedagogical practices employed by the teachers and administrators at the charter schools, including the ways in which teachers incorporate student heritage and culture into their individual pedagogies and curricula. Next, the chapter will examine the resource provision that these case study schools offer their students based on both individual and communal needs. Finally, this chapter explores the rates of student success among the students that attend the case study schools and compares statistics to both Los Angeles Unified School District and California state averages.

#### Ednovate Academic Model

The Ednovate academic model consists of three important practices implemented into the charter school structure: personalization, purpose, and community. Ednovate works to create a personalized environment that fits the needs of every student and their individual learning styles. By creating both physical and technological spaces for students to work at their own pace and in their preferred learning settings, both teachers and students have the autonomy to develop curricula and learning skills used in the future, while simultaneously gaining important skills and experience with technology and its tools. From the first day that a student is enrolled at an Ednovate school, educators and

administrators aim to impart a “sense of purpose” to each of their students (“Ednovate: Our Model”, n.d., para. 7). The overarching purpose instilled in Ednovate students and the curricula is a term known as *Positive Multigenerational Change* (PMC), one that is central to the system’s vision and mission. As Participant 2 stated:

“[PMC] goes beyond college acceptance; it’s getting our students ready for college and beyond, and even after, what you’re doing with that college degree is affecting the world, it’s affecting your community.... So, everything you’re doing has ripple effects. Whatever our students end up doing in the future, we want them to know that they can create positive change, not just for the now, but for beyond.”

The notion that an individual student’s educational experience has the ability to change not only their community, but also the world around them is one that is crucial to understanding Ednovate’s educational model. PMC suggests that each student and their personal educational experiences have agency in their schools, communities, nations, and world. PMC is central to each of the themes assigned to each year of Ednovate students’ high school careers, acknowledging the importance of growth and development throughout a student’s education. The four grade level themes are titled: 9<sup>th</sup> grade: Know Yourself; 10<sup>th</sup> grade: Know Your Community; 11<sup>th</sup> grade: Know Your Nation; and 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Know Your World. These themes are central to what the teachers and administrators at Ednovate seek to accomplish with their classroom lessons and curriculum throughout each year of a student’s high school experience. Each theme influences the materials used and lessons planned in Ednovate classrooms and acts as a vision for the entire academic year. In order to advance to the next grade level, students must “complete a minimum of 10 hours in a volunteer capacity” (“Ednovate: Our Model”, n.d., para. 9), beginning their journeys of enacting PMC through small acts of

community volunteerism. The ripple effect that PMC creates starts by inspiring students to learn about themselves and their individual identities; it proceeds to teach students about their surrounding communities and how they can inspire change locally; next it teaches students to be aware of their nations; it finally allows students to envision how education can change and impact the entire world. Participant 7 stated:

“So, through that four-year continuum, curriculum and experiences, they’re learning about their own identity, they’re learning about the community, their family and their makeup, and the systems and structures in the world that were built up around them.”

PMC and its ability to create lasting impacts on both local and global scales is central to Ednovate’s mission and purpose. Promoting a personalized educational experience for each student and recognizing, as Participant 3 states, that “access to higher education so that they have more opportunities in the future is a right for every single student” are both essential factors in this educational model. Because of the autonomy that both teachers and administrators have in their classrooms, PMC has the ability to become the central focus in every classroom throughout a student’s navigation of schooling; inspiring PMC has become the nucleus of Ednovate’s academic model and vision for every student.

An additional significant part of Ednovate’s mission and model is focused around the staff that they employ. Hiring at Ednovate schools is highly selective; the most recent hires made up only 1% of all applicants (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.). Within this selective hiring process, a large percentage of the teachers and administrators at Ednovate schools come from diverse backgrounds and share similar cultural experiences to the students in the communities that they serve. When looking for new hires, Ednovate searches for

faculty who have a “culture first mentality” (“Ednovate: Who We Look For”, n.d.). According to Ednovate, this mentality helps with “focusing on the small details that contribute to a strong learning culture” (“Ednovate: Who We Look For”, n.d.). Their selectivity and commitment to finding faculty that represent the students that they serve often allows teachers to teach in environments in which they are familiar. Because of the autonomy that the charter school has with hiring, applicants can be selected based on if they represent Ednovate’s vision. As Participant 1 stated, “We get a lot of choice in who we hire and finding staff that align with our vision.... our school vision is around disrupting systemic inequity, so we get to prioritize finding people who are aligned with that.” Creating a community where personal and communal visions align is an important part of the Ednovate model. This selectivity often also comes from the employees themselves; many teachers and administrators at Ednovate look for teaching positions in certain communities with certain values. Participant 6 stated:

“I see being a teacher as a social responsibility to uplift my community and that translates to having a strong passion for working with underserved communities, which is why whenever I look for a teaching job, I’m looking to teach where there’s a lot of need.”

The reciprocal selectivity among employers and employees at Ednovate often allows educators to give back to communities similar to their own. Identifying and connecting their own personal experiences to the communities in which they wish to teach is an essential factor when deciding where to teach for many of Ednovate’s educators. As Participant 4 stated when speaking about the principal at their school: “As an administrator she has held that one of her top priorities is helping the community that she works in, the community that she comes from, and the community that raised her.” Using

their platforms as educators and administrators, the faculty at Ednovate looks to give back to their communities and as Participant 7 stated: “use our privilege that we have earned over our lifetimes to give that back to our students so that they have better access or more equitable access to college.” Both the applicants and the employers at Ednovate share equal responsibility in shaping employment practices and the diverse makeup of the entire faculty population.

Ednovate’s unique academic model and mission is not simply a school model; Participant 7 stated that “it’s a model for a district and how a district should be run”. Ednovate’s model strives to reach not only local districts in California but also districts across the nation. Its goal is to inspire others to adopt similar values and schooling practices in order to ensure academic equity and equality for all students. The following section will discuss the ways in which teachers at Ednovate use narrative teaching as a tool to connect with and inspire their students.

### Narrative and Connective Instruction

Central to this study and the interviews conducted, is the theme of storytelling used as a tool in the classroom. Most, if not all participants in this study brought up the importance of storytelling and using personal experience as a means of inspiring and connecting with their students. Establishing meaningful connections with students was found to be one of the key ways to help students engage in the classroom. Teachers described that when students see and interact with teachers that come from similar backgrounds, their interest in schooling increases. Through the use of unconventional practices in classrooms such

as personal storytelling, teachers and administrators expressed that students are better able to connect with figures of authority. When asked about storytelling and its influence on students, Participant 1 stated, “I think there’s a lot of power around storytelling and I think our staff can connect and share their story and journey, and I think that allows students to have a sense of belonging.” Both administrators and teachers involved in this study conveyed that developing a sense of belonging within a school community is a crucial part in building identity and confidence during a student’s educational journey; being surrounded by teachers and administrators who have shared similar immigrant or first-generation experiences in the United States has allowed marginalized students to see people with similar backgrounds in successful positions of power, with better access to resources and tools. They described that through the use of personal storytelling in the classroom, students are then better able to identify with their teachers/administrators and envision a future for themselves in positions of authority and as successful professionals; this reflection has become a meaningful goal for Ednovate teachers. When discussing the significance of establishing relationships with both parents and students, Participant 4 stated, “I want them to see themselves in me....and I want their kids to see themselves in me and knowing that there is that opportunity still, there is room for a better life, and that there is a reason that they came to this country.” The results of this study show that stories shared by immigrant/first-generation teachers help to validate the similar events and backgrounds that immigrant/first-generation youth have also experienced in the United States. Shared experiences and cultural values help form integral relationships during a student’s education and has given immigrant/first-generation students a sense of empowerment within their communities. Most participants in this study expressed the

importance of students being able to identify with their teachers and administrators through shared cultural experiences and backgrounds. When asked about the power of immigrant/first-generation teachers educating immigrant/first-generation students,

Participant 5 stated:

“I think as Latinos we value the power of story, and the power of connection. So, I believe having teachers who come from immigrant parents or who themselves are immigrants, allows students to be able to connect and to be able to feel empowered.... it allows them to see that they’re capable. Because a lot of the times the people that they see empowered don’t look like them, so then they feel like ‘okay maybe this is something that I can’t do’ or ‘I’m not smart enough to do it’. So, I believe that having individuals who come from immigrant parents or who are immigrants, allows this huge empowerment, where students now don’t worry so much about how smart they are, but really about ‘what do I need to do to be able to get there?’”

During the course of eight interviews, the term “connect” or “connection” was used by the participants nearly 40 times when discussing their teaching practices. Storytelling is one of the key ways in which Ednovate teachers and administrators have found connection with their students and helping students understand why they are invested in their educational experiences. When asked about their direct involvement with students in the classroom, Participant 3 stated: “At the beginning, part of it is telling them my own story, making sure that they know that I was an immigrant to this country, an English Language Learner, struggled financially, so that they know who I am as a person....” Allowing students to hear the personal stories and challenges that their teachers and administrators have faced creates a space of open communication and relationship-building. At Ednovate, as Participant 2 stated, “The single factor that is correlated with student success in schools is building relationships with at least one adult.” In order to inspire student success and create lasting relationships with their students, the faculty at

Ednovate schools discussed the importance of not only sharing their similar stories, but actively celebrating the cultures and backgrounds that they come from. The next section will explore the ways in which Ednovate teachers directly incorporated student culture and heritage into their curricula.

### Celebrating Culture and Heritage

Several participants in this study described the ways in which they integrated their students' cultural identities into the everyday curricula that they taught and how this inspired a celebration of heritage and background. One of the ways in which teachers blended cultural identity with schoolwork included creating lesson units on certain authors, novels, and global processes that resonated with the students in their classrooms.

When asked to give specific examples of this, Participant 3 stated:

“...in our Spanish courses for example, teachers have done a variety of units including an immigration unit, a globalization unit, again with a lens and a focus on really providing students with an opportunity to learn about their own identities and the identities of marginalized communities.”

When asked about individual curriculum practices, Participant 5 described the priority for connecting students' interests and needs with the curriculum in the classroom. They stated:

“I do believe that the curriculum that I built before was really connected to what students were into.... So really thinking about the needs of our students and their interests to help them understand that education is not something negative, it's not something that they should hate, but it's something that they should value, because it's going to allow them to move in a certain way out in society.”

Teachers and administrators interviewed from the case study schools expressed the particular importance of integrating novelists, poets, and other authors into the

curriculum that match the cultural backgrounds of the students that they serve.

Correlating with the large percentage of Latino/Latina students that attend the case study schools, specific authors mentioned during interviews included Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Francisco Alarcon, and Junot Diaz—all authors of Chicano/Chicana backgrounds. Participants in this study again described the value of cultural visibility and being taught about successful professionals who come from similar communities and backgrounds. As Participant 6 stated, “I expose them to the literature written by people of color, specifically authors who share their background, and we focus on a lot of themes that again, are relevant to their cultural experience.” Again, the employment of culturally relevant pedagogy was at the forefront of the interviews conducted during this study.

One particularly powerful way in which teachers celebrated the culture and heritage of their students was introduced by Participant 4, who has incorporated the arts into the curriculum of their school. During the interview conducted with this participant, they described the ways in which integrating a cultural dance program into their school community has allowed students to learn about both the history and practices of Mexican folkdance. As Participant 4 stated, the Mexican folkdance program has “empowered” and impacted both the school and outside communities in positive ways. For the parents and families, Participant 4 states, “it has reclaimed our culture for them”; for the students and dancers,

“it has given [them] a stronger sense of who they are, it has allowed them to find power in stories that come from their culture, their lineage, their background. It has also allowed them to.... bridge the gap between them and older generations from their families.”

Coming from a similar background as many of their students, Participant 4 discussed their personal connection and experience with Mexican folkdance and the ways in which it inspired them to begin teaching the subject to students from comparable cultural identities. They stated:

“Regardless, what I always knew was that [Mexican folkdance] gave me cultural pride in who I was, and literally when you’re on stage, your culture is being celebrated, you feel, and you hear, and you see the applause, and your culture is in the spotlight.... Mexican folk dance on a stage is symbolic, it represents the diversity of Mexico, and the celebration of people, the celebration of exchanges, of cultures, identities, ideas. And I want to make sure my kids feel that you know.... And just understanding the importance of that in academic spaces, and what it does to our kids and what it does to uplift our communities that we serve too, is very important.”

Participant 4 shared their aspirations of opening up the Mexican folkdance program to the larger community in hopes that “other people can celebrate what we do, too, and the community that we come from”. For this participant and their respective school community, the Mexican folkdance program has proven to be a “staple of [the] school”, promoting student cultural celebration through the arts and by extension to the outside community. The school’s webpage confirmed the relevance of the Mexican folkdance program; on a page entitled “Student Life”, several images of students dressed in traditional Mexican apparel can be seen performing and posing onstage (“Ednovate: Student Life”, n.d.). Participant 3 noted that the inclusion of these cultural programs “impacts how students perform” and “allows [them] to build understanding and compassion at a very early age”.

An additional finding about the celebration of culture and heritage was focused on language and communication between students and faculty at the case study schools.

During the course of the interviews, participants were asked the ways in which language barriers affected their classrooms, if at all. An overwhelming majority of the participants interviewed discussed the importance of encouraging Spanish-speaking or English Language Learner (ELL) students to use their native language in and out of the classroom. Given that many students that attend these schools are ELL, teachers and administrators have found empowerment in speaking Spanish with their students. Participants in this study discussed using familiar language as a way to connect and appreciate the shared culture with students. One participant stated that they use “terms of endearment in Spanish....to connect with students”, while another participant said that “saying certain phrases that they might hear from their parents creates a different connection”. One way of empowering students’ cultural identities through language discussed by participants was simply being vocal about taking pride in speaking Spanish. Participant 8 stated:

“understanding that speaking another language is nothing to be ashamed of, that Spanish can be something that they can use in schools here, and that their experiences--whether it was in their home country or here as an immigrant--are valuable and they still deserve the same opportunities as other people that were born here. And just being able to be proud of being Latino.... being proud of the fact that you speak Spanish.”

When asked about the specifics of language in their classroom, Participant 4 disclosed that they have “found power” in speaking Spanish with their students in order to connect with them and build valuable relationships. Participant 4 also stated that being given the opportunity to speak Spanish in the classroom helps to “validate” student’s identities and backgrounds; celebrating the Spanish language as part of a student’s culture has “embraced a whole community”.

In conducting this research, direct correlations were drawn between the celebration of cultural background and the building of trusting relationships among faculty and students. Ways of implementing cultural celebration included incorporating literature from Hispanic authors into the curriculum, creating a cultural dance program that extended to the community, and encouraging the use of the Spanish language in classrooms. The following section will discuss the ways in which Ednovate has equipped its students with pertinent resources and guidance based on the educational and political disadvantages that they face in the United States.

#### Resource Provision

A fundamental finding of this study was the way in which Ednovate campuses offered their students and families crucial resources. This section also explores the ways in which the current political climate in the United States affected the role of faculty at Ednovate and how they sought to protect their students and families.

One of the key resources that Ednovate's academic model has introduced into its schools is the use of advisories. Advisories are groups that consist of a small number of students and one teacher; these groups meet twice daily for the entirety of the students' high school years. According to the Ednovate webpage titled "Our Model":

“Advisory serves as a family within the larger school setting, serving as a safe and secure home base for students throughout their time at Ednovate. We know that forming these long-term relationships throughout the school will allow students to support one another in high school and beyond.” (“Ednovate: Our Model”, n.d., para.10)

Advisories serve as locations for student-faculty engagement and as a safe environment for Ednovate students to share their concerns and questions with an adult mentor. When asked how the administration and teachers work together to ensure a safe and accepting environment for immigrant and first-generation students, Participant 2 stated that students and their teachers “tackle a lot of issues” within their advisory groups each day. Again, building trusting relationships with adult mentors has proven to be an effective tool in inspiring student motivation. When asked about their relationships with students in their classroom, Participant 4 stated:

“.... we make sure that every single one of our students is feeling visible and that they have the supports that they need. I also am an advisor to 16 boys, and every morning I start with my 16 boys, every afternoon I close the day with those 16 boys, and I am the one that is going to be mentoring them for the next four years of high school.... at the end of their high school career, I am also the one that hands them their diploma when they are crossing the stage. So that in itself is very emblematic and symbolic of the relationship that we do have because I am going to be mentoring them, and I don't know any other school that does allow for that to happen....”

Data from interviews conducted suggests that advisories not only impacted the relationships that Ednovate faculty built with its students, but also the relationships formed with the students' families. One of the case study schools in the Ednovate network has a goal to meet with 95% of its students' families at least four times a year in order to discuss students' individual needs and goals. The implementation of small advisory groups at Ednovate schools has helped configure a personalized education plan for every single one of its students and their families.

A number of resources and tools were used at Ednovate schools in order to establish a sense of security, safety and guidance for immigrant and first-generation students

impacted by the current political climate in the United States. One of the tools used to create personalized education that acknowledges the political adversities that Ednovate students face was the practice of individualized scheduling. Participant 4 described this process:

“We go down a roster and we talk about every single student and we mention every student’s name and every week, we create a new schedule for them depending on the needs that they have, for areas of growth; part of those needs are social and emotional needs that are affected by their immigrant experience, that are affected by the current anti-immigrant political climate.”

Ednovate schools and their faculty dedicate time to personalize every student’s schedule; this includes allotting time for conversation and reflection regarding personal and political struggles that the students and their families face. The high percentage of immigrant and first-generation students at Ednovate schools has led to an overall increase in the faculty’s awareness of political events that affect their students. When asked how the political climate has impacted Ednovate faculty’s roles, Participant 1 stated that faculty “had to do a lot more research to respond to certain policies and think about the impact they might have on our students”. Along with research, faculty at Ednovate schools began providing more resources to their students and families after certain immigration policies were implemented in 2018. The resources offered to Ednovate students included information sessions about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), access to need-based scholarships and financial aid, sessions with lawyers, workshops held for families of students, and the creation of centers for student services. At one of the schools participating in this study, an immigrant center called the “Dreamer Center” was in the process of being created. Participant 4 discussed the importance of this center for the school’s immigrant and first-generation students:

“... they are the ones that are going to be facing a reality that a lot of other students will not, and they are going to need certain social and emotional supports but also certain legal supports, and that will all be part of the programming of our Dreamer Center, so just like social services, emotional services, curriculum supports that our students need based on their immigrant experience.”

In addition to a physical space created for immigrant and first-generation students facing political adversity, one school includes visual representations and resources in order to mark their school as a safe location for immigrant students. Participant 4 described how visual representation is present at their school:

“... we have butterflies all over our campus and in every single one of our classrooms, and the butterfly for the Dreamer Movement is very significant because it declares safe spaces for our immigrant students, and we want to make sure that we are as visual and as vocal as possible, so that they know that this is a safe space for them.”

Several participants in this study noted that providing both visual and physical resources to both families and students of the Ednovate community has been a way to combat the “racist rhetoric and attitudes that are resurfacing” due to the current political landscape. A number of fears for immigrant students listed by participants included: “trauma of family separation”, inaccessibility to financial aid, lack of “sense of security for family”, “lack of morale and motivation” in school, “financial struggle” and “poverty”, “lack of resources being provided at their schools”, “socializing”, and a “perceived lack of sense of power”. Motivated by the fears and challenges of their immigrant and first-generation students, participants in this study talked about the ways in which they made resources more accessible and equitable for their students and families.

An important factor in providing resources is the availability of material and information in both English and Spanish. Faculty at Ednovate provide resources in both languages

due to the large percentage of students and families whose first language is Spanish or who are labeled as ELL. One example of this practice is providing subtitles in Spanish for films and videos shown in classrooms and to families. On the Ednovate website for example, a video titled “A Peek into Ednovate Charter Schools” is completely subtitled in Spanish for accessibility to families and students navigating the website (“Ednovate: Personalized College Prep”, n.d.). Participant 3 ensured that when reaching out to students’ families, “all communication is sent home in Spanish as well”. When asked how language barriers affect classrooms, Participant 8 stated that an important part of access to resources is “making sure all materials are accessible in Spanish if they need it”. The high volume of Spanish-speaking and ELL students and families at Ednovate schools has made Spanish-translated material crucial to resource accessibility.

One final resource described by participants in this study was an alumni counselor program geared towards recent graduates of Ednovate and first-year college students. This program is made to ensure that former Ednovate students are not only accepted into colleges and universities, but as Participant 3 stated: “ensuring that they thrive in college”. One participant talked about the ways in which the alumni help recent Ednovate graduates to navigate through the university environment:

“So we even hire alumni counselors, once we have a graduating class, who follows up with our alumni, tracks them and makes sure they are doing okay, connects them to resources if they are struggling with financial aid, will go onto their campus to interview them and really think through what we can learn from our students in college so that we can make adequate changes in our programming in high school to best prepare them.”

Several participants in this study reiterated the importance of following up with their students after graduation and the benefit of acknowledging that their goal is not solely to

make sure that their students go to college, but that they succeed and “find affinities and continue to replicate [them] at their universities”.

Interviews conducted during this study showed the ways in which Ednovate faculty provides important resources and tools to their students and their respective families.

Both legal and emotional supports have been established at Ednovate schools in order to combat the adversities that immigrant students face from the current political climate in the United States. Pinpointing the specific challenges that their students face has helped faculty understand which resources to provide and how to reach families as well. The following section will look at the rate of student success among Ednovate students as a result of the specific pedagogical practices aforementioned.

### Student Success

This section will cover the rate of academic success among students that attend Ednovate schools. Data for this section is sourced from statistics provided by Ednovate. The rate of Ednovate academic success is comparative to statistics from both Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and California state averages; results are based on ACT and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) scores.

Ednovate operates 5 public charter schools in Orange County and Los Angeles: East College Prep, USC Hybrid High, Esperanza College Prep, Brío College Prep, and Legacy College Prep (Santa Ana). A main goal of Ednovate is to have 100% of its students accepted into selective four-year colleges and universities (“USC Rossier”, 2017). The Class of 2018 marked Ednovate’s third graduating class; every single student from all

three graduating classes from Ednovate schools were accepted into four-year colleges and universities (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.) Additionally, 100% of Ednovate’s graduating seniors from all three of its graduating classes completed all of California A-G coursework (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.). According to the University of California system, “‘a-g’ refers to the subjects, and number of years of each, that are required to meet the subject requirement for admission to UC” (“University of California Admissions”, n.d., para.29). Therefore, 100% of Ednovate’s seniors have been eligible to apply to any university in the state of California (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.).

Besides the 100% acceptance rate, Ednovate students have been the recipients of a substantial amount of scholarships and grants. In total, Ednovate students have been awarded approximately 11 million dollars, including both Posse and Questbridge scholarships (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.). According to the Posse Foundation website, “The Posse Foundation identifies, recruits and trains individuals with extraordinary leadership potential. Posse Scholars receive full-tuition leadership scholarships from Posse’s partner colleges and universities” (“Posse Foundation Homepage”, n.d., para.1). QuestBridge’s “College Match Scholarship Recipients are granted admission to one of QuestBridge’s college partners with a full, four-year scholarship worth over \$200,000 each” (“Questbridge Scholarship Details”, n.d., para.1).

Test results provided by Ednovate demonstrate student success based on composite ACT scores and proficiency average scores for the SBAC test under the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). The following results are based on

averages from the Ednovate Class of 2019 compared to those of both the Los Angeles Unified School District and the state of California (“Ednovate: Results”, n.d.). ACT scores are based on four categories: math, science, English, and reading. Each category is scored on a scale from 1-36; a total composite score is the average of all four categories rounded to the nearest whole number (“Understanding Your Scores”, n.d.). Figure 5 shows the average ACT composite scores for Ednovate Class of 2019 students versus average ACT composite scores for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

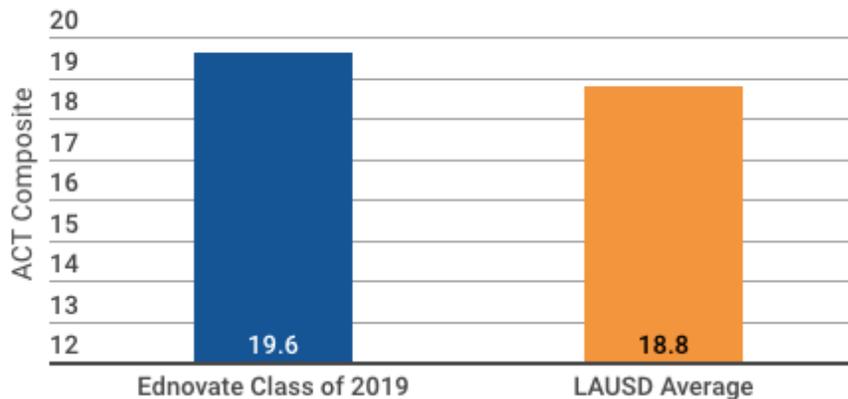


Figure 5: Average ACT composite for Ednovate students versus district peers for class of 2019  
Source: Ednovate

The Ednovate Class of 2019 had an average ACT composite score of 19.6, while the Los Angeles Unified School District averaged a composite score of 18.8. On average, a higher percentage of Ednovate students tend to receive ACT composite scores of 21 or higher than other Los Angeles Unified School District students. Figure 6 shows the percentage of Ednovate students with an ACT composite score of 21 or more compared to other LAUSD schools.

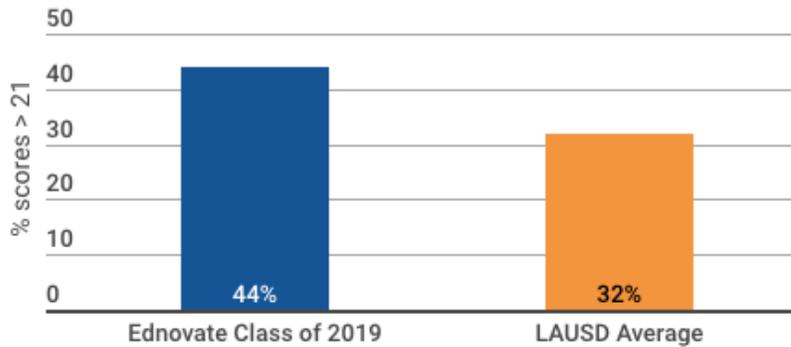


Figure 6: Percentage of students with ACT composite 21+  
Source: Ednovate

Ednovate Class of 2019 had an overall higher percentage of students who averaged a 21 or higher on their ACT composite scores with approximately 44% meeting this standard. In comparison, only 32% of students in other LAUSD schools received a composite score of 21 or more on the ACT. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium exam is administered under the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress typically to high school Juniors (“CAASPP”, n.d.). It consists of two testing sections: English language arts/literacy and mathematics (“CAASPP”, n.d.). Figure 7 shows the percentage of Ednovate Juniors that on average, met or exceeded proficiency on the English portion of the SBAC exam compared to averages from both the LAUSD and the state of California.

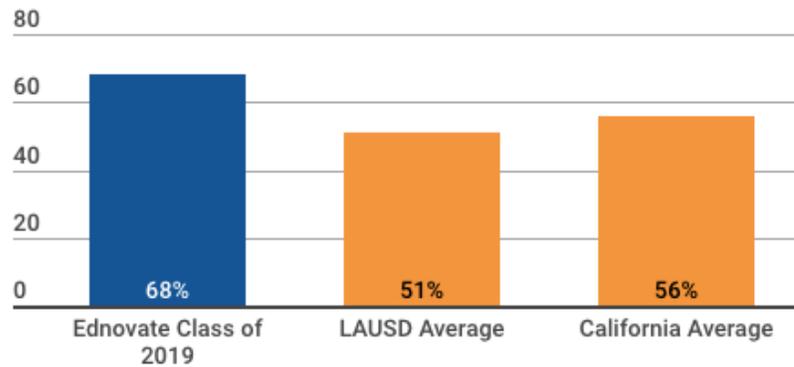


Figure 7: Percentage of Juniors meeting or exceeding proficiency on the English SBAC Exam  
Source: Ednovate

Approximately 68% of Ednovate’s Class of 2019 students (when they were Juniors) met or exceeded proficiency on the English language arts/literacy section of the SBAC exam. For the Los Angeles Unified School District, 51% of Juniors met or exceeded on the English SBAC. The California state average was slightly higher than that of the LAUSD average, with 56% of Juniors meeting or exceeding the English portion of the SBAC exam. 17% more of Ednovate Juniors averaged higher on the English SBAC than their LAUSD peers, and 12% of Ednovate Juniors averaged higher than California state high school Juniors. Figure 8 shows the percentage of Ednovate Class of 2019 Juniors that met or exceeded proficiency on the math portion of the SBAC exam.

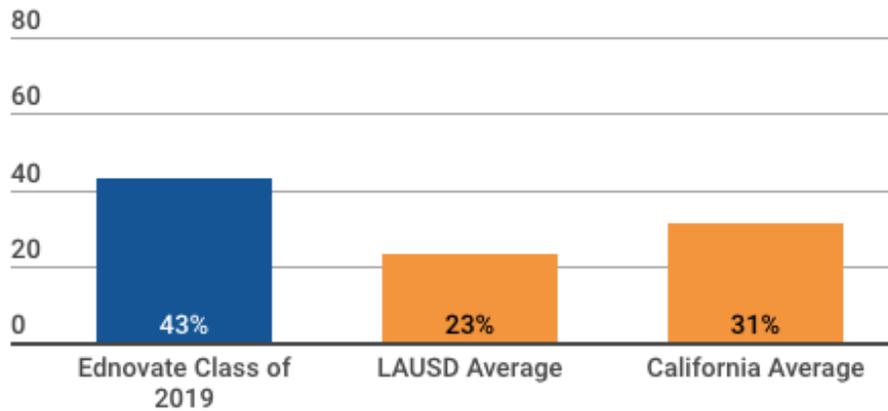


Figure 8: Percentage of Juniors meeting or exceeding proficiency on the Math SBAC Exam  
Source: Ednovate

Based on results from the Ednovate Class of 2019 Junior-year results, 43% of students met or exceeded proficiency on the math portion of the SBAC. In comparison, only 23% of LAUSD Juniors met or exceeded proficiency, and the state of California averaged slightly higher with 31% meeting or exceeding math proficiency. On average, 20% more Ednovate Juniors excelled on the math SBAC than LAUSD Juniors, and 12% more Ednovate Juniors excelled on the math SBAC than the state of California average.

The data provided by Ednovate suggests that on average, there is a higher rate of student academic success among Ednovate students than students in other LAUSD schools and other schools in the state of California, based on average scores on standardized tests administered to students statewide. The next chapter will discuss the implications of these results and the need for further research on this topic.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to 1) examine the ways in which immigrant/first-generation educators use their identity and cultural experiences in teaching immigrant/first-generation youth in their classrooms and 2) determine how certain pedagogical practices used by immigrant/first-generation teachers leads to higher rates of success among their students.

As discussed in Chapter Two, this study was conducted at a system of five public charter schools run by Ednovate, a charter management organization in Orange and Los Angeles counties in California. This charter school system was chosen because of the high percentage of immigrant/first-generation faculty and students, and the availability of faculty to participate in interviews during the summer. The data in this study was extracted from extensive website research and from the qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with participants.

#### Summary of Findings

After extracting data from interviews and information provided by Ednovate's website, there are five major categories of findings. The first category showed that Ednovate schools have developed a unique academic model based on several factors: 1) endorsing positive multigenerational change (PMC) in all aspects of a student's academic experience, 2) creating four annual themes that explore self-identity, community, nation,

and world, 3) selectively employing faculty who reflect the school's vision of equity and opportunity, and 4) creating a model that has the potential to inspire entire school districts across the nation. The next category of results reflected Ednovate schools' emphasis on establishing connection between students and faculty, often through the use of personal storytelling and sharing of similar cultural experiences; all of the Ednovate faculty interviewed discussed at length the necessity of creating personal connection with their students, especially those of marginalized communities who face a lack of representation and advocacy in many academic settings. The next category of results showed the ways in which Ednovate schools incorporate students' cultural heritage into the everyday curricula that they use in their classrooms; interviews revealed that teachers often incorporate literature by authors of similar backgrounds and have created cultural dance programs that give students and the community the opportunity to engage in traditional art forms. The fourth category of results demonstrated Ednovate's provision of resources to immigrant students and families facing current political adversity. The resources described by participants included access to lawyers, workshops, DACA information sessions, the creation of permanent advisory groups for students and families, and an alumni counselor program; all resources were provided in both Spanish and English in order to increase accessibility and comprehension among ELL families and students. The final category of results explored the high rates of student academic success among Ednovate students. These results were based on a number of factors: 1) 100% of Ednovate's graduating classes have been accepted into four-year colleges and universities, 2) the substantial amount of selective scholarships and grants awarded to graduating seniors, and 3) Ednovate averages for standardized tests such as the ACT and

SBAC exams are significantly higher than those of both the Los Angeles Unified School District and the California state averages.

### Potential Limits of Generalizability

The teaching practices and school model that Ednovate has adopted seeks to disrupt the many academic injustices faced by marginalized students in schools. However, there are also certain potential limitations to the ways in which Ednovate's model functions as a whole. One of the key components in Ednovate's model is the idea of personalized learning for every student. This personalized education is designed for students to work at their own paces and in their own preferred environments of learning. Because of the size of Ednovate schools, this aspect of their model may work well on a small scale. However, with growing numbers of applicants each year, Ednovate may find this difficult to implement in larger numbers. Allowing each of their students to choose their personal pace and working environments may create a lack of cohesion and difficulty meeting certain accountability standards in the future. This may also create a disadvantage for students continuing their education in other settings, as many institutions do not allow for the same personalized learning that Ednovate provides its students for the entirety of their high school careers. Students may therefore find it difficult to adapt to future educational environments where learning is often regulated and conventional, with limited autonomy to choose individual pace. The challenge, then, for other schools seeking to adopt this academic model will be finding ways of implementing these practices within the limits of school size and school regulations.

There are, of course, limits to the implementation and generalization of Ednovate's model on a broader scale. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), around 15.1 million students were enrolled in high schools across the United States in the fall of 2018. Many schools in the United States have over a thousand students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 ("Average Public School Student Size", n.d.), which is well over the average number of students enrolled at Ednovate schools. Because the United States' education system contains many schools with huge enrollment numbers, the adoption of a school model similar to Ednovate's would prove to be relatively challenging in many of these larger schools. The personalization of every student's education would be nearly impossible in schools of over a thousand students, and selectively hiring staff that reflects the students' backgrounds may be difficult to achieve on such a large scale and under the jurisdiction of elected school boards. While Ednovate focuses on building close relationships with each of their students and families, educators at schools with larger student populations often do not have the same opportunity as small schools for building strong student-teacher relationships (Darling-Hammond, Ross and Milliken, 2006). The ability of Ednovate's faculty to focus on the identities of all of their students is largely attributed to the size of its schools. In schools with large student enrollment, freedom to create curriculum that provides marginalized and minority students with certain supports is less common than in small schools like Ednovate (Darling-Hammond et al., 2006). Due to the prevalence of large schools across the United States, it would likely be difficult to apply the Ednovate model in schools where student enrollment is significantly higher. Personalizing every student's education, developing close relationships between student and teachers and teachers and families, and creating curriculum that accurately considers

students' backgrounds is increasingly challenging in bigger schools and demonstrates the various limitations of employing Ednovate's model on a larger scale.

### Discussion

In exploring how educators use their cultural identities and experiences in fostering academic engagement among immigrant and first-generation youth, this study described the inner-workings of the Ednovate charter management organization and the faculty it employs in its five schools. This study also analyzed the ways in which certain pedagogical practices geared towards marginalized students have created a high level of student success in Ednovate schools. This discussion will examine Ednovate's model as a school district model and will also discuss the pedagogical practices in place at Ednovate schools as methods of encouraging student success. From the results, implications will be discussed for public charter schools that have the autonomy to create curricula specific to the populations they serve, for state governments that have the power to create programs and resources to foster student success, and for educators that wish to use their backgrounds and personal experiences in teaching students from disadvantaged communities.

### Ednovate as a District Model

Outlined in Chapter Three, the results demonstrated the ways in which Ednovate has developed a unique academic model that consists of yearly academic themes, a vision of positive multigenerational change that is at the core of every student's academic experience, and selective employment of faculty who align with the schools' visions. The results also showed that the Ednovate academic model was meant to serve not only as a singular school model, but also as a district model that has the potential of being utilized

in districts across the United States. As the findings from this research show, Ednovate’s academic model is largely based on the needs and backgrounds of the students that it serves. Many school districts across the United States—especially urban school districts—struggle with low academic performance rates and are in need of major structural reforms (Wong, 2016). As Wong’s research suggests, some of the necessary reforms for school districts include more communication among educators across all disciplines and school subjects, and paying attention to issues such as class, race, politics, and ideologies when attempting to understand school district reform implementations (Wong, 2016). Ednovate’s academic model explicitly enforces both of these practices within its framework; participants disclosed that teachers and administrators from all fields meet weekly to discuss each student across all subject matters. Participant 5 stated that this open communication among the faculty at Ednovate schools is at the core of the Ednovate model and requires teachers to ask the question, “How can we come together as a team to make sure we are supporting everyone?”. The Ednovate academic model and vision was created to not only serve single schools, but to inspire and influence entire school districts that require internal reform and structural guidance. Participant 7 stated that “districts have a hard time serving *all* students well.... especially in urban communities, typically the most low-income, the people who are first-generation, who don’t know how to access the public education system typically get the short end of the stick....” Acknowledging and understanding community and school demographics are crucial when restructuring or reforming school districts that struggle with low performance rates and disengagement (Wong, 2016). Ednovate’s model incorporates both autonomy and accountability in order to foster student engagement while continuing to

align its core values with the staff it employs. The autonomy to hire staff members and leaders that embody Ednovate's central vision and principles has allowed Ednovate schools to create a community of committed, compassionate, and successful school leaders that inspire their students to engage and enjoy their individual educational experiences. Previous research suggests that educational leaders are those who are expected to "guide and steer their schools through the daily challenges brought on by an increasingly complex set of demands" (Normore, 2006, p. 45). The increasing diversity in schools leads to more demands and therefore more responsibilities for educational leaders; leaders that become successful often have a deeper connection to the missions of their schools and tend to sustain their focus on the educational mission throughout their leadership (Normore, 2006). The selective hiring process of Ednovate faculty creates successful leaders; an applicant's selection largely depends on their compatibility with the school's vision and their desire to teach underserved, diverse communities with a greater need for support and resources.

As discussed in Chapter One, there is a definite correlation between academia and developing identity in students (Pizarro, 2005). An essential part of Ednovate's academic model is focused on the personalization of education, creating purposeful learning, and engaging with the outside community. The personalization of every Ednovate student's education aligns with developing an educational experience that fits the needs, background, and identity of each student. Part of the model consists of the four year-long themes that guide both the teachers' and students' classroom experiences. As discussed in Chapter Three, these themes include: 1) Know Yourself, 2) Know Your Community, 3)

Know Your Nation, and 4) Know Your World. Each of the themes explores identity on a different scale, starting with a theme that focuses on building personal identity within the school community. Each theme is inspired by the ultimate goal for Ednovate students: to create positive multigenerational change (PMC) in the community, nation, and world. Given that prior research suggests that for many marginalized youth, ethnic identity is closely tied to self-identity (Schwartz, Cano, & Zamboanga, 2015), Ednovate's integration of cultural identity into each student's personal academic experience demonstrates that the Ednovate model takes into consideration the connection between schooling practices and developing identity in minority students. Through the use of positive multigenerational change and the four year-long themes embedded into the learning practices of students, the development of identity is fundamental to Ednovate's model. Part of enacting PMC includes the requirement for all students to complete 10 hours of community volunteerism in order to move on to the next grade level each year. This allows students to interact with and give back to their communities and others. This required volunteerism is a method of learning outside of the classroom and connecting real-life experiences to academia and learning; learning outside of the classroom helps many immigrant/first-generation students to develop a critical set of tools such as humanitarianism, identity affirmation, and responsibility for learning (Goldschmidt, Ousey, & Brown, 2011). Greater autonomy and accountability within the Ednovate system and model allows for teachers and administrators to require all students to actively participate in volunteerism within their communities, helping them to establish these important developmental skills. Ednovate's academic model encompasses many aspects of what a district model has the potential of becoming: attention to student and

teacher demographics, selective hiring of applicants to create successful leaders, engagement within the community, and adopting a core vision across all of its schools help to solidify Ednovate’s success as a school model and its potential as a district model.

### Ednovate Fostering Student Success Through Pedagogical Practices

The rates of academic success among Ednovate students outlined in Chapter Three demonstrate that the unique pedagogical practices that Ednovate teachers and faculty adopt have fostered higher levels of student engagement in the classroom and higher rates of graduation, college acceptance, and test scores. The results discussed in Chapter Three indicated three ways in which the teachers and faculty inspire student engagement and success: 1) connective instruction, 2) celebrating culture and heritage, and 3) providing hard-to-access resources for students and families. Connective instruction is a method of teaching that involves teachers helping students make personal connections to schooling and to the instructors themselves (Cooper, 2014). The teachers and faculty at Ednovate utilize connective instruction through storytelling and sharing personal experiences with their students that often come from similar communities and backgrounds. Connecting personal struggle and identity development with classroom learning leads to an overall higher level of student engagement and success (Cooper, 2014). The power of storytelling between both students and faculty at Ednovate helps to build important relationships, often resulting from the connective instruction that teachers employ. Participant 5 stated that all aspects of instruction and teaching methods are “connected to [the students’] identities” which has ultimately led to not only a stronger sense of identity and belonging, but also to higher rates of student engagement in the classroom and

community. Participants described personal narratives of both struggle and triumph as key tools in engaging students in their classrooms. As one participant expressed, relatability and connection to both course content and instructors has created a sense of “empowerment” among students across Ednovate schools.

Tied closely to connective instruction methods is Ednovate’s emphasis on celebrating the cultures and heritages of their students. Described in Chapter Three, Ednovate teachers and faculty have made it a priority to celebrate their students’ cultures and identities through the incorporation of culturally relevant material in their curricula. According to previous studies, including classroom content that recognizes individual identities and experiences has proven to be one of the most notable methods of engaging students (Cooper, 2014). Among some of the ways in which Ednovate celebrates their students’ cultures was the inclusion of authors from Latino/Latina backgrounds into their literature units and the creation of a Mexican folkdance program. Both approaches seek to teach Ednovate students about Latino/Latina literature, art, music, dance, and history and helps connect their educational experiences to their familial heritage and culture. Ednovate’s incorporation of culture into curriculum has affirmed that teaching content that is culturally relevant to the students’ identities and experiences empowers students and helps them become successful in society (Osborne, 1996). As described in Chapter Three, the cultural dance program that was created at one Ednovate school has not only fostered student engagement but has also created a wider community engagement through the public celebration of Mexican culture. As Participant 4 stated in their interview, the Mexican folkdance program has created a space where “marginalized communities and

their cultures [are] in the spotlight, on the stage, so that we celebrate them”. According to one recent study, community engagement is one of the key factors when trying to reform a school or district; relationships between parents, community members, and schools has led to a higher level of accountability and expectation from the schools and their results (Sanders, 2014).

A significant part of Ednovate’s community engagement is related to the resources that they make accessible to students and families. According to a recent study done on urban school districts there is a direct correlation between the distribution of resources and academic success among immigrant students (Schwartz & Stiefel, 2004). Within their five school campuses, Ednovate provides a number of important resources for immigrant and first-generation families in their communities. Some of these resources include access to lawyers, DACA information sessions and workshops, safe centers for immigrant students, visual affirmations, advisory groups, and alumni counseling programs. Extending these resources to both the students and their families created more engagement between the school community and the outside community. Workshops, information sessions, and legal counseling were open to families seeking guidance and answers, while advisory leaders met with families several times a school-year to talk about the individual needs of their students. Building these relationships between the school and parents is an effective way of facilitating open communication and overall success for a school (Sanders, 2014). Resource provision at Ednovate schools has allowed both students and their families to access important information and tools that

are otherwise usually not available to immigrant students in schools that have inadequate educational resources (Borgonovi, Piacentini, & Schleicher, 2019).

In this study, student success was measured by three factors: 1) college acceptance rate, 2) scholarships and grants awarded, and 3) standardized test scores. According to the United States Census Bureau (2018), the percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in college or university was approximately 19.1% in 2016. Meanwhile, 100% of all of Ednovate's graduating classes have been accepted into four-year colleges or universities and have received over 11 million dollars in prestigious scholarships and grants. Ednovate students have exceeded both Los Angeles Unified School District and California state ACT and SBAC exam score averages by several percentage points, making them an exceptionally successful group of students based on socioeconomic, ethnic, and immigrant status disadvantages that many immigrant/first-generation students face in school (Clarkson, 2008). The connective and culturally relevant pedagogical practices that Ednovate has established creates an environment where students are highly engaged in both the classroom and community, increasingly motivated, and comparatively successful across multiple academic disciplines.

### Implications

Although this study only examined the model and pedagogical practices of one small system of charter schools, the results have broader implications for state governments, other public charter schools, and educators who wish to introduce certain pedagogies into their teaching of students from particularly disadvantaged communities and backgrounds. The results from this study have the potential of demonstrating how schools and

educators can use their platforms to inspire structural change and reform within school communities in order to create higher rates of student success and engagement. This study has shown that the Ednovate academic model consists of several important components that have the potential of inspiring entire state-governed school districts to follow a similar model in order to ensure more academic success among its students. The findings have also indicated that the specific teaching methods used by the educators at Ednovate schools have resulted in higher rates of student success and participation in both the classroom and outside community; applying similar pedagogical practices could potentially yield better results in other schools and districts.

#### For State Governments

School districts are governing bodies and territories that act an extension of the state; made up of elected school boards, their autonomy is somewhat limited and is in the hands of elected officials and state responsibilities (Briffault, 2005). While charter schools do not fall under the jurisdiction of school district rules that are applied to traditional public schools, the overarching values and principles that a charter school like Ednovate embodies has the potential to help influence the restructuring and reforming of any school district. However, school districts have very little legal or political power compared to other local government bodies, as “there is far greater state administrative oversight of school boards than of other local governments” (Briffault, 2005, p.30). When looking to reform or reshape a school district, one must turn to state government officials and policies in order to create true change. The findings in this study show that placing student and teacher identities, personal experiences, and cultural values at the core of a school model yields impressive academic results. Perhaps if state governments focused

their educational policies on both the cultural contexts and communities that students in certain school districts come from, there could be a wider use of culturally relevant pedagogies and access to resources that students in many school districts in the United States currently lack. As the results in this study have shown, a significant part of what makes the Ednovate model successful is the hiring of teachers and administrators that share similar experiences, backgrounds, and values as the communities that they serve. This is a major factor in attempting to create positive outcomes for minority and disadvantaged students (Meier, 2005). For minority and other marginalized students in school districts across the nation, lack of representation plays a significant role in the higher rates of student failure among these groups of students (Weiher, 2000). Perhaps a simple solution for state governments and school districts would be to employ a higher number of minority teachers that accurately reflects the population of students that they serve. Results from this study and previous studies (Meier, 2005; Weiher, 2000) have shown that this process of selectively hiring teachers ultimately leads to higher rates of student achievement. For state governments that have jurisdiction over school districts and boards, normalizing certain standards that take into consideration the identities, cultures, and experiences of their students could increase student success and engagement. While this study only examined one charter school system, its impressive results and high levels of both student and community engagement reflect the effectiveness of its model and could be influential at a state government level to inspire change in public education policy.

### For Public Charter Schools

Though public charter schools only make up about 5% of all public schools in the United States, they are highly prevalent especially in urban cities and low-income areas (Boundy & Weckstein, 2011). While funded by a number of different entities, charter schools are often created in hopes of inspiring innovation and competition among students and staff (Boundy & Weckstein, 2011). Results from this study show that because charter schools are not required to follow the same rules applied to local district schools, there is greater autonomy in selectively hiring staff, creating curricula that fits the needs of the students, establishing educational and community programs, and implementing certain teaching practices that aid in the developing of identity and belonging in marginalized students. The autonomy granted to charter schools has the potential of creating academic models that can foster both innovation and culturally relevant pedagogies, exemplified by a charter school like Ednovate. Results from this study indicate that the autonomy given to charter schools also allows school faculty to create and maintain a central mission that aligns with every aspect of their schooling practices, from the hiring process to the classroom curriculum. For other public charter schools across the nation, the autonomy and accountability that charter schools hold is an opportunity to create a model that caters to the individual needs of disadvantaged students. Findings from this study show that aligning a school's mission or vision with the demographics of the population they serve creates a safe, trusting, and engaged school community. Both a strong academic model and ensuring that all staff uses culturally relevant pedagogical practices are key to engaging students and fostering academic success.

While many charter schools are criticized for racial segregation or isolation (Gajendragadkar, 2006), the results of this study show that public charter schools have the potential and power to encourage diversity in both their student and staff populations and have the potential to celebrate the cultural backgrounds of all students, while simultaneously creating high rates of student success. For other public charter schools that struggle with student performance or engagement, the findings from this study indicate that there are several factors that could lead to better results: 1) developing and preserving a clearly defined mission statement that reflects the demographics of the students, 2) strictly hiring teachers and administrators who align with the values within the mission, 3) creating personalized academic plans for every individual student, and 4) incorporating aspects of culture (both the teachers' and students') into the everyday classroom curricula. Despite the pushback against the charter school movement that claims level of satisfaction among charter school parents and students is not promising (Buckley & Schneider, 2007), this study demonstrates the methods in which public charter schools can generate high levels of both parent and student satisfaction. The 95% satisfaction rate of Ednovate parents and students and the nearly 10% increase in applicants suggests that by exercising certain teaching practices that create connection between staff and students, other public charter schools have the potential to increase parent and student satisfaction and resist criticism from opposers of charter schools.

According to data from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, total enrollment in U.S. public charter schools is over 3,000,000 (David & Hesla, 2018). With such a high number of students enrolled in public charter schools, accountability and student

performance are top priorities in these schools. With many charter schools being located in urban and low socioeconomic areas, it is vital that the curriculum, staff, and school missions reflect the experiences and identities of the communities they serve. As this study has demonstrated, there are several measures that can be taken in order to ensure positive growth and development in marginalized students. While this case study looked mainly at immigrant and first-generation students, these pedagogies could perhaps be used with other disadvantaged students from a number of different backgrounds and could be helpful in encouraging student engagement and success in classrooms and communities across the nation.

### For Educators

A fundamental part of this study is the change that Ednovate educators seek to make in the field of education. As discussed in Chapter Three, Ednovate teachers utilize specific teaching methods that are geared towards the identities and needs of their individual students. The findings of this study demonstrate that through the power of personal storytelling, connective instruction, celebrating culture, and providing students and families with crucial resources, teachers can help their students develop a sense of identity and belonging through meaningful relationships, while also achieving higher rates of student success. For any educator, these specific practices--demonstrated by Ednovate teachers and administrators--have the potential of being highly valuable tools that can help combat challenges that educators face in their field. Many educators face a serious challenge known as teacher burnout; according to one study, emotional exhaustion, stress, and minimal opportunity for reflection are all common causes of

burnout (Chang, 2009). Forming close bonds and relationships with students has been an integral factor in the teaching methods discussed in this study. Not only are student-teacher relationships beneficial to the students' learning and belonging, but they are also highly valuable to educators' wellbeing and sense of commitment to their jobs (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Pedagogical practices such as personal storytelling, connective instruction, and community engagement help to build relationships with students, families, and members of the community. As demonstrated by this study, the team-oriented mindset among teachers and administrators within a school helps to create community and belonging; one participant stated, "there's a strong sense of community, collaboration, and team; we're one family". For educators, focusing around a central school mission and while forming relationships with other faculty members has the ability to create a sense of family and community, with stronger ties to their schools and careers. Incorporating teaching practices that utilize personal experience and relationship-building is advantageous to both the students and the faculty within a school community. Establishing strong relationships with both students and other colleagues is a significant factor in teacher job satisfaction, which ultimately leads to higher rates of student academic achievement (Knox & Anfara, 2013). Although stress is often inevitable in the field of education, using teaching methods that help create bonds with students and other faculty members has the potential to increase levels of satisfaction and fulfillment in education careers, while also increasing the overall levels of student success.

### Limitations and Future Research

There are, of course, limitations to this study as it focused on only one charter management system of schools and a small group of teachers and faculty from the case

study schools. The data in this study came from both publicly available information on Ednovate's website, as well as one-on-one interviews that were conducted by the researcher, which often reflects a level of bias on both the interviewer and the interviewee's part. This study took place in the summer months of the year, which led to limited accessibility to teachers and administrators, as many were not available for interviews at the time. Conducting interviews during the academic year may have led to a wider availability of teachers and faculty to conduct interviews. Because the participant pool was relatively small, there are limitations on the qualitative and interview data, as it does not reflect a large percentage of the teacher population at the case study schools. Interviewing a greater number of the faculty from these schools would have led to a broader understanding of the research question and could have included a more diverse set of opinions and answers to interview questions. Interview questions were written and asked by the researcher, which could potentially reflect personal biases when selecting the final set of interview questions. As with many interview-based studies, interpretation of the qualitative data may display some research bias from prior opinions and ideologies.

This study found that the Ednovate model (including the selective hiring of applicants) has the ability to function as an entire school district model. Further research is needed to explore how the implementation of such a model would affect other school districts of similar demographic makeups, and what policies would be needed to implement a similar model. Conducting research on a wider range of public charter schools in other states would also lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how different academic models might work for different districts, and how aspects of Ednovate's model could be

used to inspire low-performing school districts. Because of the selective teacher applicant pool at Ednovate schools, more research would need to be done to look at the criteria used to hire new teachers and staff, and how this could translate to other hiring processes in other school districts.

This study also found that through the celebration of culture, connective teaching, and providing crucial resources to immigrant/first-generation students, Ednovate schools have fostered a higher level of student success than schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District and the state of California. However, these findings are only based on data publicly provided by Ednovate and are based on the average scores on several standardized tests. This study also measured student success based on college acceptance rates and selective scholarship earnings. Measuring student success on these three factors has its limitations, and further research looking at other components such as average GPA and dropout rates may create a broader definition of student success.

Finally, this study did not consider the outcomes from the students' perspectives, due to a lack of student availability and legal matters when researching minors. Further research examining students' opinions on student-teacher relations and their personal academic experiences would allow for a more dimensional and comprehensive study that explores the results from both a faculty and student viewpoint. This could lead to a wider understanding of the ways in which using culture and identity in teaching play a role in student academic success.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Lucie,

The study referenced above has final approval to begin. The study was judged exempt from further review under Category 2 of the regulations. As a study in that category, no further communication with the IRB is required, unless you need a modification.

We keep applications in this category for five years and then destroy, but we will confirm with you that the study is completed prior to destroying. I have attached the completed cover page and approved application for your records.

If you need to submit a modification to the study please visit our [website](#)

Good luck with the study.

Best regards,  
Paula

**Paula Portalatin, M. Ed., CPIA**  
**Research Compliance Officer II**  
Office of Research Compliance  
University of Maine  
Corbett Hall Room 402  
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<https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/>

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Lucie Bonneville, an undergraduate student in the Department of International Affairs at the University of Maine. The faculty advisor of this study is Dr. Linda Silka of the University of Maine George J. Mitchell Center for Sustainability Solutions. The purpose of the research is to study the ways in which the United States' educational system is influenced by the growing number of immigrant teachers and staff and using educational anthropology to understand how groups of individuals from different backgrounds and cultures influence an education system.

### **What Will You Be Asked to Do?**

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a recorded interview. Questions asked during the interview might include: "What ethnicity do you identify as?", "How has your experience as an immigrant in the United States influenced your role as an educator?", "What are some of the challenges that immigrant students face in school today?", etc. It may take approximately 45-60 minutes to participate.

### **Risks**

-Except for your time and inconvenience, there are no risks to you from participating in this study.

### **Benefits**

-While this study will have no direct benefit to you, this research may help us learn more about the educational system in the United States and how immigrant teachers and faculty have a profound impact on education systems; it may also help us learn about the ways in which people from different backgrounds and identities shape education differently.

### **Confidentiality**

Your name will not be on any of the data. You will be assigned a random number label as to not connect the data to your name. Any audio recordings of interviews will be stored on the device it is recorded on and will be destroyed by May 2019. The faculty advisor on this study, Dr. Linda Silka may have access to any of the data collected during research. Your name or other identifying information will not be reported in any publications.

### **Voluntary**

Participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

### **Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at (207)-323-

6241, [lucie.bonneville@maine.edu](mailto:lucie.bonneville@maine.edu). You may also reach the faculty advisor on this study at (207)-581-3411, [silka@maine.edu](mailto:silka@maine.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance, University of Maine, 207/581-1498 or 207/581-2657 (or e-mail [umric@maine.edu](mailto:umric@maine.edu)).

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What ethnicity do you identify as?
- Can you tell me a little bit about your experience as an immigrant in the United States?
- What is the value of education in your culture?
- What are some of the main differences that you have experienced between the education system in the United States and that of your country?
- How has your experience as an immigrant in the United States influenced your role as an educator?
- What parts of your own culture (if any) might influence the way you educate your students?
- What is the overall ethnic makeup of your student population?
- What are some of the challenges that immigrant students face in school today?
- How does the demographic makeup of the school affect the education or curriculum, if at all?
- What are some of the benefits of working in a charter school system rather than a district school?
- What makes USC College Prep unique?
- How do you interpret USC College Prep's mission?
- What do you think is the value of having immigrant teachers educating immigrant students or children of immigrants?
- Given the current political climate and the current administration's stance on immigration, has your role as an educator/administrator to immigrant students been affected at all?
- What is the importance of cultural diversity in education systems, and how have you seen this make a difference in the education of students at USC College Prep?

- Can you tell me a little bit about your curriculum and how it is unique/beneficial to immigrant students?
- How do the administration and teachers work together to ensure a safe and accepting environment for immigrant students?
- Do you have a close relationship with many of your students?
- How do language barriers affect your classroom? How do you use your experience with students learning English?

## AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Lucie N. Bonneville was born in San Francisco, California on July 11, 1998. She moved to Belfast, Maine when she was seven years old and graduated from Belfast Area High School in 2016. Lucie is bilingual in French and English and is a dual citizen of both France and the United States. She majors in International Affairs with a concentration in Culture, Conflict, and Globalization and minors in French. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and recently worked on Senator Angus King's Re-Election Campaign in 2018.

Upon graduation, Lucie plans on traveling and volunteering internationally before finding work in the non-profit/non-governmental organization sector.