TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

By

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TEACHER KNOWLEDGE AND SECONDARY ENGLISH LEARNERS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

By

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Due to a variety of global, political, and local forces, rural schools in the United States (US) face an increase in the number of English learners (ELs), the majority of whom are from Hispanic backgrounds, who participate in mainstream, inclusive secondary classrooms where the primary medium of instruction is English. Like their non-rural counterparts, teachers in rural communities must facilitate learning for EL students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from the mainstream. However, rural teachers are less prepared to do so. Although some research on what teachers need to know to effectively teach language and content to ELs has been conducted, little is known about the actual teacher knowledge required to provide effective EL instruction in secondary rural settings. Employing teacher knowledge and place-based education as a lens, this narrative-informed qualitative study examined what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in a rural secondary school community. The study addressed two main questions: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?
Four secondary teachers who taught ELs in a rural school in the southeastern US participated in the study. Primary data were gathered for each participant through four semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation methods, and secondary data consisted of archival and ongoing text documents. Using an iterative approach, data analysis commenced with open coding followed by analytical axial coding that culminated in categories. Findings from this study demonstrated that the teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges emerged as the most prominent influences in their work with secondary ELs in this rural community. Participants’ relational knowledge was central in mediating and constructing TK. Findings also suggested that the participants’ knowledges: personal, relational, place-based, and professional were constantly interconnected in a dialectic manner, continually shaping and reshaping each other. A four-dimensional model is proposed. Findings suggest PD opportunities for rural teachers to reflect on TK dimensions to illuminate the ways in which these shape teachers’ work with ELs in a particular rural community.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview

How teachers come to know what they know and what they do with what they know in classrooms has been the subject of extensive research and is considered integral to student learning (Borg, 2006, 2015; Carter, 1990; Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Freeman, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). While research on teaching was initially guided by positivist epistemological perspectives that separated teachers’ professional work from their personal lives and experiences (Borg, 2006, 2015; Carter, 1990; Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 2012), more constructivist perspectives emerged shifting the attention from what teachers did to how they thought about what they did (Clandinin, 1985; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997, Elbaz, 1983; Freeman, 2002, 2016; Johnson, 2006; Lampert, 1985; Shulman, 1987). As Freeman (2002) noted, “background, experience, and social context were all overlooked as potential influences on how new teachers formed knowledge in their professional education” (p. 5). Thus, over the past four decades, research on teaching and the work that teachers do in classrooms with students has expanded into more nuanced areas that underscore teachers as thinkers and agents in their learning and teaching decision-making processes, including their personal lives and experiences shaping their professional lives (Borg, 2015; Calderhead, 1987; Carter, 1990; Elbaz, 1988; Freeman, 2002; Jackson, 1968; Johnson, 2006; Lortie, 1975, Walberg, 1977).

The relationship between teacher knowledge (TK) and student learning is a topic of frequent investigation among educational scholars. Although, teachers’ work does
account for student learning (e.g., Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Téllez & Waxman, 2006), recent studies (Berliner, 2017; Campbell & Ronfeldt, 2018) demonstrated that it accounts for only a small portion of overall student learning. Nevertheless, what teachers know is an important area of investigation, because teachers—who possess personal, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds; nuanced professional preparations; and face different contextual school environments—must appropriate this background and knowledges in unique ways. Thus, investigating who teachers are and how their personal experiences shape their work in schools must shed some light on what they know and how they appropriate knowledge learned to address the undeniable challenge to successfully meet the needs of the increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in the US.

In this introductory chapter, I will accomplish four goals: First, I contextualize the research problem being investigated by discussing the following: 1) the rapid growth of ELs in the US; 2) the shortage of well-prepared EL teachers; 3) the widely documented pattern of underperformance of ELs on state and national tests (Kieffer & Thompson, 2018); 4) the lack of empirical examinations of TK theoretical frameworks informing EL teaching and learning; 5) the limited scholarship about secondary TK and experiences working with secondary ELs in rural communities. These areas require educational research that illuminates the necessary TK that will enhance secondary ELs’ academic performance in rural settings. Second, I list the two research questions. Third, I discuss the significance of the study. Lastly, I define important terms to provide the foundation for the language used in this dissertation.
Statement of the Problem

Due to a variety of globalized, political, and local forces, schools in the US are faced with an increase in the number of English learners (ELs) who participate in mainstream, inclusive classrooms where the primary medium of instruction is English (Freeman, 2018; Gallagher & Haan, 2018). ELs in US public schools represent about five million students and the number continues to grow (Lucas, Strom, Bratkovich, & Wnuk, 2018). ELs are among the fastest growing demographic group in US public schools (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2011), and that growth requires educators to address ELs’ educational needs in order to succeed socially and academically.

Most mainstream teachers who have ELs in their classrooms are not prepared to teach such a heterogeneous group of students (Calderón et al., 2011; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Li, 2013; Menken, 2006) and are not sufficiently prepared to teach students who come from homes and backgrounds where English is not their first language (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Li, 2013). Gándara and colleagues (2005) surveyed teachers with ELs in their classrooms and found that only 29% of them were certified in English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education. Similarly, a study by Karabenick and Noda (2004) reported that most teachers surveyed, who had ELs in their classes, lacked basic foundational knowledge about EL issues. More troubling was that even when teachers indicated that they felt incompetent to teach ELs, they did not seem to have a complete understanding of the serious challenges ELs face as they think that commonsense practices for English-speaking students are good enough for ELs (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Thus, the US educational system faced with these challenges: 1) the rapid growth of ELs in the US; 2) the shortage of well-prepared teachers; and 3) the widely documented pattern of underperformance of ELs on state
and national tests (Kieffer & Thompson, 2018), requires educational research that illuminates the necessary TK that will enhance ELs’ academic performance.

**TK and ELs**

EL students in US public schools represent approximately 9.6% of the K-12 student population (NCES, 2018). Florida has the third largest number of ELs in the US, followed by California and Texas. Recent data (2016-2017) indicate that Florida has 294,309 who were identified as ELs in grades K-12 (FL DOE, 2017). Of that number, roughly 232,576 (79.4%) were identified as Hispanic. The majority of students identified as ELs in the US represents Spanish speakers (FL DOE, 2017, NCES, 2018, US ED, 2020).

Over the last decade, research has begun to frame the knowledge that teachers need to effectively teach language and content to ELs that emphasize the linguistic and cultural dimensions of schooling (e.g., Coady, Hamann, Harrington, Pacheco, Pho, & Yedlin, 2007; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; Commins & Miramontes, 2006; de Jong & Harper, 2005; de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Fillmore & Snow, 2000, 2002; Flores, Sheets, & Clark, 2010; Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Sanders, & Christian, 2006; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2006; Turkan, de Oliveira, Lee, & Phelps, 2014). For instance, Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2011, 2016) developed a conceptual framework that described the components of the TK of teaching and learning for ELs which included three main areas: 1) teachers’ background and experiences; 2) teachers’ knowledge of teaching and learning processes of ELs; and 3) teachers’ knowledge of ELs as learners. Other authors (e.g., Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-González, 2008; Valdés, Bunch, Snow, Lee, & Matos, 2005) insisted that EL teachers should have knowledge of the structure of
English, a knowledge of second language learning principles, and an ability to apply these principles in their teaching.

Most of the conceptual frameworks— which have illuminated what mainstream teachers need to know and be able to do when working with ELs in elementary settings— have been encouraging for educators to build a knowledge base and guide teacher education. They also presented an optimistic landscape for the educational future of most ELs. However, as Turkan, De Oliveira, Lee, and Phelps (2014) observed “beyond these attempts to inform and guide teacher education, the growing body of empirical and conceptual literature has not been translated into a TK base to guide educating all teachers to teach ELLs” (p. 5). Thus, the necessary knowledge that teachers must have to effectively teach ELs continued to be unclear. Other scholars shared Turkan et al.’s same sentiment. For instance, Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2016) added that most conceptual frameworks held promise for developing competence in teaching ELs, however, they asserted that little is known about what teachers know to provide EL instruction conducive to learning. More empirical examinations of these theoretical frameworks need to be examined (Tandon, Viesca, Heuston, & Milbourn, 2017; Turkan et al., 2014).

**US Secondary School Settings TK and ELs**

This situation is more critical in secondary school settings in which newcomer ELs are faced with complex academic language and English development in the content-areas. Secondary ELs are expected to master a new academic language— which typically takes five to seven years to acquire under normal circumstances (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2008) —and the explicit and implicit curriculum their English-speaking peers have been exposed to during their entire school career. Scholarship on
what secondary teachers working with ELs know or need to know, has been overlooked (Tandon et al., 2017; Reeves, 2009). Even when scholars have recognized the need to develop a knowledge base of principles and practices geared specifically for content-area teachers working with ELs in secondary school settings (Faltis, Arias, & Ramírez-Marín, 2010, Reeves, 2006), this research continues to be largely absent. In addition, the personal and professional experiences of secondary teachers working with ELs have received little attention (Reeves, 2006). The rigid structure of secondary settings with fixed content-area classrooms present a difficult challenge for teachers to differentiate curriculum, especially those with a low incidence of ELs in their classroom (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The rigid content-area structure, combined with limited time to learn about EL individual students or to plan curriculum differentiation, and the pressures for accountability imposed by local, state and national level educational policies, such as state-mandated testing and other EL requirements, all present additional challenges for secondary teachers to provide EL instruction that meets their academic needs (de Jong et al., 2013). Moreover, secondary teacher preparation for EL instruction has been ignored (August & Shanahan, 2006), hence secondary teachers are likely to be unprepared to meeting the needs of ELs.

**US State and National Educational Policies Shaping ELs Teaching and Learning**

Local, state and national level educational policies influence how teachers enact their professional knowledge to elicit EL instruction. Even before the adoption of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001, the majority of ELs were placed in monolingual, English-only or mainstream classrooms, a practice that reflected national and international trends to standardize and improve their instruction (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2010). Nevertheless, ELs remain the lowest achieving
student subgroup in the US and they are more likely to drop out of school than their English-speaking peers (Calderón et al., 2011; Carnoy & García, 2017; Kieffer & Thompson, 2018; Menken, Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Viadero, 2009; Warren, Reeder, Noflte, Kaiser, & Jurchan-Rizzo, 2010). Scholars have demonstrated that state-mandated requirements influence how mainstream teachers often view ELs from a deficit perspective (e.g., Escamilla, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Harklau, 2000; Lee, Luyks, Buxton, & Shaver, 2007; Penfield, 1987). Teachers’ frustrations and deficit views of ELs and their families are further exacerbated by national educational policies requiring measured achievement outcomes for ELs. For instance, by promoting deficit discourses that focus only on what students are not able to do, teachers have difficulty recognizing the benefits of ELs’ bilingual practices when students are in the process of learning. Bunch (2014) warned against researchers and educators engaging in deficit discourses as these practices only contribute to the further marginalization of ELs in mainstream classrooms and ensure that their needs will not be met.

As noted, the US educational system faced with these challenges: 1) the rapid growth of ELs in the US; 2) the shortage of well-prepared teachers; 3) the widely documented pattern of underperformance of ELs on state and national tests (Kieffer & Thompson, 2018); 4) the lack of empirical examinations of TK theoretical frameworks informing EL teaching and learning; 5) the limited scholarship about secondary TK and experiences working with ELs; and 6) the lack of understanding of how local, state, and national policies shaping TK for secondary ELs, requires educational research that illuminates the necessary TK that will enhance secondary ELs’ academic performance.
In the next section, I will discuss some of the strengths and challenges of rurality as they relate to TK for secondary ELs.

**US Secondary EL TK and Rurality**

Rural teachers must be familiar with both the strengths and challenges of rural places to develop a sense of place (Howley & Howley, 2014). A teacher’s sense of place requires teachers to be aware of the role that rurality plays in the education of ELs. In defining rural spaces, attention must be directed “to social processes, to the ways in which people live, work, play, desire, and hopefully, cooperate” in particular places (John & Ford, 2017, p. 13). Reid, Green, Cooper, Hastings, Lock, and White (2010) reminded us that “coming to know a place means recognizing and valuing the forms of social and symbolic capital that exist there” (p. 272). People in a rural place have a strong sense of community and schools in those places serve as the glue that holds a community together (Dolph, 2008). Scholars have theorized that rural places are socially, historically and culturally vivid as they offer ways of being, knowing, and living. For instance, scholars have theorized a sense of place as the coming to know a place as a sense of an interaction between *field and habitus* in which society and space interact beyond a simple location (Reagan, Hambacher, Schram, McCurdy, Lord, Higginbotham, & Fornauf, 2019; White, 2015). Other researchers emphasized the significance for teachers to possess both personal and contextual knowledge of the rural community in which they work (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; White, 2015; White & Reid, 2008).

In this study, then, it is important for secondary teachers to consider place as something more fluid; rather than a fixed, neutral geographical site (Gruenewald, 2003). That is, what teachers know about themselves (ontology) and what they know
(episteme) about their profession and their work with EL students is shaped by one’s history and experiences as well as by beliefs and expectations of what it means to teach in a specific rural community. Thus, what a rural secondary teacher knows is linked to a particular place since how a teacher views herself and how she makes sense of her professional preparation both informs and is informed by a sense of place in that particular rural community (Eppley, 2015).

Therefore, the uniqueness of rural communities warrants that scholars examine the specific TK needed to teach ELs in rural areas and school districts (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Stufft & Brogadir, 2010). Recent data from the 2016-17 school year indicate that EL students now account for 9.6% of the total K-12 student population, or just under 5 million students across the country (NCES, 2018). In fringe, distant, and remote rural settings, defined following US guidelines for rurality (NCES, 2006), EL students account for about 14% of the total EL population (NCES, 2012). It is plausible that the number of rural EL students is well over 800,000 students in 2025.

Rural school districts are experiencing an influx of ELs as a result of immigrant families seeking work and a safe place to live (Coady, 2019; Coady, Heffington, & Marichal, 2017). The majority of immigrants living in the rural US are Hispanic (O’Hare, 2009), and the majority of students identified as ELs represents Spanish speakers (US ED, 2020). The exact number of EL students is difficult to determine as identification guidelines such as English language proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which guide the definition of who is an EL, vary from state to state (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Genesee et al., 2006).
The abovementioned challenges faced by US secondary teachers of ELs are exacerbated by rurality. A rural context poses educational challenges for teachers who work in low-incidence mainstream classrooms in which there are only one or two ELs in a classroom (Bérubé, 2000; Hansen-Thomas, 2018). Most rural communities generally have little experience with people from other cultures (Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Wrigley, 2000) and do not have access to teachers who understand the special linguistic, cultural and educational needs of the growing number of ELs. For example, there is a sociocultural and linguistic disconnect between rural teachers and EL students’— US rural teachers follow the general trend, they are primarily white, monolingual, English-speaking females with a bachelor’s degree (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). In addition, there is lack of well-trained teachers in ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) methods, lack of language-focused teacher education, and a dearth of professional development (PD) resources for in-service teachers in most rural areas (Hansen-Thomas, 2018). Rural communities have found themselves exploring the best ways to teach ESL and figure out how to comply with accountability measures of Titles I and III of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. These mandates required EL students to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Thus, rural teachers face the challenge of teaching English and rigorous academic content without accessibility of resources (Hansen-Thomas, 2018).

The limited access to funds and resources is also exacerbated by the nature of rurality: demographic and geographic isolation, sociodemographic and topographic factors, teacher attrition, poverty, and community language barriers (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Coady, Coady, & Nelson, 2015; Hansen-Thomas, 2018;

Even when some states mandate the preparation of teachers, there is lack of substantial evidence that mainstream teachers actually engage in differentiated instructional practices for ELs (e.g., Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Coady, Li, & Lopez, 2018, 2019; Ernst-Slavit & Poveda, 2011). Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2016) found that in spite of the existing Florida Consent Decree—a legal document signed in 1990, outlining the preparation of all Florida teachers to work with ELs—teachers in the study used “unplanned” or spontaneous responses to ELs’ academic needs. For instance, the state of Florida requires that all mainstream secondary content teachers receive 60 hours of ESOL as well as 60 PD hours for educational leaders (FL DOE, 1990). However, there is little evidence that Florida state requirements result in teacher changed practices (Coady, Li, & Lopez, 2019). Nevertheless, it is important to note that efforts had been made to prepare teachers for the challenging task of educating ELs. For instance, in rural Texas, Bustamante, Brown, and Irby (2010) conducted research on preparing teacher leaders for ELs. More recently, Ankeny, Marichal, and Coady (2019) found that teachers enrolled in a PD in rural Florida addressed issues of poverty and rurality that were specific to their unique environment, resulting in a transformative practice.

**Rural TK Research and ELs**

Rural EL education research has been largely absent from the rural education literature (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Brennan, 2005; Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017). Currently, about 50% of all school districts in the US are classified as rural (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017), and one-third of all public schools are located in rural
areas (Ayers, 2011). Nonetheless, most of the investigations on education in the US are conducted in urban or suburban schools (Williams & Grooms, 2016). Brennan (2005) argued that rurality had been largely absent from educational research. In the review of nearly 500 rural education research studies conducted between 1991 and 2003, Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, and Dean (2005) did not identify a single study on teaching and learning for ELs in rural settings. Likewise, Cicchinelli and Barley (2010) conducted a review of 62 articles, once more, there was an absence of studies focusing on rural and second language education (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017).

From 2008 to 2018, ten relevant studies were identified that underscored the importance of exploring teachers’ knowledge and related constructs to work with ELs in rural settings. Seven studies examined perceptions of teacher education and classroom instruction that support ELs’ learning. Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) explored the beliefs and experiences of rural teachers of ELs in Texas and found that even when the majority of teachers had previous ESL preparation, they felt incompetent to teach ELs. Another study conducted by Hansen-Thomas and Grosso Richins (2015) found mentoring and collaboration beneficial in promoting a shift in the teachers’ personal knowledge and identities as ESL rural teachers.

In North Carolina, O’Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez (2008) explored teachers’ perceptions of their own preparedness to teach ELs in mainstream rural classrooms and found high levels of frustration, inadequacies about assessment, concerns about the cultural differences, and lack of confidence in teachers’ knowledge base. Also, in rural North Carolina, Manner and Rodriguez (2012) conducted a small study of teachers’ perceptions about the success of online PD and found that an online PD delivery was a
practical way to receive the needed training. A study by Ringler, O'Neal, Rawis, and Cuminsky (2013) examined a framework for guiding instruction for ELs in mainstream classrooms Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarría, Short & Powers, 2006) and reported that school administration positive support was necessary to implement a SIOP PD program.

The work of Fogle and Moser (2017) examined the personal and professional trajectories of foreign and second language teachers in K-12 rural settings and found that these life trajectories contributed to their understandings of language teaching for ELs. Further, through strategic collaboration, teachers saw themselves as facilitators of social change in their rural school and their communities. Along the same lines, Bustamante, Brown, and Irby (2010) explored rural ESL teachers’ perceptions of their influence in reshaping the sociocultural context of their own school and community cultures to meet the needs of ELs. Because of the “dearth of empirical studies examining every aspect” of EL experiences and achievement in rural settings, the researchers offered several recommendations: 1) to gather more community perceptions of the unique contextual forces that might hinder teacher leadership and student achievement; 2) to conduct more research on the effectiveness of rural teacher preparation and PD; 3) to promote an increasing level of awareness with the purpose of conducting more studies at the high school level, “where the dropout rates of Hispanic […] in rural areas continues to remain disproportionally high in comparison to those of white rural youth” (p. 250).

Three studies emphasized the need for rural educators to learn about: 1) students’ backgrounds; 2) instructional strategies that connect learning to EL students;
and 3) navigating local, district, and state policies that support rural EL academic learning and development. The first study by Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010) explored the challenges to improving learning for Latino ELs and found that 1) culture clashes and communication gaps hindered the work of teachers; 2) that teachers lacked knowledge in multiculturalism, language acquisition, EL instructional strategies, and of support mechanisms for families transitioning to a new place and culture. The second study by Paciotto and Delany-Barmann (2011) explored white teachers’ understandings and transformation of state mandated language policies for equitable educational reform for all students in the district. The third study drew upon contexts of reception and sociocultural theories, Lee and Hawkins (2015) examined how teachers were making sense of educational policies for ELs and found that five rural districts were understaffed, overwhelmed, isolated, and unable to recruit and retain EL teachers.

The dearth of research in US rural areas reflects the reality that the ESOL field does not have a clear understanding of what teachers know for effective EL instruction in mainstream rural secondary classrooms. As noted, pressing challenges for rural schools and for the education of ELs in those areas persist. As abovementioned, TK investigations have focused on a more constructive perspective that considered the influence of teachers personal lived experiences shaping their professional lives related to their instructional decisions. Thus, I theorize that an examination of what teachers know about EL teaching and learning in rural settings should begin with an examination of what teachers say they know about themselves, their students’ backgrounds, their professional preparation for teaching ELs in rural places, and what they know about the
rural place in which they work. This study investigates TK for teaching secondary English learning students in a rural Florida community.

What mainstream teachers know and the way in which they appropriate their professional teacher education impacts EL students’ achievement levels and, consequently, their academic success (Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Coady, Li, and Lopez (2018) observed in Florida that in 2011, the achievement gaps between EL and non-EL students in the NAEP reading assessment were 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at the 8th-grade level. For example, data from the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) indicated that ELs continued to be outperformed by non-EL students across all of the state standardized assessments (Coady, Li, & Lopez, 2018). Additionally, the gap at the 5th grade level in both English language arts and mathematics persists across all grade levels. For example, the percentage of students considered proficient, i.e., passing with a score of 3 or above on the English language arts assessment, was 16.1% in grade 5, but that number decreases to 7.9% by grade 10 (FL DOE, 2017), underscoring an achievement gap of 44.1 percentage points between EL and non-EL students by grade 10 (Coady et al., 2018). The decreased English proficiency of EL students in higher grades demands the need to explore what secondary mainstream teachers know to ensure that ELs have full access to complex academic and content-area language to improve their educational outcomes and to ensure a steady progress through secondary school.

Undoubtedly, there are pressing needs to be addressed to facilitate secondary mainstream teachers’ work with ELs. The limited research base in rural settings indicate that these needs are exacerbated by the rural nature of schools, namely limited
resources, and geographic and social distances (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Coady, Harper, & de Jong., 2011, Coady & Sorel, 2013, Coady, Coady, & Nelson, 2015; Fogle & Moser, 2017; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Johnson & Zoellner, 2016; Reynolds, 2017; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009, Wenger & Dinsmore, 2009; Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagómez, 2012; White & Corbett, 2014; Williams & Grooms, 2016). Thus, US mainstream secondary teachers of ELs in rural settings must be aware of how their personal knowledge (background, life stories, beliefs) intersects with their professional preparation and experiences. Simultaneously, these personal and professional knowledges inform and are informed by the place in which teachers work. For example, an understanding of rurality as comprised not only of a geographic space, but also of people in that space and the social processes that take place there is critical to ELs teaching and learning (John & Ford, 2017). Theorized in Chapter 2, the three conceptual TK dimensions —personal, professional, and place-based — can be used to frame teachers’ work with ELs. Thus, the difficult task for TK research and for the present study “is not simply […] showing that teachers think, believe, or have opinions but that they know. And even more important, that they know what they know” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 51). This study seeks to examine what mainstream teachers say they know related to the teaching of secondary ELs in a rural school community.

**Purpose of the Study**

For the most part, the research investigating TK for EL teaching and learning has been focused on what all teachers need to know and be able to do (e.g. Genessee, Lindholm-Leary, Sanders & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). The research on what secondary mainstream teachers need to know and be able to do to ensure that ELs have full access to academic and content-area language
to enable them to succeed socially and academically is largely absent (Faltis et al., 2010; Reeves, 2006). Research on secondary teachers of ELs needs greater attention, because in advanced grades the demands of academic language are more complex (Bunch, 2010; Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006). Furthermore, research demonstrated that ELs continue to be outperformed by non-ELs in state standardized assessments and the achievement gap percentage increases in higher academic grades (Coady et al., 2018). In rural settings, these issues are exacerbated by the lack of well-prepared teachers in ESOL methods, the lack of language-focused education, misconceptions and deficit views about their culturally and linguistically diverse students, the influence of local, state, and national level educational policies on teachers’ work with ELs, and a dearth of professional development (PD). Because of these challenges, mainstream secondary teachers of ELs in rural settings need to develop a deep knowledge of place, i.e., an understanding of how community, geography, topography, diverse demography, way of life, and limited resources relates to EL teaching and learning. Finally, the existing body of literature regarding TK and its connection to the teaching of ELs in rural settings has been largely absent. These are several gaps on the literature on TK for teaching secondary ELs in rural settings.

The purpose of this study to examine what secondary teachers say they know about working with ELs in a rural community. This study will complement the limited number of studies of TK for teaching ELs in US secondary rural settings and explore how rural teachers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interpret their personal, professional, and place-based knowledge.
Research Questions

Since educators have not yet reached a general consensus about what all teachers need to know to ensure that the growing population of ELs succeed socially and academically, the purpose of this study is to examine what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in US secondary rural settings. The two main research questions that guide this study are: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?

Significance of the Study

This study examines the ways in which the three dimensions of TK, described in detail in Chapter 2, interact to inform their work with EL secondary students in a rural community. Further, this study aims to illuminate teachers’ specialized knowledge for teaching ELs by providing insight into the inextricably interwoven dimensions of the personal, professional, and place-based knowledges of teachers of ELs in US rural secondary settings. Findings from this study could inform inservice PD programs for rural teachers of ELs in the US and for the preparation of preservice teachers who might work with EL students in rural communities.

Definition of Terms

This study will investigate what teachers say they know about teaching ELs in rural secondary settings. Following are key definitions used in this study.

- Teacher Knowledge (TK): TK has been broadly conceptualized as the knowledge teachers draw upon for their professional work as teachers. TK scholarship has roots in general education research stretching back more than 40 years (Borg, 2015). Further attempts by scholars to illuminate its nature have revealed it to be
a far more complex concept (Borg, 2006, 2015; Carter, 1990; Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The growing inventory of terms (e.g., teacher cognition, TK, teacher thinking, pedagogical content knowledge or PCK, personal practical knowledge or PPK, teacher beliefs) adds further complexity to the construct. As described in Chapter 2, this study conceptualizes TK as composed of teachers’ personal, professional, and place-based knowledge.

- **English Learners (ELs):** ELs are defined as students who are in the process of attaining proficiency in English as a new, additional language and whose families are culturally and linguistically diverse (Ariza & Coady, 2018). Although, most of the ELs in the US are Spanish speakers, and arrive by choice or in search of refuge (Calderón et al., 2011), there are long-term ELs who have been attending schools for at least seven years and are still in need of language services (Calderón et al., 2011; Menken et al., 2012). Moreover, while some ELs in secondary/middle-high school levels (see definition below) are US American born citizens, others are EL newcomers with an inconsistent educational trajectory (Menken et al., 2012). Therefore, teachers must get to know their EL students, their former language and literacy levels in order to provide the specialized instruction they need (Menken et al., 2012).

- **Mainstream classrooms:** classrooms where the primary medium of instruction is English and in which ELs are increasingly placed and expected to meet grade-appropriate standards developed for fluent English speakers. ELs must also demonstrate achievement through standardized tests in English (Harper & de Jong, 2009).

- **Mainstream classrooms teachers:** are general education teachers, defined as those whose primary training has been to teach English-speaking students in one or more traditional subject areas, such as mathematics, science, English, or social studies (Pettit, 2011).

- **Secondary or middle-high classrooms:** Secondary and/or middle-high school settings refer in most cases to consolidated grades 5-12 or upper school grades 9-12. A consolidated school combines two or more school buildings or districts into a single entity primarily for educational or economic benefits. A larger, consolidated school can offer a more enriched curriculum by combining resources as well as more schedule flexibility in the upper levels (9-12), and better qualified teachers. In contrast, smaller schools offer students more opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life and are more conducive to student learning due to optimum class sizes and teacher-student ratios. Consolidating smaller schools can impact rural districts and communities as rural schools serve as the glue that holds a community together (Dolph, 2008).

- **Hispanic:** In this study, this term is used to refer to students whose heritage is from Mexico, Central America, and the Spanish-speaking South America and Caribbean as *Hispanic*. As a first language speaker of Spanish, I recognize the
nuances of the terms Latino(a)/Latinx and Hispanic. This distinction is important since not all Latinos are considered Hispanics, linguistically speaking (e.g., Brazilian-Latinos speak Portuguese). For this study, I will refer to Spanish speakers as Hispanics and I will use Latinos when discussing research that employs this term. Regarding this controversy, Nieto (2012) noted that although some people have strong preferences for terms such as Latino and Hispanic, these terms are often interchangeable. In addition, it is important to recognize that not all Hispanic students are considered ELs and not all ELs are Hispanics. Spanish speakers began to populate the US due to several historical events, for example, the annexation of territories following the Mexican Revolution in 1820 and the Spanish American War in 1898 (when Puerto Rico became a US territory); the arrival of Cuban refugees fleeing the Castro regime in the early 1960s (Duany, 2017; Welch, 1985); the migration of Puerto Ricans to New York around the same time, specifically from 1945-1964, in search of better job opportunities (Duany, 2017); and currently, a significant number of undocumented Hispanics who entered and now live in the US (Barreneche, Lombardi, & Ramos-Flores, 2012). A consequence of these migration trends is that most US rural area teachers will have to teach Hispanic ELs and potentially other ELs at some point in their careers, and will be unprepared to teach them (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2013).

- Low-incidence mainstream classrooms: classrooms in which there are only one or two ELs (Bérubé, 2000; Hansen-Thomas, 2018).

- Marginalization of ELs/Marginalized ELs: Marginalized students refer to collective or individual students who have been traditionally ignored, dismissed, and/or relegated to the fringes within the educational system and therefore have received inadequate opportunities to learn (Campbell & Ronfeldt, 2018, p. 1264). For the purpose of this study, marginalized students include those identified as rural secondary ELs receiving English language services.

- EL Inclusion: Inclusive teaching in mainstream classrooms requires that teachers go beyond good general education practices and including ELs physically in classroom activities. In an inclusive classroom, ELs’ language and literacy development and cultural learning needs are addressed through systematic and planned instruction, such as second language and literacy scaffolding (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016, p. 361).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study will investigate TK for teaching ELs in US rural settings at the secondary school level and how rurality shapes TK of ELs. I will be using a narrative informed qualitative research study methodology with four focal teacher-participants that will be selected following purposeful sampling procedures. The study assumed that
participants will be honest and sincere about their responses. Assuming the honesty of the informants, their stories will be my primary data, which can also constitute a limitation since my findings will be based on what the participants say they know about teaching ELs and not about what they actually do in the classroom. As a researcher, I will also be systematically interpreting the data.

By investigating what teachers say they know about teaching US secondary ELs in a rural setting, I have placed a clear boundary defining this research. The relationship between TK and teacher practice is beyond the scope of this study. I have chosen to investigate on what four focal secondary teachers say they know about their work with ELs in a rural school community.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter describes the background of the problem and contextualizes the research problem. This study will examine TK for teaching ELs in US rural settings at the secondary school level. Although several knowledge frameworks for teaching ELs have been proposed, there is lack of empirical research as to what teachers need to know and do to grant ELs full access to academic and content-area language to enable them to succeed socially and academically, especially in secondary settings (Faltis et al., 2010). Scholars have noted that ELs’ performance is improved when students receive ongoing support, specifically in the home language (L1) (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2000). In addition to the limited TK research in secondary school settings, research on secondary teachers of ELs is critical due to the complex academic and content-language demands ELs face at this level (Bunch, 2010; Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006). The lack of well-prepared teachers in ESOL methods, the lack of language-focused education, misconceptions and deficit views about their culturally and
linguistically diverse students, and the dearth of PD for rural teachers of EL students reinforce the challenges that ELs and their teachers face in US secondary mainstream classrooms. This chapter also discussed how research illuminating TK for teaching ELs in rural settings have been largely absent. Only a handful of studies discussing nuanced aspects of this knowledge were identified in prior research. The next chapter describes the theoretical framework for the study and reviews empirical research related to TK and place-based education.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

In this chapter, my primary goal is to review conceptual and empirical studies relevant to this study. First, I examine the construct of teacher knowledge. I argue that TK is comprised of two main areas: 1) personal knowledge and experience, and 2) professional knowledge and experience. Both areas subsume educational and life experiences. I see these as two essential components of the overall knowledge-base of teachers that affect their work with EL students. Next, I review the relationship between TK and teacher instructional practices of ELs. I argue that the relationship between TK and instructional practices is fluid, multidirectional and “messy.” Lastly, I discuss the role that context plays in shaping TK and practices for ELs. Specifically, the constructs of place-based knowledge (Gruenewald, 2003), and geographic space (Green & Letts, 2007; John & Ford, 2017) such as rurality as a contextual factor appears to shape TK and practice because teachers must a) understand the specific rural community in which they teach and b) be invested in the local context in order to connect their knowledge to their work with ELs. This seems especially evident in rural education for ELs. Finally, this chapter ends with a conceptual diagram that demonstrates the relationship between the constructs and that provides an overall conceptual framework for the study.

Teacher Knowledge (TK): Epistemological Overview

Defining TK has been highly influenced by various epistemological perspectives about what constitutes knowledge and knowing. Episteme refers to how we know what we know in understanding or making sense of the world. The complexity of the construct is exemplified by the various scholars’ definitions and descriptions of TK which

Before research on TK emerged in the 1980s, a positivist scientific approach in the late 1960s posited that reality was something that existed separate from the knower and could be captured through empirical and systematic behavioral observations. Dunkin and Biddle’s (1974) process-product model for the study of teaching reflected this predominant positivist approach. This model focused on endowing teachers with specific behaviors that would elicit student learning to systematize classroom processes and to relate teachers’ behaviors to students’ achievement.

Scholars criticized positivist research because it reflected a depersonalized and decontextualized view of teaching that assumed that all students came from the same background and shared the same needs (Calderhead, 1987; Freeman, 2002; Jackson, 1968; Johnson, 2006, Lortie, 1975; Shulman, 1987). Additionally, this view conceptualized teachers as doers, receivers, and transmitters of other people’s knowledge, incapable of making their own decisions or producing their own instructional knowledge. Furthermore, the methodological rigor required by positivist research required no consideration of the teaching context nor of the complexities of the activity of teaching. As Freeman (2002) noted, “background, experience, and social context were all overlooked as potential influences on how new teachers formed knowledge in their professional education” (p. 5).
Developments in cognitive psychology in the late 1970s influenced researchers to shift their objective focus on the study of TK from collecting lists of teacher behaviors to understanding the activity of teacher learning and highlighting the influence of thinking and decision-making on behavior, a more subjective approach (Borg, 2015; Calderhead, 1987; Carter, 1990; Elbaz, 1988; Freeman, 2002; Jackson, 1968; Johnson, 2006; Lortie, 1975, Walberg, 1977). A more constructivist shift in research recognized the knowledge and cognitions of both teachers and children as essential to the process of interpreting and making sense of classroom life and influencing classroom behavior and acknowledged teachers as thinkers and agents in their learning and teaching (Shulman & Elstein, 1975). Elaborating on Heidegger’s (1997/1927) view that humans do not live apart from existence, Olsen (2008) noted,

> As we go through life, we are continually evaluating and reevaluating, assembling and reassembling our selves in an attempt to carve out an authentic existence in relation to things [...] Epistemology becomes ontology. Interpretation constitutes reality. The present always links to the past, because each of us remains in part bound by our previous assemblages of a self while we reconstruct our selves within any present experience [...] The present, Heidegger argued, involves a dynamic interplay of past, present, and future. It is related to a past-made-present and a future-already possessed in the prediction of events and consequences encountered. (p. 14)

That is, TK entailed an understanding of constantly interacting prior life experiences that shape the ways teachers come to know and make sense of what they know. Further, this paradigm acknowledged that knowledge is a “cyclical, integrated, interactive, multidirectional, and multidimensional” process, rather than a “linear, discrete, additive, and compartmentalized” concept (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p.17). Debate emerged over whether learning was individually and intellectually grasped—the cognitive approach—or whether learning was conceived as occurring inside an
interaction between individual and environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991)—the situated approach. Describing this situated perspective, Lave and Wenger (1991) observed, that there is no activity that is not situated. It implies emphasis on comprehensive understanding involving the whole person rather than “receiving” a body of factual knowledge about the world; on activity in and with the world; and on the view that agent, activity, and the world mutually constitute each other. (p. 33)

In other words, the process of knowing is perceived by Lave and Wenger as a social activity within a context in which the individuals begin thinking in new ways; can undergo identity change; adopt novel ways of, for instance, using language; and shape new relationships with the world around them in which new memories emerged from these experiences.

While the cognitive tradition located TK and learning inside information-processing mechanisms residing in the teacher, which connected external information with teachers’ own responses, the situated, more holistic approach to learning emphasized the role of emotions, context, culture, and history on how we know what we know. Although the cognitive perspective did not ignore the role of context in its entirety, it conceived it “as existing independently of situation and purpose and acting as influence on learning” (Olsen, 2008, p. 17). Johnson (2009) noted,

From an interpretive stance, researchers could no longer ignore the fact that teachers’ prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and, most importantly, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do. (p. 9)

In this study, I argue that contextual considerations are instrumental to the study of TK since, first, knowledge does not transfer automatically into instructional practices, and second, teachers are not necessarily able to directly internalize theoretical knowledge presented to them by teacher education programs. Third, context cannot be excluded
from the study of TK as a process, because context shapes the work of teachers. Most importantly, the epistemological overview indicated that teachers were not the recipient of others’ knowledge, but thinkers, knowers, and creators of knowledge in their own right.

**TK Dimensions: The Professional-Personal Nexus**

TK has evolved to embody the perspective of the individual. Individual teachers thought differently, knew different concepts about teaching, and interpreted content and their classrooms differently “because they were different people, with distinctive backgrounds, experiences and views” (Freeman, 2016, p. 172). This personal dimension of TK has been captured in nuanced ways. In particular, I have identified five TK frameworks addressing the personal and professional role of the teacher: Shulman (1986, 1987) *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK), Elbaz (1983) *practical knowledge*, Lampert (1985) *personal knowledge*, Clandinin and Connelly (1987) *personal practical knowledge* (PPK), and Mercado (2002) *saberes docentes* (SD). These frameworks are explained in detail below. Although the professional and personal dimensions are described as separate sub-constructs; in reality, these are inextricably intertwined.

**Teacher Professional Knowledge**

Three main scholars’ work informed this section: Shulman, Dewey, and Elbaz. Below I review these scholars’ contribution to professional knowledge using frameworks of *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) and *practical knowledge*.

**PCK, Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

In mainstream teacher education, Shulman’s (1986, 1987) seminal research recognized that there was a “missing paradigm” and argued that existing descriptions of teachers’ practices had ignored how teachers understood and reconstructed subject-
matter knowledge learned in their teacher preparation programs. Also missing was how
teachers made such subject matter comprehensible to students. Shulman added that
sound subject knowledge (what is taught) and the ability to transform this knowledge to
students in the most effective way (how to teach it) was absent from earlier
considerations of TK. Shulman called this type of knowledge pedagogical content
knowledge (PCK), depicted as a combination of knowledge that teachers possessed
about the world, their own life experiences, the subject-matter, and how they connected
that knowledge to their own classroom practice during the act of teaching. Although a
very influential concept, PCK was learner directed; it did not go beyond a transmission
model framework that emphasized teachers’ knowledge of pedagogical techniques,
representation of concepts, knowledge of strategies, and knowledge of students. The
personal aspect of the TK consisted of transforming the knowledge that the teacher
“personally” held into instructional strategies, which would foster meaningful
understanding in response to the circumstances of the classroom. Further, teachers’
thoughts, personal cognitions, and the process of how teachers came to know what
they knew were personal aspects excluded from Shulman’s definition of PCK.

Practical Knowledge

Teachers’ personal thoughts and experiences were recognized by the philosophy
of experience by Dewey (1938) which acknowledged an “organic connection between
education and personal experience” (p. 25). Otherwise stated, the process of reflecting
and reconstructing meaningful experiences resulted in the development of TK. Dewey
(1938) observed,

The effect of an experience is not borne on its face. It sets a problem to
the educator. It is his business to arrange for the kind of experiences
which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his activities
are, nevertheless, more than immediately enjoyable since they promote having desirable future experiences. [...] Every experience lives on in further experiences. (p. 27)

The relationship between theory, practice, and personal experiences—as expressed by Dewey’s continuum of experience—influenced Elbaz (1983) conceptualization of TK as practical knowledge or the knowledge teachers hold and use in practice. Simply put, as teachers used their knowledge to better understand their experiences, their experiences also exerted an effect on their knowledge. Thus, there was a dialectical relationship between experiences and knowledge.

Elbaz’s work was considered seminal for developing a definition of TK that was sensitive to and reflected the context of the teacher, rooted in her told experiences. Elbaz (1983) study was one of the first systematic studies to recognize the influence of teachers’ prior personal experiences and cognitions on knowledge. Her work pushed TK research into a constructivist direction. Her work connected the professional knowledge of a general teacher to the personal aspect of a teacher’s knowledge.

Elbaz (1981, 1983) provided a case study of a secondary school English teacher, Sarah, that illustrated—through the use of Sarah’s images—how all the components of practical knowledge influenced each other, and, further, Sarah’s active role in using that knowledge to understand her classroom work experience. The data consisted on interview situations in which the teacher reflected on her teaching. By categorizing the data, she conceptualized a view of a teacher’s practical knowledge: its content, its orientations, its structure, and the teacher’s cognitive style. As she acknowledged, knowledge was “shaped by and for the practical situation” (Elbaz, 1983, p. 55). For instance, she recognized five orientations: situational, theoretical, personal, social, and
experiential. Of the five orientations, the personal became focal, as Elbaz (1981) explained,

the teacher is the ultimate practical authority on what kids do in the classroom, and [his/her] practical knowledge is both the tool, and the outcome, of his ongoing effort to assume that authority in a responsible and personally meaningful way. (p. 58)

This case study established that the interaction of teachers’ lives and educational experiences, theoretical knowledge, feelings, beliefs, perceptions, needs, and folklore guided teachers’ instructional practices.

**Teacher Personal Knowledge**

This section reviews the research of multiple scholars whose work further informed the personal dimension of TK and who continued to refine the literature by proposing frameworks such as *personal knowledge* (PK), *personal practical knowledge* (PPK), and *saberes docentes* (SD). In this review, identity or who teachers are and their personal life experiences and backgrounds seem to shape what teachers know. It is beyond the scope of this study to review teacher identity frameworks.

**Personal Knowledge (PK)**

In a case study of two elementary school teachers, as well as herself in her own teaching, Lampert (1985) examined the personal knowledge teachers used to manage dilemmas in the classroom. *Dilemmas* were defined by Lampert as the tensions between interpersonal and institutional aspects of teaching. Some of these pedagogical dilemmas, for example, referred to the desire of working with a particular student individually and the need to teach an entire group of students. Lampert (1985) noted that the image of the teacher as a dilemma manager accepted conflict “as endemic and even useful to her work rather than seeing it as a burden that needed to be eliminated.”
(p. 192). She showed how teachers used their personal knowledge as a framework to manage classroom dilemmas through the use of narrative. The focus of this analysis was on knowledge of self, personal values and intentions, and knowledge of students and how these types of knowledge were used to handle classroom as well as administrative issues and tensions. Lampert viewed the teacher as a “dilemma manager” as well as one who “builds a working identity that is constructively ambiguous” (p. 178). Rather than resolving tensions emerging in a classroom setting, Lampert argued that, instead, a teacher managed dilemma by arguing continuously with herself. This process allowed for a review of the consequences of alternative responses to classroom tensions. Even when there was no resolution, the teacher in Lampert’s study coped personally with tensions among beliefs, values and feelings. Lampert believed that this process of dealing with conflict rather than eliminating it should be considered by teachers as part of the personal TK growth. The contribution of Elbaz (1983) and Lampert (1985) to the current study is that their work illustrated how TK is shaped by the interactions between teachers’ personal experiences and personal theoretical orientations in response to their actual practice.

**Personal Practical Knowledge (PPK)**

Combining the TK frameworks by Elbaz (1983) and Lampert (1985), Connelly and Clandinin (1988) expanded the conceptualization of TK as personal practical knowledge (PPK). They described PPK as,

a term designed to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons. Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher’s practice. (p. 25)
The most significant contribution by Clandinin and Connelly (1987) is that their definition of TK underscored the influential role that teachers' moral and affective aspects played on their personal and educational experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1987) further defined PPK as “a moral, affective, and aesthetic way of knowing life’s educational situation” (p. 59). The practical component suggested that the knowledge constructed from personal experiences was available to the teacher in the face of challenges and demands of practice. Echoing the conceptualization of emotion by Dewey (1934) as “the moving and cementing force in an experience” (p. 42), morality and affectivity in PPK were the “glue which [bound] together the educational and personal private sides of an individual’s life” (Clandinin, 1986, p. 131).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) emphasized that TK was morally oriented and that the “everyday life, personal history, social history, and the moral role of other teachers” interacted with teachers' professional knowledge (p. 27). PPK portrayed teachers as knowledgeable, knowing persons, not just as transmitters of information found in the teacher’s practice. Furthermore, teachers did not solely apply subject matter, they created their own PPK of teaching. Thus, PPK or TK embraced both emotional and moral components of a teacher’s knowledge which constantly interact with classroom events and were closely connected to the personal and professional narratives of teachers’ lives.

Expanding Elbaz’s TK framework, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) used a construction of teachers' narratives to connect the nuanced aspects of teachers’ knowledge. They used biographies, observations, journals, interviews, and also emphasized the need to represent these in linguistic ways or images to better
understand the notion of PPK. The use of metaphors and images in the teachers’ narrative was used to capture the experiential link—framed by the teacher’s personal philosophies, beliefs, values, and actions—between a teacher’s professional-personal life and his/her educational life experiences. The conceptualization of a teacher’s image contributed to a “theoretical understanding of personal knowledge” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 382). For example, Stephanie’s image of classroom as a home appeared as “a crystallization of her experience, experience in which emotions and morality are elements” (Clandinin, 1985, p. 376).

Furthermore, Connelly and Clandinin (1999), in their study of teachers’ professional identities, realized that teachers’ answers to questions about knowledge appeared to be answers to questions about identity as they were more concerned about who they were than about what they knew. Connelly and Clandinin recognized that understanding teachers’ professional knowledge and practice could not be separated from the teacher’s personal development of self and identity.

Other scholars continued to explore the relationship between TK and teacher identity by including the integrated and interwoven relationship between the professional knowledge of teachers, the personal knowledge and experience, and the way they see themselves, that is, their personal identity, as teachers. Palmer (1998), for instance, described this as,

an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitute my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic makeup, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffering — and much, much more. In the midst of that complex field, identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make who I am, converging in the irreducible mystery of being human. (p. 13)
Holistically conceived, the relationship between identity and professional knowledge is seen as “each is part of the other” (Olsen, 2003, p. 4 as quoted in Bukor, 2015); a nexus in which teachers’ personal and professional lived experiences are intertwined.

**Saberes Docentes (SD)**

Along the same lines with PPK, Mercado (1991, 2002) used the construct of saberes docentes (SD), (literally translated as teachers’ pedagogical knowledge) in her work with small elementary schools in Mexico. SD was grounded and constructed in teachers’ daily experiences with learners as well as teachers’ own lived experiences. Under this theoretical framework, teaching is viewed as a socially constructed practice rather than a performance of prescribed roles and didactic actions; teachers’ knowledge is viewed as multi-layered and intertwined with various domains of teachers’ personal past and present social life (Mercado, 2002). In her ethnographic work with first grade Mexican teachers, Mercado (1991) observed that “cada maestro aporta la diversidad de sus propias [personal] referencias así como las posibilidades de observación y reflexión involucradas en la resolución de su trabajo” “each teacher contributes her diverse own experiences as well as her own observations and reflections involved in enacting her job” (p. 60). One example is the study of two immigrant educators working with immigrant students in Washington State, by Ernst and Poveda (2011) in a diverse rural school community. Drawing on ethnographic methodology, the researchers explored “the lives and circumstances” of two first grade bilingual teaching assistants working with Mexican descent ELs in Washington in K-12 schools (p. 8). Ernst-Slavit and Poveda focused the analysis on the SD revealed by these teachers. Not unlike PPK, SD underscored the personal subjective aspect of TK, focused on how teachers’ individual accumulated personal, professional, and social experiences played a role in
appropriating theories and adapting instruction according to the demands of practice. In this study, all students and teachers were fluent in Spanish, which was their first language (L1). Even when one teacher was aware of the multiple meanings for the word pig—cochino, marrano, chancho, puerco, cerdo, etc— she only validated the “high status” name of the animal and corrected the students when they used the rural version of the word. The teacher’s instructional decisions were guided by her own assessment of what counted as correct Spanish.

Even after the researchers pointed the possibility of a diversity of “Spanishes” and different standards, the teacher considered that the Castilian standard was the most accepted word. According to Ernst-Slavit and Poveda (2011), “the personal preference is a product of [the teacher’s] own saberés” and counted as her teaching knowledge for teaching ELs (p. 11). The researchers concluded that their study suggested a reconsideration of how teacher education articulated the relationship between teachers’ professional and personal knowledge of the context—saberés docentes. Ernst-Slavit and Poveda suggested that carefully considering educators’ personal biographies and trajectories as components shaping teachers’ knowledge was essential to uncovering hidden beliefs or ideologies that could clash against the reality of classroom contexts and instructional practice; they demonstrated that the notion of SD was an alternative framework useful in theoretically framing ethnographic research in contexts where teachers and students had different personal experiences and came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

**Criticism of the Personal Aspect of TK.** Critics of the personal aspects of a teacher’s knowledge have warned against methodological issues and researcher’s
biases and assumptions in gathering and analyzing data (Britzman, 2003; Willinsky, 1989). A qualitative investigation within a constructivist paradigm, is oriented to the production of subjective and reconstructed interpretations of participants which assumes subjectivity in the analysis of data. Willinsky (1989) noted that “researchers must find ways of stepping from behind the disembodied voice” (p. 249). Furthermore, to ensure the trustworthiness of such research, the researcher’s subjectivities and positionalities and the power relations among the researcher and the researched need to be thoroughly examined. Assessing the epistemic merit of the personal dimension of knowledge, Kumaravadivelu (2012) noted that “teacher knowledge remains an intractable challenge largely because it is easy to identify a body of knowledge, but difficult to identify ways of knowing” (p. 33). I will address these criticisms such as positionality and trustworthiness in Chapter 3 when I discuss the methodology of the present study.

**Teacher Knowledge for Teaching English Learners (ELs)**

Like mainstream education in general, the field of second language teacher education progressed in a similar way along a trajectory from professional knowledge to personal knowledge regarding the conceptualization of TK (e.g., Almarza, 1996; Bailey, Berghold, Braunstein, Jagodzinski Fleischman, Holbrook, Tuman, Waissbluth, & Zambo, 1996; Farrell, 1999; Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996). The exploration of teachers’ professional and personal knowledge dimensions indicated that teachers’ prior language learning experiences established certain beliefs about learning and language learning which served as a foundation of teachers’ early conceptualizations of teaching. In other words, teachers’ personal knowledge—which subsumes a tacit aspect—and professional knowledge dimensions are inextricably intertwined, fluid, and
highly influential on the way teachers come to know and enact that knowledge in response to their classroom dynamics throughout their lives. For instance, Crookes (2015) reconciled the boundaries between teacher professional knowledge and teachers’ personal inner lives,

A language teacher may have a philosophy of teaching, that is, views or principles informing and guiding professional practice and an accompanying body of professional knowledge. Sources for this include one’s own experiences as a student, one’s personal values, and broader life experiences and reflections. (p. 486)

A study by Golombek (1998) adapted Elbaz’s Practical Knowledge and Clandinin and Connelly’s PPK frameworks and applied those to language teacher education. She offered a definition that underscored “teachers’ knowledge as being dialectical, situated, and dynamic in response to their personal and professional lives, embodied in persons” (Golombek, 1998, p. 448), while focusing on the role of language. Using data from class observations, interviews, and stimulus recall reports, her study of two preservice ESL teachers in the US explored the tensions teachers faced in the classroom. Both participants revealed how their L2 language experiences influenced their teaching practice. One of the teachers in the study faced tension in the classroom as she felt pressured by the school administration to offer students corrective feedback. Recalling her own fears to speak in class as a result of constant correction during her studies of Russian, the teacher hesitated to correct students’ mistakes even though she was trained to do so by her university professor. On the other hand, the other pre-service teacher constantly scaffolded instruction as a result of her positive language experience with her own teachers growing up. Golombek focused primarily on the personal
histories of teachers and how teachers understood their activities. Institutional influences were not explored in this study.

In her biographical case study of two monolingual EL teachers with limited L2 learning experience early in their careers, Reeves (2009) showed that teachers' individual characteristics and their personal experiences—bilingualism, diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, certain personality traits, and positive attitudes toward ELs—played a role on the teachers' knowledge base for teaching ELs. The researcher—examining TK about content comprehensively rather than as separated from other subjective knowledge domains (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman, 2002; Johnson, 2006, 2009)—used ethnographic and narrative methods to provide an in-depth focus of the dynamics of the classroom setting. She inquired what teachers knew about language and L2 teaching as well as how they came to know what they knew. The main purpose was to interrogate the influence and relevance of teachers' language learner biographies rather than “determining the ‘best’ biography for ESOL [English to Speakers of Other Languages] teaching effectiveness” in this highly linguistically diverse middle school located in a US midwestern city (p. 110).

The participants' language learner biographies, captured through several interviews, revealed that having little or no experience with L2 acquisition impacted the teachers' knowledge about language in two ways: “their ability to predict learner difficulties with language and their understanding of the L2 learning process of learners” (p. 120). For instance, one of the monolingual teachers in the study, who had two years of Spanish as a foreign language, which he had learned following the grammar-translation method, could not recall any particular instance of his limited high school
Spanish grammar instruction. This limited experience did not portray language as an authentic tool of communication rather, linguistic information was presented as a fixed system of rules that needed to be memorized. The data collected by the researcher provided examples of how inadequate language learning experiences interacted with teachers’ linguistic knowledge of English for teaching ELs. For example, in explaining the third person singular ending s, this teacher showed an “everyday understanding” of English by noting that third person s just “sounded right” in present tense verbs (p. 120). This study confirmed that teachers’ biographies as language learners shaped their linguistic knowledge for teaching ELs. Thus, Reeves (2009) recognized that what teachers needed was a form of “biographically responsive ESOL teacher preparation” that explored both the personal and educational experiences of teachers entering the profession (p. 121).

Highlighting teachers’ PPK (personal practical knowledge) and their narrative authority, Pedrana (2009) study of Latino teachers of ELs underscored the direct influence that personal and educational experiences exert over who teachers are and what they teach, “what their students learn, and how they engage students in their learning” (p. 176). He noted that “becoming aware or understanding how personal experiences are the threads that are woven” into a teacher’s philosophy and practice is critical for helping teacher candidates to become teachers (p. 176). Drawing from Connelly and Clandinin’s personal practical knowledge (PPK) and using narrative inquiry, Pedrana (2009) explored teacher candidates’ PPK while enrolled in a required bilingual/ESL course that he was teaching. Some of the questions he explored were: “what happens to our experiences when we become teachers? What compelled us to
become teachers in the first place? When we are teaching, are we a different person than the one who plans dinner, worries about traffic, schedules meetings?” (p. 176).

Using a gallery walk in which student teachers shared their individual work and gave each other feedback, they “scaffolded” their personal experiences by elaborating on their personal histories as they related them to the historical perspective of bilingual education. The space provided by this course allowed student teachers to reflect on past experiences and memories which in turn became the lens by which they became classroom teachers. For example, discussing the nuances of cultural and linguistic connections to families and education while reading excerpts from Valdés’ *Con respeto* (1996), the student teachers were exposed to a particular perspective on Latin American culture, education and family ties. Becoming aware of different languages and cultures made teachers recognize that not all families interact in the same manner. Pedrana concluded that making sense of how the experience of Hispanic bilingual teachers who worked with Hispanic students influenced their practices was necessary to prepare them to be “better equipped to guide their students in navigating their cultures and their languages” (p. 188).

What emerges from the review of these three studies in language teaching education is the tremendous influence that teachers’ personal lives exert over what they know, think, and do in the classroom. Further, these studies demonstrated the importance of exploring the personal-professional nexus of teachers’ knowledge and how this connection is constantly interacting with teachers’ instructional context. Recognized by scholars as the sociocultural turn (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2004, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Lantolf & Johnson, 2007), language TK
was understood as “normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and later as teachers in the settings where they work” (Johnson, 2006, p. 239). Thus, teachers’ professional education and teaching experiences are presumed to shape their knowledge base for language teaching by underscoring the role of teachers’ personal experiences in their professional development. In the following section, I will discuss how TK for teaching ELs has been conceptualized in the EL literature.

**The Specialized Professional Knowledge for Secondary Teaching of ELs**

Much of the recent literature about educating bilingual students has focused on meeting the needs of ELs, and has been centered on what all teachers need to know and be able to do to meet those needs (e.g., Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Sanders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). These studies range from peer-reviewed empirical research to conceptual pieces informed by SLA processes. Although, at first, separate programs with specialist teachers were implemented to meet the need of ELs, the insufficient supply of educators qualified to teach ELs (Téllez & Waxman, 2006) required schools to include ELs in the mainstream classrooms. Scholars have observed that the focus of teacher education for mainstream teachers who worked with ELs should be on linguistic knowledge because English is the medium through which content is introduced in the classroom; others have emphasized the need for EL teachers to understand the ways in which culture, language, and contextual factors shape their instructional practices (Coady & Escamilla, 2005; Coady et al., 2009, 2016; de Jong & Harper, 2005).
Over the past few decades, ELs have been placed into traditional mainstream classroom settings (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-González, 2008). EL students brought to this setting: 1) different levels of L1 proficiency; 2) different educational experiences; 3) diverse understandings of school routines and acceptable behavior (Short & Fitzimmons, 2007); and 4) distinct levels of academic and social English language proficiency. As a result, teachers felt increasingly overwhelmed and found the presence of ELs disruptive to their classroom settings (Reeves, 2006; Walker, Shafer, & Iams, 2004).

Most of the conceptual frameworks—outlining what mainstream teachers should know and be able to do when working with ELs—have been encouraging for educators to build a knowledge base and guide teacher education. They also presented an optimistic landscape for the educational future of most ELs. However, as Turkan, De Oliveira, Lee, and Phelps (2014) observed “beyond these attempts to inform and guide teacher education, the growing body of empirical and conceptual literature has not been translated into a TK base to guide educating all teachers to teach ELLs” (p. 5). Thus, the necessary knowledge and skills that teachers must have to effectively teach ELs continued to be ambiguous. Other scholars shared Turkan et al.’s same sentiment. For instance, Coady et al. (2016) added that these conceptual frameworks held promise for developing competence in teaching ELs, however, they asserted that it is largely assumed that the ESL knowledge and skills developed in teacher preparation programs will translate automatically into effective instructional practices for ELLs. In fact, we know little about the trajectory of development for the body of knowledge and skills that teachers bring into their classrooms. (p. 341)

What is largely absent from the teacher education literature is the knowledge base of principles and practices geared specifically for secondary subject-area
classroom teachers to allow culturally and linguistically diverse students to have full access to academic and content area language to succeed in school (Faltis, Arias, & Ramírez, 2010). In addition, the experiences of secondary teachers working with ELs have received little attention (Reeves, 2006). A review of this literature is included in the next section.

In the last decade, new frameworks continued to emerge that underscored the importance for teachers to have specialized knowledge for teaching and learning in order to respond to ELs’ unique linguistic and cultural needs and to the changing classroom context. (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, Strom, Bratkovich, & Wnuk, 2018). Summarizing the EL specialized TK necessary to meet ELs’ academic as well as their cultural and linguistic needs, teachers of ELs needed to possess knowledge of: 1) how L2 is learned (SLA processes); 2) what role language and culture play in school; and 3) the instructional implications for those students. Because ELs are learning English while learning the content of the curriculum, the process of learning English is “inextricably linked with all their school learning” (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008, p. 362). That is, to succeed in US schools, ELs face the challenge of: 1) learning content material; 2) acquiring English as a second language; and 3) adapting to a culture different than their own, simultaneously, while their English-speaking classmates continue to progress academically and linguistically. Because ELs have the arduous task to catch up with this moving target, de Jong (2012) observed, “it may take a long time for ELs to catch up with their peers and to be able to demonstrate their learning at age-appropriate levels on standardized achievement or reading tests” (p. 203). Schleppegrell (2012) agreed
that every teacher is a language teacher and thus needs to have knowledge about
language to provide the best instruction for ELs.

dee Jong, Harper, and Coady (2013) further organized the “enhanced expertise”
for teachers of ELs in elementary settings. This framework encompassed the following
three dimensions of knowledge:

(a) understanding ELLs from a bilingual and bicultural perspective; (b)
understanding how language and culture shape school experiences and
inform pedagogy for bilingual learners; and (c) ability to mediate a range of
contextual factors in the schools and classrooms where they teach. (p. 89)

Synthesizing the essence of this framework, Gallagher and Haan (2018) described
that effective teachers of ELs should know their content-area knowledge and “language- and
culture-specific knowledge of students, pedagogy, and context, and the ability to apply
that knowledge” (p. 306).

Informed by the abovementioned literature (e.g., Coady, Harper, & de Jong,
2011, 2016; de Jong et al., 2013; Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Golombek, 1998; Reeves,
2009), the next section underscored four main areas informing the specialized TK for
teaching ELs: 1) the intersection of secondary school settings and EL instruction; 2) EL
teachers’ personal and professional lives; 3) SLA processes; and 4) the use of L1 for
instructional purposes. These areas illuminated the personal-professional nexus
shaping US secondary teachers’ work with ELs.

**Secondary EL Teaching**

Scholars have recognized the limited research on the experiences of EL
secondary teachers and the lack of teacher preparation at the secondary level to teach
ELs effectively (Reeves, 2006; Rubinstein-Ávila & Lee, 2014). Although most of the
same principles for EL teaching and learning employed in elementary school settings
also apply to secondary settings, it has been recognized “that middle and high school teachers face additional challenges in providing EL instruction” (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013, p. 94). First, the rigid structure of secondary settings with fixed content-area classrooms present a difficult challenge for teachers to differentiate curriculum, especially those teachers with a low incidence of ELs in their classroom (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Second, the pressures for accountability, imposed by state-mandated testing and other EL requirements, present additional challenges for secondary teachers to provide EL instruction that meets their academic needs (de Jong et al., 2013). Third, secondary teacher preparation for EL instruction has been ignored in the research literature (August & Shanahan, 2006). Thus, secondary teachers are likely to be unprepared to meeting the needs of ELs. Moreover, scholars observed that secondary single-subject teachers are not likely to use the instructional strategies needed to teach this population effectively (Reeves, 2006; Rubinstein-Ávila, 2006; Rubinstein-Ávila & Lee, 2014; Walker et al., 2004); and hold different views toward participating in PD that is designed to scaffold instruction of content for ELs (Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004; Yoon, 2007).

**EL Teachers’ Personal and Professional Lives**

Coady, et al., (2011, 2016) developed a conceptual framework that described the components of the TK of teaching and learning for ELs which included three main areas: 1) teacher background and experiences; 2) teacher knowledge of teaching and learning processes of ELs; and 3) teacher knowledge of ELs as learners. Echoing Reeves (2009) study on teachers’ biographies, the first component of their framework, teachers’ personal and professional experiences emerged as a relevant source of influence on teachers’ work with ELs. The scholars’ acknowledged that teachers’
personal and professional biographies (Reeves, 2009), positive attitudes towards ELs, certain personality traits such as open-mindedness (Brower & Korthagen, 2005), and linguistic and cross-cultural experiences (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) informed the teaching and learning process of ELs. In the next subsections, I will discuss four personal aspects of teachers shaping their TK in their work with ELs. These four areas are: 1) teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds; 2) teachers' authenticity, 3) teachers' religious beliefs; and 4) teachers' beliefs about ELs.

**Teachers' backgrounds: bilingualism and hispanidad.** In this study, the discussions about bilingualism will be based on the Hispanic bilingual community because my work has centered on this particular community and Hispanic bilinguals represent the majority of bilinguals in the US (Palmer & Martínez, 2013, US ED 2020). Thus, it is beyond the scope of this investigation to focus on students outside the Hispanic community. In addition, it is important to underscore that not all Hispanic teachers and/or students are bilingual as they could be in the path toward bilingualism.

Scholars have acknowledged the benefits of bilingualism such as the cognitive flexibility bilinguals possess over monolinguals and the ability to utilize languages actively, even when only one language is being used in a monolingual context (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). Other research demonstrated that bilingualism resulted in a cognitive reorganization of language in the brain, specifically in the prefrontal cortex, which involves working memory and executive function (Kroll, Dussias, Bogulski, & Valdés Kroff, 2012; Penn, 2010, as cited in Nunley, 2010; Szilágyi, Giambo, & Szecsi, 2013). Scholars have theorized that a bilingual's "constant mental juggling,"— the bilingual's use of "a domain general inhibitory mechanism" to inhibit irrelevant
information from the one and to select the relevant information in the target language—have contributed to the bilingual advantages observed in many aspects of executive function across a person’s lifetime (Kroll et al., 2012, p. 249). Moreover, growth in working memory in L1 predicts growth in reading in L2 (Swanson, Sáez, & Gerber, 2006). Empirical evidence support that bilinguals use their knowledge of concepts in the L1 to comprehend those in the L2, and similarly the L2 influences the L1 (Cummins, 1979, Valdés, 2005). In addition, because L1 skills transfer to L2 (Cummins, 2005), bilingual children’s L2 acquisition can be promoted by using the strong foundations of their L1 skills.

Several investigations have suggested that teachers who understand the noted benefits of bilingualism and are proficient in a Language Other Than English (LOTE) tended to be more sensitive to the linguistic needs of bilingual learners (Lee & Oxelson, 2006). The study by Lee and Oxelson (2006) supported the value of foreign language education and the need for “mandatory and systematic foreign language education” as a core component of general education (Lee & Oxelson, 2006, p. 466). Similarly, García-Nevarez, Stafford, and Arias (2004) found that bilingual teachers believed that using L1 was important for the bilingual student, while teachers without a bilingual education background did not believe that students should use their L1 in the classroom. Lee and Oxelson (2006) found that because monolingual teachers did not speak their students’ L1, they did not know how to implement L1 in their instruction.

Much of the literature aimed at educating bilingual students has been directed to monolingual English-speaking teachers and sought to offer instructional strategies and methods for monolingual teachers to meet the needs of bilingual learners (Palmer &
Martínez, 2013). According to García and Sylvan (2011), this type of literature presumed that monolingualism is the norm and that bilingual students must be accommodated until they catch up with their monolingual English-speaking peers. Scholars have argued that teachers need specialized knowledge about language and second language acquisition processes (SLA) to effectively teach EL students (August & Hakuta, 1997; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Cummins, 1979; Harper & de Jong, 2004; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008, Scarcella, 2003; Fillmore & Snow, 2000, 2002). Palmer and Martínez (2013) asserted that even though this knowledge is necessary to work effectively with EL students, it is insufficient on its own.

Shifting the conversation from monoglossic perspectives that emphasized instructional methods and strategies to “extraordinary pedagogies” that support understandings of language and bilingualism (Palmer & Martínez, 2013), Lucas and Grinberg (2008) affirmed that teachers need to either experience multilingualism by studying a LOTE or to be in contact with people who speak a LOTE in order to be better prepared to work with EL students. They argued that such an exposure to a LOTE could serve as the basis to develop “affirming views of linguistic diversity” and “an awareness of the sociopolitical dimension of language use and language education,” both central to support ELs in the classroom (pp. 612-613). Echoing Clandinin and Connelly (1987) “personal practical knowledge [PPK]: knowledge which is experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a teacher’s life” (p.490), Ellis (2006) argued that language learning experiences, formal or informal, influence knowledge and previous understandings. Using data from an Australian study, Ellis (2006) demonstrated that personal and experiential knowledge in the form of L2 learning (e.g. formal, informal,
elective or circumstantial bilingualism) was a powerful resource supporting teachers’ professional EL knowledge. For instance, Polish teachers’ immigrant experiences in English-speaking Australia allowed them to understand and empathize with the experiences of their bilingual students. Ellis (2006) remarked,

Teachers who have experienced this process of having to construct a second-language or bilingual identity are, I argue, much more likely to understand their learners’ needs and difficulties in learning to function in English and negotiate L1/L2 use. (p.10)

Ellis (2006) added that teachers who had personal experiential knowledge of what it means to live as a bilingual or who could recall the impact of being in a classroom where L1 was not the medium of instruction, could discuss the experience with their students. She concluded that, in contrast, monolingual ESOL teachers with no experiential knowledge of what it meant to learn an L2, have no communication strategies at their disposal. Although Ellis clarified that she was not suggesting that monolingual teachers were not good teachers—i.e., good teaching is not only dependant on solely L2 learning experiences—rather, she affirmed that bilingual teachers possess more resources at their disposal to make informed professional decisions than monolingual teachers do. Similar findings have been observed by other scholars who have recognized that personal and professional experiences with L2 learning and being exposed to diversity contributed to a higher sense of empathy towards ELs and to developing positive relationship with EL students. (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2004). Strong arguments have been made that White teachers are not able to understand and relate to students of color in ways that teachers of color are able to do (e.g., Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009).
Faez (2012) acknowledged that teachers possessing experiences with diversity “have a higher selfperceived empathy towards ELs due to their shared backgrounds” (p. 64), however, she suggested that teachers’ professional knowledge for providing support and targeted instruction for ELs was needed to complement teachers’ personal knowledge and experiences.

**Hispanidad.** According to Garza (2006), “a bilingual and bicultural" teacher confronts the challenges of an English-only school system at a very personal level” (p. 22). One example is Garza’s description of bilingual/bicultural teachers in a two-immersion program in the Tijuana/San Diego border US region:

These women share much in common both on a personal level, as bilingual and bicultural individuals of Latino backgrounds and on a professional level, as skillful educators well versed in using Spanish and English as languages of instruction. [One teacher explained that] their solidarity with one another and with their students, and their parents and communities, arises out of their own experiences as bilingual and bicultural individuals. (p. 27)

Garza (2006) stated that the teachers believed that they had a “mission” that connected them to their students and to each other, giving them “the same language” to talk with each other to accomplish their instructional goals (p. 27).

Similarly, Okhremtchouk and González (2014) observed that teachers working with ELs must possess “specialized cultural and pedagogical skills” (p. 22), one of which is to communicate and engage with EL students and families in their communities. Informed by scholarly work such as, Galindo (1996), González and Moll (2002) and Monzó and Rueda (2001), the researchers found that Hispanic teachers and paraprofessionals engage in confianza practices (relationships of mutual trust) forming strong bonds. Okhremtchouk and González (2014) identified three knowledges that Hispanic teachers possess in working with ELs: 1) Hispanic teachers “tend to place
strong levels of importance on building personal relationships with students and attending to the whole child, which encompasses social and emotional along with academic needs" (p. 22); 2) most Hispanic teachers are bilingual in English and Spanish allowing them to have a clear understanding of how to integrate and teach critical aspects of language, how to provide support in L1, and, seem to be able to differentiate between students with learning disabilities or students who are still developing English proficiency; and 3) Hispanic teachers represent a role model for diversity. Okhremtchouk and González (2014) stated that Hispanic teachers were more likely than white monolingual teachers to connect classroom instruction to students’ daily lives by not only employing linguistic knowledge into their curriculum and instruction, but also by fostering a classroom atmosphere with interactions con cariño (Shannon, 1995, as cited in Okhremtchouk & González, 2014), styles familiar to EL students (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Thus, empirical research has demonstrated that Hispanic teachers positively impact minority student achievement (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2005; Flores, Clark, & Villarreal, 2007) stemming from cultural and linguistic experiences such as patterns of interaction, use of time and space, and conversational turns that are more similar to those of ELs (Villegas et al., 2012). For instance, Clewell et al. (2005) found that students of Hispanic fourth and fifth grade teachers had significantly higher test score gains in math than those with racially-dissimilar teachers. In general, Villegas and Irvine (2010) described the practices of successful teachers of color, including Hispanic teachers, and found five practices: 1) having high expectations of students; 2) using culturally relevant teaching; 3) developing caring and trusting relationships with students; 4) confronting issues of racism through teaching; and 5)
serving as advocates and cultural brokers. In addition, Horng (2005, as cited in Villegas & Irvine, 2010) observed that recruiting and preparing Hispanic teachers for the profession has the potential to alleviate the high rate of attrition in low-performing schools. Okhremtchouk and González (2014) suggested that Hispanic teachers “are imperative to improving the academic outcomes and experiences for [ELs]” (p. 23).

**Culture, the secondary classroom, and the specialized EL TK.** There is a documented cultural and linguistic disconnect between rural teachers and EL students’—US rural teachers follow the general trend, they are primarily white, middle-class, monolingual, English-speaking females with a bachelor’s degree (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). The mismatch between teachers’ and EL students’ experiences result in numerous problems including teachers misunderstanding students, students misunderstanding teachers, and students feeling unmotivated (Carothers, Aydin, & Houdyshell, 2019). Thus, from a cultural standpoint, EL teachers must know that the US secondary education of the culturally and linguistically diverse ELs is culturally mediated through the organization of school classrooms and various content-areas, and through teacher-student and student-student interactions. Scholars recognized the need for EL teachers to get acquainted with students’ cultural backgrounds in order to tailor effective instruction and use this cultural knowledge to broker cultural norms and differences and to explore how these affect ELs L2 acquisition and participation in school (Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Coady & Escamilla, 2005; Faltis et al., 2010; Harper & de Jong, 2009; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Being familiar with ELs’ lives enhance teachers’ awareness of ELs’
cultural backgrounds in order to connect curriculum to students’ prior knowledge and experiences (Cholewa, 2009, Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011).

Several scholars have engaged in the difficult task of defining culture. For instance, Hollins (2008) asserted that defining culture is a difficult exercise because is the essence of who we are and that “essence” is difficult to explain. Researchers have attempted to define culture; for instance, Barrett (1984, as quoted in Hollins, 2008) defined it “as the body of learned beliefs, traditions, and guides for behavior shared among members of any human society” (p. 18). Hall (1981, as quoted in Hollins, 2008) underscored the importance of understanding culture:

Culture is man’s medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves, the way they think, how they move, how problems are solved, how cities are planned and laid out, how transportation systems function and are organized, as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function. (p. 1)

These definitions illuminate culture as “the foundation for organizing and managing all human groups through processes such as strategy, structures, systems, and technology” which result in organizational outcomes (Glover & Friedman, 2015, p. 5).

Adapting Trumpenaars’ (in Brotherton, 2011, as cited in Glover & Friedman, 2015) concept of transcultural competence—going beyond being able to adapt to any specific culture, which can never be fully understood by a cultural outsider, by taking advantage of diversity regardless of whether it relates to one specific culture or multiple differing cultures—Glover & Friedman (2015) discussed the need for educators to embrace the four elements or 4Rs of transcultural competence. They described,

First, recognition: what is the dilemma? Second step is respect: there’s a dilemma, and both sides have legitimate opinions. Third is reconciliation: the art of coming to some sort of agreement; the fourth is realization: actually, translating it into actual behavior.
Transcultural competence enables those who possess it to recognize, respect, reconcile, and realize cultural dilemmas. The concept of transcultural competence parallels the framework described by de Jong et al. (2013) which underscored the need for teachers to not overlook ELs’ relevant cultural differences, but 1) to identify (recognize) ELs’ funds of knowledge (their prior schooling, their home lives and communities, González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and to have a deep knowledge of the social and cultural differences of their linguistically and culturally diverse newcomer students; 2) to leverage (respect) and facilitate ELs’ navigation through the new school environment; 3) to reconcile the cultural differences by planning their participation, engagement and learning in the classroom 4) to enact (realization) effective and strategic instruction and by making classroom cultural norms explicit to them.

**Teachers’ authenticity shaping TK.** Scholars have recognized that teachers must possess specialized cultural and pedagogical knowledges to work with ELs (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992). One of these knowledges included the ability to communicate and engage with students as well as with their families and cultural communities. The teacher-student relationship is of central importance to how students experience learning. As a teacher, I have observed that the classroom climate teachers create and the relationships they developed with their students appeared to be important predictors of students’ academic success. Skolverket (2006, as cited in Malm, 2008) showed that when teachers cared about their students and were empathic and believed in the students’ ability and will to learn, the students were more receptive to learning.
Teachers have demonstrated to be authentic when values related to teachers’ personal and professional selves are in unison; “when ‘what I am’ and ‘what I do’ are as true to one’s nature as they can possibly be” (Malm, 2008, p. 373). A study by Malm and Löfgren (2005) investigated how educator-trainers defined authenticity. Different interpretations were expressed by the participants. Some of the descriptors were: being genuine, true, and real. Hargreaves (1993) contended that the role of the teacher goes beyond being a transmitter of knowledge to encompassing all aspects of the personal teacher’s learning and development. Moreover, Hargreaves argued that teaching encounters were relational encounters and, consequently, an “emotional practice” because emotions were “at the heart of teaching” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 835). According to one of the educators-trainers in Malm (2008) study, an authentic teacher is:

A teacher who has good personal insight. One who feels at ease with herself. Being confident enough to risk being oneself without having to put on an act. To feel naturally at ease in a classroom and with the students. Confident enough to be able to expose oneself to others criticism and be able to see a potential in it, that it need not be a threat. Being genuine in every sense of the word. That kind of clarity. “This is me”. (Head of department, female) (p. 375)

Bialystok (2016) defined an authentic teacher as an authentic person “whose identity is expressed or confirmed in some necessary way through her teaching (p. 317). Similarly, Kreber (2013) concurred that “I want teaching to be an important aspect of what I do because it is part of how I am (p. 23). Laursen (2004) wrote, “authenticity and professionalism are not each other’s opposites; on the contrary, authenticity is professionalism at the highest level, where there is no division between person and professionalism” (p. 161).

Laursen (2004) identified seven competences related to authentic teachers: 1) personal commitment; 2) embodiment of the task; 3) realistic intentions concerning
teaching; 4) working in contexts where these intentions can be realized; 5) respect for students, 6) intense co-operation with colleagues; and 7) a continual striving towards personal and professional development. Another group of researchers, Cranton and Carusetta (2004), suggested four components of authenticity in teaching: 1) being genuine; 2) showing consistency between values and actions; 3) relating to others in such a way as to encourage their authenticity; and 4) living a critical life. Thus, knowing and learning to be an authentic teacher comes from integrating the teachers’ evolving personal lived experiences, background, and values in alignment with the professional role of a teacher.

Scholars have observed that emotions like caring and love are ubiquitous in teacher education (Nieto, 2003, 2005; Noddings, 1984, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela (1999) described an authentic form of caring necessary to educate Hispanics that “emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students” (p. 61). Valenzuela added: “Students’ precondition to caring about school is that they are engaged in a caring relationship with an adult at school” (p. 79). Thus, teachers need to learn about and from their students as they develop interpersonal relationships that will provide affection, caring, and empathy towards students’ lived experiences. As Nieto (2005) explained,

Care is demonstrated most powerfully through high expectations and rigorous standards, and in teachers’ beliefs that the students are worthy and capable […] In the most effective examples of research we have seen, caring has included not only providing affection (cariño) and support for students, but also developing strong interpersonal relationships with students and their families, learning about and from them, respecting and affirming their language and culture, and building on these to support learning. (p. 32)
Caring, according to Noddings (1995) is a relationship of mutuality as well as an emotion or disposition. Noddings (1995) suggested one example to describe the mutuality in this emotional relationship: the unconditional relationship of a good mother to her child. This implied that caring involves reciprocity between the parties involved.

**Teachers’ religion guiding TK.** Spirituality and religion are often used interchangeably in the literature describing all the various aspects of a person’s religiosity. In contemporary usage, spirituality has often become associated with the interior life of the individual, placing an emphasis upon the well-being of the mind-body-spirit, while religion refers to an organizational and communal aspect of prayer. Personally, I consider spirituality a more encompassing term that includes religion. For the purpose of this study, I will use religion when referring to the more communal aspect of prayer and also to any other source of guidance a person draws upon.

Scholars have recognized the role that religion plays in the personal lives of people in the US (White, 2009). While in 2002, the Pew Research Center reported that 59 percent of Americans said that religion was important in their lives, two-thirds or 66 percent was reported in 2014. In spite of this finding, research on how teachers negotiate religion in the classroom is largely absent from the educational literature (White, 2009). In fact, the majority of educational articles addressed the role of religion in relation to the students’ lives and educational experiences. Because teachers make daily decisions, both conscious and unconscious, related to academic instruction and relationships in the classroom, their decisions shape the quality of a student’s education. However, little is known about how teachers use their personal religious beliefs to navigate instructional decisions. White (2009) alleged that omitting religion
from the schools is a “questionable approach when governments have given people rights to freely exercise religious choice” (p. 860). The separation of church and state in US public schools and the sensitive nature of the topic of religion result in silencing and avoiding mention of the topic of religion in public and private schools.

Scholars claimed that religion often determines the “most vital convictions that make up personality” (Foster, 1993, p. xiv). Thus, religion must be part of the construction of one’s personal experience and a part of who a person is. Britzman (2003) explained that “the difference between circumstance and lived experience is the capacity to bestow experience with meanings, be reflective, and take action” (p. 51). Thus, the value of religion is to guide people to make meaning of their lived experiences and in that process, to shape one’s personality. If religion shapes how people make sense of experiences in their lives determining their own identity, then religion plays a role on teachers’ personal construction of who they are. Connecting the personal and professional nexus with religion, Knowles (1992) sheds light on the complexities of a professional-personal nexus. Similar to Clandinin and Connelly (1986), Knowles using a Biographical Transformation model, described four major components in the development of one’s “image of self as a teacher” (1992, p.126). These are: 1) childhood experiences; 2) teacher role models; 3) teaching experiences; and 4) prior non-formative experiences. These components bring together both personal and professional experiences by acknowledging teachers’ personal biographical experiences that influence the formation of a professional identity they develop. Religious beliefs and experiences will be intertwined with these components shaping how teachers viewed their roles as professionals. A limitation of this model is the
absence of contextual considerations determining a teacher’s identity formation which is beyond the scope of this study. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) have observed that a person responds in a unique way to the external or institutional setting. Therefore, the formation of a person’s identity occurs within the broader institutional settings and constraints, in this study, a rural setting. In this study, as the studies reviewed have indicated, identity or who teachers are and their personal life experiences and backgrounds seem to shape what teachers know. It is beyond the scope of this study to review teacher identity frameworks.

TK and teacher beliefs about ELs. There is a large and emerging body of literature on teacher beliefs about the teaching of ELs. Coady et al. (2016) observed that “the precise relationship between beliefs, attitudes, and teacher knowledge is still not clear […], work in this area continues to advance among scholars” (p. 344). A review of this literature is beyond the framework of the current study. However, it is important to acknowledge the mediating effect that beliefs exert on what teachers think they know. There are four prevalent themes in the literature on beliefs regarding the teaching of ELs: 1) beliefs about teachers’ own preparedness (e.g., Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; O’Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez, 2008; Reeves, 2006; Torres & Tackett, 2016; Walker, Shafer, & liams, 2004; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005); 2) beliefs about ELs’ academic capacity and potential (e.g., Escamilla, 2006; Harklau, 2000; Lee, Luyks, Buxton, & Shaver, 2007; Penfield, 1987); 3) beliefs about inclusion of ELs in the mainstream classroom (e.g., Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001); and 4) beliefs about learning English as a second language and the use of the home language in
instruction (e.g., Escamilla, 2006; García-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004, Karathanos, 2009; Lee et al., 2007; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Walker et al., 2004).

In addition to these themes in the literature of beliefs about teaching ELs, scholars have identified three main factors that can also shape teachers’ beliefs and mediate teachers’ own appropriation of knowledge about teaching ELs: 1) teacher’s experiences with diversity and with ELs (e.g., Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2005, Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Youngs & Youngs, 2001); 2) teacher training, background, and educational experiences (e.g., Byrnes et al., 1997; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Faez, 2012; García-Nevárez et al., 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Shin & Krashen, 1996); and 3) the context in which teachers learn and work (e.g., Byrnes et al., 1997; Harklau, 2000; Johnson, 2000; Khong & Saito, 2014; Walker et al., 2004).

What comes to light from these investigations is the interconnected and critical role of teachers’ personal, professional, and contextual dimensions of knowledge and how these nexuses influence teachers’ experiential sense-making. Moreover, these studies highlighted the complexity of isolating these knowledge dimensions as they are constantly at work during the activity of teaching. In some cases, teachers did not feel prepared to teach ELs, or to even address sociocultural issues and other challenges related to teaching ELs. Other teachers exhibited deficit views of their culturally and linguistically diverse students and held numerous misconceptions regarding the use of L1 and L2 development. More troubling was that most of those teachers were not receptive to participating in PD related to ELs and instead relied on common sense.
teaching. Teachers’ misconstrued belief that the use of common-sense instructional strategies for native English speakers are good enough for teaching ELs ignores the special academic and content demands of culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Some studies (e.g., Byrnes, Kiger & Manning, 1997; Flores & Smith, 2008; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Polat, 2010; Youngs & Youngs, 2001) revealed that teachers who had previous experience with other diverse cultures and who had participated in some form of ESL or ESOL training held positive beliefs and attitudes toward ELs as compared to teachers with no preparation. Thus, the findings of these investigations suggest that schools serving ELs may need to identify teachers with positive attitudes towards ELs and diverse educational backgrounds in order to improve education for ELs. Those teachers appeared more likely to exhibit affirming beliefs and may engage in beneficial instructional practices. This seems to matter irrespective of if teachers are monolingual or bilingual (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; Faez, 2012; Lucas et al., 2018). As Walker et al. (2004) indicated, “even a little appropriate training can go a long way in preventing and improving negative teacher attitudes” (p. 142).

Other studies cited above showed contradicting findings about teachers’ beliefs regarding ELs and their practices. For example, even when teachers acknowledged their own under-preparedness to teach ELs, they also rejected the idea of receiving professional development because they did not believe that teaching ELs was their responsibility (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004). While some teachers valued linguistic diversity and the use of L1 in theory, they did not enact practices reflecting these beliefs (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Escamilla, 2006;
García-Nevárez et al., 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Karathanos, 2009; Lee et al., 2007; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Walker et al., 2004). These practices might have been the result of misconceptions regarding the process how ELs acquire a second language, or that teachers face obstacles and challenges that impinge upon their ability to enact effective practices.

Scholars have identified several reasons for the lack of correspondence between what teachers know, think, and do in the context of their classrooms. For instance, Pajares (1992) noted that stated beliefs were not “always a very reliable guide to reality” (p. 326). Recently, scholars have suggested that beliefs, knowledge and practice needed to be looked at in the context of practice. That is, teachers’ personal aspect of knowledge could not be well understood if it is decontextualized. For example, Basturkmen’s (2012) review of research into the corresponding link between language teachers’ stated beliefs and practices suggested three main reasons for these contradictions, 1) complexity of multiple belief systems; 2) limitations of research methodologies; and 3) the influential role of context.

Theorizing that multiple belief systems could be at play, Basturkmen (2012) explained that, “beliefs in one system, such as beliefs about the use of the target language in the classroom, may, for example, periodically conflict with beliefs in another system, such as beliefs about student factors” (p. 284). That is, beliefs and practices may not be consistent due to the dynamic nature of belief systems. While teachers might reflect a belief at a specific time and place, they could, very well, exhibit a belief that is contrary to earlier stated ones at a different time or place. These incongruities are to be expected since teachers enter a fluid belief change process in which beliefs are
constantly transformed in response to teachers’ personal life and professional experiences in the context of their practice.

Another suggested reason for incongruities in the study of beliefs is limitations of research designs. Scholars have recognized that previous quantitative and mixed-methods studies fell short of accurately depicting the nuances involved in studying teacher knowledge as a process. Thus, further inquiries require a more qualitative approach to be able to co-construct knowledge as a multidimensional concept.

What emerged from this examination is the critical role that context plays in shaping teachers’ beliefs, consequently influencing how teachers come to understand and enact their instruction. Basturkmen’s (2012) review found that context and other institutional constraints played the largest role in the inconsistencies across studies’ findings. Fang (1996) acknowledged that the complexity and reality of the context of each school affects what teachers know, believe, and do. Along the same lines, Borg’s (2003) work on the role of beliefs in language teaching underscored the influence of contextual factors in determining the extent in which teachers taught according to their beliefs. Local and national contexts played a role in teachers’ beliefs and their attitudes toward ELs as demonstrated in some of the above studies (e.g., Byrnes et al., 1997; Johnson, 2000; Walker et al., 2004).

**Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Processes**

The second and third components in the TK framework theorized by Coady et al. (2011, 2016) emphasized both the role that language and culture play on TK for teaching and learning for ELs. In terms of the linguistic aspect of the framework, Fillmore and Snow (2000) argued the critical need for teachers of ELs to have a profound linguistic background since children’s academic achievement depends on their
English language and literacy development. They noted, “that teachers need a thorough understanding of how language figures in education, and for that reason they must receive systematic and intensive preparation in what we will call educational linguistics” (p.5). Fillmore and Snow maintained that possessing TK of educational linguistics facilitated the teaching of literacy skills and their work with ELs.

Noted above, Coady et al. (2011, 2016) TK framework also underscored the need for teachers to understand SLA processes. For example, the researchers emphasized that teachers must understand that the automaticity of learning L1 differs from learning a second language (L2). Mainstream teachers must continuously assess, rather than assume, ELs’ command and proficiency of L2 and their own language use in response to their students in order to provide adequate verbal or non-verbal feedback and assessment. For instance, ELs might be able to comprehend a question asked even when he/she is not able to address such question. Teachers must know how bilingualism as a dynamic process is manifested in the development of ELs’ oral language and literacy development and use what they know to make sense of formative and summative assessments (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013). Most importantly, teachers must avoid watering down curriculum for ELs as this would hinder further language development. Moreover, teachers need to understand that pairing ELs with other students for support or even placing them in cooperative settings is helpful but insufficient for English language development. de Jong and Harper (2005) stressed that English is not magically learned “by osmosis” by simply being immersed in an English environment (p. 104). Research over the past decades revealed that ELs develop conversational proficiency within two years of initial exposure to the language, but often
need five to seven years to develop academic language proficiency comparable to that of a native speaker of the same age (Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2008). In sum, teachers working with ELs need to know that “teaching and learning are linguistic and cultural practices that are socially mediated “that will facilitate the identification the linguistic challenges confronted by ELs in the process of learning academic content through L2, a language in which they are not fully proficient (de Jong et al., 2013, p. 92).

The Use of the First Language in Secondary EL Instruction

Extensive research underscored that valuing and capitalizing on ELs’ home languages and cultures is critical for their academic success. Ariza and Coady (2018) noted that two 2006 major reviews of the research on educating ELs, one by the national literacy panel (NLP) and the other by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, (CREDE), reported that: 1) primary language instruction (L1) promotes reading achievement in English (L2) and in the L1; 2) more L1 instruction over more years leads to higher levels of EL achievement in English; 3) the longer ELs receive instruction in a mix of L1 and English, the better their achievement in English; and 4) learning to read in the home language promotes reading achievement in L2.

All teachers of ELs, both monolingual and multilingual, could benefit from knowledge and use of bilingual practices and instruction. For example, the use of L1 as a resource has been documented in the past by the use of code-switching (Myers-Scotton & Jake, 2001, Zentella, 1997) and more recently by García’s (2014) translanguaging—the strategic use of two or more languages as an integrated language system. Teachers must also be aware that L1 can help students negotiate L2 tasks, so that ELs can better mediate these tasks in the L2. In essence, the use of L1 does not
interfere or delay the acquisition of L2 (García & Kleyn, 2016; Karathanos, 2009; Ramírez, Yuen, Ramey, Pasta, & Billings, 1991). Work in this area continues to advance and be debated among scholars (Cummins, 2018; Flores & Rosa, 2015; MacSwan, 2017, 2018; MacSwan, Thompson, Rolstad, McAlister, & Lobo, 2017).

**Translanguaging pedagogy.** García, Ibarra Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) described translanguaging as

the complex language practices of multilingual individuals and communities and to the pedagogical approaches that draw on them to build the language practices desired in formal school settings. [...] from a sociolinguistic perspective, translanguaging differs from [...] code-switching, and in the case of bilingual Latinos, “Spanglish.” (p. 20)

García et al. (2017) differentiated code-switching from translanguaging. She asserted that code-switching referred to “switching back and forth between language codes that are regarded as separate and autonomous. It considers language only from an external perspective that looks at bilinguals’ language behaviors as if they were two monolinguals in one” (p. 20). In contrast, translanguaging, a transformative act in which bilinguals use language features in creative and constructive ways, referred “to the ways that bilinguals use their language repertoires from their own perspectives and not from the perspective of national or standard languages” (p. 20). That is, from bilinguals’ internal perspectives what they have is one linguistic repertoire composed of different language features often deployed for effective communication.

García et al. (2017) described a translanguaging classroom as a space-built collaboration by the teacher and bilingual students as they use their different language practices to teach and learn in creative and critical ways. García asserted that a translanguaging classroom is purposeful and strategic, not chaotic and messy. [...] [classrooms] are powerful, equitable learning environments for bilingual students that enable them to 1) engage with complex content and
texts, 2) strengthen linguistic practices for academic contexts, 3) draw on their bilingualism and ways of knowing, and 4) develop socioemotionally with strong bilingual identities. When teachers effectively leverage students' bilingualism for learning, they can level the playing field and advance social justice. (p. 16)

García et al. emphasized that creating a translinguaging classroom takes thoughtful and effective planning because it is not enough to follow a translinguaging *corriente*—the natural flow of bilingualism throughout a classroom---the teacher needs to “purposefully and strategically” leverage the translinguaging corriente for learning (p. xi). Thus, this translinguaging pedagogy framework required three strands, teachers need to 1) have a translanguing stance—the philosophical, ideological, or belief system that teachers draw from to develop their pedagogical framework, for example, teachers considering students’ language repertoire as a resource; 2) build a translanguaging design; and 3) make translanguaging shifts. García underscored that teachers need to transcend the first strand because it is not enough to have a stance to enact a translanguaging pedagogy as careful planning and thoughtful assessments need to be implemented.

**Content-area linguistic knowledge.** Developing content knowledge at the secondary school level can be a daunting challenge for ELs. It is widely recognized that L2 development is a long-term process that becomes more complicated as students are exposed to content in secondary settings (August & Shanahan, 2006; Valdés, 2004). For secondary ELs, L2 development is compounded by their gaps in formal schooling (Rubenstein-Ávila, 2006). For ELs to succeed academically and have a chance to higher education, secondary teachers must understand and recognize the sophisticated language demands in content areas other than English Language Arts (Valdés, 2004). More importantly, EL students may be enrolled in 10th grade, despite having only
completed, for instance, 4th grade in their country (Rubenstein-Ávila, 2006). Subject areas such as, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies require that ELs understand specialized language that might be unfamiliar to them.

“Comprehensible input,” as described by Krashen (1985), included the use of graphic organizers and collaborative groups as essential instructional components to facilitate the academic success of ELs in such courses. However, used alone without explicit instruction, these strategies are insufficient for ELs. Scholars continue to underscore the benefits of instruction that employs ELs’ L1 to allow improved accessibility to content-area knowledge, facilitate academic and cognitive growth, and support simultaneous L1 and L2 development (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Cummins, 1979, 1981, 2000, 2008; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Escamilla & Coady, 2000; Karathanos, 2009; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). For example, since many English-Spanish cognates are academic vocabulary words originating from Latin, Scarcella (2003) suggested that teachers could explicitly point to Latin roots to “provide a bridge” between ELs’ L1 and L2 vocabulary development (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 110).

By introducing the interdependence hypothesis, Cummins (1979, 1981, 2008, 2018) theorized that ELs could transfer concepts from L1 to L2 as they developed a ‘Common Underlying Proficiency.’ Cummins proposed that ELs’ language proficiency was composed of two parts: conversational language and academic language. BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) are the skills required in a social, daily conversation while CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) are the language skills utilized to comprehend advanced or technical vocabulary without any verbal or contextual cues. With this model, Cummins argued that the lack of academic
achievement of ELs was due to the lack of emphasis on explicit instruction of academic language in school. For instance, work by Hakuta (1986) and his colleagues provided clear support that an EL who acquired L1 literacy or mathematical concepts in L1 could transfer this knowledge easily to L2. This suggested that teachers must contextualized the material they present in the classroom and must be knowledgeable of the students’ prior background experiences in order to relate this material to students. Recent work in this area continues to affirm the transfer theory of second language acquisition as opposed to more time-on-task in the target language (MacSwan et al., 2017). In addition, teachers need to also develop and integrate language and content objectives to facilitate L2 development in content areas (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

Despite the limited research about what constitutes a TK base for teaching ELs in secondary settings—that allow culturally and linguistically diverse students to have full access to academic and content area language to succeed in school (Faltis et al., 2010)—, educators continue to propose novel frameworks. One example, drawing upon systemic functional linguistics (SFL) theory and academic language perspectives, Turkan et al. (2014) proposed an analytic framework for theorizing a TK base that emphasizes the role of language in teaching content to ELs. Using the term Disciplinary Linguistic Knowledge (DLK), they described it as

the specialized knowledge base for teaching content to ELLs […] teachers’ knowledge of the academic discourse of a discipline or content area […] the linguistic knowledge base that all teachers of ELLs need to facilitate students’ understanding of oral and written discourse within a discipline and their use of language in ways that allow them to actively participate in the disciplinary discourse. (p. 9)
Turkan et al. argued that as part of the unique knowledge base for teaching ELs, teachers need to know which linguistic features relate to the particular content area that might cause misunderstandings for ELs’ comprehension. Teachers need to unpack discipline-specific linguistic features by explicitly connecting meaning and content. Similar to Shulman’s PCK (1986) framework, which underscored teachers’ unique professional knowledge base: knowledge of content and pedagogy, Turkan et al. (2014) DLK definition of TK for ELs illuminated teachers’ special job to simultaneously facilitate ELs’ language development and content learning. This framework further underscored the specialized linguistic aspects of teaching content to ELs, which have not been included into an “all teachers’ knowledge base for the purposes of making content accessible to ELLs” and enhancing their academic language proficiency (Turkan et al., 2014, p. 24).

Teacher Knowledge of Place

Essential to this study is the notion of context as a dimension through which TK about secondary EL education in rural settings is examined. To contextualize the discussion of place-based TK, I must explore how contextual factors are inextricably intertwined with the personal and professional dimensions of TK for ELs. I argue that place-based knowledge matters in EL secondary education. First, after an overview of how the construct of context has been conceptualized in the literature, I underscore the strengths of rural communities. Second, I examine the academic literature about the challenges faced by educators in rural school settings. An understanding of TK in rural school settings could be more comprehensive when viewed through the lens of place-based education, that puts an emphasis on the role of rurality on the secondary TK for working with ELs in rural school communities.
Context as a new dimension in TK. Because earlier professional teacher practices were essentially defined as behaviors, contexts were merely seen as places in which that behavior unfolded. Scholars have recognized the complexities of teachers’ practices as situated in personal and professional histories and seen as “interactive (or dialogical) with others—students, parents and community members, and fellow teachers—in the settings in which they unfolded (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1983; Ernst-Slavit & Poveda, 2011; Lampert, 1985; Mercado (1991, 2002); Pedrana, 2009; Reeves, 2009; Wenger et al., 2012). Thus, “the notion of context moved from backdrop to interlocutor in the creation and use of teachers’ knowledge” (Freeman, 2002, p. 12). The need to understand contextual aspects of teaching and the tensions teachers experienced in practice guided TK research towards a more constructivist epistemology that included context as a new dimension worth considering. Sharkey (2004) observed,

“Context” is more than geographical location and a host of concrete factors that shape classroom practices (physical space, number of students, type of program, materials, etc. It also encompasses the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts, i.e., the values and ideologies that inform the policies, practices and interactions that shape teachers’ work. (p. 282)

Freeman and Richards (1996) also noted that teachers “(re)conceptualization and (re)construction of their experiences, previous knowledge, and personal beliefs” were seen as a response to “both macro- and micro-level contextual factors in their classrooms, schools, and communities” (p. 5).

Investigating the role of TK and voice in an ESOL curriculum development project located in a rural state, Sharkey (2004) conducted a qualitative case study of nine elementary ESOL teachers, a school district coordinator, and a university
researcher. The study revealed that the knowledge of context served teachers throughout the curriculum project as a mediator for establishing trust, defining needs, and critiquing political factors affecting their work. The study allowed teachers to name the tensions felt as they worked “within and against” the contexts that shaped their work (p. 288).

Freeman (2018) revisited Freeman and Johnson’s (1998) reconceptualization of the knowledge base for language teaching education which argued that language teacher education research and programs should move beyond a focus on content and methods to one that appreciates the personal, sociocultural, and political context of teachers and teaching. Freeman’s (2018) framework further underscored the impact of social and political dynamics of migration shaping the new demands of the particular work in the context of place and time. As new demands emerge “so do the parameters of what people need to know in order to do it [the work]” (p. 2).

In the new framework, TK is driven by use, a context-driven set of arguments: who is using English and how, is reshaping what teachers of ELs need to know and the trajectory of this knowledge will be best understood “if the sociocultural contexts in which these processes take place are explicitly examined as part of the research process” (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 407). Sharkey (2004) concurred that the realities of classrooms are affected by the educational policies and social contexts in which classrooms are embedded. Similarly, John and Ford (2017) agreed that indeed “the place in which one engages in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience” (p. 12). As follows, TK of context is complex and shaped by teachers’ own constructions and understandings of personal and professional life.
histories and experiences, in which knowledge of *place*, rurality in the current study, is another dimension shaping this relationship.

**The Relevance of TK of Place in EL Secondary Education in Rural US**

The size of the US rural population, 60 million people or 17% in 2006, exceeds the size of other subgroups (Hispanics: 43.2 million, or 14.7%; African Americans: 40.2 million or 13.7%; or people age 65 and older: 37 million or 12%) (Brown & Schafft, 2011). Recent data from the 2016-17 school year indicate that EL students now account for 9.6% of the total K-12 student population or just under 5 million students across the country (NCES, 2018). In fringe, distant, and remote rural settings, defined following US guidelines for rurality (NCES, 2006), EL students account for about 14% of the total EL population (NCES, 2012). It is plausible that the number of rural EL students is well over 800,000 students by 2025. O'Hare (2009) observed that the majority of immigrants living in rural US are Hispanic, and “new research shows that Hispanic population growth is emerging in unexpected places” (p. 13). Even though, these newcomer families are a revitalizing force (Lichter, Parisi, & Taquino, 2016), they require specialized resources to meet their cultural and linguistic needs. A consequence of this inflow of immigrants to rural areas is a growth in the ELs attendance in classrooms in which teachers feel overwhelmed and underprepared to meet the linguistic and cultural learning needs of their students (Freeman Field, 2008; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

Although the percentage of rural ELs (14) seems relatively small in comparison to those in suburban (30.6) and city areas (47), rural settings pose exceptional challenges related to teaching and learning for ELs that have not been addressed by the literature (NCES, 2012). As aforementioned, not only have scholars recognized that
the knowledge-base for teaching ELs in a general education setting is nascent (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Turkan et al., 2014), “little is known about teachers who enter the field of education with the intention of teaching in rural communities” (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 376). Rural educators who work with diverse students must address the linguistic, social, and academic needs of all students, including the specific needs of ELs (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Furthermore, teachers need to know and understand the challenges posed by the place in which they work and how these challenges shape what teachers know and think and how they enact EL instruction, and further, how these challenges are detrimental to the education of ELs in rural schools. To paint a holistic picture of rurality, I will briefly discuss the strengths of rurality followed by the specific challenges faced by EL teachers in rural communities.

**Strengths of Rural School Communities**

Researchers and educators have often failed to recognize the unique strengths of rural places. Brown and Schafft (2011) observed that although rural areas only contain 15 to 30 percent of a nation’s population, they typically contain most of its land, water, and mineral resources. Thus, rural areas contribute to a nation’s economic, social well-being, and to its energy and food security. Moreover, US survey research has shown the power of rural communities in supporting conservative candidates in local and national elections. Although all rural communities are unique, as I argue in the next sections of this chapter, most rural people “hold more conservative attitudes toward abortion, sex education, homosexuality, and other social issues” (Beale, 1995 as cited in Brown & Schafft, 2011, p. 11).

White and Reid (2008) argued that the unique qualities found within rural communities can be seen as resources for attracting and retaining teachers. For
instance, the smaller size of rural schools has its advantages such as lower student-to-
teacher ratios as compared to larger schools (Center for Public Education, 2018;
Wenger & Dinsmore, 2009) and generally closer relationships between teachers and
students (Semke & Sheridan, 2012). The social bond and cohesion in rural communities
observed by scholars (e.g. Wilkinson, 1991; Brown & Schafft, 2011) indicate that the
social community relationships that bond people living in geographic locales play a
central role in meeting people’s daily needs and integral component to developing
personal identities. As Brown and Schafft (2011) described,

Being part of a community implies a long-term, continuous social
interaction that contributes to the formation of personal identity, and to
social and economic production and reproduction. As a result, members
share a sense of belonging, of “we-ness.” (p. 35)

The strong sense of community within the school as well as support from the
local community is interpreted as a positive strength for rural schools (Knoblauch &
Woolfolk-Hoy, 2008). This sense of community is attributed to the ways that rural
communities are linked to their schools in ways not typical of urban areas (McCracken &
Miller, 1988). More specifically, most teachers in rural schools are familiar with the
context because they were born or went to school in the same place they teach and
they either have personal connections to rural communities or are attracted to the
prominent role of the school within the community (Arnold et al., 2005, Arnold, Biscoe,
Farmer, Robertson, & Shapley, 2007). These rural educators know and understand the
context of school and community and are more eager to be engaged and engage
students in service to the community (Howley & Howley, 2014; Johnson & Zoellner,
2016). Language and ESL teachers in rural schools take on multiple language roles
(Paciotto & Delany-Barmann, 2011). Personal relationships and a family atmosphere
tend to create a cooperative, accepting, and supportive environment in rural schools (Sheridan, Kunz, Holmes, & Witte, 2017), which is correlated with positive student attitudes, behavior, and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003; Williams & Grooms, 2016). Close community ties present in rural communities represent an opportunity for teachers to explicitly connect what is learned in school to their students' backgrounds and experiences; which has been linked to positive academic and social outcomes, especially among students who have been historically underserved by schooling (Lieberman & Hoody, 1998).

**Challenges of Rural School Communities and EL Education**

In spite of the abovementioned strengths of rural communities, there is a rural narrative or a “stereotype threat” for people living in rural areas (Azano, 2015, p. 268). Azano (2015) asserted that rural students “are told by popular culture, canonized literature, media, music, comedians, and so forth that they are lazy and stupid. Redneck and poor white trash can be readily heard in academic circles and television” (p. 268). As Azano reported, this enduring narrative, pejoratives, and negative stereotypes persist in the US and constitutes one of the challenges and misconstructions facing rural schools and communities.

Nevertheless, the nature of rurality poses other challenges for EL education that transcend limited resources. There is a lack of educators well-prepared to teach ELs (Hansen-Thomas, 2018; NREA, 2016). Teacher under-preparedness has been exacerbated by persistent crises in rural education which include attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality teachers (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, Dean, 2005; Azano & Stewart, 2015; Collins, 1999; Freeman Field, 2008; Gallo & Beckman, 2016; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016) and high turnover and teacher shortage in disadvantaged schools.
Specifically, ESL teachers are among the hardest to recruit (Dadisman, Gravelle, Farmer, & Petrin, 2010), in part because many states have ESL teacher shortages and ESL positions are often readily available in suburban and urban areas (Walker, 2012). For instance, in the rural state of Idaho, 72% of the school districts with ESL teacher vacancies reported that they were hard or very hard to fill (Batt, 2008). Additionally, teachers in rural school districts frequently have limited experience with ELs, making professional development paramount but often expensive, as these opportunities are much more limited in rural areas than in urban centers (Burton, Brown, & Johnson, 2013; Kandel, Henderson, Koball, & Capps, 2011; Wenger & Dinsmore, 2009) due mostly, in part, to remote geographical distances combined with limited funding.

Finance and funding for schools are impacted by the sociodemographic and topographic factors of rural districts and vary from state to state. Population sparsity, distances of schools, and students’ homes create additional costs for student transportation. Challenging topography such as mountains, prairies, lakes, etc., increase costs of services and goods (Johnson & Zoellner, 2016). Funding policies at the local, state, and federal level intersect with one another; generally state and federal funding treat urban and rural schools in the same way. Johnson and Zoeller (2016) argued that the “larger the role played by local funds, the more inequitable the funding levels are” (p. 14). The value of real estate and personal property taxes, which varies dramatically among communities, determines the local revenue. While school districts located in wealthier communities have access to a higher tax base, rural school districts have more limited funds than wealthier urban districts to finance necessary bilingual and
home language resources for instruction and cultural awareness (Hansen-Thomas, 2018).

Lack of community amenities, lower salaries (Arnold et al., 2005), high poverty rates (Miller, 2012), and educational policies of accountability (Wenger & Dinsmore, 2005) constitute additional challenges in the teaching practices of teachers in rural settings. Additionally, the insulated nature and the inherent physical, social and cultural characteristics of rural communities, (Burton & Johnson, 2010) and the realities of rural life (Barley & Brigham, 2008) can result in novice teachers in rural areas experiencing unique and perhaps more profound isolation (Barley, 2009; Fry & Anderson, 2011). Rural teachers have to deal with a lack of teaching resources, as well as out-of-date classrooms (Marlow & Cooper, 2008). While these circumstances compound the difficulties that rural teachers face in their work, they represent enormous challenges to rural EL teachers who are not well prepared to address ELs’ specialized educational needs (Good, Masewicz, & Vogel, 2010; Manner & Rodriguez, 2012; Rodriguez & Manner, 2010).

This overview of the characteristics of rural places underscores the importance for teachers of ELs to adapt to the rural context, to recognize both the strengths and the challenges inherent within these contexts and to acknowledge that place itself could be a resource in their teaching. As Eppley (2015) expressed, teachers need to embrace and to integrate in the school and the local community, as they are generally expected to develop familiarity with the places and the people. As some scholars have contended, to teach effectively in a rural community, teachers must not only see themselves as individuals who chose to teach in rural communities but should also build
relationships with the surrounding community and connecting with students in the classroom, that is, teachers must have a “real-life experience of visiting, seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling, and interacting” with the place in which they work (White & Reid, 2008, p. 8).

Rural teachers have an obligation to awaken the consciousness of their students towards sustainability in rural areas and help them develop and nurture a sense of place (Wenger, Dinsmore, Villagómez, 2012). Additionally, rural teachers must learn the specific culture not only of their new school, but also of the rural community itself (Eppley, 2009) because effective teaching in rural areas requires that educators recognize and respect this unique sociological dynamic (Burton & Johnson, 2010). The notion of “place” (Corbett, 2016; White & Reid, 2008) and an understanding of its role and importance in rural teachers’ work is a “necessary condition in appreciating the circumstances and specificity of rural education” (Green & Reid, 2014, p. 27). In the following section, I describe place-based education as an important theoretical construct used as a lens in this study.

**Place-Based Education and TK**

Integral to this study is the notion of context as a dimension through which TK and teachers’ work with ELs in rural secondary settings is examined. Recently, educational scholars who noticed the renewed interest in rural education argued that context is something that is “worked” and “worked within” (e.g., Reagan, Hambacher, Schram, McCurdy, Lord, Higginbotham, & Fornauf, 2019, p. 84) by teachers who work in rural places and seek to understand the role it plays in teacher education for rural places. The increased focus on the significance of place emerged as “a necessary condition in understanding and appreciating the circumstances and specificity of rural
education” (Green & Reid, 2014, p 27). As a result of this interest, literature on place-based (Comber, Reid, & Nixon, 2007; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009) and place-conscious (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; White & Reid, 2008) approaches to education have been emerging in rural teacher education programs and research on rural education (Reagan et al., 2019).

**Uniqueness of Rural Places: A Sense of Place**

Corbett (2016) remarked, “the more we know about rurality, the less we know, it seems, and, as the old saying goes, if you have seen one rural community, you have seen… well, one rural community” (p. 278). Scholars noted that place-consciousness works with and from an attention to the specificity of particular places or place-communities (Cormack, Green, and Reid, 2008, as cited in White & Reid, 2008). Greenwood (2013) argued that to study places means to know more about our experiences and the experiences of others. Many existing conceptualizations of rurality range from false binary comparisons between what is urban vs. rural (John & Ford, 2017) to fifteen US government official definitions (Reynolds, 2017, p xxi) or “bureaucratically-delineated” categories (Eppley, 2009, p. 8) that intend to standardize and generalize rurality “erasing the differences of culture, race, ethnicity, class, and linguistic usage” particular to rural places (Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2007, p. 23). Other rural scholars contend that teachers working in rural places and rural students “are deeply tied to locality by their ‘sense of place’” (Azano, 2011, p. 1). For instance, Hutchinson (2004) described sense of place as a constructed reality “informed by the unique experiences, histories, motives, and goals that each of us [teachers] brings to the spaces with which we identify” (p. 11). Cloke and Milbourne (1992) observed that rurality refers to how people “construct themselves as being rural,” that is,
understanding rurality as a socially constructed state of mind (p.360). Rurality as a socially constructed reality presumes that places are rural not because of their geography, size, or even environmental characteristics; rather, places are rural because the people who live in rural places deem themselves as being rural in terms of their social, moral, and cultural values (Brown & Schafft, 2011). Similarly, other scholars (e.g., Corbett, 2016; Green & Reid, 2014; White & Reid, 2008) have recognized the importance of problematizing place as a “necessary condition in understanding and appreciating the circumstances and specificity of rural education” (Green & Reid, 2014, p. 27).

Howley and Howley (2007) noted that “the more unique characteristics of a place, the more likely it is to contribute to terroir” (p. 7). Terroir refers to not only a sense of place but also to the products of that place. Similarly, who people are, their ontology or identity and what they know are central to place. The concept of terroir reminds all of us of the need for place-consciousness (Gruenewald, 2003), which refers to not only the work we do but also the people with whom we interact, their identities, and their knowledge of the world. Scholars argued that it may be more informative in research studies to include a description of the actual community classified as rural (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017). Characteristics of communities such as population density, condition of infrastructure, availability of services and goods, access to transportation and internet networks, access and type of jobs people hold, the ways of being, the nature of tax base, and social community functioning, might best define what is rural. A description of this study’s research context is included in Chapter 3.
Diversity and Race in Rural Communities

Scholars argued that in places like the US, rural landscapes have been socially constructed as icons of national identity (Brown & Schafft, 2011). For instance, Woods (2005) observed that rural spaces have been positioned “as a repository of historical national values [that] explicitly or implicitly identified with a homogeneous ethnic group” (Woods, 2005, p. 282). Constructing rural places as a White space reinforces the social exclusion of racial and ethnic subgroups in those areas (Groenke & Nespor, 2010; Holloway, 2007).

Brown and Schafft (2011) observed that rural America “is often more racially and ethnically diverse than popular imagination would presume” (p. 122). Scholars have historically recognized that rural America has been the home to large numbers of racial and ethnic minorities (Brown & Schafft, 2011; Lichter, 2012; Saez, 2012). For instance, between 2000 and 2010, the rural Hispanic population increased by 44.6 percent (Lichter, 2012). Although some scholars noted that community solidarity among the diverse rural populations had increased and racial housing segregation had declined in the last 50 years (Iceland, 2009; Qian & Lichter, 2011), others suggested that rural America was divided in “two peoples, two cultures, and two languages,” and that Hispanics are hard to assimilate (Huntington, 2004, p. 30). Fennelly (2008) opined that “language barriers and socioeconomic class differences relegate many immigrants to a permanent category of outsiders” even if they had been in the area for years (p. 172). As outsiders, immigrants represented a “threat” to national identity and their relationships with locals were relegated to formal ones such as “teacher-student” or “manager-worker;” they were viewed as “eroding the sense of community and shared
values” of the existing White homogeneous community (Lichter, 2012, p. 25).

Donehower, Hogg, and Schell (2007) expressed,

People of color grouped in these [rural] areas continue to reflect the unique historical circumstances each group faced as they established themselves in the United States or found themselves there by force or annexation. (p. 3)

They observed that the first step toward moving away from the myth that rural America is homogeneous is to acknowledge the diversity and complexity of rural populations.

A study by Gimpel and Lay (2008) found that anti-immigrant sentiment in two meatpacking communities in Iowa was strong among affluent young adolescents of the particular rural community. Massey (2008) also observed that hostile sentiments toward new immigrants originated from resentments regarding new taxes imposed to build more schools or hire more teachers. More recently, Massey (2020) noted President Trump’s anti-immigrant efforts have transformed a humanitarian problem affecting Central American families and children into a “manufactured immigration crisis for the nation as a whole” (p. 18). In addition, the geographic isolation and job discrimination of rural Hispanics has reinforced cultural isolation and anti-immigrant prejudice, respectively (Lichter, 2012). Lichter (2012) noted the extraordinary prejudice Hispanic immigrants face in rural communities from:

the longtime rural residents who have never before been exposed to minority populations who speak a different language or who do not embrace American culture in their daily lives (e.g., they dress differently, eat different foods, and listen to different music from native whites). (p. 28)

In sum, many areas of rural America have unfortunate histories of racial conflict and exclusion, “legacies that continue to exist in the form of de facto racial segregation” and social and economic disparities” (Brown & Schafft, 2011, p.141).
Place-Based TK. This study was contextualized in rurality which I theorized as an important factor that shaped TK and teachers' work with ELs in this secondary rural community. The construct of “rural” was not simply used as a backdrop for examining TK. It was also conceptualized as a “constitutive place[s] that shape[s] identities and possibilities” (Eppley, 2015, p. 70) and is “pedagogical” because a place teaches educators who, what, and where they are, as well as how they might live their lives (Gruenewald, 2003). Drawing from Donehower et al. (2007), rurality includes: 1) a geographic aspect, denoting a particular physical area or space. Spaces are localities inscribed by social processes, that is, they foreground spatial, social, cultural, and historical production (Gruenewald, 2003; Reagan et al., 2019); and 2) a socio-cultural aspect, involving the interaction of people in communities and cultural groups, which make them unique and rich in human-world relationships that need to be acknowledged.

Early mainstream rural educational research on schools and communities did not consider rural ways of being, knowing, and living; and was conducted based on two assumptions: 1) the presumption of rural inferiority and 2) the irrelevance of social and cultural processes to both education and schooling (Howley & Howley, 2014). In order for rurality to become more than a backdrop to education studies—a fixed and static place, defined in opposition to other fixed and static entities—attention must be directed “to social processes, to the ways in which people live, work, play, desire, and hopefully, cooperate” in those places (John & Ford, 2017, p. 13). Howley and Howley (2014) noted that most place-based educational studies use quantitative methodology that treats rurality as a geographical boundary, rather than a “cultural marker,” which tends to
overlook “the circumstances” or the complexity and richness of rural places (p. 15).

Similarly, Eppley (2009) observed that

“Rurality” as a social and cultural construct (as opposed to bureaucratically-delineated category) implies a deep connection to place; the rural place is much more than simply a backdrop to one’s life. […] The highly qualified rural teacher understands this. Rural residents may define their identity, in part, through connection to a rural place [...] and census bureau designation as rural or not matters little in how they see themselves. (p. 8)

Furthermore, Green and Letts (2007) argued that spaces are infused “with histories that render them politically, economically and socially charged. We must think of spaces literally, […], but also as knowledge spaces, as comprising both ‘materiality and ‘mentality’” (p. 13). Likewise, Greenwood (2013) acknowledged the pedagogical nature of places as they shape us as we shape them. Reid et al. (2010) reminded educators that “coming to know a place means recognizing and valuing the forms of social and symbolic capital that exist there, rather than elsewhere. It means using the resources of the people who know” (p. 272). Additionally, Coladarci (2007) argued that, as researchers, we should not seek consensus on a single definition, but rather a detailed description of the context in which research is conducted and teaching is enacted, is imperative for understanding results and improving rural education for ELs.

Extending this conversation, White (2015) proposed a theoretical knowledge-base for rural teacher educators characterized by three main overlapping dimensions emerging from White’s analysis across studies and literature. The first dimension refers to the *funds of knowledge* or “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” originally proposed by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992, p. 133). The second dimension, *rural social space* entails the constructs of geography, demography,
and economy, i.e., the coming to know a place as a sense of an interaction between field and habitus in which society and space interact beyond a simple location (Reagan et al., 2019; Reid et al., 2010). The third dimension is place consciousness, which emphasizes educators’ awareness and attention to the specific and circumstantial nature of particular places or communities in engagement with broader contexts; this theory problematizes place as something more fluid and provisional than its traditional understanding as a fixed geographical site (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; White & Reid, 2008).

These theories emphasized the significance for teachers to possess a deep school and community knowledge. In other words, with this theoretical framework, White acknowledged the importance for teachers to possess both a personal and place-based knowledge of the space in which they work. Thus, as Gruenewald (2003) suggested, rural places are real spaces that go beyond a mere geographical location and stereotypical descriptions, “places themselves have something to say” (p. 624). They are unique and rich in human-world relationships that need to be acknowledged. Gruenewald (2003) noted that,

[Places], as centers of experience, teach us about how the world works and how our lives fit into the spaces we occupy. Further, places make us: As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped. […] The kind of teaching and shaping that places accomplish, of course, depends on what kinds of attention we give to them and on how we respond to them. (p.621)

In other words, funds of knowledge—people’s social and cultural capital—culture, and place are deeply intertwined (Basso, 1996; Casey, 1997; Feld & Basso, 1996 as cited in Gruenewald, 2003) because people make and shape places and places shape and make people.
While critics of place-based education frameworks alleged that young people need to be educated for a globalized world and not for an insulated community (Greenwood, 2013), its strong supporters argued that place-based education does not only entail a complex understanding of place, but a complex understanding of places and the relationship between places, past, present, and future.

Place-based education as a unique, generative, sociocultural construct that researchers and teachers need to explore, reflect on, and define according to their personal and professional experiences in the space in which they work, requires us to be aware of a sense of place. Problematizing place requires teachers to have an awareness of how context shapes what they know, think and do in their work with ELs. As John and Ford (2017) remarked “The rural is nowhere [...] there is no such ontological thing as the rural or the urban” (p. 3), rather alternative forms of knowledge. Places are not neutral and the construct of rurality does not fit the “one size fits all” approach.

The use of place-based education theory as a lens to examine TK about EL secondary teaching in a rural community entails constructs like rural, place, and rural education and their significant impact on student learning and teacher practice. By working with the notion of place-based education in this study, my conceptual understanding of TK as a teaching framework points to the different factors that are intrinsically linked to rural contexts. In other words, place-based education introduces a new perspective for viewing TK for EL secondary teaching in rural settings, particularly in terms of how rural contexts could shape teachers’ personal and professional knowledge.
Rural Research Connecting TK and Place-based Education

Scholars supporting place-consciousness pedagogy (Azano, 2011; Gruenewald, 2003, Theobald, 1997, White & Reid, 2008), which underscores grounding teaching and learning in a sense of place—the lived experiences of people, cultures, and histories—have urged teachers to connect instructional materials to their rural places. Applying the second component of the “enhanced expertise” framework for teachers of ELs by de Jong et al. (2013), TK for teaching ELs in a rural setting needs to include, along with the aforementioned specialized linguistic knowledge and pedagogy, an understanding of the role that students’ cultural background plays in their academic success. Fillmore and Snow (2000) noted that, “children of immigrants and native-born American children from non-majority backgrounds may encounter a stark disjunction between their cultural understandings and those of the school” (p. 12). Along the same lines, White and Reid (2008) suggested that,

As teachers come to know, and know about, a particular rural place, and come to understand its relationships to, and with other places, they [teachers] are developing knowledge, sensitivities, awareness, skills, attitudes, and abilities that will allow them to feel more at home and more powerful in a rural setting. (p. 6)

Within the rural education literature, I identified two recent studies that explored teachers’ personal and professional life histories and their connection to teachers’ rural social context.

As abovementioned, Ernst-Slavit and Poveda (2011), drawing on ethnographic methodology explored “the lives and circumstances” of two first grade bilingual teaching assistants working with Mexican descent ELs in Washington in K-12 schools (p. 8). Ernst-Slavit and Poveda focused the analysis on the saberes docentes revealed by these teachers. Using saberes docentes (SD) to underscore the personal subjective
aspect of TK, the study focused on how teachers’ individual accumulated personal, professional, and social experiences played a role in how they organized and adapted instruction according to the demands of practice. Ernst-Slavit and Poveda suggested that carefully considering educators’ personal biographies and trajectories as components shaping teachers’ knowledge was essential to uncovering hidden beliefs or ideologies that could clash against the reality of classroom contexts and instructional practice; they demonstrated that the notion of SD was an alternative framework useful in theoretically framing ethnographic research in contexts where teachers and students had different personal experiences and came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in a rural setting.

Similar to Ernst-Slavit and Poveda (2011), Wenger et al. (2012) grounding their study in SD, conducted a 30-month qualitative exploration of teachers’ knowledge and identities in a high-poverty, bilingual K-8 public charter dual-language immersion model school in rural eastern Oregon. Using narrative inquiry, life history interviews, and ethnographic methods, they identified core beliefs of teachers tracing links between teachers’ life histories, beliefs, and their views of themselves as teachers, which they described as teachers’ identities. By describing and examining the instructional adaptations that teachers made, and their personal orientations as they interacted with students, they sought to show how selected adaptations and stances were mediated by their personal experiences.

Interview data and identity snapshots, defined by Wenger et al. (2012) as “critical incidents in the past and in daily practice that help[ed] shape the identities of these effective teachers of multicultural rural students” (p. 7), provided past information for
understanding the role of the personal aspect of teachers’ knowledge. As they reviewed teachers’ life histories, Wenger et al. (2012) focused on how their experiences and their professional trajectories mediated their instructional practice, i.e., their *saberes docentes*.

The researchers also looked closely at how the school sociocultural context—its culture and community members—supported and extended those beliefs in the construction of teachers’ identities. For instance, one of the teacher’s beliefs about collaboration was depicted in her identity snapshot. Growing up in a close-knit rural community allowed her to believe in a sense of community and collaboration. She collaborated with students and parents in creating a bilingual cookbook project as part of her English class to sell to community members to raise money for her students’ eighth grade trip. Her sense of community growing up, in particular her knowledge and concepts of rurality, played a role in how she organized instruction. Wenger and colleagues showed the potential for exploring personal and professional life histories as a tool for developing understanding of themselves as teachers within a particular rural school, and how the context and physical space influenced teacher practices.

A recent study in rural education by Ankeny, Marichal, and Coady (2019) drew from teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Palmer, 2018) and place-based education (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003) frameworks to describe emerging teacher leaders for ELs in a PD model in rural Florida. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) defined a teacher-leader as a professional with four distinct qualities. A teacher-leader can lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice;
and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of leadership (p. 6). Ankeny, Marichal, and Coady’s (2019) research on teacher-leaders demonstrated how teacher-leaders transformed educational settings. Palmer (2018) identified similar qualities across her study participants. She found that bilingual teacher-leaders of EL students were reflexive of their practices and engaged in ongoing inquiry, collaborated with colleagues in co-constructed ways, and advocated for educational equity and change on behalf of their bilingual students. In addition, bilingual teacher-leaders took on the additional role of acting as cultural and linguistic brokers, developing a personal awareness of their own and their students’ identities. The participants in this study revealed that in rural settings, educators felt compelled to play multifaceted roles and extended their own work to advocate for EL students and families through small but collaborative purposeful acts.

**Conceptual Framework**

This chapter provided a conceptual framework for the current study. Figure 2-1 demonstrates the components of this framework and the intersections of these components for this study. After examining the construct of TK, I argue that TK is comprised of three main areas: 1) *personal knowledge*, 2) *professional knowledge*, and 3) *knowledge of place*. Figure 2-1 also demonstrates that TK is mediated by a variety of factors, including local, state, and national policies. The dimensions of personal and professional knowledge subsumed educational and life experiences and are constantly interacting with one another throughout a teacher’s life. I consider these as two essential components of the overall knowledge-base of teachers that affect teachers’ work with EL students. Finally, the third component of this framework, *knowledge of*
place, reflects the contextual dimension that shapes TK, and it is the essence of being, knowing, and living in a particular space.

Figure 2-1. Conceptual framework: Rural teacher knowledge for teaching ELs

That is, to connect TK to instruction, teachers of ELs must a) possess a deep knowledge of school and community—funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992); b) be invested in the rural social space (Reid et al., 2010) or those connections between geographic space (Green & Letts, 2007) and society that define a community through their people interacting with other people and the environment; and c) possess a sense
of place or place consciousness (Gruenewald, 2003). In other words, the constant interaction among personal and professional knowledge—what teachers know about themselves or their ontology and what they know (episteme) about their profession—shaped by one’s history and experiences as well as by beliefs and expectations of what it means to teach in a rural setting, contributes to the overall TK linked to a particular place. How a teacher views herself both informs and is informed by a sense of place. This appears to be especially evident in rural education for ELs.

Thus, TK for teaching ELs in rural settings is found at the juncture of these three dimensions: personal and professional knowledge, and knowledge of place. Teacher knowledge for teaching ELs is a complex, “messy” proposition constantly shaping and shaped by the three components of this framework, e.g., teachers’ own constructions and understandings of their personal, professional knowledge and experiences are constantly and mutually informed by the particular demands of place. What is more, teaching ELs requires a specialized linguistic knowledge and a command of second language acquisition processes which includes explicit instruction of academic language in school. For this reason, I have placed TK for teaching ELs in the intersection of the three components and it is here where my study is situated.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced the theoretical framework and literature review that underlie this work. It presented TK as a theoretical lens for understanding how teachers know what they know. The literature revealed three interrelated dimensions of this knowledge, i.e., personal, professional, and knowledge of place which, I theorize, shape each other in teachers work with secondary ELs in a rural setting. Thus, the first section began with a historical overview and conceptual definitions of TK in the general
education field and by reviewing the theoretical framework aligned with it as well as some of the empirical literature carried out. The second section built a case for the professional-personal nexus that shapes TK and reviewed the literature that supports this connection. Then, the next section reviewed how TK in the field of EL teaching has been researched, followed by the theoretical framework that supports a contextual knowledge of place as another dimension shaping TK. The next to last section examined the specialized TK for teaching ELs through these three lenses. The final section provided the conceptual framework for studying ELs in a rural setting, namely teachers’ professional and personal knowledge, and knowledge of place. In the next chapter, I describe the research methodology for the study.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study investigated what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in a rural secondary school community. The study also examined the three interwoven dimensions of TK, —personal, professional, and place-based—informing the four focal participants’ work with rural EL secondary students. Two main research questions guided this study: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs? The study used a narrative informed qualitative research approach to data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to elicit narrative events of personal, professional and place-based experiences. This chapter describes the research design structure in this study (Figure 3-1).

Figure 3-1. Research Design Structure
This study relied on systematic research processes described by Merriam & Tisdell (2016) that guaranteed cohesion in the research design: data collection methods, data analysis methods, methodology, and philosophical perspectives. Scholars had recognized the concept of methodological congruence which suggested the need for systematic cohesion between the research questions, the research purpose, and methods (Morse & Richards, 2002).

**Philosophical Perspectives**

There is lack of consensus among scholars in how to label the philosophical and theoretical knowledge foundations providing context to a qualitative study. Several scholarly constructs have been proposed: theoretical traditions and orientations (Patton, 2002, 2015); worldviews (Creswell, 2011); interpretive paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013); epistemology and theoretical perspectives (Crotty, 1998); and philosophical perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study aligned with the philosophical perspectives proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised researchers to philosophically position qualitative research by examining what one believes about the nature of reality (ontology or what one knows about oneself) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology or how one makes sense of the world). This study followed constructivist philosophical perspectives aligning with the constructivist epistemologies and theoretical perspectives described in Denzin and Lincoln (2013) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) to seek what knowledges secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in a rural setting, and how their work with ELs was shaped by teachers' knowledge of place.

The use of a constructivist paradigm aligns a relativist constructivist ontology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Ontology, or one’s view of the self or the worldviews and
assumptions about the nature of reality that influence researchers’ quest for knowledge suggests the belief that there is not one single truth that must be found; rather, that multiple realities exist and are shaped by social and experiential co-constructions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013). That is, “as researchers, we must participate in the research process with our subjects to ensure we are producing knowledge that is reflective of their reality” (Lincoln et al., 2013, p. 210).

This ontological stance presupposed a constructivist/subjectivist epistemology in which researcher and researched co-create understandings or verstehen. In other words, my social reality is a construction based on my frame of reference within a particular setting. A constructivist paradigm recognized that knowledge is socially constructed (Crotty, 1998) and that we are not able to separate ourselves from what we know; the researcher and the researched are linked so that “who we are and how we understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves and others” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, as quoted in Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 212). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) an interpretive or constructivist philosophy assumes that there is no single or objective reality; rather, there are multiple realities or interpretations of a single event that are contextually-bound. Understanding the world means that knowledge is guided by personal experiences, and reality is co-constructed by both researcher and the researched.

This research, guided by constructivism and a constructivist epistemology, sought to reveal what knowledges mainstream secondary teachers said they knew about their work with ELs in a rural community and how their knowledge of place shaped their work with ELs. It was assumed that TK was shaped by their experiences in
the context in which teachers were immersed. In addition, each teacher’s experience would be different from each other and from my own. Those experiences would also be different from the ones that I, as the researcher, had encountered. The data generated through this study was constructed by the researcher based on the reality described by the participants. As noted in Chapter 2 and depicted in Figure 2-1, TK for teaching ELs was comprised of personal and professional knowledge as these interacted with the realities of students and families in the rural context in which they worked. Also, my own background shaped my interpretation of the findings as I made sense of and reconstructed participants’ data. The next section provides the rationale for the selection of a narrative informed qualitative research approach as the most suitable type of methodology for the current study.

**Methodology**

Understanding individual TK for teaching ELs in a rural setting and what they say they know about their work with ELs entailed the co-construction of participants’ personal, professional, and place-based knowledges. Qualitative research methods were appropriate for my study since my main focus was “on process, understanding, and meaning” and on obtaining “richly descriptive” data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15).

Patton (1985) explained that qualitative researchers are interested in how people understand their experiences, make sense of their lives, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to these experiences. Patton (1985) asserted,

[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactons there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting—what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting—and in the analysis to be able to
communicate that faithfully to others […] the analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 1)

The main concern in this study was examining what personal, professional, and place-based knowledges teachers revealed about their work with ELs and how these knowledges shaped each other and the teaching and learning of ELs. The uniqueness of this information lies in that the teachers’ information was guided by an emic or insider’s perspective approach as it was based on the participants’ own unique perspectives as I interpreted and made sense of the participants’ data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that narrative inquiry as a research technique is used to study experience through stories. The emphasis is on the stories people tell and on how they are communicated, that is, on the language used to tell the stories. While some forms of narrative analysis consider a participant’s story as a whole and “the parts within it interpreted in relation to other parts of the story” (Beal, 2013, p. 694), other forms of narrative analysis focus on conducting categorical analysis or analyzing categories or themes in the narrative such as abstracting units from the completed stories for further analysis (Beal, 2013). Scholars have recognized that teachers’ knowledge is “event-structured” in which descriptions of teaching sound more like stories than theories because they are unique instances of teachers’ personal experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elbaz, 1988). Cortazzi (2002) underscored the need to explore what teachers know, “perhaps surprisingly, we do not know much about what teachers know. […] Yet what teachers know and learn is clearly crucial to our understanding of educational processes (p. 9).
In this study, I focused on knowledges the teachers revealed linked to their narrative events. As Cortazzi (2002) stated “event-structured knowledge” or the “reconstruction of past situations and cases play a major role” in the development of teachers’ knowledge (p. 9). TK of the participants was reconstructed based on narratives of past personal, professional, and place-based experiences via stories. These narrative accounts carried the participants’ voice and their knowledges, which were under examination in this study. Cortazzi (2002) elaborated,

Teachers’ narratives express their knowledge of classroom practice and some of the knowledge could not, we can conclude, be expressed in any other way. All of this suggests that studying teachers’ stories could be a productive way of finding out more about teachers’ knowledge. (p. 10)

Thus, a qualitative research approach employing narrative methods was suitable for the purpose of examining what secondary teachers said they know about working with ELs in a rural community.

**Research Context**

This study was conducted in the context of a project funded by the US Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) in partnership with a local education agency (LEA) that has been identified as 'rural' following NCES guidelines in 2006. Project STELLAR (Supporting Teachers of English Language Learners Across Rural Settings) aimed to provide support to teachers of English learners (ELs), ELs and their families who resided in rural settings across the US. The principal investigator of this project is Maria Coady, PhD. As I describe in my positionality statement, at the time of the study, I was a doctoral candidate who had previously served as program coordinator in Project STELLAR’s research team.
The north central Florida community in which this study was conducted is best characterized as rural and agricultural in nature, with immigrants entering and leaving the community according to seasonal crop labor demands (Coady, Heffington, & Marichal, 2017). In the community, immigrant Hispanics were employed at plant nurseries, on horse training farms, and on dairy farms. They also engaged in seasonal labor by harvesting peanuts and watermelon, and baling hay. While a few Hispanic families had lived in the community for more than a decade and participated in church, school, and social events, many were newer arrivals principally from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala (Coady, Coady, & Nelson, 2015; MPI, 2019), making this particular setting what has been described as a “new Latino destination” (Suro & Singer, 2002). US Census (2017) data indicated that 87% of the county population was predominantly White, and about 8.3% was Hispanic (approximately, 3,320 people). About seven percent of the population spoke a language other than English (LOTE) in the home, and the average family income per capita approximated $20,000/year (US Census, 2017). However, these data did not capture unauthorized members of the community, and there was strong evidence that those numbers were twice those reported in the Census (Coady, Lopez, Marichal, & Heffington, 2019; Stacciarini, Vacca, & Mao, 2018).

The study was conducted in the Ivy County school district, which consisted of secondary schools in three main towns: Hibiscus, Calla Lily, and Alamanda (US Census, 2017). At the time of the study, there were just under 200 students or four percent of the students across grades kindergarten through 12 identified as receiving ESOL services in local schools (V. Boughanem, personal communication, February 6,
2019). Consistent with Capps, Hooker, Koball, Pedroza, Campetella, and Perreira (2015), a great number of these children were born in the US (52%). In the district about 94% of the ELs spoke Spanish in the home and among ELs and their families. The ability to access early childhood education services in rural Ivy County was virtually zero, due to the low income of families. In fact, the percentage of persons living at or below the poverty rate in Ivy County was 20.8%, compared to the poverty rate in the state of Florida, 4% (US Census, 2017).

Over the past decade, research by Staccciarini, Wiens, Coady, Schwait, Pérez, Locke, LaFlam, Page, and Bernardi (2011) had illuminated several social issues that characterized and affected families’ emotional well-being and safety in rural Florida. First, families and children faced extreme social isolation. For undocumented immigrants, social isolation intersected with limited public transportation that would otherwise facilitate social and emotional support networks; data revealed that members of the community felt largely “unheard” (Stacciarini et al., 2011, p. 490) or invisible in the rural community. Second, the social isolation and rural nature of the community meant that mental health concerns could not be addressed, as families preferred to stay outside of the spotlight and invisible from public sight as they could not risk potential deportation after being pulled over when driving (Coady & Sorel, 2013). Families who were undocumented lived with the constant fear of driving without a valid license. This became exacerbated at the time of the study under the new presidential administration’s anti-immigrant stance (Inskeep, 2017; Massey, 2020).

Beyond issues of transportation, further work by Coady et al. (2015) in rural north Florida had noted that English as a Second Language (ESL) services, library support
services, and culturally-sensitive health related interventions were also absent. Teachers in this study identified the most pressing issues in which they wished to receive professional development: 1) how to modify their instruction for immigrant families, especially ELs, and 2) the desire to effectively communicate with the culturally and linguistically diverse ELs and their families.

The schools in which the study’s participants worked followed the state-mandated requirements for the preparation of all teachers who worked with ELs (see the Florida Consent Decree, FLDOE, 2017). The district’s chosen model for EL instruction was a “mainstream, inclusive classroom” model, also known as “Structured English Immersion” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013) in which English was the medium of instruction. Following this model, teachers included EL students in all mainstream English classroom activities and were required to differentiate their instruction in academic content areas for ELs based on those students’ various English language proficiency levels. Teachers used differentiated instruction and assessments to meet the language- and content-learning needs of their EL students; teaching was focused on both 1) developing English language proficiency skills in reading, listening, writing, and speaking, and 2) teaching academic content-area material. In an inclusive classroom setting, teachers also had students with various learning disabilities, gifted and talented, and students on Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Supports for ELs typically included supplemental language programs, such as Rosetta Stone. Although likely helpful in some areas of English language development, this software program was not effective for replacing classroom teachers who facilitated English language learning and development (Lord, 2016), nonetheless, all ELs were, at
the time of the study, required to complete a minimum number of hours on this program per week. Additional support was provided by the district in the form of an ESOL bilingual paraprofessional when there were more than 15 ELs in a given school. Hence, the inclusive classroom setting was, in itself, a diverse and challenging learning space (Coady, Lopez, Marichal, & Heffington, 2019).

Despite the required preparation of Florida teachers to work with ELs and to differentiate their instruction, ELs across the district continued to fail to meet the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) or benchmarks set by the Florida Department of Education. At the time of the study, the AMAOs addressed the listening, speaking, reading, and writing English language proficiency-level targets (percentage of students meeting State set goals). For example, in 2013-14, the percentage of ELs in the district that achieved state benchmarks for “English language proficiency” in grades Kindergarten to 2 was 32%; in grades 3-5 was 19%; in grades 6-8 was 21%; and in grades 9-12 was 0%. State proficiency targets for those four corresponding grade ranges were 22%, 26%, 24%, and 21%, respectively. Only ELs in grades K-2 were able to meet State English language proficiency goals. More importantly, no EL student was found to be “proficient” in English at the secondary level, according to state AMAO benchmarks (Coady, Li, & Lopez, 2019).

My decision to select north rural Florida as research site was guided by several reasons. First, due to the noted failure to meet the benchmarks set by the Florida Department of Education (AMAOs in 2017) that addressed the listening, speaking, reading, and writing English language proficiency-level targets for ELs in this area, it was imperative to question what secondary teachers know about teaching ELs in the
particular north Florida context to find out how these knowledges interacted shaping their instruction. In other words, what personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? And what place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?

Secondly, the small number of ELs in mainstream rural classrooms presented a challenge for teachers to deliver differentiated instruction for such low numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse ELs. Classrooms with very limited EL student representation were referred to as low-incident settings and are typical of rural areas (Bérubé, 2000; Haworth, 2005 as cited in Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016). At the time of the study, there were less than 200 ELs in middle-high school in Ivy County (V. Boughanem, personal communication, February 6, 2019). This study sought to examine what knowledges rural teachers revealed about implementing the specialized knowledge and academic instruction required by ELs in secondary mainstream classrooms.

Third, my work in a small rural district in north Florida had allowed me to establish rapport with teachers and administrators as well as families in this area. This work had provided me with experiences including collaborating in the infusion of curriculum with ESOL content; providing on-site, school-based coaching and mentoring to teachers; collaborating in research publications, and family night gatherings in rural Florida. Furthermore, working with a group of seven teachers and occasionally assisting a newly arrived paraprofessional in one of the schools in the area also inspired me to conduct the study in this setting. I was able to closely observe classroom instruction and work individually with teachers and ELs prior to this study. I have observed, firsthand,
teachers not implementing some of the ESOL instructional strategies learned in the PD courses. This experience led me to pursue my research questions related to TK for teaching ELs in a rural school community.

**Participant Selection**

Seeking to examine what knowledges secondary teachers reveal related to their work in rural Ivy County required a strategic or intentional selection of participants, achieved through what Patton (2002, 2015) denominated *purposeful sampling*. Given my research questions, 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs? and the in-depth nature of interview data, I sought a small number of teacher-participants who had been working with ELs in rural settings. In terms of the number of participants, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that the number of participants is dependent on the nature of the research questions, the data being gathered, the analysis in progress, and the resources one has to support the study.

In this study, I selected four participants that, I knew, would provide “information-rich data” to shed light on how rural teachers’ diverse personal and professional experiences influenced what teachers say they know about themselves, EL teaching, and the place in which they worked and how these knowledges intersected (Patton, 2002, p. 46). My work with rural teachers in the same context in which this study was conducted, provided me with the needed insider knowledge about participants who could provide information-rich narrative events for my research. My advisor, Dr. Maria Coady, also served as expert consultant in this matter as she was also well-acquainted with the secondary teachers in this rural context. Patton (2015) explained that “the logic and
power” of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis of in-depth understanding which entails selecting information-rich participants whose insights will illuminate the questions under study (p. 53).

I intentionally selected the study participants through a combination/mixed purposeful sampling since it was a combination of criterion, stratified, and theoretical-construct sampling (Patton, 2002). A combination purposeful sampling in this study combined three sampling strategies: 1) criterion sampling strategy; 2) stratified and; 3) theoretical-construct. First, a criterion sampling strategy required that I recruited participants that met seven criteria such as 1) teachers with different personal, cultural and linguistic backgrounds differed from one another to illuminate how those personal and professional differences shaped what they know about teaching ELs. For instance, participants that varied in terms of their linguistic (e.g., monolingual versus bilingual), and cultural profiles (e.g., Hispanic versus American English-only speakers); 2) teachers working in a secondary rural school; 3) teachers that had more than two years of experience in that setting; 4) teachers that had ELs in their classrooms and/or within a year from the time of the study; 5) teachers that participated in Project STELLAR PD; 6) teachers that held an ESOL endorsement from the State or had earned points towards a state ESOL endorsement; 7) teachers that were available during the summer months of 2019. Chapter 4 explores in depth the participants’ profiles and includes Table 4-1 which summarizes essential personal information.

Second, a stratified sampling strategy allowed me to facilitate comparisons among participants by choosing those that differed in their personal and professional profiles to shed light on how their lives, background, and experiences shaped what they
said they knew about EL teaching and to highlight the role that place-based knowledge played in what they said they know about their work with ELs. Lastly, a theoretical-construct sampling strategy was in place as I was guided by this study’s conceptual framework framed the way I recruited informants, i.e., participants’ various personal and professional characteristics.

The purposeful sampling selection criteria allowed me to select the teachers’ school level, their personal and professional characteristics, and their experience with a rural setting and ELs. It is important to recognize that being familiar with the participants could represent biases for this study. Although, the goals of this study were aligned to the larger objectives of the PD program, the research questions and purpose for this dissertation were developed independently of and were different from the overarching objectives of the PD program that involved teachers in Ivy County. The personal and professional interactions and rapport I built with the participants as program coordinator via the PD program, however, facilitated the selection and the data collection process.

In terms of the grade level, I chose to study secondary mainstream teachers since teaching in secondary settings posed an extra challenge for teachers of ELs as the academic language of upper grades was more complex and differentiating instruction became more cumbersome. My familiarity with the secondary setting was another reason to select secondary teachers since I had been a secondary Spanish teacher for more than 20 years. Lastly, due to the limited TK research in secondary school settings (Faltis et al., 2010), I intentionally wanted to illuminate TK about EL teaching and learning in a rural secondary school.
Additionally, including teachers that differed in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds allowed me to understand their different perspectives and in light of their personal and professional experiences and how lives and experiences shaped the TK of teaching ELs in nuanced ways. For instance, Ernst-Slivit and Poveda (2011), drawing on ethnographic methodology explored “the lives and circumstances” of two first grade bilingual teaching assistants working with Hispanic ELs in Washington in K-12 schools (p. 8). The researchers were able to show how two bilingual teachers’ personal and professional life histories and their connections to their social context influenced the way they made sense of their professional preparation as it intersected with their diverse identities.

Lastly, the participants in this study had two or more years of experience working in the district with ELs and were able to shed some light about their knowledge of teaching and place-based education. Although all the participants were part of Project STELLAR, at the time of the study I was no longer their program coordinator and I made sure they understood that their confidentiality was protected and they were free to be honest in their responses. I communicated this orally to them and in writing through the informed consent document (Appendix C). A purposeful sampling strategy that is criterion-based, stratified, and guided by a theoretical-construct (conceptual framework) allowed me to find answers to my research questions: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?
Data Collection

The collection of data was determined by the research questions, the theoretical framework, the philosophical perspectives, and the participant sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These elements helped illuminated the selection of sources of data collection. Patton (2002) argued that “no rigid rules can prescribe what data to gather to investigate a particular interest or problem. There is no recipe or formula in making methods decisions” (p.12). Patton (2002, 2015) suggested that qualitative findings mainly grow out of three kinds of data collection: interviews, direct recorded observations, and various types of documents. Similar, suggestions for methods to obtain data by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) were outlined by Patton (2002, 2015).

For the purpose of this research, a combination of different types of methods facilitated the collection of data. Primary data collection consisted of interviews and an Arts Based Research approach (ABR) in the form of photo elicitation. Harper (2002) noted that modified photo elicitation was “the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (p. 13) by inviting participants to talk about the image during the interview and to extract meaning from it. The use of ARB extended beyond “the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that would otherwise be ineffable” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 1). Images tell stories, as Riessman (2008) contended, some investigators tell a story with images, and others tell a story about the images that themselves tell a story. I used photo elicitation to interpret participants’ own understandings of their images and their intentionality behind the chosen pictures. Secondary data consisted of archival and ongoing documents. In the next section I discuss primary data collection methods: Interviews with participants and photo elicitation. Figure 3-2 describe the data collection sources.
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<td>2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?</td>
<td>Stage 2: Professional TK</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 3: Place-based TK</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 4: Connecting TK dimensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3-2. Data Collection Sources

**Interviews**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that in education and most applied fields, interviewing is "the most common form of data collection" (p. 106). As it is the case in this study, scholars observed that even in some studies, interviews were the only source of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews provided direct quotations from participants regarding their experiences, knowledge, opinions, thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and/or feelings regarding the phenomenon in question. Riessman (2008) argued that interviewing allowed researchers to have access to the closest thing to a reality, and added that, narratives were focused both on an event that depicted human action and, on an experience. Mattingly (1998) noted that,
They do not merely describe what someone does in the world but what the world does to that someone. They allow us to infer something about what it feels like to be in that story world. [...] Narratives do not merely refer to past experience but create experiences for their audiences. (p. 8)

Aligned with these definitions, DeMarrais (2004) described a research interview as a process in which researchers and participants engage in a conversation centered on questions guided by the research study. Thus, interviewing was necessary when behavior, feelings, knowledge, and interpretations about the world cannot be observed. Patton (2015) argued that it is also necessary to conduct interviews when researchers are interested in past events that cannot be replicated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell summarized the reasons to employ interviews, “Interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when…. it will get better data or more data or data at less cost than other tactics!” (Dexter, 1970, p. 11, as quoted in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 109). Then, interviewing allowed me to have a purposeful conversation about special information that resided in my mind (guided by the study’s conceptual framework, philosophical perspectives, and research questions) and captured in my interview protocol in order to gain the participants’ perspective.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) categorized the different types of interviews in a continuum in terms of the amount of structure. Interview types range from: 1) highly structured interviews, in which wording and order of questions is predetermined and strictly followed (e.g., an oral form of a written survey to obtain participants’ background information); 2) semistructured interviews, in which a mix of more and less structured questions are included (e.g., questions are used flexibly, without a predetermined order, yet guided by a list of questions to be explored); to, unstructured/informal interviews, which are more open-ended, flexible and exploratory, more like a regular conversation.
Because the structure of interviews lies on a continuum, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that “in most studies the researcher can combine all three types of interviewing” (p. 111). In this manner, some standardized information might be obtained, for instance, some of the same open-ended questions might be asked of all participants, and some time could be spent in an unstructured mode to allow for “fresh insights” and new information to emerge (p. 111).

Following the guidelines suggested by Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016), I conducted interviews that ranged from semi-structured to unstructured interviews. My constructivist philosophical perspectives and epistemological beliefs guided me in this respect, i.e., I believed that each one of the participants in this study constructed or “define[d] the world in unique ways” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110) I selected interview questions that allowed for more in-depth explorations and more flexibility. Aligned with the “guided conversations” suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005), interviews were conceived and conducted as conversations in which I gently guided participants in an extended discussion. My role as a researcher consisted to prompt “depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee” (p. 4). In this study, primary data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews and unstructured or open-ended photo elicitation of visual documents with teacher participants. Secondary data collection consisted of a combination of archival and ongoing personal documents.

**Interviews with participants**

The interviews with participants (four secondary EL teachers working in a rural setting) were video recorded and conducted in four stages. Only one participant, Marisol, declined the video portion for fear to be recognized, however, she agreed to be
audio recorded. Three types of questions were used for all interviews as described by Rubin and Rubin (2012): main questions which provided direction and scaffolding to the discussion and ensured that the research question is addressed; follow-up questions, which intended to elicit more detailed information on the themes, concepts, or events that emerged from the interview; and, probes, which were questions, comments, or gestures used by the interviewer to help manage the conversation by keeping it on topic. Each interview session included a brief open-ended interview about visual documents generated by the participants in the form of photo elicitation, explained in the next section, to dig deeper into more details about the theme and main questions for that particular stage. The interview protocols and the rationale for the questions used for the interviews are included in Appendix A and described in detail following the next section. Based on the conceptual framework, interviews were divided in four stages or themes that examined the personal, professional, place-based knowledge dimensions, and, the last interview was used to make connections between the three dimensions of TK to explore what teachers stated they knew about teaching ELs and the role that place-based knowledge played on TK about ELs.

Photo elicitation

The use of photography as a tool for data collection and analysis has not been used by many researchers. Researchers who use photographs for inquiry may choose to do so because they have come to understand that there are some particular advantages of its use over more traditional approaches. In this study I used photos to reconstruct and reorder participants' personal and professional experiences. Although, in this study, documents are a secondary source of data collection, photo elicitation was
included as part of a brief open-ended interview embedded in the semi-structured interview, and, for this reason, I referred to it as a primary source of data collection.

Photo elicitation was first named in a paper published by the photographer and researcher John Collier (1957), who explored mental health in communities in Canada. Collier proposed photo interviewing as the solution to misunderstandings on categories of the quality of housing in the researched area. What was significant about the use of this method was that the data generated by photo elicitation interviews and regular semi-structured interviews with the same participants provided a way to verify findings. Collier (1957) noted that the photos elicited more comprehensive interviews and helped participants overcome the tedious and unexciting repetitions of traditional methods of interviewing.

Describing the benefits of using photography as a visual document in qualitative research, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that “photos alone can tell the story of what the photographer [the participant] thought was important to capture, [and] what cultural values might be conveyed by the particular photos” (p. 170). Photos can be taken by the researcher, found in public or personal records, or taken by the participants themselves. In addition, photos can become prompts for verbal data by asking participants to interpret the photos during an interview, thus, providing data for subsequent analysis.

Aligned with my philosophical foundations and epistemological perspectives, incorporating photo elicitation as a method recognized that participants made meaning and expressed it in different ways. As a teacher, I know that people can make meaning in new and deeper ways when asked to express something through visual art, poetry or other form of creative expression (Bailey & Van Harken, 2014, as cited in Merriam &

A few scholars have raised issues of concern about how accurate are photographic representations of participants’ lives (Barone & Eisner, 2012, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Dempsey & Tucker, 1994; Leavy, 2015, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Riessman, 2008). These concerns are minimized by asking for participant-generated photos rather than researcher-created (Sampson-Cordle, 2001). To learn more about how participants make sense of their personal, professional knowledge for teaching ELs and knowledge of place and the experiences related to these themes, I asked participants to share their generated photographs with me, as I followed a semi-structured photo-interview protocol of open-ended series of questions. The photographs used during the three stages of interviews elicited deeper information related to the themes of that stage. For instance, during Stage 1, I asked the participants to bring photos for the following stage (Stage 2) which required them to take pictures of their classroom setting or other examples of what they said reflected their knowledge for teaching ELs to facilitate further discussions about classroom organization strategies and their knowledge for teaching ELs. Discussions based on the picture elicited intentionality and further elaborated on a theme already discussed in a different way.

During the interview, I invited participants to talk about the image and how the photo they generated themselves embodied a personal (Stage 1) or professional experience (Stage 2) (Harper 2002). I did not only ask what the picture meant but also
how and why it was chosen or taken, and when. In exploring tourists’ experiences engaging in flamenco music and dance classes in the southern part of Spain, Matteucci (2013) used researcher-found photos to understand and explore aspects of tourists’ perceptions and experiences with flamenco in the South of Spain. The use of ABR as data collection in this example was to illuminate participants’ experiences with flamenco in this specific area in Spain and not about the photos per se. The researcher chose to select the photos himself due to time constraints. The use of images in Matteucci’s study was an elicitation device to understand how the participants made sense of their experience. In my study, photo elicitation was used in a similar manner, yet the photos were participant-generated or personally chosen by the participant to represent the theme of the interview.

**Procedures and Interview Protocols**

The initial procedure carried out before data collection began was obtaining approval from two institutions, including the UF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Ivy County District School Board office. Once these initial permissions were granted, and participants were selected, consent was obtained from the four participants to ensure their willingness to participate in the study (Appendix C). After selecting the participants—Adela, Jack, Jacqueline, and Marisol (pseudonyms for privacy)—and obtaining the necessary permissions, arrangements were made to begin Stage 1 (Weeks 1-2).

In this study, I connected my research questions to the interview and photo elicitation protocol. The interview process was divided in four stages as detailed in Appendix A. The rationale for the creation of these stages and the interview questions was guided by the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2 and depicted in Figure
During the first stage, I carried out 56 to 129-minute interviews with participants to learn about what they knew about themselves, their personal backgrounds, life histories or stories (Atkinson, 1998), experiences, and values that might shed some light about their overall knowledge for teaching ELs (Weeks 1-2). Thus, the theme for Stage 1 was personal knowledge, as described in the conceptual framework, and all activities during this stage, namely semi-structured interview questions and photo elicitation open-ended questions were related to that theme. During Stage 2 (Weeks 3-4), I conducted interviews to learn about their EL professional knowledge, preparation, and the specialized knowledge for teaching ELs. Interview questions and photo elicitation were related to EL professional knowledge theme. In Stage 3 (Weeks 5-6), I asked questions related to participants’ knowledge of the rural school community in which they worked. To elicit a more fluid notion of place, photo elicitation helped in describing the place, people, and other considerations that enhanced the participants’ construction of place. In the last interview session, Stage 4 (Week 7), I asked questions connecting all TK dimensions: personal, professional, and place-based knowledge to illuminate how they intersect. During this interview, I revisited other areas that remained unclear in earlier stages as needed.

The conceptual framework for this study included the three dimensions of TK identified in Figure 2-1 guided each one of the four stages of the interview/photo elicitation and this study’s research questions: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with
were linked to the interview protocol as described below. Appendix A includes the four stages of the interview protocol.

I communicated with the participants to agree on a time and place convenient for them before the first interview. Since Jack and Adela lived nearby, they agreed to meet at my house for all the interviews. Marisol who lived in Ivy County, wanted to come to the city and decided to come to my house also. On June 13th, there was a 90% probability of rain and I volunteered to meet Jacqueline at the McDonald’s in Hibiscus. We conducted all our interviews there. I enjoyed it because I later learned McDonald’s was the place where wi-fi was more accessible to ELs for completing their assignments.

I conducted about one interview per week, unless summer plans and trips interfered with our schedule. Since my primary data were interviews and photo elicitations, I was able to conduct all interviews from June 11th to July 26th, 2019 or 7 weeks during the summer. These dates were convenient for all participants as they were on summer break. For the bilingual participants I gave them the choice to speak Spanish or to translanguag, if they so desired. I conducted Adela’s all four interviews in Spanish.

Adela was happy to go through two interviews, Stage, 3 and 4 during the same day due to her summer travels. I conducted a total of 16 interviews in total. The shortest interview lasted 38 minutes and the longest lasted 129 minutes for a total of 1,178 mins of interview time or 20 hrs approximately for all 16 interviews. After each interview ended I reviewed the transcript and wrote down any questions I had for clarification to review in the next interview.

All the interviews were video-recorded, except for Marisol’s who, as noted, was afraid to be video recorded due to her new position as assistant to the Ivy County ESOL
district director. Simultaneously, I used my iphone to audio record all interviews as a back up measure. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. I personally transcribed the first interview with each teacher. However, I used an online program called TranscribeMe! to transcribe the 12 other interviews. I uploaded 16 audio files to the website of the online program and paid the corresponding cost. After 24 to 48 hours, I received 12 Word Documents that contained the encoded transcriptions of the interview files. I read through all the documents and detected some errors. To correct these errors, I played each video file while I read through each document and made the necessary corrections. I employed this data verification procedure in all 12 Word Documents. I kept a data collection and transcription schedule that documented dates, times, length of interviews. I also placed an x next to the completed interview and documented when the transcript was completed by writing “interview #” under the transcript done column. The schedule was color coded and a folder in the same color was assigned for each participant. Each folder contained hard copies of transcripts and participants’ informed consents (See Appendix C). Names are in no particular order. Figure 3-3 shows the data collection and transcription schedule.

Prior to Stage 1, I requested two to three participant-generated pictures that they believed represent their personal information, cultural and early educational background. Photo elicitation was inserted in the interview session and was conducted during or at the end of the interview depending on the participant’s mood and state of mind. After Stage 1, the participant was reminded to bring photos for the next interview protocol. The next steps related to data organization and analysis are discussed in the following section.
Figure 3-3. Data Collection and Transcription Schedule 6/11/19-12/18/19

Documents

Another source for data collection is digging data from documents and artifacts, what in anthropology is called “material culture” (Patton, 2002, p. 293). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) observed that documents and artifacts are ready-made, easily accessible source of data that supplement evidence gathered, for example, in interviews, enriching the data collection process.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) organized documents into four, often overlapping types: 1) *public records*, which include hard copies or digital ongoing official records as well archival documents; 2) *personal documents*, which include any first-person
narrative, ongoing or archival, that describe participants’ practices, experiences, knowledge, and beliefs (e.g., journals, letters, e-mails, blogs, personal online postings, home videos, pictures); 3) **popular culture documents**, often subsumed under *public records*, include popular media forms such as television, film, radio, newspapers, photography, cartoons, and other internet sources of public data, and, even though all types of data source mentioned above might include visual formats, 4) **visual documents**, which include film, video photography, and web-based media, have recently grown in popularity as both, a type of data source and as a way of presenting findings of a research study. As Pink (2012, 2013) has observed, the camera and the digital image are readily accessible and a constant presence in pockets, handbags and on the computer, which has become a part of our modern reality. In this study I will be using visual and archival documents.

Guided by my philosophical perspectives, the study’s concept map, and research questions, I explored several archival documents that illuminated secondary rural teachers’ personal and professional knowledge about teaching ELs as well as their knowledge of place. Most participants have probably participated in a PD course offered by a US southern institution. With the adequate permission, I examined specific documents that fit the conceptual framework of this study. First, I used the results of an online survey (Appendix B) which explored teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds and other relevant personal information. This online survey was administered at the time of their application to a PD program to capture participants’ initial personal and EL professional information and help with the recruitment of participants in the PD program. Second, as a way to verify the information provided by
the online survey and interviews, I asked for a résumé that included educational and professional experiences. Third, I used three pictures generated by me showing participants’ projects with their students.

Because of the relationships built with the participants, I was invited to two events at their school. One event was an ESOL fair on October 29th, 2019 in which two of the participants, Adela and Jack collaborated with students in designing some projects that affirmed their cultural and linguistic histories. I took some pictures of their projects as data for my dissertation. Also, on December 18th I was invited to participate in a college fair organized by Adela for ELs and families to provide college related information in their home language. During the fair I also took some pictures of their project and included them as data. They were labeled as ongoing documents in Figure 3-2 under Stage 4.

The 4-stage interview protocol along with photo elicitations, archival and ongoing documents further illuminated what participants knew about their work with ELs in the rural community in which they work. Figure 3-2 above summarized the data collection methods for this study and how the research questions and conceptual framework connected with the proposed data collection sources. Figure 3-3 summarized in detail how I scheduled the data collection methods and kept track of the transcriptions (365 pages of transcribed data). Figure 3-4 includes a summary of all the data collected and transcribed.
Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined data analysis as “the process of making sense out of the data” by “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (p. 202). This definition of data analysis offered by Merriam and Tisdell suggests that data analysis is a co-construction between participants and the researcher to answer the study’s research questions; it also aligns with a constructivist epistemology, which guided the present study.
Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that the process of data collection and analysis is recursive, simultaneous, and dynamic. Rather than a step-by-step process, data analysis is an ongoing process that entails moving back and forth between bits of data and between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretations, as shown on the timeline for this study in Figure 3-5. Further, findings of a study consist of the meanings and understandings derived from these interpretations, organized in the form of themes, categories, or answers to a research question.

Referring to simultaneous data collection and analysis, Merriam and Tisdell (2016)
noted that “data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating” (p. 197).

For this study, I began to analyze interviews conducted during Stage 1 as soon as I collected those and the preliminary analysis guided questions proposed for a second interview or photo elicitation in Stage 2. Thus, data collection and analysis were conceived as an ongoing and recurrent process, as well as a co-construction of my interpretations of participants’ interview data. This recursive procedure for data analysis is consistent with a thematic or categoric analysis as described in Merriam and Tisdell (2016) focused on category analysis in which units were condensed from the completed stories. This process lasted 25 weeks, from June 11th to December 18th, 2019.

This study considered data analysis as inductive, deductive, and comparative to generate findings. First, it is inductive because looking through a constructivist epistemological lens, the purpose for the study and research questions were established. Second, it was deductive because the study’s conceptual framework and the theories reviewed provided a sense of the categories emerging from the data. Guided by the purpose of the study and research questions, I entered data collection and data analysis simultaneously and tentative categories or themes were derived from bits and pieces of data. In doing constant comparisons, manageable pieces of data pieces to be analyzed for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Through data analysis process, the study sought to understand what secondary teachers in rural Florida said they knew about teaching ELs and how personal and professional experiences and their knowledge of place helped shape their knowledge for teaching ELs.
Data analysis for this study was comparative because multiple sources of data from the same participants were used and analyzed. The constant comparative method of data analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), originally recommended for grounded theory, included: collecting and analyzing data simultaneously; constructing codes and categories from data, making comparisons during each stage of the analysis; advancing theory development throughout different stages of data analysis; using memo-writing to define relationships between categories; sampling aimed towards theory construction rather than sampling representation; and conducting a literature review after analyses. However, Charmaz (2014) noted that the constant comparative method of data analysis had been widely used by other types of qualitative studies, including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnographic, case studies, action research, and narrative inquiry (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Thematic Analysis through Category Construction**

As previously mentioned, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described category as a synonym of theme, pattern, a finding, or an answer to a research question. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) defined codes as “labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (p. 71). Thus, coding is the task of condensing or synthesizing data that enables the researcher to retrieve the most meaningful material that would be potentially relevant for and responsive to the study’s research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I followed a thematic or category construction analysis to interpret this study’s data.

In the initial phase of this process, I began by reading the interview transcripts from Stage 1 which discussed the personal experiences of the participants. I reviewed
them twice, without marking anything nor highlighting important ideas. This mode of reading allowed me to recollect my thoughts about the questions and responses that I used and obtained from the interviews. I also read the textual documents that I collected such as the online survey, and the participants’ curriculum vita documents twice to get a sense of the themes. During the third reading, I employed open coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to find out what knowledges were revealed by the participants regarding their work with ELs. I marked events that stood out to me based on my knowledge of the conceptual framework that I used in the study. It is important to note that during the open coding process, I also wrote analytic memos (Clarke, 2005; Saldaña, 2009) which served as explanations of the open codes that I generated. These memos were written in the “comment function” of Microsoft word. A sample of written analytic memos is provided in Appendix D. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested a forest and trees analogy for data analysis that is inductive, deductive and comparative. Data analysis is the process of moving between a forest, as the big picture, and the trees—the particulars. During open coding, the researcher is still thinking about trees: the exact word or phrase that captures that section of data.

At this point I had trouble keeping all the data organized since the quantity of open codes was overwhelming. I quickly learned that I needed to find a better way to analyze and store the data. Since I was somewhat familiar with Microsoft Excel, I used it to store all the transcript data as well as a photo elicitation log with descriptions of all the participants’ generated picture. Basically, I prepared a table that included all the information needed from the participants assigned number, the interview number, the research question that the open code was addressing, the major category informed by
the conceptual framework of the study ending with the open code or theme describing the content of the transcript excerpt. The column for the axial coding between the major category and open coding was left blank initially. Figure 3-6 shows a fragment of the Microsoft Excel sheet and the photo elicitation log that kept pictures organized. Once the highlighted quotes from the three readings of the transcripts were selected, I placed them on the right-hand column of the Excel sheet as shown in Figure 3-6. This painstaking process was followed for all 16 interviews. After that process was completed I proceeded to assign a description of the open code guided by the research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding/Analysis_ALL INTERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Table showing excerpts from interviews with headings and descriptions]

Figure 3-6. Microsoft Excel sheet used for Thematic Analysis and photo elicitation log.
The next step proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) involved identifying patterns or creating groups. This is also referred to as *axial coding* (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015), and *analytical coding* (Richards, 2015). Axial coding went beyond the descriptive open coding because, it came “from the interpretation and reflection on meaning” (Richards, 2015, p. 135). This step helped organize and condense the data into groups. Merriam and Tisdell suggested it is important to keep a running list of codes per set of data, which could either be attached to a transcript or in the form of a memo. Microsoft Excel facilitated this task. Using the Command F function, I could search for any specific open code belonging to a particular participant or depending on the research question addressed. This was useful when analyzing and comparing axial codes across types of evidence. Thus, initially I had multiple lists of open codes for each source of data collection (e.g., interview transcripts, photo elicitation transcripts, and archival documents), and in this second step I grouped and condensed the axial codes accordingly.

The third stage proposed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) is the construction of *categories*. Moving to the next set of data (a second transcript), the first and second steps were repeated. *Categories* are conceptual elements that group or span the units of data one has already labeled and are “abstractions derived from data, not data themselves” (p. 207). These categories emerged from the themes that were the most frequent or significant across the different types of evidence and were also informed deductively by the study’s conceptual framework.

In sum, after obtaining open codes from across all the data sets, I grouped related open codes into axial codes. I re-analyzed the axial codes and compared them
again with the data. I utilized this iterative approach until I obtained the final categories. I followed Merriam and Tisdell’s suggestion of moving back and forth from the data and after a while, reflect on the forest and question, what were the main themes emerging? What were the answers to my research questions? Going back to the trees, do the trees or the individual data bits support what emerged as a forest? The categories resulting from this analysis were 1) responsive to the purpose of research, or provide answers to the research questions; 2) exhaustive and mutually exclusive, a particular unit of data needs to fit only in one category or theme; 3) sensitizing and conceptually congruent, the category label needs to be as sensitive and compatible to the unit of data. I carried with me, the two research questions at all times during the data analysis process.

As abovementioned, Merriam and Tisdell advised that deriving categories during the data analysis process should be informed by the study’s purpose, the researcher’s orientation and knowledge, and the meanings conveyed by the participants. Further, the conceptual framework, or the body of literature in which the study was situated allowed a researcher to establish the study’s purpose statement and research questions. Therefore, since the categories emerging from the data analysis provided answers to the research questions, the labels for these categories aligned with the philosophical perspectives of the study.

In addition, I generated a master list of codes for the major categories (e.g. personal, professional, and place-based knowledge) for each participant. A master list constitutes a primitive outline reflecting the recurring themes in the study. Once the categories were established, each unit of data was placed accordingly by collapsing two or three axial codes together. Marshall and Rossman (2016) equated categories to
“buckets or baskets into which segments of text are placed” (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 224). This was accomplished by creating another Excel sheet, each labeled with a major category\(^1\) name, the participant # and a description of the axial codes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that units of data should include original identifiers codes such as participant’s name or pseudonym, line numbers of the excerpt, type of data source, and so on. I accomplished this task with Microsoft Excel. The committee members will be able to go back to the original data source to review the context of a quote, if necessary. An example of the master list of codes is shown in Figure 3-7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P1 Personal Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Agenda/ Advocacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Caring</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Background: Familiarity with Rurality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Qualities, Traits, &amp; Work Ethic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Educational-Life Experiences</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>aware of social inequities which promotes a desire to create a counternarrative to systemic injustices suffered by ELs: a supercommunity</td>
<td>Taking care of socioemotional needs of ELs comes first. Caring, getting to know students in order to make them feel comfortable, valued and included comes first before establishing instruction. If also includes allowing the students to know you also in order to establish connection.</td>
<td>This is P1’s strength. Personal life experiences exposed him to what rurality entails. Possesses a deep understanding of rurality and is able to understand how rurality impacts EL schooling.</td>
<td>recognizes the qualities/work ethic an EL teacher should embrace.</td>
<td>recognizes certain formal and informal educationally experiences can have an impact in how he conducts his life and how he develops instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accepting communities already in place/supercommunity</td>
<td>feeling empathy as an outsider himself</td>
<td>EL families feeling included/safe</td>
<td>access to resources</td>
<td>resistance to change</td>
<td>time management</td>
<td>open mind</td>
<td>Exposure to cultural diversity: growing up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3-7. Master Code List for Participant #1

After revising all the open and axial codes and considering my major categories and research questions, I proceeded to integrate or collapse the categories by conducting another level of analysis (See Figure 3-8).

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\(^1\) **Major categories** refer to the knowledge dimension such as personal, professional, and place-based knowledge. This is in contrast to a category which refers to the theme, the end result of the thematic analysis.
The 1066 original open codes identified were condensed to 20 unique axial codes which resulted in five categories or themes answering the two research questions. Specifically, three themes answered question one and two themes answered question two (Figure 3-9).

Appendix E includes a sample of open coding and analytic memos and the transition to the Microsoft Excel document for data analysis.
Positionality and Subjectivity: Language-as-Resource Tale

According to Tracy (2013), in most research reports it makes sense to “recognize our connections and write about them, but mainly as these connections further illuminate the reader’s understanding of the cultural event, place or practice” (Krisek, 2008, as quoted in Tracy, 2013, p. 149). Therefore, the researcher’s position or what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) call reflexivity and Tracy (2013) labels as self-reflexivity or a confessional tale, is a strategy related to the integrity of qualitative researchers, that allows them to reflect on how they shape or have been shaped by the research process.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) observed that behind the ontological, the epistemological, and the methodological activities stands the personal life history of the researcher, whose character is shaped by gender, class, race, ethnicity, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. That is, the researcher as a multicultural subject approaches the world with a set of ideas and assumptions about him/herself and the world. In this study, I have been inspired by the language orientation framework in Ruiz (1984). This language-as-resource tale will reveal how events in my life have been shaped by my linguistic and cultural background: an “important source of expertise” (Ruiz, 1984, p. 28).

Thus, in this case, it is suitable for this narrative informed qualitative research study to story and make visible my own biases, worldviews, and theoretical assumptions regarding the investigation to be undertaken. This clarification allows the audience to best understand how a researcher has arrived at a specific interpretation of the data. As Maxwell (2013) elaborated, the main reason for researchers to make their assumptions explicit is to understand “the researcher’s theories, beliefs, and perceptual lens,” rather than avoiding them completely (p. 124). Therefore, guided by my
conceptual framework, I will reflect, storying some of the experiences that have contributed to the person and professional I am today during my life journey.

As a foreign (Spanish) language teacher for almost 15 years, I have come to know that my personal and professional experiences and the contexts in which these lived experiences took place have shaped both my professional and my personal identities. These identities are inextricably interwoven in the way I make sense of new experiential information. In some instances, depending on the occasion, who I am as a professional must be foregrounded in relation to the personal; nevertheless, it is my strong belief that it is impossible to completely be devoid of the personal as who we are and belief will tacitly permeate through every decision we make. This philosophical stance was evident in the visual presentation I shared with my students every new school year. Every year on the first day of school, I would share with my students my personal information, e.g., where I was from originally, who my family members were, my educational background, facts about the benefits of being bilingual, and of course, the syllabus and expectations for the course. I felt this was an important way to establish rapport with the students and to motivate them to learn another language. Both my personal and professional information were made visible along with information about the context in which those experiences were acquired.

I am a Hispanic, Catholic, White, female born in the island of Puerto Rico or Borinquen (as the original Taíno inhabitants named the Island). Puerto Rico has an atypical status among Latin American and Caribbean countries. In 1898, the US invaded the Island during the Spanish-American War and has since dominated the Island militarily, politically, and economically. In 1917, US Congress granted US
citizenship to all Spanish speaking residents of Puerto Rico, yet the Island remained an unincorporated territory until 1952 (nine years before I was born), when Puerto Rico became Estado Libre Asociado (US Commonwealth). Although, Puerto Rico has a resident commissioner in the US Congress, that person has no voting privileges. While Puerto Ricans are able to cast a vote in the primaries, they are not able to vote in US presidential elections.

I was born into a middle-class family, raised by my maternal grandparents. My Mexican father and Puerto Rican mother were divorced when I was only two years old. My mother worked as a secretary and lived with her parents as an adult. My grandfather owned a small business and we lived modestly. My Basque grandmother was very proud of her Spanish heritage and although she attended school through eighth grade (she had to work to help support her 10 siblings and her ill father who escaped the Spanish Civil War), she was extremely bright, helped me with school work everyday, and instilled in me the love for education. When I was little, my favorite pastime was playing “school” with my stuffed animals. I would quiz them and record their grades in little notebooks. I should have known, then, that I wanted to be a teacher.

I was a very introverted child growing up, great student, quiet and observant, loved music and loved to dance. My grandmother taught me how to dance all the traditional Spanish dances, not salsa since salsa music emerged in the 1980s, but plena, danza, paso doble, merengue, and other typical music of Puerto Rico. I loved to visit my great-aunt who lived next door and who would tell me stories of the ten children growing up in a household in which their father only spoke Euskera. Family stories were all the entertainment we had; there was no Internet, Facebook, or Netflix. I loved to
listen to those stories. I wonder if I was destined to follow a qualitative narrative approach for this study from the start.

I attended public elementary school in Puerto Rico, a school named "modelo" which was associated to the University. The weakness of most public schools then was that the use of English was not enforced in the classrooms and students had no oral opportunities for practicing the language. I have always blamed that deficiency for the fact that I don’t enjoy reading for pleasure. It is a miracle that I did so well in school. It still puzzles me how I was called a “comelibros” (equivalent of bookworm) growing up but hated to read in general. My grandmother was instrumental in guiding my study habits during my early education years and all through high school.

When I entered a private girl’s middle-high school (7th- 12th grade)—thanks to a paternal aunt who paid for my tuition and who, like my grandmother, valued education and wanted me to do well in school—I excelled in every subject but English. I was put in a remedial English class in order to catch up with the rest of the students. I caught up quickly and the following semester I joined the advance English section. However, the classes were composed of 30 some students and there was little opportunity to practice oral English. Most textbooks for all other subjects were in English, but classes were held in Spanish. I was an expert at translanguaging—because that is what comes naturally for all bilinguals (Garcia, 2014)— before the term as such was recognized. I always felt deficient in oral English and was terrified when my aunt suggested I apply to Yale University for college; I could not say a word in English. However, I graduated first in my class and was accepted to Yale University in 1979 with a generous financial aid packet and felt excited and nervous to be on my own for the first time.
In Puerto Rico, I was part of a homogeneous community, overprotected by my grandparents and the environment at school. I was not aware of what a “minority” student was or what “affirmative action” entailed at the time. I just thought I deserved the acceptance to this prestigious place because of my work ethic and my high school academic achievements. At Yale, I quickly learned, by listening to conversations around me, that I was probably an “affirmative kid,” a minority, someone inferior to the majority White Anglo-Saxon Protestants and the students that attended prep schools like Phillips Exeter Academy. Ethnic students, like myself, had a different freshman counselor, one that would be able to “understand” us. I was considered “brown” but I really wasn’t; and learned that brown was not seen as an acceptable trait. I learned that quickly. My accent, which I still proudly own, was different. Different from what? Ugly, not correct. It is true that there was some diversity at Yale in 1979, but ironically, some of the foreign looking students mostly stayed together, especially as freshmen. It was the comfort zone for everyone.

During my years at Yale, I never attended “white parties,” I was never even offered to be a member of the exclusive secret societies. Every ethnicity had a “club” and we all attended each other’s activities. I felt a little bit “segregated” from the rest of the “normal” student population. At the time I was unaware that the extensive academic preparation and cultural background of most white Yale students was unreachable (third and fourth generation students), no matter how hard I worked. While I was the first person to go to college in my family, a great accomplishment, something to be proud of, one of my freshman roommates, was the daughter of the president of another Ivy League school. Frequently, she organized afternoon tea parties in our room without my
consent (She did apologize during our 25th year Yale reunion). I understand now that this behavior represents entitlement, a term that was unfamiliar to me at the time.

In my first English course, I felt incompetent as most students whose first language was English, naturally excelled at every task. The professor was very understanding of all the students that needed extra help and I was able to do well academically. I believe now that my personal values and the role that education played in my upbringing drove my desire to succeed. Although I slowly learned I had a disadvantage in terms of how academically prepared I was when I entered Yale, I knew somehow that I had to continue my college journey and graduate with that diploma. I recently read the 2013 Chief Justice Sotomayor’s biography *My Beloved World* in which she stories similar experiences. Sotomayor (2013), a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent who attended Princeton University, realized as a freshman that most of the gaps in her knowledge were due to simply “limits of class and cultural background, not lack of aptitude or application” (p.135).

Nonetheless, I initially survived Yale’s rigorous academic load by taking notes in Spanish when listening to professors’ English lectures. Ten other students from the Island were also accepted from Puerto Rico. We helped each other and we all did well. I was too young to understand what it meant to be a Puerto Rican in Connecticut, since the only Puerto Ricans the US Mainland was acquainted with were Puerto Ricans that migrated to New York in the 1960s. In search for better job opportunities, Puerto Ricans in New York were considered Neoricans by us islanders, and even identified themselves better with the African American community than with the island Puerto Ricans. They also spoke better English than the Islanders.
My personal childhood, cultural, linguistic, and educational experiences as a young woman, influenced the way I feel towards and empathize with ELs. This is why I consider myself an EL and continue to be an EL. Even though, I did not feel I belonged in this new culture, I valued my Spanish heritage and have always been proud of it. At Yale I enjoyed Spanish literature courses which made me feel at home, another comfort zone. My husband was also instrumental during my college years. While he was at Princeton, we would help each other and often reflected in the socio-cultural issues we were experiencing. Even though, we were too young to fully understand our experience, we were driven to succeed and supported each other in this journey.

After graduating with a BS in Biology and almost minor in Spanish, I went back to Puerto Rico, got married and moved to Augusta, GA where my husband pursued his gynecological residency. Since I was not able to get a job and felt unwelcome in this Southern town, I decided to do what I did best, I studied. I enrolled in business school because MBAs were popular in the early 80s. Although I did not know what I was really doing at the time, this path led me to my passion for teaching. While I was in school I served as a graduate teaching instructor teaching university level Spanish. I loved the opportunity to teach. Thanks to this experience, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in Spanish language teaching after my husband completed his education.

By 1990 I had three children and had moved to Gainesville, FL. Here, people had been more welcoming than in the other places I have lived before. My husband and I raised my children speaking Spanish and instilled in them a love for our Puerto Rican traditions and heritage. I think we have succeeded. I did not want them to feel ashamed because of their background. One of them is an educator. Through the lens of a parent,
I have witnessed his joy of teaching and we often share our thoughts about the profession.

When my children were old enough, I enrolled at the University of Florida and in two years I graduated with a Master in Spanish Linguistics. An Argentinian professor at the Department of Spanish and Portuguese was instrumental in my education. I could never forget her words: “Nidza, tienes una capacidad docente increíble. Adelante” (you have great pedagogical skills), she was a mentor to me and supported me through those years in the MA Spanish program. I knew I wanted to inspire a student the same way this professor inspired me.

Right after I graduated, I secured a job at a local private high school. I loved my work with the students, I instilled in them respect and love of the Spanish language and culture and always made clear to them how I identified with the difficulties of learning another language. During that time, immersion was a hot topic and it was suggested by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL) that teachers used only the target language for instruction. I disregarded that policy and explained grammar in English when necessary. During my years teaching introductory and advanced Spanish, my instructional practice was guided by my college experience (through the translinguaging strategies I used to make sense of lectures), my knowledge of second language acquisition (comprehensible input, Krashen, 1985), and my belief that the use of students’ L1 was essential for students’ understanding of some aspects of a new language. I have learned that teachers often favor their personal values and beliefs, over stipulated policies.
The high school in which I worked for nearly fifteen years, was run by a Board of Directors and a headmaster, most of whom were white males. I was one of the Spanish teachers and served as Chair of the World Languages Department the last five years I worked there. When a new, inexperienced male principal was hired, he decided to boost the school’s enrollment by actively recruiting twenty new, wealthy international students from China. As soon as they arrived, they encountered academic problems due mainly to their emerging English skills. This situation was compounded by not having their biological families in town and living with sponsors away from home. In order to help them succeed, I advocated for special ESOL classes and the hiring of a new teacher for that purpose. I spoke with both the principal and headmaster and made a request to the Academic Council several times during the year with no success. The administration dismissed my requests and decided I was “overreacting.” They alleged that the Chinese families “had signed a contract, and they had agreed to the existing curriculum.” In desperation, I made another appointment with the principal. Once again, he dismissed all my requests and said “we obviously don’t understand each other. Perhaps we can’t reach an agreement because we are culturally different.” At the time, I was shocked but speechless. I wanted to say “what do you mean by that?” The principal dismissed all my suggestions and was not open or interested in understanding what the students were going through— away from home, experiencing a culture shock, and attending a school with different classroom structures. At that moment, I knew I wanted to make a difference in those children’s lives but felt powerless. I did not feel I had the tools to speak for them anymore. Partly, because of this experience, I resigned from the school
and was inspired to begin my doctoral studies in education at UF with a concentration in the bilingual education/ESOL program.

My experience working as a program coordinator in Project STELLAR providing on-site PD support to teachers in a rural community of north Florida, the same place in which this study is undertaken, has allowed me to closely observe how only a few mainstream secondary teachers’ implement ESOL strategies and accommodations that meet the needs of their linguistically and culturally diverse ELs. At the same time, I have closely seen how the ELs struggle to make sense of material in the classroom. Because of my work in this area I also know how fluid and volatile is the population of ELs in these rural schools since the number of ELs is constantly changing due to migration patterns. As a researcher, then, I will have to be mindful that my position as program coordinator of STELLAR might have an influence on how the participants respond to my questions and be sensitive to participants’ concerns.

The personal and professional experiences lived in different contexts, mainly the US and Puerto Rico, have shaped my understandings and awareness of how people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds might feel when they face foreign culture or surroundings. After so many years, today, I sometimes feel part of what Duany (2017) calls “a nation on the move” (p. 2). That is, a person that goes back and forth between cultures. In spite of my US citizenship, when I visit the Island I get the impression that I am not perceived as a Puerto Rican and when I return to the US, I never completely belong here either. I feel that my identity is always negotiated, contested, a hybrid between my Boricua identity and my US identity.
Based on Norton’s work on language and identity (Norton, 2010), who we are is theorized as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle: and produced in the context of diverse relations of power, for instance in social interaction between people, and in the broader social, political, and economic activities. Specifically, Norton (2010) noted “Every time we speak, we are negotiating, and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space” (p. 350). Similarly, Spring (2010) also underscored the underlying forces of culture and how they evolve when different cultures are in contact resulting in new ways of seeing the world and *emersion* of hybridity of cultures. Spring calls this stage *internalization*, that is, when persons come to terms with living within the culture (e. g., the US) while having a continuing relationship with an ethnic culture. I feel that identities are fluid, constantly being constructed according to how we are positioned with respect to the intersection of different factors, such as race, age, religion, social status, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliations, and institutional settings. I believe that my contested biculturalism shapes the work I do and will serve as a lens to interpret how teacher knowledge for teaching the culturally and linguistically diverse ELs intersect with teachers’ personal and professional knowledge and knowledge of place.

A poem by twentieth century Spanish poet Machado (2003) comes to mind at this point; it reads: “Caminante no hay camino. Caminante, son tus huellas el camino y nada más, Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.” This poem explores human destiny by using a metaphor of a road: we walk on the road and thus walk life, observing the world and making sense of it. The last part of the poem urges the wayfarer not to look back but forward, to keep walking the path that he has created for
This poem is inspiring because it is a reminder that who we are is based on past, present, and future experiences and what we know is shaped by those experiences; that one has a past to reflect on and a future to look forward. Raising awareness of myself as a socialized member of various intersecting groups within a particular culture in a particular time and place facilitates the examination of those beliefs and values that I have been socialized to embrace and that shape my thoughts, actions, and my work. Similarly, as Freire suggested, becoming consciously aware of our context and our circumstances requires us to understand the act of “reading the word and the world” (as cited in Darder, 2015, p. 103).

Trustworthiness

Since I conducted a qualitative investigation within a constructivist paradigm, I was oriented to the production of reconstructed interpretations of the social world of mainstream secondary teachers in a rural school community. In this qualitative approach to research, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) explained that terms like internal and external validity are replaced by other terms like trustworthiness and authenticity. By operating from a constructivist paradigm, I aim to create new knowledge by interpreting my participants’ insights into understandings of TK for teaching ELs. To achieve this goal, I intentionally made every effort to be honest and trustworthy by engaging in a few strategies to enhance the credibility of my study.

Because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality were accessed directly through their observations and interviews. Though qualitative researchers can never capture an objective truth or reality, there are a number of strategies that can be followed to enhance the credibility of the findings; the best-known strategy is known as
triangulation. Denzin (1978) proposed four types of triangulation: the use of 1) multiple methods, which involves cross-checking the data by using different methods of data collection (e.g., interviews, photography, or documents); 2) multiple sources of data, which involves cross-checking data collected with participants at different times (e.g., follow-up interviews with the same participants, or different participants to obtain different perspectives; 3) multiple investigators, when multiple investigators collect and analyze data separately to later compare interpretations; or 4) multiple theories to confirm emerging findings, the less common of the four types according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), which involves approaching data with several hypotheses in mind to see which one works best in relation to the data.

There are three more strategies that are common in qualitative research: 1) member checks or respondent validation, which involves soliciting participants’ feedback on the study’s emerging findings to rule out misinterpreting participants’ perspective and meanings of what they said or did; 2) researcher’s positionality and subjectivities; which refers to how the researcher affects and is affected by the research process by explaining their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding a study; and 3) peer examination or peer review, which is a process built into the dissertation committee by which the committee reviews the research process from its design to its conclusion.

In order to ensure the trustworthiness in this study, three strategies were employed. The first one is triangulation by multiple methods and multiple sources of data. Data from multiple interviews, photo elicitation, and archival and ongoing document analysis were triangulated to find out what knowledges secondary teachers
working in a rural school community revealed about their work with ELs. Furthermore, participants were interviewed multiple times which allowed to triangulate findings and verify answers through member-checking. The almost 20 hours of video recorded interviews and the 1066 initial codes systematically condensed into five categories also provided trustworthiness to the study.

The second strategy is the definition of the researcher’s positionality and subjectivities. I described my role in the research study in terms of my personal history as an English learner myself, the influence of my cultural background and personal experiences and my involvement as an active participant in the PD program in Ivy County. I also described my positionality in terms of data analysis, particularly on the possibility that the data analysis process was influenced by my preconceived notions about of what teachers should know about their work with ELs. As Merriam & Tisdell (2016) stated, it is important for researchers to clarify their biases from the beginning of the study so that readers can understand their positions and assumptions in the study. The third strategy used was peer examination/review which will take place within my dissertation committee.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the philosophical perspectives that guided the present study, the positionality and subjectivities of the researcher, the methodological design and sampling considerations which framed it, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. Lastly, it provided an overview of the strategies that I used to ensure this work is trustworthy. This study was framed by constructivism and uses a narrative informed qualitative research design (Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cortazzi, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Primary data collection
methods included interviews with teachers and photo elicitations while secondary data collection methods will consist of archival and ongoing document analysis. The constant comparative method was used to guide data analysis, followed by a thematic analysis, and finally an interpretive phase with the assertions or lessons learned. Finally, several strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the results obtained.
CHAPTER 4
RETELLING PARTICIPANTS' PERSONAL STORIES

Overview

In order to understand the knowledges revealed by the four participants in this study, it is important to learn about their life histories, personal cultural, linguistic, and geographic background, educational experiences, and some qualities that are most demonstrative of their characters. Because their ontology (i.e., who these teachers are and their personal lives) influences how they think about their work with ELs in a rural secondary setting, this chapter provides the profiles and stories of the four participants in this study. Table 4-1 summarizes some of the essentialized features of each participant. In addition, this chapter paints a deeper picture of the focal participants as teachers of ELs in rural secondary settings. Names are in no particular order.

Table 4-1. Summary of Participants’ Backgrounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jack</th>
<th>Jacqueline</th>
<th>Marisol</th>
<th>Adela</th>
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</thead>
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<td>African American</td>
<td>White Hispanic</td>
<td>White Hispanic</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
<td>N.Y. native</td>
<td>P.R. native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Florida, urban</td>
<td>N.Y., urban</td>
<td>P.R., urban-rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree working toward a M.A.E.</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree working toward a M.A.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs. of experience teaching in rural Ivy County</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jack, a Southern Rural EL Teacher-Advocate

There is more to Jack than meets the eye. Jack’s story revealed a character that transcends the stereotypical all-American-southern-White-male exterior. Back in 2017, when I met Jack, a White American ninth grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in rural Hibiscus, Ivy County, FL, he was a teacher participant in Project STELLAR, a US Department of Education funded grant to improve EL instruction in rural settings. As a program coordinator for the Project, I worked closely with Jack to guide him in the implementation of EL instructional strategies with two ELs in his ELA classroom. Jack was born in Orlando, FL and moved with his family to the small town of Amaryllis, Tennessee (TN) when he was only five years old. His parents worked in the banking industry and neither of them had college degrees. Jack, an only child, was the first in his family to graduate from college: “I am one of the few that graduated from college, from my grandparents and their siblings and all the way down” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19). Making Jack feel comfortable during the interview was my main objective since, as a teacher, I believe that establishing a connection with my participant is important to develop trust. Thus, after brewing fresh Puerto Rican café, we engaged in some informal conversations about doctorate life. I began recording our interview and organizing the pictures Jack brought for photo elicitation.

Growing up rural, Jack explained how some aspects of rurality impacted his life. For instance, Jack recognized that the same sense of community support he experienced growing up in rural TN was also evident in Ivy County. Before moving to the mountains, Jack, his parents, and his extended family lived in a small duplex type home. Closeness with his relatives made Jack understand the importance of having a sense of family in his life. He noted,
When we first moved we actually lived with my family, my dad, my mom and myself, and then also my aunt and uncle, cousins and my grandparents. So, we lived like that for a year and a half. We lived in a duplex. There was quite a bit of bodies, which was fine, it’s where I got my sense of family and having siblings when I didn’t have any. (Interview #1, 6/11/19)

Jack’s ties with rurality began in Amaryllis on the top of a mountain where he experienced life in a rural setting. When I asked Jack to share pictures of his childhood home, where he spent the majority of his early life and his “true tie to rurality,” he showed me the picture in Figure 4-1. Looking at the picture, it is hard not to notice the snow on the roof and on the ground and a sense of isolation and silence. Jack lived in a “modest house” built by previous owners. He continued,

I did not realize at the time how modest of a house it was. It was made of wood. As I was going through high school and the house started to get older, it started to have some rotting issues and some things like that, roof leaked a little bit, it was part of being at home, living in a wooden house in the middle of a mountain. It is a big part of my life and a lot of the memories, the many days spent with the trees, going through, blowing leaves and all the things that come with it. This is why I incorporated that picture, it is where I grew up and got that upbringing, snow, a lot of snow on the mountain. If we could not get out of the mountain it meant there was no school. (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19)

When Jack and his family moved to the home in the mountains, they experienced geographic isolation and a climate particular to Amaryllis. Jack and his family had “a 15 min drive to get to school, or anywhere. There was a corner store in the whole mountain. Otherwise you had to drive 20-30 mins to get to the closest store to buy groceries” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19). Jack spent the majority of his time in the woods, by the house on the mountain located on a dead-end road that turned to gravel. He would spend long hours playing sports with friends that lived in the same street, “it was nice, it was freedom” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).
Growing up in a middle-class rural setting, Jack also experienced socioeconomic diversity both in his home and in the community. He acknowledged that this experience is similar to the reality of his EL students live in Ivy County. He noted, 

a lot of the people that lived in the mountain, some lived in very nice houses in the golf course that was there which was one of the other business that was there, or you had, a lot of my friends lived in the trailer park that was out there. And there were a lot of family issues, issues with drugs, things like that as well, so, got to experience a little bit of everything growing up. (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19) 

Indeed, as a child growing up in rurality, Jack learned lessons that facilitated his work with ELs in rural Florida today. His upbringing not only kept him “humble, but it also gives me an outlet to connect with my students who may be experiencing some of the same experiences within a rural setting that I or my friends experienced as I grew up” (Jack, data generated from email, June 10, 2019).
In terms of his experience with diversity and race, Jack remarked that although Amaryllis “was pretty much a white mountain, all white people,” he was able to experience some diversity. Since his parents worked downtown, he attended early elementary school there. In contrast to his elementary experience, Jack described high school as

It was very monocultural, we had, you could count with one hand the amount of colored people that we had in high school at any point in time. And usually, there was a joke, especially in our middle school, they were all related to our secretary, who was a black lady. So, I did not experience a lot in the way of diversity there. But I did things outside of school that helped influence me. Kind of an early age I wanted to be a teacher. (Jack Interview #1, 6/11/19)

Jack explained that experiencing cultural diversity opened his mind to other cultures. Jack was eager to share his experiences during a trip to Paris with his wife. Jack asserted that this trip provided him with a small glimpse into what EL families experience as newcomers in Ivy County schools: entering a school system with a language and culture they may not understand. He shared how vulnerable he felt at one point in the trip when they lost their way in Paris and had to retrace their steps while attempting to talk to people that could not understand them. He expressed,

I can’t only imagine how these [EL] families and students feel as they try to navigate our communities and systems. This trip forced us out of our comfort zones because neither of us speak any French, and we were faced with the struggle of being in a foreign culture with a very limited ability to communicate besides with those that spoke English” (Jack, data generated from email, June 10, 2019).

As a child, involvement in sports and other clubs fostered Jack’s driven and competitive character, but more importantly, Jack asserted that it also allowed him to experience a more diverse environment. One of his beliefs is that “everybody deserves to have a place where they feel like they belong and can talk and should have their
opinions heard” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). When he talked about his EL students, I felt Jack’s sense of caring for the students. Jack was passionate about getting to know ELs even when he recognized his own language barrier as a monolingual English speaker. He understood the necessity to “help them […] see that you care enough to try to make things different for them” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19). Jack recognized the inequities experienced by ELs he remarked,

So just going up and asking if they need something, if [they] got everything they need to be able to do the task that you have given them, all these kinds of things. A lot of times they get overlooked. And so just kind of making sure that they are included and helped. (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19)

Jack emphasized that not only do teachers need to build connections with ELs by making them feel welcome, but “another big issue is having EL families [felt] included, and feeling safe and feeling like they [could] ask questions and that there’s someone there to help them” (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19).

Unquestionably, through the lens of rurality and his personal lived experiences, Jack recognizes the inequities suffered by ELs that exist in Hibiscus school. The fact that Jack was both an insider to rurality and an outsider to rural Ivy county allowed him to connect with ELs and EL families. He recognized that it was very easy “to feel othered and feel like a subpopulation whenever you speak a different language (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19). Specifically, he was very sensitive and attentive to the feelings of his ELs whenever they were pulled out of class to work with a paraprofessional.

Visiting old friends in the white mountain of Amaryllis showed Jack the impact of not having diversity as a child. This realization awakened his sense of teacher leadership and advocacy for ELs. He remarked,
The way some of my [White] friends would talk, and they are not bad people, but they haven’t had the chance to experience the kinds of things you can whenever you are working within a diverse population. Whenever you make friends from other cultures, you see the humanity of other cultures and no longer is something you see on the news and usually all the negative representations. (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).

Indeed, mentoring other teachers through the courses offered by Project STELLAR, advancing his doctorate studies, and leading the first ESOL sheltered classroom in rural Hibiscus Middle-High school, at the time of the study, were evidence of Jack’s emerging passion as teacher leader and advocate for ELs. For Jack, the classroom was an avenue toward a bigger goal: challenging deficit ideologies and promoting social justice for ELs and families.

**Jacqueline, the African American Bilingual Teacher-Leader**

Jacqueline is a veteran teacher with 35 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study, Jacqueline had been the Spanish teacher in Alamanda, FL during the last 29 years. Jacqueline holds a bachelor’s degree in TESOL. Before concentrating fully on her duties as Spanish teacher, she served nine years as ESOL coordinator for Ivy County. As such, she aided in the development of the district ESOL plans as well as helped in the training of classroom teachers in ESOL strategies.

Professionally, as I worked closely to mentor Jacqueline in the context of Project STELLAR, I quickly learned that Jacqueline’s bilingual expertise was an asset to her EL students and fellow monolingual colleagues. Based on my own professional experiences working with Jacqueline, she struck me as a caring, receptive individual who was always open to learning and eager to embark on new adventures. I saw firsthand how she cared about her EL students’ well-being and academics and how she built strong relationships with some of her ELs’ families. Her openness to learning
inspired her to join Project STELLAR despite her already school-wide, well-known expertise in ESOL matters. Nevertheless, she wanted to learn more about current immigration laws as well as updated methods of instruction and materials for EL teachers (Jacqueline, Online Survey). Being open and flexible, as she confessed in a later interview, was one of her most valuable qualities, well-suited for working with ELs. She believed that a “perfect teacher” of ELs needed to “leave [her] preconceptions at the door and open [herself] up to learning [her] students” (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/18/19).

When I asked her to participate in this study, Jacqueline was excited and willing to help. I was thrilled because I knew her years of expertise teaching in rural Ivy county were invaluable. We agreed to conduct our interviews at the McDonalds in rural Hibiscus, FL, where she lives. Humorously, she shared that McDonalds was “the place,” well-known by its best free WIFI in all of Ivy County; I later found out it was indeed the actual place where EL students lacking internet would go to complete school assignments.

Our first interview took place during a rainy Florida morning. Since it was barely 11 AM, McDonalds was not yet crowded. While I was setting up the video equipment, Jacqueline and I engaged in small talk about our love for teaching Spanish and the fact that we could conduct our conversations bilingually. I began by asking her about details and context in which she was born. She replied, “I understand I was born 61 years ago in West Palm Beach Florida and you can probably tell by looking at me that I am Black [laughter]” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). It was evident that race was something
she was constantly negotiating in predominantly White rural Ivy County. I wondered if
infusing humor in her conversations was her way of broaching the subject of race.

As a child in south Florida, Jacqueline was exposed to diversity. She recalled,
“being born in Palm Beach gave me exposure to Latinos because in our neighborhood
at that time, [there were] Blacks and Latinos, not so much Whites” (Jacqueline,
Interview #1, 6/13/19). In her neighborhood, the Latinos were mostly Cubans who spoke
primarily Spanish. She learned quickly that speaking Spanish to the Hispanic elders
made them feel at ease. As a Spanish teacher, Jacqueline was constantly exposed to
different Spanish accents and, as she remembered, “it was what inculcated my interest
in it” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). As she stated her experiences with diversity
and bilingualism are resources for her work with rural secondary ELs.

Jacqueline realized that her bilingualism and exposure to languages and cultures
growing up bridged cultural gaps in the classroom and facilitated the connections she
made as EL teacher and teacher/mentor-leader at her school. These experiences
helped her to see “the whole picture” and to identify the academic needs of ELs that
often times go beyond language barrier (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline
observed,

I kind of give my teachers a heads up, ‘Let me know if you get somebody
new who doesn't speak English. Because sometimes the administration
doesn't remember to let me know.’ It's just-- they're busy and stuff. And a
teacher will say, 'I have this kid. I'm going to send her to you.' And I go,
'Okay.' And I'll just talk to them and ask them about themselves.
(Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Caring about her EL students is a priority for Jacqueline; she made sure they
knew how to find her. She remarked, “They're used to me asking these types of
questions. And used to me introducing myself [...] ‘If you need something and you can’t express it, come to me’” (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/18/19).

Growing up in an African American low-income family, Jacqueline was taught that education was the means to move ahead in life:

The reason that is important is because 61 years ago culture was a bit different than it is now. Black people were not accepted in certain places and wasn’t as easy to get certain jobs in education. My father had a rural upbringing here, around this area. I moved here after he retired so I could be here. My mother not so much, my mother had more education than my dad. She went through her AA. My father dropped out of high school to help his family and he got his GED later. So, in my household education was always important. My mom and my dad were very clear that especially considering our circumstances, you can’t move ahead if you don’t have education. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Jacqueline’s passion for education and the experiences she faced growing up, such as her family’s socioeconomic struggles and racial discrimination, have prepared Jacqueline for her work with ELs today. However, she did not elaborate on specific experiences with race. Describing the “circumstances,” she quickly clarified how her family struggled to provide that coveted education. She noted,

We were encouraged to do things like play word games, dictionary games, crossword puzzles and, of course, when you are younger, you don’t realize that was educating you: we were just having fun, learning new words and seeing what we could do. As an adult I realize that was one of the ways that they were working on our education. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Resourcefulness was learned by Jacqueline at an early age. She became emotional when she recalled a story describing how her family sought educational materials. She recalled the story of the family’s garbage man friend who collected unwanted books in the library’s trash and brought them to her family for her and her siblings to read. Jacqueline explained, “because we were poor we had to come up with creative ways of getting things.” Encouraged by her parents, Jacqueline became an
avid reader, remembering this experience as “one of things that had formed my thinking on education” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline learned at an early age that growing up poor did not prevent her from advancing her education. Resourcefulness was one of the qualities that facilitated Jacqueline’s work with ELs.

Growing up poor also taught Jacqueline to be resourceful in implementing instructional strategies with ELs. She recalled a story of an EL family that had financial difficulties and did not have access to educational materials. The EL student needed to work to help the family and had been absent from school, but he needed to develop his literacy skills. Because Jacqueline established strong relationships with EL families, she knew they were religious and told the EL mother, “This is something you believe in. Use that to help you with your reading” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline suggested having the EL student read the bible in Spanish to build his literacy skills. Her resourcefulness and her ability to establish strong bonds with EL families allowed her to facilitate her work.

As a child, Jacqueline remembered that religion was an integral part of her family. Because she was from a large family of nine, everybody knew Jacqueline’s family in south Florida. She remembered: “my father was a deacon in the church, and my mom and dad were like founding members of the church we went to, down there. So, they were a big deal in the church, every Sunday” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Reflecting on how spirituality shaped Jacqueline’s life as a child, she remarked, “It’s just part of who I am and who I grew up to be” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline’s experiences with religion and having a religious family involved in
the church community instilled in her a sense of family which became a strong influence in her EL instruction.

Jacqueline’s sense of family informed her teaching of ELs and the relationships she developed with EL parents. When I asked Jacqueline to share a picture of her childhood, she shared the picture in Figure 4-2 which showed Jacqueline, her father and sister embracing each other while smiling. Looking at the picture of the three appear to be happy together. Jacqueline recognized that her sense of family was the most influential force in the way she treated her EL students. She explained,

Figure 4-2. Jacqueline, father and sister. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline.

I think that the way I feel about family informs how I teach. Because I think of my students as my kids. They'll all tell you, 'I'm Ms. Jacqueline's kid. I'm Ms. Jacqueline's—' You know, they're my kids. And I try to treat them with the same consideration and worth that I treat my family. I think everybody's worth is important to them. And some people, I'm not trying to be mean, but I feel that some people don't think of other people as particularly worthy of their time. It's like, "Well, she's not even trying." [...] And I try to make sure that the students know it, that the teachers know it.
Because I feel so like an Auntie, it's family. I want to make sure that my family is taken care of as much as possible. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Jacqueline's value of family extended to her students and their families. She aimed to ensure that students were comfortable in her classroom. Even after no longer serving as administrative ESOL coordinator, she continued to be a mentor-teacher and trainer for ESOL. She noted,

I believe that my strongest leadership quality is the ability to communicate well as both speaker and listener. I feel it is important for a leader to listen to the concerns and ideas of those in their orbit in order to best facilitate understanding. (Jacqueline, Online Survey)

Her professional knowledge and experience in ESOL and her personal lived realities prepared Jacqueline for working with ELs and mentoring EL teachers. Jacqueline did not see retirement in her near future, she remarked,

For my future, I see myself continuing to teach while taking on more leadership roles within my school […] Eventually, I want to continue my education and move into a different role into education such as working for a district and eventually working my way into a teacher educator role in the post-secondary environment. I feel as though I have the ability to have a large impact on the students I teach, but I feel like I can broaden my impact through working at higher levels within education to influence more teachers to have a larger influence on their students. (Jacqueline, Online Survey)

Our fourth and last interview ended July 2nd around noon. The next day, Jacqueline traveled to Machu Picchu in Perú for a summer vacation.

Marisol, the Tough-Loving Inner-City Neorican: De Corazón a Corazón (New York born Puerto Rican: Heart to Heart)

Meeting with Marisol is always a joyous occasion. When I reflect on my interviews with Marisol, I smile and hear ¡wepa! ¡Wepa!, a slang interjection used by most Puerto Ricans to express great happiness or an invitation to party. ¡Wepa! became popular in Puerto Rico (PR) thanks to the 1974 hit Christmas song El jolgorio
(Wepa, Wepa, Wepa ♫♫♫) by Alfonso Vélez. However, the exclamation rose such prominence that internet users began to tag social media posts with #wepa to express joyful feelings. Because of her rough NY inner city demeanor and her Neorican accent--a NY-Puerto Rican fusion--meeting with Marisol for the first time may seem intimidating. Yet, once acquainted with her, one realizes that Marisol is an introverted person with a compassionate heart and joyful personality.

Since arriving in Florida five years earlier, Marisol had held various job positions. Before being the District ESOL lead teacher in Ivy County, Marisol was a secondary English teacher who helped the school with ELs and EL families as needed. Her administrative position at the time of the study allowed Marisol to collaborate more with EL students and EL families; teachers and ESOL paraprofessionals; and school administrators. Despite being a single mom to three boys, Marisol’s tenacious character has allowed her to continue her own education against the odds of cost, time, and distance associated with traveling to a nearby university. Marisol held a Bachelor’s degree in secondary English education and was working toward her Master of Arts in Education with a concentration on Bilingual Education/ESOL at the time of the study.

The first time I met with Marisol, two years before this study began, she was serving as an ESOL paraprofessional working with EL students during the day and assisting EL parents as requested. Paraprofessionals are only required to hold a high school diploma. She was also in charge of the Focus Lab classroom, teaching and supervising mainstream and EL students that were not meeting grade level standards in regular classroom settings. In the context of Project STELLAR, Marisol also facilitated activities engaging students and parents during EL family engagement nights when EL
parents were provided computers to learn English and students could be tutored and supported with homework.

In the context of my work with Project STELLAR, Marisol would always make me feel welcome in her classroom. She welcomed me with a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. As I came into her classroom, I noted her small shrine (Figure 4-3, a picture generated by Marisol for photo elicitation) in the back wall displaying la bandera de Puerto Rico (Puerto Rican flag), la cruz de Jesucristo (crucifix of Jesus Christ), velas (candles) and other mementos. The full display represented: una Boricua creyente enseña aquí (a Puerto Rican teaches here). I wondered how welcomed and valued her two ELs must have felt having Marisol as their teacher. When I visited and the students got distracted, Marisol shouted, ¡Hey! ¿qué eso? ¡pónganse a trabajar! (Hey what’s this? Get back to work!). And, smiling, they would immediately go back to work while Marisol winked. Her students seemed to respect her and simultaneously sensed her affection. Undoubtedly, Marisol’s hispanidad and bilingualism facilitated an instant connection with her EL students and families. She understood that bilingual personnel were needed in Ivy County; Marisol asserted it was the main reason for coming to FL. She remarked, “they needed someone to speak in Spanish in [Calla Lily, FL]. So, I got hired to work in the alternative school with these behavior kids, but there were also EL kids in the class. So that's how I got to become ESOL [paraprofessional]” (Marisol, Interview #2, 6/24/19)

As my mentee in the context of Project STELLAR, Marisol was a very responsible and organized student, an important aspect of her personality that facilitated her work as a teacher. I often joked with her and called her “my overachiever”
because she was always the first one to arrive to a face-to-face class or conference and the first one to turn in an assignment. If you asked her for three pictures, she turned in six. Figure 4-3 shows a cropped classroom picture of Marisol’s back wall. Another version of this picture also appears in Chapter 5 when I discuss the study’s major findings. Here, I use Figure 4-3 to capture Marisol’s ontology, including her excellent organizational skills as well as her deep religiosity and her sense of pride for her beloved Puerto Rico. Marisol and I met at my house on June 17 at 10:30 AM to conduct the first interview for this study. I also informed her we were welcome to speak either English or Spanish or translanguage if we wished, which is what comes naturally to us bilinguals.

Figure 4-3. Marisol’s back wall. Photo courtesy of Marisol.
As expected, she arrived early at 10 AM and although I had my video equipment ready, she asked me to only audio record our interviews. Since she began working in an administrative capacity in Ivy County at the time of this study, she was concerned about recording video where she could be identified by supervisors. After reassuring confidentiality, Marisol felt at ease with audio recording our conversations.

Marisol’s upbringing in an inner-city environment, acknowledging her own social and emotional needs growing up, and the economic circumstances of her childhood prepared her to work with immigrant ELs. Marisol was born in Manhattan, NY in an area “known as the Projects so it was supposedly a middle class but it was a poor community” (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19). She was of the first generation in her family to be born in the US as both her parents were originally from the island of PR. She described how a sister, two brothers and Marisol shared one small bedroom,

I had a sister and two brothers and we lived in an apartment of two bedrooms so there was 4 of us in one bedroom. So, you can tell already we were a poor family. My dad worked and mom was a homemaker, she took care of us. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Realizing that the Projects was a rough neighborhood not well-suited for young children, her mom sent the children to PR every summer to keep them off the dangerous streets of New York. She noted,

But we were here [NY] during the school year but every summer we went back to PR. My mom did not want us in the streets during the summertime. She was very overprotective of us. A lot of it had to do [with what went on] inside the household. Our family structure was a little... how can I say...there was abuse in the home, so as we grew up we never spoke of what happened you know you are in the house things happen, you leave the house and everybody smiles, nobody knows what is going on. And I graduated from high school over there and that is when I moved to NJ. Basically, all my childhood and teenage life was in NY before I left the city. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)
The mental, physical, and emotional abuse experienced by Marisol while growing up in NY seemed to toughen her appearance and seemed to allow her to develop an identity that protected her from her home environment. She felt that this prepared her to work with ELs. The toughness and tenacity people perceived from Marisol was derived from those lived experiences. She described,

I think a lot of my teacher coworkers have expressed that I am a little tough but I think it is because of the neighborhood I was brought up in. [...] I am the first born and he [her dad] wanted a boy and obviously I am a girl. Because he wanted a boy back in the days, he expressed what he wanted and he raised me like a boy. I did all sports, unfortunately I was even like a boy, so you know I was tough. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

While Marisol had a deep understanding of some of her students’ socioemotional problems, the students also perceived her empathy. Building this relationship, de corazón a corazón (“heart to heart”), promoted trust between Marisol and her students. Her personal life experiences prepared her to deal with the difficult circumstances some of her students had gone through. In an emotional way, Marisol described,

Do I regret my childhood? yes, I wish there [were] a lot of things I did not have to go through because a lot was mental, emotional, and physical abuse. But at the same time, it prepared me for my life now. A lot of my experiences actually has helped me understand a lot of my students and the homes that they come from. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Diversity was an everyday experience for Marisol growing up in the Projects of New York, one, she admitted, she took for granted. She remarked, “Diversity there was between Hispanics, Blacks and Indians. There was a variety, that is why to me diversity wasn’t a big issue because you were born in that kind of atmosphere, so you never thought of it” (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19). Although she stated that she experienced racial segregation in the city, she did not perceive racism as such at school. In the
classroom, everybody was culturally and racially “integrated.” She explained that the area in which she lived,

was multicultural but it was mostly Hispanics and Blacks. We had a few Orientals, a few Indians, a couple of whites. But, the Projects go by sections, in this section you see the Hispanics and the Blacks and then you see across the road to the other side is the whites. But we were raised just the same kids, we did not see the culture differences in our streets or in our schools. We were treated all the same. But we knew who belonged in our community so if there was an outsider we knew “you don’t belong here” and we would investigate. Other than that, no, it was multicultural. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Marisol believed that having a multicultural experience opened her mind and prepared her to bridge the existing cultural gaps in Alamanda, FL. Her exposure to diversity [had] “definitely [helped] me in today’s classroom with the different cultures, diversity in the classroom. I am very, very open minded” (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19). Marisol’s openmindedness allowed to treat each student with respect and to learn from their diverse cultures.

Similar to Jacqueline, Marisol’s experience with religion allowed her to develop a sense of family and community. Religion served as a safe place and support for Marisol to take a break from her personal home experiences. She welcomed church members’ love and support to help her go through her emotions. Marisol explained,

my religious background definitely made an impact and it affects my way that I teach or work with the kids or even live today. I was born and raised in the Christian religion, denomination is Pentecostal Spanish and yeah, we would go to church and everyone in church is the same, nobody was different, we treated each other the same, we treated each other with respect. […] We were there to support each other; the support was big and that has played a big role in my life. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Her empathy, religiosity, and her sense of family allowed Marisol to show students that she really cared, de corazón a corazón,
If you sit in my classroom, from the very first day, you become my son, my daughter. Just like I made sure my kids graduated, and they’re doing what they’re doing now, because I raised three boys by myself, that's what I'm doing with my class. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Although Marisol’s lived realities growing up, her tough-loving nature, her compassionate heart, her experiences with multiculturalism, her professional preparation, and her religiosity are important aspects of who Marisol is, she stated that her hispanidad, her Hispanic identity, and bilingualism were the most important personal attributes that influence her connection with ELs and EL families.

When I think of Marisol, one word comes to mind: ¡Wepa!

Adela, the Maternal Teacher: Teaching con Cariño, Fe y Puertorriqueñidad (with Affection, Faith, and Puerto Rican Flair)

Adela is a certified Spanish teacher from Puerto Rico with twelve years of teaching experience. She had been working in Ivy County since 2013 and received numerous recognitions for her work, including the 2015 Teacher of the Year for Hibiscus Middle High School (HMHS) and 2015 District Teacher of the Year in Ivy County. Her desire to become more knowledgeable in ESOL matters motivated her to join Project STELLAR. As my mentee in the context of Project STELLAR, Adela demonstrated a love of teaching, a desire to help and serve ELs and EL families and was a mentor and leader in her school.

We met during the intensity of the Florida summer months when Puerto Rico was experiencing a series of protests that resulted in the resignation of former Governor Ricardo Rosselló. These protests were motivated by a laundry list of grievances such as: US-PR troubled relations regarding the aftermath of Hurricane María, economic and political discontent, mass migration, and longstanding cases of government corruption. To show my solidarity with our island, my husband and I placed a garden banner with
the flag of Puerto Rico on one of the trees in our front yard. No one could miss it.

Neither did Adela who was able to easily locate my house.

When I opened the front door, I passionately exclaimed, “#rickyrenuncia,” a popular hashtag circulating through social media that called for Rosselló’s resignation. Recognizing the hashtag, Adela laughed, but I also observed her tears. When I asked her why she was crying, she explained that seeing our Puerto Rican flag made her emotional. Thus, began our time together, and it was against that backdrop that I conducted my four interviews with Adela. We began each interview with café puertorriqueño Alto Grande and finished with croquetas de jamón y Medalla, our cerveza puertorriqueña (ham croquettes and Puerto Rican beer).

 Needless to say, the name given to her by her mother would determine how her life would unfold. When she was born, in Caguas, PR, her young mother named her Adela after the name of the main character of a popular telenovela (soap opera) in PR. Both her parents were Puerto Ricans—her mother, a math teacher and her father, a hitman. It was not until her father passed that she began to understand her father’s real identity. She recalled that people in Caguas respected her father and her family, yet not for the right reasons. She explained,

porque mi papá era el que movía la droga del pueblo. Todo el mundo lo sabía, porque mi papá, entiende, él es el que viaja, que sale, que entra y lo otro, él es el tirador, entonces hay como un respeto. (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

because my dad was the one who moved drugs in the town. Everybody knew it, because my dad, you know, he was the one traveling, the one that comes and goes, he is the distributor, then everybody respected him (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Growing up, Adela remembered that her family seemed traditional, at least to the outside world. However, her reality was a different one. Her father’s alcoholism, drug
addiction and job instability were the motive of most of the couple’s arguments which regularly took place while the children were sleeping. Although she was too young to realize it at the time, Adela understands now the mental and emotional abuse her family suffered at the hands of her father. One example was the special room in the house, equipped with scales to weigh drugs. Adela and her sisters were summoned every evening to help her dad in “the business.” When children at school would ask Adela and her sisters: “¿qué hace tu papá?” “What does your father do for a living?” her sister would reply: “él hace cigarrillos en la casa, es que se trae el trabajo para la casa” “he makes cigarettes at home because he brings work home” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). Adela tearfully described,

And when they ask us “yes, we help him because we clean the seeds. And we were little, you know? And we would work at the table, you understand? How irresponsible of parents to do that to their children. We had a good living, but how could you make your children do that? (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

As a young girl, Adela communicated her father her fear of being followed when she was around the town. He responded by handing her a gun to use for protection. Adela explained, “Tú sabes, ya una vez que uno tiene la pistola, pues ya uno tiene más acceso a ciertas cosas. Yo [...] era niña, pero era un adulto. Buenas notas, siempre tuve buenas notas” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). You know, once you have a gun, you have access to certain things. I was a child but also an adult. Good grades, I always had good grades.” These tumultuous times motivated Adela’s mother to seek refuge in the Pentecostal church.
While Adela’s father was in and out of jail, the family struggled to make ends meet. He opened a series of businesses (e.g., a restaurant, a bar, and a cock fighting business or gallos de pelea, a popular Puerto Rican sport) for the purpose of laundering money. Although Adela understood that her father was not a model citizen, he was always loving toward the children. During Adela’s high school years, he supported her desire to teach by building a classroom in the back of their house for Adela to tutor children after school. Nevertheless, her mother resented her father’s cariño (affection) toward Adela and her sisters and, as a result, this resentment led to emotional abuse towards them.

Indeed, the experiences she endured growing up and her experiences as a young mother prepared Adela for her work with ELs. Her own relationship with her mother, the maternal relationship with her sisters, and becoming a young mother unexpectedly influenced the way she conducted herself in the classroom with her EL students.

Adela’s experiences with motherhood came at a very young age. At 15, Adela had her first maternal responsibility when her mother enrolled in graduate school to advance her education. Adela had no choice but to assume the role of caretaker and mother to her sisters. After her father passing, during her sophomore year in college, Adela and her husband were expecting. At the time, they were both excelling academically in college; Adela had a full tuition scholarship while her husband was in the engineering program. Recalling these moments and wiping her tears, she shared a recent family picture, Figure 4-4. This picture of Adela, her husband, and their beautiful children depicts a happy family and a proud mother. With great pride she explained the importance of having a sense of family. With great emotion and tears in her eyes looking at the
picture, she exclaimed, “¡Qué lindo, es familia linda!” “How beautiful, it is a beautiful family” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). Adela’s sense of family and maternal instinct transcended to the classroom through her love and empathy towards her EL students. The cariño and loving approach to Adela’s teaching is derived from her lived emotional realities. In our conversations, Adela’s personal and professional lived emotions intersected when she described her feelings regarding the teachers’ apathy towards their students. She observed,

Figure 4-4. Adela y su familia: su orgullo. Adela and her family: her pride. Photo courtesy of Adela.
es un dolor, es un dolor. Cuando ese niño va al salón y tú sabes que no se ha bañado. Como mamá me duele, como maestra me duele, como hermana me duele. Tú sabes que esa niña está utilizada de cierta forma y te duele. [...] ¡Bendito! (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

it hurts, it hurts. When that child goes to the classroom and you know that he hasn’t bathed. As a mother, it hurts, as a teacher it hurts, as a sister, it hurts. You know that girl is being used in certain ways, it hurts [...] Bless your heart! (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Adela’s early language experiences in her high school years served as a model for her actual practice. She recalled Mrs. Roldán’s classroom style and the personal elegance with which she conducted her class.

Ese es el salón que tú querías llegar y esa era casita, esa era your home. Esa era mi clase favorita, la de español. Entonces llegábamos y como nos expuso las novelas, a la lectura, y fue una de las cosas que me ayudó como maestra, luego, a salir de leer el libro y ayudar a mis estudiantes a actuar, lo que está pasando. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

That is the classroom where you wanted to be and that was the little house, that was the home. That was my favorite class, Spanish class. Then, we arrived there and she exposed us to novels, readings and that was one of the things that helped me the most as a teacher, later, to leave the book and help my students to act out what was happening [in the reading]. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

By emulating Mrs. Roldán’s style, Adela knew to design activities to engage students in instruction while, simultaneously, having fun.

Prayer has been a constant exercise in Adela’s life and she described how her faith has guided her loving and caring instructional approach. Religion permeated every aspect of Adela’s life. During our conversations, it was evident her students knew her well as they constantly asked for her prayers in crucial moments in their lives. For instance, they would say, "¿puedes orar por mí? Y yo le digo, ‘bueno, cuando voy por la noche, te presento en oración.’ ¿Vienen con sus problemas, cuando tenemos exámenes, yo les digo, ‘bueno, esta mañana oré por todo el mundo’ “Can you pray for
me? And I say to them, ‘well, at night, I pray for you.’ They come with their problems, when we have tests, and I say, ‘well, this morning I prayed for everybody.’” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). During our interview sessions, she consistently referred to parables in the Bible as metaphors of life guiding her personal and professional life.

Adela’s cariño, maternal disposition, and faith intertwined with her puertorriqueñidad facilitated her work with EL students by creating a second home, a welcoming, and happy space for her EL students.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter foregrounded the stories of the four focal participants in this study. The stories were summarized and retold according to the video recorded interviews and photo elicitation conducted with each participant, as well as other documents such as the online survey and the participants’ résumés. Their stories presented a deep picture of the participants as teachers of ELs in rural settings. All four teachers have been participants in Project STELLAR and were, at the time of the study, secondary EL teachers in a rural Ivy County.

The stories underscored the participants’ personal background and qualities that shaped how they thought about their work with ELs in secondary rural settings. Jack, the American white southern monolingual English teacher, emerged as a fierce advocate of ELs in the classroom and a teacher-leader in the school. His vast familiarity with rurality and monoculturalism allowed him to empathize with the feelings of outsideness experienced by most newcomer ELs and families. Recognizing his desire to be bilingual, he found other avenues to promote communication with ELs. Jacqueline, the African-American bilingual Spanish teacher, grew up in a multicultural city in Florida surrounded by a large nuclear family that highly valued education despite experiencing
poverty. Her bilingualism, love of education, her concept of family, and her profound belief that the ideal teacher needs to leave preconceptions at the door, facilitated her work with ELs in the classroom. Her personal and professional story revealed her as an ESOL resource for students, colleagues, and school administrators. Marisol is the tough-loving inner-city Neorican paraprofessional turned English teacher, whose difficult lived childhood realities prepared for her work with ELs in rural settings. She emerged as a confident and beloved EL teacher whose personal background, hispanidad, and bilingualism allowed her to connect de corazón a corazón, heart-to-heart with her EL students in a profound way and to collaborate with school teachers and administrators for the advancement of EL rights. Puerto Rican Adela, the maternal Spanish teacher that treated each student con cariño, fe y amor (affection, faith, and love), endured an unimaginable childhood to become an adored teacher, mother for her students, and someone who created a classroom space where her students felt welcome: her happy place. Her puertorriqueñidad and personal experiences allowed her to connect with her EL students and to serve as a mentor-teacher to her colleagues. Using different lenses, the identities of the four focal participants in this study influenced the way they thought about their work with secondary ELs in a rural community. The following chapter answers the research questions of how secondary teacher knowledges inform their work with EL students in rural Ivy County.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS

Overview

Drawing from the personal stories of the four participants, Chapter 4 provided a profile of each of the four participants in this study. The profiles included rich descriptions of each participant that aimed to capture their personal and professional backgrounds and orientations towards working with rural EL students. Based on the findings from interviews and photo elicitation with each participant, this chapter answers the two research questions: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?

Personal and Professional TK for ELs in this Rural School Community

The first section of this chapter addresses the first question. Focusing on the personal and professional experiences of the participants, three main themes emerged from the data: 1) teachers’ knowledge that conceptualizing relationships with teacher-EL students; 2) teachers’ knowledge of bilingualism and hispanidad as a resource in their work with ELs; and 3) teachers’ knowledge of EL-specialized instructional strategies for rural ELs. All three of these themes intersected with their knowledge of rurality and how the community functioned.

Conceptualizing Teacher-EL Secondary Students Relationships

The four focal participants in this study revealed that building strong relationships or connections with ELs and their families was a priority for their work in Ivy County. The participants repeatedly noted that before any instruction could begin, it was essential to establish a personal connection with students that goes beyond a traditional teacher-
student relationship. Getting to know the EL students and allowing EL students and families to know the teacher were essential components of the relationship. The participants described the manner in which they established relationships with EL students and families, and they accomplished it in nuanced ways. Some participants created a space in which they could develop those relationships such as through instructional games or through the use of technology; others accomplished the task outside the classroom as they connected with families. Data from the participants demonstrated that building relationships with EL students, in which both teacher and students were active participants, preceded instruction.

One example from Marisol exemplified this connection:

I think my personal experiences, my experiences at their age, helps me connect immediately, you know, meeting them getting to know them first it is a heart to heart thing and if they know where I come from, then they know I understand where they come from. And that makes the first connection, and it makes it easier to teach them too. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Similarly, Jacqueline underscored the importance of reconceptualizing teacher-EL student relationships by sharing aspects of her personal life with students,

I find it’s necessary [to let students know you personally] Not like putting you in my personal life because my life is not your business, but my experiences that pertain to what you’re doing, they really are. And I tell my kids, you know. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Reconceptualizing this relationship transcended beyond traditional professional instructional duties. Rather all four participants underscored the importance of creating a space in which they could be real, authentic, and personal with EL students and families. Specifically, being personal meant to let students and families know, in a sincere way, who the teachers were at the personal level—including lived experiences, background, emotions, and religious beliefs—while getting acquainted with their
students. By being authentic or sharing their personal lived experiences, emotions, and religious beliefs, teachers were prone to being vulnerable. The participants explained that the relationship arising from being authentic and personal, allowed teachers to show empathy for students’ lived experiences and develop trust which preceded instruction. Thus, building relationships meant teachers needed to be authentic in their work with EL students and families. In the next section I demonstrate how the participants knew to reconceptualized the teacher-EL student relationship by being authentic.

**Being authentic**

As described in Chapter 4, Marisol experienced socioemotional difficulties growing up. She asserted that her work with ELs in Ivy County involved going beyond her professional duties; it also required being personal and authentic in the classroom. For Marisol, this meant learning from students’ lives as well as sharing with them aspects of her own personal life. Marisol explained that revealing her authenticity meant allowing herself to be somewhat vulnerable due to the emotional nature of some of the shared personal lived experiences. Marisol stated that this interaction allowed teacher and students to understand each other’s feelings and experiences. Thus, empathy nurtured this relationship. At the same time, Marisol asserted students learned to trust her and, consequently, were more receptive to her instruction. Marisol described this connection:

> [Students come] with a lot on their shoulders so to know where you are coming from as a teacher, “hey this teacher understands” so they connect with you faster which will help the learning experience flow much easier and they are going to want to learn.[...] once they know you personally, I am not telling you to tell them every secret you have, but once they know you personally then they are like, “ok, I am ready to learn with this one.” (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)
When I asked Marisol to share personal pictures depicting her life and/or her relationship with her students, she brought a photo of herself with Penny Girl (Figure 5-1), her rescued horse. When I looked at the picture I immediately sensed Marisol's connection to Penny. She underscored that building that relationship took her months of caring and showing her love for Penny. As I seemed confused about Marisol's intentionality behind the picture, she described how the process of emotionally connecting with Penny required a sincere and caring relationship by being personal, and authentic with Penny. She remarked,

![Penny Girl and Marisol](image.jpg)

Figure 5-1. Penny Girl and Marisol. An authentic relationship. Photo courtesy of Marisol.

When I moved to FL I was able to have my first horse. This horse follows me everywhere. This is a lesson for me, it is teaching me, I don’t do good with animals and this is a big animal, she was a very calm animal, she was able to teach me how to stop for a minute and slow down. [...] Her name is Penny and we call her Penny girl, she was a sick horse, she was abused, I got her from, what do you call it, a rescue, she was all bones, it took me months to aid to [...] her health, which taught me to take one step at a time which kind of works with the kids, get to know the horse first. I
was told that horses kick hard, I never had a horse so (laughter) I had to learn to read her in order to take care of her. [...] This was 2 years ago. It took that long for her to come up to me to eat out of my hand, she knows my voice but because [she was] physically abused [she was] afraid of people, which gets me nervous, because my husband told me you don’t let them know you are nervous, which is almost like with the kids, you cannot let the kids know that you are kind of nervous, that you are kind of scared, you got to be strong because they read you and they behave according to what they read. Same thing with the horse. They react to what they feel from you. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Elaborating on being authentic, Marisol underscored the importance for teachers to reconceptualize connections with EL students in a sincere, loving way. She stated that connecting emotionally with students facilitated teachers’ work with ELs because they learned to feel the teacher's empathy. She asserted,

I feel that in order to see a student succeed is not just all about his classes at the professional level but it is also to let the student feel that you are actually there for them at an emotional level, you know. They know who is real and who is not and it is the way you act with them. I've always said that the value that you have as a teacher is your word. And your word is covered by your actions and kids see that. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19).

Reconceptualizing relationships with EL students by being authentic also included ELs’ families and/or parents. Knowing the personal and educational background of their students and families, their lived realities, and their study habits at home allowed Marisol to differentiate and scaffold EL specialized instruction. Marisol described how a deep knowledge of students’ lives facilitated her instruction,

I believe a [what] teacher should do is find out the background of the student. Where they come from. I'm not saying to go into their personal details, but a generalization or an idea of where the student is coming from. The child, whether it's a different country, the language background, the way they were raised could be totally different than what you were raised. That's the very first thing a teacher should know, before they even try to teach the student anything. (Marisol, Interview #2, 6/24/19)

As described in Chapter 4, Marisol facilitated activities engaging students and families during EL family engagement nights when EL parents were provided computers
to learn English and students could be tutored and supported in homework. Marisol’s participation in the family engagement nights allowed her to build relationships with EL families. There, she learned about the lived realities of the families of her students while simultaneously, sharing aspects of her own life with them. Marisol learned quickly that building relationships with families allowed her to know a student beyond a student’s written record. She revealed during our interviews that building relationships with EL students and families was imperative. She advised,

To me, knowing the kid is talking to the kid and talking to the parents and they can write whatever they want and they say the application in the school application, whatever. But when I talk to them one on one, I learn more than what I read in the paper. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

Similarly, Jacqueline knew that to build relationships with EL students and families, she needed to be authentic by becoming part of students’ life. Jacqueline believed that to be an authentic teacher, she needed to know students’ lived realities and to share aspects of her own life with them. She knew that “being a part of the lives of your students, kind of helps them trust you. So that if they [trusted] you, you [could] help them more” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline stated that by revealing personal aspects of her life to students and their families meant to be authentic and to start building a sincere and caring relationship that would lead to trust. Jacqueline asserted that trust would develop as a result of showing her authenticity.

Relating authentically to EL families and caregivers was evident in Jacqueline’s life. According to Jacqueline, establishing close connections with families allowed Jacqueline to help advance her EL students’ education. By conversing with parents and learning about their lives, students’ study skills, and family members, Jacqueline could understand students’ circumstances influencing school performance. She explained,
Knowing these types of things about the family, can really help us help the whole family grow to be comfortable and useful and feel that way here [at school]. Because I've had people who I've talked to, and I could tell, they just didn't feel they were any use to their child educationally. And that's an awful feeling to have. So, I always try to tell them ways [to help them] […] And that helps them, the pride that they have, in knowing that I can help my child educationally really does affect the way that they look at it.

(Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19)

Jacqueline shared Figure 5-2 to demonstrate evidence that by being authentic a teacher can build relationships with EL parents while advancing EL education. By being authentic during one of her classroom lessons on pastimes, Jacqueline shared with her class her personal pastime of tennis. One of her ELs, showing her excitement, told her mom about it. The picture Jacqueline shared depicts her student’s Puerto Rican mother and Jacqueline during a tennis match. The EL mother and Jacqueline established a mutual relationship that allowed Jacqueline to know more about her EL student and allowed the EL mother to get to know Jacqueline and to trust her as her child’s teacher. Establishing relationships with EL families allowed Jacqueline to get closer to her students and to learn about their lives at home, and the parents’ educational background. Establishing these connections allowed Jacqueline to identify educational gaps and differentiate her instruction.

Similar to Marisol, being authentic for Jacqueline meant connecting with ELs by letting them know who she was because she knew that ELs opened up more easily and felt more comfortable and understood, if they knew each other in a more personal way. She explained how some teachers did not believe in showing their personal side, they only emphasized the professional dimension of their lives. She elaborated,
I've had students say to me, "That teacher's a phony," and "That teacher's a fake." And I was like, "Well I don't think that teacher's trying to be a phony or a fake. I think that teacher is trying to make sure he or she projects the right image as a teacher." Which can come across as phony or fake, but I don't do that. (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19)

In spite of his stated language limitation, Jack also described the importance of building relationships by being an authentic teacher with his EL students. Although he acknowledged the difficulty of developing a relationship with Hispanic ELs, he knew that “you’ve got make those connections because a lot of times that’s going to be how you make that difference” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19). Jack established relationships in creative ways using technology in pedagogy. Using dialogue journals and google translate allowed Jack to share aspects of his personal life with his students as well as to learn about their lives. Jack asserted that learning about his students’ lives also let
them know he cared for them. Moreover, getting to know each other in this way allowed Jack to use that information in his work with ELs.

Establishing relationships by being authentic was also a priority for Adela prior to beginning instruction. During the first days of the school year, Adela purposefully planned activities with the purpose of “breaking the ice.” During those activities she shared aspects of her personal life with her students as well as learned about ELs’ personal lives. Adela revealed her authenticity to students by sharing some of her emotional personal childhood experiences as discussed in Chapter 4. Showing her vulnerability meant to Adela to share those experiences with her students. Reliving and revealing the pain she endured as a child allowed students to open up about their personal lives which also facilitated Adela’s understanding of certain student behaviors, such as absenteeism, lethargy, among others. She described,

 esos primeros dos o tres días, tenemos juegos y actividades, se rompe el fuego, porque ellos llegan con miedo, y yo rompo el hielo. Cuando ellos saben que uno es vulnerable, que uno se ha expuesto [a ciertas experiencias][…] Yo no voy a dar tanto detalle, pero ellos saben, ¿entiendes? ellos saben-- si vienen a mi salón intoxicados, ellos saben que yo voy a saber, ¿me entiendes? ellos saben, y son sinceros contigo también, yo los miro y saben. (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Those first two or three days, we play games to break the ice because they are scared, and I break the ice. When they know we [teachers] are vulnerable, that [we have been] been exposed [to certain experiences]. I am not going to give so much detail, but they know, you understand? They know…If they come drunk to class, they know I am going to know…You get it? They know and they are honest with me too; I look at them and they know. (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Similar to the other participants, Adela understood that connecting authentically with her students entailed revealing some emotional vulnerability. Adela accomplished this by making “un inventario de necesidades del estudiante” (an inventory of students’ socioemotional needs) to get to know the student and understand certain behaviors
elicited by their personal lives. Being authentic for Adela meant treating her ELs empathy and allowing them to see who the teacher is authentically, i.e., the teacher as a person or her humanity. She described with great emotion,

Pero yo digo que esto [la conexión] tiene que formarse desde el día primero. Ellos tienen que ver el humano en el maestro, para poder [conectar]-[…] No que te hagas vulnerable a que ellos sepan mucho. […] Pero también tú tienes que entender, ellos no tienen coraje contigo, ellos no tienen-- ellos no te odian a ti, ellos no están-- ellos no-- la malacrianza no fue contigo. ¿Tendrá hambre, tendrá sueño, tendrá sed, tendrá--? Las niñas, ¿tendrán dolor?, ¿tendrán lo que necesitan? (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

But I say that this connection needs to be established from day one. They need to see the humanity of the teacher, to be able to connect. You don’t have to be totally vulnerable. But you [teachers] also need to understand that they are not mad at you, they don’t hate you, the bad manners were not directed at you. Will [the student] be hungry, sleepy, thirsty…? The [female students] were they going through [menstrual] pains? Do they have what they need? (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Thus, Adela’s authenticity meant being somewhat vulnerable by revealing aspects of her humanity—who she was with her virtues and her flaws—and inviting students into her life was the means to getting closer to students’ hearts and to build a relationship. Adela was aware that once the teacher-EL student relationship was established, the students were more receptive to instruction. She also suggested that interviewing the family needed to be part of this process. As she described,

Entrevistar al niño, conocerlo, conocer la familia. Yo entiendo que eso es fundamental. Cómo yo como maestra puedo ayudar a su hijo, a su niño a alcanzar-- aunque me tenga que sentar ese primer meeting con un translator. Pero por lo menos saber cuáles son los challenges de esa familia, porque ahí tú estás haciendo una conexión que va beyond. […] Yo pienso que esa conexión es bien importante, la conexión con el niño. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

To interview the child, get to know him/her, get to know the family. I understand that that is fundamental. How as a teacher can I help your child to reach---even if I have to sit down with a translator during that first meeting. But at least I will know which challenges this family faces,
because you are making a connection that goes beyond...[the superficial]. […] I think that connection Is very important, the connection with the child. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

Guided by Religion and Faith

Religion also emerged from the data as a theme informing the process of building strong relationship with students. As noted, religious beliefs were a component of the person of the teacher, and revealing personal religious beliefs could be considered a way of being authentic with EL students and families, overlapping with the first finding in this study. However, I chose to foreground religion because it emerged as an important source of guidance in the participants' work with ELs. Religion, as well as authenticity, played a role in reconceptualizing teachers' relationships with EL students and families. As described in Chapter 4, Jacqueline, Marisol, and Adela had a religious upbringing and belonged to religious congregations. Their faith guided their work with ELs and their families.

As a child, religion informed Jacqueline’s personal life. She remarked, "It's just part of who I am and who I grew up to be" (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline’s experiences with religion and having a religious family belonging to a church community instilled in her a sense of family which became a strong influence in her EL instruction. As a teacher, Jacqueline stated that she was in the presence of God at all times and was guided by her convictions. She acknowledged that her religion, which she sometimes referred to as spirituality, “informed everything [she] [did]” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline told me how she built relationships with EL students and their families using religion as a resource for instruction. She shared the story of a family whose children were struggling with reading due to poor
attendance. One of these children had to work nights in order to support his family which would frequently cause him to miss class. Jacqueline remembered,

> Because I was trying to build their literacy skills as well [and] because they were poor, and you know, the boys had to work so they missed a lot of school. And to me it was perfectly reasonable to say, 'This is something you believe in. Use [the Bible] to help you with your reading.' (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19).

Knowing that her student and his family believed in God, Jacqueline was able to be creative in her instruction. She stated that she established a deep connection with her student and their mother through religion. Recognizing that the student’s mother practiced the Christian faith, she suggested that the mother used the Bible, a book the family already had accessible, as a resource to facilitate her student’s education. She also knew that involving the mom in her EL’s education and using the Bible as a resource for learning was appropriate for this family. Jacqueline did not learn to do this in an ESOL course or a particular instructional method; rather, she stated that her own faith guided her creativity to establish a connection with the family and to identify a solution.

Religion was also a strong influence in Adela’s personal and professional life. She recognized that the manner in which she built relationships with her students was guided by her faith in God. Her Christian faith and her belief “en Dios todo poderoso y en su divina providencia” “in God all almighty and in his divine providence” served as a source of guidance in her life (Adela, data generated from email, 8/15/19). Adela added that she prayed for her students often. As a teacher, her faith motivated her to connect with her students. She acknowledged that each student that went through her classroom door brought “a world” of personal history, difficulties, experiences that could directly affect students’ behaviors in the classroom. Adela believed that her faith allowed
her to pray for her students to overcome their personal struggles and to establish a relationship with them. She explained,

Una de las oportunidades, puedo decir, que tengo en este condado, es que es un condado que cree en Dios. Que no se nos ha cerrado la puerta y tenemos expresión en cuanto a lo que la fe se refiere. En mi salón--todos los salones tienen taladrado en In God We Trust, eso está taladrado. [...] [Mis estudiantes] preguntan: ‘¿puedes orar por mí?’ Y yo les digo: ‘bueno, cuando voy por la noche, te presento en oración.’ (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

One of the opportunities, I can say, that I have in this county, is that it is a county that believes in God. That the door is open for us and we have freedom of expression to profess our faith. In my classroom, in all classrooms, [the sign] In God We Trust is [permanently] drilled [to the wall]. My students ask me: ‘can you pray for me?’ and I respond, ‘Well, at night, I pray for you.’ (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Using Biblical parables as metaphors of life is another way that Adela’s religion emerged from her interviews and guided her as she established connections with students. Using Revelations 3:8 as an example, Adela described, “hay como una historia bíblica que dice que tú bendices las puertas de tu casa, que todo el que entre reciba bendiciones. Es algo que yo acostumbro hacer mucho” “There is a bible story that says that you bless the doors of your house and as people enter they receive blessings. It is something I do a lot” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). Every day in her classroom, Adela offered her blessing by touching each student’s backpack as they went through her door. She explained that if for any reason she would forget to offer blessings, the students would request it. Adela was certain that students could feel her love and caring pedagogy. She knew that her religious practice in the classroom was a source of comfort for students and allowed them to focus on their education.

When Adela prayed to God, she usually asked for “sabiduría y el discernimiento para entender el humano en mi niño” “wisdom and discernment to understand the
human being in [my children].” The children she referred to in that quote were her students because she treated them as such. From the first day of school, Adela would inform them that they would be treated as her own family and that she expected the same from them (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19).

Marisol’s religion had been a constant source of inspiration and guidance in her life and in her work with ELs as well. As described in Chapter 4, practicing the Pentecostal religion—a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and the direct experience of the presence of God by the believer—and attending church growing up in New York, provided Marisol with a safe haven, family atmosphere, and loving support that she lacked at home as a child. Her faith allowed Marisol to develop a sense of family and community. Marisol asserted that God had guided her to design a classroom environment that recreated the same family atmosphere and loving environment she learned at her Pentecostal church. Marisol knew to decorate her back wall with items and motifs that identified her. Figure 5-3 depicts how Marisol allowed students to know about her faith without specifically discussing religion or her religious orientation. Her picture revealed Christian symbols such as the Christian cross, the Christmas tree, inspirational words such as “believe” and “hope and musical notes.” As a shrine in her classroom, Marisol’s back wall seemed designed as a holy, peaceful place. She remarked,
I put things that represent me. Sometimes I won't use words. I'll have a cross, I'll have butterflies, I'll have quotes of believe, dreaming, anything positive. The kids would walk into my room and they would have an idea of me without me even telling them about me at first. I've always experienced, I'm not saying that it's the right way, but I've always experienced that when the students walk into the classroom, and they looked around first, they had an idea of what type of teacher was in the room. At that moment, I started winning their trust, their respect without saying a word. Then from there on, we continued to grow together. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Working in Ivy county where, Marisol asserted, Christianity predominated, she explained that students looking at the wall behind her desk would immediately recognize the kind of teacher she was: a faithful Christian (In Florida, the 2014 Pew Research Center reported that 70 percent of adults were Christian). She believed that her “shrine” was a source of comfort for them as they identified with the symbols
displayed. She also added that most Hispanic students were also Christian and she could build an immediate connection with them through her faith.

Marisol’s faith and her church community taught her to turn the difficult and negative events of abuse in her personal life into positive thinking and actions towards others. Based on these experiences with faith and guided by the Holy Spirit, Marisol was able to establish a personal and emotional connection with students, showing empathy towards ELs undergoing similar experiences. She explained,

I don’t want kids to feel the pain I felt. It teaches me how to deal with the kids, it teaches me to look for certain signs, I can spot certain signs that other teachers may not spot. That is a big influence because if anything my negativity taught me that to be positive for these kids now. I don’t have to say they have you been abused, I was abused too, no, but if there was abuse I can work around that because I know how they feel. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Marisol connected with students emotionally when she sensed they were going through difficult problems at home. She recognized that taking care of the students’ emotional and physical needs came first, prior to instruction, as the lived realities of some of her students could prevent them from doing their academic work. Marisol’s faith allowed her to develop a personal and emotional relationship her students and showed them she authentically cared and empathized with them. As Marisol remarked,

I feel that in order to see a student succeed is not just all about his classes at the professional level but it is also to let the student feel that you are actually there for them at an emotional level, you know. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Although, at first, Jack stated that he was not aware if religion played an important role in his life, he described growing up in the Christian faith. Reflecting on this though, he explained, “as a Christian with a Christian background and upbringing [he knew to treat] everyone the correct way […] in the sense of helping those in need, I
don’t want to talk about ELs as a deficit or that they are in need: the White savior complex.” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19). He stated that his desire to develop a relationship with ELs could be explained by his religious upbringing in some way. He recognized that he had the motivation to treat ELs “the correct way” and that could be driven by his faith.

Jack’s Christian belief that everyone should be treated equally meant, as he stated, to know each of his students personally by learning about their personal lives and struggles and to “hopefully help them not only see that you care enough to try to make things different for them” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19). Knowing students personally, not “as an objective” was important because their lived realities were different for each student and family. He asserted, “you can't judge a kid […] or even a student's performance as an objective. Each student […] doesn't have an objective story” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). He stated that building relationships with ELs allowed him to recognize inequities experienced by ELs at his school at the hands of other teachers. He remarked, “one of the things that I feel it is my job is for inclusion of those students.” He added that whether it was saying “hey in the morning the same way I say hey to anybody else and not looking over them” as he had observed other teachers do (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).

**Bilingualism and Hispanidad as Resources in the Teaching of ELs**

All four participants acknowledged that a teacher’s cultural and linguistic background mattered in their work with ELs and EL families. Although bilingualism and hispanidad are part of the personal cultural and linguistic background of a teacher and could have been considered as a subheading under the first finding in this study; I chose to foreground bilingualism and hispanidad as a separate section to highlight its
significance in the participants’ work with ELs and families and as, what they stated, was a source of knowledge for their work with rural EL students. Since being bilingual is part of some teachers’ ontology or identity, using bilingualism as a resource in instruction and communication with ELs and families was a way for participants to demonstrate their authenticity as teachers. In addition, being bilingual facilitated communication with ELs and families, and being able to communicate in students’ home language aided in building connections with families.

Adela recognized that her bilingualism was a resource for communication with EL students and families and facilitated building a connection. She remarked, “a mí se me hace más fácil porque yo puedo hablarle al niño en español” “It is easier for me because I can speak Spanish to the child” (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19). Recognizing the importance of establishing connections with Hispanic families to advance their children’s education, Adela expressed concern about the existing shortage of bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals in Ivy County schools. This theme is discussed in the second part of this chapter when I address the second research question.

In a similar way, Marisol believed being bilingual and Hispanic were essential resources facilitating her connection with ELs and families. Growing up bilingual, bilingualism was the norm for her and a source of confidence as a teacher. Laughing, she explained,

It’s a normal flow for me coming from the city up north, it’s a normal thing for me. I sometimes find myself talking to myself in both languages. I do. I say that’s the Gemini in me. My one Gemini’s English and the other Gemini is Spanish, talk to each other. But it’s just a nature to me. I was always able to be successful in the classrooms because of that. (Marisol, Interview #2, 6/24/19)
Marisol’s personal background combined with her hispanidad and bilingualism provided the confidence to instruct the EL students and communicate with EL families. She remarked,

I think the biggest part of being confident is because I know the language. I'm able to communicate. In order to be able to teach these kids you have to learn to communicate first. Through the communication you're going to gain their trust, you're going to gain a friendship where they're going to let you teach them. There's a lot of kids that won't let you teach them because they don't feel comfortable. So, confident I am and it's mostly because of my background. I think that's a very big plus. But either way, my background, you're always learning something new. (Marisol, Interview #2, 6/24/19)

Marisol knew that being bilingual facilitated her communication with EL families and her participation in parent-related activities such as: Families’ Monday Nights, in which EL families learned English by working on a computer-based language learning program called Rosetta Stone—which was regularly used at school in the ESOL program. On Monday nights, while families learned English in the computer lab and socialized amongst themselves, EL students received tutoring help. Marisol’s interactions with her students’ families allowed her to know her students at a deeper level by learning about their lives outside school. At the same time Marisol was the language broker informing families about school-related activities. Parents were able to better understand their children’s experiences at school as they “didn't have to depend on their child to come home and tell them everything that happened in the school, because a lot of the time, that does not happen, and a lot of the parents feel like they're out of whack” as if they were not at the same level with their children (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19). Marisol knew that EL families could rely on her. She remarked, “I feel like I have every right to speak and say what they want to say. I'm their voice. that's a definite” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19).
Jacqueline agreed with Marisol’s contention that being bilingual was “very big plus” in her work with ELs and families. As shown in the previous section, being bilingual allowed Jacqueline to establish close connections with parents that resulted in advancing her EL students’ education by conversing with parents and learning about their lives, pastimes, and their study skills. Jacqueline also revealed that the first step prior to implementing EL instruction is “knowing about the kid as much as you can really [help]” a teacher to facilitate their education (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). She emphasized the idea that “you don’t know what you need to know about [ELs] until you actually communicate with them and learn about them.” (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19). Jacqueline knew that information about a specific student could help a newcomer EL feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar environment. In her own words,

Sometimes I can take what I know about another student, and use it to help both that student and the English language learner. If they have things in common; if they have things that they like. Like I’ve had kids that were into soccer. […] And the English language learner is learning English, but he’s also in an environment that he’s comfortable [familiar with soccer] with. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Being bilingual allowed Jacqueline to see and understand “the whole picture” about an EL and to transcend language barriers. Because of her bilingualism and ESOL knowledge, she was able to serve as a mentor to other teachers, especially monolingual teachers, to help them meet the academic needs of their ELs. In her experience as a former ESOL coordinator, Jacqueline explained that monolingual teachers frequently identified ELs’ language barrier as the main cause for their poor academic performance. Instead, Jacqueline believed that a bilingual teacher who could communicate and converse with students and parents one-on-one in their home language, could expedite the process of identifying the student’s emergent needs by getting “the whole picture.”
She highlighted that a teacher must get to know the child as soon as possible. She explained,

A lot of the English learners that we get, especially in rural settings, are not only English learners, they haven’t learned to read. Or they haven’t learned-- they’re not up to their age limit literacy-wise. And that’s something that I saw too when I was a kid. I would help my friends and I would go, “You can’t read this?” And it was a shock then, as a kid; you figure everybody can do what you can do. But now I look for that, I look to make sure that what I’m seeing is the whole picture. And that way I can help my English language learners and also help the other teachers get it. Get that it’s not just a language barrier, it’s also something else. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Jacqueline’s bilingualism was a resource for the administration and they frequently utilized her for language brokering with EL students, families, and teacher-parent conferences. Jacqueline made sure the administration understood that if she made communication easier for ELs and families, it would subsequently facilitate relationships among all stakeholders at the school.

Recognizing that EL parents were traditionally ‘voiceless’ by having little input into the school functioning and their children’s education in Ivy County due to their language barrier, Jacqueline asserted that bilingual teachers could help EL families to have a stronger voice in their school. Addressing her colleagues’ language barriers, Jacqueline underscored the importance of hiring more bilingual teachers. She argued,

Understanding a parent, family dynamic even is important. It can be difficult, because one […] thing is the language barrier for many teachers. And it’s not that they’re not willing, but the language barrier works both ways. And a lot of parents simply withdraw from dealing with this school and the system unless something happens, unless something goes wrong. And that’s not because they don’t care about their child. Usually I have met a couple of them, but most of them, it was because they feel they can’t, they have no power. They have no power in that place, so they have no standing in that place. (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/27/19)
Although this is a study about the knowledges revealed by secondary teachers of ELs in a rural community, it is also important to underscore what participants said they did not know and what they deemed essential knowledges to possess. One example is Jack who struggled to overcome the language barrier with his ELs and families. Jack, the White monolingual southern participant in the study admitted,

I kind of kicked myself for, is not realizing how important it would have been for me to learn Spanish better, whenever I was in college [...] I really wish someone in the education program would have stressed the importance of being [...]. You don't have to necessarily be bilingual, but being able to communicate with students, that's one of the hardest parts. [...] The students may be able to do this task, but it's going to take me an extra five to ten minutes to explain to them verbally, what exactly I would like for them to. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

He also shared that having “some basis of common L1 knowledge, if possible” should be an essential component of the knowledge-base for EL teaching, particularly in rural schools where there are few linguistic resources. By listening to his Hispanic students converse with each other in Spanish in and outside of school, Jack made efforts to understand their conversations, albeit admittedly unsuccessfullly. Through his struggles with language in Ivy County, he learned to “convince kids, now as a teacher, of the importance to learn a different language. [...] I wish I would have taken all 4 [levels of Spanish], gone as far as I could with it, noticing that it would have been beneficial now.” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).

**Hispanidad.** Adela expressed that being Hispanic and bilingual (not all Hispanic people are bilingual) was an important resource in her teaching. She asserted that her strong connection with EL students and families originated from her puertorriqueñidad and her respect for all Hispanic cultures. When Adela spoke of her puertorriqueñidad,
she referred to the different ethnicities and races that comprise the complex Puerto Rican ethnic and racial reality: the Taíno, Spanish, and African. She described,

Es conectar con el humano, con la persona. A veces se hace difícil porque a veces llego a mi casa y [me pregunto] ‘Dios mío, ¿qué puedo hacer? ¿Cómo puedo ayudar a éste?’ y es terrible, pero yo creo que es parte de mi cultura puertorriqueña. Porque hay otras culturas hispanas que no son iguales, no sé, a lo mejor la mezcla de ser diferentes razas en una persona ha despertado eso en uno, que somos uno de muchos. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19)

It is connecting with the human being, with the person. Sometimes, it is difficult because I come home and [I ask myself], ‘Oh my God, what can I do? How can I help this [student]? And it is terrible, but I believe that it is part of my Puerto Rican culture. Because there are other Hispanic cultures that are not the same, I don’t know, maybe the mixture of different races in one person has awakened that in oneself, that we are one of many. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19)

When I asked Adela to share a picture depicting her background, Adela showed me a picture of her favorite beach in our mutually-beloved island of Puerto Rico (See Figure 5-4). The picture showed a lighthouse in the distance, but what was evident was the beautiful blue skies reflected on the water. Looking at the image, I could smell the salt water and hear the soothing sounds of the ocean. Adela explained that she chose this picture because it symbolized for her: the openness, the heart of our Boricua culture, and the essence of her hispanidad. Listening to Adela as I simultaneously looked at the photo, I could sense Adela’s feelings of pride and peace emanating from her oral description of the picture. Adela knew that her puertorriqueñidad guided her to create a classroom space in which students could sense the same happiness and welcoming feeling she experienced being close to the ocean in the island. She explained that the beach in Puerto Rico was her happy place. She smiled and remarked, “la playa es mi lugar feliz, la sal, la arena. No sé, la gente lo identifica con limpieza, pureza, libertad […] . Viene y va, siempre regresa” “the beach is my happy
Figure 5-4. Puerto Rico, the island, the sea and peace: an open door for ELs. Photo courtesy of Adela.

place, the salt, the sand. I don’t know, people identify it with cleanliness, purity, freedom [...] It comes and goes, it always comes back” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19).

A shared, common puertorriqueñidad forged a strong bond between us, and I understood how Adela could build that same connection with her students through her deep knowledge of place. She stated, “Como tú eres boricua [tú me entiendes], cuando tú vas a la playa y te sientas ahí, es como que-- como una limpieza, como que tú le das al mar tu dolor y ella está ahí y te escucha, no sé. Y es mi lugar feliz, es mi lugar feliz, no sé” “Since you are boricua [you understand me], when you go to the beach and sit down there, it is as if—as a cleanse, as giving the sea your pain and she is there,
listening to you, I don’t know. And it is my happy place, I don’t know (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). She added that recreating that same emotion emanating from the picture on Figure 5-4 in her classroom was one of her main goals.

Adela recalled two specific EL female students from Puerto Rico that were “glued to her like leeches,” she described, “Son mis niñas boricuas y se pegaron como lapa, porque ellas me conocen, ellas saben […] I was their advocate, […] ellos se conectan y ya la cultura estaba ahí” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19). “They are my boricua girls and they were glued to me like leeches, because they know me, they know […] I was their advocate […] they connected with me and the culture was there” (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19).

EL Specialized Professional TK in Secondary Teaching

Drawing from the participants’ data, three main components to the EL specialized instructional knowledge base for secondary teachers emerged from the data. These included: 1) teachers’ knowledge about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) processes; 2) teachers’ knowledge about the use of L1 as a resource; and 3) teachers’ knowledge about ELs in US secondary schools.

SLA Processes

The four focal participants in this study demonstrated knowledge about SLA and language learning processes. For instance, Jack considered SLA to be an essential knowledge for teaching ELs because he understood the importance of knowing differences between first and second language acquisition. He explained,

Learning the different stages of language acquisition, knowing that a kid may be quiet, may be in a quiet place, but they're not just completely going against you as a teacher. They're not sitting there, and they have no idea, they're just trying to figure it all out in their head. […] Just knowing some of the differences in language and communication styles because,
knowing where there may be an easy miscommunication between certain languages, or knowing where there may be words that sound the same but mean completely different things, making sure that you know where those things can happen. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Likewise, Jacqueline also considered knowledge about language an essential knowledge base for an EL teacher—monolingual and bilingual—because it helped a teacher determine and resolve certain students’ learning gaps. Based on her experience, Jacqueline knew to explicitly point out to EL students’ certain linguistic similarities between languages.

In a similar way, Adela also recognized that once a teacher learned about ELs at a personal level, knowing about SLA was imperative. Knowledge about language, levels of proficiency, and developmental phases allowed a teacher to understand that a quiet EL might be experiencing a silent phase as opposed to being emotionally detached. She expressed,

Yo pienso que es importante que todo profesional sepa cómo el lenguaje funciona, cómo se adquiere por la repetición, por escuchar, por interactuar, hacer esa conexión visual. Yo pienso que el profesional, como maestro, debe saber eso, porque independientemente del lenguaje que se hable, ahí está el proceso de las fases, especialmente cuando, hablando de los niños bilingües. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

I think it is important that all professionals know how language functions, how it is acquired through repetition, listening, interacting and through making visual connections. I think that the professional [teacher] should know this, because no matter the spoken language, the developmental phases are there, especially when we refer to bilingual children. (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

Discussing some of the most pressing academic needs of newcomer ELs, Adela remarked, “El vocabulario académico [de un EL] no es tan amplio como el niño que se ha criado aquí” “EL’s academic vocabulary is not as broad as the vocabulary of a child raised here [in the US].” Adela knew that teachers need to build on that vocabulary and
use cognates in their home language to expand their English language because she knew that “conocer un idioma te puede hacer enriquecer el otro.” “Knowing a language can enrich the other” (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19).

Awareness of ELs’ non-verbal cues. All participants demonstrated the importance to be aware of EL non-verbal behaviors, especially if the teacher was monolingual. Sometimes, being withdrawn meant the student was going through physical (hunger, abuse, deportation fear) or emotional traumas at home. Thus, getting to know students involved the difficult task of identifying certain behaviors exhibited by ELs in the classroom. Jacqueline described a specific experience with an EL student who lost her mother and no one at the school knew about it because her father did not speak English well enough to be able to communicate it to the administration. The student was withdrawn, sad, and inattentive. The child was still grieving for the loss of her mother and was affecting her behavior at school. Jacqueline found out by chance in casual conversation with her. Jacqueline usually observed students’ behavior as, according to her, they could reflect other issues happening outside the school environment. Jacqueline knew that understanding the traumatic experienced of losing a mother, moving to the US, going to secondary school, and not knowing the language was overwhelming for a teenager, she remarked, “I don't know, I might go into a cocoon myself” (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19).

Marisol also knew to observe students’ behavior and body language. She understood that the lived realities of some of her students can prevent them from doing their work and can affect them academically. Recognizing these silent behaviors,
Marisol knew to ask them to walk away from work and to take a deep breath. She explained,

Sometimes you run into situations with students that they know how to do the work but there is so much at home that they bring their problems to school. Sometimes you have to stop with the lesson, pull them aside, and take them out to the yard, walk them to the cafeteria, just one on one and just you are not thinking about class, you are not thinking about grades, or you are not thinking about your work, you are not thinking about homework. It is just you and me. Sometimes we don’t have to say anything, just walk. Sometimes walking is enough to release the stress, to release the tension, to release an anger. (Marisol, Interview #1, 6/17/19)

Jack also recognized that it was imperative for monolingual teachers to be attentive to the body language of their ELs. He explained,

But I think working with ELs, especially if there is that linguistic gap, verbally being able to read that body language and being able to use it to your advantage as much as possible, uh, can be the difference between connecting with a kid and helping that kid still feel involved, uh, with the classroom and that you’re paying attention to them. (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19)

Jack was careful to pay attention to non-verbal cues, such as the student’s posture. He knew that “as an educator, there is a meaning behind everything someone does” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19).

**The Use of L1 as a Resource in Instruction**

All participants recognized the use of L1 as a resource for teaching. For Marisol and Adela, the use of L1 in instruction came naturally to them as well as for bilingual Jacqueline. Due to her bilingualism and her early bilingual school experiences in NY, Marisol explained how she embraced instructional strategies to reach both EL and English-speaking students, “communicating with them as one” in front of the classroom (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19). As demonstrated in Figure 5-5, the use of the bilingual word wall in Marisol’s classroom helped both ELs and English-speaking students
learned bilingual vocabulary together. Marisol stated that with her students, they “worked with the wall, word walls, birthday walls, and [she] tried to not overfill the walls, but like the everyday words that we used, [she] tried to put them [bilingually]” (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19). This practice motivated ELs to learn English, but also English-speaking students to learn Spanish. At the beginning of the year, “they would point out words of what they wanted to say to each other” and English-speaking students would try to pronounce the Spanish words, which was a source of laughter, breaking the ice. Even Marisol’s monolingual colleagues, when they visited her classroom, were encouraged to practice some Spanish by using the word walls (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19).

Adela had a three-part strategic plan for addressing EL’s academic needs. First, teachers must work at improving EL’s academic vocabulary as the first step to addressing EL’s academic needs. Second, she encouraged parents to read to their children in their L1 at home because she knew that simultaneously developing L1 with
L2 further enhanced L2 proficiency levels. Although allowing English-speaking students to use English as a resource in the Spanish classroom was not an accepted supported foreign language teaching practice in the past, Adela allowed ELs to use L2 and L1 resources to advance academically. Third, Adela underscored that EL teachers could not assume that newcomer ELs possessed study habits and parental support. She asserted,

El niño para ser exitoso necesita tiempo de calidad para estudiar en la casa, para revisar las notas, para hacer preguntas al texto, para poder comunicarse con lo que escribió en el salón, para hacer su flash cards para practicar vocabulario, irse en línea. También ese tiempo tiene que sacarse. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19)

The child, to be successful, needs quality time to study at home to review notes, to ask questions to the text, to be able to communicate with what he/she wrote in the classroom, to prepare his/her flashcards to practice vocabulary, go online. That time needs to be allocated. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19)

Adela stated that to meet these three academic needs, it was essential to differentiate instruction, “individualizando con el niño” by using instructional strategies such as: sentence frames, flashcards, and journaling (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19).

In her Spanish classroom, Jacqueline stated that she used a variety of bilingual strategies such as: word walls with cognates and graphic organizers. For Jacqueline, using collaborative groups was a fun way to engage and motivate all students in her classroom. As Jacqueline said, “And it's not aside from learning. It's learning with fun” (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19). Her participatory style teaching consisted in evaluating the students while they combined the use of reciprocal teaching and role-playing dialogues.

As abovementioned, Jacqueline recognized the use of L1 as a valuable strategy to communicate with EL families and make them feel included in their children’s
education. Engaging parents using L1 was part of the knowledge base of Jacqueline and Marisol. For this reason, they developed a project to keep EL families and students informed of their children’s school events by adding important dates to the marquee in front of the school. (See Figure 5-6).

![Marquee Project by Jacqueline and Marisol](image)

Figure 5-6. Marquee Project by Jacqueline and Marisol. Keeping EL parents informed. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline and Marisol.

Providing language support and bilingual strategies for ELs to enable them to comprehend difficult texts was imperative for Jack. He understood that scaffolding instruction for ELs meant “providing them with vocabulary ahead of time and then seeing if that [helped] their comprehension” and “having them do the synonyms first in their L1” (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19). Jack recognized that using EL students’ L1 facilitated their comprehension prior to reading. He found that using cognates was helpful and a knowledge base worth having for differentiation and giving feedback to students. Using L1 in instruction was challenging for monolingual Jack; however, he
understood that to differentiate and scaffold EL instruction using L1, working with paraprofessional was vital. He remarked,

And a lot of times, in this year we encountered it with students who may come in with a lower L1 proficiency. And so, with those students, we found a Spanish text of the text, of the text we were reading in English in my class. And so, I thought, ‘Okay, well we can work with the L1 knowledge to work on concepts.’ But even the Spanish version of the text, which sadly I’m not well-versed enough in Spanish to be able to know exactly how hard [it is for them]. [...] So that’s a new thing that we’ve got to sit down with the paraprofessional and think about how we can try to even simplify maybe texts we use in L1. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

As abovementioned, Jack pointed out that sometimes paraprofessionals were not available in which case, the use of L1 in technology such as, Google translate, was particularly useful for Jack to communicate with his students.

**ELs in US Secondary Schools**

Drawing from interview data, the participants revealed knowledge of how secondary school settings shaped their work with EL. Two main knowledges were identified: 1) teachers’ knowledge about their content-area and 2) teachers’ knowledge of the role of ELs prior educational and cultural experiences, including teachers’ knowledge about how ELs navigate school cultures and to have high expectations for ELs.

**Content-area knowledge**

Although all participants agreed that, first and foremost, teachers must possess a deep knowledge of their content-area, knowing the subject seemed insufficient. Adela asserted, “a teacher can’t be an effective teacher if she is not aware of the socio-emotional and cultural aspect of her students” (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19). Thus, once secondary teachers established relationships with EL students and families,
Marisol revealed knowing the subject-matter and tailoring instruction to meet the needs of the students were essential components of EL instruction. She remarked,

Don't come in knowing everything, acting like you know everything. You know your subject, you know what you want to teach, but you're teaching something, you've got to know your students so you can bring it down to their level so they can understand. It's a work in process. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Bringing instruction “down to their level” meant to Marisol, as she stated, that students needed to receive comprehensible input in order to be able to understand the curriculum. Data from Jacqueline aligned that of Marisol, in that teachers needed to master their subject while being open to “teaching that student in the manner which he or she needs” and leave preconceptions about ELs at the door. (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 6/18/19). Jacqueline asserted this by stating, “Don't expect their culture to be my culture. I know their language isn't my language. But it's not a one-to-one correlation. Don't expect their comprehension of concept to be my comprehension of concepts” (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 7/2/19).

**Knowing how to appropriate theory to instructional practice: “a juggling act.”** Jack recognized that the process of appropriating theory to instruction was one the main challenges as a young mainstream English Language Arts (ELA) teacher with a low number of ELs in his classroom. For instance, he referred to differentiating instruction as a “juggling act.” He described,

And so, I feel like that juggling act of trying to do curriculum and trying to do the basics that are necessary for communication, for navigation, for all those things, that part isn't really touched much in the development. So that's something where you have to learn on the fly. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Jack recognized that appropriating theory into instructional strategies was “one of the hardest things to do and it’s one of the biggest things that [professional development
instructors] try to teach us” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19). Jack believed that it was easier said than done and,

differentiation has a whole new kind of application and definition whenever it comes to different and differentiating different levels of WIDA scores, different levels of FSA scores, and then differentiating between FSA and WIDA scores and putting it all together into one. That's when it really gets tricky. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

Using instructional strategies learned in his teacher preparation and PD courses, Jack demonstrated knowledge of the usefulness of collaborative groups in instruction. However, he expressed concerns about how the ELs felt working in those groups. He constantly wondered if they even felt more isolated, Jack remarked:

Because I've often wondered, do you feel more isolated being in a big group and working on something differently on the side, while everyone else is working on something? Or would you feel even more isolated if I put you in a small group knowing you've got limited connections and limited ability to really connect with everyone. Is that going to make it worse because now you're in a group of four and you're the odd man out? versus being in a group of 20 and there are four of you working together. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Despite Jack's dilemmas about the know-how of implementing EL instructional strategies and differentiation, at the time of the study he was hopeful that eventually he could feel more comfortable and “branch out and really figure out what works” (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19).

Even with her years of experience, Jacqueline agreed with Jack’s assertion that implementing theory into practice was “tricky” for teachers in Ivy County. She asserted that the difficulty ranged from teachers’ linguistic barriers to not knowing the EL well to understand his/her specific learning needs. Jacqueline emphasized that “the more you know, the more you can inform your work with the kids” (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/25/19).
Jacqueline made efforts to stay professionally informed about the newest EL principles and ideas. However, she said,

I may not always agree with them. [...] sometimes the theories are obviously theoretical. They don't take into consideration different personalities, different ages, different cultural backgrounds. [...] But I do have used information that I've felt to not make it so much easier. But to make it more comprehensible [to them]. (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Even when she incorporated some of these strategies, Marisol added her own personal-family style to implement them. Marisol also underscored that all the theory she had learned, she appropriated and had blended with her instruction. Referring to the value of theory, Marisol asserted: I've learned [from] them, but at the same time I've kind of mixed it with my personal, and my way of always communicating with the kids (Marisol, Interview #2, 6/24/19).

Although she deemed some theories and strategies useful, bilingual Marisol believed that most of them were meant for monolingual teachers. In other words, for a bilingual EL teacher, Marisol explained, “the books don’t come first.” Once she got acquainted with her students, she “pushed books aside” and “hacked the books,” meaning that she adapted the materials to meet the student’s specific needs.

Explaining in detail, Marisol remarked,

I'm the type of person that I'll learn by the book, but then I try to hack it, redirect certain formats that the books teach. Because I am a firm believer that the books do teach you how to be able to work with the students. But to know the students facilitates that or it makes it easier, you know (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

The role of ELs prior educational and cultural experiences

As noted, religion informed Adela’s work with ELs in Ivy County. She shared with me a Biblical metaphor based on Jeremiah 18:1-12— in which God is compared to a
potter molding clay—to describe the experience of a newcomer EL coming from elementary to secondary school. Drawing from the biblical passage, Adela explained that in the US elementary setting, the teacher was like the potter in the Bible, “molding” their young, malleable students. Coming to a secondary setting, English-speaking adolescents were already set in their ways with “imperfections” that needed to be “polished” and perfected by the secondary teacher for the student to meet secondary school expectations. Adela underscored that, for a newcomer EL, the experience was more challenging as they had to learn to navigate a new societal structure and school cultures while learning a new language. Marisol concurred that secondary school age ELs faced an added challenge,

the student is coming in already molded. He’s already learned what he should have learned. Now you got to teach him a different route, a different way of what he already knows, but in a different language. And it’s hard for a teacher to be able to have that student catch up or learn while she’s maintaining, let’s say a group of 30. Yeah. You know, I have 30, 30 kids in my class. That’s not easy. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

In addition, Jack underscored that teachers of newcomer ELs needed to be aware that the content-area knowledge of ELs coming from other countries or even from within the U.S. could significantly differ to that of their English-speaking peers. Jack explained,

You may have differences in what you were taught in the same grade level versus where you are now. But whenever you’re an ELL student, you may have moved, you may have been in the same grade level in a different place, but you are on a completely different curriculum. (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19)

Navigating US secondary school cultures. All participants underscored the importance for secondary teachers to be cognizant of the complex cultural environment that local Ivy County students and newcomer ELs face when entering US secondary
school. Specifically, in sixth grade, US secondary public schools are organized by content-area subjects, a cultural environment different to what students were accustomed in elementary school. For a newcomer EL to rural Ivy County, coming from a different country, with a different cultural and linguistic background, this experience is overwhelming. Data from all participants demonstrated how culture affected learning and teaching. One example is Jack’s experience with his EL students, he underscored the need for teachers to be cognizant and attentive to students’ ways of communication across cultures. He explained that “communication within a culture […] is the first aspect that you really have to know” (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19). Jack elaborated,

You don’t want to put expectations that American, European expectations for communication on students who aren't used to those. [...] Even though all the other students know what that is, they’ve been through it for 10 years. [ELs] may not know raising your hand is how we do things here. [...] They may not feel comfortable making eye contact. They may not feel comfortable asking questions or answering questions. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Likewise, Jacqueline believed that “one of the things [teachers] have to realize is that, if a child cannot navigate the place, the child cannot possibly settle down to learning. Just can’t, it's too much tension to just figure out the place” (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19). Jacqueline asserted that this is one of the main reasons that teachers must not assume that ELs’ previous knowledge and experiences are the same as their English-speaking peers. Jacqueline explained that teachers must get to know ELs, what they know about secondary school cultures, and what they learned in their previous school in order to design instruction for newcomer ELs and to help them navigate the different school and classroom rules. She added,

You know, the history of the United States is not the history of Guatemala, it’s not the history of Mexico. [EL] kids may have learned history in school,
but it's the history of their country. They probably know a lot more about our country than we know about theirs. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

As a former ESOL coordinator, Jacqueline taught teachers that working within a school meant working “in a culture within a culture” (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/18/19). When I looked confused, Jacqueline drew the sketch in Figure 5-7 to clarify her thoughts and to clarify my confusion. Referring to Figure 5-7, she explained that beginning with the outer rectangle, English speaking students are familiar with their US societal and home culture. When they entered secondary school, they have already been exposed to the US general school culture, which included the school's regulations. In addition, they needed to learn the different content-areas classroom cultures (which could amount to 4 to 6 in US public high schools, the four squares in the center). For an EL, Jacqueline explained, this navigation was different and more complex because they

![Figure 5-7. School is a culture within a culture. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline.](image-url)
brought with them knowledge of different societal and home cultures and they lacked the US cultural and linguistic connections that English-speaking students have.

Jacqueline explained,

> [ELs] come from their culture and their school culture, and their home culture within that culture. And they come straight to our classroom. [...] So what we have to be aware of, is for [ELs] the general school culture, the general societal culture that we live in, and the general home culture that we're used to within our society, [they]are all null cultures for [ELs]. They don't have them. They have a different set of culture norms. (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/18/19)

Jacqueline offered an example of why teachers need to develop sociocultural awareness and the relationship between the school, home, and society. EL teachers needed to be aware that the way ELs understood classroom culture and socialization differed from what they were accustomed. As described in Chapter 4, her exposure to a multicultural environment as a child, in which most of her neighbors and classmates came from Hispanic backgrounds, taught her that greetings and ways of socialization were customary in Hispanic cultures. Prior to begin instruction, Jacqueline learned to allow some time for socialization and greetings as well as catching up with personal news. Jacqueline also knew the importance of teaching other educators about ELs’ cultures to facilitate their education. Jacqueline learned that allowing ELs “to socialize before [they] get down to business” by creating some space to chat and mingle made them feel at ease and more receptive to instruction (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/25/19).

**Having high expectations for ELs.** Participants acknowledged the importance for EL secondary teachers to be aware that their students were in the process of becoming adults. Jacqueline deemed essential for secondary EL teachers to have some knowledge about child developmental stages of high school age children in order to design age appropriate instruction. She added,
All teenagers are well along the road of developing their ego. You have to be if you’re going to be a teenager. Because you’re on the road to adulthood. And so, I approach that as much as possible with that in mind. I don’t want to give a teenage EL a first grade English book. How does that stimulate the intellect? And does it not insult their self-worth? (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Jacqueline preferred to design instruction by simplifying texts that were mature enough for the secondary age group or by finding Spanish editions when they were available, rather than providing them with texts targeted younger children. Thus, Jacqueline underscored the importance for teachers to have high expectations for EL students. As a teacher-mentor and ESOL expert, she ensured that her colleagues understood the need to provide a challenging curriculum.

Having high expectations for ELs also entailed assessing students carefully as Jacqueline observed that most teachers would not know how to give “valid grades” for them. She asserted that appropriate EL assessment was a matter of respecting ELs. She remarked,

And the other teachers know that they have to have valid grades for these kids. You can’t just give them an A for sitting there. That’s not what we do. They have to have earned. And in order to earn, they have to learn. And so that’s pretty much what we’re working towards. (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

In a similar way, Jack believed that, teachers must know where students are coming from in order to differentiate instruction for the specific student. He remarked, “I think one of the biggest things we can do, as teachers, is set that bar higher and higher and let the kids know that that bar can be moved” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). When I asked them specifically about assessing EL ninth graders, he remarked,

Especially like the reading skills and those kinds of things. I try to, for them it’s the thought process, not so much the English usage that I’m interested in. Obviously if they’re a level one, they are not going to have the same
ability to write me a paragraph answering your question in English. But so a lot of times what I’ll do for the thoughts and the process is giving them things in Spanish, and using technology to my advantage. (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19)

Summary of Research Question One

In the first section of this chapter, I presented the findings for the first research question: What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? The findings were organized based on the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, which guided the four interview sessions and photo elicitation methods with participants. Three main findings emerged from the participants’ data: 1) teachers’ knowledge that building strong relationships with EL students and families required them to be authentic, and this included a sense of faith or religion; 2) teachers’ knowledge of bilingualism and hispanidad as a resource in their work with ELs and families; and, 3) teachers’ knowledge of EL-specialized instructional strategies for rural ELs. All three of these themes intersected with their knowledge of rurality and how the community functioned.

Place-Based Knowledge in Teaching Secondary ELs in Rural Settings

The second part of this chapter addresses research question two: “What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?” Drawing from Donehower, Hogg, and Schell (2007), I theorized in Chapter 2 that rurality includes: 1) a geographic aspect, denoting a particular physical area or space intertwined with people and communities; and 2) a socio-cultural aspect, involving the interaction of people in communities and cultural groups. As Gruenewald (2003) suggested, rural places are real spaces that go beyond a fixed geographical location and stereotypical descriptions, “places themselves have something to say” (p. 624). As
a pedagogical construct, places are unique and rich in human-world relationships that need to be acknowledged. Following Donehower et al. (2007), findings from this study about how rurality shaped the participants' work with ELs in a secondary setting are understood in the context of two main themes: 1) teachers' knowledge of the uniqueness of this (Ivy County) rural community, which subsumes themes such as: the specific physical space of Ivy County and the social processes that take place in that space; and 2) teachers' knowledge to be the voice for ELs. Drawing from Reagan et al. (2019), a sense of place and space is shaped by one's construction of self in that place; hence the two themes in this chapter will include the four participants' construction of place. This study identified specific ways in which the dynamics and overlapping challenges, characteristic to this rural community, shaped how teachers understood their work with ELs.

**The Uniqueness of This Rural Community**

The participants' data demonstrated that they were aware that each rural community was different, and the uniqueness of this rural community impacted their work with ELs. Two main themes emerged from the participants' data under this finding: 1) teachers' knowledge of physical space and the social processes taking place in that rural community; and 2) teachers' knowledge about the influence of rural geography on EL education; and 3) teachers' knowledge of how funding shaped the education of ELs in a rural community.

Because of Jack’s familiarity with rurality, as described in Chapter 4, he recognized that each rural community was different. He understood the interaction between space and place in his own community of TN. Jack asserted that the physical space in a rural community influenced the lifestyle of that community. When I asked for
an example, he quickly explained, that while Ivy County was based on an agricultural-based economy, the rural community where Jack grew up was characterized on trade-based jobs requiring training and skill, such as electricians, plumbers, and construction workers. He also recalled that the typical snowy weather in the mountain where he used to live, was another spatial aspect of his own community that affected schooling and it was different from his experience in Ivy County, FL. Jack remarked, “snow on the mountain. If we could not get out of the mountain it meant there was no school” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).

Without hesitation, he explained what makes a rural place different from others,

Each rural place is different. [...] so growing up in our rural space you had a different, you had a different emphasis on what’s important as far as where you’re looking to go. Like what are the expectations, all those kinds of things. Uh, and that I would say that could be place oriented. Like for us, I was in a rural area but it wasn’t as agriculturally based, it was working class based and it was a lot more of a rural place where you drove to where you worked, not worked on the ground. Uh, and so we, we didn’t have an FFA at all. Even though we had a lot of agriculture around us, we didn’t have that emphasis within our school on that. Instead, we had an emphasis on things like, uh, trades. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

He added that a rural place cannot be overgeneralized because “there are intricacies to each place and each space” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19).

Marisol also observed that the components of a physical space such as a locality’s climate and infrastructure differed according to the rural location and, subsequently, shaped life in a rural community in nuanced ways. Specifically referring to her experience in Ivy County schools, Marisol observed how the rural lifestyle experienced by some of her EL students coming from Puerto Rico was different that the rural reality they faced in Alamanda. She knew that experiencing rurality in Alamanda differed from experiencing it in Puerto Rico because in Alamanda the physical space
was larger with more available housing and the climate and agricultural economy was different. Although Marisol observed that there were some resource limitations in Alamanda, such as limited wi-fi and lack of public transportation, the lack of resources in rural Puerto Rico were more dramatic. This was especially the case after hurricane María devastated the island of electricity, water, and other basic necessities in the rural communities in the island. Thus, Marisol could not assume that the physical aspects of rurality were experienced in the same manner in every rural community because she understood that knowledge of rurality included the space and the social processes characteristic of that particular rural community. She explained,

We have a lot of kids that they come from a little bit. And just by stepping into the states, there's a lot, you know, I mean we got kids that maybe came from a little house and just campo (country field) alrededor (around), you know, and then they come. This rural here is different from theirs where there's more houses. You still have campos alrededor, but then you still have roads. You know, you may have vehicles over there, they may have horses, you know, the atmospheres would be different. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

Jacqueline also observed differences in the way people behaved in each rural town in Ivy County. Hibiscus, Alameda, and Calla Lily were the main towns in which the participants worked. Having lived in this area for more than 30 years has taught Jacqueline that there are nuanced differences among the three towns. Jacqueline asserted that each town had its own identity. She noted,

The state of mind of the kids and the students I've interacted with from Calla Lily is different to the ones I interacted from Hibiscus and Alamanda. Each town has its own identity. Don't misunderstand me, but they [Calla Lily students] seem less willing to accept new ideas which surprised me to be honest. (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19)

Jacqueline also demonstrated the uniqueness of place by acknowledging that teachers as well as EL students come to Ivy County with different personal geographic
I strive to comprehend and internalize the place. Your first place is your place, and that's another thing: we have to understand as teacher, these students, our ELs' first place, is their place. So, we have to teach them about this place. (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19)

**Geography Shaping the Education of ELs in this Rural School Community**

**Access to resources and services.** The participants in the study revealed that geographic distances in the Ivy County community area, shaped their work with ELs and understood that teachers working in these settings needed to be mindful of how it affected EL education. Jack felt that geographical distances were “a big aspect of rurality” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). For instance, the town of Hibiscus, where Jack worked, was 30 minutes in either direction away from the next town, and there was no public transportation. In addition to vast distances, the terrain limited access to amenities and resources. Dirt roads and uneven ground that was hard to walk on with no safe sidewalks for children to go to school, made transportation difficult for low-income families who did not own cars. Thus, Jack understood the importance for EL teachers to learn about the rural place in which they worked and to reflect on how Hibiscus’ lack of safe roads, long distances, access to health and transportation, and lack of infrastructure, such as wi-fi, affected EL and families’ life and EL academic performance. Jack knew that because of these geographical limitations, “those resources and all those important places, those necessities [got] farther and farther away” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). Thus, Jack described the impact the lack of access transportation and other resources had on EL academic success. He asserted,

I know we have some kids who have to go, like the McDonald's is one of the few places that has free wi-fi. And so, they may go to the McDonald's
to do their homework if they had, they know they have to do homework, but that’s only if they have a ride to get there and a ride to get home afterwards. And so, there’s all of these things that start to play into it, uh, that can, can make or break kids’ ability to do the education. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/23/19)

Jack experienced that living in a rural isolated space affected his work with ELs and he understood that access to resources could not be taken for granted in a rural space. Jack asserted that teachers in a rural space had to possess a deep knowledge of the place in which they worked. In addition, Jack recommended that teachers working in rural settings needed to understand how and where students lived in order to anticipate obstacles that geography could impose on their daily life.

Jacqueline also observed how the lack of amenities impacted the lives of young ELs. She remarked, “we don’t have a movie theater. We don’t have a bowling alley” and “you have to drive so far to get anywhere. You have to drive and drive” (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19). Similar to Jack, Jacqueline observed that the lack of municipal services made living for young people difficult in Alamanda. Most families were low-income families that could not afford a car; therefore, adolescent ELs tended to be isolated after school hours and during the weekends with no access to organized recreational activities.

When I asked Jacqueline to bring a picture describing what rurality looked like for her, she brought the picture shown in Figure 5-8, to show the vast space behind her classroom. Before coming to Alamanda, she had never seen a classroom with a backyard behind it, “It’s the view from my backdoor. [...] I take my kids sometimes when we’re doing our Spanish dance off and say, ‘Let’s go to the backyard [...] To me that also is rural” (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19).
Jacqueline emphasized that Ivy County’s insularity and the lack of access to intellectual stimuli, such as libraries and museums, resulted in a lack of access, or even, limited curiosity about certain types of knowledge. Jacqueline explained that she did not mean that her Ivy County students were ignorant in a pejorative way; however, she asserted that they lacked some knowledge about the world because Ivy County had limited access to those resources. She remarked, “place inform[ed] what you need to know” (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19), and, according to Jacqueline, people living in Alamanda did not know what was not accessible to them.

Figure 5-8. The backyard of Jacqueline’s classroom. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline.
Adela referred to the consequences of this lack of access to amenities and intellectual stimuli: “una privación cultural terrible” “a terrible cultural deprivation” (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19). Adela demonstrated that the cultural deprivation of their students affected their performance in AP Spanish language exam. The students had to write a comparison of how different types of housing affected family life and they could not make the connections between the types of rural housing in Ivy County and other countries’ way of living.

Referring to the lack of world knowledge by her students, Jacqueline explained:

I think there are a few elements that make a place rural. One, a lack of access to stimuli, that’s what I’m looking for. I like have access to stimuli, that urban children, even poor urban children like me receive, because they’re free things you could do, you can get on a bus for a couple of bucks and get there. If you want to go to games go, and go to the museum from a rural area from Williston than from Chiefland, from Bronson, you can’t hop on the bus and go. Even if I love that like the museum, you can get in there for free on certain day, which is wonderful, but you can’t get there for a couple of bucks. (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19)

The participants observed that teachers in Ivy County needed to be mindful of how the rural geography combined with the lack of access to resources and amenities affected the schooling of ELs and their lives in this rural setting.

School absenteeism: Invisibility of ELs and families. Geography combined with the seasonal agricultural-based economy affected EL attendance to school. Having to travel long distances, lack of public transportation and other EL-lived realities contributed to an increase in EL school absenteeism. For example, Adela named absenteeism as one of the most significant problems experienced by ELs and EL families. She contemplated, “El problema de ausentismo es real. No sé si es por la distancia […] no sé si es como van a trabajar cuando llegan es tan tarde. Prefieren faltar a esa primera clase o llegar tarde al primer periodo” “The problem with
absenteeism is real. I don’t know if it is because they go to work and get home late. They prefer to skip that first class or be late to the first period” (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19).

Adela learned from her students that some ELs worked long hours at night to help support their families. Some worked in the construction industry, others had to work in their parents’ agricultural business. In some occasions, she was aware that older children needed to take care of the young while the parents worked. Adela understood those issues and knew why some of her students were so tired during the day, why others did not complete their assignment and why most of them chose not to attend school at all. She acknowledged that most of her colleagues were not aware or interested about ELs’ lives and usually did not inquire what was going on and were not flexible in their assessments.

Jack also observed the rural physical space impacting schooling. He remarked, they've got to walk a farther distance to get to a bus stop to, to be picked up. And if they miss the bus, there's no catching a ride with someone else who's just happens to be driving by the house or something like that because your house may be at the end of a, you know, 200-foot dirt road. And a lot of our kids who, if you don't have to go very far to work […] they have one reliable car instead of multiple. And so if that car's gone whenever you missed the bus or whatever it may be then you are not going to school that day. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

The social processes inherent in rurality contributed to school absenteeism as demonstrated in the second part of this section.

Although Ivy County’s rurality played a major role on EL school absenteeism, it was not the only cause. Jacqueline learned that EL absenteeism was perceived differently in other countries from which the families came. While in the US attendance was expected and absenteeism penalized, Jacqueline learned that in other countries
attendance was not enforced in the same way. Jacqueline observed that some ELs “come, not come, come, not come.” When she asked one of her EL student, he explained that, in his country, even if a student missed half the school year, he only had to pass all the tests, and subsequently he passed on” (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19). Jacqueline emphasized that teachers could not assume that US school cultural norms were equivalent to ELs' and that EL teachers needed to get to know students and families to learn about their cultural norms to be able to teach them what was appropriate in Ivy County.

In some cases, EL families’ fear of deportation and US immigration laws affected ELs’ attendance and, consequently, hindered their education. Marisol explained that she was listening to an EL parent’s story during the Monday Parent Nights. Some of the parent’s family members experienced a raid in the Walmart in Alamanda. Most EL families felt petrified and did not “to want to leave the house, the kids, they [kept] the kids home, the kids [did not] come to school” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19). As a teacher in a rural setting, Marisol explained, that one had to understand that “not every kid that's out, it's because they want to be out.” In some instances, teachers needed to go beyond the classroom instruction in order to connect with ELs and their families and become creative in reaching ELs in their invisibility. Marisol described, “Guess what? Miss Marisol went to the house twice a week, and I gave them lessons, you know. So that's what teachers are all about” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19).

**Funding Shaping the Education of ELs in this Rural School Community**

Participants demonstrated knowledge that rurality affected finances and funding for education. This affected both school structure (school consolidation) and families’ costs of living and survival. Two participants demonstrated knowledge about the impact
of funding in the education of ELs. For example, Jack understood how the US rural education system was systemically funded. He explained that the low population density characteristic of rural places reduced the amount of property taxes generated resulting in limited financial funds for essential school resources. Also, the historical ways in which land is passed down through generations undervalued the land in rural communities and diminished the tax base, resulting in limited educational resources for all students. Typically, people in Ivy County inherited their land; they were mostly considered “land rich and cash poor,” as Jacqueline described. Figure 5-9 depicted her home on the land she inherited from her grandfather. He built his own house which was torn down 10 years before this study took place. She explained,

My grandfather came as a young man, and land then... This was all considered scrubland. I mean there was nothing. This street that goes down here was not here. The street that goes all the way down, none of these were paved. This was way, way back, in the 19, what 1919, 1920s. And basically, if you could claim the land and farm the land, you got to keep the land. So, my grandpa farmed all this land [...] [and] he was considered, by law, that he owned the land. So, it was deeded to him and everything. So, when he died, it went to his different children who were still living. And like this, it's all part of my father's land. So, a lot of people's land is like that. It came into their family in the late 19th, early 20th century when you could prove the land by being able to farm the land. So, my grandad has hundreds of acres, which I didn't realize was a big deal. (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19)
Jacqueline recognized that Ivy County’s cost of living was low and that lower salaries were “endemic in rurality” (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19). Jacqueline asserted that teachers who worked in Alamanda must understand how funding in rural places affect schooling for ELs. She was aware that EL families receiving a lower pay, could not afford having a car, internet, a house, and other life necessities. Jacqueline insisted that this was another reason why the people in Ivy County were considered “land rich, money poor.”

School Consolidations. Jack understood that the merging of middle and high schools was “all based on money” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19) and demonstrated concern for the well-being of ELs. In Hibiscus Middle High school (HMHS), a school that three years prior had been consolidated from a single middle and single high school, bigger class sizes resulted in less time dedicated to the education of ELs. While he could see the
advantages of older kids mentoring younger ones, Jack also recognized the possibility of negative mentorship. He feared that ELs sixth graders immersed in a middle-high school setting with schoolchildren who were far older than them could have an impact on their learning experiences. Jack spoke of a loose continuum or age gap negatively affecting ELs. He stated, “in high school […] it’s like we’re preparing for adulthood and ninth grade is now the start of that. Now with it being [grades] 6-12, it's just all kind of on a loose continuum” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/23/19).

Jacqueline also voiced her concern about the challenge caused by school consolidations: not having enough time to dedicate to ELs’ education due to the big size classes that surpassed the stated Florida law on class sizes. She stated,

it’s easy in the class size that we have in Alamanda, to lose a student within the crowd of students. It's very easy, because I have a class for example. Last year I had a class of 34 kids. Now if there's one kid who's sitting there quiet, when other kids are bombarding me with questions, I could lose that child. And if it's an EL child, he or she is not going to feel able to just speak out and speak up because that may not be where they came from. That's not how you do things. So, if you aren't given the time to focus on that child, it's a huge challenge. (Jacqueline, Interview #4, 7/2/19)

Marisol described the stress that consolidation posed on the ELs’ education. She acknowledged that ELs that were not placed in the right grade level resulted in multiple grade levels and preparations, an added stress for a teacher who already had a class with more than 30 kids. She described,

Now I'm working with kids that didn't learn. There may be the 10th grade level reading and now we are doing 10th and 11th that's crazy. I identify um, the students with disability and IEP in my class. Yeah. And then I have my ESOL group, so I have four different groups that I got to work with in four different levels in four different ways. Sometimes at four different times. Yeah. And I have an assistant in the classroom? Yeah. It's difficult. It's different. It's difficult. So, it's not about getting an assistant for ESOL only, you know, we have different situations and scenarios in one classroom that now the state expects one teacher to handle instead of
shrinking our classroom now, now we got classes of 30 students and we have to work with that. That's very stressful. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

The merging of grade levels allowed schools to save money on school transportation. When buses were available, they could pick up more kids at once in order to save some money. This practice affected ELs since they had to wake up at 6:30 in the morning to get to school by 8:30. As Adela described, “Los mezclan todos” “They mix them all up” and they were exhausted by midday (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19).

A shortage of ESOL personnel and paraprofessionals. Marisol understood that the shortage of prepared ESOL personnel and bilingual teachers was tied to the low cost of living and low pay in Ivy County. She explained,

That's why I believe we lose a lot of our teachers, you know, forget the pay. We get paid less than others. Yes, that's true. But it becomes very stressful. It becomes a physical hit. And then what happens? It affects our students. We're not there for our students. So now we have students that are below grade level that are not passing state testing. They're not being taught what they need to be taught. And I could keep going on and on. Yeah. And, and, and speak about this, you know, that we have our issues for our rural and our ESOL kids. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

Marisol understood low teacher pay and the merging of schools resulted in a lack of bilingual teachers who would facilitate the education of Hispanic ELs in Ivy County. As abovementioned, participants acknowledged that bilingualism and the use of L1 in instruction were essential components to facilitate communication and connection with ELs and EL families. Thus, the lack of bilingual teachers due to financial reasons has affected the education of ELs in Ivy County. Marisol observed that despite the growth of ELs in Ivy County, there was only a handful of experienced bilingual teachers. She observed,
I’ve been here for five years, and these towns are small. Now it’s that we’re starting to see a flow in of Spanish speaking families, but even then, me walking into let’s say for example the [Alamanda] atmosphere, beside Jacqueline who’s probably on the other side of the building, I was the only Spanish speaking person. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Social Processes in this Rural School Community

Participants acknowledged the combined social and cultural aspects of rurality involved the interaction of people in communities and cultural groups in that physical space. The themes emerging from the participants’ data underscored two specific social processes: 1) teachers’ knowledge of the intersection of race and community and 2) teachers’ knowledge of rural ways of living or place-fixedness shaping EL education.

The intersection of race and community. Describing the demographics of Ivy County, Jack and Adela in particular showed awareness that there was a historically-based racial segregation in the town of Hibiscus. These racial issues were still in place at the time of the study, fostered in part by the interaction between space and place. That is, the spatial boundaries between these communities facilitated the existing racial segregation. Jack estimated that 50% of the population was White while 30 or 40% was African American and 10 to 15% Hispanic. In reality, 2017 data from the US Census Bureau reported that Ivy County had a predominantly White population at 79.5%, followed by 9.4% African Americans and 8.6% Hispanic. The jobs that African Americans, Whites, and Hispanic held affected how the community remained segregated. Jack observed that most African Americans worked in the trucking business, Whites owned their own businesses or worked at the school, and Hispanics were in the agricultural industry. Jack remarked, “so they wouldn’t mix, they wouldn’t cross paths if it wasn’t for the fact that we have our school” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19).
Jack explained that the racial and physical boundaries were clear for both the White and the African American populations in Ivy County: the east part of Hibiscus was mainly populated the African Americans; and the west Hibiscus was identified as the White cultural “hub.” Jack explained that “the east side is kind of this segregated area where a lot of the Black families still live [where there] used to be our Black high school” (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19).

When I asked Jack if he knew about a designated area for Hispanics in Ivy County, he was not sure of the answer. He theorized that some factors, such as their transient lifestyle caused by the seasonal nature of the agricultural economy, fear of deportation, and, perhaps his limited knowledge of Spanish to be able to listen to students’ conversations, prevented him from finding out about a specific location. Jack remarked,

from what I’ve been able to tell in the two to three years, that I’ve been there, […] there doesn't seem to be like a cultural hub that I've been able to find for the immigrant population or the Hispanic population or anything. It seems like it's mostly, you still either see, you've got the White population and kind of where their different hubs are and then you've got the Black population where there's are, those are pretty evident. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

However, he acknowledged that a strong sense of community and of belonging existed within each of these populations.

**African Americans in Ivy County.** When I asked Jack to share a picture depicting rurality, he brought the picture shown in Figure 5-10. The picture showed
Jack’s hand reflected in the car window. When I asked him why he did not open the glass window, he replied that his wife was driving quickly and they did not want to be seen taking the picture. In the picture, one can observe a group of African Americans, some seemed to be relaxing under the tree during the day. In the picture, there are chairs and trashcans in the area arranged to, perhaps, foster conversation, demonstrating the strong sense of community amongst the African American community.

Jack explained that the picture represented to him both the positive and negative aspects of how a rural community functioned. It showed a tree behind the old railroad tracks in Hibiscus where, as Jack learned from his students, African Americans gathered to socialize. This was also the place that he described as “the rougher part of town.” Jack emphasized that this tree represented to the African Americans both a
positive and negative aspects of this community. Although Jack described that the tree was the site for socialization where culture and traditions were passed down through generations, "it can be a good place, a positive place where heritage is kind of passed down and, you learn kind of the ways to talk and the ways to act and all those things from elders" (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19), he also recognized that this site was also a symbol of a stagnate way of life where negative cultural trends and norms were passed down to the young. Jack observed,

But also, at the same time you can learn bad habits. Um, and a lot of people can kind of see it as kind of a stagnant place where, um, you know, when these people could be working, but they're here at the tree hanging out and conversing […] some people do see it as kind of a negative aspect of culture too. And I think with rural communities especially, you get that interplay a lot. (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19)

Adela, aware of the negative connotation of the tree, often communicated to her African American students her disapproval of the gatherings by saying: “No te quiero ver debajo del palo […] a veces me ha dado coraje y he pensado ir y decir dos o tres a esos adultos sinvergüenzas ” “I don't want to see you under that tree […] sometimes I have been mad enough to say one or two things to those shameless adults” (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19). Adela recognized that illegal drug transactions took place under the tree and young men, who were not to follow a college educational path, were initiated in the illegal drug trafficking there. She explained: “Está el niño que el padre no quiere que termine debajo del palo y está el otro que eventualmente tú sabes que, regardless of the odds, va a terminar ahí” “There are fathers that do not want their child to end up under the tree, but there are others that eventually, you know that, regardless of the odds, is going to end up there” (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19). With this comment, she suggested that the way of life of African Americans in Ivy County seemed to be
perpetuated from one generation to the next by the traditional social processes inherent in that place.

**Whites in Ivy County.** An important observation by Adela was recognizing the influence the White population of Ivy County exerted over school decisions. Although she recognized different SES within the White community, she knew that most of her White students belonged to families that did not hold professional degrees, but that owned local businesses, land, and supported their community in that way. Those families, Adela asserted, had a powerful voice in the school. She described,

> ellos saben que pueden tomar decisiones, saben que son una voz latente en la escuela y pueden promover una causa o pueden protestar por otra, y se les respeta mucho, ellos saben que lo que ellos dicen tiene peso y causa efecto. (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19)

they know that they can make decisions, they know that they are a strong voice in the school [latent voice] in the school and they can promote a cause or can protest. They are well respected, they know that what they say was influential [has weight] and causes an effect. (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19)

**Rural sense of community and its resourcefulness.** Sense of community was a theme emerging from all participants’ data. To describe the importance for teachers in Ivy County to understand a community-based ideology, or what he referred to as the resourcefulness of the rural community, Jack shared the picture shown in Figure 5-11. In this picture I observed a series of family homes in proximity to each other, as well as two or three cars parked by the buildings with a playground to the right. One can imagine the familial interactions that took place in this site. The proximity of the buildings in these vast and isolated areas far from any outside amenities in rural Ivy
Figure 5-11. Resourcefulness of the rural community. Photo courtesy of Jack.

County allowed people to socially gather and to help each other with house chores, childcaring, and possibly, transportation. At the same time, Jack observed that the same resourcefulness could impact EL’s education. He pointed out that when cars break down, multiple families living in these areas and relying in one car for school transportation, could impact EL school attendance:

And a lot of our kids may even help with work or, um, I've had some kids who miss and say, well, I the car wasn't working, my mom hadn't gone to work, so I had to fix the car before she could go to work. And so, I didn't go to school that day. Uh, and so a lot of the resourcefulness that you see, uh, that can make the community what it is. At the same time can be factors that play into this schooling. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

Thus, a sense of community, according to Jack could both be advantageous and detrimental to advancing the education of the children of Hibiscus, including ELs.
Rural school serving as community center: a symbol of pride. The four participants revealed the way that their school served as a community center. In spite the historical segregation of the communities in Hibiscus, the school was the place in which all the communities gathered in one site to attend different school related activities and town social events. In Ivy County, there was no other community center or building to socialize for town activities. The school was that building or “that glue” (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19) gathering locals in one space. Participants recognized that ELs and EL families frequently missed these activities because of the language barrier.

Adela remembered that when the merging of schools occurred, three years before this study was conducted, the new unfinished building was open to the community. It was a great event covered by the local news. Adela took a Facebook screenshot of a picture of the event. Everybody was wearing helmets for protection in the construction site. See Figure 5-12. She also added: “La vida social de este pueblo gira en torno a las actividades deportivas de la escuela” “This town’s social life revolves around the school athletic activities” (Adela, Interview #3, 7/26/19).

Although Jacqueline did not elaborate on the subject, she concurred that school was the site where all cultural and racial groups were present. Marisol also remarked, school is where all the gatherings happen. The kids are not just coming in for class, but you have the extra school activities, you have the night activities, you have the conferences, you have anything, the graduations, any celebrations, it's happening in the schools. Around the schools, you have fields, maybe one Walmart, the parents are taking care of their businesses, whether it's horse, cows, corn, and watermelon. The kids are in school, the parents come to school, the announcements... What I also like is that, if there's anything going on in Alamanda, for example the Watermelon Festival, guess what? It's a big blow out in the school. The
kids participate, the kids are growing their watermelons, and so it happens in the school. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Figure 5-12. School another site fostering a sense of community “integration”: construction of the HMHS. Photo courtesy of Adela.

Jack understood that school was “a symbol of pride for our community.” He explained that school was growing into an academic symbol of pride due to the emphasis families gave to sporting events and the FFA (Florida Farmers Association). Adela also observed that football was the sports in which both African American and White participated. Jack added, “it definitely is a pride thing for our community to be able to say that that is what’s representing us. It’s kind of, I would say it’s […] the one thing that you’re going to look at, […], you’re going to see that integration happening (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19). By integration, Jack elaborated that the White, African-American, and Hispanic communities gathered under the same roof. He clarified that, in spite of school integration, meaning all students from various racial backgrounds attended the school, he recognized the past historical segregation replicated in the classroom,
The integration of the different groups happens most, through sports, clubs, those kinds of things. But there is definitely a kind of a segregation of those groups, even within racial groups by class or whatever it may be. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

Adela attempted to bridge those cultural and racial gaps in the classroom by wearing her sombrero (hat) cultural. Every day, “ves los grupos ahí, yo los tengo que mezclar” “you see the groups there, I have to mix them up” (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19). She added,

A veces el niño afroamericano te dice, ‘No me siente con este blanco,’ y a veces hay un blanco donde a ti te dice, "Yo no puedo hablar con esta persona, señora, muévame del asiento." […] no les gusta socializar con el blanco, prefieren socializar con el moreno a socializar con el niño caucásico. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19)

Sometimes the African American boy tell you, ‘don’t sit me with this White,’ and sometimes there is a White one that tells you: ‘I can’t talk with this person, Mrs., move me from my seat.’[…] they don’t like to socialize with the White, they prefer to socialize with the Black. (Adela, Interview #4, 7/26/19).

Jack acknowledged that the clash of cultures and races he experienced in his classroom was a daily struggle and found the task of bridging this gap difficult. He had not given up. He remarked, “I feel we really we have been able to embrace the idea of mixing communities” (Jack, Interview #1, 6/11/19).

Marisol also experienced cultural and racial divisions among her White, African American, and Hispanic students in the classroom. Like Jack, she felt the clash of cultures was almost like fighting a battle. She fought against this divide through her strategy of “communicating with them as one.” She used a simplified metaphor to describe how she get all her students acquainted with each other:

I feel that when I have them in a big group first, they all at first, see each other as different (brown egg vs the white egg) but as I continue to work, talk, dialogue with them as one group I am pushing the opportunity for students to work out loud, (speak, read) I am cracking that egg. Many
students (the ones born here in the states) will see that someone from a
different culture is actually the same as them, (thought, idea, life process,
life experiences inside. (Marisol personal email 8-14-19)

Marisol also shared a picture (shown in Figure 5-13) that helped further illustrate
the above-mentioned metaphor of “cracking the egg.” This picture symbolized,
according to Marisol, that despite her students’ diverse appearances, her students were
more alike than they were different once they became acquainted with each other
through “communicating with them as one.”

Figure 5-13. Marisol's cracking of the eggs or bridging cultural gaps. Photo courtesy of
Marisol.

**The rural way of life shaping EL education in Ivy County.** A theme emerging
from all participants’ data was the importance for EL teachers to notice that the way of
life in Ivy County—slow paced, deceivingly simple—permeated every town and every
school activity. Marisol shared two pictures that captured the essence and serenity of a
rural place. See the pictures in Figure 5-14 and 5-15. Figure 5-14 depicted a corn field
and a bright turquoise sky. I could imagine the sound of the wind against the corn stalks
oscillating back and forth, a peaceful scenery, indeed.

Marisol described that when she first came to Ivy County, five years before this
study began, she was mesmerized by the tranquility of the life in this area and the blue
skies she seldom experienced in New York City. She was also amazed at the fields of corn, which she learned were grown to feed the cows. She learned from the farmers that they grew corn for cows constantly and they were not meant for human consumption. She explained,

"you see the corn coming up. It's not like when I was in in New York that you only saw corn fields in the fall is you see it all year round. You know, they plant the corns to feed the cows and I'm just, I just laugh because it's beautiful. [...]. My house is in the middle of cornfields. Wow. The good thing about these corns that they go up and within the week they're down. Once they're all, you know, they'll feed the cows will either do hay or corn."

(Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

Likewise, Figure 5-15, a house she passed by every day on her way back from school at the end of the day. The picture conveyed a similar tranquility that the one in Figure 5-14. Here though, Marisol contrasted the way of life in New York City versus her experience in Ivy County. There were no people in the picture, only nature and the slow motion of a rocking chair symbolizing the pace of a rural way of life in this particular town. She described,
I always dreamed of having a rocking chair. And, there’s these little houses in [Alamanda], and [...] these simple rocking chairs. Um, usually you see a grandma, but I don’t want to take pictures of nobody’s face, you know? The rocking chair, just to me, the rocking chair symbolizes how in New York, everything moves fast. And here in the country, in the rural areas, it’s a pace. It’s a slow pace. You know, to me the days are longer here […]. A rocking chair, it’s a symbol for me, [to] just stop and think, rest, something we don’t do right, as teachers. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Jacqueline, Jack, and Adela echoed Marisol’s observations about the pace, way of life, and close-knit networks in Ivy County. Jack learned that to make a difference in his students’ lives he needed make those connections with families and build relationships with the students by understanding Ivy County way of life and sense of community and coaching football after school. He asserted,

There’s a number of teachers who are family friends with other families of students who, you know, have worked with this school to be able to bring their kid to school with them. And so, you see the tight knit community in that aspect. You’ve got a lot of teachers who may bring, you know, family, friends, kids and things like that. Uh, and that’s one of the issues with people like myself who are coming from outside. Like, if it wasn’t for coaching, I wouldn’t […] have those connections with the community, uh, to, to get to that role, uh, and to make those connections. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)
Jacqueline, on the other hand, learned years ago to be open minded and to step back and to learn from students first. She added,

Come to them where they are. And sometimes they'll surprise you about where they are. Don't come to them from where you are. Because you are where you are. But if you're interacting with anyone, even like... any interaction in my mind, I try to come to you where you are. And if I really want to be able to help you, that's what I would have to do. (Jacqueline, Interview #2, 6/18/19)

Matching the teaching style to the way of living was a knowledge base emerging from the participants’ data. This theme was expressed by expressions like Jacqueline’s “come to where they are” and Marisol’s “come down to their level.” Marisol explained that the teaching pace felt slower to her because life in NY was hectic. She described,

You're not going to come teaching to students who ride a train every day. Which means, what I'm saying is, because that's me going to school every day in the train, it was rush, rush, rush, let's go, let's go, let's go. Over here, a lesson that you thought you could teach in one day up north, you might have to take two days, or three days to teach it here.” (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Marisol respected Ivy County’s way of life and loved the peacefulness and tranquility she experienced and could not imagine ever returning to NYC. She explained that that physical aspect of rurality, the isolation and insularity, shaped what the students knew about the world and the way she would teach: “they have always been in this rural setting” and “rural is all they know” (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19). She further elaborated,

Teaching is slower because, a lot of the things that we teach, they wouldn't have an idea of what it is because they've always been in this rural setting. A lot of these kids will tell me, they've never been to New York, they've never been to New Jersey. They go from Florida to Georgia, Georgia to Florida. They've never left the state. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)
Allowing time for students and teacher to get acquainted was the right way to understand the influence of rural social processes on instruction. She explained, 

You have a more positive response, you know, new teacher that comes in like, Hey, okay, this is the way it's gonna roll. I'm sorry. This is a family community. They have their traditions, they have their customers, they got each other's back. They know who's who and what's what. You're not going to come in and scream it out. They'd be like, “I don't think so ma'am.” They will let you know now this is not the way we do it. You know? So, [the rural social processes] it would affect the teaching. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

**Teachers and ELs: feeling as outsiders in rural Ivy County.** Participants revealed that, coming from the outside, they needed to embrace the way of life in Ivy County by understanding the tight social connections existing in this space. When Marisol arrived to Ivy County, the local people made her feel as an outsider. She could sense the distrust. She remarked, “when I first started here in a rural setting, I realized that I was different. I felt different, and the atmosphere made me feel different. So, I had to get accustomed to that.” She added,

We'd walk into the classroom [...] everybody stared at you, like, "You're not from around here." Then when I would start talking, it was totally different from their accent. So, it's like I would start talking and a kid would raise their hands like, "Ms. Marisol, can I ask a question?" I'm like, "Sure, yeah." "You're not from around here, are you?" I'm like, "How would you know?" It's like, "Because you talk different." I [didn't] think I [talked] different, but to them, I [talked] different. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

One of the biggest challenges for Marisol was to get families to know her because they were not used to a bilingual teacher with a NY accent like her. That was not “what they were used to” (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19).

For instance, Marisol understood that adjusting to her new school setting meant making some changes in her “flashy” New York City appearance, her voice while the
students learned about her Hispanic background and her bilingualism and felt more comfortable with her. She explained,

Well, my way of speaking, my way of moving my hands while I talk, they don’t do that here. It’s something that Spanish people and us New Yorkers we talk with our hands. So, I had to pay attention to the way I speak, the way I walk, the way I move my hands, the tone of my voice. I could have been saying something like a certain way and the kids would be like, "Is that wrong, or right?" Because of the way I was saying it. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Coming as an outsider, Marisol learned that she had to get to know the students by allowing them to know who she was and where she came from while adjusting to their way of life and respecting their traditions. She explained,

the salary that I got here, the cost of my mortgage, the cost of my insurance, it was also much less than the city, so [I] adjust to it. […], I didn't come in to flash, I didn't come with too much stuff because I knew already it was a simple life. The less the better for them. You win them faster that way too because, you don't want to come in and they want to think that you think you're rich (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

In the Ivy County family-style community, Marisol understood that she was not one of them: “they had their customs, they got each other’s back” and “they know who's who and what's what” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19). This way of “doing it" permeated to the school. She knew she would receive a more positive response accepting and adjusting to their way of learning. She added,

I had to learn to come down to their level so they can understand me. Then from there, they wanted to learn from me" and “I had to come down first. I couldn't expect the students to come up and meet me. I had to go down and meet them to what they already knew, because I didn't want to scare them. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

When I suggested that to “come down to their level" sounded pejorative, she insisted she did not mean it in that way. She meant instead that the students who have been born and raised in Ivy County all shared the same way of life and traditions; spoke
the same language; understood schooling rules, and how the rural community calendar shaped school curriculum and activities, she recalled, “if there’s anything going on in [Alamanda], for example the Watermelon Festival, guess what? It's a big blow out in the school. The kids participate, the kids are growing their watermelons, and so it happens in the school.” (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19).

Feeling as an outsider, Marisol asserted,

beside Jacqueline who's probably on the other side of the building, I was the only Spanish speaking person. It's like everybody there is English speaking. Their customs are the same, they're all country folks, they come from farming families, they raise cows, horses. So, everybody, it looked like it was all in the same level, I'm the different one. I'm the different one. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Thus, Marisol felt that at first, meeting them where they were and allowing them to get to know her, as abovementioned, rather than imposing her way, was the way to teach them.

Jacqueline understood that most opinions were based on previous experiences and she was regarded as an outsider when she arrived to Ivy County 30 years before I conducted this study. She remembered the local kids amazed at having a black Spanish teacher:

How many of these people do you think have ever seen a Black language teacher? Especially if they're from around here. When I first came, my little students [said] "You're the Spanish teacher?" And I went, "Yeah, why not? I'm your Spanish teacher." (Jacqueline, Interview #1, 6/13/19)

Working as a past ESOL coordinator, Jacqueline sensed distrust from her teacher-mentees at first and wondered if racism was involved. She described, “I expect[ed] some pushback because of race. [...]”. But I realized that I... It was more of my outsiderness than my race, because where the teachers were White or non-White. I had that same barrier” (Jacqueline, Interview #3, 6/27/19).
Despite his familiarity with rurality, even Jack felt as an outsider to the Ivy County community. Jack realized that ELs also experienced those feelings and had to adapt to a new lifestyle. Feeling empathy for newcomer ELs when in Ivy County, he remarked, seeing as someone for me who has come into this community as kind of an outsider, uh, I want to also, you know, I'm trying to work my way into it. I went to also, I try to be kind of that person to help the ELs as they come in because most of the students had, are in their first year, second year are in their first year, second year. within our community. And so, I have yet to get a student that has been within the Williston community for a long period of time. And so, uh, enabling and helping them kind of make that transition into a new community and being welcoming and all those kinds of things. I can use that experience. (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19)

The constant presence of ELs and EL families in Ivy County had awakened their community. The participants had observed certain reluctance toward the newcomers. They seemed to be in a state of “shock” at the prospect of becoming a more diverse community, which could challenge their way of life. Participants have observed that the Ivy County school community’s first tendency was to push ELs aside. At the time of the study, Marisol recognized that changes were happening to the people of Ivy County, seeing the Spanish speaking families come in, and other nationalities, I can see that they are starting to wake up to, there's a break in their routine, their customs or what they're used to seeing. It's new for them. So, I can see it's a process for them. Some of them it's not that they're not accepting it, it's that it's new so they have questions, they're going to look like they're confused, they're going to push them to the side. So, that's the atmosphere I ran into. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

**School's indifference to change shaping EL education.** In the schools, bilingual teachers like Marisol, Adela, Jacqueline, and a handful of paraprofessionals were the first and only resource for communication available to newcomer ELs and families. Participants believed that more bilingual personnel were needed in the county to facilitate their work with ELs. Marisol remarked,
I think the teachers that are bilingual, they help extremely in atmosphere, and in the work. In the office, they’re stuck for example because they have certain forms, here we come in, “Hey, let me get the forms, and we'll translate.” I've translated many applications, and forms, and the school conduct book, the codes. I got to do that in [Calla Lily]. By doing that, you also see that the people in the office are starting to accept a little bit more the changes. Good changes (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

Marisol acknowledged that the school community of Ivy County was not prepared for ELs because “[the school administrators] don't understand the language. They can't speak the language. So now they're against the wall. You can’t just leave [the problem] there and assume that maybe […] things could keep moving along. It’s not” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19). Marisol recognized the consequences of ignoring the academic needs of ELs, she added,

whether it's the student's grade, school grade, state grade is going to start going, no. The administration has to start with the administration to open up and [there are] certain things that have to be changed. You know, you have to change. I'm not telling you to change the whole thing, but allow certain things to happen. Allow certain [meaning bilingual] teachers, you face the facts, we've got a whole school system, and we probably only have two handfuls of Spanish speaking bilingual teachers. (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19)

Jack agreed that the administration was “still kind of behind the times in some of the things we use in some of the ways we do things” (Jack, Interview #4, 7/23/19). He understood the link between funding for rural schools and the inequities suffered by ELs. He believed that state-mandated requirements, such as learning by a computer software such as Rosetta Stone rather than from a specialized ESOL teacher, took away from the meaningful teacher-student relationships and collaboration. He remarked,

Build test takers. Yeah. And that’s what you should be doing. And that's that the big a catch 22 for all teachers and all teaching but I think it affects ELs even more because they're required to go sit in front of a computer and spend so much time on a computerized program where, sure, they're
interacting with English, but you're not really interacting with anything. You're listening to a computer and then you're talking to a computer. And so, uh, and those are all state mandated things. And so, if we don't, you know, the slap on the wrist goes from a slap on the wrist to, you know, dropping funding. (Jack, Interview #3, 7/4/19)

He also explained that funding for EL sport participation was not available to ELs and even if it were, the geography and lack of access to transportation made their participation almost impossible. Jack also observed the lack of bilingual signs to make the school environment more welcoming to ELs and families. He believed they should have the same access other families have to relevant school information.

This really impacted me seeing how we really don't have anything that promotes an inviting environment [...] if you can't speak in English, we have nothing. So that really got me thinking about how I can further help, my position within the school can further help create, hopefully some, at least the knowledge that we need to be doing something. And that can get the ball rolling on how we can start to institute making our whole building, especially the front lobby where everyone comes, more inviting for EL students, more inviting for EL families. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Marisol asserted that the channels of communication between administration and teachers needed to be open to collaboration with respect to advancing the education of ELs. Marisol remarked, “open that door and ask a bilingual teacher, a bilingual paraprofessional, come into it and then start working with them to facilitate the EL students” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19). Adela believed that principals should not ignore when an EL consistently failed for an entire semester. Adela added, “si hay una apatía de parte de administración” “if there is apathy from the administration,” the teacher will not follow up the EL’s academic performance (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19).

She described an experience with Ms. Newman, her neighbor teacher who had an EL student in her classroom earning “0” in every assignment during the entire semester. Adela knew the EL was a good student and decided to confront the teacher. Ms.
Newman explained that she had been submitting mid-year reports to the principal and that no one had contacted her to follow up. Adela could not understand why the teacher and/or administration did not take the time or had the interest to talk to the student or the parents to learn if there was a reason for his performance. Adela added,

hay niños que te dicen: "Uno aquí es como un fantasma", están, pero no están porque nadie los ve, son invisibles, están en mí salón y les doy clases, pero, son invisibles para cierto-- y eso duele, duele (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

there are children that say, “here, one is like a ghost” They are there but they are not because no one sees them, they are invisible, they are in my classroom and I teach them but, they are invisible for [certain people]- and that hurts, it hurts (Adela, Interview #2, 7/5/19)

**TK to Be the Voice for ELs in this Rural School Community**

Participants recognized that the invisibility ELs experienced in Ivy County is exacerbated by the physical (insularity, access to resources, and funding) and social aspects (the people, sense of community, their way of life) of rurality. In order to improve ELs’ access to an equitable education, participants felt it was their responsibility to serve as the voice for ELs and their families and increase their visibility in this rural school community.

Two examples from Jack exemplified his desire to improve ELs’ academic success for ELs and increased their visibility: a Hispanic awareness project and the implementation of a self-contained ESOL sheltered classroom. A self-contained ESOL classroom, was atypical for this school. In this classroom ELs were provided with specialized intervention and support via a full-time bilingual paraprofessional and Jack. In particular, a self-contained ESOL classroom used a variety of classroom configurations where learners conducted academic work with other EL students and were mainstreamed for non-academic subjects and non-instructional parts of the day. In
addition, the teacher in the self-contained ESOL classroom had to “level instruction”. This meant that the teacher had to plan small-group and whole-group lessons given the varying levels of ELs’ English language proficiency. His project consisted on allowing ELs to research relevant Hispanic artists, athletes, and writers to prepare and display a poster board for the ESOL fair. Jack learned that the students did not even know some of the personalities they researched. With this project Jack began to advocate for both ELs’ culture and language as well as increased their visibility in their school. Jack explained that the students were very proud of their accomplishments and felt valued. Figure 5-16 showed the poster the students made.

![Figure 5-16. Jack's example of advocacy. Photo courtesy of the author.](image)

Recognizing the existing EL inequities in his school, he acknowledged that he felt the responsibility to be an advocate for ELs.

I feel the responsibility. I don't feel like I've been able to step out yet. But I feel like I am an advocate for ... Even like the language used or the keeping it to where it's something that we can constantly keep on our minds with our EL teaching practices, that is something that I tried to keep
in the forefront of our school, and our instruction. (Jack, Interview #2, 6/25/19)

Similarly, Adela felt it was her responsibility to bridge cultural gaps by creating cultural activities that valued students’ home language and culture. This was a way for Adela to not only learn from and connect with her EL students, but it was also a way to make ELs less invisible to school administrators, educators, and the rest of the students. One of her most popular activities was the día de los muertos celebration (Day of the Dead), in which Mexicans honored their dead relatives. Adela would celebrate the Day of the Dead in her classroom every year during the month of November as her students looked forward to the event. For the ESOL Fair, Adela decided, with the help of some of her students, to showcase a sample of Mexican culture for the entire school by recreating the altar honoring the dead. They cooked favorite foods of their deceased families and brought pictures of them, candles, papel picado (tissue paper with cut-out shapes), and colorful sugar skulls. I took an opportunity to take a snapshot of the event. A representation of Day of the Dead at the ESOL fair activity is shown in Figure 5-17.

Adela recognized the need to enhance communication about school activities for ELs and their families. She realized that although the English-speaking students had a college night—a night in which EL families and students were invited to learn about the college application process, including financial aid, application forms, and other important information—
there was not such an event planned for ELs and their families in their language. Adela, with the help of her students, organized a college night during the Christmas time, Navidad Hispana, conducted in Spanish in which she decided to showcase her students’ talents. She described how her students wrote the sketch for a play, prepared dances and songs for the activity. Families brought typical foods from their country. Adela asserted that there were very few opportunities for the Hispanic culture and language to be valued in the school. Adela prepared different tables with information about the college process in Spanish and invited a Spanish speaker to talk to the EL families and students about careers. Adela shared with me that she felt the responsibility to advocate for the ELs in her school.

With activities like this one, Adela remarked,

Pero muchas de las cosas que hacemos, van más relacionadas para que ellos se identifiquen con su cultura, ¿entiendes? La comida de
Guatemala, de El Salvador, de México, cuando hago mis celebraciones, trato de que sean de esos países para que ellos se vean representados, porque ellos no tienen esa oportunidad en otras clases. (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

A lot of the things we do, are related so that the identify with their culture. You understand? The Guatemalan food, El Salvador, from Mexico, when I do my celebrations I try to include those countries so they see themselves represented because they don’t have that opportunity in other classes. (Adela, Interview #1, 6/28/19)

Figure 5-18. College Fair organized by Adela. Photo courtesy of the author.

Figure 5-18 shows that snapshot I took of the college counselor that attended the program.

As part of an assignment for one of the PD courses offered by Project STELLAR, Jacqueline and Marisol requested that the school’s administration added important announcements in Spanish on their school’s marquee which could be viewed by anyone driving by the outside of the school. In an effort of inclusion of ELs and their families,
Jacqueline and Marisol intended to keep parents informed of their children’s school events as well as elevate ELs’ culture and language (See Figure 5-19).

Figure 5-19. Marquee Project by Jacqueline and Marisol. Advocating for ELs. Photo courtesy of Jacqueline and Marisol.

Recognizing the difficulty for both teachers to remind the front office to continually display Spanish announcements in the marquee, Marisol explained,

I think a lot of the Spanish speaking families in our school that do not speak English. Walking into the office is a very scary thing. Seeing this [sign] outside the office, I think it eases the tension a little, and they open up more to try to communicate because I see, at least they can start reading something they can understand. Before walking into the office and realizing nobody speaks Spanish, they got a way to call Jacqueline or me to the office to translate. Honestly, the marquee to me eases the tension for them right before they walk in through the doors, because it's in front of the main office. [...] It's something I feel that they got to practice more, because it starts off as a project, and at first it looks good, but it has to turn
into like I guess a common routine. [...] I understand there’s nobody that speaks Spanish in the office, so it's not like somebody could say, "Hey, remember the marquee, you have to do it in Spanish." So, Jacqueline’s a teacher, I'm a teacher, it was kind of hard, but we tried the best we can with that. (Marisol, Interview #3, 7/3/19)

As described in Chapter 4, Marisol served as the leader and main participant of the EL families’ Monday Nights. During those events, Marisol explained that she arranged transportation through school buses and provided a safe environment in which families felt at ease and not afraid of possible deportation raids (as they were frequently happening in that area at the time of the study). She asserted that EL families enjoyed the gatherings as they were able to practice English (by working on a computer-based language learning program called Rosetta Stone) and socialized among their peers while EL students received tutoring assistance from other volunteers. Marisol stated that she knew the families well and the families relied on her for information as she was seen as the language broker informing them about school-related activities. Reviewing her résumé, Marisol’s past role as a paraprofessional allowed her to serve as the main liaison between EL families-ELs and the schools. In addition to serving as a language and cultural broker, Marisol’s interactions with her students’ families allowed her to know her EL students and families at a deeper level by learning about their lives outside school and serving as their representative in her school, as she remarked, “I feel like I have every right to speak and say what they want to say. I’m their voice. that’s a definite” (Marisol, Interview #4, 7/22/19).

Summary of Research Question Two

In the second section of this chapter, I presented the findings for the second research question: What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs? The findings were organized based on the conceptual framework in
Chapter 2, which guided the four interview sessions and photo elicitation methods with participants. Two main findings emerged from the participants’ data: 1) teachers’ knowledge of the uniqueness of the rural community in which they worked. This included TK knowledge of physical space and social processes characteristic of Ivy County, such as the relationship between race and rurality, a sense of place-fixedness or a rural way of life particular of Ivy County shaping EL education; and 2) teachers’ knowledge to be the voice of secondary EL students and families in this rural community.

**Chapter Summary**

In the first section of this chapter, I presented the findings for the first research question: What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? The findings were organized based on the conceptual framework in Chapter 2, which guided the four interview sessions and photo elicitation methods with participants. Three main findings emerged from the participants’ data: 1) teachers’ knowledge that reconceptualizing relationships with EL students required them to be authentic, and this included a sense of faith or religion; 2) teachers’ knowledge of bilingualism and hispanidad as a resource in their work with ELs and families; and, 3) teachers’ knowledge of EL-specialized instructional strategies for rural ELs. All three of these themes intersected with their knowledge of rurality and how the community functioned.

The second section of this chapter, I presented the findings for the second research question: What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs? The findings were organized based on the conceptual framework in
Chapter 2, which guided the four interview sessions and photo elicitation methods with participants. Two main findings emerged from the participants’ data: 1) teachers’ knowledge of the uniqueness of the rural community in which they worked. This included TK knowledge of physical space and social processes characteristic of Ivy County, such as the relationship between race and rurality, a sense of place-fixedness or a rural way of life particular of Ivy County shaping EL education; and 2) teachers’ knowledge to be the voice of secondary EL students and families in this rural community.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in a rural secondary school community. A review of previous and current literature showed that there is a dearth of research examining what EL secondary teachers know (Faltis et al., 2010; Reeves, 2006). In fact, research examining TK for ELs in rural settings is largely absent (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Cicchinelli & Barley, 2010; Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017; Coady, Lopez, Marichal, & Heffington, 2017; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Williams & Grooms, 2016). This study was undertaken to address these shortcomings in the academic literature, particularly in examining what secondary teachers say they know about their work with ELs in a rural Florida community, with the goal of improving education for rural EL students and the preparation and PD for EL teachers in these communities.

Two main research questions guided this study: 1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings? and 2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs? In Chapter 2, I examined the construct of TK by presenting a sociohistorical and epistemological overview of TK that represented a continuum between positivist paradigms—that is, paradigms that considered the teacher as a recipient and transmitter of knowledge whose effectiveness could be observed and quantified—to more constructivist conceptualizations—that is, paradigms that underscored teachers’ agency as a thinker and creator of knowledge mediated by their
personal experiences. This constructivist perspective underscored the subjective and more personal nature of TK. Second, I emphasized the importance of the personal-professional nexus in teaching ELs in rural secondary settings. I argued that TK was comprised of two main areas: 1) personal knowledge and experience, and 2) professional knowledge and experience. Both areas included educational and life experiences. Although these appear in the construct as separate conceptual boxes, I acknowledge the overlap and interplay between them. For instance, teachers do not cease to be personal when teaching, and their professional lives and experiences do not disappear when they leave school. I theorized that these areas were two essential components of the overall knowledge-base of teachers that affected teachers’ work with EL students. Third, I reviewed the academic literature on the specialized TK for effective EL instruction. The empirical research on EL knowledge for instruction focused mainly on what all teachers needed to know and should be able to do (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016; Genessee, Lindholm-Leary, Sanders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Specific research on TK for effectively addressing secondary ELs was largely absent (Faltis et al., 2010; Reeves, 2006). Thus, I argued that the understanding of the relationship between TK and instructional EL secondary practices was still emerging.

Lastly, I discussed the role that place plays in shaping TK for ELs. Expressly, the specificity of geographic space (Green & Letts, 2007; John & Ford, 2017) such as rurality as a contextual factor seemed to shape TK, because place is a dynamic and complex pedagogical construct (Gruenewald, 2003) that teachers consistently interact with and consistently affects their decisions. I theorized that problematizing place
(Green & Reid, 2014; White & Reid, 2008) was central for teachers to know and understand the specific “circumstances and specificity of rural education” (Green & Reid, 2014, p. 27) in the rural community in which they teach. This seemed especially evident in the limited research reviewed in rural education for ELs. Finally, Chapter 2 ended with a conceptual diagram that demonstrated the relationship between the constructs and that provided an overall conceptual framework for the study.

In this study I identified five teacher knowledges: 1) teachers’ knowledge that their bilingualism, hispanidad, and geographic backgrounds were a resource for teaching ELs; 2) teachers’ knowledge that conceptualizing relationships with EL students, which they expressed in two ways, by being authentic and displaying their religious beliefs; 3) teachers’ knowledge of the uniqueness of the rural community; 4) teachers’ knowledge to be the voice of secondary EL students and families in the rural school community of Ivy County; and 5) teachers’ knowledge of EL specialized instruction necessary for teaching ELs in this rural school community.

Findings from this study demonstrated the significance of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges to continually guide teachers’ professional work with secondary ELs in this rural community. Although each of the teacher knowledges played a role in their instruction, teacher personal knowledge played a crucial role in how they made sense of their place-based knowledges. Personal and place-based knowledges interacted to enable teachers to make sense of and express their professional knowledge. Both personal and place-based knowledges emerged in this study as the more prominent influences on TK and their work with secondary ELs in this particular rural school community because they informed how they constructed their
relationships with students as people. A significant finding indicated that personal and place-based knowledges mediated and were constantly mediated by participants’ relational knowledge. That is, participants underscored the fundamental role of building teacher-EL student relationships facilitating their work. This relationship-building process transcended one-way dynamics that literature on teaching EL students has suggested in the sense ‘that teachers should know their students’ backgrounds in order to teach ELs.’ This relational knowledge entailed a give and take or bidirectional relationship-building process. In this particular rural community, the role of the participants in the lives of their EL students, and who the EL students were mattered in order for them to enact their professional work. Thus, participants’ relational knowledge was central in mediating and constructing TK for secondary ELs in this rural community.

The findings also demonstrated that participants’ knowledges, e.g., personal, professional, and place-based, are not to be understood as decontextualized or discrete entities, rather, as constantly interconnected in a dialectic mode, continually shaping and reshaping each other.

What emerges from the findings from this study is that who teachers are and where they are from inform their personal knowledge, which along with their knowledge of place underscore the pivotal role of teachers’ relational knowledge. The teachers’ personal knowledges informed by the knowledge of the rural community in which they work highlighted the need for building authentic relationships with their EL students in order to invoke their professional EL specialized knowledge. Thus, the unique interconnectedness of these four dimensions constantly inform the different approaches teachers appropriate to enact their professional EL knowledge. This study’s framework
has the potential to inform teacher education and PD programs to explore, reflect, and examine how teachers’ life biographies and attention to place impact EL teachers’ work in rural communities.

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the study in relation to the dimensional model presented below in Figure 6-1. I propose a new model that consists of four interrelated dimensions of TK: 1) personal; 2) relational; 3) place-based; and 4) professional. Then, in light of the study’s findings, I interrogate the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2 and describe the framework proposed as depicted in Figure 6-1. Lastly, I provide a summary of the chapter in the last section.

Figure 6-1. Dimensions of secondary EL TK in Ivy County
The Personal Dimension of TK

A significant finding emerging from this study was the prominent influence of participants’ personal cultural and linguistic backgrounds on their work with ELs in this rural school community. The four focal participants in the study acknowledged that teachers’ cultural and linguistic background was an asset in their work with ELs and EL families. Both Marisol and Adela asserted that their bilingualism and hispanidad were resources for communication with ELs and their families allowing them to make connections with them. These connections helped them establish strong bonds with students to attend to the whole child. This included learning about their socio-emotional as well as their academic needs. They also relied on their cultural background to inform cultural and instructional activities in the classroom that elevated their students’ heritage. Jacqueline’s bilingualism allowed her to communicate with students and families one-on-one in their home language to expedite the process of identifying the EL students’ emergent needs unrelated to the students’ bilingualism such as learning disabilities or emotional issues at home. Jack recognized the importance of being bilingual in that he failed to capitalize on learning the language when he had the opportunity early in life. Nevertheless, his driven personality and his perseverance allowed him to find other ways of accessing linguistic resources to communicate with EL students such as technology. The importance for bilingual and Hispanic teachers to build these personal relationships of mutual trust or confianza have been recognized by multiple scholars over decades of research (Ellis, 2006; Galindo, 1996; González & Moll, 2002; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Monzó & Rueda, 2001, Okhremtchouk & González, 2014). Empirical research has demonstrated that Hispanic teachers positively impact minority student achievement (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2005; Flores, Clark, Claeys, &
Villarreal, 2007; Villegas et al., 2012). The researchers acknowledged that the positive influence Hispanic teachers exerted over students stemmed from cultural and linguistic experiences (e.g., way of interaction, use of time and space, and other conversational patterns) that were similar to those of their EL students (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). For instance, Okhremtchouk and González (2014) underscored the Hispanic teachers’ reliance on their hispanidad and bilingualism for making their instruction relevant to ELs. Findings from their study on the perspectives of Latino teachers in Arizona aligned with the findings in the current study regarding the prominent influence of teachers’ personal backgrounds on their work with ELs. The teachers in Okhremtchouk and González’s (2014) study stressed the importance of integrating cultural diversity into classroom and curricular practices.

Adela’s experiences in her high school Spanish language classroom in Puerto Rico influenced her career and her love for Spanish. In alignment with the findings in this study, Reeves’ study (2009) showed that teachers’ individual characteristics and their personal experiences—bilingualism, diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, certain personality traits, and positive attitudes toward ELs—played a role on the teachers’ knowledge base for teaching ELs. The participants’ language learner biographies, captured through several interviews, revealed that having little or no experience with L2 acquisition impacted the teachers’ knowledge about language in two ways: “their ability to predict learner difficulties with language and their understanding of the L2 learning process of learners” (p. 120). For instance, one of the monolingual teachers in the study, who had two years of Spanish as a foreign language, which he had learned following the grammar-translation method, could not recall any particular
instance of his limited high school Spanish grammar instruction. This limited experience did not portray language as an authentic tool of communication rather, linguistic information was presented as a fixed system of rules that needed to be memorized. The data collected by the researcher provided examples of how inadequate language learning experiences interacted with teachers’ linguistic knowledge of English for teaching ELs. This study confirmed that teachers’ biographies as language learners shaped their linguistic knowledge for teaching ELs.

Findings from this study illustrated that the four participants’ personal educational and cultural experiences exerted a significant influence on how they constructed their personal knowledge and how they enacted their professional work with secondary ELs in this rural school community. For instance, the four focal participants described that having personal experiences and exposure to cultural diversity growing up or by traveling abroad facilitated their work with ELs in rural Florida. All four participants revealed positive attitudes towards ELs and designed classrooms that were welcoming to their EL students and families. These findings aligned with scholars who have suggested that “teachers’ professional perspectives and actions are influenced by what they have seen, heard, and done” in their personal lives such as having contact with people who speak languages other than English (LOTE; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008, p. 611). The researchers suggested that these personal experiences can promote teachers’ deep connections with their ELs because teachers who had previous experiences with other diverse cultures held positive beliefs and attitudes toward ELs and their EL families. Similarly, Pettit (2011) found that teachers who had greater exposure to language diversity, or who spoke another language held more positive
beliefs toward ELs and informed their professional instruction. Youngs and Youngs (2001) postulated that classroom teachers who had lived or taught outside the US had significantly more positive attitudes towards ELs than those lacking such experiences. Different from the more quantitative nature of the above studies, the findings in this narrative-informed qualitative study illustrated, through the voices of rural teachers, the crucial influence that teachers’ personal experiences exert in their work with ELs.

Another finding emerging from the data was that the participants’ experiences in their personal geographies shaped their personal knowledge, which in turn informed how they understood life and work in Ivy County. All of the participants demonstrated a place-consciousness by recalling their personal childhood experiences of place and comparing and contrasting that with their personal and professional experiences in the rural community in which they worked. For instance, Jack’s personal familiarity with rural geography growing up in TN contrasted with the rurality encountered in Ivy County, Florida. As he observed, being an insider to rurality and an outsider in Hibiscus allowed him to realize how the strengths and weaknesses of the way of life in Ivy County impacted his work with ELs. In alignment with John and Ford’s (2017) work, the findings from this study support their contention that “the place in which one engages in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience” (p. 12). Scholars have also recognized the dynamic nature of places as pedagogical and productive entities shaping identities and constantly teaching us (Corbett, 2016; Eppley 2015; Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003). The findings from this study regarding the personal dimension of TK in EL secondary rural settings extend the limited research on
“teachers who enter the field of education with the intention of teaching in rural communities” (Burton & Johnson, 2010, p. 376).

**The Centrality of the Relational Dimension: Teacher-EL Secondary Student**

A prominent finding in this study is that participants acknowledged that conceptualizing the teacher-EL student relationship was a priority in their professional work in Ivy County. The participants’ personal knowledge along with their place-based knowledge underscored the centrality of the teacher-EL student relationship. This relational dimension of TK is the core from which the teachers in this study could enact their professional EL knowledge.

What was crucial in these teachers’ attempts to construct authentic relationships with their students was that they not only tried to learn about the students but also shared relevant experiences about themselves with their students. Thus, while the EL literature has emphasized the need for teachers to have a “contextual understanding” of ELs’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013, p. 95) or a “personal knowledge of the ELs in their classrooms” (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, p. 226), the findings from the present study illuminate the importance of the bi-directional sharing of personal experiences in the development of a teacher-student relationship. That is, the findings from this study regarding the relational dimension of a teacher’s knowledge went beyond a checklist or description of what to do in acquiring knowledge about their secondary EL students as most of the previous EL literature has suggested (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Gallagher & Haan, 2018).

The findings from this study suggested, as part of this relational dimension of TK, that the teachers demonstrated a vulnerability to their students in a fundamental way: to
show they had experienced similar difficulties in their own personal lives. At the same time, another key component of the relationship is that the teachers knew not to share inappropriate information. As Jacqueline noted, “I find it’s necessary. Not like putting you in my personal life because my life is not your business, but my experiences that pertain to what you are doing, they really are. And I tell my kids.” These teachers shared personal information that enabled them to connect in an emotional and authentic way to earn EL secondary students’ trust or confianza to engage them in learning.

The findings from this study aligned more with the work of Freire (2017) who suggested that “education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction” by conceptualizing and reconciling “the poles of contradiction in that relationship” (p. 72). The participants’ descriptions of the process of teacher-EL student relationship building aligned with Freire in that both teachers and EL students became active participants in that relationship, and they were both teachers and students simultaneously. In conceptualizing the teacher-EL student relationship, data suggested that this was an ongoing process through caring dialogue, and planned and implemented activities that eventually generated trust. Freire (2017) affirmed that dialogue founded in “love, humility, and faith” resulted in an authentic “relationship of which mutual trust between” teacher and student (p. 91). Freire added that authentic humanism in education “is not carried on by ‘A’ for ‘B’ or by ‘A’ about ‘B,’ but rather by ‘A’ with (italicized in original text) ‘B” (p. 93). As Freire (2017) explained, the teacher is no longer “the-one-who teaches, but one who is herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (p. 80). Freire proposed that “through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to
exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (p. 80). In alignment with Freire, bell hooks suggested that students should not be the only ones who are asked to share aspects of their personal life. Her engaged pedagogy suggests that teachers also grow and are empowered by the relational process. However, this empowerment is not realized unless teachers show their vulnerability in the classroom as “being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit” (p. 21). Similar to the findings from the teachers in this study, hooks acknowledged that educators who embrace the challenge to enter in this relational dimension are “better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply” (p. 21). In other words, educators are better able to use their personal knowledge to inform their professional knowledge. As hooks described,

When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material. (p. 22)

Another finding from this study demonstrated that the personal knowledge of the Hispanic teachers in this study connected to their place-based knowledge informed the way to construct mutual caring (con cariño) relationships with their Hispanic EL students. Supporting this finding, Valenzuela (1999) described an authentic form of caring necessary to educate Hispanics that “emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students” (p. 61). Authentic care, as described by Valenzuela, transcends the notion of supportive relationships. Valenzuela underscored the need for teachers to incorporate actions that include genuine consideration of the person being cared for and their capacities. Valenzuela (1999) added, “Students’ precondition to
caring about school is that they are engaged in a caring relationship with an adult at school” (p. 79). Thus, in building connections with secondary EL students, teachers in this study showed cariño (affection), love, caring, and empathy towards students’ lived experiences as they developed their mutual caring relationships. As Nieto (2005) explained, “caring has included not only providing affection (cariño) and support for students, but also developing strong interpersonal relationships with students and their families” which included respecting and affirming their linguistic and cultural backgrounds while building on those to enhance teaching and learning (p. 32).

While the teachers in this study displayed a caring disposition toward their EL students facilitating the mutual relationship-building process with their students, they accomplished the task maintaining their authority in the classroom. This finding is supported in the work by Noddings. A relational ethic of caring, according to Noddings (2005) is a relationship of mutuality as well as an emotion or disposition. This implied that caring involves reciprocity between the parties involved. While her work is in alignment with Freire’s and hooks’ in that it illustrates the importance of the student-teacher relationship, she describes it as a mutual and unequal relation of caring. She posited,

‘A’, the carer, cares for another, ‘B’, and ‘B’ recognizes [receives ‘A’s caring and reacts in a way that shows it] that ‘A’ cares for ‘B’. […] ‘A’ genuinely listens, feels, and responds with honest concern for ‘B’s expressed interests or needs. […] A relation of caring is complete when ‘B’s recognition becomes part of what ‘A’ receives in his or her attentiveness. (p. 91)

Noddings described the mutuality in this relationship as unequal because the teacher occupies the position of carer most of the time, while students are necessarily the cared-for.
Findings from the study demonstrated that teachers were guided by their religious beliefs in their work with ELs in this rural community. Specifically, three participants, Adela, Marisol, and Jacqueline, acknowledged that religion was a source of guidance in their work with ELs and played a significant role in building teacher-EL student relationships. Guided by their personal religious belief, their deep knowledge of place and EL students, and the mutual relational process with students in this religious rural community, the teachers displayed religious motifs in their classrooms (Marisol), prayed for students’ intentions as requested by the students themselves (Adela), and used the Spanish Bible as an instructional tool for developing L1 literacy to facilitate L2 (Jacqueline).\(^2\) Clandinin and Connelly’s (1987) definition of personal practical knowledge (PPK) underscored the moral and affective aspect of a teacher’s personal knowledge and its influential role in their professional lives. In alignment with Clandinin and Connelly, Noddings (1988, 2005) suggested a moral orientation in teaching or a relational ethic of caring, as noted and described above, which presumed that human relationships with each other are characterized by affective and reciprocal encounters as examples of a moral education. Noddings (2005) further suggested that “who we are, to whom we are related, and how we are situated” matter to develop a relational ethic of caring in education (p. 21).

I hypothesize that teachers’ religious beliefs, which inform the moral life of a teacher, are part of who they are and are not separate from their identities, as Jacqueline expressed in her interviews. Scholars have recognized the role that religion

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\(^2\) The use of the L1 Bible further demonstrated how their personal and place-based dimensions of TK informed the relational dimension which also shaped and was shaped by the professional EL knowledges. This is an example of the interconnectedness of the four dimensions as they appear in the diagram [Figure 6-1]
plays in the personal lives of people in the US (Fang, 2005; Randall, 1997; White, 2009; Woodward & Mazumdar, 2005). While the majority of educational articles addressed the role of religion in relation to the students’ lives and educational experiences, research on how teachers negotiate religion in the classroom is largely absent from the educational literature (White, 2009). Because teachers make daily decisions, both conscious and unconscious, related to academic instruction and relationships in the classroom, their decisions shape the quality of a student’s education. However, little is known about how teachers use their personal religious beliefs to make both non-instructional and instructional decisions. Findings from this study extend previous research on morality to suggest the importance of religious beliefs as a source of personal moral guidance informing the rural secondary EL teachers’ personal, relational, place-based, and professional dimensions of TK in Ivy County.

The Place-Based Dimension of TK

Participants’ place-based knowledges emerged as a prominent component of TK in this rural school community, constantly interconnected to participants’ personal knowledge, mediated by and informing the relational dimension of TK and shaping and being shaped by the teachers’ professional EL knowledges.

A main finding from this study is the teachers’ knowledge of the uniqueness of this rural community impacting their work with ELs in Ivy County. The participants demonstrated deep knowledge and understanding of specific physical aspects of space in Ivy County such as its geographic distances, infrastructure, and school funding impacting the ELs’ educational opportunities in Ivy County. When addressing questions of space specifically, participants demonstrated the interconnections between Ivy County’s space and social processes. That is, spaces are localities inscribed by social
processes, that is, they foreground spatial, social, cultural, and historical knowledge production (Gruenewald, 2003; Reagan et al., 2019). Findings from this study suggested that places are more than a geographical location. Participants described places as pedagogical spaces that shape people as people are shaped by them. For instance, Jacqueline noted, “Place informs what you need to know, so place is very important in education and in growing up.” Reagan et al. (2019) have noted the sustained influence of the literature on place-based (Comber et al., 2007; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009) and place-conscious (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; White & Reid, 2008) approaches to education in which scholars recognized the specificity and complexities of places. Findings from this study aligned with Gruenewald’s (2003) research on place-conscious approaches to education when he remarked, places “teach us” and “make us” (p. 621) and “themselves have something to say” (p.624). That is, places are unique and rich in human-world relationships; people make and shape places and places shape and make people. Other scholars have attempted to define place; these conceptualizations of rurality range from false urban-rural binary comparisons (John & Ford, 2017) to “bureaucratically-delineated” categories (Eppley, 2009, p. 8) that tend to standardize rurality, thereby “erasing the differences of culture, race, ethnicity, class, and linguistic usage” particular to rural places (Donehower, Hogg, & Schell, 2007, p. 23).

The limited literature on rural education over the last decade has emphasized the importance of problematizing “place-as-identity” or “thisness” focusing on what happens in *this* school, *this* place as opposed to *that* one (Thomson, 2000 as cited in Green & Reid, 2014, p. 33). Findings from this study aligned with work by Green and Reid (2014...
Researchers and educators that insist in the particularities of place acknowledge the complexity of situated practice; rather than generalizing place as a static, universal entity (Green & Reid, 2014). Azano’s (2011) work contended that teachers working in rural places and rural students “are deeply tied to locality by their ‘sense of place’” (p. 1). Hutchinson (2004) described a sense of place as a constructed reality “informed by the unique experiences, histories, motives, and goals that each of us [teachers] brings to the spaces with which we identify” (p. 11). The present study adds to the limited rural literature by illuminating the interconnected nature of teachers’ personal, relational, professional knowledges informed and informing their place-based knowledges as they work with ELs students in this unique rural community. Findings from this study revealed, through the teachers’ voices, the importance of recognizing the influential nature of the rich human interactions that constantly enlighten teachers’ place-based knowledges and that interact with their personal and relational knowledges informing their professional knowledges.

A significant finding in this study is that participants acknowledged the combined social, racial, and cultural aspects of rurality involved in the social interaction of people in communities in that physical space. Participants demonstrated knowledge that these interactions replicated in the school. In spite of the historical segregation in Ivy County, school was the place in which all the community gathered to attend school related activities and town social events. As Adela remarked, the school was “the glue” gathering students and locals in one space. The participants underscored the need to understand these social processes as they replicated in the classroom. These findings from this study support the work of Green and Reid (2014).
underscored the significance of place and space as a consideration in understanding and appreciating the specificity of rural schooling (Green & Reid, 2014). Underscoring the significance of the relation among place, space, and location, John and Ford (2017) remarked,

There is no doubt that the place in which one engages in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience. Thus, [...] it is absolutely imperative that we think not only about the relations between place, space, and education, but also that we think deeply about how to conceptualize each of those terms. [...] There are problems, issues, possibilities, and constraints that are specific to particular places and to particular types of places and the power relationships represented in naming and claiming these spaces. [...] Instead of thinking about places as static entities, we should turn our attention to social processes, to the ways in which we live, work, play, desire and, hopefully, cooperate. (pp. 12-13)

Another finding emerging from the participants’ data was the importance of EL teachers noticing that the way of life in Ivy County—slow-paced that seemed deceivingly simple—permeated every town and every school activity. That is, participants acknowledged how their rural community functioned and aligned their work to the social functioning rather than vice versa or expecting the community to change for them. The findings from this study aligned with scholarship that recognized the human agency in place making (Green, Noone, & Nolan, 2013) and observed that “construction of the self as a rural teacher thus draws on the role one fills in both the school and the community in a particular context, and is a highly individual project” (Reagan et al., 2019, p. 87). Undoubtedly, the participants recognized that the process of becoming personally acquainted with Ivy County social processes informed their professional work as teachers. I postulate based on the participants’ data, that the teachers have personally internalized and acknowledged the importance of having a place-conscious approach by becoming “simultaneously compelled and seduced” into transforming their
work to fit the specificity of Ivy County (Corbett, 2010, p. 84). This process involved deepening their relations to the EL students and to the community, becoming authentic teachers, and blurring the lines between their personal and professional lives. Findings from the present study adds validity to previous conceptual rural research that supports the pedagogical nature of places. That is, teachers’ place-based knowledge shapes and is shaped by teachers’ personal knowledge informing and being informed by their relational dimension in their professional work with ELs.

Another finding emerging from this study illuminated the interconnectedness of the four dimensions of TK proposed by the present study: the recognition by participants that the physical (insularity, access to resources, and funding) and social processes in Ivy County (the people, sense of community, the way of life, school administration’s indifference) were obstacles to an equitable EL education. The participants recognized the marginalization that ELs were experiencing as they were “ignored and overlooked” by educators. They also recognized that EL families lacked power in that place [Ivy County school]. They understood this reaction was due to the educators’ inability to communicate directly with ELs and families. Thus, participants felt empowered to serve as the voice for ELs in this rural community and felt a responsibility to mentor and lead other colleagues and advocate for the needs of ELs and their families in their school.

The bilingual participants acknowledged serving as language and cultural brokers in the schools as needed. They served in this way during and after school hours at school related activities and served as mentors to other teachers to facilitate EL instruction. All four participants asserted they have provided on-site coaching to teachers in their school, bridging the cultural and linguistic gap between EL families and
schools in Ivy County. Okhremtchouk & González (2014) recognized the need for bilingual and Hispanic teachers to challenge the system by “showing resistance and creating safe places for their students in the classroom environment that they can control and where they can make a difference” (p. 31). The potential for Hispanic teachers and teachers of color to build cultural bridges to learning and serve as role models for culturally and linguistically diverse students have been observed by scholars (Okhremtchouk & González, 2014; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Findings from this study indicated that the participants expressed possessing qualities of teacher leadership and advocacy through initiating small but collaborative and purposeful acts in their schools. In other words, based on the study’s findings, I theorize that the participants’ combined personal and place-based knowledges served to bridge, or at least mitigate, the cultural and linguistic gaps between these schools and the EL students in this rural county. In doing so, they entered the process of becoming teacher-leaders in their rural community while opening the door to an advocacy stance. By recognizing the existing EL inequities in their schools, they felt compelled to build collaborations with colleagues around them, and to be the voice for EL students and families in this rural community of Ivy County. These findings aligned with the work by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) that defined a teacher-leader (TL) as a professional with four main qualities: A teacher-leader can 1) lead within and beyond the classroom; 2) identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; 3) influence others toward improved educational practice; and 4) accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of leadership. Research on TLs has demonstrated how TLs transform educational settings.
In alignment with Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (2009) work, Palmer (2018) identified similar qualities across her study participants. She found that bilingual teacher-leaders of EL students were reflexive of their practices and engaged in ongoing inquiry, collaborated with colleagues in co-constructed ways, and advocated for educational equity and change on behalf of their bilingual students. In addition, bilingual teacher-leaders took on the additional role of acting as cultural and linguistic brokers, developing an awareness of their own and their students’ identities. Findings from this study also support the work by Domínguez (2017). He used the term *ontological distance* to describe “the dehumanizing distancing between subjects that emerges,” in this case, from uninterrogated cultural, racial, and linguistic differences in this particular place (p. 226). The data suggested that the emerging TLs performed acts facilitated the bridging or hacer puentes (Domínguez, 2017 inspired by Gloria Anzaldúa’s poetry) of *ontological distances* between EL families and the predominantly White-monolingual school culture. The participants personally had the experience of bridging those ontological distances themselves informing their work. This is another way in which their personal and place-based knowledges shaped their professional knowledge.

Although I used a constructivist lens in this study, McDonough (2015) suggested that critical consciousness or critical reflection is the prelude to the participants’ emerging advocacy and leadership. Aligning with Freirean pedagogy in that action or performed activism is predicated upon critical reflection, the participants’ reflections that emerged from this study’s interviews allowed them to share their emerging activism. Their emerging activism consisted of serving as mentors to other colleagues, as cultural brokers, and as leaders who initiated school presentations and new curriculums for EL
students that had the potential to change ELs’ educational outcomes. Scholars have noted that educators in rural areas must serve as advocates for ELs in their schools (Ankeny, Marichal, & Coady, 2019; Bustamante, Brown, & Irby, 2010; Coady, 2019; Hansen-Thomas, 2018). A study in rural Texas explored how TLs advocated for ELs while attempting to make connections between pedagogy and the value of place (Bustamante, Brown, & Irby, 2010) and demonstrated the key role that rural TLs play in influencing changes that improve the academic achievement of ELs in rural schools. Findings from the present study complement the limited rural research on EL TK for secondary settings.

**The Professional EL Dimension**

As noted in Chapter 5, an important finding in this study was that participants’ personal knowledge along with their place-based knowledge underscored the centrality of the teacher-EL student relationship. This relational dimension of TK is the core from which the teachers in this study could enact their professional EL knowledge. The complex, fluid, and dialectic nature of these interconnected knowledges constantly informs the enactment of participants’ EL specialized professional and pedagogical knowledge. On the basis of the findings of the present study, I hypothesize that the complexity and interconnectedness of these fluid dimensions reflect the difficulties teachers encounter acquiring and implementing the knowledge gained in teacher preparation and education courses. Participants demonstrated knowledge of EL specialized knowledge which consisted of knowledge about: 1) SLA processes; 2) the use of L1 in instruction, and 3) ELs in US secondary schools. Since they participated in a professional development project, Project STELLAR, and were previously enrolled on EL instructional courses, the participants demonstrated knowledge of specialized EL
instruction, especially SLA processes and the use of the L1 for learning. My discussion in this section emphasizes the participants’ secondary EL professional dimension and how it interconnects with the other dimensions as proposed in the model depicted in Figure 6-1.

What was crucial about the participants’ findings is the way they enacted their professional EL knowledge in a secondary setting. They all asserted the use of differentiated instruction and instructional strategies that incorporated L1, such as scaffolding material, using sentence frames, cognates, word walls, and graphic organizers. They also understood that reducing the language demands for ELs by providing comprehensible input while simultaneously providing opportunities to develop academic language skills was imperative for L2 development. In their descriptions of how they designed their instruction, their personal and place-based knowledges continuously informed the relational dimension of their TK which helped activate their professional. For instance, Marisol first used her relational knowledge informed by her place-based and personal knowledge to design a classroom in which she “communicated with them [students] as one.” In this way she used her relational knowledge: her dialogue with the EL students, her personal display in the classroom, her personal background and experiences, and her knowledge of how the place functions to enact her professional EL classroom. In sum, she blended her personal and place-based knowledges and used them to engaged in the relational dimension in order to activate her professional dimension in this particular place. She developed a unique teaching style that made all her students feel included, affirmed, and valued. I hypothesize that the fact that Jack struggled to implement his EL instruction has to do
with the interplay of certain aspects of his personal and professional knowledge in particular. Although he does use methods to engage the students in mutual relationships and has a deep knowledge of place, his novice teaching experience (personal/professional) and his inability to speak the language of his EL students (personal) are dimensions that are still being negotiated.

As noted, much of the recent literature about educating bilingual students has focused on meeting the needs of ELs and has been centered on a list or a description of what all teachers need to know and be able to do to meet those needs (e.g., Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Sanders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Although several scholars have acknowledged the role that personal experiences play on teachers' professional lives (e.g., Brower & Korthagen, 2005; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; Gándara et al, 2005; Golombek, 1998; Pedrana, 2009; Reeves, 2009), the significance and interconnectedness of place-based, relational, and personal knowledges was never mentioned in these studies. As abovementioned, the scholarship on secondary school settings is scarce (Faltis et al., 2010, Reeves, 2006). There has been recent scholarship suggesting the need for a more caring and mutual teacher-student relationship that addresses a more humanistic EL pedagogy. Ramírez, Faltis, and de Jong (2018) have emphasized the significant role that teachers play in the lives of their students: “a dynamic learning relationship between teachers and students” (p. 8). Drawing from Freire, Reyes (2018) suggested the notion that teachers’ authentic thinking is based on communication between living beings. This suggests a humanistic pedagogy that “minimizes the distance between educator and marginalized youth” (p. 109) and humanizes teachers and EL secondary
students. This resonates with Dominguez’ s (2017) efforts to mitigate ontological distances between school culture and EL students and families. Findings from the present study adds to the limited EL rural literature and illuminate the complexities of TK in EL secondary rural settings.

Another finding from this study indicated the importance for secondary EL teachers to understand how the structure of US secondary schools shaped their work with ELs\(^3\). For instance, Jack, Jacqueline, and Marisol underscored the need for teachers to be aware that the content-area knowledge of ELs coming from other countries and, even from other areas in the US, could significantly differ to that of their English-speaking peers. Jacqueline acknowledged that if a student is not able to “navigate” the school culture and the place, the student could not possibly “settle down to learning.” She knew, as one of her responsibilities, to facilitate ELs’ cultural transition into their new environment.

Jacqueline’ suggestion is supported by the literature on EL secondary teaching. Scholars have recognized that developing content knowledge and L2 simultaneously at the secondary school level can be a daunting challenge for teachers as students are exposed to content in secondary settings (August & Shanahan, 2006; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011, 2016; Turkan et al., 2014; Valdés, 2004). Secondary teachers’ academic preparation tends to focus on development of the content-areas, rather than on language development. For secondary newcomer ELs, L2 development is compounded by their gaps in formal schooling (Rubenstein-Ávila, 2006). For ELs to succeed

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\(^3\) Findings discussed in this section should be considered as part of the place-based (structure of US secondary settings) and relational dimensions (ELs’ prior cultural backgrounds) and also connected to personal and professional EL dimensions. They are included in this section because this finding emerged during conversations of the participants’ professional EL knowledge and has been addressed as such in the literature. All these dimensions are interconnected and constantly informing each other.
academically and have a chance to enroll in higher education (if they so desire), secondary teachers must understand and recognize the sophisticated language demands in content areas other than English Language Arts (Turkan et al., 2014; Valdés, 2004). In alignment with these findings, the literature confirmed that this task becomes more complicated with the lack of teacher preparation and PD resources at the secondary level to teach ELs effectively (Reeves, 2006; Rubinstein-Ávila & Lee, 2014). Especially, the lack of teacher preparation and the dearth of PD resources for rural secondary teachers of ELs is a reality in the rural community of Ivy County (Coady, 2019; Freeman Field, 2008; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2014).

Findings from this study demonstrated that participants understood the importance for teachers to know ELs’ prior and cultural experiences to help them navigate secondary school cultures. Adela demonstrated knowledge that newcomer ELs coming midway to a US secondary setting bring with them educational, linguistic and cultural experiences or funds of knowledge that teachers need to learn from (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), to help ease the EL’s transition into a new school cultural context and, consequently, succeed academically. de Jong & Harper (2005) underscored the role that EL students’ prior background knowledge and learning experiences, such as those who have been schooled in their home country, play on their US education. Rubenstein-Ávila (2006) observed that the task of developing content knowledge and L2 simultaneously in secondary settings is compounded by the enrollment of EL students, for instance, in 10th grade, despite having only completed 4th grade in their country. Findings from this study aligned with research by de Jong,
Harper, and Coady (2013) that underscored the need for teachers to not overlook ELs’ relevant cultural differences, but 1) to identify (recognize) ELs’ funds of knowledge (their prior schooling, their home lives and communities, [González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005]) and to have a deep knowledge of the social and cultural differences of their linguistically and culturally diverse newcomer students; 2) to leverage (respect) and facilitate ELs’ navigation through the new school environment; 3) to reconcile the cultural differences by planning their participation, engagement and learning in the classroom 4) to enact (realization) effective and strategic instruction and by making classroom cultural norms explicit to them.

What emerges from the findings of the present study is that in this particular rural community, the prominence of teachers’ personal knowledges along with their deep knowledge of place underscored an engagement in the relational process which guided teachers’ professional work. These teachers understood that as they made sense of the workplace, their personal and place-based knowledges were constantly mediated by the relational process in which both students and teachers entered into communal dialogue to construct their own knowledges and TK understandings in this place. This is a highly relational process central for developing a TK for secondary ELs in this rural community.

**Rethinking TK for Rural Secondary ELs: The Relational Dimension**

Due to the absence of a TK theoretical framework that conceptualizes the interrelationship between teachers’ personal, professional, and place-based knowledges in the work of EL secondary teachers in this particular rural community, this study attempted to demonstrate these connections by proposing a new model in Figure 6-1. As illustrated in Figure 6-1, TK for secondary ELs in this rural community is composed of four dimensions of teachers’ knowledge: 1) personal; 2) relational; 3)
place-based; and 4) professional. Drawing from the findings in this study, the large bidirectional arrow in the center represents the prominent influence and interconnectedness of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledge dimensions. This underscores the significant influence of both personal and place-based knowledges in the teachers’ work with secondary ELs in this rural community. In contrast to the initial conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, the circle connecting the four bubbles in Figure 6-1 show a more dynamic, dialectic, and continuous relationship amongst the dimensions. In addition, the larger bubbles of personal, relational, and place-based dimensions represent their significance in guiding and shaping teachers’ professional EL TK.

The model proposed in Figure 6-1 demonstrates that teachers’ personal and place-based dimensions of TK constantly inform and shape each other and highlighted the centrality of the relational dimension (located on the middle at the top of the diagram). As teachers engage in their place of work and make sense of that place, teachers recognized the need to conceptualize the teacher-EL student relationship constantly informed by their personal lives, backgrounds, and educational experiences. As a result, teachers and EL students co-constructed their relationships as they engaged in that place. This relational process is central to understand and enact teachers’ professional EL TK in this particular rural school community. Thus, the findings in this study suggested that who teachers are and where they come from as well as who their students are and where they came from in this particular rural place mattered for enacting a TK for secondary ELs in Ivy County rural community.
The findings from this study inform and empower teacher preparation and PD programs to shift their emphasis from uniquely emphasizing professional instructional knowledge to a richer exploration and extension of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges. In rural school communities where many teachers come from White-middle class backgrounds, it is imperative to allow teachers to reflect on and examine their own personal lives, experiences, and backgrounds and how these differ and interact with their EL students’ lives, experiences, and backgrounds and the place in which they work. This study’s framework has the potential to inform teacher education and PD program designs for EL teachers in rural communities.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of the study in relation to the TK framework presented in Chapter 2. I proposed a new four-dimensional model demonstrating that the personal dimension of the participants’ TK and their place-based dimension mattered and continuously informed their professional knowledge for teaching ELs. This connection underscored the pivotal role of the relational dimension of TK. I theorized that the construction of the self as a teacher in a rural community (the personal, place-based and professional aspects) draws on the role of that teacher in the rural school community. Thus, personal knowledges of teachers are constantly informed by a sense of place. Then, in light of the study’s findings, the TK framework reflect the significant role of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges and the centrality of teachers’ relational knowledges in their work as secondary teachers of ELs in a rural community as demonstrated by Figure 6-1.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this narrative informed qualitative study was to examine what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in rural secondary settings. With this goal in mind, the main research question was, “What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching ELs in rural settings?” The second research question was, “What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with ELs?” A constructivist epistemological perspective was adopted to frame this narrative informed qualitative study to illuminate what the four focal teachers revealed about the teaching and learning of secondary ELs in a rural community in the southeastern US. A constructivist epistemology suggested that each person’s way of making sense of such experiences is valid and worthy of respect (Crotty, 1998) and underscored the unique personal and professional experiences that shaped the knowledge of the four focal participants working in a secondary rural setting. My personal background and experiences also shaped my interpretation of the findings as I made sense of what participants said they know about their work with secondary ELs in a rural setting.

Findings from this study demonstrated the centrality of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges continually guiding teachers’ professional work with secondary ELs in this rural community. The way in which participants constructed their personal knowledge was fundamental and continually connected to their understanding of place impacting the enactment of professional knowledge. Both personal and place-based knowledges emerged in this study as the most prominent influences on teachers’
knowledges and their work with secondary ELs in this particular rural school community. The findings also demonstrated that participants’ knowledges, e.g., personal, professional, and place-based, are not to be understood as decontextualized or discrete entities; rather, as constantly interconnected in a dialectic mode, shaping and reshaping each other continually. A significant finding indicated that personal and place-based knowledges were constantly mediated by participants’ relational knowledge. That is, participants underscored the fundamental role of building teacher-EL student relationships facilitating their work. Participants’ relational knowledge was crucial in mediating and constructing TK for secondary ELs in this rural community. Participants underscored the fundamental role of building teacher-EL student relationships facilitating their work. This relationship-building process transcended one-way dynamics as the EL literature has suggested. The relational process entailed a give and take or bidirectional relationship-building. Thus, in this particular rural community, who participants were in the life of their EL students and who the EL students were mattered for developing their professional work.

Addressing the research questions, three main findings emerged regarding teachers’ personal and professional knowledges which indicated that: 1) teachers’ knowledge that bilingualism and hispanidad were a resource in their work with ELs and families, including personal geographic background; 2) teachers’ knowledge that conceptualizing teacher-EL student relationships that were authentic was needed. This included a sense of faith or religion guiding their work; and, 3) teachers’ knowledge of EL specialized professional for rural ELs was necessary. Participants also
demonstrated that their personal and professional knowledges continuously shaped each other as were also informed by rurality.

Findings from this study also revealed that participants’ place-based knowledges were pivotal in their work with secondary ELs in this particular rural community, because the participants’ personal knowledges and who they were in their personal and professional lives informed and were informed by a sense of place. Two main findings emerged from the participants’ data: 1) teachers’ knowledge of the uniqueness of the rural community in which they worked. This included TK knowledge of physical space and social processes characteristic of Ivy County, such as the relationship between race and rurality, a sense of place-fixedness or a rural way of life particular of Ivy County shaping EL education; and 2) teachers’ knowledge to be the voice of secondary EL students and families in this rural community.

The findings from this study suggested a dynamic relationship amongst the dimensions of the framework in Figure 6-1. The participants’ data demonstrated that teachers’ personal knowledge constantly informed their place-based knowledge. As teachers engaged in their place of work and made sense of that place, (e.g., the physical aspects, students, and social processes unique to that place), teachers recognized the need to conceptualize teacher-EL student relationships constantly informed by their personal lives, backgrounds, and educational experiences and by their EL students’ backgrounds. As a result, both teachers and EL students constructed their own identities as they engaged in that specific place. As this process is in motion, teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges continued to shape EL instruction in this rural school community. Thus, the findings from this study suggested that in an
educational engagement—1) the specific place; 2) who teachers are and where they come from; 3) who their students are and where they come from; 4) the way teachers build mutual relationships with EL students—mattered for enacting a TK for secondary ELs in Ivy County rural community.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study related to my position as a Hispanic, bilingual Spanish teacher, as an EL myself, and as a former program coordinator of Project STELLAR. My interpretations could be inevitably influenced by my frame of reference as a Puerto Rican and as an EL in the US. My own cultural, linguistic, and geographic background could have potentially influenced the ways I constructed meanings from the experiences of the four focal participants. However, I tried to minimize these biases by adhering to the research design and by continually reflecting upon the biases that I brought to the study. My former job as mentor to these participants could have shaped the sincerity of their responses, yet I always emphasized their privacy and took measures to hide their identities.

Another limitation referred to the nature of the data. My primary sources were based on interview data since no observations were conducted. However, I minimized this limitation by conducting four different interviews with each participant which also included a photo elicitation technique to verify participants’ responses. I also implemented member checking as well as triangulated information with other archival documents.
Implications

Teaching and Research

This study unraveled the complexities involved in EL teachers’ work in rural communities. This research has the potential to add to and expand on the discourse regarding the EL knowledge base for teaching and learning in rural settings. By examining the knowledge of teachers working with ELs in a rural community, the study expanded on the dearth of literature on TK related to the teaching and learning of ELs in rural school communities. Gruenewald (2003) emphasized the complexities of teachers’ place-based knowledges that intertwined with their own and distinctive personal and professional knowledges: “significant knowledge is knowledge of the unique places that our lives inhabit […] and to fail to know those places is to remain in ignorance” (p. 627).

This idea of expanding teachers’ knowledge about the uniqueness of rural communities seem to contradict the prevalent emphasis on standardizing educational practices and homogenizing culture in the US. This study demonstrated that the interaction among teachers’ personal and professional selves were shaped by teachers’ very personal, histories, backgrounds, and experiences as they worked in a particular place (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Burton & Johnson, 2010). In other words, the personal experiences and knowledges of teachers mattered as much as their place-based experiences and knowledges in shaping their own professional work with secondary ELs in a rural community, blurring the lines between the teachers’ personal, professional, and rural community identities.

A significant finding from this study indicated that teachers must conceptualize teacher-EL student relationships as authentic and real to build meaningful connections with students. In some instances, these meaningful connections might be informed by
their personal religious beliefs, as the participants in this study revealed. This finding extended previous research in the field of bilingual education. The existing EL research has emphasized the need for teachers to have a “contextual understanding of bilingual learners that includes their linguistic and cultural backgrounds” (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013, p. 95). Similarly, Gallagher and Haan (2018) described TK for ELs should include: “language- and culture-specific knowledge of students, pedagogy, and context, and the ability to apply that knowledge” (p. 306). Other researchers have recognized the need for teachers to get acquainted with ELs at a personal level to engage them in language learning (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007). The findings in this study transcended the one-way dynamics suggested by the EL literature. Participants revealed that EL teachers need to conceptualize teacher-EL student relationships through authentic and loving pedagogy to engage EL students and families in education. Building relationships for EL teachers in this rural community was a two-way dynamic that entailed opening up their hearts in authentic dialogue with the students as the students shared aspects of their lives with them. The relational knowledge revealed by the teachers enable them to engage and to fully understand that the culturally different dynamics and challenges confronted by Hispanic families in a particular rural community. The relevance of teachers’ relational knowledge is an important contribution to the EL TK field. Future longitudinal studies, in particular rural contexts, that combine interviews and observations to illuminate how teachers’ and students’ personal lives, backgrounds, and experiences interact in the particular place and inform their professional work in mainstream secondary rural communities are needed.
Some of the participants’ relational knowledge included religion. Religion played a role in building relationships with EL students and families. While several scholars have observed authentic relations of reciprocity between teachers and students (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; Laursen, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999), little is known about how teachers use their personal religious beliefs to navigate instructional decisions (White, 2009). Research on parental involvement and engagement has indicated that building relationships is vital in the work of teachers of ELs in rural communities (e.g., Calderon et al., 2011; Coady, 2019; Hite & Evans, 2006; Rao & Morales, 2015). All teachers in the study recognized that EL family support as well as communications with families facilitated learning about ELs to tailor their instruction. Future research exploring teachers’ thoughts and reflections on how they develop teacher-student relationships that are authentic are warranted. In addition, further studies that explore the role that religion plays in building these relationships are also suggested.

Related to the uniqueness of rural communities, findings from this study revealed the importance for teachers to be familiar with the demographics and the historically-based racial conflicts existing in specific rural communities. This is important because in a rural community, as the participants asserted, schools serve as community centers in which community social networks and historically-based racial segregation are reified. This study’s findings revealed that racial conflicts took place in the classroom and perpetuated the de facto segregation of the community’s White, African American, and Hispanic students. One of the participants, Jacqueline, seemed to avoid the subject of race in our discussions. Although she acknowledged race in the first interview, as noted, I proceeded to text her for member checking to verify the other participants’ assertions.
about the existing racial segregation in Hibiscus. She agreed with the other participants but did not elaborate further. One reason for her silence could be attributed to the personal nature of the one-on-one video-recorded interview that could have prevented Jacqueline from discussing a sensitive and personally painful subject such as race. Future studies employing a racial lens are recommended to examine how these issues impact EL education.

**Teacher Education**

As noted, inadequate teacher preparation and education and a shortage of well-prepared personnel are some of the most prominent issues with teachers of ELs in rural school settings (Freeman Field, 2008; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2014; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Kandel, Henderson, Koball, & Capps, 2011). Compounding this issue is the dearth of PD resources for teachers working in rural settings (Hansen-Thomas, 2018; White, 2015). As the participants in this study asserted, this is attributed to limited funding, remote distances, and lack of amenities and resources to attract qualified teachers. While teacher education can be difficult to access in remote areas, teachers working in rural places have a harder time attending PD and teacher education programs that will better prepare them to work with ELs. The four focal participants in this study were four out of 24 participants that participated in Project STELLAR, a university partnership working with other local agencies providing PD to teachers of ELs in rural Ivy County. All four participants demonstrated knowledge of different styles of specialized EL instruction. Jack, the monolingual participant indicated that the low incidence of ELs with multiple levels of L2 proficiency felt like a “juggling act” in terms of finding ways to differentiate and scaffold instruction. As I have theorized in this study, the appropriation of the EL specialized professional and pedagogical knowledge is
complicated (Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2016) and often “non-linear” (McDonough, 2015, p. 70, as quoted in Ankeny, Marichal, & Coady, 2019). In other words, in this rural community where I conducted this study, teachers’ ability to appropriate and deploy EL specialized pedagogical knowledge was informed and shaped by the dynamic interplay and understanding of their personal, place-based knowledges mediated by the relational process. Each teacher’s dynamic TK interplay is a unique configuration informing their work and the enactment of their professional EL TK. The findings from this study inform and empower teacher preparation and PD programs to shift their emphasis from professional instructional knowledge to an exploration of teachers’ relational knowledge embedded in their personal and place-based knowledges. In rural school communities where most teachers come from White-middle class backgrounds, it is imperative to allow teachers to reflect on their own personal lives, experiences, and backgrounds and how these differ and interact with their EL students’ lives, experiences, and backgrounds and the place in which they work. This study’s framework has the potential to inform teacher education and PD program designs for EL teachers in rural communities.

This study’s finding also suggests that teacher preparation programs for rural settings must incorporate place-based education (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003) in the teacher education curriculum for EL teachers. Place-based consciousness or an awareness of the rural context and its inherent characteristics shaping teachers’ work with ELs were revealed by the participants. A curricular reform could integrate place-based education and TK that aims at preparing teachers to effectively teach ELs in secondary rural settings. Preparing teachers to negotiate the challenges of cultural
and linguistic diversity in rural settings enables them to expand their repertoires of teaching practices for ELs in rural schools (Eppley, 2015; Li, 2013; Milner, 2012). As noted, since most of the public-school teachers in the US are White, monolingual, middle class, and live outside the communities of their EL students, a space must be available for teachers to examine their identities in relation to others in order to compare and contrast their personal life experiences and background to that of their EL students’ and the rural community in which they work.

Another salient finding in this study was that all participants acknowledged (including Jack) that being bilingual and Hispanic was an asset to teachers’ relational knowledge to build personal relationships of mutual trust with secondary ELs and families in Ivy County (Ellis, 2006; Galindo, 1996; González & Moll, 2002; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Monzó & Rueda, 2001, Okhremtchouk & González, 2014). As noted in Chapter 2, empirical research has demonstrated that Hispanic teachers positively impact EL student achievement (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2005; Flores, Clark, & Villarreal, 2007; Villegas et al., 2012). Okhremtchouk and González (2014) suggested that Hispanic teachers’ knowledges were “imperative to improving the academic outcomes and experiences for [ELs]” (p. 23).

Due to the beneficial effect of having Hispanic and/or bilingual teachers in the lives of ELs, rural schools that have EL students need to consider diversifying their homogeneous workforce. The mismatch between teachers’ and EL students’ experiences result in numerous problems including teachers misunderstanding students, students misunderstanding teachers, and students feeling unmotivated due to lack of teacher role models that look like themselves (Carothers et al., 2019). Thus,
preservice teachers should be encouraged to enroll in second language courses or study abroad experiences. Clearly, high quality teaching is dependent on far more than the teacher’s L2 learning experiences, however, as noted, bilingual teachers possess multiple knowledges that inform their professional decisions. Teacher preparation programs must encourage monolingual pre-service and in-service teachers to acquire an additional language or to experience other cultures in a study abroad setting.

An important finding in this study is the recognition by participants that the physical (insularity, access to resources, and funding) and social aspects (the people, sense of community, their way of life and traditions) of rurality combined to shape and inform teachers’ knowledge for ELs’ education. Participants felt a responsibility to mentor other colleagues and advocate for the needs of ELs and their families in their school. They demonstrated instances of teacher leadership and advocacy for ELs and families. Scholars have observed that educators in rural areas must serve as advocates for ELs in their schools (Ankeny, Marichal, & Coady, 2019; Bustamante, Brown, & Irby, 2010; Coady, 2019; Hansen-Thomas, 2018). Hornberger (2005) suggested that bilingual educators need to be conscious advocates for language rights and resources for ELs. All participants, conscious of the inequities confronted by ELs in Ivy County, repeatedly emphasized that they felt empowered and responsible to be their voice, increase their visibility, and to serve as TLs in their rural school community. These emerging TLs, besides their deep knowledge of content and pedagogy, reflected on their practices, collaborated, and led others to build a stance for advocacy for their culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. PD are needed in rural
school communities that document educators’ critical reflections of the possibilities of developing an advocacy stance for the diverse EL subgroup.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The findings from this study revealed that both teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges equally mattered in shaping teachers’ professional work with secondary ELs within the context of a rural community, blurring the lines between the teachers’ personal, professional, and rural community identities. The personal and place-based knowledges underscored the need for building authentic relationships with their EL students in order to invoke their professional EL specialized knowledge. Thus, the unique interconnectedness of these four dimensions constantly inform the different approaches teachers appropriate to enact their professional EL knowledge. This study’s framework has the potential to inform teacher education and PD programs to explore, reflect, and examine how teachers’ life biographies and attention to place impact EL teachers’ work in rural communities. In this chapter, I discussed the potential implications for teaching, for research, and for teacher education in rural communities.

I identified implications for future research in TK and secondary ELs in rural communities, specifically in the following areas: 1) Exploring teachers’ thoughts and reflections on how they develop teacher-student and teacher-family relationships that are authentic in EL secondary rural settings, including providing teachers a space to reflect on their personal life experiences, backgrounds, early educational, and professional experiences that might influence their work with ELs; 2) Examining the role teachers’ religion or spirituality plays in building teacher-EL student relationships; 3) Employing a different theoretical framework such as a racial lens to examine how racial differences impact EL education in rural school communities; 4) Exploring how teachers’
personal lives, backgrounds, and experiences interact in the particular place of work and inform their professional EL instructional work in mainstream secondary rural communities are needed; 5) Conducting mixed methods studies to further document teachers’ interviews, classroom observations to examine how instruction by bilingual and Hispanic teachers impact EL academic experiences and achievement.

This study has significant implications for teacher education research and professional developers who wish to deepen collaboration within a rural school. The wisdom and knowledges of the amazing participants in this study suggested that scholars and educators must address and engage in an exploration of teachers’ personal and professional histories and experiences contextualized in rurality. That is, there is a need to emphasize the relevance of building authentic relations with EL students that transcend one-way dynamics; rather than placing the emphasis on what teachers need to know and do pedagogically. Future studies employing a critical lens to investigate teacher education programs can encourage EL educators’ critical reflections about their personal histories and experiences in the context of the particular rural school community. Further, empirical studies in the context of PD programs must document EL teachers’ thoughts about the possibilities of developing an advocacy stance for ELs and EL families particularly in rural school communities. Scholars have observed that support from school administrators is a crucial component of teachers’ instructional practices in any context (Hite & Evans, 2006; Richards, Brown & Forde, 2007; Wenger, Dinsmore, & Villagómez, 2012). Across these studies, supportive school leadership had a positive impact to the teachers’ work with ELs. This is a call to all rural researchers and a reminder that “the more we know about rurality, the less we know, it
seems, and, as the old saying goes, if you have seen one rural community, you have
seen… well, one rural community” (Corbett, 2016, p. 278).

Echoing John and Ford (2017) contention that “the place in which one engages
in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience” (p. 12),
this study calls for EL scholars and educators to grapple with and unravel the
uniqueness and complexity of a particular place because the constant interaction
among teachers, EL students, and people in particular rural communities shape the
professional work of teachers of ELs in that school community. This must be our
responsibility as EL educators in rural communities.
Stage I Personal Knowledge and Photo Elicitation. During the first stage, weeks 1-2, I carried out 60 to 90-minute interview with each participant to learn about what they know about themselves, their personal backgrounds, life histories or stories (Atkinson, 1998), experiences, and values that influenced and shed some light about the participants’ overall knowledge for teaching ELs.

Homework for Stage 1 Photo Elicitation 1 Personal Knowledge. Bring two to three photos that show something about yourself, that identifies you (Exploring personal knowledge) This will be communicated to participant before hand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What knowledge do rural secondary mainstream teachers reveal about teaching ELs?</td>
<td>Life story→experiences:</td>
<td>- Tell me a story about when and where you were born and the community or communities in which you grew up. What are some significant experiences growing up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birthplace, family, cultural and linguistic background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What is the role of place in TK of teaching ELs?                                 | Educational→experiences                     | - Tell me a story that captures your early experiences attending school (K-12).  
  - Where did you attend school?  
  - Tell me about your favorite classes and teachers  
  - What was school like for you?  
  - How do you think your teachers perceived you?  

- Do you think you received a high-quality education? Why? 

- Did the community or communities you lived in influence the quality of the education you received? Tell me about it. |
Stage 2 Professional Knowledge: Interview Questions and Photo Elicitation

**EL Professional Knowledge.** During the second stage (Weeks 3-5), I will conduct interviews to learn about participants’ professional preparation and experiences and what they know about the specialized knowledge for teaching ELs. The following questions will be used as guides for inquiry. Photo elicitation will be conducted during or at the end of the interview depending on the participant’s mood and state of mind.

**Homework for Stage 2:** Bring two to three photos depicting areas of classroom setting and environment that might shed some light on your choice of EL instructional methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Knowledge Stage 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| What knowledge do rural secondary mainstream teachers reveal about teaching ELs? | Professional Preparation | - What story comes to mind when you think of yourself as a teacher?  
  - Why did you become a teacher?  
  - How long have you been a teacher?  
  - Has your teaching evolved over time? Why? |
| Content--area/instruction | Knowledge | - Tell me a story about your professional knowledge and qualifications for teaching ELs  
  - Where did you receive your teacher education?  
  - Where do you teach now and what is your content-area?  
  - Was this the content-area you intended or preferred to teach?  
  - What kind of preparation or experience do you have for teaching this subject? |
|  |  | - When you teach do you feel that you are a different person than the one at home. Tell me a story that captures that. |
| What is the role of place in TK of teaching ELs? | **for Teaching ELs:**  
- Tell me a story that shows how prepared you feel to teach in general and/or to teach ELs.  
- What story captures what you think of ELs? when you think of an EL?  
- Tell me a story that captures your prior experiences working with ELs.  
- Tell me a story that captures your experiences working with ELs in your current school setting.  
- What do you think a teacher needs to know and do to be a good teacher of ELs?  
  - What are the academic needs of your ELs?  
  - How do you go about deciding how to teach ELs?  
- What comes to mind when you hear the word inclusion? Inclusion and ELs?  
- How familiar are you with the culture of your ELs? With their families? The cultures represented in your classroom?  
- Describe any differences in the EL cultural background and the mainstream American classroom culture? Provide a story that elaborates on it.  

| Photo Elicitation: Professional Knowledge and Knowledge for teaching ELs | **Today:** Tell me a story about these photos (Knowledge for teaching ELs). Why did you choose/take them? |

**Homework for Stage 3: Theme:** How does teaching in rural Ivy County look like? Bring two or three photos that show your rural town, the community and its people.

**Stage 3 Knowledge of Place: Interview Questions and Photo Elicitation.** In Stage 3 (Weeks 6-7), I will ask questions related to participants’ knowledge of the context in which they work, their contextual knowledge of people, economy, geography, and the participants’ sense of place. To elicit a more fluid notion of place, photo elicitation will help in describing the place, people, and other considerations that will
enhance the participants’ construction of place. At the end of the interview process, I will be ready to revisit other areas that might remain unclear in earlier stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What knowledge do rural secondary mainstream teachers reveal about teaching ELs? | Funds of knowledge/ Demography of rural social space | -Tell me a story that describes what you know about the community in which you work.  
-Tell me what you know about the rural and social life of some of the immigrant members of the community in which you work  
- Tell me what you know about the most common jobs held by immigrants in your area of work.  
- In what ways does your school promote parental involvement in general? or in what ways are immigrant parents encouraged to participate in decision making?  
-What story can you tell me that captures what rurality means to you? Or how is a place defined as rural?  
-Talk about the benefits of teaching in a rural area.  
-Tell me about the challenges of teaching in a rural area. Tell me a story about it.  
- Do these challenges vary depending on which of the three towns in Ivy County you work? How?  
-Tell me what you know about how rurality might influence your work with ELs What story or stories come to mind?  
Probe: Financial funds, tax base issues, geography/space, infrastructure, transportation, educational policies, availability of services and goods (internet) | |
| What is the role of place in TK of teaching ELs? | Rural Social Place/Place consciousness | Demography/People Economy/Production Geography/Place | |
| Photo elicitation: a sense of place | | What story captures what we see in these pics? How does teaching in rural Ivy County look like? Two to three photos: the town, the people… |
**Stage 4 Connecting TK dimensions: Interview Questions.** In the final stage, Stage 4 (Week 8), I will ask questions to elicit how participants’ knowledge dimensions about EL teaching intersect and to examine what role does place play in TK of ELs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Place Stage 4</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What knowledge do rural secondary mainstream teachers reveal about teaching ELs?</td>
<td><strong>Personal Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>- In what ways does your personal background shape the way you conduct your classroom?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                           | | **Professional Knowledge** | - What principles, beliefs guide your teaching for ELs?  
- In what ways do your K-12 educational experiences influence your work as a teacher? And as a teacher of ELs? |
|                           | What is the role of place in TK of teaching ELs? | **Knowledge of Place** | - How does the knowledge learned in your university/professional development courses influence your regular practice?  
- How does the rapid growth of immigrants in rural areas of the US mean for teaching and learning?  
- In your view, does your educational context (the place you work now) impact the way you design and conduct your instruction for ELs?  
- How did the (different) places you have lived impact your teaching of ELs?  
- How, do you think, knowing about the rural place in which you work influence the way you design instruction for all students in your classroom? |
Qualtrics Survey Questions

1. Name
2. Address
3. Phone number
4. Email address
5. For how long have you been teaching?
6. Please list the school(s) you are currently working at in Ivy County and grade(s) you are teaching (if applicable).
7. Please list all schools in Ivy County you have worked at in the past.
8. Highest degree completed
9. Have you completed (in-field) State of FL ESOL endorsement?
10. Describe your prior and current experiences with ELs
11. What would you want to learn when enrolled in PD Project STELLAR?
12. What would you want to achieve after completing program?
13. Any previous experience in coaching or mentoring other adults?
14. What is your strongest leadership quality?
15. Envision your future
16. Any extenuating circumstances which may make you ineligible?
APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Please read this document carefully before you decide to participate in this research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can decline to participate, or withdraw consent at any time with no consequences.

June 11, 2019

Dear ________________:

I am Nidza Marichal, a PhD candidate in the Bilingual Education track in the School of Teaching and Learning at the University of Florida. The title of my dissertation is Teacher Knowledge and Secondary English Learners (ELs) in a Rural Community. The purpose of this study is to examine what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of ELs in rural secondary settings. In addition, the study will also examine the role that rurality plays in shaping teacher knowledge of ELs.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I am looking for four (4) secondary teachers who: (a) have a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience in rural settings; (b) are teaching within the 6 to 12 level in the school district of Ivy County, particularly in the towns of Calla Lily, Alamanda, and Hibiscus; (c) hold either a bachelor’s or master’s degree; (d) have previous experiences with teaching English learners (ELs); (e) come from a variety of cultural backgrounds; and (f) have ESOL endorsement, earned points leading to endorsement, or have received professional development (PD) related to the teaching of ELs. You have been carefully selected because you are believed to fit these criteria.

Participants will be asked to do the following:
- sign the IRB consent form, to be scanned, and returned over e-mail
- participate in 4 video-recorded interviews, lasting 60-90 minutes each (scheduled over the course of a month or so and at your convenience)
- provide a résumé and/or a lesson plan/statement of teaching philosophy.

There are no risks or discomforts anticipated. I will not use or write your name on any documents. Interviews will be video recorded, but names will be deleted and will only be used for educational purposes. Additionally, this study will not interfere or affect your work as a teacher.

Further, this study will illuminate teachers’ specialized knowledge for teaching ELs by providing insight into the inextricably interwoven dimensions of the personal, professional, and place-based knowledge of teachers of ELs in rural secondary settings. Findings from this study could inform in-service PD programs for rural teachers of ELs in the US and the preparation of preservice teachers who might work with rural EL students.
You are free to withdraw your consent and to stop participating in this study at any time without consequence. You can also decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. If you wish to discuss the information above or any discomforts you may experience, please ask questions now or contact me at any time.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB02) office at (352)392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu.

I look forward to hearing from you.

NIDZA MARICHAL
PhD Candidate in Bilingual Education at the University of Florida
IRB201901341

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Participant Signature ___________________________
I would say that Williston is, um, it’s a very interesting rural town because you have as far as the people who live there, you’ve got a combination of uh, every mixture almost. So you can think of, you’ve got, um, people who are very affluent, I have people who are very well off, uh, because a lot of the land is farmland where a lot of the most affluent families are, um, landowners with farms of some kind, Um, whether it be cropland or cattle or livestock or whatever it may be. Um, so you’ve got that aspect of town. Um, you’ve also have some people who live there who work maybe either in Ocala, the bigger city or in Gainesville and who are driving. Um, and so you’ve also got those people as well. And I would say that’s mostly the middle class workers, uh, are going to be there.

And then of course you do have a lot, uh, quite a bit of a lower class families as well. We’ve got different sections of a, some government subsidized housing, uh, within Williston. And, um, you also just have, um, and you also just have some places that are what most people consider temporary housing that some people have kind of whether they want it or not. I have turned into temp or permanent housing. Um, and so you see a lot of different living conditions, uh, within Williston, but you not only have every different level of, um, socioeconomic status, but you’ve also got every type of background, cultural background. Um, we have a lot of just the majority white. I won’t say majority, it would be majority, but not by. I think as much people think of the white population, whether it be lower class, middle class, upper class, I can say they kind of span all three.

God, okay.” And then I ask them what questions they have. Because that was one of the things I really would’ve liked when I got into high school. Could somebody have said, “What questions do you have?” “Who do I go to find my classroom? For goodness’ sakes, this is a huge school. Am I supposed to come in at this time?” Simple things like, “Where am I supposed to be when that bell rings?” Things that people take for granted, again, because they expect them to have this body of knowledge behind this experience that they don’t have. They haven’t gone through our school system. They don’t necessarily understand that this bell, if you’re not in the class by this bell you’re late. And if you’re late, you have to go and get a tardy slip. And try telling someone who doesn’t speak English, you have to go and get a tardy slip. And you don’t speak Spanish. You know, and things like that. Line 495

I have the records we need. But having somebody to come to and be able to do that really does help, especially in secondary school. So you know, and the teachers will— I tell the teachers, “I don’t mind if they come to me. Now if I’m in a class, they may have to sit a while before I can get to them.” And they’re like, “That’s fine because they’re totally lost right now.” Okay. And so I’ll have kids who will come in, and they’ll do their work in my class so they can ask me questions. While we’re working or whatever on what we’re doing. They’ll do that sometimes. And it’s not a real intrusive thing, because they’re basically using me as a resource, not as a teacher. And the other teachers know that they have to have valid grades for these kids. You can’t just give them an A for sitting there. That’s not what we do. They have to have earned. And in order to earn,
APPENDIX E
SAMPLE OF ANALYTIC MEMOS AND DATA ANALYSIS
LIST OF REFERENCES


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nidza Vizcarra Marichal received her Doctor of Philosophy degree in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in ESOL and bilingual education from the University of Florida in May of 2020. Prior to joining the Ph.D. program at UF under the supervision of Dr. Maria Coady, she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Yale University, a Master of Business Administration degree from Augusta University, and a Master of Arts degree in Spanish linguistics/Second Language Acquisition at the University of Florida. She has taught university and high school Spanish for more than 20 years and has served on various administrative committees. Nidza worked as Program Coordinator of Project STELLAR from 2016 to 2018, facilitating professional development to educators of English learners (ELs) in rural north Florida. Her responsibilities included: providing onsite feedback to teacher participants in ESOL matters, serving as interpreter in different teacher-parent-administration gatherings, translating relevant teaching materials to Spanish, revising and co-writing articles for publication, documenting data, infusing ESOL content in professional development courses, and disseminating Project STELLAR’s work. At the time of the study, she was the president of the North Central Florida LULAC council, seeking to advance Hispanic Americans civil rights. Her research topics include: multilingual education, teacher education, two-way immersion programs, biliteracy writing assessments, EL secondary rural settings, and translanguaging.