5-2022

"Implacement": The Importance of Place and Community in Schooling

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“Implacement”: The Importance of Place and Community in Schooling

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education Policy

by

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Seton Hall University
Bachelor of Science in International Relations, 2010

May 2022
University of Arkansas

This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council

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Abstract

This dissertation consists of three chapters exploring my overarching research question: How does sense of place shape a teacher's orientation to their profession? My first chapter empirically answers the question: Is there a relationship between place attachment and measured aspects of teacher quality? In an attempt to qualify the strength of bond between a teacher and his or her community, I adapted a place attachment instrument developed by Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010). Each teacher is given a place attachment score informed by their responses on the 21-item survey. Next, I correlated these scores to other aspects of teacher quality including retention, loneliness, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and instructional effectiveness. This paper is an exploration of place attachment with a limited sample size and measure of impact. While I will give a more in-depth overview of the findings, in preview, I find a weak relationship between a teacher's place attachment and teacher quality metrics.

In my second chapter, I explore the ways in which teachers engage in the broader community. I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with 18 teachers from across the United States and various school types including traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools. These interviews informed three archetypical profiles of teachers in the community.

My final chapter is a mixed methods investigation of Marshallese English Language Learners (ELL) in Springdale public schools in Northwest Arkansas. This context provides a critical case study of the importance of community and its relationship with a student's education. I employ a mixed methods research design leveraging student achievement data and focus interviews with district employees to answer two questions. First, what is the schooling experience of Marshallese ELL students in Springdale district? Second, how do Springdale

teachers build relationships with the Marshallese community? Through the quantitative phase of the study, I find a persistent achievement gap between Marshallese ELL students and their ELL peers. The qualitative interviews reveal that the district's approach to ELL instruction is geared towards Spanish-speakers, and cultural differences between Marshallese families and the dominant culture in Springdale create barriers in the classroom for students and teachers to overcome.

Acknowledgements

First, to Mrs. Swanson (Ms. B) and Mrs. Greenwalt. Two educators who inspired this research and served as exemplar teachers motivating and influencing my career path. Thank you for believing in me as a student.

To do it all over, I would choose EDRE every time. Albert, thank you for taking a chance on me. I would not have made it without your constant support. You are uncommonly kind, and I can never thank you enough for your empathy. Sarah, I cherish your mentorship and friendship. I am the luckiest to count you in my life. Kathleen, my other mother. Thank you for loving me like I am yours and being a fierce advocate in my corner. Dr. Wolf, thank you for creating an intellectual space welcome to all students. I will always remember to demonstrate kindness while disagreeing with others and to exercise rationality when examining policy.

Dr. Maranto, thank you for our unplanned discussions about the comical realities of daily life in a classroom, and how we can investigate them further. Dr. Zamarro, thank you for modeling strength as a woman in academia. Jon, thank you for your endless encouragement and for demonstrating vulnerability as an expert researcher. Dr. Wai, thank you for the great advice and dry wit. Dirk, Dr. Costrell, Dr. McGhee, Charlene, Laura, Dr. Greene, John, and Avi, thank you for the support, the laughter, and our chats.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Kathaleena Monds at the Center for Educational Opportunity at Albany State University. Her organization's generous funding ensured this research could be conducted.

By far, my friendships are the best aspect of EDRE. Molly and Katie, I love you so much. Bich, you inspire me to be a better person every day. Slenzy and Andrew, my best friends.

Barnesy, the Gigi to my Yolanda. Brother Rian, you were there on the hardest day of my life. Thank you for standing by me. To the rest of my ed reformers, you are so special to me.

Finally, my family, both biological and adopted. Jeff, I love you. We will always be dancing to Arcade Fire in a criminally-furnished living room in Tallulah. Amanda Kay, Mark, Tera, and Laura, my original squad in this work. Aaron, Nastassia, Becky, Lauren, Gayatri, Dom, Stephanie, Jen, Esther, Kellie, and Ted thank you for the endless support. My sisters, thank you for enduring Hurricane Emily for the entirety of your lives. Sal, thank you for all that you did as I crossed the finish line. I love you.

Dedication

To my mother, Joann Larson Coady. A woman who taught me unconditional love, acceptance, and enduring strength. I would not be here without you. Thank you for your constant sacrifice for us. To my father, Patrick Coady. I hope to be a small reason for you to reflect with pride and accomplishment on your life. Your struggles have not been in vain.

To my students. You are the reason for this work. I love you, and I am so proud of you, wherever you are. We miss you, Fred.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A sense of place has always been critical to the human condition. Iselin (p.1, 2021) muses:

> To be human is to dwell within a particular place - from the moment we are, we are "implaced." Places shape us in deep, significant and at times unexpected ways. Our souls, our loves, our relationships and our calling and purpose are inextricably linked to places.

We find that culture, religion, and collective memory are formed by place for groups of people. For example, Louisiana's French Creole culture is distinct from surrounding regions and the broader country. This group's values, cuisine, and language has developed for centuries in sweltering bayous and these cultural traits continue to be reinforced by Louisianans' collective experiences shared through place (Dajko and Walton, 2019). "Implacement," or the cultivation of social belonging through a physical place, is a powerful force that shapes culture and people's lived experiences.

Education and individuals' schooling experiences also experience this phenomenon. This dissertation seeks to explore the connection between place or community and the institutions charged with the education of a community's younger generation. Schools serve a critical role in preserving and informing the unique qualities of places, and teachers are the conduit in which values and cultural norms are imparted to students. Arguably, next to their family, a student's teacher is the most important factor in their schooling experience (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998). Decades of economics research into teacher quality and labor markets, offers little consensus on what is good pedagogy or who becomes a great teacher, but certain trends suggest a potentially critical relationship between a teacher and the community where they teach. I hypothesize that sense of place or "implacement" plays a critical role in the overall schooling experiences for students and teachers. While it may be impossible to explicitly measure sense of

place, I explore aspects of place and community and how they relate to the experiences of teachers and students.

This dissertation consists of three chapters exploring my overarching research question: How does sense of place shape a teacher's orientation to their profession? My first chapter empirically answers the question: Is there a relationship between place attachment and measured aspects of teacher quality? In an attempt to qualify the strength of bond between a teacher and his or her community, I adapted a place attachment instrument developed by Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010). Each teacher is given a place attachment score informed by their responses on the 21-item survey. Next, I correlated these scores to other aspects of teacher quality including retention, loneliness, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and instructional effectiveness. This paper is an exploration of place attachment with a limited sample size and measure of impact. While I will give a more in-depth overview of the findings, in preview, I find a weak relationship between a teacher's place attachment and teacher quality metrics.

In my second chapter, I explore the ways in which teachers engage in the broader community before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in a qualitative case study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 teachers from across the United States and various school types including traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools. These interviews informed three archetypical profiles of teachers in the community. The first archetype is the "The Neighbor," and these teachers view the profession of teaching as a symbiotic relationship with the broader community or neighborhood. Their teaching philosophy gives equal prioritization to relationship building and the maintaining of high academic standards. This teacher keeps a visible profile in the community and often he or she lives in geographic proximity to students and their families.

The second profile of teacher in chapter three is “The Classroom Agent.” These teachers view themselves as academic content experts, and while they believe relationship building is important for student success, they rely on the school day to cultivate relationships with students and their families. These teachers typically do not live in the community, and they often self-select into schools that have a culture that promotes and sustains more rigorous academics. The last profile is the “The Bureaucrat.” These teachers are naturally oriented towards community engagement, but due to explicit or implicit fear invoked by their school or district, they defer to the bureaucratic systems to define what is appropriate and important in regard to relationship building or community engagement. They believe that they cannot and should not be present in the broader community and independently building relationships. As a result, these teachers’ actions align with the “Classroom Agent,” while their teaching philosophy reflects that of “The Neighbor.”

My final chapter is a mixed methods investigation of Marshallese English Language Learners (ELL) in Springdale public schools in Northwest Arkansas. This context provides a critical case study of the importance of community and its relationship with a student’s education. I employ a mixed methods research design leveraging student achievement data and focus interviews with district employees to answer two questions. First, what is the schooling experience of Marshallese ELL students in Springdale district? Second, how do Springdale teachers build relationships with the Marshallese community? Through the quantitative phase of the study, I find a persistent achievement gap between Marshallese ELL students and their ELL peers. The qualitative interviews reveal that the district’s approach to ELL instruction is geared towards Spanish-speakers, and cultural differences between Marshallese families and the

dominant culture in Springdale create barriers in the classroom for students and teachers to overcome.

Sense of place has long been explored by theologians and environmental psychologists (Iselin, 2021, Berry, 1996; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Raymond, Brown, & Webster, 2010). Particularly, place attachment has been found to affect individuals' perceptions of identity, home ownership rates, the strength of human relationships, decision-making, refugee migration, civic involvement, environmental awareness, and social networking (Marais et al., 2018; Theodor & Theodori, 2014; Clary et al., 2013; Shamai, 2018). At the same time, thirty years of economic research has offered mixed evidence on teacher recruitment, predicting, training, and retaining effective teachers. These three studies will contribute to both fields of literature and to inform policy interventions regarding teacher recruitment and retention. "Implacement" is a natural wonder of human existence, and presumably, this phenomenon also plays a direct role in in education. This dissertation attempts to investigate sense of place, its importance, and its impact on the schooling experiences of teachers and students.

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Chapter 2: Sense of Place: Exploring the Relationship between Place Attachment and Teacher Quality

Introduction

Place has long been studied as a critical function of humanity. Essentially, place is a value-laden concept. One's personally defined place can take the form of a hometown, a religious community such as a church or a mosque, or a geographic region like the Mississippi Delta (Guiliani, 2003). Further, a person's "sense of place" is the identity they derive from their defined community (Masterson, et al., 2017). Instilling a sense of place moves beyond a simple recognition and affinity for that community (Berry, 1996). Rather, it is the identity they derive from their defined community. Developing a sense, requires one to witness the place's good, and to have them "imagine how they might tend to its flourishing. It means not being afraid to put down one's roots in a place" (Baker & Bilbro, 2018). This grounding in place can help individuals create and hone their life's larger purpose (Berry, 1996).

Sense of place consists of three constructs: a sense of belonging to a place, attachment to the place, and a commitment to that place (Raymond, Brown, & Webster, 2010). Specifically, place attachment is the emotional bond between an individual and a physical place such as a town, neighborhood, or larger geographic region (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Raymond, Brown, & Webster, 2010). Environmental psychologists have extensively explored this phenomenon and its relationship with aspects of life. Place attachment has been found to affect home ownership rates, the strength of human relationships, decision-making by at-risk youth, refugees' stress management, civic involvement, environmental awareness, and social networking (Marais et al., 2018; Theodor & Theodori, 2014; Clary et al., 2013; Shamai, 2018). Additionally, research has produced several instruments to measure place attachment in an individual, and in how to gage this bond's effects on behavior and values formation (Guiliani, 2003).

Evidence suggests teachers continue to have a strong bond with place. Teachers are more likely than other college graduates to choose jobs in close geographic proximity to their hometowns (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). The majority of schooling decisions are based on place including student attendance, funding, and curriculum. Moreover, teacher labor is one of the loudest drivers for a district's priorities, state accountability measures, and students' daily experiences. Yet, despite decades of research of the teacher labor market, we have achieved little consensus on the ideal teacher. At the same time, place attachment theory has provided critical insights with other groups of people including members of the workforce. In this study, I measure place attachment in teachers and explore its correlates with other aspects of the teacher experience. This paper addresses two research questions:

1) Does the strength of a teacher's place attachment correlate with other aspects of teacher quality such as retention, job satisfaction, and instructional effectiveness?
2) What teacher and school characteristics predict place attachment?

To measure teacher place attachment, I adapted Raymond, Brown, and Webster's (2010) place attachment instrument to fit the context of teachers in K-12 schools. Fifty-six teachers took part in a survey which included five scales – place attachment, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, teacher effectiveness, and loneliness. Teachers also reported their intentions to stay in the profession, school type, community type, and additional self-demographic information. I find two statistically significant results. First, the strength of a teacher's attachment to the community where they teach is positively correlated with decreased feelings of loneliness and isolation. Rural teachers also reported stronger place attachment as compared to teachers in urban and

suburban schools. However, this study has a small sample size, and I lack statistical power to detect significant relationships across constructs.

Literature Review

Place Attachment

"Place is not a 'neutral space,'" (Shamai, p. 1349, 2018). Specifically, place attachment is the emotional bond between a person and their community (Shamai, 2018; Guiliani, 2003; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Raymond, Brown, & Webster, 2010). A person's place attachment is greatly influenced by personal experiences, other community members, and the community's physical environment (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Moreover, place attachment has been found to be relevant for a variety of socially-positive behaviors including sustainable environmental practices, social engagement, the development of a regional or national identity, and the social mobility of impoverished families (Amundson, 2015; Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2010).

For decades, environmental psychologists studied place attachment through a two-dimensional plane: place identity and place dependence (Raymond, Brown, and Weber, 2010). Of recent, the body of research has begun investigating additional influencing factors of attachment including the community and the environment. This emerging trend is grounded in theory that attachment is greatly influenced by a person's community culture, existing civic infrastructure, and their natural environment (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Raymond, Brown, & Webster, 2010).

For example, Scannell and Gifford (2010) present an instrument constructed through a tripartite framework to measure place attachment. The first lens is the personal, or the "who" of the attachment. This dimension accounts for culture, religion, life milestones such as high school

graduation and job placements. The second dimension is process. This lens evaluates how an individual's attachment impacts their happiness, proximity to that place, memories, and emotional meaning. The final dimension refers specifically to the place. This measurement includes the social spaces, such as churches or schools, and the place's physical spaces such as urban landscape or the natural environment.

Raymond, Brown, and Webster (2010) offer an alternative attachment instrument grounded in the individual's position to social and geographic contexts. Their instrument consists of four constructs. First, *place identity* measures how a person identifies with their community's physical settings. Further, it accounts for connections to the place or a symbolic or spiritual nature. The second construct is *place dependence*. Here, I measure a teacher's ability to use the place in its intended use. In other words, does the teacher anticipate that they can live their life fully in the community? Third, *social bonding* measures the level of belonginess to groups of people including colleagues, students and their families, and friends. Finally, *nature bonding* explicitly measures the relationship between individual and the natural environment. This construct is not limited to rural spaces but also includes urban landscapes. Additional evidence affirms that social and geographic contexts should be factored in place attachment (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003).

People act based on their emotional connection with place (Amundson, 2015). Lewicka (2005) found that a citizen's attachment to their community was strongly predictive of their sense of civic duty. Thus, it is in the best interest of a community or neighborhood for its residents to feel a strong attachment to place (Lewicka, 2005; Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003). Moreover, place attachment may contribute to cultural self-esteem, self-pride, and self-worth (Low and Altman, 1992). Researchers found that stronger community attachment mitigated rural

out-migration and motivated at-risk youth (Theodori & Theodori, 2013). Place attachment has also been found to have a positive impact on the tourism economy, environmental awareness, and cultural assimilation for groups of migrants (Clary, Sumrall, Rodgers, & Wandersee, 2013; Amundson, 2015; Marais, Cloete, van Rooyen, & Denoon-Stevens, 2018).

Place attachment may affect how an individual responds to large-scale events. Students with strong attachment to the Gulf Coast had a stronger emotional reaction and expressed elevated interest in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Disaster (Clary, Sumrall, Rodgers, & Wandersee, 2013). Amundson (2015) also finds that individuals with a stronger emotional bond to their community or geographic region were more likely to exhibit a willingness to change personal habits in an effort to curb climate change. Additionally, tourists with a stronger place attachment were more likely to practice environmentally responsible behavior while traveling (Cheng & Wu, 2015). Further regarding the tourism economy, a tourist's perception of a place's amenities and reputation led to a stronger initial attachment. Further, place dependence, a construct of attachment, was positively correlated with the individual's trip satisfaction (Lujun, Huang, & Hsu, 2018).

While researchers have associated place attachment to numerous positive behaviors, this emotional bond could also be counterproductive to a community's growth. Place attachment and a more-developed community-based identity can create a sense of loyalty to the status quo, whether that reality is positive or negative for current residents, and thus, a resistance to change. Bauman (1998) reveals that place attachment has more of an impact in this sense for individuals from a lower socioeconomic class and for rural dwellers. He further speculates that a person's emotional attachment to his or her community may be a result of having no other available option (Bauman, 1998). In other words, the bond is inherently adverse and born of isolation and

hopelessness (Livingston, Bailey, & Kearns, 2010). Place attachment can also contribute to irrational acts such as war. The on-going Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Rwandan genocide, and today's Russian invasion of the Ukraine can all be traced to competing groups' equally intense attachments to the same place (Power, 2007; Guiliani, 2003).

Individuals can create equally impassioned negative attachments to places. Shamai (2018) investigates place attachment in removed Israeli West Bank settlers. Her research suggests that forced relocation or other experienced trauma associated with transitioning places may shape how individuals form attachments to their new communities. Additionally, a difficult workplace environment can negatively influence an individual's attachment to place (Scrima, Rioux, & DiStefano, 2017). Thinking through this lens, it is reasonable to assume that conditions such as work-related stress or sense of belonging could impact a teacher's attachment to the broader community.

Teacher Quality

Teacher quality literature is an extensive canon grounded in economic theory. Yet, nearly forty years of research, there is little consensus on who should become a teacher and how to keep great teachers in the profession (Corcoran, Evans, and Schwab, 2004; Hanushek and Pace, 1995; Goldhaber, 2002). For district and school leaders, attracting highly effective teachers and the measurement of teacher impact is a priority. Place attachment theory could be an informative piece of the teacher labor pipeline.

The recruitment of new teachers and the retention of high performing teachers in the classroom remains a top priority for school districts (Zamarro, Camp, Fuchsman & McGee, 2021). Staiger and Rockoff (2010) explain that managers cannot predict the effectiveness of a teaching candidate at the time of hiring. They suggest that districts instead focus on stronger

evaluation systems in a teacher's first few years and dismiss the lowest performing teachers (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). At the same time, researchers found that performance during screening was strongly associated with increased test scores, increased teacher attendance, and increased teacher retention (Bruno & Strunk, 2019).

Place plays a significant role in shaping educational infrastructure and policy. Over 70% of students in the United States attend a public school dependent on neighborhood (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). As a result, place then also plays a role in the dispersion of teacher quality. Teachers choose where they want to teach based on a variety of place dependent factors. Reininger (2012) finds that nearly 35% of teachers took their first job in the school district they graduated high school from. Moreover, 85% of teachers get their first teaching job within 40 miles of their hometown (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

The perceived work conditions by community and school type directly influence where a teacher chooses to work. Inner-city schools as well as rural schools were perceived to have lower access to resources, less support for teachers, and higher risk for safety concerns (Khalil, 2012; Bacolod, 2004). This self-selection often results in teachers of higher quality remaining in suburban schools and more expensive neighborhoods (Khalil, 2012). Additionally, evidence suggests that charter school teachers have higher self-efficacy and a more professional orientation to student learning (Boyd, 2018). Charter school availability is inconsistent by place (Hentschke, 2017). Additionally, place dependent content and schooling experiences may influence a student's place attachment. "Place- based science" curriculum focuses on knowledge of the local environments, and this approach is associated with strengthening a student's attachment to their surrounding community (Semken & Freeman, 2008).

It is difficult to define a "good" teacher (Goldhaber, 2008). Available indicators are not consistent predictors of teacher quality. As a result, theoretical differences and controversy exist in the field of teacher effectiveness measurement (Bitler, 2019). Teacher evaluations serve as the primary evidence in schools' human resources decisions. Evaluations typically include student data and classroom observations. Evidence from Washington D.C.'s evaluation system reveals improved the performance of their teachers by nearly one third of a standard deviation (Wyckoff & Dee, 2015). Additionally, more than fifty percent of lower performing teachers voluntarily left the district (Wyckoff & Dee, 2015). Value-added models (VAM) are perhaps the most controversial of teacher evaluations (Ehlert, Parsons, Koedel, & Podgursky, 2014; Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2012).

Teachers' years of experience can significantly raise student test scores suggesting the craft of teaching takes time to develop and perfect (Rockoff, 2004). At the same time, researchers find that the biggest jump in teacher's professional development happens in the first two or three years in the classroom (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). There is middling evidence that degree program or alternative certification are predictive of success (Wiswall, 2013; Buddin & Zamarro, 2009; von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). Whereas teachers from the elite program Teach For America (TFA) appear to have a tremendously positive impact on student math achievement (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Vasquez Heilig, 2005; Wright et al., 2019). However, TFA corps members do not represent the general teaching population (Glazerman, Mayer, & Decker, 2005).

The impact of teachers on student achievement is undeniable. Despite mixed findings and the on-going debate of measurement validity, research overwhelmingly demonstrates that teachers are the single most critical factor in school quality. Extensive research captures the

relationship between teacher and student achievement data. Beyond test scores, Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2014) found that teachers not only impacted short-range outcomes such as grade point average but also college matriculation and later earned income. Teachers also positively impact a student's growth in non-cognitive skills such as grit and effort in class (Kraft, 2019).

By design, schools will always be place dependent. Their students and their families matriculate from the surrounding community. The literature reveals that place also influences teacher's labor decisions, and therefore, it also impacts the equitable distribution of teacher quality. Teachers are also place dependent. At the same time, policy researchers continue to search for additional indicators of teacher quality and retention. Informed by the existing research, I argue that teachers naturally develop an emotional bond to the community where they teach, and that the strength of a teacher's place attachment could be positively correlated with aspects of teacher quality and career retention. Therefore, teachers' place attachment deserves to be empirically investigated.

This Study

This study is an exploration of the relationship between teachers and the communities where they teach. Specifically, do teachers develop an emotional bond with those communities, outside of the school, and does that sense of place and belonging impact their views of the profession? This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, teacher quality literature reveals those existing pre-service indicators such as college GPA, teacher demographics, certification, or degree struggle to predict who will be a great teacher. Therefore, school districts grapple with determining the candidates they should initially hire and how to retain excellent teachers. Second, research's emphasis has been to isolate teachers as a causal mechanism for

students' success or failures in the classroom and later in life. This limited focus restricts our definition of a great teacher to a standardized model of excellence.

I argue that schools as institutions of the community are far more holistic, and teachers, as members of those communities, may have a more complicated and robust profile that deserves to be explored. A teacher's orientation and relationship to the broader community plays a role in their overall job experience, thus impacting student learning. At the same time, prior literature reveals that a person's place attachment is greatly influenced by personal experiences, social relationships, and the place's natural environment (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Therefore, teacher and school characteristics should also impact a teacher's place attachment.

This study's primary focus is the measurement of place attachment in teachers and its relationship with other field-accepted teacher quality measurables. To accomplish this, I adapted Brown, Raymond, and Webster's (2010) place attachment instrument to fit the context of teaching K-12 in the United States. Additionally, I included reliable and validated scales measuring job satisfaction (NCES National Teacher and Principal Survey, 2017), loneliness (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and professional self-efficacy (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999). The instrument also asks teachers how long they plan to stay in the profession and for demographic information. Finally, for a small cohort, I was able to include a measure of teacher effectiveness through classroom observations conducted by an instructional coach.

Analytic Approach

Methodology

I use multiple regression models to empirically investigate the relationship between place attachment and teacher quality. I present heteroskedastic robust standard errors in both models.

The first model addresses the research question: Does the strength of a teacher's place attachment correlate with other aspects of teacher quality? My model is as follows:

$$1. \quad \beta_1 TQScore_i = \beta_0 + PlaceAttach_i + X_i\beta_2 + \varepsilon$$

TQScore is a continuous variable representing teacher *i*'s score for each teacher quality construct. The score is an average of the teacher's responses to each of the items on the scale. For job satisfaction, self-efficacy, effectiveness, and loneliness, the score is an average of the teacher's responses to each of the items in the scale. The scores range from zero through five, with a score of five being the highest. I standardized all key variables to have a standard deviation of 1 and a mean of 0. Retention is a binary variable. It takes the value of 1 if teacher *i* indicates that they plan to stay in the classroom for the duration of their career.

PlaceAttach is my independent variable of interest. It is a continuous variable representing teacher *i*'s place attachment score. The score is an average of the teacher's self-reported answer. The scores range from zero through five, with a score of five being the highest. X_i is a vector of teacher observable characteristics including school type, community type, years of experience, gender, and race. Teachers reported these demographics in the survey.

In the second model, I address the research question: What teacher and school characteristics predict place attachment? I use a vector of teacher self-reported demographic information including school type, community type, years of experience, gender, and race. The final model is as follows:

$$2. \quad PlaceAttach_i = \beta_0 + X_i\beta_1 + \varepsilon$$

Sample

This study's data comes from participant responses on a survey, measuring a teacher's place attachment and additional teacher quality measures. To procure participants, I used

multiplicity sampling, also known as snowball sampling. This process relies on participants asking other test subjects to participate. I elected to use this sampling method to ensure teachers in my sample were diverse in terms of geographic location, school type, and years of experience. Snowball sampling hosts two serious limitations. I cannot calculate sampling error, and I am unable to extrapolate this study's findings to the general population (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1996). However, this study is strictly descriptive, and I do not plan to generalize the findings. Rather, this study is meant to be an initial step into a new area of teacher quality research. Additionally, this study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic before vaccines were widely available. Mitigation strategies including social distancing and remote instruction, as well as the general exhaustion felt by teachers at this stage of the pandemic, made it difficult to use probability sampling.

In the end, 56 teachers participated in this study. In terms of observable characteristics, the sample is overwhelmingly White and female. These demographics reflect national trends in the teaching force (Will, 2020). Most of the teachers work in traditional public schools, and only one teacher works at a private school. Half of the sample identifies the community where they teach as rural. The average teacher in this sample has taught for more than eight years, and classroom experience ranges from first year teachers to veterans with nearly 40 years of teaching. Forty percent of teachers in the sample disclose that growing up, their family's income level matches their current students. The summary statistics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary Statistics, Observable Characteristics

Observable characteristic	*Percentage of population*
Female	72%
White	76%
Traditional Public	89%

Rural	50%		
Suburban	32%		
	Average	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
Years of Experience	8.6 years	39 years	1 year

Description of Survey Instruments

The teaching profession is intrinsically tied to the community context. About 70% of students in the United States attend an assigned public school based on geographic proximity (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Therefore, I adapted Raymond, Brown, and Webster's (2010) instrument as it accounts for community context and sense of belonging. Participants completed a 68-item survey. The full survey can be found in Appendix B. Besides the teacher quality scales and the place attachment scale, participants also indicated their plans to stay in the profession and how they identify across a range of demographic questions. The demographic results are presented in Table 1.

While the place attachment construct is central to this study's purpose, the additional scales provide opportunities to empirically correlate a teacher's emotional bond to the community and well-researched components of teacher quality. First, the UCLA Loneliness Scale measures feelings of isolation and social connection with colleagues and community members (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980). This instrument serves as a proxy to account for teachers' social happiness and well-being.

Second, to measure teacher's overall job satisfaction, I used questions from the National Center for Education Statistics' 2015-2016 National Teacher and Principal Survey. NCES conducts this survey biannually. These questions measure happiness with pay, stress management, and enthusiasm for daily life. Third, I included a measure of teacher self-efficacy (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999). Self-efficacy is the belief and capacity to accomplish

one's job in spite of external barriers. Extensive research reveals that teacher self-efficacy predicts student achievement, student motivation, innovative instructional practices, and teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Classroom effectiveness is the most critical, and most researched, aspect of teacher quality. At the core of the profession, a teacher's ability to construct a lesson, manage behavior, engage students, and ensure content mastery compose is critical. There, it was critical to assess place attachment's relationship with teacher effectiveness. I did not have access to administrative data due to my sampling method. However, of the 56 participants in this survey, fourteen were current TFA Appalachia corps members in rural, eastern Kentucky. This cohort shared an instructional coach who observed classrooms monthly and rated the teachers on the organization's rubric. The coach provided the most recent observation scores for each corps member across the five instructional constructs: classroom environment, academic ownership, essential content, demonstration of learning, and culturally responsive teaching.

Student academic data is considered a more unbiased source of data in measuring a teacher's effectiveness. However, emerging research emphasizes the critical role and validity of classroom observations in the majority of teacher ratings and accountability-based evaluations (Steinberg and Garrett, 2015). Additionally, as these teachers in this subsample teach a wide range of tested or untested subjects, I could not have included value-added measures of teacher quality. Classroom observations are the most rigorous data available.

Place Attachment Instrument

I adapted an existing Place Attachment scale that had been validated and tested for reliability (Raymond, Brown, and Webster, 2010). I selected this instrument due to its four-pronged scale and its successful validation. Place attachment theory incorporates these four

constructs to produce an overall empirical measurement of a teacher's emotional bond to the community. Recognizing that the term "community" could be vague or interpreted as a value-laden ideal, the survey's questions explicitly instruct teachers to reflect on the community where they teach. They may not reside in that community or consider it their hometown. Therefore, I clearly define how the participant should define community. In this case, the community is the town or neighborhood the teacher works in. The original study's participants were landowners in rural Australia. Therefore, I also modified the questions' framing to apply to K-12 teaching in the United States.

Reliability Testing

To measure each the survey's internal consistency, I conducted statistical reliability testing (Koretz, 2008). I computed Chronbach's alpha coefficients for each of the five instruments. All instruments achieved a coefficient above 0.7. Thus, I conclude they are reliable. Specifically, the adapted place attachment instrument produces strong reliability with a score of nearly one. The results of testing are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability testing of survey's scales

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
Attachment to Place	0.91
Job Satisfaction	0.91
Self-Efficacy	0.91
Loneliness	0.84
Teacher Effectiveness	0.87

Findings

In this section, I present the findings from my two models. First, Table 3 displays the summary statistics for each instrument. Each instrument is scored on a five-point range. Overall, teachers in my sample scored highly on *self-efficacy* with an average score of over four points. For *loneliness*, a score closer to one indicates that on average teachers do not feel as lonely or isolated.

Table 3: Summary statistics of all instruments

Instrument	***Average Score***	***Minimum Score***	***Maximum Score***
Attachment to Place	3.25	1.57	4.86
Job Satisfaction	3.37	1.80	4.55
Self-Efficacy	4.06	2.20	5.00
Loneliness	1.76	1.00	3.10

Notes. N = 56.

Next, Table 4 reveals the findings for my first research question: Does the strength of a teacher's place attachment correlate with other aspects of teacher quality? I find a statistically

significant relationship between place attachment and loneliness. A one-point increase in a teacher's place attachment score was associated with a decrease of 0.3 standard deviations. In other words, teachers with a stronger attachment to place reported feeling less lonely or isolated. I do not detect a statistically significant correlation between place attachment and the other teacher quality constructs. While my sub-sample of TFA Appalachia corps members suggests a negative correlation between place attachment and teacher effectiveness, I have a small sample and lack the statistical power to detect a significant relationship.

Table 4: Model I Findings

	Teacher Effectiveness	Job Satisfaction	Self-Efficacy	Loneliness	Retention
Place Attachment	-.315	.247	.177	-.314*	.04
	(.192)	(.18)	(.186)	(.158)	(.068)
Female		-.092	-.041	-.291	-.133
		(.292)	(.295)	(.326)	(.156)
Ethnic Minority		-.067	-.393	-.371	.061
		(.409)	(.477)	(.345)	(.199)
Rural		.04	.011	.559*	-.159
		(.321)	(.315)	(.297)	(.133)
Traditional Public		.865**	.241	-.202	-.014
		(.362)	(.41)	(.548)	(.243)
Years of Experience		-.029	.027	.033**	-.001
		(.018)	(.024)	(.016)	(.009)
Observations	14	56	56	56	56
R-squared	.126	.205	.056	.179	.048

Finally, table 5 presents the answer to my second research question: What teacher and school characteristics predict place attachment? I find that teaching in a rural community predicted more likely to have a stronger place attachment with .58 standard deviations. I did not detect a statistically significant relationship between gender, race, school type, or years of experience.

Table 5: Model II findings

	Place Attachment
Female	-.089
	(.284)
Ethnic Minority	.374
	(.292)
Rural	.579*
	(.306)
Non-Traditional Public	-.107
	(.354)
Years of Experience	-.014
	(.016)
Observations	56
R-squared	.149

Conclusion

This study is the empirical exploration of place attachment and its potential relationship with teacher quality. In a survey of 56 teachers, I find that teachers with a stronger place attachment are less lonely. I do not detect a statistically significant relationship between place attachment and teacher retention, job satisfaction, effectiveness, or self-efficacy. Additionally, rural teachers appeared to have stronger place attachment as compared to their colleagues in urban or suburban schools. I did not detect significant place attachment trends across school type, years of teaching experience, race, or by gender.

This study has several limitations. First, my sample is small and lacks statistical power. Second, I do not have a random sample. Survey participants were through the snowball technique, increasing the chance of bias in my findings. Finally, this study's detected results could be spurious. Feelings of loneliness or belonging could be the result of other personality metrics in teachers such as extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, or neuroticism. This chapter serves as an initial investigation into a teacher's sense of place and how place shapes the teaching profession. Extensive place attachment research reveals its

importance in the human condition. It is reasonable to assume that teachers are not immune to this phenomenon. This study's initial findings provide some evidence that a teacher's place attachment may correlate with aspects of teacher quality. Future work is necessary to better understand this relationship, its potential impact on schooling, and place attachment's correlation with other noncognitive skills in teachers.

Schools, whether geographically determined or not, are communities themselves. Place defines these institutions, and the values and content taught. Although this study had sampling limitations, these preliminary results indicate an opportunity for future exploration. Beyond teacher quality, place attachment could also be investigated in relation to student and teacher inclusion and equity, family engagement, academic success, and student discipline. This study provides immediate opportunities for future exploration of place attachment and teacher quality. A larger random sample of teachers would provide more statistical power as well as diversity of experience. Moreover, future studies should examine the construct validity of place attachment measures within the context of schooling. Similar to teacher evaluation instruments, there are multiple place attachment measurements. Other existing instruments may provide more insight to the relationship between teachers and place.

Like place, teaching is ultimately a value-laden concept. Families entrust teachers to impart knowledge to their children. Teachers shoulder that burden, and for many, the profession is a calling. Discord among researchers as to who is a good teacher, who should enter and stay in the profession, and how we evaluate good teaching should not distract from the need to better understand this critical societal role. Instead of searching for a standardized model of recruitment, retention, and evaluation, place attachment might affirm that families, schools, and communities could want different qualities in their teachers.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Q1 First and Last Name

_____

Q2 What is your email address? (emailhandle@domain.xxx)

_____

Q3 What community do you teach in? (Please list as City, State)

_____

Q4 How would you characterize the community where you teach?

- ○ Urban (1)
- ○ Suburban (2)
- ○ Rural (3)

Q5 How long have you been teaching? (Please list in years - if this is your first year teaching please fill in "first year teaching")

_____

Q6 How would you characterize the school where you teach?

- ○ Traditional Public School (1)
- ○ Charter School (2)
- ○ Religious Private School (3)
- ○ Secular Private School (4)

Q7 What is your undergraduate degree in?

- ○ Education (1)
- ○ Business (2)
- ○ Political Science (3)
- ○ Science, Engineering, Mathematics, or Technology (4)
- ○ English (5)
- ○ Other (6)

Q8 If you listed "Other" for your undergraduate major, what did you receive your undergraduate degree in?

_____

Q9 Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up qualitative interview? They take approximately 60-90 minutes.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ Maybe (2)
- ○ No (3)

Q10 How true are each of the following statements for you?	Not at all true (1)	A little true (2)	Somewhat true (3)	Mostly true (4)	Completely true (5)
The community where I teach is very special to me. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
The community where I teach means a lot to me. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
I am very attached to the The community where I teach. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
I identify strongly with the The community where I teach. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Living in the community where I teach says a lot about who I am. (5)	○	○	○	○	○

I feel the community where I teach is a part of me. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
When I spend time in the natural environment of the The community where I teach, I feel a deep feeling of oneness with the natural environment. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
I would feel less attached to the community where I teach if the native plants and animals that live here disappeared. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
I learned a lot about myself spending time in the natural environment of the community where I teach. (9)	○	○	○	○	○

I am very attached to the natural environment in the community where I teach. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I have roots in the community where I teach. (11)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the community where I teach had a significant impact on my development. (12)	○	○	○	○	○
No other place can compare to the community where I teach. (13)	○	○	○	○	○

Doing my activities in the community where I teach is more important to me than doing them in any other place. (14)	○	○	○	○	○
The community where I teach is the best place for the activities I like to do. (15)	○	○	○	○	○
I would live in the community where I teach because of the friendships I have formed with people here. (16)	○	○	○	○	○
My relationships with my students in the community where I teach are very important to me. (17)	○	○	○	○	○

Without my relationships with families in the community where I teach, I would probably move away. (18)	○	○	○	○	○
Belonging to the community where I teach is very important to me. (19)	○	○	○	○	○
Belonging to other groups in the the community where I teach is very important to me. (20)	○	○	○	○	○
The friendships developed by doing various community activities strongly connect me to the community where I teach. (21)	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agre (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Strongly disagree (4)
I am satisfied with my teaching salary. (2)	○	○	○	○
I am generally satisfied with being a teacher at my school. (17)	○	○	○	○
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at my school aren't really worth it. (18)	○	○	○	○
The teachers at my school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group. (19)	○	○	○	○
I like the way things are run at this school. (20)	○	○	○	○
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible. (21)	○	○	○	○

I think about transferring to another school. (22)	○	○	○	○
I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching. (23)	○	○	○	○
I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go. (24)	○	○	○	○

Q12 How true are each of the following statements for you?	Not at all true (1)	A little true (2)	Somewhat true (3)	Mostly true (4)	Completely true (5)
I am able to successfully teach all of my subject content to the most difficult students. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to make a personal connection with the most difficult students. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Over time, I will become more and more capable of helping to address my students' needs. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Even if I get disrupted while teaching, I can maintain my composure and continue to teach well. (4)	○	○	○	○	○

I am able to be responsible to my students' needs when I am having a bad day. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
I can exert a positive influence on the personal development of my students. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
I can exert a positive influence on the academic development of my students. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
I can develop creative ways to teach well despite system constraints (such as budget cuts and other administrative problems). (8)	○	○	○	○	○
I can motivate my students to participate in innovative projects. (9)	○	○	○	○	○

I can carry out innovative projects even when I am opposed by skeptical colleagues. (10)	○	○	○	○	○

Q13 How often do you feel the following?	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)
I feel in tune with people around me. (1)	○	○	○	○
I lack companionship. (2)	○	○	○	○
There is no one I can turn to. (3)	○	○	○	○
I do not feel alone. (4)	○	○	○	○
I feel part of a group of friends. (5)	○	○	○	○
I have a lot in common with the people around me. (6)	○	○	○	○
I am no longer close to anyone. (7)	○	○	○	○
My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me. (8)	○	○	○	○
I feel isolated from others. (9)	○	○	○	○

People are around me but not with me. (10)	○	○	○	○
There are people I can turn to. (11)	○	○	○	○

Q14 How true are each of the following statements for you?	Not at all true (1)	A little true (2)	Somewhat true (3)	Mostly true (4)	Completely true (5)
I look forward to teaching in the future. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I am glad that I selected teaching as a career. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching is more fulfilling than I had expected. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
If I had to do all over again, I would not become a schoolteacher. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
I look forward to each teaching day. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel depressed because of my teaching experiences. (6)	○	○	○	○	○

The teaching day seems to drag on and on. (7)	○	○	○	○	○
My physical illness may be related to the stress in this job. (8)	○	○	○	○	○
I find it difficult to calm down after a day of teaching. (9)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I could do a much better job of teaching if only the problems confronting me were not so great. (10)	○	○	○	○	○
The stresses in this job are more than I can bear. (11)	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 How long do you plan to remain at your school?

- ○ As long as I am able (1)
- ○ Until I complete my teaching commitment with my current organization (2)
- ○ Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., parenthood, marriage, retirement of spouse or partner) (3)
- ○ Until a more desirable job opportunity comes along (4)
- ○ Definitely plan to leave as soon as I can (5)
- ○ Undecided at this time (6)

Q16 What is the name of the college or university where you earned your bachelors degree?

_____

Q17 Is your undergraduate institution a Historically Black College or Univeristy?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (3)

Q18 Are you a member of a teachers' union or an employee association similar to a union (not including Teach For America)?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q19 How would you describe yourself? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Teach For America corps member (1)
- [ ] Teach For America alum (3)
- [ ] Arkansas Teacher Corps (4)
- [ ] Other teaching corps program not listed (5)
- [ ] Traditionally certified teacher (6)
- [ ] Alternatively certified teacher (7)
- [ ] Uncertified teacher (8)

Q20 Which gender do you most closely identify with?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Non-binary (5)
- ○ Transgender (6)
- ○ Wish not to disclose (7)

Q21 What is your current marital status?

- ○ Now married (1)
- ○ Widowed (2)
- ○ Separated (3)
- ○ Divorced (4)
- ○ Never married (5)

Q22 What is your race? (Make one or more races to indicate what you consider yourself to be.

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Alaska Native (5)
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx (6)

Q23 What is your hometown? (City, State)

_____

Q24 Do you consider your hometown urban or rural?

- ○ Urban (1)
- ○ Rural (2)

Q25 Growing up, did your family's money situation mirror the majority of your students' money situation?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Q26 Do you have any additional comments regarding your feelings about the community in which you teach? Such as: reasons you may stay or leave the community; how you have developed your feelings about your community; or anything else our previous questions did not cover

_____

Appendix B: IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Albert A Cheng BELL 4188
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB Committee
Date:	05/13/2019
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	05/13/2019
Protocol #:	1903186415
Study Title:	Teach for America Summer Institute Evaluation

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Emily E Coady, Key Personnel

Chapter 3: Teacher-Community Partnerships Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

The modern teaching profession is a complicated, ever-evolving role that requires more flexibility and commitment relative to other professions of similar social admiration and financial compensation. As Goldstein (p. 2, 2014) asserts, "Teachers do work that is both personal and professional." Teachers are required to be instructor of content, emotional support counselor, behavior scientist, and a role model of cultural traits. Outside of the classroom, teachers are often sainted or villainized, and as a collective group of workers, many of which are card-carrying union members, provoke a considerable amount of debate amongst politicians, media talking heads, and policy makers. However, it is undeniable, even to the harshest of critics, teachers have played a significant role in society. In fact, our country's enduring obsession of this profession reflects the persistent and critical need for educators.

Historically, teachers have not had a strong position of prestige and deference from students, families, and the broader community (Lucas, 1999). However, Black educators were considered content experts and enduring moral exemplars, and as such, students, families, and community members were deferential to their authority (Siddle-Walker, 2009). Yet, as public education has been politicized and bureaucratized, teacher labor markets have shifted, and the changing demographics of the student population, the teaching profession no longer maintains the same level of reverence and cultural respect (Brouillette, 1998; Corcoran, Evans, and Schwab, 2004; Hanushek & Pace, 1995; Krogstad & Fry, 2014). Despite these changes, the relationship between schools and the communities in which they serve still exists. Arguably, teachers are critical to this enduring connection.

My dissertation's second chapter explored the relationship between a teacher's place attachment, a quantified measurement of a teacher's emotional bond with community where they teach, and other aspects of teacher quality including job retention, career satisfaction, and instructor effectiveness. In an effort to contextualize the empirical findings in chapter two, I conduct a qualitative study to capture teachers' perception of, orientation to, and aptitude in community relationship building. This chapter's original intention was to broadly observe teachers' perception of community-based relationships. However, due to the study's timing, a secondary purpose emerged: to better understand how the pandemic could play a role in teachers' overall experiences in their schools and its impact on teachers' relationships both within their school and in the broader community.

In March 2020, the vast majority of public schools in the United States pivoted to virtual instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Opponents to school closures cited student mental health concerns, loss of learning, and damage to teacher-student relationships (Barnum & Darville, 2021, Nawaz & Cuevas, 2022). On the other hand, proponents named community spread concerns for both students and school staff (Boodman, 2020; Couzin-Frankel, 2020). Although schools have largely returned to in-person, administrators, teachers, and families now must navigate the consequences of remote or socially distanced instruction as well as sustained teacher and student absences due to exposure and infection (Barnum & Darville, 2021).

Researchers are just beginning to uncover COVID's impact on the United States (U.S.) education system, but teacher retention during the pandemic is a primary concern for districts (Zamarro, Camp, Fuchsman, & McGee, 2021; Steiner & Woo, 2021). Additionally, political battles between city governments and teacher unions have erupted over remote instruction, cleaning protocols, and masking guidance (Hartney & Finger, 2021). Teachers appear to be

central in the public's perception of schools in their pandemic management. Therefore, it is reasonable to presume that the pandemic will have a direct impact on teachers and how they relate to their students and the broader community.

This chapter is a phenomenological case study of teachers and their relationship with their school's city or town. Specifically, I investigate two questions:

1) Do teachers view themselves as integral members of the communities where they teach?
2) Have relationships with students, families, and the broader community endured during the COVID-19 pandemic?

From December to March 2021, I conducted virtual semi-structured interviews with eighteen teachers, representing a variety of school types and communities in the United States. Four themes related to teacher-community partnerships surfaced from the interviews First, more than a teacher's orientation towards the community where they teach, the teacher's school or district dictates their level of outside involvement. Second, teachers struggled to assess whether they, as individuals, fit into the communities where they teach. Third, COVID-19 impacted how teachers viewed themselves and built relationships in the community. Finally, a teacher's orientation to the work appears to inform their views of themselves as community members.

With regards to the last theme, the evidence presented also allowed me to discern three distinct archetypal orientations to relationship building. The first archetype is the "The Neighbor." These teachers prioritize partnerships with the broader community. The second teacher profile is "The Classroom Agent." These teachers view themselves as strict intermediaries for students' content mastery. They recognize relationships are important to their students' academic success, but relationship building is kept to the school day. They do not

prioritize community engagement. The final archetype is “The Bureaucrat.” This teacher’s philosophy is more aligned to their “Neighbor” colleagues, but they perceive that they cannot and should not be building community partnerships. These feelings are reinforced by implicit school culture norms and explicit district-level policy dissuading them.

This study contributes to the literature by capturing the lived experiences of teachers as it relates to nonacademic student outcomes. Further, the timing of the interviews allowed me to record timely data regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on non-academic student outcomes. This research could also inform policy as schools and districts attempt to navigate the consequences and opportunities of COVID.

Literature Review

Schools as Community Institutions

Historically, teachers have not had a strong position of prestige and deference from students, families, and the broader community (Lucas, 1999). In the early 20th century, teaching was one of the few suitable higher paying professions for women and Black Americans. As such, highly qualified individuals entered the teaching profession. Thus, the public came to view teachers and principals as important members of the broader community (Rousmaniere, 2013). However, in the 21st century, evidence indicates that intelligence is viewed as elitist and may not be prioritized in student instruction and in teaching candidates (Maranto & Wai, 2020). For ethnic-minority communities, where the teaching profession was one of the highest forms of attainable employment, teachers held additional esteem and served as a critical role model for children (Madkins, 2011). Today, the teaching profession and its societal importance has drastically changed (Hargreaves, 2009). The creation of the modern school district, the

unionization of teachers, and the accountability-based performance measures have transformed the U.S. education system (Moe, 2011; Hargreaves, 2009).

The advent of the modern American school district began in early 20th century as education reform embodied the Progressive movement (Brouillette, 1996). Schools underwent a transformation in pedagogy and organizational management. First, progressives prioritized the implementation of centralized management models (Fischel, 2009). Frederick Taylor's scientific management model was implemented in newly consolidated school districts across the country (Fischel, 2009; Reese, 2001). At the same time, the "Father of Progressive Education," John Dewey, helped to shift American pedagogical practices towards child-centered instruction, university preparation, and learning daily skills (Reese, 2001).

Fischel (2009) describes this period as the start of "bureaucratic education establishment." He explains that one-room schoolhouses transformed into the multigrade, consolidated schools and districts we experience today. As a result, teachers were viewed as interchangeable pieces in a large system, principals were demoted to middle-managers, and both groups lost the autonomy and agency once enjoyed (Rousmaniere, 2013). School districts continued to increase in size and in control throughout the 20th century due to rural-urban migration and a growing immigrant population (Fischel, 2009; Brouillette, 1996).

Downs (1964, p. 1) asserts that bureaucracies "are among the most important institutions in every nation in the world." Indeed, school districts and state departments of education serve as critical bureaus. As the student population has grown and diversified in terms of needs, policies and program implementation has had to expand. For example, services for special needs students require a significant amount of oversight and support (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 1998). No

Child Left Behind and subsequent accountability measures further cement the need for large bureaucracies (McDonnell, 2012).

While school districts are clear bureaucracies with standardized systems, there is wide variation across districts in terms of effectiveness, human capital quality, and organizational culture. For example, Payne (2008, p. 123) describes urban school districts as a "pathological bureaucracy." The district's bureaucratic power grows at the expense of efficiency as a result of rampant system-wide corruption. Urban school districts have long weathered harrowing narratives of dishonest graft, unsafe schools, and scandal (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2004). Suburban and rural districts are not immune, but due to size differentials in population and spending, these bureaucracies receive less scrutiny and public attention when issues arise (Truscott & Truscott, 2005).

Bureaucracies are large organizations with a hierarchical employment model and evaluate employees using outputs closely tied to performance (Downs, 1964). These employees, also known as bureaucrats, experience an initial period of indoctrination regarding the bureau's values and collective culture (Adler, 1999). Downs (1964) reveals five bureaucrat types, defined by a collective set of personality traits. They are Climbers, Conservers, Zealots, Advocates, and Statesman. On average, the teaching force in the United States is overwhelmingly White and female (Will, 2020). As such, they share common characteristics including a high aversion to risk, an inclination for consistency, and, overall, they chose teaching as a profession due to its perceived flexibility, allowing the teacher to raise a family (Bowen, Buck, Deck, Mills, & Shuls, 2013). These traits closely align with the Conserver. They prioritize job security and income, but they are constantly working to preserve their power (Downs, 1964).

American public schools engage in a symbiotic relationship with surrounding communities. By design, these schools derive their student population largely from surrounding neighborhoods. School staff is also largely determined by geographic proximity. Teachers report choosing teaching jobs based on proximity to hometown (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005). Yet, these bureaucracies have historically operated separately from other civic structures that would encourage community partnerships (Henig, 2013). As such, American schools are also not set up as institutions which encourage teachers' personal autonomy or individualized leadership development. I theorize that while teachers have inherent bonds with the community where they teach –through their student-family relationships as well as their own personal experiences in the community – teachers will perceive both a lack of agency and limited skills in strategically aligning and partnering with the larger community.

COVID-19 in American Schools

In March 2020, the vast majority of American schools pivoted to remote instruction. Almost overnight, students began learning from their homes through technology platforms, and content mastery become more reliant on self-driven instruction and parental involvement (Grooms & Childs, 2021). Schools have had to learn to navigate a "new normal" as districts slowly returned to in-person and hybrid instruction. As a result, schools have endured contentious debates over masks, social distancing, and vaccination requirements (Grooms & Childs, 2021; Malkus, Christensen, & West, 2021). Students from high-poverty communities experienced less rigorous virtual instruction and accountability for their academic work (Malkus, 2020). Moreover, ethnic background, political partisanship, local outbreaks, and access to school modality predict parental choice between in-person and remote instruction (Camp & Zamarro, 2021).

Early research indicates that the pandemic has immediate impacts on student learning, student mental health, and teachers' sustainability (Jones & Kessler, 2020). Most of the emerging literature focuses on tracking and predicting teacher labor markets during the pandemic. Teachers are less certain of their future in the profession (Zamarro, Camp, Fuchsman, & McGee, 2021). In another study, nearly 25% of teachers indicated that they were likely to leave the profession at the end of the school year due to pandemic-caused stresses (Steiner & Woo, 2021). This phenomenological study fills a gap in the research as it explores the pandemic's impact on teacher-community relationships.

This Study

This study is a qualitative investigation into teachers and their relationship with the community where they teach. I conducted focus interviews with eighteen teachers from a diverse set of schools, community types, and grade levels. This study explores two questions:

1) Do teachers view themselves as integral members of the communities where they teach?
2) Have relationships with students, families, and the broader community endured during the COVID-19 pandemic?

I conducted this research with three working hypotheses informed by the literature. First, schools and administration actually dictate teacher-community relationships rather than teachers. Second, teachers differ on their orientation to relationship building based on their teaching philosophy. Third, mitigation strategies for COVID-19, including remote instruction and masks, will have an adverse effect on teacher-community relations.

Qualitative Methodology

Research Design

I employ a phenomenological case study to investigate teachers' perceptions of their role in the broader community and their experiences teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Seidman (2019, p. 16) notes, phenomenological interviewing "focuses on the lived experiences of participants and the meaning they make of that experience." This research design allows me to capture a holistic narrative of participants, in this case, current classroom teachers. Seidman (2019, p. 16) further explains, "human lives are bound by time and that human experiences are fleeting. In human experience, the 'will be' becomes the 'is' and then the 'was' in an instant."

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of teachers. Moreover, given the research's timing during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, phenomenological interviews are a preferred approach to accurately capture teachers' experiences navigating the pandemic and community partnerships during that particular time period (Creswell, 2013). The semi-structured interviews contextualize the quantitative findings from chapter two. This information can be used to better understand a teacher's place attachment as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher-community partnerships and a teacher's daily experiences while teaching during the pandemic (Bailey, 2013).

Sampling Method

This study's participants were found using multiplicity sampling, also known as snowball sampling, relying both on educator professional networks and community-based gatekeepers to introduce me to current classroom teachers. I elected to use this sampling method to ensure participants were diverse in terms of geographic location and school type. Snowball sampling's limitations include the inability to calculate sampling error, and I am unable to extrapolate this

study's findings to the general population (Bailey, 2013; Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 2000). Further, I did not want a systematic population that may have similar orientations to community building that I may find with teachers from the same training program or those grouped at the same school. Finally, this study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic before vaccines were widely available. Mitigation strategies including social distancing and remote instruction, as well as the general exhaustion felt by teachers at this stage of the pandemic, made it difficult to use probability sampling.

Beginning in November 2019, I reached out teaching organizations and known classroom teachers in effort to identify gatekeepers to teaching networks. For the inclusion criteria, participants only had to be currently teaching kindergarten through 12th grade in brick-and-mortar schools in the United States. For the purpose of this study, heterogeneity in teachers' day to day experiences was critical. Therefore, I prioritized diversity of community type, and I did not consider other observable characteristics in the inclusion criteria.

In the end, I virtually conducted semi-structured interviews with eighteen teachers from a diverse set of schools and community types. All but one of this study's participants also took part in chapter 2's empirical exploration of place attachment. This study's sample is overwhelmingly white, female, and teaching at a traditional public school. On average, the sample taught for over six years. The summary statistics can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: *Summary statistics for full sample*

Characteristic	*Tabulation*		
Female	13		
White	15		
Traditional Public	13		
Charter	4		
Private	1		
Rural	4		
Urban	7		
Suburban	7		
	Average	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
Years of Experience	6.4	1	11

Interview Protocol

Due to the wide range of participants' geographic locations and the threat of COVID-19 exposure, as this research was conducted before vaccinations were widely available, I elected to conduct virtual interviews through Zoom and phone calls. Interviews took place from December 28th, 2019, until March 3rd, 2020. Participants verbally provided informed consent, and videos were recorded and stored in a password-protected platform per Institutional Review Board requirements. Interviewees did not receive compensation. Each interview was roughly 30 to 45 minutes in length and consisted of semi-structured questions. Again, this study intends to explore teacher-community relationships and assess how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts teachers' relationship building. While I had a confirmed set of questions, I also wanted to ensure the conversation naturally flowed. I employed a semi-structured interview protocol which allowed

me to react to comments and probe in real time (Bailey, 2013). The question bank can be found in the appendix.

Interview Coding

I employ a modified Classic Approach to code the interviews (Beck, 2020; Seidman, 2019; Creswell, 2013). I did not use a coding software to analyze the interviews. The research is conflicted on the efficiency of programs versus a systematic visual method (Deterding & Waters, 2018). My sample size is less than 30 participants which gives me the flexibility to develop numerous codes and identify multiple themes and subthemes (Deterding & Waters, 2018; Bustamante & Gamino, 2018). Therefore, I made the decision to manually conduct the analysis rather than relying on a software program.

With the assistance of a research assistant, I transcribed the interviews into word documents and confirmed the transcript's accuracy. I then transferred each line of dialogue into a password-protected Google spreadsheet, separating interviews by participant. After thoroughly reading each interview twice, I began identifying overarching themes and recorded them in a separate column in each interviewee's spreadsheet. I then developed a color-coded system and highlighted direct quotations with the corresponding color based on general theme. Next, I copied and pasted these quotations and their aligned theme into a new spreadsheet, grouped by theme. I then further analyzed and grouped quotations into subthemes. Like Beck (2020), I chose to sort responses by thematic fit rather than by question. The themes naturally fell into two categories, crafted by this study's research questions. The first category is overall teacher-community partnerships, and the second category is the pandemic's impact on relationship building and teachers' daily experiences. Finally, I classified archetypes of orientation to relationship building based on the identified themes.

Findings

Four themes related to community-partnerships surfaced from the interviews. First, more than a teacher's orientation towards the community where they teach, the teacher's school or district dictates their level of outside involvement. Second, teachers struggled to assess whether they, as individuals, fit into the communities where they teach. Third, COVID-19 impacted how teachers viewed themselves and built relationships in the community. Finally, a teacher's orientation to the work appears to inform their views of themselves as community members. From this finding, I classify three archetypes of teacher-community partnership orientations. I also document teachers' overall experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Emerging Themes

School and district norms.

Teachers may not perceive that they have the autonomy or agency to build community relationships outside of their school. In fact, despite a teacher's natural orientation towards relationship building and community interfacing, it appears that they defer to the cultural norms or explicit policies of their school or district. One teacher shared that her ease of being in the community comes directly from her school's mission. "I really feel like our charter school is very like rooted in the community where we teach." On the other hand, teachers cited district policies around contacting parents and being seen in the community could label them as problematic to their school's administration. For teachers at traditional public schools in suburban communities, community presence was both explicitly and implicitly discouraged.

Therefore, most community engagement on the behalf of the teachers is rooted in formal partnerships with community organizations rather than a daily, common lived experience. One teacher explained, "You build relationships, but I don't think outside of that I'm like, going into

the community like shaking hands with every business." Participants cited student-facing programs provided by community organizations such as law enforcement, local churches, and neighborhood non-profit organizations. There were varying levels of intensity in terms of these partnerships. Some teachers shared that these formal partnerships resulted in apprenticeships or scholarship funds while others noted these partnerships were usually singular events like a fund-raiser or robotics competition.

Fitting in.

I began each interview by asking the participant if he or she felt that they "fit in" in the community where they teach. It appeared that teachers had not spent time considering their fit in the broader community. Twelve of the 18 interviewees asked for clarification around what I meant regarding fitting in. Teachers may feel deeply connected or at least a level of fit with their community within their school, but it did not appear that teachers actively thought about their role in the broader community or whether it served them to think of their work with students through this angle.

For my sample, those teachers who were originally from the community felt an inherent sense of belonging. One teacher stated, "I think, being in Bentonville for so long really attributes to my ownership in the Bentonville school system." Moreover, a teacher's presence outside of the school seemed to impact their sense of fitting in and developing an emotional bond with their community. Teachers who chose to live in the same neighborhood or town as their students felt a deeper connection to the broader community and counted themselves as a member. A level of comfort, ownership, and familiarity seemed to exist for those teachers. One teacher, who lived in the same neighborhood as her school, shared an incident with some residents.

> "I turned the corner onto the block, and the gentleman started calling me by a name that had my race attached to it, and so I stopped the car and got out and this can't continue. So, I said, 'hey should we have a conversation?' And they were so surprised, and it really took them off guard, 'oh hey right,' but I think the first hurdle was them understanding I am not scared. I am not scared to be here, and I am proud to be here."

Observable traits including race, socioeconomic class, religion, and gender appeared to enhance or retard a teacher's feeling of fitting in. One teacher shared, "as far as fitting into the community like it definitely does like weigh on me as far as you know I consider myself an educator of color but I'm an Asian teacher." Similarly, White teachers in my sample that taught in historically Black communities cited a feeling of not fitting in.

For another teacher, "I didn't grow up you know underprivileged, my family was middle to high income, so I think that is something that has, I guess been difficult to relate with." The private school teacher cited that sharing a religious background with her students led to a deeper relationship with the community. At the same time, teachers who taught at larger schools with wider diversity in student population felt that they naturally fit in given the context of the student body and surrounding community. One teacher noted,

> "I mean, like the rich of the rich and then we have the poorest of the poor. We have undocumented students. We have public housing students. Someone in between that is a large portion of like middle, middle class residents. So, you fit in. The way the district runs, everybody fits in."

Lastly, the community's collective values including social norms and political majority may discourage a teacher from reaching out. These interviews took place over the U.S. Capitol attack and President Joseph Biden's inauguration. Shared political beliefs were central to

participants' views on community fit. "I don't politically align with most of the people there and you know I don't pride myself on going to church every Sunday, like they do." Teachers also perceived that the pandemic heightened feelings of isolation and forced them to question their fit at their school and in the community.

In fact, based on identity, there may be a false perception of shared values by families and the broader community. An interviewee shared, "My external identity markers probably fit in pretty well. Um, but, like ideologies, I would say differ pretty strongly so that's where I could kind of put myself." White teachers shared that students and community members would verbalize an assumption that they must have voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election. Participants cited a lack of willingness to be part of the broader community if they felt that they did not share values and beliefs.

The impact of COVID-19.

COVID-19 forced teachers to acknowledge misaligned values with their school and community, amplifying a feeling of separation and misaligned values with the broader community. The public health crisis had a direct impact on a teacher's philosophy of community partnerships, and it created logistical barriers in relationship building during a public health. First, the pandemic left many teachers reevaluating their fit with the community where they teach. This finding trends for self-identified progressives who work in rural, more politically conservative towns. As one teacher revealed, her principal greeted her to a faculty meeting as "a snowflake" for wearing a mask. Several teachers revealed that they were planning to move districts for the upcoming school year that had displayed more consistent mitigation strategies. Participants expressed frustration towards school boards, central office, and building-level administrators.

> "When our new AP came down, she had her mask under her chin, and I was like okay well that tells me basically everything I need to know about you. With us teaching in a school that is majority like Hispanic and Latino students, like you're not wear a mask is racist. Like you don't even care about them. Even though their communities are being hit harder than the White community."

In an obvious manner, fear of community infection spread, limited how teachers could engage in the broader community. Teachers cited that lack of community events such as sporting events, virtual parent-teacher conferences, and an abundance of respect to common spaces, there were minimal opportunities to be physically present in the community where they teach. This feeling was compounded for those teachers at schools with full remote instruction. Students and families are the quickest pathways for teachers to be present in the community.

The interviews also revealed contextual information regarding COVID mitigation strategies in schools that had direct and indirect impact on teachers and their relationships with students, administration, and the broader community. Specifically, teachers cited virtual instruction and face masks impacting the strength of their relationships with students and their ease in partnering in the community. Moreover, decision-making procedures surrounding COVID further reinforced teachers' perceived lack of autonomy. Teachers felt excluded from spaces of influence, and they cited being consistently ignored by higher district, state, and union administration.

In addition to diminished relationships, participants described substantial inequity regarding the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation strategies during in-person instruction as well as in the access and quality of virtual instruction. At the time of these interviews, hybrid

instruction between remote and face-to-face delivery appeared to be the preferred model. A teacher in rural Arkansas explained,

> "The quality of education that they're getting is fairly low because they are asynchronous because of connectivity issues. A lot of teachers are struggling a lot with how to appropriately modify assignments and learning to go into a digital format."

In rural North Carolina, a middle school teacher shared that while her school was fully remote, the county's bandwidth was not enough internet coverage for students to have a steady connection. Additionally, the majority of her students came from Spanish-speaking homes, and parents could not provide as much instructional support for their child due to language barriers. In general, teachers assumed learning loss due to virtual instruction.

Overall, teacher unions, state governments, and engaged parents seemed to be the key influencers in districts' decisions surrounding COVID-19. Urban charter schools and the singular private school represented in this study surveyed their family populations, who voted overwhelmingly to continue with virtual instruction. While public school teachers from suburban Philadelphia, Chicago, suburban New Jersey, and Arkansas cited the teachers' unions as the mechanism for decision-making, the data yielded no evidence from the interviews that teachers were directly surveyed or involved in their district or school's decision-making process. One teacher discussed a situation in her school district,

> "The district itself cannot make a decision to close down. They need get approved by the state department. Because there was a period in time where we were really struggling to get subs and the school district, the board, the superintendent wanted to close the school. Make it virtual. The board of education said no. So, um, that's weird. I think because the

superintendent can close the school the school for, you know, weather related issues, but they can't make a choice based on COVID."

Additionally, there was inequity in district support and sanitizing procedures for those schools in-person. A teacher in rural Mississippi revealed her district provided watered down disinfectant, and that she had only been given two rolls of paper towels since the first day of school year. She is expected to purchase any additional necessities with personal funds. Classroom coverage and chronic student absenteeism were also issues for schools that had returned to face-to-face delivery.

Archetypes of Relationship Building

The interviews yielded evidence of three distinct archetypes in teacher-community partnership building. I found that while the teacher's school or district played a significant role in shaping a teacher's bond with the community, both in positive and negative ways, teachers' innate orientation to the profession and the importance of community played a significant role as well. The three teacher profiles are "The Neighbor," "The Classroom Agent", and "The Bureaucrat."

First, "The Neighbor" teacher holds a teaching philosophy grounded in a sense of belonging to the community where their students reside, and conscious decision making to engage in the broader community. While academics are still the priority in the classroom, content instruction and relationship building weave together to structure how the teacher plans for culture and pedagogy. A teacher described their relationships with students, families, and community members "are one of the most precious things in my life. I love them so much." These teachers view themselves as integral members of the neighborhood or town, charged with caring for and teaching the youth of the community. As one Chicagoan explained,

> "I made a very intentional decision when I went to teach and lead schools in the Southside, and I wanted to live in the same neighborhood as which I taught, and I think for many educators, and I'll speak for white women, educators do not make that decision."

For some teachers, having this orientation to the work and maintaining visibility in the community has built rapid trust with stakeholders. These teachers choose to live in the community, attend religious services, engage with civic organizations, and regularly attend games. One teacher described an interaction with a local school board member, "I remember even like I was in a barbershop once and a school board member came up to me and asked me I was, how it's going. Like what do you think about the feel from the district." Moreover, it appears that parent engagement and colleague relationships are stronger for these teachers. They view themselves as invested in the community's future as other stakeholders because they hold an emotional bond with the community. "Neighbor" teachers also seem to experience a stronger fit in the community and are willing to strategically work around any district barrier in community partnerships. One teacher revealed, "Surprisingly, yeah, I feel like I do, it's definitely not my home culture, I wouldn't say, but I feel like I fit in yeah."

The second archetype is "The Classroom Agent." These teachers do value relationship building with students and families, but academic instruction is far more important and central to their identity as a teacher. They do not consider community partnerships an essential piece of their classroom vision outside of singular events or financial contributions. Student content mastery is their priority, and strategies in doing so are grounded in pedagogy and curriculum.

Moreover, these teachers do not believe they hold a critical role in the broader community. "Agents" may live in the community, but unlike their "Neighbor" colleagues, it is

not a values-informed decision. Typically, if an "Agent" lives in the same town or neighborhood as their student it is out of convenience rather than a conscious attempt to embed themselves. One teacher shares,

> "I feel part of the community in the sense that I love the city. I think my experiences are very different from my students' experience. I barely spend time there and most of my time that spent with my friends was in Midtown and like the richer neighborhoods."

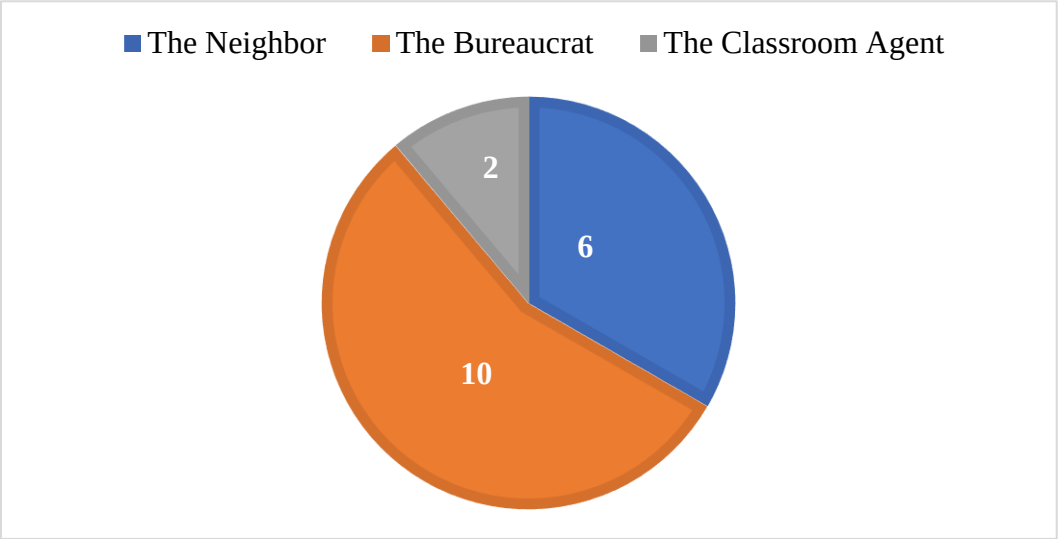
In this study, "Agent" teachers have self-selected into a school with a clear vision for academic rigor and high behavioral expectations, like a "No Excuses" model in charter schools. "Agents" consider relationships to students and their families to be important in a child's academic success, but instruction, test scores, and post-secondary pathways are the most critical mechanism. Broader community partnerships are seen as a means to the end, not as an opportunity for the teacher to develop a sense of belonging or an identity as a member of the broader community.

The final profile in teacher-community partnerships is "The Bureaucrat." These teachers would self-identify as "The Neighbor." However, they hold the perception that their ability to live out this archetype is beholden to their school or district. In other words, these teachers would like to have a more visible presence in the community, to further develop an emotional bond and identity in that community, but they feel that their jobs would be threatened if administration knew about these activities. As one teacher explained, "The biggest barrier for anything in my district is just how restricted it is, but I do feel like it does make us safer in some ways." Another teacher revealed that her district discourages and, in some cases, punishes teachers for taking on civic roles. She shared, "The expectation of teachers really is just to shut up and teach." In this study, "Bureaucrat" teachers appear to work in traditional suburban or small urban public-school

districts, and their actions imply that the bureaucracy's culture and expectations take priority over a teacher's innate philosophy regarding community relationships.

In Figure 1, I present my sample disaggregated by teacher archetype. The majority of the study's participants are "Bureaucrats." While they would self-identify as "The Neighbor," due to external perceptions or explicit instruction, they defer to their district or school when deciding to engage in the community. Of my sample, 10 teachers are "Bureaucrats." Six teachers are "The Neighbor" and the final two are "The Classroom Agent."

Figure 1: Disaggregated sample by archetype



Conclusion

This phenomenological case study explores teacher-community partnerships. I conducted semi-structured interviews with eighteen U.S. K-12 teachers in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1) Do teachers view themselves as integral members of the communities where they teach?

2) Have relationships with students, families, and the broader community endured during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The interviews yielded four themes related to teacher-community partnerships surfaced from the interviews. First, teachers struggled articulated whether they, as individuals, fit into the communities where they taught. Second, the teacher's school or district dictates their level of community involvement. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic forced some teachers to reevaluate their fit with the community where they teach. Finally, a teacher's natural inclination towards relationships appears to inform their views of themselves as community members.

Additionally, three distinct archetypes in teacher-community partnerships emerged from the data. The first profile is "The Neighbor." These teachers naturally orient their teaching philosophy to relationship building, and they make conscious decisions to be present in the community. Though, it is not clear if these teachers consider themselves embedded community members. "Classroom Agents" prioritize content delivery in their teaching philosophy. While they consider that relationships are important to a student's academic success, these teachers focus those relationships to students and families within the context of school rather than the broader community. These teachers often commute to work, and do not spend as much time being visible outside of school. Finally, "The Bureaucrat" teacher is one who shares an orientation to relationship building with their "Neighbor" colleagues, but for explicit or implicit suggestions from their district and school administration, do not believe they have the job protection to be as civically engaged. Ultimately, these teachers defer to the system, and allow bureaucratic decision-making to dictate their level of involvement in the broader community. Their actions align to the Conserver bureaucrat profile (Downs, 1964)

So, do teachers view themselves as an integral member of the community where they teach? Through a qualitative process, I found that, in general, teachers do not present a clear and strong emotional connection to the community where they teach. Teachers prioritize relationship building within the school, identifying their colleagues, administration, and students as their "community." District bureaucracy and minimized teacher autonomy and self-efficacy may be underlying mechanisms as to why teachers cannot articulate an enduring connection to the broader community, the neighborhoods where their students reside.

This study's findings elicit a secondary question worthy of future research: Is it important for teachers to feel integrated in the communities where they teach? State and district accountability measures, the growing school choice movement, and the potential growth of virtual or hybrid instruction further divorce the physical connections teachers may share with the communities where they teach. Yet, decades of teacher quality research have provided little consensus on the necessary characteristics in a good or great teacher. Place attachment in teachers – their emotional bond with the community where they teach – is a new field of research to be explored with possible policy implications.

Furthermore, I discovered timely data regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and American schooling. The interviews captured the daily experiences of teachers at the height of the pandemic in Winter 2020 at the start of the vaccine roll-out. Like in any phenomenological case study, we hope to capture the lived experiences of humans during that particular point in time, and I successfully accomplish that feat here. The pandemic may serve as a turning point in schooling, and, as a result, it will be an enduring area of study for education policy researchers. These findings warn of enduring resource inequity and potentially negative academic outcomes

for students. Only time will reveal the long-term implications, but schools and districts must consider and strategize for COVID-19 and future public health crises.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Name
Where do you teach? Grade and subject
How long do you plan on teaching?
Where are you from?
Do you fit in in the community where you teach?
Tell me about your relationships with your students and their families? Your co-workers? Other community members?
What were some of the challenges you faced in building relationships with your students and getting connected to the community?
What has your school done to address COVID?
Has COVID-19 affected how you build relationships with your students and families? In what ways?
Do you know any other teachers I should speak to?

Appendix B: IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Albert A Cheng BELL 4188
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB Committee
Date:	05/13/2019
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	05/13/2019
Protocol #:	1903186415
Study Title:	Teach for America Summer Institute Evaluation

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Emily E Coady, Key Personnel

Chapter 4: The New Immigrant: The Schooling Experiences of Marshallese English Language Learners in Springdale, AR

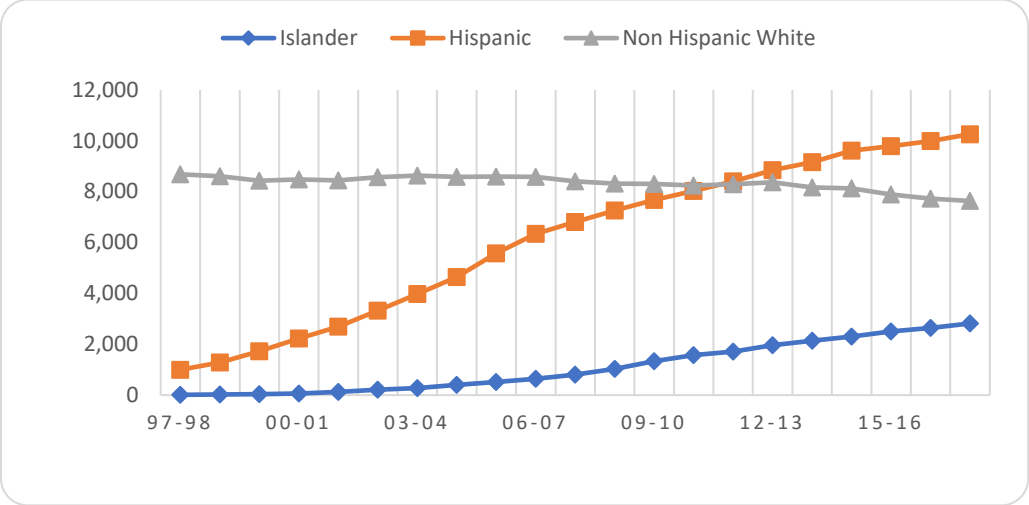
Introduction

The mission of English Language Learning (ELL) education is to enable a student who speaks a different mother tongue to holistically develop and actualize their full potential (Greene, 1998). ELL students constitute 9.6% of the student population in public schools in the United States (Mitchell, 2020). Though there is a diversity of linguistic needs in this population, ELL curriculum and pedagogy are largely geared for Hispanic populations, and there is little research regarding effectiveness of these programs for non-Spanish speaking ELL students in terms of English language acquisition and academic achievement (Harper & Jong, 2004). As a result, language minority students, those where Spanish is not their native language, are at an academic and developmental disadvantage.

Springdale Public Schools in Northwest Arkansas is the state's largest school district, and it has an ethnically diverse student population and robust ELL program (Sitek, 2020). Mirroring national trends, Spanish speakers continue to be Springdale's largest ELL population. The district is also home to the world's largest Marshallese speaking population outside of the Marshall Islands. The growth rate of Springdale's population can be found in Figure 1. As climate change continues to affect the small country, Marshallese families continue to migrate to Springdale for economic opportunities, enrolling their children in the local school district (Sitek, 2020).

Springdale public schools has enjoyed a reputation for being an innovative ELL program with strong academic achievement. The district's website provides resources for non-English speaking parents, translating most materials in Spanish and Marshallese. For districts with growing ELL populations, Springdale public schools is a model for instruction.

Figure 1: Student Demographic Population Growth for Springdale Public Schools



Marshallese-speaking English Language Learners in Springdale Public Schools (SPS) provide a unique case study to explore the intersection of community and school. First, Marshallese families have concentrated migration to Springdale. As a result, while Marshallese students are still a minority group based on numbers, there is a critical mass of students with similar cultural values and experiences. Second, given the growing ELL population in the United States and Springdale's distinct status as a leading ELL provider, this study can inform policy and instruction.

While the district expertly leverages administrative data in understanding their Marshallese population, achievement numbers only provide insight into one portion of a student's educational journey. Through a mixed methods approach, this study attempts to build a more robust picture for Springdale and empirically explore the following questions:

1. What is the schooling experience of Marshallese ELL students in SPS?
2. How do Springdale teachers build relationships with the Marshallese community?

I employ an explanatory sequential design. First, I identify trends in student test scores grouped by student's home language. In this, I find that Marshallese ELL students have

performed significantly lower than their Spanish speaking peers on Arkansas's achievement tests in math and English Language Arts (ELA). I also find that there is a wider gap in math achievement as compared to ELA achievement. Second, I conducted focused interviews with district employees. Per my research design, the interview questions were informed by the quantitative results. The qualitative findings reveal aspects of a Marshallese student's experience in Springdale as well as possible mechanisms for this consistent achievement gap. First, Marshallese students and their classroom teachers navigate challenging cultural differences including philosophies of time management and the outcomes of individualized recognition and attention. Second, I find that the district's ELL program, while comprehensive and rigorous, may be designed more for Spanish speakers than other linguistic minority students.

The Marshallese in Springdale

The Pacific Islander population has been steadily growing in the United States since the 1970s (Barringer, Gardner, and Levin, 1993; Sitek, 2020). Many island nations developed diplomatic partnerships with the United States in the aftermath of World War II. For forty years after the end of WWII, the United States managed the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). While this treaty has since expired, it has left lasting diplomatic ties between the U.S. and the Pacific Islands (Schwartz, 2015). In fact, the majority of U.S. territories are found in the Pacific Islands – Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. These Pacific Islanders enjoy the benefits of U.S. citizenship, and in return, the United States maintains a critical military presence, particularly as it is concerned with China and North Korea (McGann, 2020). These enduring diplomatic relations, a lack of economic opportunity, and increased threat from climate change have resulted in heightened migration between Pacific Island nations and the United States (Schwartz, 2015).

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is a small island nation in the South Pacific that has also been engaged in a formally recognized partnership with the United States. In exchange for questionable nuclear testing practices, the United States has enabled the Compact of Free Association with the RMI since 1986. This formal agreement allows Marshallese citizens to relocate to, work, attend school, and serve in the U.S. military without the having to navigate U.S. immigration. For companies looking for low-wage workers, there is increased incentive to hire Marshallese workers because there is no risk with immigration or expensive work authorization requirements.

In addition to nuclear testing fallout, the RMI is experiencing the catastrophic effects of climate change. Land lost to rising sea levels has resulted in a decrease in agriculture – the country's leading economic industry. Additionally, the country's freshwater supply is threatened by waves of saltwater reaching farther inland (Greshko, 2018). Since 1999, the country has lost one fifth of its population due to these climate effects, with a majority relocating in Springdale, AR (Milman & Ryan, 2016). For the community of Springdale, Marshallese families bring their own unique needs, and their adopted hometown has had to respond with specialized resources including public health access and Marshallese street signs in the downtown (Schwartz, 2015).

Historically, in the United States, refugees settled in major urban centres due to the access to resources, ease of physical entry, and financial barriers to leave the city once they become settled. However, in the past 25 years, migration patterns for groups of refugees have shifted to include small cities and rural communities located in more isolated pockets of the United States. For many of these smaller towns, local government, public health infrastructure, and school districts possess little experience in handling a refugee population. Thus, they lack the resources necessary to support the immigrants' needs. Minnesota has the largest population of

international refugees per capita (Shaw, 2018), and, in the past decade, the rural Mississippi Delta has experienced an influx of Middle Eastern political refugees. Their students are enrolled in the public schools, families need livable wage jobs, and they require healthcare. These small, rural towns must provide the infrastructure for their new residents often with significantly fewer financial resources and human capital.

Springdale is a small city in Northwest Arkansas with a population of around 70,000 and is home to the largest Marshallese population outside of the Marshall Islands. Six percent of the city's population identifies as Marshallese. According to local lore, migration began in the late 1980s when a Marshallese citizen, John Moody, moved to Arkansas to work at Tyson Chicken, headquartered in Springdale (Schulte, 2012). By 2021, the majority of displaced Marshallese have settled in Northwest Arkansas.

Marshallese royalty have even relocated to the community, and since 2008, the RMI government have operated a consulate in downtown Springdale (Schulte, 2012). However, local media outlets report that Marshallese students face a myriad of barriers when navigating American schools including language and cultural norms around education. As a result, Marshallese students have a lower graduation rate and struggle with school academic and behavior expectations (Lowe, 2020). One district principal famously gave her Marshallese families alarm clocks in an effort to curb tardiness (Schulte, 2012).

The State of English Language Learning in the United States

English language acquisition has been a priority in the U.S. public education system since the first waves of immigration in the early 1800s. Initially, dual-language instruction, or bilingual education, was a school's approach to educate immigrant students, allowing them to learn English while also preserving their home language and culture (Malakoff & Hakuta, 1990).

However, by the early 20th century, full cultural assimilation and English-only education became proxies for nationalism and democratic ideals (Cavanaugh, 1996).

In this sense, education can be used as a political tool, and ELL programs are no different (Lee & Norton, 2009). A boom in Cuban refugees in the 1950s spurred the first U.S. ELL department in the Miami-Dade school district. A specialized ELL department was seen as a way to combat communism through full assimilation of entering Cuban refugees. Moreover, immigration demographics shifted from no single predominant language spoken to Spanish making up the vast majority of languages spoken by immigrants. This shift, in addition to Cold War concerns, further solidified full language immersion as the primary style of ELL pedagogy in U.S. public schools (Cavanaugh, 1996). Despite a more diverse ELL population now, ELL pedagogy is still structured for a homogenous, Spanish-speaking population (Harper & Jong, 2004).

Pedagogy

English-only pedagogy was not only politically safe, it did not put pressure on districts to recruit focused ELL teachers as it requires no specialized training during a teacher's preservice (Adams & Jones, 2006). Full immersion requires that all students, regardless of linguistic background, to be taught in English without reference materials or translation support in their mother language. Nonetheless, evaluations since the late 1980s find that this approach to ELL is less effective than bilingual education programs across outcomes such as language acquisition, academic achievement, and overall persistence (Ramirez, 1991; Adams & Jones, 2006; Garza & Crawford, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2003).

By the early 1990s, social views of English-only learning and assimilation shifted negatively, and correspondingly, districts began using bilingual pedagogy. Bilingual education

allows ELL students to master English and other academic content through the use of their native language. In the United States, bilingual education programs are predominately Spanish (Steele, Slater, & Zamarro, 2017).

Unlike evaluations of full English immersion programs, research on bilingual education is largely positive. Greene's (1998) meta-analysis reveals that children in a bilingual education program will gain around three months more of English learning than children in an English-only program. When thinking about the average school year of nine months, bilingual students are learning more than a third of the year faster than another ELL student who is in a full immersion program. Repeated evaluations of random control trials show that bilingual education has a significant, positive effect on a student's English language acquisition and overall academic achievement; however nearly all of these bilingual programs were Spanish (Greene, 1998; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2004; Barrow & Markham-Pithers, 2016). Similar academic achievement trends are also experienced by English native speakers enrolled in dual language programs (Steele, Slater, & Zamarro, 2017; Thomas & Collier, 2003).

Wiley and Wright (2004) further outline that ELL students build self-autonomy in their new learning environments through a bilingual pedagogy. According to the authors, bilingual education does not reinforce repressive cultural tactics or xenophobia. As previously mentioned, monolingual English programs have a long history in the United States of being a tool for forceful assimilation of minority language speakers (Cavanaugh, 1996). Garza and Crawford (2010) name this concept "hegemonic multiculturalism." Standardized testing and other external performance pressures in American public schools maintain and reinforce hegemonic multiculturalism, while bilingual curriculums disrupt that experience for ELL students.

However, bilingual ELL programs are only successful if a district has access to appropriate resources to support the diversity of their ELL population. Dual-language immersion is easier to implement when there is a large number of native speakers and there have been best practices tested in other communities, which is why most bilingual education programs are Spanish. When ELL curriculum is constructed for a particular ethnic group, in the United States' case, Spanish speakers, it places unrealistic expectations on non-Spanish speaking students and imposes a learner identity onto them. This lack of representation can be harmful for ELL students' overall success in school (Harklau, 2012).

Teacher Quality

Regarding teacher quality, it is difficult to provide a singular narrative for ELL programs given the wide variation in student needs, cultural differences, and district contexts that exist. In California, where 25% of the student population is classified as ELL, a report indicated that public school teachers cited professional development (PD) specializing in the linguistic development of ELL students as most beneficial. However, when the authors attempted to distill which PD approach was most helpful, the wide variation in responses provided no policy implications (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Moreover, Harper and Jong (2009) find that despite progressive ELL teacher training in Florida, it was difficult to discern what made for strong ELL teaching practices as opposed to general proficient teaching.

Furthermore, there is a link between a teacher's attitude towards ELL teaching and a student's success in the program. While Karabenick and Noda (2004) found that teachers generally held no reservations about working with ELL populations, there was a correlation between how positively a teacher felt towards the ELL instruction and how well ELL students perform on overall academic achievement, as well as in their mastery of the English language.

The authors theorize that teachers' attitudes are rooted more in a lack of training and confidence than in outwardly negative feelings towards ELL students. This theory holds especially true when teachers are working with minorities within their ELL population in which they have little experience with the students' languages and cultural differences.

Research Gap

ELL research is overwhelmingly about Spanish speaking populations (Haper & Jong, 2004). This predisposition is due mostly to the high numbers of Spanish speaking ELL students in the United States. School districts demand research-based practices to serve their predominately Hispanic student population, and the high numbers of Spanish speaking ELL students gives ELL studies more statistical power. However, those districts with a large non-Spanish speaking ELL population have to create ELL curriculums, stressing human and financial capital ("5 Million Voices", 2017).

Another reason for this research gap could be the difficulty of acquiring English for non-Spanish speakers. According to Marin (2015), it can take an ELL student from a non-Germanic or non-Romance language up to 10 years to become academically proficient in English. There are vast linguistic differences between Western European languages and those from other parts of the world. There is a lack of shared alphabet or sentence structures, and even the mouth formations for words differs (Lust, Chien, Chiang, & Eisele, 1996). The low numbers of non-Spanish speakers coupled with the longer time investment to evaluate the effectiveness of ELL interventions could lead to the current gap in research. Subsequently, minority language students, including Marshallese students, suffer.

English language acquisition has been a critical component for the United States public school system for generations of students. Political pressures as well as the wide variation in

linguistic and academic needs of ELL students have shaped both ELL instruction in schools and the research and evaluations of such programs. This reality has a potential impact in language policies regarding linguistic minority students within the ELL population. Therefore, the research gap exploring the barriers and opportunities for non-Spanish speaking ELL students adds to the systems-level system of inequity regarding instruction. Moreover, there have been few, if any, quantitative studies exploring the experiences for Marshallese-speaking students.

Analytical Approach

I employed a two-phase sequential explanatory design (Crewswell and Plano Clark, 2006). First, I conducted regressions to empirically measure English Language Arts (ELA) and math achievement across groups of ELL students for Springdale school district. Next, I conducted focused interviews with a former principal and a current teacher who have extensive experience with the district's ELL population. I utilized snowball sampling to locate participants for the qualitative phase. Through a mixed methods approach, I hope to investigate the interaction between Marshallese students, their families and the schools in which they attend. My quantitative results informed the construction of the interview questions. Thus, my qualitative results serve to contextualize our empirical findings and provide a narrative that can hopefully help inform ELL policy for schools and districts. Specifically, this study addresses two questions:

1. What is the schooling experience of Marshallese ELL students in SPS?
2. How do Springdale teachers build relationships with the Marshallese community?

Quantitative Phase

I use longitudinal data to examine trends over time in an effort to identify patterns and highlight the disparities between students of different linguistic backgrounds. There are many

factors that contribute to academic challenges for all ELLs. Consistent with national trends, I find that all ELLs tend to score below average on math and reading achievement tests. I also consistently observe Marshallese students demonstrating lower performance than their ELL peers. This could be due to several factors, including the relatively heightened dissimilarity between the Marshallese and English languages, school-based challenges, or broader cultural challenges. While I explore the potential relevance of some of these mechanisms in our qualitative analysis, I cannot make claims about the causes of achievement disparities with our quantitative data.

Sample

I investigate academic outcomes of English Language Learners in the Springdale School District using a longitudinal dataset that spans the academic years of 2012-13 to 2016-17. This dataset is provided by Arkansas's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and accessed through the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas. It includes demographic and achievement records for all ELL students enrolled in the Springdale School District (SSD) in grades 3-12 who take the annual state assessment. The data includes academic achievement scores in ELA and math as measured by Arkansas's end of year standardized test. Arkansas, like many states, has used several different tests over the years in this data set. Students took the Benchmark exam through the spring of 2014, the PARCC exam in the spring of 2015, and the ACT Aspire exam beginning in the spring of 2016. In order to meaningfully compare student test scores across changing exam formats, all student-level test scores are standardized within grade, subject, and year for all students in SSD prior to analysis. Standardization allows me to interpret achievement differences in units of standard deviation rather than scale score units.

Arkansas does not test ELL students who have been U.S. residents for less than a year, so all students included in the analysis have been enrolled in the district's ELL program for at least one year. The dataset also includes other student-level characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, special education identification (SPED), free or reduced lunch status (FRL), primary home language, grade level, and school of attendance.

Using this data, I conduct two analyses. First, I examine the trends in achievement for Spanish-speaking and Marshallese-speaking students pooled across grades 3-12 for the academic years of 2012-13 through 2016-17. Students begin taking these annual achievement exams in the 3rd grade. Therefore, I do not include students enrolled in kindergarten through second grade. Second, I conduct a cohort analysis following a group of students who began 3rd grade in 2012-13 through their 7th grade year. Notably, if students received exemptions from testing due to language proficiency level, they will also be excluded from the sample. The demographic characteristics for the full sample of students used in the pooled analysis are reported in table 1.

Springdale school district serves over 5,000 ELL students each year in grades 3-12. While there is evidence of a slight increase in linguistic diversity in the district over time, the vast majority of the ELL population are Spanish speakers. In the 2012-13 school year, 18.8% of the ELL population are native Marshallese speakers and 78.7% of these students are native Spanish speakers. These proportions shifted slightly by the 2016-17 school year, with 23.7% of ELL students speak Marshallese as their first language and 73.4% of ELL students are Spanish speaking. There is fairly consistent, low proportion of ELL in the "other" category, those students who qualify as ELL but do not speak Spanish or Marshallese as their home language. Moreover, the sample tends to be slightly less than 50% female, and the overwhelming majority of students (94 -95%) qualify for free and reduced price lunch (FRL). Notably, there is a slight

increase of ELLs with special education designations over time, with 7.1% of the sample receiving SPED services in 2012-13 and 10.5% receiving services in 2016-17. Springdale's ELL population can be found in table 1.

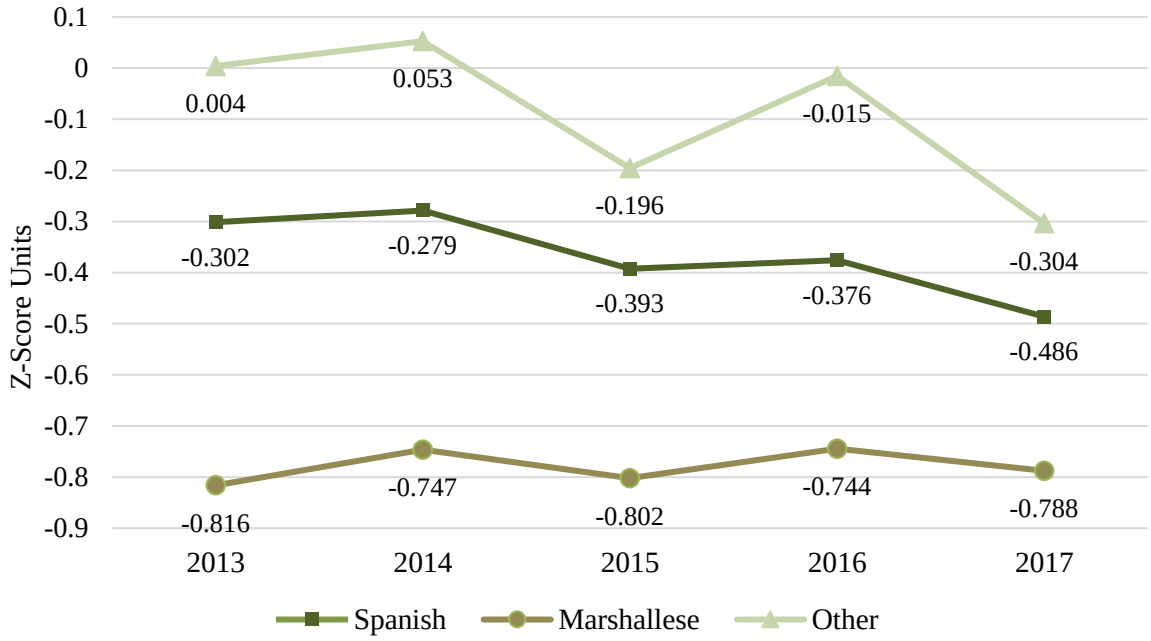
Table 1: Summary statistics for Full Sample of SSD ELLs, 3rd-12th grade

	Benchmark	**Benchmark**	**PARCC**	**ACT Aspire**	**ACT Aspire**
	2012-13	**2013-14**	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**
Marshallese	18.80%	19.87%	21.20%	22.00%	23.72%
Hispanic	78.69%	77.68%	76.50%	75.43%	73.39%
Other	2.51%	2.44%	2.29%	2.58%	2.89%
Female	47.12%	46.87%	45.47%	46.02%	45.03%
FRPL	95.73%	94.67%	95.26%	94.88%	95.10%
SPED	7.13%	7.92%	8.07%	9.73%	10.53%
Total ELL Students	*N= 5,299*	*N = 5,615*	*N = 5,230*	*N = 5,469*	*N = 5,119*

Quantitative Findings

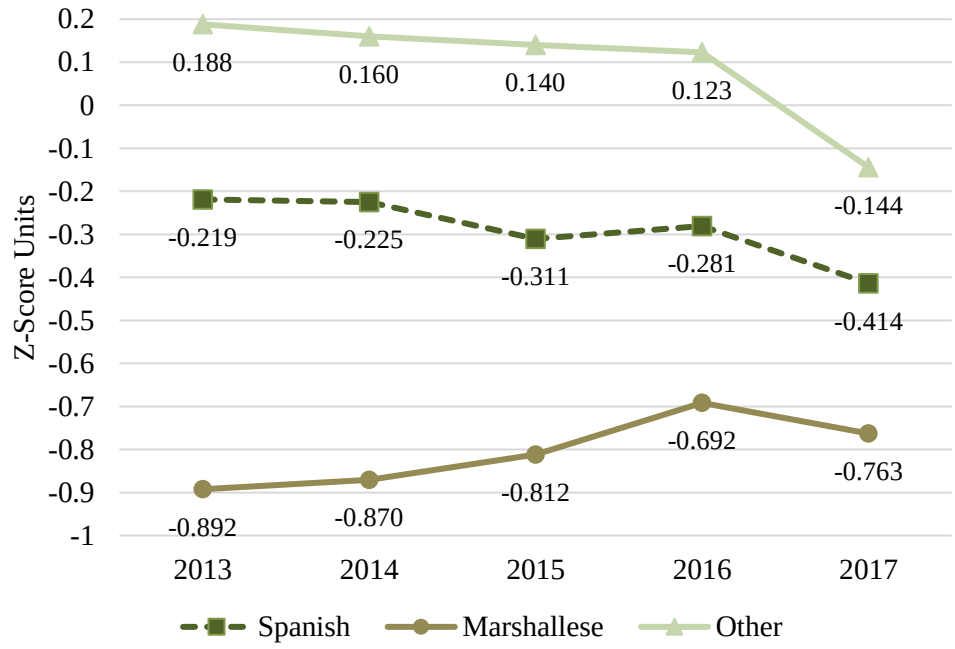
First, I present the trends in achievement across this five-year period for students who are native Marshallese speakers, Spanish speakers, and speakers of any other language, which are deed as "Other" in the results. These trends for English Language Arts (ELA) are presented below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Average English Language Arts (ELA) Scores for Full Sample by Primary Language



There are persistent but narrowing achievement gaps between Spanish and Marshallese speaking students, with Spanish speakers outperforming their Marshallese-speaking peers by 51% of a standard deviation in 2012-13 and 30% of a standard deviation in 2016-17. Upon further investigation, the narrowing of this gap appears to be driven by decreased levels of academic achievement for Spanish-speaking ELL students. Marshallese-speaking ELL students' scoring relatively consistent, albeit quite low relative to the general student population in Springdale. The same trends for math achievement are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Average Math Scores for Full Sample by Primary Language



I find larger gaps evident in math achievement than in ELA. Theory dictates an expectation that ELL students to experience greater challenges with ELA exams than math exams due to the need of language mastery for success. And in fact, Spanish-speaking ELL students in the sample do demonstrate slightly higher achievement on math exams than ELA, relative to the general student population. However, Marshallese students are scoring at comparable levels in both subjects rather than following the same pattern as their Spanish-speaking peers. Finally, I observe larger gaps between the two linguistic groups on math exams, with achievement gaps ranging from 35% to 67% of a standard deviation.

To better isolate the relationship between primary home language and achievement, I control for several student and school level characteristics that could likely influence achievement. Results from this analysis are displayed in Tables 2 and 3. They demonstrate the statistically significant score gaps between Marshallese and Spanish-speaking ELLs for each

year of analysis. I find that the achievement gaps between Marshallese and Spanish-speaking ELLs range from 31% to 55% of a standard deviation in ELA and from 35% to 67% of a standard deviation in math. All estimated coefficients are statistically significantly different from zero. The regression analysis also further indicates that these gaps are decreasing over time, with the greatest score disparities appearing in 2012-13 and the narrowest gaps in 2016-17.

Table 2: ELA achievement by primary home language, including grade and school fixed effects

	Benchmark	**Benchmark**	**PARCC**	**ACT Aspire**	**ACT Aspire**
	2012-13	**2013-14**	**2014-15**	**2015-16**	**2016-17**
Marshallese	-0.552***	-0.503***	-0.406***	-0.408***	-0.308***
	(0.0355)	(0.0344)	(0.0338)	(0.0534)	(0.0344)
Other	0.157*	0.182**	0.149**	0.236***	0.0694
	(0.0832)	(0.0736)	(0.0708)	(0.0660)	(0.0754)
Female	0.278***	0.268***	0.236***	0.248***	0.251***
	(0.0356)	(0.0295)	(0.0277)	(0.0234)	(0.0201)
FRL	-0.266***	-0.193**	-0.208***	-0.0982	-0.0240
	(0.0843)	(0.0788)	(0.0673)	(0.0580)	(0.0402)
SPED	-1.275***	-1.167***	-0.882***	-0.998***	-0.892***
	(0.0597)	(0.0761)	(0.0407)	(0.0520)	(0.0422)
N	4,410	4,548	5,072	5,401	5,029
R-squared	0.240	0.230	0.196	0.218	0.220

Table 3: Math achievement by primary home language, including grade and school fixed effects

	Benchmark 2012-13	**Benchmark 2013-14**	**PARCC 2014-15**	**ACT Aspire 2015-16**	**ACT Aspire 2016-17**
Marshallese	-0.670***	-0.648***	-0.486***	-0.426***	-0.351***
	(0.0470)	(0.0305)	(0.0351)	(0.0455)	(0.0311)
Other	0.129	0.262***	0.285***	0.243***	0.0784
	(0.0912)	(0.0806)	(0.0687)	(0.0680)	(0.107)
Female	-0.0268	-0.00171	0.0455*	0.0229	0.0217
	(0.0265)	(0.0282)	(0.0258)	(0.0299)	(0.0265)
FRL	-0.271***	-0.213***	-0.1000**	-0.00275	-0.0257
	(0.0634)	(0.0686)	(0.0426)	(0.0515)	(0.0535)
SPED	-0.982***	-0.892***	-0.724***	-0.683***	-0.602***
	(0.0644)	(0.0737)	(0.0386)	(0.0372)	(0.0415)
N	4,916	5,271	5,144	5,467	5,118
R-squared	0.188	0.190	0.156	0.140	0.141

Cohort Analysis

In addition to the pooled sample, which shows how ELLs at all grade levels are performing over time, I also conduct a cohort analysis, to see how achievement gaps change for a single group of students over time. I begin with 3rd grade students with ELL designations in 2012-13 and keep students in the sample who are consistently enrolled in Springdale Public Schools and maintain their ELL designation at least through 4th grade. The demographic composition of this cohort is presented below in Table 4:

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of ELL Cohort

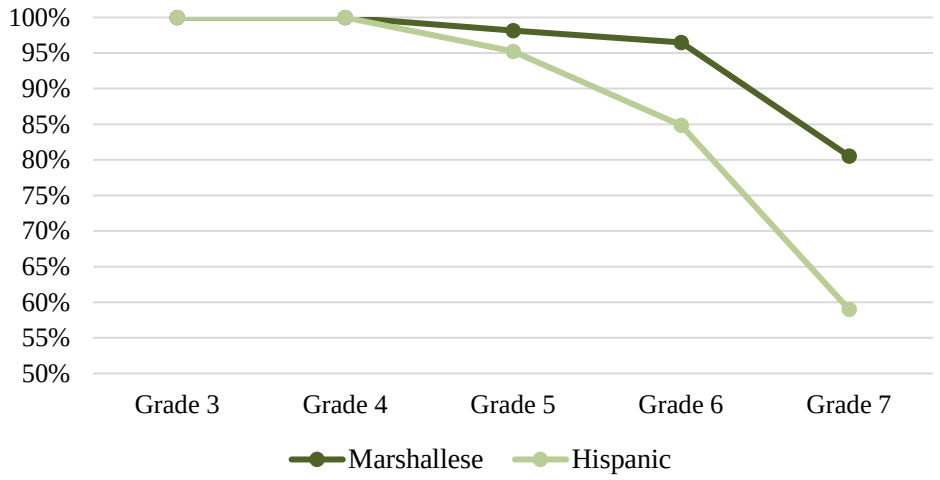
	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade
Marshallese	19.10%	18.26%	15.98%	16.86%	16.79%
Hispanic	77.73%	78.99%	80.92%	80.03%	80.09%
Other	2.24%	2.03%	2.22%	2.22%	2.23%
Female	49.28%	49.57%	48.52%	48.22%	48.89%
SPED	5.14%	6.81%	5.47%	8.73%	8.92%
FRL	95.39%	94.64%	93.64%	93.79%	93.16%
ELL Status	100.00%	100.00%	95.41%	86.83%	61.81%
	N=759	N=690	N=676	N=676	N=673

Students from the initial 3rd grade year exit the sample if they leave the district, repeat a grade, or receive a testing exemption that keeps them from taking the regular state examinations. As mentioned previously, I only include students in the cohort if they have an ELL designation in both 3rd and 4th grades. Of these students, 95.41% are still designated ELL in 5th grade, 86.83% in 6th grade, and 61.81% in 7th grade. Importantly, the cohort's 7th grade year coincided with a state policy change that made it easier for students to reclassify, likely contributing to the significant drop in the proportion of initially ELL students who maintain the designation in this year.

The most important trend to consider is the relative proportion of Marshallese and Spanish speaking students in the sample over time. Because I am interested in the achievement differences between these two groups, I wanted to be sure that they are not changing in meaningful ways over the period of analysis. While the proportion of Marshallese students

decreases slightly, from 19.1% to 16.8% and the proportion of native Spanish speakers increases slightly, from 77.7% to 80.1%, the composition stays relatively stable. However, I do find that within the sample, Marshallese students tend to reclassify at a lower rate than native Spanish speakers. The following figure presents the proportion of each linguistic subgroup that remains in the ELL program in each year of analysis. By 7th grade, approximately 80% of initially ELL Marshallese students are still in Springdale's ELL program, compared to approximately 59% of Spanish speakers.

Figure 4: Proportion of Students Remaining ELL by Subgroup



Qualitative Phase

The quantitative portion of this study highlights the academic achievement as captured by standardized assessments for Marshallese-speaking ELL students in Springdale, AR. Achievement data reveals a critical piece of a student's schooling experience, but it certainly does not tell the entire story. Therefore, I use a mixed methods approach to contextualize this study's empirical findings. Specifically, this phase's qualitative interviews allow me to investigate my second research question: How do Springdale teachers build relationships in the Marshallese community? As with any sequential explanatory research design, the qualitative

findings help us to better understand these results and to further discuss possible policy implications.

I conducted focused interviews with individuals (n = 2) who are well acquainted with Springdale schools' ELL population. One participant had worked in the district for over thirty years as a teacher, school principal, and assistant superintendent. She is currently a superintendent at a neighboring district. The other participant is a current middle school English Language Arts teacher who is assigned to her school's ELL student cohort. Our participants were located through snowball sampling, and they volunteered to participate in an interview. Although our study uses a small sample for the qualitative phase, it is considered sufficient for an explanatory sequential design (Bailey, 2013; Creswell, 2013). Moreover, I achieved data saturation, and the interview findings corroborate the narrative found in the student achievement data.

Interview Coding

Similar to chapter three, I use a modified Classic Approach while analyzing this study's interviews (Beck, 2020; Seidman, 2019; Creswell, 2013). This study has a small sample size, and as there is no consensus on the efficiency of using a software program versus a visual methodological approach, I chose to code the interviews by hand. I first transcribed each interview into its own unique password-protected Google word document and verified the transcript's accuracy. Next, after reading through each interview at least twice, I began identifying overarching themes related to my research questions. I then created a color-coded system to organize participants' direct quotations, and I copied and pasted these statements into a Google spreadsheet organized by theme.

I further analyzed the themes, identifying subthemes. I labelled and organized participant statements into more finite categories. I chose to sort extracted data by theme rather than by interview question given the context of this study (Beck, 2020). Data saturation was the inclusion criteria (Seidman, 2019). The interviews revealed that English Language instruction in the district is geared towards Spanish speakers. Furthermore, I find perceived cultural differences between Marshallese families' approach to education and Springdale's dominant culture around schooling. These differences inform classroom challenges for teachers and Marshallese students.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative phase of this study primarily investigates my second research question: How do Springdale teachers build relationships in the Marshallese community. I investigate additional questions: What is district outreach like for Marshallese families? What training do Springdale teachers receive in English Language Learning? Are there significant cultural differences between Marshallese students and their peers? Through these, I gain a better understanding of Springdale's Marshalle student population, and the district's approach to ELL instruction.

English Language Instruction

To begin, Springdale district provides expertise ELL leadership and instruction. It implements a robust and progressive approach to teacher training, ELL instruction, and cultural inclusion. The district partners with multiple stakeholders including the University of Arkansas to provide rigorous ELL training and certification endorsements. For teachers who do not directly teach ELL, they are still required to be experts in ELL instruction. As a participant stated, we "considered every teacher to be an ELL teacher." Furthermore, new teachers to the district who lacked ELL training, while successful in previous positions, seemed to struggle with

Springdale's diverse student population. School leaders prioritized the recruiting and hiring of teachers with ELL backgrounds, and the district prioritized the on-going ELL training and support of teachers.

Yet, despite Springdale's integrated approach to ELL instruction and support appears to be more geared for Spanish-speaking students. Staff professional development, ELL curriculum, and the district's overall educational philosophy better supports the needs of Spanish speakers. Participants in our interviews shared that the district approaches ELL instruction as a widespread pedagogy to "get everyone as educated as I can." As a result of this broad inclusivity, the needs of the largest group are more likely to be addressed. While Marshallese students are a substantial number of the population, Spanish-speakers are still the vast majority of Springdale's overall student population and its ELL program.

Finally, while Springdale's approach to ELL instruction and teacher training serves as an example to other similar districts, the approach appears to focus almost entirely on instructional pedagogy and rigorous academic expectations. At the same time, relationship building and culturally responsive strategies appear to be deprioritized by the district, and teachers and administrators must create their own opportunities for authentic relationship building. This approach requires ingenuity, capacity, and even financial stability from teachers. For one participant, she and colleagues, walk door to door through Marshallese neighborhoods to speak to parents and families. They usually schedule these visits around major school events such as state testing. This weekend commitment is not required or financially compensated by the district. For the other participant, she chose to raise personal funds to fly to the RMI to teach summer school in order to better understand the culture and the language. Harkening back to my previous chapter, I would categorize both participants as "The Neighbor." As a reminder, these

teachers have a philosophy which gives equal prioritization to relationship building and the maintaining of high academic standards. “The Neighbor” typically prioritizes house visits and maintains a visible presence at community events. Both interviewees shared that they visited Marshallese families at their homes on a regular basis. One participant also revealed that they personally funded two separate trips to the Marshall Islands to better understand the culture and improve their skills in meeting Marshallese students’ needs.

Marshallese culture.

Marshallese culture is distinct from the dominant culture in the United States. First, and perhaps the most impactful, Marshallese culture places a premium on collective identity rather than individualized attention and recognition. This aspect of culture is in direct contention with many aspects of schooling in the United States. Receiving praise or recognition is largely discouraged in Marshallese culture. So, for students who may achieve their school’s honor roll, or a child being awarded “student of the month,” their reaction from home may not match what teachers and administrators assume. These types of accolades are not sought after in the Marshallese community and may even invoke difficult conversations at home for a child or between the school and families.

Second, personal relationships shape almost every aspect of Marshallese life. Face to face contact and relationship building is prioritized and carries tremendous respect within the community. Overall, Marshallese community members identify as evangelical Christian, a result of missionary presence in the early 1900s. The country’s collective theology has morphed to sanctify personal relationships. This aspect of Marshallese culture directly impacts Springdale schools. For example, much of the literature cites evidence including Marshallese student tardiness and a perceived lack of family engagement in commentary on a lack of investment in

education. However, my interviews reveal that without these personal connections and concerted relationship building on the district's behalf, Marshallese families may not be prioritizing the local district. It is not a lack of investment in education, but rather a reaction to a perceived lack of investment by the district in their Marshallese students and their families.

Furthermore, Hispanic and Latinx students' context appears to have more in common with the English-speaking community and Springdale school district's overall culture. In other words, Spanish speakers' approach to education and their family's culture, more mirrors Springdale's white dominant, native English-speaking culture than Marshallese families. While Spanish speakers still face significant challenges as immigrants in Northwest Arkansas, it appears that this identified cultural alignment may positively impact their educational journey. Language as well plays a role here. Spanish and English share many commonalities as Western European languages that can aid in the interpretation of social situations and in English language acquisition for Spanish-speaking students.

These cultural differences not only create barriers for instruction, which I will detail in the next section, but these differences can result in students and families feeling isolated and disengaged from schooling. As Marshallese families have chosen to enroll their children in SPS for a number of reasons, administrators and teachers should prioritize culturally responsive strategies for engagement. This approach will take inclusion of Marshallese community in the identification and implementation of strategies. On their own initiative, this study's participants, actively engaged the Marshallese community outside of contracted work hours. Rather than relying on the natural tendencies of certain teachers, the district should have a systematic and consistent interface with Marshallese families. At the same time, schools should adopt a similar approach to student engagement at the classroom level.

Classroom challenges.

These significant cultural differences can play a role in negative schooling experiences. The participants noted that Marshallese students were less likely to ask for help, volunteer answers, and were generally much quieter as compared to their peers. For Marshallese ELLs, the language differences create barriers for students in navigating the classroom. Even with the specialized ELL training all teachers receive in Springdale, general education teachers struggle delivering academic content to Marshallese students specifically. The language differences also impact how Marshallese students advocate for themselves. One participant shared a story of a bullied Marshallese elementary student. Although the participant could discern that the child was being bullied, she could not figure out who were the bullies and the behavior continued until summer break.

Finally, Marshallese culture highly prizes the collective over the individual. As a result, students and their families do not pursue awards and accolades. As one participant explained, "Marshallese parents do volunteer in the school but don't try to publicly congratulate them or reward them for it." Marshallese students are less likely to ask for help or stay for tutoring. At the same time, advanced students appear to shy away from academic awards or individualized extracurricular activities such as knowledge bowl. For gifted students, receiving testing and designation for extra services would not be a priority for the family.

An ethno-centric approach to education is not a novel approach. Multiple examples exist in states with large Pacific Islander and indigenous populations (Buchanan & Fox, 2003). While these approaches tend to be actualized through school choice models, results demonstrate that high quality instruction and increased student academic and non-cognitive achievement can be leveraged through a differentiated approach on education. These classroom challenges pose

significant barriers for staff and students to surmount, and with the Marshallese population having reached a critical proportion of the district's overall student population, opportunities exist for SPS to create a culturally responsive educational approach for Marshallese students.

Discussion

Springdale school district and its relationship with the community's Marshallese families provides a case study in which to explore place and its impact on education. Springdale, although considered a model for ELL, struggles to reach Marshallese students as evidenced by longitudinal student achievement data in math and ELA as well as by the qualitative narratives provided by district employees. The district is well-intentioned and does in fact focus on the Marshallese student experience, but it continues to focus on pedagogical training. I found little evidence that the ELL teacher training or the district's overall ELL approach prioritize relationship building or culturally responsive inclusion.

It may serve ELL programs to consider incorporating the broader context for all ELL students, and to emphasize relationship building with the same focus as it does for instruction and curriculum. The two participants in this study were naturally oriented to education as "The Neighbor" archetype from chapter three. Through their own initiatives, both individuals sought partnerships in the broader Marshallese communities and immersed themselves in cultural experiences to better understand students and their families. The district's current orientation to ELL resembles more of "The Classroom Warrior." ELL instruction in the classroom, and in how the district trains its teachers, focuses on rigorous instruction and linguistic strategies to impart academic content. Districts of similar size with similar ELL demographics could learn from this case study.

ELL instruction, as evidenced in prior literature, is a black box as to what is successful. Experts still have not reached a consensus. Overall, excellent ELL instruction shares the best practices found in all classrooms regardless of content. However, we can see a persistent achievement gap between Marshallese ELL students and their peers. While Spanish-speaking students constitute almost the entirety of Springdale's ELL program, Marshallese students have reached their own critical mass within the district. Additionally, ELL students that fall out of that binary are a small number. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the district could provide programming for Marshallese students, contextual for their needs and cultural norms.

Education should be reflective of the needs and values of individual communities. This study reveals that what works in ELL programming for Spanish-speaking, may not result in success for other ELL students. Overall, ELL instruction – curriculum, teacher trainings, and academic research – is geared towards Spanish-speakers due to their large numbers in the United States. As a result, interventions for these students are easily scalable and their needs and learning capabilities dominate, shaping ELL programs and policy agendas.

Conclusion

In this study, I investigated the schooling experiences for Marshallese ELL students in Springdale, AR. I used a sequential explanatory research design to investigate two questions. The quantitative phase of this study helps to answer my first question: what is the schooling experience of Marshallese ELL students in Springdale district? I find that Marshallese ELL students consistently perform below their Spanish-speaking peers in state standardized assessments for ELA and math. I find a wider achievement gap in math.

This study's qualitative phase contextualized the quantitative findings and helped to answer my second question, how do Springdale teachers build relationships with the Marshallese

community? Through focus interviews, three clear themes emerged. First, Springdale's ELL program is largely geared for Spanish-speakers and prioritizes pedagogy. I found no evidence that the district emphasizes relationship building or broader community partnerships in its ELL approach. Second, cultural differences, primarily the tension between the Marshallese emphasis on the collective and the U.S. focus on the individual, create additional barriers to relationship building. Finally, these cultural differences appear to create classroom struggles for Marshallese students. Individualized attention or praise as well as language barriers can create difficult situations for Marshallese students to navigate.

This study contributes to the literature in two distinct ways. First, it empirically explores the educational outcomes of Marshallese ELL students. ELL academic research has a gap as it pertains to quantitative investigation of non-Spanish speakers in the United States. In addition, there is little research focused on Pacific Islander student experiences in the U.S. education system. Experts predict higher Pacific Islander migration to the United States due to climate change, and these findings could help inform future policy interventions for those student populations. Second, this study investigates the importance of schools' roles in the broader community. My qualitative interviews revealed the importance of school driven relationship building and community engagement for Marshallese students and their families.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

"To be human is to dwell within a particular place – from the moment we are, we are 'implaced'" (Iselin, p.1, 2021). Belonging to a place is critical to the human condition, and teachers, students, and families are not immune to this phenomenon. In fact, given the institutional service schools provide to neighborhoods and communities, and the place-dependent nature of education policy, one could hypothesize that place may play an even larger role in shaping the schooling experience for children. In Iselin's sense of the word, teachers are 'implaced;' students and families are 'implaced.' Through the lens of place and community, I examined the relationship of place attachment and teacher quality, teacher-community partnerships, and the schooling experiences of English Language Learners. Beyond the concept of place, family engagement, student inclusion, and a teacher's professional identity were central to this dissertation.

While 'implacement' is introduced as a concept more philosophical in nature, Chapter 2 attempts to empirically investigate this idea. This study measured place attachment in a population of teachers and explored the relationship between place attachment and teacher quality. This study was descriptive in nature. While I cannot infer causality, I found a teacher's place attachment was positively correlated with job satisfaction while holding a negative relationship with loneliness. This finding suggests that teachers with a stronger place attachment are more satisfied with their jobs and feel less alone or isolated. While this study had sampling limitations, the chapter provides initial research of incorporating place attachment theory into teacher recruitment and evaluative measures. To this author's knowledge, this study is the only empirical measurement of place attachment in a teacher population or to be used as a factor in educational policy analysis.

Chapter 3 provided a qualitative companion to chapter 2's work around place attachment. In a phenomenological case study, I interviewed 18 teachers about teacher-community partnerships before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants hailed from a wide range of community and school types, years of experience, and grade levels. From these interviews, I derived four themes. First, teachers struggled articulated whether they, as individuals, fit into the communities where they taught. Second, the teacher's school or district dictates their level of community involvement. Third, the COVID-19 pandemic forced some teachers to reevaluate their fit with the community where they teach. Finally, a teacher's natural inclination towards relationships appears to inform their views of themselves as community members.

Additionally, three distinct archetypes in teacher-community partnerships emerged from the data. The first profile is "The Neighbor." Their natural teaching philosophy is to assign relationships and partnership the same priority as academic content. Meanwhile, "Classroom Agents" prioritize content delivery in their teaching philosophy. Finally, "The Bureaucrat" teacher is one who shares an orientation to relationship building with their "Neighbor" colleagues, but because of explicit or implicit suggestions from their district and school administration, do not believe they have the job protection to be as civically engaged. Ultimately, these teachers defer to the system.

My final study is a mixed methods case study of Marshallese English Language Learners in Springdale Public Schools. For more than twenty years, residents from the Republic of the Marshall Islands have been migrating to Springdale, a small city located in Northwest Arkansas. District administrative data reveals a persistent achievement gap in both math and English Language Arts between Marshallese speakers and their Spanish-speaking peers. These quantitative findings then informed my qualitative phase's research questions.

Interviews with educators well acquainted with the Marshallese-Springdale context provided insights about the Marshallese schooling experience. I identified three themes. First, Springdale's ELL program is largely geared for Spanish-speakers and prioritizes pedagogy. I found no evidence that the district emphasizes relationship building or broader community partnerships in its ELL approach. Second, cultural differences, primarily the tension between the Marshallese emphasis on the collective and the U.S. focus on the individual, create additional barriers to relationship building. Finally, these cultural differences appear to create classroom struggles for Marshallese students. Individualized attention or praise as well as language barriers can create difficult situations for Marshallese students to navigate.

Springdale is an exemplar district for English Language Learning. Yet, heterogenous student outcomes reveal that Marshallese students are not achieving on the same level as their peers. The district appears to prioritize pedagogical training over partnerships. I found little evidence that the ELL teacher training or the district's overall ELL approach prioritize relationship building and community outreach for their language minority students.

Education should be reflective of the needs and values of individual communities. It requires systematic and culturally inclusive family engagement, responsive pedagogy, and strong teacher-student relationships. Marshallese students are 'implaced' in Springdale. They chose to migrate to the community and entrust Springdale Public Schools to educate their children. Marshallese students deserve opportunities for academic success and self-actualization.

Schools are microcosms of a place's collective identity, values, and traits. Berry (2009) envisions individuals feeling called to serve their place and community. Further, this service to place "requires us to be responsive inhabitants rather than specialized professionals" (Baker & Bilbo, p. 420, 2018). This feeling is poignant given the unique profession of teaching. Daily life

for a teacher has little delineation between the personal and professional (Goldstein, 2002). Teachers are expected to be content experts, researched psychologists, nurturing adults, and disciplinarians. Yet, shifting the image of a teacher as a specialized professional to instead as an invested and affected inhabitant of that singular place, could initiate future teacher quality research. At its core, education is ‘implacement,’ and teachers are in service to those places in which they dwell morning to afternoon, five days a week, fall through summer.

References

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