
Part I:

Although parent involvement in schools and children’s experiences of school is considered to be critically important, little research has been done to examine what is meant by parent involvement, particularly from the parents’ point of view. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) investigated parent involvement from the perspective of immigrant parents. This study was characterized as an ethnographic study. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) noted a gap in the research on parent involvement where all parents were homogenous. They were concerned about the lack of definition of parent involvement as well as the assumption that parents were a homogenous group. They designed a construct, Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE), based upon research done by the two co-authors as their theoretical frame. The “ecologies” term allows the authors to consider parent involvement as a system; that is, rather than examining parent involvement through a lens of behavior (what parents do or don’t do), the authors considered how parents experience school based upon personal histories and their interactions and experiences with their child’s school (relationships with teachers and administrators, school events and school structure). The authors found they were dissatisfied with the term “involvement” which suggests activities that parents do and instead used the word “engagement” to portray parent involvement as much more than attendance at a school event. Parental engagement, as defined by Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) “…includes the situations or contexts involved in an individual’s decision to participate in an event, including his or her relationship with other individuals, the history of the event and the resources available to both
the individual and the event designers.” (p. 469). Thus, by using a theoretical construct, the authors were able to delve deeply into parents’ experiences of their children’s school. For an ethnographic study it was critical that they authors define the lens through which they were analyzing parents’ experiences.

This article reports three parents’ stories of their school engagement experiences. Several activities took place within the school, which was described as being located in a high-poverty area and served a growing immigrant population. The parents were members of a group of seventeen immigrant parents who had participated in three conversation groups that were facilitated by the researchers. After the conversation groups the parents were invited back to participate in three talleres, where themes that emerged from their earlier conversation groups were discussed as well as the parents’ own school and immigrant experiences. This was an NSF funded-project and the parents received compensation and were provided with child-care during the meetings. Additionally, the conversation groups and talleres were facilitated in Spanish, the native language of the parents. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) used transcripts from these events, field notes of informal conversations, school observations, interviews with teachers and administrators and some visits to parents’ homes. Data analysis was completed through a grounded theory approach. The three parents’ stories were presented and then during the discussion section the authors identified types of presence, spaces of involvement, resources, challenges, and a summary of parents’ overall experience. Because this was an ethnographic study which used grounded theory for its analysis, the findings of this study does not provide specific data that can be applied to multiple settings. Instead, this study provides some evidence about the complexity of parent involvement in schools, particularly for minority groups. This study suggests that a shift in perspective about parent involvement may bring about changes in
how schools (teachers and administrators) engage parents in the school culture in meaningful and productive ways.

Part II:

Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) are both building theory and describing how three immigrant parents experience and understand parent involvement in American schools. By using the EPE framework as the lens through which they analyze the parents’ stories, the authors are adding complexity and nuance to the term ‘parent involvement.’ Through a deep investigation of these parents’ experiences, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) seek to understand immigrant parents’ involvement (engagement) in schools; this understanding, although in no way generalizable, does provide evidence that parent involvement is not simply an observable behavior. Parents’ own experiences frame and orient them to particular meanings regarding the opportunities and barriers that schools, as a social system, create or foster. Because this was the authors’ purpose, a qualitative study was warranted. Ethnography allowed the researchers to live in and share the culture of the families and their experiences with the school. In one telling example, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) describe that during a school-sponsored event the facilitator was monolingual in English even though the majority of the parents who attended the event were Spanish speaking (p. 475). The facilitator called upon the researcher (who is bilingual) as a resource to translate, which was done. This level of participant/observer provided unique access to peoples’ experiences. A level of trust existed between the researcher and the school staff as well as the parents. This shared experience brought the immigrant parents’ perspective to life in a significant way. Had the parents merely reported the incident, such as through a survey or interview, the event might be counted as an example of a mismatch of expectations and/or a lack of resources on the part of the school. However, because of the
researcher joining the school community, the experience was used to illustrate the challenges that immigrant families in this school face on a regular basis. The research here is not about counting events, but about how families experience the events and what their experiences tell them about school structure and their own role in their children’s school lives. Thus, an appropriate methodology was selected.

Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) describe their participants and share personal information about their life histories. To protect the identity of the parents, the name of the city, schools and families are either pseudonyms or not given. This provides a layer of protection to maintain the dignity of the subjects. This was clearly important given the population of the study. One of the parents, Pablo, is an illegal immigrant. Revealing any personal information about him could not be potentially harmful to him (i.e. being deported), but affect his wife and children as well. The authors also displayed their tendency to dignify their subjects by holding the group discussions and other conversations in the native language of the participants. The use of the word talleres to describe their narrative activities with families was one sign of respect for the subjects. In addition, translation was carefully considered when compiling transcripts. The parents’ words were available in Spanish in the article and the translation was placed alongside it. It seemed to me that the authors, in their stance that parents’ voices matter, took great care and displayed respect for their subjects by including the parents’ actual words.

There appeared to be a slight bias against the school administrators and staff. This makes some sense given the perspective of the immigrant parents and their challenges engaging with the school. In one example, the school principal, who speaks only English, is described as proudly telling one of the researchers about conversing in basic Spanish to Spanish-speaking parents at a school event (p.475). At the time, the school did not have any bilingual staff in the
office, which was frustrating to the Spanish-speaking families. The use of the word “proudly” in the article appears to set the principal up for failure. There is a characterization that his learning of basic Spanish conversation is an inadequate response to school staffing (which, as principal, was his responsibility). As a participant/observer I can understand how the researcher’s reaction was empathetic with the Spanish-speaking parents; however, I can also see a school leader who is demonstrating to his community of both parents and teachers that learning Spanish is important. Had the principal not been searching for staff members who were bilingual and skilled to work in a school office, his new Spanish skills might have been interpreted as an inadequate response to the problem. However, the principal acknowledged that finding qualified, bilingual staff was one of his priorities. My perspective was that learning Spanish was important to him given the community where the school was situated, and I saw this as a way to connect to the parents in the community and was curious about parents’ understanding and experience with a monolingual principal. I do not claim that I am right but I think my assertion is reasonable. Qualitative research requires interpretation and the authors did interpret this situation. However, alternate possibilities need to be considered. In this particular episode, a one-sided portrait emerged.

A second example of potential bias is when the authors pose a question to Celia, one of the immigrant parents, about a teacher had ever asking Celia her opinion about how decisions about her son or other students should be made (Carreón, Drake and Barton, 2005, p. 477). Celia’s response indicates that the idea had never occurred to her and that perhaps she had been cheated out of an opportunity. However, I’m not sure any teacher has asked any parent a question along those lines. In fact, the literature review of this article suggests that parent involvement, as currently constructed, is organized and run by the schools and parents are either
implicitly or explicitly given the message that their voices in larger school concerns such as policy, discipline and curriculum are not welcomed. This question, and the description of Celia’s response, suggested that the teacher had committed a grave error and perhaps had discriminated against Celia because of her status as an immigrant parent. This seemed like a large leap between data and conclusion.

When doing ethnographic work, researchers need to carefully consider language. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) were clear on their dissatisfaction with the term parent involvement. Although they used the term throughout their literature review, this was because that is how the literature is written. In seeking to build new theory, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) described their orientation through the construct of EPE (ecologies of parent engagement). This construct allowed sophisticated analysis of the parents’ stories. During the literature review, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) clearly lay out gaps in the research as well as the current view on what counts as parent involvement (school designed activities). From these gaps and definitions, the authors then describe the EPE construct and state how they will use it to inform their research analysis (p. 468-469). However, there is still a lack of clarity that might have been addressed. For example, although the authors state that this is an ethnographic study, they only briefly allude to the connection between ethnography and culture; an astute reader must have the background understanding about qualitative research to make this connection. Furthermore, the use of the word “ecologies” suggests, and is again alluded to by the authors, a systems theory construct. Certainly there is nothing wrong with pulling ideas from different theories together to inform research and analysis; however, in the case of reporting research, more explicit links and connections among the theories are warranted.
This study addressed a big gap in educational research. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) begin their literature review by stating that parent involvement is critical for children’s success in school. They cite studies to support this assertion. However, they delve deeper to explore what exactly is meant by the term ‘parent involvement’ and what the meaning is to key stakeholders: administrators, teachers and parents. The link between school-designed activities such as Parent-Teacher Association, back-to-school nights, and classroom parent volunteers and children’s academic success is tenuous. Therefore, this study provides new knowledge for anyone in education who is interested in parent involvement by offering new concepts and definitions of parent involvement (and changing the word from involvement to engagement). The shift in perspective from parent involvement being under the purview of schools where parents are expected to participate but not have a voice in policy or decision-making to one where parents actually create meaning from their experiences with their children’s schooling is both significant and interesting. Although parents may have identified some barriers to being more involved in their children’s education (time, transportation, work schedules, etc.), this study offers a portrait of parents whose stories inform us that parent involvement is more than just a ‘are involved/are not involved’ dichotomy. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) use parents’ stories to illustrate that engagement in school takes on many forms, some of which are not seen by the school personnel; engagement in school is shaped by different experiences and perspectives of the parents. This contribution to education may bring forth additional research with a wide range of parents and then provide schools along with parents to design means and activities that are valued and valuable for students.

1 This study focuses on parents’ experiences, but the experiences of administrators and teachers are also included on occasion because this study is ecological.
The ways in which immigrant families make meaning of their interactions with the school are summarized by Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) into three categories across different spaces (e.g. other spaces than just the classroom). The ‘strategic helper’, the ‘questioner’ and the ‘listener’ may be useful concepts for teachers and administrators. However, I wished the authors had further explained how these categories were developed. The description of how they created the codes was vague and at times appeared questionable. The authors required a high degree of trust from the reader. For example, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) write “In working through our layers of coding, we assessed the importance of different kinds of relationships among our ideas, such as what it means to author a space, how parents authored personal spaces within the larger formal space of schooling, and how parents created new resources from within individual and social contexts” (p. 473). This description is not helpful to me as a novice researcher and I doubt it’s very helpful for experienced researchers either, although this may be the process for researchers using grounded theory. No appendices were included in the article either to shed light on phrases such as “assessed the importance of different kinds of relationships” or to describe coding in detail. I found myself wondering how one would assess the importance, what kinds of experiences were deemed important and non-important (or less important).

This lack of description contributed to my doubt of their conclusions and the names of the categories. I had the most difficulty with Isabel’s story and the category of listener. Again, the term ‘listener’ was not clearly described but was presented as a contrast to ‘strategic helper’ and ‘questioner.’ I understood that Isabel encouraged her daughter to talk about school and what was going on in school which suggests listening (Carreón, Drake and Barton, 2005, p. 491). However, I wasn’t sure that this alone was descriptive enough as a category. Isabel certainly
experienced frustration when dealing directly with the school but when I initially read the article I thought of a category of ‘listener’ as one where the parent listened to the school’s advice and followed it without questioning. However, through several readings it does become clear that this is not what the authors meant. Isabel was described as reluctant to bring up school issues about which she was concerned. Isabel did not want her daughter to suffer any consequences based upon Isabel’s challenging school practice. The name of the category ‘listener’ is somewhat confusing, particularly when I think that what the authors want to say is that Isabel felt powerless to advocate for her daughter or herself in the school community. Isabel, a new immigrant to the United States, needed and wanted to learn about how school culture worked and she had many challenges to meet this goal. She spoke little to no English and did not have a social network to draw from when she had questions, concerns or ideas. I would have named the category ‘learner’ because it seemed that Isabel was desperate to know what she could do to ensure her daughter’s success in school. Again, there was possibly a reason that the researchers used the word ‘listener’ rather than another. The lack of description of the coding forced readers to make some leaps to make connections and left some unanswered questions. Explicit writing or an appendix would have been helpful.

Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) provide some directions for future research in their discussion section. In addition, I think that although this study focused on immigrant parents, it would be useful to deeply explore other parents’ experiences of school culture. There seemed to be occasional bits of truth in the experiences narrated by Celia, Pablo and Isabel that may hold true for other groups of parents. Through this study, Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) offered a different lens to view parent involvement and provided parents’ experiences to support why a different view may be critically important, especially to a population that is at risk for school
failure. In addition, studying other groups, such as low-income families, may continue to illuminate issues and concerns that schools need to thoughtfully address. If parent involvement (engagement) does support children’s school success then the field of education ought to know as much about parent engagement as possible.

Carreón, Drake and Barton’s (2005) study tells the stories of three immigrant parents which satisfied the goal of an ethnographic study. Their particular stance of EPE is a thread that is woven throughout the study (literature review, methodology, data analysis and discussion). Although I may have appeared critical throughout this paper my overall belief is that this is important work; I just wanted more. To a certain degree there is enough information to attempt a replication study with a different population. However, the lack of some critical information would present some challenges. The focus of the stories appeared to take precedence for the authors. Again, because this was an ethnographic study, the emphasis of the families and their experiences is appropriate. However, if this study is to rise to prominence in the parent involvement literature (and with its ecological perspective it probably should) more detail would have been helpful in order to fully trust the author’s conclusions. Certainly these stories show that these immigrant parents care deeply about their children’s education and find ways to engage with school (even if they do not attend any events) which defies a stereotype about non-involved parents. As American schools increase in diversity (for example, ethnic, SES and family structure) schools need to move away from a top/down approach when engaging parents in their child’s education. Carreón, Drake and Barton (2005) provide a framework that may not only be helpful but potentially beneficial for many current and future students which is a goal worthy of achieving.
ETAP Research Tool Exam
“Tracking and High School English Learners: Limiting Opportunity to Learn”
September 15, 2006


**Part I**

Callahan (2005) examined whether track placement or English proficiency was a stronger predictor of the academic achievement of high school English learners enrolled in a rural district in Northern California. English learners were divided into three cohorts: Long-term English learners, Recent immigrants with high amounts of previous schooling and Recent immigrants with low amounts of previous schooling. Eighty-nine percent of the English learners in this school were native Spanish speakers. This school closely matched state data on high school English learners in terms of length of residency and percentage of native Spanish speakers.

Callahan drew upon literature from the research on tracking. Her literature review begins with research on various aspects of tracking including academic content and discourse, student-teacher relationships, growth and achievement and merit. She then looks specifically at the tracking research in regards to English learners. Through this literature review she identifies a gap in the research, that is, the effect of track placement on the academic achievement of English learners who are already academically disadvantaged by their limited English proficiency (Callahan, 2005, p.309). Callahan essentially argues that English learners are at a double-disadvantage: they are placed in LEP (Limited English Proficiency) classes to improve their English; however, these classes do not offer rich academic experiences for these students which places them in a cycle where they cannot exit the LEP class (because of rigorous standardized testing) and thus continue receiving watered-down academic content and are then unable to
complete high school. Callahan takes a stance that although tracking should provide low-performing students with the instructional resources necessary to bring them up to a performance level of their higher achieving peers there are social and academic consequences for all stakeholders in schools: students, teachers and administrators. Thus Callahan’s research attempts to add argument toward the move away from the deficit approach of addressing students’ lack of English proficiency prior to their gaining access to academic content to one where students receive “double” instruction in English and subject matter (p. 324).

Callahan used to school database and student records as the sources for the data of this study. The school’s entire English learner population (355 students, grades 10-12) was analyzed. For this quantitative study both dependent and independent variables were defined. As mentioned earlier, the student demographics were close to state demographics in terms of length of residency and percentage of native Spanish speakers. Callahan provides details for all of the variables considered in the study and explains her rationale for the exclusion of a state-wide English assessment (p. 314). Additionally Callahan provides the regression equation used to identify the significant predictors of school achievement (p. 316). The rich amount of information and clarity of the presentation enabled me to follow her interpretation of the data. Tables and figures were also clearly labeled and explained in the narrative. Given the nature of Callahan’s research question, a quantitative study makes sense and the variables she included provided a thorough analysis in order to predict academic achievement.

Callahan’s analysis found that track placement was significant in predicting four academic achievement outcomes whereas English level was significant for two achievement outcomes. Further analysis provided more specificity on particular variable interactions. Most important for this study was that recent immigrants (less than 5 years enrollment in US schools)
with high amounts of prior schooling performed better than the other two cohorts thus providing evidence for Callahan’s hypothesis that English proficiency is not a strong predictor for academic achievement, rather it is students’ exposure and participation in non-LEP classes that better predicts their academic achievement.

Part II

Callahan clearly identifies her research question and provides rich detail about the variables she considered and rejected. She used her research question consistently in the interpretation of her data thus providing a cohesive analysis of the findings. The site selected for the study was appropriate not only in terms of numbers (e.g. she had a large enough sample size to work with) but also in regards to similarity to other California schools. This similarity provides the opportunity to generalize to the larger population of English learners in California which would be helpful in suggesting policy change. For a quantitative study, results that can be generalized may be fruitful not only for further research but for program and policy changes as well. Callahan uses tables and figures to illuminate her findings and provides additional analyses when appropriate. Her research question, which is stated directly (p.312) dictates a quantitative methodology and she links her question to a broader policy question about appropriate programming for English learners. She uses quantitative measures to answer her question, relying on variables such as GPA, English Development Level (ELD), SAT (math and reading) and two California tests: the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in math and language arts, although this data was only available for the tenth graders. With the exception of GPA and ELD, which may be locally defined by the school district and therefore not as useful in a broader study, her other variables allow for comparison to other schools in a later study. Her study allows for replication
at other locations within the state and is bolstered by her clear definitions of the variables and statistical analyses; including providing the linear regression formula she used (p.316). This attention to detail allows for a thorough critique of her work.

Callahan systematically explains her findings. The level of detail she provides is clearly linked back to her research question and her discussion of her results. Callahan explained the significances of track placement and English proficiency significance for the variables of GPA, Credits, SAT 9 (reading and math) and CAHSEE (language arts and math). Additionally, Callahan provided data on the relationship between ELD and GPA. This analysis provides evidence to bolster her argument that English learners are not receiving enough academic content in their English-learning classes (where the instructional focus is learning English via the content areas). Callahan found that the lower the English level, the higher the GPA. As students advance through English levels, academic content demands also increase; here Callahan (2005) states, “Confronted with high expectations that [English learners] are academically ill equipped to meet, advanced English learners begin to earn poorer grades.” (p. 318). She might have only used this data analysis to support her thesis, but by providing further analysis with multiple variables Callahan provides other evidence that English learners with a variety of backgrounds both in English and schooling are not prepared for the required CAHSEE and are thus at risk for school failure and ineligibility for higher education. She also posits that teacher expectation may play a role in this finding. Callahan notes that teachers in this school agree that at early levels of English learning, the academic expectations are lower (p. 317). The combination of teacher expectation plus academic demands places a double burden on students. As their English skills grow they are expected to also make academic gains, even if they have not had the academic preparation to do so. This is especially concerning for the long-term English learners. This
reverts back to elementary school English learning programs which are required by the state to provide English instruction to students in English; this emphasis on language proficiency means that academic content areas such as math, science and social studies are not given adequate instructional time and thus students are exiting elementary school unprepared to meet the academic demands of a high school curriculum. Thus, the tracking of students, although theoretically sensible, has long-term outcomes that are not beneficial for students.

Callahan included a brief statement regarding her prior relationship with the school that was used as the data set for this study. This potentially created an opportunity for researcher bias as she was a former employee. Because this was a quantitative study that relied on student records as the source, it is possible that some bias was eliminated. However, there might still be some evidence of either bias or possible issues that might arise in the school because of the nature of the research. Callahan is advocating for policy change in the instructional programming for a specific population of students. Her stance may have been welcomed or feared by the administration and teaching staff. It is likely that her prior relationship with the school provided her with access to the student records because of a level of trust that may exist between employer and employee; it is possible that her work was regarded as highly relevant to the school as it considered options for this population of students. Whether or not the administration and teaching staff were aligned with Callahan (or each other) in terms of appropriate educational experiences for English learners is not known. Had there been agreement about eliminating or changing the nature of the LEP track, Callahan’s research might have been useful as the school pursued changes. This is not to say that the quality of the work or the conclusions are to be doubted but rather to fully portray issues that may have arisen in the research process. While AERJ is not necessarily the appropriate forum to address all bias issues
exhaustively, I find myself curious about how Callahan’s research was fostered and received by school personnel. For example, one of the variables was grade point average (GPA). While Callahan explained that GPA included non-academic classes, she also mentioned that GPA was not weighted in the case of honors or advanced placement (AP) courses. This struck me as intriguing and made me wonder if the school policy was to count courses equally for all students (English only and English learners alike). If this is school policy, I’m surprised that Callahan did not say so. Certainly, her data may have been helped if English learners were enrolled in honors or AP courses and thus had weighted GPAs. On the other hand, her data may also be skewed if all classes were counted equally (since GPA was determined by grades/credits attempted) because non-academic classes such as Physical Education and Art were counted equally with academic courses such as Science or Math. Callahan does not provide any ratio data of academic/nonacademic credits pursued so this is a gray area when considering the reliability of her results. This certainly may be the school policy but this might also be an example of researcher bias (even unintentional) in attempting to either inflate or deflate students’ academic performance. Given her prior relationship with the school and the political consequences of her research, this decision may be critical in evaluating the overall credibility of her findings.

Another interesting omission in the research was a variable about race/ethnicity. Callahan clearly describes the demographics of the population and notes how closely they align with the state population. Of the English learner population in this school, 89% were identified as Spanish speakers (again, this aligned with state data). The remaining 11% spoke one or more of eleven languages with the next two largest sub-groups being Pakistani or Indian. Callahan makes a point about not homogenizing English learners (p.311-312) but does not select race/ethnicity as a variable for predicting academic achievement. It is possible that the numbers
were too small to be relevant. Callahan had specific criteria for examining cohorts of English learners and she clearly describes her definition of high previous schooling and low previous schooling. However, she does not provide any data about how many students of a particular ethnicity ended up in each cohort. Perhaps the numbers were too disparate to be meaningful and/or she wanted to avoid labeling any particular ethnic group as being a “model” or ideal immigrant population (e.g. one that eases into American culture with socioeconomic status). Given the sensitive political situation of immigrants, particularly those of Hispanic ethnicity, Callahan in all likelihood avoided the issue of accidentally making a political statement regarding particular immigrant groups and their academic success in American schools. If this is the case, Callahan’s omission of a race/ethnicity variable was probably not only sound in terms of data analysis but also of the danger of having her work politicized.

Callahan’s research provides solid evidence that tracking, as it is now defined and used in this California school, does not provide English learners with the skills and knowledge needed for successful school achievement. In her discussion Callahan offers some policy and program changes that she believes would support English learners in learning both English and academic content. However, she does not address any limitations to her study or implications for future research. The limitations of her study may involve demographics. Although her study site did meet the criteria for other schools in California, these schools were the rural schools. A larger study that examined multiple sites and varying demographics may provide some data that provided further evidence on the achievement gap of English learners in these settings; it would be interesting to see if Callahan’s findings hold across various school settings.

A further limitation of Callahan’s study was the lack of description of the teachers and their backgrounds. Callahan does not state directly whether the students in this school were
receiving English instruction from certified teachers. Furthermore, it might be important to determine what certification(s) the teachers did hold. One of the reasons that tracking may be ineffective for this population is that the teachers do not hold certification in an academic content area such as math or science. The teachers’ background preparation, more than the idea of the track itself, may be a potential reason that these students are not faring well in later academic courses, which are presumably taught by teachers certified in those areas. While Callahan proposes that English learners need a double curriculum in English and the disciplines, it might also be that teachers, particularly at the middle and high school levels, need double certification in content areas and ESL/EFL instruction. Although certification in and of itself is not a guarantee of successful teaching, it does provide at least some reassurance that teachers are at least minimally trained to teach the subjects they are teaching. Although this data may not relate directly to Callahan’s specific research question for this study, I think it is worth mentioning as a limitation or an area for further research.

Another area for further research would be study of the English learner cohorts. This could both be quantitative and qualitative. A further quantitative study may examine English learner cohorts and their American school histories. The long-term English learners’ early evidence of school success or failure such as reading achievement at a particular age may predict high school achievement; the recent immigrant English learners, regardless of type of prior schooling experience, may have a particular variable in their background that predicts their school achievement such as length of school year, school organization (multi-age or graded, academic preparation or life skills curriculum) and resources such as texts and technology. Furthermore, examining the parent characteristics’ of all English learners may also predict students’ school success; variables such as parent education level, particularly the mother’s, the
reason for immigration or parents’ English level may also offer further data that may predict students’ school achievement. While researchers need to be careful when using variables that cannot be controlled (such as parent education level) the information yielded from a student may suggest programmatic shifts that contribute to the likelihood of successful high school completion and achievement. One programmatic shift, which even Callahan alludes to in her study, is parent education about the consequences of course selection; students and their families may not aware that low-track curricula impedes their chance to apply successfully to college (p. 321). Further examination of other variables may provide policy-makers and practioners with data to design and implement programs that support English learners (and their families) to achieve school success. Qualitative research with English-learner cohorts may provide some insight regarding the view of school by these students. I would like to know both how English learners experience school and what they think might contribute to their school success. It would be valuable to find out how students perceive college and what they think a college education might mean for their own lives, and/or for the lives of their families. Callahan’s study provides multiple avenues of research to pursue.

Callahan makes a contribution to the body of literature on English learners and tracking. Further studies, including those of a qualitative nature, that build off of her work may prove beneficial not only to the knowledge base of researchers and practioners but also to the English learners themselves. Unsuccessful high school achievement has life-long implications for students. Students who exit high school with both language and academic deficiencies are at further risk for poor employment opportunities and struggles with basic needs such as housing and health care. Because of this, Callahan’s research is a welcome addition to the field of tracking and English learners.