

High-Performing English Learners' Limited Access to Four-Year College

tcrecord.org/PrintContent.asp

Currently, chances for English learners (ELs), emergent bilinguals who are in the process of developing grade-level academic English proficiency, to receive a college education are limited in the United States. Almost half of ELs do not attend any postsecondary education (PSE) after high school (Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015). Even among those who attend college, ELs are overrepresented in community colleges while being underrepresented in four-year institutions. On the face of it, this may all seem like an unfortunate but natural consequence of ELs' limited English proficiency. However, scholars have argued that there are structural barriers that inhibit ELs' PSE access, such as limited academic preparation in middle and high school due to their institutional status as ELs (Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Umansky, 2016). Moreover, recent statistical analyses suggest that factors that have been widely accepted as influential in the general student population's college access—the majority of whom are English-as-a-first-language (English L1) speakers—may not always be as significant for ELs (Kanno & Cromley, 2015; Nuñez & Sparks, 2012). In other words, we know that ELs do not have the same levels of four-year-college access as English L1 speakers, but we do not know exactly why. Longitudinal investigations of ELs' transition to college are particularly scarce.

The central purpose of this study, then, is to investigate why ELs have limited access to four-year college by analyzing the college choice experiences of two high-performing EL students who nonetheless elected to attend a local community college. This is part of a larger longitudinal ethnographic study that investigated ELs' college choice. Erica and Alexandra were the two highest performing students of the 8 ELs I worked with, both by their cumulative GPAs (Erica, 90.2%; Alexandra, 89.5% both A- in letter grade) and by the opinion of the head of the EL department at the school. Because of their high school academic performance, I had initially assumed that these two students would attend a four-year institution or at least apply to several. I was very surprised, therefore, when they decided to attend a local community college without even submitting a single application to a four-year institution. In analyzing these two ELs' college choice experiences, however, it became clear that the explicit and implicit messages that the staff sent to ELs about what kinds of PSE institutions were appropriate for them, as well as the two students' own beliefs about their capabilities, eventually led to their decisions. In other words, the interaction between the institutional assumptions about ELs' PSE possibilities (*institutional habitus*) and the ELs' own sense of their possibilities (*individual habitus*) shaped their college choice. This study, then, asks the following research questions:

1)

What factors and conditions inhibit high-performing ELs' four-year college access?

2)

How do a school's institutional habitus and ELs' own individual habitus interact with each other to shape ELs' college access?

In this study, I adopt Hossler and Gallahar's (1987) well-known term *college choice* to refer to all the phases that lead up to the ultimate selection of a college at the end of high school, including initial aspirations, search, application, and final decision. I use the term *participants* to refer to the 8 EL participants in the larger study, and *focal students* to refer to Erica and Alexandra in particular.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ENGLISH LEARNERS' COLLEGE CHOICE

In a recent overview, Nuñez, Rios-Aguilar, Kanno, and Flores (2016) found severely limited scholarship available on ELs' college choice, in stark contrast to voluminous research available on ELs' academic performance and social experiences in K-12 education. Although that is true, a small body of research is emerging that offers some insights. A recent analysis of the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002) found that only 19% of ELs advanced to four-year colleges directly from high school, compared with 44.8% of English L1 students (Kanno & Cromley, 2015). In contrast, similar proportions of students advanced to community colleges, suggesting that it is admission to a four-year college that is particularly challenging to ELs. Nuñez and Sparks's (2012) analysis of the Beginning Postsecondary Studies Study of 2004 (BPS:2004) suggests a possible bifurcation among non-English L1 students: Those who are already proficient in English often attend selective four-year institutions, whereas ELs attend two-year institutions.

Other studies have shed some light on why ELs do not enroll in four-year institutions at the same rate as English L1 students. ELs' restricted opportunity to learn in middle and high school has been identified as one factor (Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Gándara, 2004; Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Callahan et al., 2010; Umansky, 2016). Students who are placed in EL programs have less access to college preparatory courses in high school than bilingual students who are not placed in EL programs (Callahan et al., 2010; Carlson & Knowles, 2016). Even as early as in middle school, ELs are underrepresented in honors credits while being overrepresented in remedial credits (Umansky, 2016). Carlson and Knowles (2016) argue that reclassification as fluent-English-proficient by the end of 10th grade is key to ELs' access to college: They found that those ELs who were reclassified just before 11th grade had much better outcomes in terms of ACT scores, high school graduation, and PSE enrollment than those students who were close to reclassification but were still ELs in 11th grade. They attribute the differences to the separate curricular tracks in which these two groups of students are placed: Those reclassified by the end of 10th grade start receiving a college preparatory curriculum just in time for their transition to college, whereas those still in the EL program continue to spend much of their school time receiving instruction in the English language. However, Callahan and Humphries (2016) have recently found that even those high-performing ELs who do receive an advanced college preparatory curriculum in high school nonetheless are more likely to attend community college despite their eligibility to be admitted to a four-year college. Their findings suggest that ELs do not accrue the same college-going boost from taking advanced-level courses as their English L1 peers.

Another factor that past scholarship has identified as an inhibitor of ELs' college going is their financial constraints (Almon, 2010; Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Nuñez et al., 2016). ELs on the whole come from lower income families than non-ELs (García, Keifgen, & Falchi, 2008). ELs' lack of finances limits the range of realistic college options (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Nuñez et al., 2016). Kanno and Grosik (2012), for example, reported that even among ELs who did enroll in four-year colleges, the choice was often limited to either a local state university or a local community college to which they could commute from home. Moreover, ELs and their families often lack knowledge of different types of financial aid available and may assume that the sticker price of a college is what they would be financially responsible for (Nuñez et al., 2016).

Finally, many ELs, given low teacher expectations and the stigma attached to the EL label, may adjust their aspirations and come to believe that college is beyond their reach (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). The stigma surrounding the EL label is well known (e.g., Dabach, 2014; Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Lillie, Markos, Arias, & Wiley, 2012). Callahan and Humphries (2016) observed that placement in ESL coursework may act as a signaling device, alerting educators and others to project limitations onto EL students' academic potential (p. 286). Persistent low

expectations around them may lead many ELs to doubt their own potential. It is thus unsurprising that a clear difference in college aspirations appears statistically too. Whereas 75% of English L1 high school students aspire to earn a bachelor's degree, only 58% of ELs have the same aspirations (Kanno & Cromley, 2015).

Many ELs are also racial/ethnic minority, low-income, and first-generation college students (García et al., 2008). The intersection of these demographic characteristics, therefore, also shapes their college choice. Racial/ethnic disparities in college enrollment rates persist. In 2015, 63% of Asians and 42% of Whites ages 18–24 were enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges, compared with only 35% of Blacks and 37% of Hispanics of the same age group (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Low-income and first-generation college students also experience unequal college access. At the national level, 51% of the lowest quintile socioeconomic status (SES) high school completers were enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges in 2012, as compared with 81% of the highest quintile SES high school completers (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). In analyzing North Carolina data, Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson (2009) found that many low-income students and first-generation college students whose superior high school GPAs and SAT scores would qualify them for admission to the most selective institutions in the state were significantly undermatched (p. 99).

To what extent ELs' language status limits their college access above and beyond these other known disadvantages at this stage is not very well understood. However, recent statistical analyses shed some light on this question. Kanno and Cromley (2013, 2015, 2016) showed that both EL status and racial minority are negative predictors of college access when they are entered into a regression by themselves, but as soon as high school academic performance variables (e.g., GPA, test scores, and academic intensity of coursework) are added to the regression, EL status and race become nonsignificant. This suggests that both language status and race affect students' opportunity to learn in high school, which in turn shapes their college access. In contrast, students' family income and parental education level continue to be significant predictors regardless of other variables introduced into the regression, indicating that SES and parental education level have a direct and independent impact on ELs' ability to pursue a college education regardless of their academic preparation in high school (Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015). Further, Kanno and Cromley (2015) found that SES was a significant predictor of ELs' four-year college application but not for English L1 students, suggesting that ELs may not even apply to four-year colleges because of their perception of their inability to pay. In contrast, English L1 students seem to apply to four-year colleges regardless of their SES and make actual enrollment decisions based on the financial aid packages they receive. This harkens back to the point made earlier about ELs' and their families' lack of knowledge about different types of financial aid available to support low-income students' college education.

THE ROLE OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN STUDENTS' COLLEGE CHOICE

Because high school is where most students make their college choice, one way to investigate why minority students' college access is limited is to explore the role of high school in shaping students' college choice. One of the earliest studies in this line of work is McDonough's (1997) multi-sited qualitative study of the impact of SES on high school students' college choice. Holding gender (female) and race/ethnicity (White) constant, McDonough investigated how students from different social classes make decisions about where to go to college and what role their high schools play in their decision making. McDonough found that high schools play a pivotal role in students' college decisions by narrowing possible choices for them to consider. For example, a private college preparatory high school presented highly selective four-year institutions across the country as reasonable choices for its students and provided sufficient guidance and resources to make such choices a reality. In contrast, a neighborhood high school serving lower-middle to working-class families presented community college as the default choice, and if guidance counselors recommended four-year college to students, they were more likely to recommend a local four-year institution.

Since McDonough's study (1997), several studies have examined the role of high schools in students' college choice for a variety of student populations. Martinez and Deil-Amen (2015), examined to what extent Latino students of different SES backgrounds were exposed to the college-for-all norms through their high schools. They found, unsurprisingly, that those who attended low-SES schools were not encouraged to attend four-year institutions as much as those who attended higher SES schools. However, they also found that within the same schools, students who were placed in advanced tracks were exposed to more encouragement about four-year college going than those who were placed in general education tracks. In other words, students' academic tracks within the same schools serve as a gatekeeping mechanism for college access.

Hill (2008) investigated high schools' organizational norms and practices and divided schools into three types: (a) *traditional*, (b) *clearinghouse*, and (c) *brokering*. Traditional schools aim to send many of their graduates directly into the workforce. Clearinghouse schools, the most common type of high school, have many resources for college guidance but leave it up to the students and parents to navigate those resources, creating disparities in the amounts of resources that students and parents can access, depending on their ability to navigate the high school system. Finally, brokering schools are characterized by substantial resources *and* an institutional commitment to actively channel those resources to students and families. Hill found that both brokering and clearinghouse strategies have more positive effects on students' college enrollment than the traditional approach. However, although the brokering strategy has a universally positive effect on students' college access, the clearinghouse strategy has varying effects on racial/ethnic minority students.

Finally, Valadez (2008) conducted a case study of 12 high-achieving Mexican immigrant students' college choice. Valadez found that the guidance counselors were caring and wanted to encourage high-performing immigrant students to go to college but that they relied on the guidance approach that had worked with White middle-class students. When their usual practices did not work with immigrant students, they were puzzled and blamed the students and their parents for their lack of commitment. Immigrant students, not receiving enough guidance and perceiving going away for college as a form of betrayal to their family, in the end elected to enroll in a local community college or directly enter the workforce.

INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL HABITUS

This study employs Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) notion of individual habitus and a more recently derived notion of institutional habitus as its theoretical framework. Habitus is a key concept in Bourdieu's theory of *cultural reproduction* (1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), which delineates the role of school education in the reproduction of societal inequalities. Bourdieu argued that the school privileges the children of the dominant social class by taking their cultural capital as the norm and treating all children as if they had equal access to such cultural resources: By treating all pupils, however unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties, the educational system is led to give its *de facto* sanction to initial cultural inequalities (1974, p. 38, original emphasis).

Cultural reproduction happens not only because members of the dominant class attribute their educational accomplishments to their own merit but also because members of the dominated class come to internalize the shame of not possessing the cultural assets of the dominant class. In other words, they too misrecognize (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) the existing educational system as meritorious. The habitus, class-based dispositions that first emerge out of socialization within the family and develop over time, thus constrains what members of the dominated class view as within the realm of their possibility. Even when no external force is limiting their social mobility, they tend to draw a psychological boundary around themselves and rarely venture outside.

If we translate this theory into the context of EL education, it would suggest that, placed in an educational system in which their lack of English proficiency is highlighted while their multilingualism receives little recognition, ELs may come to internalize this deficit orientation and accept their lack of opportunities as a logical consequence of their deficit. If the habitus represents an individual's internalization of possibility (Horvat, 2000, p. 209), and ELs' sense of possibility is constrained by their history of experiences with marginalization in school, they may not venture to assume such a risky proposition as applying to a four-year college, believing, "That's not for the likes of us" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 157).

Habitus was originally proposed as the dispositions of individuals. When I speak of individual habitus, then, I am referring to this original sense of the term. However, recently in the college choice literature, the role of high schools and their habitus—what is called *organizational* habitus (McDonough, 1997) or *institutional* habitus (Byrd, 2013; Reay, 1998; Reay, David, & Ball, 2005; Smyth & Banks, 2012) in limiting the range of college choices for their students has been explored. In this study, the term *institutional habitus* is used to highlight its contrast to individual habitus. Just like individual habitus, a school develops its own institutional habitus over time through its relationship with its community, the history of educating a particular student population, and its own position in the system of prestige and reputations of schools (McDonough, 1997; Reay, 1998). It is true that a school is in the end made up of people and that individual staff members may hold differing values and opinions. Nonetheless, in the process of interacting over time and by developing and sharing a common discourse, members of a school tend to come to share similar orientations toward their students (Reay et al., 2005), whereas dissenting voices may be either ignored or nudged to conform to the common orientations (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). With regard to college choice, then, each high school develops a sense of what PSE options are realistic and appropriate for its own students. This way, a high school plays a pivotal role in reducing the literally thousands of potential college options to a more concrete and manageable set of choices for its students by making some choices virtually unthinkable and yet others routine (Reay et al., 2005, p. 47). However, it is also important to note that a school's institutional habitus does not necessarily orient all its students to the same PSE institutions. Within a school, some students may be perceived to be more promising than others and therefore given more resources and support to aim for higher-caliber of schools within the range of PSE options that the school considers reasonable for its student population.

So far, research on institutional habitus has focused on students' SES. McDonough (1997) defined what she called organizational habitus as "the specific patterns of college choices and behaviors that are manifested in schools *with similar socioeconomic status environment*" (p. 108, emphasis added). This focus on SES in institutional habitus has persisted even as other scholars have adopted this concept in their work in more recent years (e.g., Reay et al., 2005; Smyth & Banks, 2012; Wakeling, 2005). However, SES is not the only factor that shapes school staff's perceptions of appropriate college choices for their students. Perna (2006), in her conceptual model of student college choice, includes other layers of influence such as the higher education context (e.g., the presence of colleges in the vicinity, their recruitment efforts, selection processes) and the social, economic, and policy context (e.g., demographic changes, education policies, language ideologies). Although Perna placed those influences in broader layers outside of the institutional habitus, I would argue that many of these influences in fact are passed onto students *via* the school's institutional habitus. For example, the presence of a community college with solid academic reputation in the vicinity may incline a high school to recommend it as a default choice for its working-class students. This study, then, considers a multitude of factors that shape a school's institutional habitus.

In summary, I conceptualize a student's college choice as a result of the interplay between her own individual habitus and the institutional habitus of her high school. What the student sees as within the realm of her own possibilities—that is, her individual habitus—has a direct impact on the PSE options she would consider. However, the range of choices that the school presents to its students and more specifically to specific groups of students within the school as realistic options is also highly influential on the student's personal choices.

THE STUDY

The data for this study come from a larger ethnographic longitudinal study of high school ELs' college choice. I conducted fieldwork at Brighton High School,¹ a comprehensive public high school in Pennsylvania, following 8 ELs from junior year until high school graduation. The ethnographic fieldwork lasted from May 2010 to August 2013, with the most concentrated data collection occurring between March 2011 and August 2012. Altogether, I visited the school more than 70 times.

THE SCHOOL

Brighton is a suburban public high school located in a working-class community near a metropolitan city. With more than 2,500 students, it is one of the largest high schools in the region, with a diverse student body. At the time of my fieldwork, 42% of the students were White, 42% Black, 13% Asian, and 3% Hispanic, and together they spoke over 40 languages. Also, 37% of the students were low-income students, receiving free or reduced-price lunch. As is often the case with schools serving students from working-class and poor families, Brighton faced persistent underachievement: In 2011, in the year in which my participants took the state exam, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), 56% and 59% of students at the school scored Proficient or Advanced in reading and math, respectively, far below what schools in the state were mandated to achieve for that year. On the other hand, the college-going rates of the school were relatively high: Forty-one percent of graduates advanced to four-year colleges or universities, and another 37% attended community colleges, meaning that close to 80% of students attended PSE.

During 2011–2012, approximately 190 ELs were enrolled in the school. Ethnically, 42% of ELs were Asian (largely coming from Bangladesh and Vietnam), 40% Black (from West African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone), 15% Hispanic, and 3% White. The vast majority of ELs at Brighton were foreign-born immigrant students. Most ELs at the school were low-income students, and their parents/guardians typically did not have a college education.

EL PARTICIPANTS AND THE FOCAL STUDENTS

Erica and Alexandra, as noted earlier, were the highest performing students of the 8 ELs I followed at Brighton (see Table 1 for brief profiles of the two focal students). This original group of 8 participants were purposefully sampled (Patton, 1990) to represent a wide range of academic performance of ELs at the school, given that past research (e.g., Adelman, 2006; Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2005) clearly indicated that academic performance in high school is the most important predictor of college access and retention. I wanted to examine if different levels of academic performance in high school would lead to different college choice outcomes for ELs. I solicited the assistance of Mr. Woznyj, the head of the EL department, in drawing an initial list of potential participants. Of the 49 ELs in junior year, he suggested that I contact 16 students. Through an informal recruitment meeting and approaching students individually, I was able to conduct preliminary interviews with 11 of them and chose a set of 8 students who together represented a wide range of academic performance (ranging from a cumulative GPA of 90.2% to 57.1%, with 70% as the minimum passing grade; primary inclusion criterion) and diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender, and SES (secondary inclusion criteria). Because I intentionally selected 8 students of diverse academic performance levels, I had expected to see a correspondingly wide range of college choice outcomes: perhaps top-performing students entering moderately selective regional institutions, mid-performing students enrolling in the local community college, and the lowest performing students either attending vocational programs or getting jobs directly after graduation.

However, in the end, none of the participants except one who was in fact an English L1 student and a monolingual speaker of English² was admitted to the four-year institution of his choice. Further, the top two students, Erica and Alexandra, decided to attend the local community college without even applying to a single four-year college. Thus, a question begged itself to be answered: What inhibits even high-performing ELs from accessing four-year college? In this article, I decided to explore this question by focusing on the college-choice experiences of these two students.

Table 1. Summary of Focal Students Profiles

Students	GPA (%)	Sex	Race/ Ethnicity	Country of Origin	L1	Age of Arrival	Length of Residence	ACCESS ^a	PSSA ^b Reading	PSSA Math
Erica	90.2	F	European Hispanic	Spain	Spanish	16	2	4.9	Below Basic	Proficient
Alexandra	89.5	F	Latina	Dominican Republic	Spanish	15	3	4.8	Basic	Below Basic

^aACCESS: Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners, a standardized assessment of English proficiency administered to ELs every year in Pennsylvania. These are the focal students' ACCESS scores in junior year. They both were reclassified as fluent-English-proficient in senior year.

^bPSSA: Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, the state assessment in Pennsylvania.

DATA COLLECTION

I interviewed Alexandra six times and Erica five times at approximately regular intervals between the spring of their 11th grade and their graduation in June 2012. Interview protocols were developed beforehand for six semistructured interviews (see the appendix for sample interview protocols for Interviews, 1, 3, and 6). These protocols together were designed to capture the participants' ongoing college-choice experiences. I drew on ELS:2002 questionnaires for some of the interview questions because these questionnaires include a comprehensive set of questions on high school students' college choice as well as the interview protocols that I had used in the past with ELs already in college (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Kanno & Varghese, 2010). To maintain some consistency among the 8 participants, I referred to these premade interview protocols for all interviews, but as I got to know the individual participants over time, I increasingly modified the protocols to tailor questions to each participant's specific circumstances. Interviews took place during the students' study hall periods or after school and usually lasted 30 to 40 minutes. They were audio-recorded and later fully transcribed.

I also observed both focal students four times in their classes in 11th and 12th grades. The purpose of the observations was to learn (a) how they participated in class, and (b) what kind of instruction they were receiving (see Table 2 for a summary of interviews and observations). I also attended four college-related assemblies for students, Award Night for seniors, the graduation ceremony, and five college orientation nights for parents during the academic year 2011-2012.

Table 2. Data Collection With Focal Students

Erica		Alexandra	
Interview 1	05/06/2011	Interview 1	03/07/2011
Observation, Regular Algebra 2	05/24/2011	Interview 2	04/20/2012
Observation, Remedial American Literature	05/24/2011	Observation, Regular Geometry	05/19/2011
Interview 2	09/26/2011	Observation EL Reading 10	05/17/2011
Interview 3	11/21/2011	Interview 3	09/28/2011
Observation, Regular Government & Law	02/08/2012	Interview 4	11/21/2011
Interview 4	02/26/2012	Observation, Introduction to Accounting	02/13/2012
Interview 5	05/22/2012	Interview 5	02/19/2012
Observation, Conceptual Chemistry	05/22/2012	Observation, Baking and Confections	05/01/2012
		Interview 6	05/16/2012

I also interviewed 4 EL teachers, the district EL coordinator, the principal, 3 guidance counselors, and the college and career coordinator. These were the institutional agents who had the most involvement with ELs at the school. Interviews with the adults lasted 45-90 minutes. In addition, I collected the ELs' high school transcripts, PSSA (state exam) scores in 11th grade, and ACCESS (annual English proficiency assessment) scores from the school. I collected Erica's SAT scores from her.

I was not able to interview my participants' parents because the school did not grant me access. However, the students and guidance counselors discussed parental support, and I was able to obtain information on the parents' role in the ELs' college choice this way. Also, because Erica's father was a regular attendee of the college information nights that the school hosted, I had several informal conversations with him about Erica's college choice.

DATA ANALYSIS

Because this was a longitudinal study, data analysis began while I was still collecting data and progressed in tandem. I regularly reread the materials that had been collected thus far and wrote analytical memos on emerging themes and interpretations. I periodically shared these provisional interpretations with students and teachers for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also chose particular classes to observe or collected additional documents to confirm or reject emerging interpretations.

Once the data collection was completed, I read the entire data set several times and then carried out the initial coding of the data using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009): All documents were examined line by line to identify and sort relevant parts of the data into similar themes, or codes. For the purpose of this particular study, I further analyzed the two focal students' data both in terms of each student's college choice experiences (*within-case analysis*; Merriam, 2009) and in terms of the common barriers that inhibited their college access (*cross-case analysis*). For the within-case analysis, I retrieved all the codes related to each student, grouped them together into larger themes, and, on the basis of these themes, wrote a lengthy narrative of the student's college choice. Writing these narratives helped me understand each EL's college choice trajectory and the factors that shaped it. In the cross-case analysis, dozens of codes coalesced together to form three barriers: (a) limited access to advanced courses; (b) underdeveloped college knowledge; and (c) linguistic insecurity.

Student individual habitus was also examined both within and across students. Each EL's individual habitus was analyzed by analyzing codes that were specific to her and by writing of the student's narrative. Then, across the cases, commonalities and differences were noted by comparing the focal students' aspirations, decisions made along the way, and reactions to the school's institutional habitus. With regard to the institutional habitus, I combed through staff interviews, classroom observation notes, and college orientation meeting notes, looking for information that gave insight into the school personnel's views on appropriate PSE destinations for Brighton students as a whole and for ELs in particular. Particular care was taken to note consistencies and contradictions across the staff in the way they expressed and acted on the school's institutional habitus. Once I became reasonably clear about how the two focal students gauged their chances for a college education (individual habitus) and the staff's views of appropriate PSE options for ELs (institutional habitus), I further explored the interaction between the two by looking for concrete examples of how each echoed or contradicted the other in each of the three dimensions that constituted ELs' barriers to four-year college access.

TWO FOCAL STUDENTS' BRIEF PROFILES

Erica was a Spanish L1 speaker from Spain. She was an EL at the beginning of the study but was reclassified as fluent-English-proficient in her senior year. Erica's parents divorced when she was young, and she lived with her mother in Spain until she was 16, at which point she moved to the United States to live with her father, who was a school administrator and teacher at a local K-8 public school. Both of her parents were college-educated (her mother was a college professor), and each led a comfortable middle-class life. Erica attended private schools in Spain. She arrived at Brighton two years prior and entered 10th grade. She was the highest achieving student among my 8 participants, both in terms of cumulative GPA (90.2%, or an A- average) and by the EL department head's opinion. She took AP Spanish in 11th grade and was on Distinguished Honor Roll (GPA 90% or above with no single grade below 85%) in 12th grade. Despite her high achievements, however, Erica felt that her English needed to improve before she was ready for four-year-college-level work and therefore considered both four-year colleges and Local Community College (LCC), a community college near Brighton, for her PSE options. In the end, she decided to attend LCC without applying to any four-year institutions.

Alexandra was a Spanish L1 speaker from the Dominican Republic. She was an EL at the beginning of the study but, just like Erica, was reclassified in her senior year. Alexandra came to the United States from the Dominican Republic three years earlier at age 16. She first attended a transitional bilingual program in New York, but her family moved to the Brighton area after one year. Alexandra then enrolled in 10th grade at Brighton. She was the second youngest of the six children in the family, ranging in age from 31 to 14. Neither her parents nor any of the older siblings had a college degree. The family struggled financially. But because Alexandra had always been an academic achiever, her parents expected that she would be the first person in the family to attend college. Together with Erica, Alexandra was also recognized by teachers as a high-achieving EL, with a cumulative GPA of 89.5% (or an A- average). She was on

also on Distinguished Honor Roll in 10th grade. She took AP Spanish in 12th grade and also took the National Spanish Exam. Based on her high performance on the exam, Alexandra was inducted into the Sociedad Honoraria Hispania (the Spanish version of the National Honors Society), the first student to be given this honor at Brighton. Alexandra had a clear career goal of becoming an immigration lawyer and considered only going directly to a four-year college, preferably Penn State. However, just like Erica, Alexandra did not apply to any four-year institutions and enrolled in LCC in the end.

It is important to note at the outset that I do not conceive of this study as a study of Hispanic or Latina ELs' college access. These two focal students were chosen for this study because they were the two highest performing students of the 8 participants in the larger study, not because of their ethnic origins. Also, although both of them were Hispanic according to the U.S. census definition of the term (Oboler, 1998), Alexandra was a Latina, whereas Erica was a European Hispanic. Statistics suggest that Hispanics of Spanish origin are on the whole better educated and enjoy a higher SES than the Latino population (López, 2015). These differences are indeed reflected in the two students' backgrounds: Erica came from a middle-class family with college-educated parents, whereas Alexandra came from a low-income family and was the first student in her family to attend college. Thus, this study is not about how two students from similar backgrounds experienced the college choice process; rather, the study investigates how high-performing students from substantially different demographic backgrounds came to have similar restrictive college choice experiences because of their institutional identity as ELs.

FINDINGS

Findings are divided into three sections to provide an in-depth analysis of the factors that hindered the two high-performing ELs' college choices: (a) limited access to advanced college preparatory courses, (b) underdeveloped college knowledge, and (c) linguistic insecurity. In each of these facets, I provide an in-depth discussion of how an interplay between the school's institutional habitus and the ELs' individual habitus inhibited their college choice.

LIMITED ACCESS TO ADVANCED COLLEGE PREPARATORY COURSES

At the beginning of the study, Alexandra had a strong four-year college orientation. She did not consider attending a community college as an option. Noting that none of her older siblings had the opportunity to attend college, Alexandra positioned her own college going not only as an opportunity for herself but also a new opportunity for the whole family:

Cause they don't [have] the benefits that I can have now, cause in my country you need to have a lot of money to go to college, start to have, be a professional person. Well, I have dreams and things that I have to, uh, I need to be a professional person, to help my family. (IN 04/20/2011).³

Alexandra wanted to become an immigration lawyer: She said that she saw a lot of injustice done to undocumented immigrants, and although she was a legal permanent resident herself, she was familiar with immigrant lives and believed that she would be able to help other immigrants. Alexandra's parents clearly wanted their youngest daughter to go to college, and Alexandra herself was extremely career focused for an 18-year-old. When asked what she envisioned doing when she was 30, she said with a firm conviction, "I'm going to be professional first, and then having a family" (IN 04/20/2011).

Erica, although she had slightly better grades than Alexandra, did not have as strong a four-year-college orientation as Alexandra. A daughter of college-educated parents with an older sister in Spain who had graduated from a university, earning a bachelor's degree was a given. But Erica did not yet know what she wanted to study in college, and because of that, she thought that she should perhaps attend LCC first: I think I'm gonna do, like one year in LCC. And then after that I wanna go to another university, but I'm going to LCC because I don't know really what I want to study (IN 05/06/2011). Erica had an interest in marketing but was worried that her introverted personality might not be suited to the marketing field: I'm a shy person, so to do marketing, you have to make other people to buy the product, to show them. Um, I don't know how to work with that (IN 02/29/2012). Throughout her junior and senior years, Erica vacillated between enrolling in LCC first and advancing directly to a four-year institution. At the end of her junior year, she seemed more inclined to attend LCC; however, after she came back from summer, she said she was thinking about applying to Florida Atlantic University: I want to go to Florida Atlantic University because my aunt, she lives there (IN 09/26/2011).

In short, both students had a clear goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree, with Alexandra aiming to advance directly to Penn State and Erica considering both LCC and four-year-college options. However, quite apart from their own plans, the kind of coursework they were taking was not preparing them to become competitive candidates for direct four-year-college entry. At Brighton, each of the core academic subjects (English, mathematics, science, and social studies) was divided into five levels: Advanced Placement (AP), honors, advanced, regular, and remedial. Staff members informally referred to AP, honors, and advanced levels as the high track and regular and remedial levels and EL-sheltered courses (academic content courses specifically designed for ELs) as the low track. ELs were generally placed in EL-sheltered courses, such as EL Physical Science and EL Pre-Algebra, in ninth grade (or in the first year after they arrived at Brighton), and once they completed those courses, they were moved to the next remedial-level courses of the same subjects, where they would be mixed with English L1 students. In this process, the transition from EL-sheltered courses to remedial courses was near automatic: For example, Alexandra took EL U.S. History in 10th grade and earned 98% in final grade, but she was placed in Remedial Government and Law in 11th grade; Erica, who took EL Physical Science in 11th grade and earned 94%, similarly went on to take Remedial Biology I in 12th grade. Table 3a and 3b, which are compilations of their courses and grades, demonstrate that although they were generally achieving very high grades in the courses given, they were nonetheless confined to low-track courses except for AP Spanish, which both of them took.

Table 3. Focal Students Coursework

a.

Alexandra's Coursework

Subject Areas	Courses	Levels	Grade (%)
Foreign Language	Spanish	AP	95

English/EL	English Language Development I ^a	EL	93
		EL	97
	English Language Development II	EL	99
	English Language Development III	EL	92
	EL Reading 10th Grade	EL	98
	Transition EL English I ^b	Regular	87
	English Skills and Composition		
Mathematics	Algebra I	Remedial	87
	Geometry	Regular	73
	Algebra II	Regular	75
Social Studies	US History	EL	98
	Government and Law	Remedial	95
	Human Behavior	Remedial	88
Sciences	Biology	EL	97
	Environmental Science	Remedial	90
	Human Anatomy	Remedial	90
Electives ^c	Food Science		86
	Baking and Confections		93
	Studio Art		94
	Information Processing		86
	Desktop Publishing		82
	Accounting		98
	Marketing		96

^aEnglish Language Development courses are for beginning-level ELs. ^bTransition EL English courses are for those ELs who are making a transition from EL courses to regular courses. ^cElective courses were not leveled.

b.

Erica s Coursework^a

Subject Areas	Courses	Levels	Grade (%)
---------------	---------	--------	-----------

Foreign Languages	Spanish	AP	88
	Italian	Beginning	97
English/EL	Transition EL English I	EL	93
	Transition EL English II	EL	93
	EL Reading 9th Grade I	EL	98
	EL Reading 9th Grade II	EL	100
	American Literature	Remedial	92
	Transition EL English III	EL	97
Mathematics	Algebra I	Regular	97
	Geometry	Regular	80
	Algebra II	Regular	77
	College Algebra	Regular	98
Social Studies	EL Global Studies	EL	97
	U.S. History	Remedial	90
	Government and Law	Regular	98
	Human Behavior	Remedial	96
Sciences	EL Physical Science	EL	94
	Biology	Remedial	82
	Conceptual Chemistry	Regular	93
	Anatomy and Physiology	Regular	90
Electives	Volunteer Service		Pass
	Interior Design		91

^aThe numbers of courses in each subject for Alexandra and Erica do not match because they have different numbers of credits transferred from previous schools.

ELs low tracking, regardless of their academic performance or college aspirations, stemmed from Brighton's institutional habitus. On the one hand, Brighton aimed to send all its graduates to PSE; on the other hand, given that it was located in a predominantly working-class community, the school took the position that going to a four-year college did not have to be everyone's goal. The staff considered LCC, a community college in the vicinity with a solid academic reputation, as a sound choice for many of their students. Mr. Lawrence, the principal, articulated the school's institutional habitus as follows:

I'll tell you very honestly, you know, as an educated individual who went to a four-year school, I think your gut reaction is to say, Well, everyone should go to a four-year school. We should have everyone prepared for a four-year school. To me, that's not the society we live in right now. . . . With the number of credit transfer agreements that [community colleges] are obtaining, to go there and have something a little more financially affordable for a year, a year and a half, two years, and then go on to a traditional four-year school, finish and obtain a degree, I think, is becoming a much more financially realistic path for all students. (IN 01/24/2012)

However, Brighton did not uniformly encourage all students to consider LCC. LCC was for those students who wanted to go to college but whom the staff regarded as behind in some ways. As Mrs. Solomon, a guidance counselor, shared,

We do really push LCC for a lot of students. I shouldn't, you know, I shouldn't say push it, but it's a very, very good option economically for a lot of kids. And also, you know, some of the kids do need that extra need to kinda develop their work ethics, and the kids that sometimes wake up in January and want to do it, sometimes they may be a good fit for LCC because they are a little bit behind in maturity maybe with wanting to go to college. And it may be good for them if they do need any remedial courses to take them while it's cheaper. (IN 11/09/2011)

Given this institutional habitus, high-achieving ELs such as Erica and Alexandra were seen as the prime candidates for LCC. Harklau (2000) argued that in the context of U.S. high schools, being bilingual is seen as a deficit rather than an asset: Some teachers cast these students' ability to communicate in two languages not as a special talent or strength but rather as a *disability*, emphasizing what immigrant students could not do relative to monolingual, standard English speaker (p. 50, emphasis added). The Brighton staff too predominantly viewed ELs' linguistic competence through a deficit lens. For example, when Mr. Burke, director of guidance, explained the rationale for not placing ELs in AP courses, the emphasis was on their linguistic *struggles*: If they're still struggling with the language, they're going to have a heck of a time. I mean, you, you ought to see our AP courses. The amount of reading and writing required is enormous. And so, those kids would really struggle, I would think (IN 10/03/2011). To be fair to Brighton educators, it was not as if they dismissed ELs as non-college material; rather, the staff regarded ELs as students with a significant disadvantage, who needed more time to become academically competitive and college ready. Hence, the staff recommended high-performing ELs to consider LCC. For example, in his EL language development class for senior students, Mr. Woznyj gave EL seniors a strong endorsement of LCC by relating its cost effectiveness:

Mr. Woznyj is extremely nonjudgmental, and started out by saying that not everyone is going to college and that's perfectly fine. In fact, his first question was why it may *not* be a good idea for people to go to college right away. He also emphasized how much money it costs to go to college and went into considerable detail about how it may be a good idea for people to go to a community college first and then transfer to a university. He did a quick calculation of the price difference between four years of [a state university] versus two years of LCC and then two years of [the university]. (FN 09/28/2010, original emphasis)

Enrollment in a community college requires a high school diploma; on the other hand, one is not required to have taken advanced college preparatory courses in high school in order to enroll in a community college. Because of the shared institutional assumption that LCC was a good choice for ELs, staff members were more concerned about assigning ELs to the courses that they would be able to pass than challenging them academically. Consequently, the

coursework on Alexandra and Erica's transcripts consisted of low-track core courses combined with an eclectic mix of elective courses that together failed to indicate any particular strength or interest on the part of the students (see Table 3).

The focal students did not contest their low tracking. At Brighton, students, together with their parents, were allowed to request different courses from the ones the school recommended. But it never seemed to occur to either student to request higher level courses than were assigned. First of all, they did not have a firm enough grasp of academic tracking and its implications for their college choice to think of negotiating their coursework. Quite tellingly, when I asked specifically about the levels of the courses they were taking, they generally could not tell me; instead, they identified their courses by their time and classroom location. Only at the end of her senior year and after having watched her peers who had taken AP courses get accepted to four-year institutions did Erica come to the realization that she should have pursued higher level courses more aggressively:

Author: Would you be able, would you have been able to do that [i.e., take AP courses] if you had asked?

Erica: Mm, maybe, but I wasn't sure because they used to like, they normally give you the schedule so I thought I was not able to take AP classes. So that's why I didn't ask. But now that I know that you could've had asked, I feel bad about it. (IN 05/22/2012).

Second, because the ELs were so used to being told what to do as opposed to being consulted about their preferences they simply assumed that the decisions that institutional agents made for them, including their coursework, were nonnegotiable. Noting that her counselor did not suggest higher track courses and that she herself did not request them, Alexandra said, [My counselor] say[s] that these classes are good to take for me right now (IN 09/28/2011), as if that settled the matter. As I discuss in the next section, it is not as if Alexandra trusted the educators at her school or that she believed they knew her well enough to select the best courses for her. Thus, her words indicate not her trust in her counselor's decisions, but rather her assumption that she had no choice but to take what was offered.

UNDERDEVELOPED COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

Brighton was proactive in having students start planning for college from early on: From ninth grade, students were required to reflect on their college planning and report what they had done so far as part of their annual portfolios. The school offered numerous college planning assemblies, scholarship and financial aid workshops, college and career fairs, and regular opportunities for students to meet with college representatives, as well as college orientation nights for parents. There was also a college and career center in the school library where a half-time college and career guidance counselor met with individual students on request.

At the same time, Brighton adopted a typical clearinghouse (Hill, 2008) approach to college guidance, and although it offered a multitude of resources to its students, it did not ensure that all students achieved *college knowledge*, the knowledge about how to prepare for and apply to college (Vargas, 2004, p. 3). Consequently, those students and parents who knew how to navigate the high school system were able to benefit from such resources, whereas much of the information provided in assemblies and handouts remained incomprehensible to those with less familiarity with U.S. higher education. One of the EL teachers, Ms. Li, observed that ELs typically came back from college guidance assemblies looking confused:

They do go to assemblies and sometimes I ask them, So, what did you learn? And they, they don't understand what went on. So, maybe lack of English proficiency or not taking it seriously. I know that a lot of them just don't know what's really being said at these meetings. And I guess lastly it, it, it's a lot of information, so I know that EL students who are really serious about going to colleges can take all the information, understand it, and do something about it. But, a lot of them, it, it just goes over their heads. (IN 01/23/2012)

Alexandra clearly lacked college knowledge. She did not have college-educated parents or older siblings who attended college and therefore could not count on her family for college guidance. Although she maintained that her family was supportive of her going to college, she also noted that her family was not a resource when it came to college guidance:

Author: Is it mostly you who brings in the information, or are your parents looking up things and giving you the information as well?

Alexandra: I bring it cause they don't know anything. (IN 11/21/2011)

Lack of college knowledge undermined Alexandra's college planning in many ways. First, although she was determined to become a lawyer, she was unfamiliar with the concept of law school and had no understanding of how one becomes a lawyer. Because she was unfamiliar with the pathway to becoming a lawyer, the thought of choosing a university major that might give her an advantage to be admitted to law school simply did not occur to her either. Instead, she expressed her interest in studying psychology because she had taken Human Behavior and found it interesting: It's interesting cause it talk about the person and the brain. Everything about, how the person act. And, I got an A in that class (IN 09/28/2011).

Second, although she was intent on applying to Penn State, Alexandra never started her actual college application. Although she knew as early as March of her junior year that she would have to take the SAT, she kept on delaying registering for the exam. Moreover, in her mind, because she did not have her exam score, she was not able to start preparing other parts of her college application. At the end of September of her senior year, when I asked her whether she had started on her college essay, she said, I didn't do it. I didn't get started on it cause I think I needed to have the SAT score (IN 09/28/2011). While I was getting anxious about her lack of progress in college application, Alexandra herself seemed more preoccupied with her class assignments. Just before Thanksgiving, by which time, according to the guidance counselors, seniors should have completed most of their college applications, we had the following conversation:

Author: Have you started the [college application] process yet?

Alexandra: No.

Author: No. And why not? This is getting a bit late.

Alexandra: Cause I don't have the time.

Author: OK. So, what have you been up to? What, what are you doing?

Alexandra: Projects, essay. (IN 11/21/2011)

As Vargas (2004) noted, The process involved in applying to college taking the SAT or the ACT, for instance may seem to be common knowledge, but they are not obvious to underrepresented students and their families (p. 8).

Third, although she had clearly identified herself as a low-income student, her college knowledge was so underdeveloped that the question of financing never seriously entered her college choice equation. For instance, although she was aware that she would need substantial financial assistance to attend college, she never truly developed knowledge of what forms of financial aid, other than scholarships, are available to low-income students like her:

Alexandra: Like, we need to have money for it. I told [my parents] that it s very expensive. And they told me that I need a college, a scholarship. Something like that, cause they can t pay too much.

Author: Are you aware of the financial aid? The FAFSA?

Alexandra: Um, no. (IN 04/20/2011)

This conversation took place in the spring of her junior year; however, her knowledge of financial aid never progressed much from this point. Later, the reason she gave for attending LCC was simply that she had no other choice because she had failed to apply to four-year colleges in time. She never mentioned the cost benefit of attending a community college. In other words, I believe that the cost would have become a real factor had she managed to apply to four-year institutions and been admitted to one to the point that it might have forced her to give up on attending a four-year college. However, she never reached that point.

Although it was clear that Alexandra did not know what she was doing, she refused to seek help from institutional agents. Her resistance was of a different kind from that of the working-class lads in Willis s (1977) well-known ethnography. Alexandra did not resist the upward mobility and middle-class values that the educators endorsed the way Willis s lads did: She was studious and ambitious in a conventional way. However, Alexandra had a distrust of institutional agents and did not believe that the Brighton teachers and counselors cared about her:

Alexandra: The point is, if they don t give me the information, I need to look at it myself. So, that s what I m doing. And that s what I did since I came here.

Author: Mmm.

Alexandra: Cause I hate when I need to ask people for something or for , whatever. And they don t pay attention to me. Like, they don t care. Well, I do care. So I need to look at it by myself.

Author: Sure. Yeah

Alexandra: That s why I don t wait for them. I just do it by myself. (IN 05/16/2012)

Stanton-Salazar (2001) argued that relations of trust and rapport are a necessary vehicle for regular help seeking and for the fluid, recurrent, and tailored transfer of key institutional resources from agent to student (pp. 198 199). From students perspective, seeking the help of an institutional agent is highly risky business: They could make themselves vulnerable by asking for help, only to face rejection or indifference (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). In fact, Alexandra did try to approach her counselor, Mr. Olin, once, but that attempt did not go well:

My counselor, I don't know him. He's new and I never been there. I never talk to him. And I was like, the other day, after school, I was there and I want to talk to him and he was on the phone like, Give me five minutes, you need to wait cause I'm talking. I just get mad; I left. (IN 05/16/2012)

At Brighton, the counselor student ratio was approximately 1 to 300. Also, in addition to college guidance, counselors have to attend to many other issues, such as course rostering, counseling at-risk students, and testing (Woods & Domina, 2014). It is entirely possible that Mr. Olin was simply busy at that time rather than uncaring. But given the lack of existing relations of trust and rapport, Alexandra interpreted this incident as evidence of his lack of care and never approached him again.

Erica's college planning was distinct from Alexandra's because of her father's intimate involvement in the process. As an administrator and teacher at a K-8 school in a nearby district, Erica's father, Mr. Lopez, was familiar with K-12 education in the United States and closely monitored Erica's academic performance. He regularly attended the college planning nights for parents; he also regularly contacted Mrs. Hernandez, Erica's assigned guidance counselor. At times, Mrs. Hernandez thought that Mr. Lopez was pushing Erica too hard:

We have conversations with her father. And she may want to take this elective, and the father says, No, I don't want her to take another elective. I want her to take another language. I want her to sign up for Italian. And wh , and she's completely capable of doing that, but then I have to pull him back as well and say, Let's give her a breather somewhere in the day. She's taking AP Spanish, she's taking after-school Italian, and she's taking this English class. Let's kind of move it back a little bit. (IN 11/02/2011)

This and other remarks by Mrs. Hernandez suggest that Mr. Lopez did not hesitate to contact Mrs. Hernandez to express his opinions, which none of other participants' parents ever did. However, it is also interesting that he did not push Mrs. Hernandez to allow Erica to take higher level courses in the core subjects, which would have been much more effective in making her a more competitive candidate in college admission than taking an additional foreign language. This, I believe, indicates the limits of his own college knowledge.

There are additional indications that even someone like Mr. Lopez was not entirely familiar with the U.S.-college-application process although he was college educated, his college education was back in Spain, and he was an administrator at a K-8 school that did not have a high school component. His own confusion about the U.S. college application process and his strong dominance in Erica's college planning shaped the direction of her college choice. Initially, Mr. Lopez encouraged Erica to choose LCC because in his opinion, only students who know what they want to study in college should attend four-year colleges, and his daughter was not sure about her college major. Although his opinion may be theoretically rational, in reality, many 18-year-olds do not know what they want to study in college, but that does not stop many middle-class and upper-middle-class parents from encouraging their children to consider only four-year institutions (Capuzzi Simon, 2012).

By the beginning of Erica's senior year, however, the rationale for Mr. Lopez's choice of LCC for his daughter had shifted to financial concerns. Erica noted, My dad, he was thinking, like go to a university is really expensive. So, he thinks maybe I should do one year or two years at [community] college, and then go to another university (IN 09/26/2011). At the same time, he also pressed Erica to prepare for the SAT, which she did not need to do if she was to attend LCC: He all the time tell me to study for the SATs because um, it's really important (IN 09/26/2011).

Erica remained passive through her college-planning process and allowed her college choice to be swayed by her father and her school staff. Sometimes she made attempts to defy her father and exert her independence. For instance, because her father's main rationale for recommending LCC was to save money, Erica believed that if she earned a scholarship, her father would let her attend a four-year college. In September of her senior year, as she thought about applying to Florida Atlantic University, she became interested in getting scholarships:

Author: OK. So, you talked about what your dad is planning for you.

Erica: Yeah [laughs].

Author: What is *your* plan?

Erica: My plan, like, my plan for right now is like, try to get good grades, so they can give me ah, how you say

Author: A scholarship?

Erica: A scholarship. Yeah. So, I am really focused this year. (IN 09/26/2011, original emphasis)

Ultimately, however, because her father was strongly pushing for LCC and her school also steered her in that direction, and because she had her own linguistic insecurity (see next section), by early November of her senior year, Erica decided to attend LCC:

Well, I decide go to LCC because first, my dad, he was saying that you can, it's going to be better for me because go to a university, four-year college is going to cost you more. Um, I want to learn better my English, reading and writing. So, I don't know, I just, I don't think, it's not a bad school, what they say. I was, yeah, because I was talking with Mr. Woznyj and he say it's was a good idea. (IN 11/21/2011)

School staff, in the meantime, attributed Erica's and Alexandra's lack of self-advocacy to their passiveness rather than to their confusion or lack of trust in institutional agents. Even Mr. Woznyj, who knew these students much better than subject matter teachers, perceived Erica and Alexandra to be passive students who did not take the initiative to seek help: Those two girls would never approach me for help ever. Even if they're completely clueless. . . . So, I could see them just getting or having questions, but just sitting back saying, Well, this isn't gonna just happen, you know. So, I guess it doesn't happen (IN 01/06/2012). Reminiscent of the guidance counselors in Valadez's (2008) study, when ELs failed to reach out to teachers and counselors, even the educators, such as Mr. Woznyj, Ms. Li, and Mrs. Hernandez, who cared about ELs, attributed their lack of self-advocacy to their passivity rather than asking themselves whether their methods of guidance were effective with ELs.

LINGUISTIC INSECURITY

As Erica and Alexandra meandered through their college planning, another factor that shaped their college choice was their *linguistic insecurity*. The term, coined by Labov (1966), refers to the feeling of inferiority about one's own speech as measured against an exterior standard of correctness. Although Labov used the term to refer to social class differences as reflected in speech patterns, we can also apply the notion to ELs and how they might feel anxious about

their English as compared with the native speaker standards (Bucchi & Baxter, 1984). Erica, the highest academic achiever of the 8 participants, was ironically also the EL who exhibited the strongest linguistic insecurity. She acknowledged that her linguistic insecurity at times made her avoid speaking with English L1 peers: I don't speak a lot of, of English, like people who speak English. I speak, but I speak more with my Spanish. So, I know that is my fault. Because my dad, he like, Oh, you try to, you need to speak more with American people (IN 11/21/2011). Erica's linguistic insecurity also made her hesitate to reach out for opportunities in other areas. Mr. Woznyj noted Erica's lack of confidence, which he saw as preventing her from challenging herself. For example, in her senior year, Erica begged Mr. Woznyj to move her from a regular English course back into his EL course: Erica is a pretty intelligent girl . . . but, I don't see the push to really achieve that goal in her. She was in regular ed. English and wasn't even doing poorly . . . [but] she started saying, I can't do this. I don't want to (IN 01/06/2012). Ultimately, Erica's linguistic insecurity contributed to her college choice. She was clear that she would eventually attain a bachelor's degree; however, as she moved from junior to senior year, Erica became increasingly convinced that with her English proficiency, she first needed to attend a community college before she was ready to face the demands of four-year-college work. It is important to note that the reasons for her father's choice for LCC and Erica's own reason for choosing LCC were not the same: Mr. Lopez preferred LCC for financial reasons; Erica increasingly leaned toward LCC because of her lack of confidence in her English. Even as she contemplated applying to a four-year college in September of her senior year, she also simultaneously took comfort in the idea of enrolling in LCC, where she could take time to practice English first: If [I] go to LCC, I can study English very good. So, I can go to the university. I won't have like a lot of problems (IN 09/26/2011). In leaning toward LCC because of her still developing English, Erica might have erroneously assumed that one's English had to be perfect in order to attend a four-year college. Such assumption, Ms. Li observed, was common among ELs: I know that they think college is where all these like, you know, perfect-speaking English people go. And you have to have such a great score on your SATs (IN 01/23/2012). Erica took the SAT in May of her junior year, and her low scores 300 in Critical Reading, 390 in Math, and 230 in Writing also reinforced her belief that she was not ready for college-level work with her current English proficiency. There is by now a strong awareness in the educational research community that standardized tests are not valid measures of ELs' academic knowledge because such tests confound ELs' English proficiency and their content knowledge (Abedi, 2004; Solano-Flores, 2008; Solórzano, 2008). These test scores therefore may not have reflected Erica's true academic ability. However, although she talked about retaking the exam in the fall of her senior year, in the end she never did and seemed to accept the scores from her first attempt as an external verdict that her English was still inadequate for four-year college.

Just like Erica, Alexandra was another student who expressed a sense of linguistic insecurity. She said, Sometimes I'm afraid to speak. [Author: Why?] Cause I don't feel like I'm speaking well, like other people. Like when I had to speak with Americans. The Americans are, they can speak well (IN 04/20/2011). Although Alexandra was only considering applying to four-year colleges, her linguistic insecurity made her reluctant to take the SAT in a timely manner and ultimately limited her choice but to apply to a community college. She knew all along that she had to take the SAT in order to apply to Penn State. However, she kept deferring taking the SAT, and when the deadline came for the last possible exam she could take in time to have the scores ready for the Penn State application deadline, she failed to register. That she failed to coordinate the exam taking and the college application despite her strong organizational skills in general was largely a result of her lack of college knowledge. However, although she was aware of the necessity to take the SAT, she kept delaying it until the last possible moment, which, I would argue, stemmed from her linguistic insecurity and her fear of receiving low scores. She acknowledged that she felt unprepared for the exam and therefore was reluctant to take it:

Author: And why didn't you take the SAT? You could have taken the one in November, right?

Alexandra: It passed already.

Author: Yeah. I know, but I mean, you knew you could have, you were talking about taking it in October, but

Alexandra: Yeah. But, I missed it.

Author: The deadline? In October? Hm. And why did you miss the deadline?

Alexandra: Want to take it, but I think I m not prepared. Maybe I am, but I need practice. Cause I don t know what s on the SAT. (IN 11/21/2011)

It is important not to reduce these students' linguistic insecurity to simply their own personal weakness and to recognize that their school did very little to bolster their confidence. First, the Brighton staff did not sufficiently recognize these students' academic accomplishments, thereby failing to facilitate their development of an identity as four-year-college-bound student. Erica spoke four languages (Spanish, English, French, and some Italian). She was also on Distinguished Honor Roll in her senior year. Erica had the opportunity to be inducted into the National Honor Society (NHS) but was advised against it by Mrs. Hernandez, who told her that "It's not a good deal, because for a fee of \$80, the membership did not confer much value. However, being a member of the NHS was in fact a major honor at Brighton. The names of the NHS members of the class of 2012 were prominently displayed in the commencement program, which was distributed to all the students and parents who attended the graduation ceremony. Public recognition such as this and other privileges that being an NHS member entailed might have boosted Erica's confidence and helped her recognize that she was in fact a highly accomplished student. Likewise, Alexandra was also on Distinguished Honor Roll in 10th grade; moreover, she achieved an exceptionally high score in the National Spanish Examination and was inducted into the Sociedad Honoraria Hispania. For this accomplishment, Alexandra was given recognition at the school's Award Night. However, apart from this recognition, no teacher or counselor suggested that this was a major honor that Alexandra should highlight in her college application, or even that with an honor such as this, she should definitely consider advancing to a four-year college.

Second, when Erica and Alexandra began to second-guess their ability to reach a four-year college, teachers and counselors did not encourage them to stay the course and maintain their original high aspirations. Instead, the staff presented LCC as a good choice if the students were not certain about advancing to a four-year college. As Mr. Woznyj's and Principal Lawrence's earlier remarks suggest, the Brighton staff never encouraged students to choose LCC as a means to obtain an associate's degree as their terminal degree. Rather, when they endorsed LCC, it was always with a view toward transferring to a four-year college. In other words, they presented LCC to students as an alternative pathway toward a bachelor's degree. As Erica and Alexandra contemplated their choices, the Brighton staff's strong endorsement of LCC and their message that students could always transfer from LCC to a four-year college had a strong impact on their decision making. On realization that she had missed the SAT registration deadline and foreclosed the opportunity to apply to Penn State, Alexandra did not seem particularly perturbed and readily switched to the transfer plan: "I [m] thinking about going to LCC cause they don't need the SATs for like a year and then transcript [i.e., transfer] over to university when I take the SATs there. Maybe that's what I want to do" (IN 11/21/2011). Erica too acknowledged the influence of Mr. Woznyj's endorsement of LCC in her decision making: "Ah, he was saying like, if I go two years to LCC, I can, ca-, transfer? [Author: Transfer, yes.] Transfer to other- um, to university" (IN 11/21/2011). With the strong endorsement of teachers and counselors, the two top-performing ELs convinced themselves that their ultimate goal of obtaining a bachelor's degree had not changed and that they were simply taking an alternative route to the same outcome.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate what prevents high-performing ELs from reaching four-year college and how a school's institutional habitus and ELs' individual habitus interact with each other in the process to create conditions that hinder ELs' four-year college access. This study identified three inhibiting factors: (a) ELs' low tracking, (b) their lack of college knowledge, and (c) linguistic insecurity. First, the school placed ELs in remedial-level courses after they had completed sheltered instruction courses. Such placement subsequently locked ELs in the

low track, precluding opportunities to reach advanced college preparatory courses. Second, although Brighton offered a wealth of resources on college guidance, it took a clearinghouse approach to college guidance and did not ensure that ELs developed sufficient college knowledge. Third, the two students in this study held an acute sense of linguistic insecurity and avoided high-stakes situations that would challenge their English proficiency, such as taking the SAT and applying to a four-year college. In other words, they eliminated themselves before they had a chance to be eliminated (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

This outcome that Alexandra and Erica decided to attend LCC without even applying to a single four-year college was the most surprising and disturbing finding. Prior to this project, I had assumed that many ELs apply to four-year colleges but do not get admitted because of their insufficient qualifications. However, the results of this study suggest that many ELs do not reach four-year college because they do not even apply in the first place. This finding is in fact consistent with the patterns emerging from statistical studies. Kanno and Cromley (2015) found that as many as 38% of ELs who have been on the four-year-college pathway up to the application stage nevertheless decide not to apply, compared with 20% of equivalent English L1 students. In other words, many high-achieving ELs who have taken all the necessary steps thus far to become four-year-college eligible nonetheless decide not to apply in the end. The most important contribution of this study is to illuminate why this self-elimination happens: namely, that high schools with their deficit orientations steer such ELs to community colleges while ELs themselves come to perceive four-year college as beyond their reach.

What is striking is how, through junior and senior years, the Brighton staff consistently failed to recognize Erica and Alexandra as potentially four-year-college-bound. As I have noted several times, these two students were highly accomplished: They achieved high enough GPA to be placed on Distinguished Honor Roll within three years of arriving in the United States; Alexandra's superior knowledge of Spanish landed her in the Spanish Honor Society; and Erica qualified to be inducted into National Honor Society, already spoke three languages, and was in the process of adding a fourth language to her repertoire. If we consider an analogous situation happening to a White middle-class English L1 student that is, a White English L1 student achieving the level of success in AP Spanish that inducts her into the Spanish Honor Society or such a student speaking four languages, all the while keeping a high GPA that earned her a place on the school's honor roll would we not regard her as definitively four-year-college-bound? However, just because these two students were ELs, none of the educators at Brighton noticed their accomplishments as a mark of distinction.

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) would call such a situation an example of *equity traps*, ways of thinking or assumptions that prevent educators from believing that their students of color can be successful learners (p. 602). In their work, McKenzie and Scheurich focused largely on racial minority students, but the same (false) logic that leads educators to fall into equity traps applies to educators working with ELs. One of the four causes of equity traps is deficit thinking: that is, when educators locate an inherent deficit within a particular group of students, they become complacent about the students' lack of success, and they neglect to pursue avenues that would create more academic equity for such students. Brighton educators, like educators in many U.S. public schools, viewed ELs through a deficit lens, conceptualizing them as students with a significant disadvantage (Callahan, 2005; Dabach, 2014; Harklau, 2000). Flores, Kleyn, and Menken (2015) noted that such deficit thinking regarding ELs is common, arguing that what pathologizes the language practices of multilingual students of color is pervasive *epistemic racism* that situates the epistemology of privileged monolingual subjectivities as the unmarked societal norm (p. 118). By uncritically accepting the monolingual White norm as the standard by which everyone should be evaluated, educators, even conscientious ones, come to view reduced educational opportunities for ELs as justified because they fall short in a meritocratic system. Caught in such an equity trap, Brighton teachers and counselors did not think about placing high-performing ELs in high-track courses despite the students' repeated demonstration of high performance in their classes and certainly did not encourage their four-year college going. It is not so much that the Brighton staff conspired to suppress educational opportunities for ELs as they failed to question the deficit thinking about ELs' linguistic and academic capabilities that had become so deeply entrenched in their institutional habitus. As McKenzie

and Scheurich (2004) noted, These traps are both individual and collective, often reinforced among administrators and teachers through formal and informal communication, assumptions, and beliefs (p. 603). In other words, such equity traps become part of a school's institutional habitus through the collective reinforcement of deficit assumptions among the staff members.

Of course, it is not only the educators who internalize the equity trap. ELs themselves misrecognize (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) the language practices of White monolinguals as the norm and come to accept their limited educational opportunities and marginalized position in school. Such misrecognition severely constricts ELs' individual habitus. Although it is true that Erica's father played a major role in her ultimate college choice, it is important to stress that her own reason for choosing LCC was linguistic: She was not confident enough to jump right into a four-year college with her current level of English. She had come to the decision to enroll in LCC because, I would argue, she had thoroughly internalized the deficit orientation herself.

Alexandra's refusal to seek help from the school personnel is another albeit less obvious version of acquiescence to this linguistic order. By approaching her counselor once and interpreting his casual dismissal as a sign of rejection, Alexandra was in fact internalizing the institution's positioning of ELs as marginal. In an alternative universe, it is not hard to imagine ELs positioning themselves as gifted multilingual students bound for four-year colleges. Students with such self-identity and sense of entitlement are likely to demand services and assistance and would assume that assisting them was part of their teachers' and counselors' job. However, Alexandra, with her diminished sense of habitus, was simply resigned to the lack of institutional support and concluded, Like, they don't care.

Unfortunately, the two ELs' lack of self-advocacy had the effect of reinforcing Brighton's institutional habitus. Seeing that students such as Erica and Alexandra were not aggressively seeking four-year-college opportunities and mobilizing all the resources at the school to make this happen, counselors and teachers confirmed their belief that they were not yet mature and autonomous enough to pursue a four-year-college education and therefore would be better off at LCC. Brighton was in fact a school that encouraged students' self-advocacy. Teachers and counselors commended students who took the initiative to request higher level courses or to make use of the college guidance resources. However, the staff did not reflect on under what conditions (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 9) students were able to speak up and exert their agency. When Erica and Alexandra did not contest their course assignments or did not make use of guidance counselors, even the teachers and counselors who knew them relatively well attributed their inaction to their passiveness, and this became one more reason to encourage them to attend LCC.

But would it be such a tragedy if high-performing ELs such as Erica and Alexandra decided to attend a community college after all? As long as they transferred to a four-year college and eventually obtained a bachelor's degree, would they not have fulfilled their aspirations? In fact, would it not be a smarter choice because they would have saved a considerable amount of money by completing two of the four years of college at a community college? I would agree with this argument if it were true that transferring from a community college to a four-year institution was as near-automatic as the Brighton educators believed it to be. However, research shows otherwise. Several studies have shown that attending community college as the first PSE institution significantly lowers one's chances for attaining a bachelor's degree (e.g., Alfonso, 2006; Bradburn, Hurst, & Peng, 2001). Moreover, for the EL population specifically, too, a recent study (Kanno & Cromley, 2016) shows that ELs who first enroll in community colleges have lower chances of bachelor's degree attainment than those who enroll directly in four-year institutions. Only 23% of ELs who entered community colleges with an intention of transferring to a four-year institution later obtained a bachelor's degree. In other words, advising ELs to consider community college telling them, You can always transfer to a four-year college later is to misguide them to an unconscionable degree. One *cannot* always transfer to a four-year college.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

LIMITATIONS

Although I took care to ensure the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the information in the study with prolonged engagement in the field and multiple sources of data, there are some important limitations of the study that need to be noted. First of all, as I discussed in the methods section, I was not able to interview the parents of my participants. I had several informal conversations with Erica's father because he was a regular attendee of the college workshops, and therefore I was able to obtain some direct insights into his perspective on Erica's college choice. In contrast, I had no contact with Alexandra's parents. However, the students themselves often spoke at length about their parents' aspirations for them and the degree of concrete support (or lack thereof) they received. The guidance counselors also spoke about communication with the participants' parents, and I was able to achieve some level of triangulation of the data this way. I am therefore confident that I have a sufficient grasp of my focal students' parents' positions on their children's college choice; nonetheless, secondhand information is no replacement for hearing directly from the parents.

Another limitation, which is also an implication for further study, concerns the role of gender in ELs' college choice. Given that the two focal students in this study were female, it is hard to tell to what extent their gender contributed to their college choice, especially the role of gender in their linguistic insecurity. It is true that since the concept linguistic insecurity was developed, it has been found that female speakers are more conscious of linguistic correctness and therefore are perhaps more prone to linguistic insecurity (Labov, 1990). However, with the evidence I have in this study, it is difficult to conclusively attribute Erica's and Alexandra's linguistic insecurity to their gender, especially given that the other two female participants in the larger study exhibited no sign of linguistic insecurity. It is thus up to future research to examine if female ELs are more prone to linguistic insecurity and let it affect their college choice.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study suggest a number of policy and pedagogical implications for how we could expand college access opportunities for ELs. I conclude this article by articulating the most important implications for different stakeholders.

School and District Leaders

The most obvious implication of this study is that ELs must be given the same opportunity as English L1 students to receive a college preparatory curriculum. This is consistent with a policy recently affirmed jointly by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice (2015): School districts may not categorically exclude EL students from gifted and talented education (GATE) or other specialized programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), honors, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses (p. 21). In reality, however, ELs' exclusion from advanced-level courses happens routinely (Callahan et al., 2010; Kanno & Cromley, 2013, 2015). School and district leaders thus need to play a much more aggressive role in expanding ELs' access to advanced college preparatory courses. One concrete way to achieve this goal is through *equity audits*: that is, auditing the school's or district's data for inequities between student groups (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004, p. 617). For example, a district can run an analysis of the percentages of ELs enrolled in honors and AP courses at district schools and compare them with the percentages of

ELs at these schools. If it turns out that ELs are severely underrepresented in those advanced-level courses, it suggests that there are structural barriers barring ELs from accessing those courses, and it is the district's and school leaders' responsibility to investigate and eliminate them.

Teachers and Counselors

As educators who work directly with ELs, teachers and guidance counselors can do much more in expanding college opportunities for ELs. The tracking system needs to become more flexible, allowing for movements of students across tracks. Teachers need to recognize those ELs who are demonstrating high performance in their classes and advocate their placement in higher level courses. Those teachers who have had ELs in their classes for the previous year in particular have the insight to judge which ELs would likely thrive in more advanced-level courses, and such teacher opinions should weigh heavily in determining ELs' course selection. Similarly, guidance counselors, rather than placing ELs in easier courses where passing is assured, should err on the side of overchallenging ELs and assume that they will rise to the challenge. In short, rather than assuming that ELs are incapable and creating many safety nets to prevent failure, teachers and counselors should start with the assumption that ELs are capable and that their job is to invite ELs to be academically challenged while also providing them with linguistic support to maximize their potential.

Parents

The ELs I worked with already did everything they could to aim for the best outcomes in their education. Their parents too had a strong desire to send their children to college, although most were not able to provide concrete guidance because of their own lack of college knowledge. To demand that ELs and their parents do more without providing them with additional support thus would be tantamount to blaming the victim. This section and the next, then, are not so much about what ELs and their parents themselves should be doing as about what additional support services need to be in place for ELs and their parents to navigate their college choice more effectively.

Starting with parents, they need to be educated about the U.S. PSE system and college planning along with students. However, such efforts must begin much earlier than high school. For a variety of reasons (e.g., fear of the unknown, lack of English proficiency, deference to teachers), ELs' parents tend to stay away from their children's schools (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Guo, 2006). Unless schools make a concerted effort to cultivate trusting relationships with them, ELs' parents' alienation from U.S. schools will be firmly established by the time their children reach high school age. At that point, it would be nearly impossible for schools to invite ELs' parents back to become partners in supporting their children's college choice. If schools are to work with ELs' parents, therefore, efforts must begin much earlier, preferably in elementary school, so that by the time ELs are in high school and need to seriously consider PSE options, the relations of trust have already been firmly established with their parents and communities.

Students

For EL students to exert their agency and navigate their college choice effectively, they need to be equipped with much more college knowledge. They need to be informed of the system of academic tracking in high school and its consequences for their college options. They also need to be much more explicitly educated about the steps they need to take in the college choice process. A clearinghouse approach to college guidance is clearly insufficient in helping EL

students and their parents make an informed college choice. Rather, to reach institutionally marginalized students, who are unlikely to take advantage of the resources on their own, institutional agents need to aggressively approach them.

Such a form of proactive counseling in fact already exists at the college level, especially at the community college. The idea of intrusive academic counseling (Grubb, 2006, p. 18; also see Karp, O Gara, & Hughes, 2008) is to *require* traditionally underserved students to receive structured academic guidance, such as regular meetings with advisors and an introductory course on how to navigate college (Karp et al., 2008). We can expand the idea and spirit of intrusive counseling to high school, and even to middle school: to actively seek out and direct resources to those ELs who are most unlikely to initiate help-seeking. Although other teachers and guidance counselors could play a role, I believe that EL teachers are particularly suited to providing ELs with such intrusive counseling. They are the institutional agents that come in contact with ELs every day, and moreover, they are trained to provide information in comprehensible language to ELs. Currently, college guidance is not considered part of EL teachers' job. However, they are positioned optimally to provide regular, consistent, and accessible college guidance to ELs, which is precisely what students need to take control of their own college choice.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to Sara Kangas, my writing buddy, who patiently read every iteration of this study for the last two years. Without her wise counsel and encouragements, this article would not have survived its difficult birth.

Notes

1. The names of the high school and individuals involved have been changed to protect their confidentiality.
2. The only student who was admitted to the four-year college of his choice was in fact an English L1 and monolingual speaker. Although he was placed in the EL program because he was a speaker of Liberian English, his college choice experience was qualitatively different from those of all the other participants because of his native English proficiency.
3. Interview excerpts are indicated by IN and field notes by FN, followed by the date. I am explicitly noting the dates of the excerpts because in a longitudinal study, when certain decisions and comments are made is an important part of the data.

References

Abedi, J. (2004). The No Child Left Behind Act and English language learners: Assessment and accountability issues. *Educational Researcher*, 33(1), 4-14. doi:10.3102/0013189X033001004

Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Involvement.

Alfonso, M. (2006). The impact of community college attendance on baccalaureate attainment. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(8), 873-903. doi:10.2307/40197515

Almon, P. C. (2010). *English language learner engagement and retention in a community college setting* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3408684)

Arias, B. M., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). *Promising ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times*. Retrieved from Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice website: http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Arias_ELL.pdf

Bourdieu, P. (1974). The school as a conservative force: Scholastic and cultural inequalities. In J. Eggleston (Ed.), *Contemporary research in the sociology of education* (pp. 32-46). London, England: Muthuen.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. (pp. 241-258). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (2nd ed., R. Nice, Trans.). London, England: Sage.

Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line: Completing college at America's public universities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bradburn, E. M., Hurst, D. G., & Peng, S. (2001). *Community college transfer rates to 4-year institutions using alternative definitions of transfer*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001197.pdf>

Bucchi, W., & Baxter, M. (1984). Problems of linguistic insecurity in multicultural speech contexts. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 433(1) 185-200. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.1984.tb14767.x

Byrd, D. (2013). *Beyond barriers to entry institutional habitus and postsecondary success: A literature review and research*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from the AERA Online Paper Repository website: <http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?TabID=10250>

Cabrera, A. F., Burkum, K. R., & La Nasa, S. M. (2005). Pathways to a four-year degree: Determinants of degree completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College student retention: Formula for student success: Formula for student success* (pp. 155-214). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Callahan, R. M. (2005). Tracking and high school English learners: Limiting opportunity to learn. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(2), 305-328. doi:10.3102/00028312042002305

Callahan, R. M., & Gándara, P. (2004). On nobody's agenda: Improving English-language learners' access to higher education. In S. Michael (Ed.), *Teaching immigrant and second-language students: Strategies for success* (pp. 107-127). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Callahan, R. M., & Humphries, M. H. (2016). Undermatched? School-based linguistic status, college going, and the immigrant advantage. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(2), 263-295. doi:10.3102/0002831215627857

Callahan, R. M., & Shifrer, D. R. (2016). Equitable access for secondary English learner students: Course taking as evidence of EL program effectiveness. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 1-34. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0013161X16648190

Callahan, R. M., Wilkinson, L., & Muller, C. (2010). Academic achievement and course taking among language minority youth in U.S. schools: Effects of ESL placement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(1), 84-117. doi:10.3102/0162373709359805

Capuzzi Simon, C. (2012, November 2). Major decisions. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/04/education/edlife/choosing-one-college-major-out-of-hundreds.html?_r=0

Carlson, D., & Knowles, J. E. (2016). The effect of English language learner reclassification on student ACT scores, high school graduation, and postsecondary enrollment: Regression discontinuity evidence from Wisconsin. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 35(3), 559-586. doi:10.1002/pam.21908

Dabach, D. B. (2014). I am not a shelter! : Stigma and social boundaries in teachers' accounts of students' experience in separate sheltered English learner classrooms. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 19(2), 98-124. doi:10.1080/10824669.2014.954044

Flores, N., Kleyn, T., & Menken, K. (2015). Looking holistically in a climate of partiality: Identities of students labeled long-term English language learners. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 14*(2), 113-132. doi:10.1080/15348458.2015.1019787

Gándara, P., & Orfield, G. (2012). Segregating Arizona's English learners: A return to the Mexico Room? *Teachers College Record, 114*(9), 1-27.

García, O., Kellifgen, J. A., & Falchi, L. (2008). *From English language learners to emergent bilinguals*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524002.pdf>

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Grubb, W. N. (2006). Like, what do I do now? : The dilemmas of guidance counseling. In T. Bailey & V. S. Morest (Eds.), *Defending the community college equity agenda* (pp. 195-222). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Guo, Y. (2006). Why didn't they show up? : Rethinking ESL parent involvement in K-12 education. *TESL Canada Journal, 24*(1), 80-95.

Harklau, L. (2000). From the good kids to the worst : Representations of English language learners across educational settings. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(1), 35-67. doi:10.2307/3588096

Hill, L. D. (2008). School strategies and the college-linking process: Reconsidering the effects of high schools on college enrollment. *Sociology of Education, 81*(1), 53-76. doi:10.1177/003804070808100103

Horvat, E. M. (2000). Understanding equity and access in higher education; The potential contribution of Pierre Bourdieu. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 16, pp. 195-238). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). Studying college choice: A three-phase model and the implication for policy makers. *College and University, 2*, 207-221.

Kanno, Y., & Cromley, J. (2013). English language learners' access to and attainment in postsecondary education. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*(1), 89-121. doi:10.1002/tesq.49

- Kanno, Y., & Cromley, J. (2015). English language learners pathways to four-year colleges. *Teachers College Record*, 117(120306), 1-44.
- Kanno, Y., & Cromley, J. (2016, April). *English learners high school academic preparation, community college enrollment, and eventual bachelor's degree attainment*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), Washington, DC.
- Kanno, Y., & Grosik, S. A. (2012). Immigrant English learners access to four-year universities. In Y. Kanno & L. Harklau (Eds.), *Linguistic minority students go to college: Preparation, access, and persistence* (pp. 130-147). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kanno, Y., & Kangas, S. E. N. (2014). I'm not going to be, like, for the AP: English language learners limited access to advanced college-preparatory courses in high school. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(5), 848-878. doi:10.3102/0002831214544716
- Kanno, Y., & Varghese, M. (2010). Immigrant English language learners challenges to accessing four-year college education: From language policy to educational policy. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 9(5), 1-19. doi:10.1080/15348458.2010.517693
- Karp, M. M., O'Gara, L., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). *Do support services at community colleges encourage success or reproduce disadvantage?* CCRC Working Paper, 10. Retrieved from <http://inpathways.net/community-college-support.pdf>
- Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Labov, W. (1990). The intersection of sex and social class in the course of linguistic change. *Language Variation and Change*, 2(2), 205-254. doi:10.1017/S0954394500000338
- Lillie, K. E., Markos, A., Arias, M. B., & Wiley, T. G. (2012). Separage and not equal: The implementation of Structured English Immersion in Arizona's classrooms. *Teachers College Record*, 114(9), 1-33.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- López, G. (2015). *Hispanics of Spanish origin in the United States, 2013*. Retrieved from Pew Research Center database: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/>

Martinez, G. F., & Deil-Amen, R. (2015). College for all Latinos? The role of high school messages in facing college challenges. *Teachers College Record*, 117(030301), 1-50.

McDonough, P. M. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

McKenzie, K. B., & Scheurich, J. J. (2004). Equity traps: A useful construct for preparing principals to lead schools that are successful with racially diverse students. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(5), 601-632. doi:10.1177/0013161X04268839

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31. doi:10.2307/2F3587803

Nuñez, A.-M., Rios-Aguilar, C., Kanno, Y., & Flores, S. M. (2016). English learners and their transition to postsecondary education. In M. B. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 31, pp. 41-90). New York, NY: Springer.

Nuñez, A.-M., & Sparks, P. J. (2012). Who are linguistic minority students in higher education? An analysis of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Study 2004. In Y. Kanno & L. Harklau (Eds.), *Linguistic minority students go to college: Preparation, access, and persistence* (pp. 110-129). New York, NY: Routledge.

Oboler, S. (1998). Hispanics? That's what they call us. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds.), *The Latino/a condition: A critical reader* (pp. 3-5). New York: New York University Press.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 21, pp. 99-157). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Reay, D. (1998). Always knowing and never being sure: Familial and institutional habitues and higher education choice. *Journal of Education Policy*, 13(4), 519-529. doi:10.1080/0268093980130405

Reay, D., David, M. E., & Ball, S. (2005). *Degree of choice: Class, race, gender and higher education*. Stoke on Trent, England: Trentham Books.

Smyth, E., & Banks, J. (2012). There was never really any question of anything else : Young people s agency, institutional habitus and the transition to higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(2), 263-281. doi:10.1080/01425692.2012.632867

Snyder, T. D., & Dillow, S. A. (2015). *Digest of education statistics 2013* (NCES 2015-011). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Solano-Flores, G. (2008). Who is given tests in what language by whom, when, and where? The need for probabilistic views of language in the testing of English language learners. *Educational Researcher*, 37(4), 189-199. doi:10.3102/0013189X08319569

Solórzano, R. W. (2008). High stakes testing: Issues, implications, and remedies for English language learners. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(2), 260-329. doi:10.3102/0034654308317845

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2001). *Manufacturing hope and despair: The school and kin support networks of U.S.-Mexican youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Umansky, I. (2016). *Leveled and exclusionary tracking: English learners access to core content in middle school*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Center for Education Policy Analysis.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). *The condition of education 2017*. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics database: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017144.pdf>

U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education. (2015). Dear colleague letter: English learner students and limited English proficient parents. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

Valadez, J. R. (2008). Shaping the educational decisions of Mexican immigrant high school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), 834-860. doi:10.3102/0002831208320244

Vargas, J. H. (2004). *College knowledge: Addressing information barriers to college*. Retrieved from <http://www.usc.edu/dept/chepa/HRYANG/publications/128.pdf>

Wakeling, P. (2005). La noblesse d'état anglaise? Social class and progression to postgraduate study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(4), 505-522. doi:10.1080/01425690500200020

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Woods, C. S., & Domina, T. (2014). The school counselor caseload and the high school-to-college pipeline. *Teachers College Record*, 116(100301), 1-30.

APPENDIX

Sample Student Interview Protocols

(Complete interview protocols are available on request)

Student Interview 1 Protocol

Spring, junior year

a.

Background

1. How old were you when you arrived in the U.S.?
2. Do you know why your parents decided to immigrate to the U.S.?
3. Did you speak any English when you arrived? If so, how did you learn English before you came to the U.S.?
4. After arriving in the U.S., did you take EL classes? If so, what kind of EL classes did you take?
5. What language do you speak best now?
6. Do you read and write in your native language?
7. What kind of work do your parents do in the U.S.? What about in your home country? What did they do in your home country?
8. Are your parents financially comfortable?
9. Do your parents own the home you live in? Or are you renting?
10. Are you receiving free or reduced lunch at this school?
11. Who do you live with?

b.

College Plans

In this part of the interview, I would like to ask you about your plans after high school.

1.

After graduating from high school, what do you want to do?

2.

Did you always plan to go to college as you grew up? If so, where does that idea come from? Or is it something that was recently decided?

3.

Do you know what you want to be in the future? Say, when you are at age 30?

4.

How much education do you think you need to get that job?

5.

Do you know which colleges/universities you want to apply to? (If multiple colleges), of these schools, what is your first choice and why?

6.

Do you know what kinds of qualifications (e.g., courses, test scores) you need to have in order to get into your first-choice school?

7.

As things stand now, what chances do you think you have of getting into that first-choice school and why?

8.

What do your parents think of your plan?

9.

There are many steps that high school students need to take in order to go to college. Which of these have you done so far? (If the interviewee says yes to any of them, ask follow-up questions, such as What kinds of things did you discuss with your parents? and How well did you do on PSAT?)

a.

Discuss your college plans with your parents

b.

Discuss your college plans with any of your teachers or coach

c.

Discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor

d.

Discuss your college plans with your friends

e.

Look up information online

f.

Look into financial aid information

g.

Read information packages you have received from colleges

h.

Take PSAT

i.

Take SAT

j.

Visit colleges

c. High School Academic Work and Social Activities

In this part of the interview, I want to learn what you do in this school.

1.

What courses are you taking this semester?

2.

Which of these classes do you like the most and why?

3.

Which of these classes do you like the least and why?

4.

Whose EL class you are in?

5.

Does your English ability affect your academic work or social life at Brighton in any way?

6.

Do you know your GPA? If so, what is it? If not, what kinds of grades do you tend to get?

7.

Academically do you think you are (a) an academic star, (b) doing OK but not one of the top students, or (c) struggling?

8.

Are you involved in any sports, activity clubs, bands, orchestras, the National Honor Society, or any other student associations?

9.

Are you involved with any youth groups or community services outside of school?

10.

Who are your friends in school? That is, who do you tend to spend your time with while you are in school?

11.

Do you have a close relationship with any of the teachers, coaches, or guidance counselors?

d. Paid Work

1.

Many high school students work while going to school. Do you work? If so, what kind of work do you do, and how many hours a week do you work?

2.

(If working) why do you work? (If not) why do you not work?

Student Interview 3 Protocol

October/November, senior year

1.

We talked last time on [date]. Can you tell me what you have done since our last meeting in terms of college preparation/application?

2.

Did you have a chance to visit some colleges during the summer?

3.

This is the first time for me to talk to you since you became a senior. Have you decided which colleges you want to apply to?

4.

[If multiple colleges,] which one is your first choice and why?

5.

(If there has been a major change in the interviewee's college plan [e.g., deciding to go to a community college rather than applying to four-year institutions] ask him/her to explain how this change has come about.)

6.

People choose colleges for a variety of reasons. For example, some people want to commute to college from home, so being close to home is important. For some people, in-state tuition rate is an important factor. Other people want to go to a major research university. Others may choose a college where they are known for a particular program. So when you go about choosing a set of colleges for yourself, which are important criteria for you?

7.

Do you know what you want to study in college?

8.

Once again I want to know which of these steps you have taken so far (follow up for any new developments):

a.

Discuss your college plans with your parents

b.

Discuss your college plans with any of your teachers or coach

c.

Discuss your college plans with your guidance counselor

d.

Discuss your college plans with your friends

e.

Look up information online

f.

Look into financial aid information

g.

Read information packages you have received from colleges

h.

Take SAT

i.

Visit colleges

j.

Prepare college applications

k.

Apply to colleges

1.

So far, who has been helping you most with your college application?

2.

[If the first-choice college is not a college that has an open door policy,] what do you think are your chances of getting into your first-choice college?

3.

Does your being an EL affect your college choice or college application in any way?

4.

How are you planning to pay for college?

5.

Do you know what you need to do to apply for financial aid?

6.

Which courses are you taking this semester?

7.

Which of these classes do you like the best and why?

8.

Which of these classes do you like the least and why?

9.

What else is new with you?

Student Interview 6 Protocol

May/June, senior year

1.

We talked last time on [date]. Can you tell me what you have done between then and now?

2.

Last time, you said that you were going to do X (e.g., attend College X). Is that still your plan? If so, what have you done to get ready for that?

3.

Have you informed College X that you are going to attend from this fall?

4.

(If deferring or deciding not to go to college at all,) what prompted this change of plan?

5.

Do you know how you are going to finance your college education?

6.

Looking back, how satisfied are you with how things have turned out?

7.

Did the fact that you are an EL affect your college application/college choice in any way? If yes, how?

8.

The college going is a long process. If you were to do it all over again, how would you do things differently?

9.

On the whole, what do you think of the support you received from your high school in terms of helping you go to college? Were teachers and counselors helpful?

10.

Who helped you most with your college going?

11.

If you were to give advice about college going to other ELs who are now in 9th or 10th grades, what advice would you give?

12.

What are you going to do between now and September?

13.

This is my last formal interview with you. I really appreciate your working with me for such a long time and letting me be part of your college-going process. Could you tell me if participating in this study affected your college going in any way, and if so, how?